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## **Iowa Farmers Union Leads Coalition Asking for Changes to Pesticide Rules**

*Farmers seek better protections and resources to deal with pesticide drift.*

DES MOINES (Jan. 20, 2015) – The Iowa Farmers Union (IFU), along with Pesticide Action Network (PAN), today announced their request to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) to improve the reporting and response process and the agency support available to farmers who experience losses from pesticide drift.

“Pesticide drift from nearby fields is a very real problem for farmers in Iowa,” says Jordan Scheibel, a diversified vegetable farmer from Grinnell, Iowa. “Not only can pesticide drift delay or cause a farm to lose its organic certification, it results in products that farmers - certified organic or not - may not be able to sell legally, safely, or in good conscience, and it exposes the farmers and their workers to potentially harmful pesticides.”

Pesticide drift is a growing concern among Iowa farmers. A recent report to IDALS from the Practical Farmers of Iowa highlights dozens of reported pesticide drift violations across the state between 2008 and 2012, with fines issued in less than 20% of the cases.

Jana Linderman, President of the Iowa Farmers Union, states: “Current administrative rules designed to prevent pesticide drift and assist farmers who experience losses from drift are inadequate. We have proposed several rule changes to IDALS through a recently filed petition for rule making. We are attempting to improve the relationship between IDALS and impacted farmers when it comes to dealing with damages caused by pesticide drift.”

The IFU petition for rule making requests:

- That IDALS provide information in writing and via the IDALS website to farmers and others who have come into contact with or suffered losses from pesticide drift regarding

the details of the agency process, as well as their rights and available remedies under the law;

- That IDALS provide information on the potential financial impacts of pesticide drift as part of the certification and continuing education process for commercial pesticide applicators;
- That IDALS maintain a public database of the evidence of financial responsibility required to be filed with the agency by certified commercial pesticide applicators;
- That commercial pesticide applicators be required to provide IDALS with monthly reports of pesticide applications, and that spray drift incident reports involving contact with a human, sensitive crop, or bee apiary be made available in a public database;
- That commercial pesticide applicators be required to provide notice to individuals who are on the sensitive crop or bee registries and who are within a 5-mile radius of the application site at least 48 hours prior to spraying; and
- That the rules be updated to provide for increased fines for serious or habitual violations of the rules governing pesticide application.

“Farmers should be able to control what comes onto their farms,” says Kate Mendenhall, an organizer for PAN who is a beginning farmer in northwest Iowa. “We’re not only concerned about the well-documented crop damage from spray drift, but also the potential health harms to farmers, farmworkers, and rural communities.”

IFU and PAN also are asking the Iowa legislature to establish an indemnity fund to improve the testing time for crops damaged by pesticide drift, to fund work to upgrade and improve the IDALS Pesticide Bureau website, and to increase the amount of insurance coverage carried by commercial pesticide applicators.

“Significant financial losses from pesticide drift can threaten the viability of family farms and put the diversity and safety of our food system at risk,” notes IFU President Linderman. “The modest improvements we are seeking can provide important safeguards for family farmers who are working hard to build their businesses and provide safe and healthy food to consumers.”

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*Since 1915, Iowa Farmers Union members have worked together to strengthen the independent family farm through education, legislation and cooperation and to provide Iowans with sustainable production, safe food, a clean environment and healthy communities. IFU is a grassroots member organization of family farmers, advocates and consumers committed to promoting family agriculture in Iowa through policy positions and priorities initiated and approved by our members.*