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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America implements strategy for safer farms at first national meeting**

The Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA) identified issues critical to a safer, healthier agricultural workforce during its recent national meeting in Washington, D.C.

The meeting was attended by leaders in farming, agribusiness, insurance, government and safety who are implementing a national strategy to reduce disease, injuries and fatalities in American agriculture. Discussion centered on sharing best practices to improve health and safety for agricultural workers.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman, whose organization hosted the January 29 meeting at its headquarters, welcomed attendees. Stallman, a rice and cattle producer from Texas, said the importance of agricultural safety and health hit "close to home" because he had lost a cousin in a grain bin suffocation.

U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (Iowa), chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, sent his top agricultural aide, Mark Halverson, to speak on his behalf at the meeting. Halverson said Senator Harkin has always supported the health and prosperity of agriculture and rural life, and that he encouraged ASHCA to use its collective voice to keep Harkin and other Washington decision-makers informed.

Speaker John Howard, M.D., former director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, said ASHCA "has a large role to play."

Howard said ASHCA can serve this role through surveillance of injuries in the industry as well as communication of research findings regarding best practices. He encouraged ASHCA to help reduce injuries among hired farm laborers, including immigrant workers, as well as family farmers.

Agriculture is consistently among the most hazardous occupations in the United States. In an average year, 516 workers die while doing farm work, and each day about 243 agricultural workers suffer lost-time injuries.

ASHCA incorporated in late 2007 as a not-for-profit 501 (c)(3). It is not a lobbying group. Rather, it attempts to guide research priorities to rapidly identify best-management practices for worker safety and health that maximize cost efficiency and sustainability.

ASHCA members include American Farm Bureau Federation, Agri-Services Agency, Association of Equipment Manufacturers, CHS Foundation, CropLife America, Farm Foundation, Liberty Mutual, National Farm Medicine Center of Marshfield Clinic, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, National Pork Board and Workers Compensation Fund.

New members are welcome to join ASHCA at the organization, association or individual level. For information, go to [www.ashca.com](http://www.ashca.com) or phone 715-221-7270.

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