

Protecting Your Health & Safety

When we send you on your volunteer assignment, we want to ensure that you are aware of the severe environmental pollution problems and health risks that may exist in certain areas. These hazards can be localized or regional. They can arise both from existing contamination and from a lack of information, education and regulatory controls.

You must exercise caution when actively participating in any agricultural production, processing, or distribution practices. Be conscious of the general lack of enforceable environmental protection regulations and the prevalence of antiquated and defective equipment and machinery. Due to the lack of financial resources for maintenance and upkeep of equipment, training, and provision of proper storage facilities, you should use discretion when visiting farms and observing practices that involve machinery and storage facilities. If you encounter a situation where pesticides are being used improperly with serious risk of human exposure, please report this to your F2F contact or a USAID official. While this is especially critical for USAID-funded projects, it is equally important in any other farming or gardening situation.

In all cases, you need to:

- Take care of your own health first and, if in doubt, do not participate in an activity until you can obtain professional advice
- Note possible negative effects on the environment
- If you see inappropriate use of pesticides and you are trained in pesticide use and safety, open a discussion on alternative practices
- Take every opportunity to provide safe use information to your host. This may include the use of personal protection equipment, back-pack sprayers and proper container storage/disposal. In some situations it may be appropriate to help farmers identify and use other forms of pest control
- If you are asked to recommend a pesticide and you are trained in pesticide application and safety, please recommend only the appropriate, approved pesticide from the PERSUAP
- If you are not trained in pesticide application and safety, you should request that a pesticide expert visit the site to provide appropriate recommendations

What to Do Now

To prepare for your assignment, we recommend you conduct an informal environmental review to gauge any potential negative (or positive) impacts. This is for your use as you prepare for and implement your assignment. Your review should concentrate on environmental degradation, health and safety risks to the environment and humans, recommendations that mitigate these risks, and how to monitor the project post-assignment. If you are preparing a training program for pesticide use, food processing or natural resource management, do some advanced planning based upon USAID regulations, your scope of work and any background information provided to you. Consult with F2F staff, volunteers who have been to that country or worked with your hosts. This will aid your ability to plan recommendations and plan for demonstrations. Plan to protect your own health and safety, bring any protective gear you will need to conduct the assignment and review “what to bring” materials from your volunteer organization.

Information Sources on Environmental Health and Safety:

Title 22 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 216 (22 CFR 216) Agency Environmental Procedures.

https://www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/compliance/22cfr216

Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan (PERSUAP): What Volunteers Should Know

<https://www.farmer-to-farmer.org/> Search for PERSUAP

USAID Global Environmental Management Support Project sector guidelines

<http://usaidegms.org/sectorguidelines.htm>

World Bank Environment

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/environm>

UN Environment Program

<https://www.unenvironment.org/>

USAID's Climate Change and Development Strategy

<https://www.usaid.gov/climate/strategy>

SERVIR Global <https://servirglobal.net>

USAID Resources on Climate Change

<https://www.climatelinks.org>



Environmental Guidelines for Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteers



A healthy environment and the sustainable use of natural resources are essential to long-term economic growth. As a Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) volunteer, you are expected to consider the potential environmental consequences of your work and to promote active environmental stewardship. F2F volunteers have a tremendous opportunity to disseminate a uniform and consistent message to promote environmentally sound practices throughout the agricultural communities in which you work.

These guidelines provide an orientation to USAID policies and benchmarks for you to consider how your recommendations, advice and efforts can promote environmental stewardship and environmentally sound solutions for your hosts and their communities.

USAID Environmental Policies

As with all USAID funded programs, Farmer-to-Farmer is required to comply with federal environmental regulations to safeguard the environment from adverse consequences in implementation of all program activities. Even the best intentioned activities can have real, adverse impacts on people's health, livestock health, biosafety and the natural resources on which our hosts' livelihoods depend and the viability of their farms or businesses. It is USAID's policy to:

- *Ensure that the environmental consequences of USAID-funded activities are identified and considered by USAID and the host country prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted*
- *Assist developing countries to strengthen their capabilities to appreciate and effectively evaluate the potential environmental effects of proposed development strategies and projects, and to select, implement and manage effective environmental programs*
- *Identify impacts resulting from USAID's actions upon the environment, including those aspects of the biosphere which are the common and cultural heritage of all mankind*
- *Define environmental limiting factors that constrain development and identify and carry out activities that assist in restoring the renewable resource base on which sustained development depends*

Prior to implementation of this F2F project, USAID conducted an Initial Environment Examination that identifies environmental risks and prepared a Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan (PERSUAP). Each F2F implementing partner has prepared an Environmental Management and Mitigation Plan that adheres to USAID's environmental regulations as well as the laws and policies of the country in which they—and you—work. Compliance with these rules and regulations and your own sound judgement as a volunteer steward of your host's environment and natural resources are crucial to managing and mitigating the risks inherent in your assignment.

Volunteer Responsibility & Good Practices

F2F volunteers bear a significant responsibility in your work with your hosts:

- *Follow USAID regulations and the laws and policies of your host country*
- *Consider the direct environmental impacts of your work and recommendations to host organizations*
- *Ensure that host organizations (and others in the country) have the tools and resources to implement and replicate your recommendations*
- *Consider the indirect environmental impacts and issues that relate to the agricultural sub-sector and cumulative impacts on the local, regional and global environments*
- *Discuss your ideas for new interventions with local experts, your home organization's managers, input and service providers to be sure you have considered all potential impacts*
- *Learn which pesticides, veterinary medicines and fertilizers are registered in your country of assignment. Work with your hosts to emphasize the importance of reading and following labels and application instructions, and using personal protective equipment. Get translations of labels as needed.*

As a specialist in your field, you will be aware of the environmental issues in your area of expertise. As you develop recommendations and guidance for your host, it is a good practice to ask a series of questions that help you identify solutions to environmental problems:

- *What is the source of the environmental problem?*
- *What is the magnitude and impact of the problem?*
- *What measures will help mitigate the problem?*
- *How to implement these measures?*



It is a good practice to determine how your recommendations and activities mitigate and manage environmental impacts. Ask, will my actions promote:

- *Soil and water conservation?*
- *Protection of water, soil, air and food from contamination?*
- *Pollution prevention, especially through proper storage and disposal of pesticides, fertilizers and veterinary medicines?*
- *Integrated pest management, particularly alternatives to chemical inputs?*
- *Increased agricultural exports, by ensuring no inappropriate pesticides were used in production?*
- *Animal health/welfare and livestock biosafety?*
- *Ecologically sound waste management and disposal?*
- *Reform of government policies and regulations to better manage and protect natural resources?*
- *Reform of government policies and regulations to protect farmers and agricultural industry workers?*
- *Procedures for measuring, assessing, monitoring and mitigating environmental impacts of unsound practices?*
- *Emergence of local agricultural research capacity committed to developing processes and environmentally friendly technologies?*
- *Awareness of environmental health risks?*
- *The importance of occupational health and safety both on the farm and in industry?*

If your assignment involves pesticide application or recommendations (including organic options), you must reference the active ingredients in the F2F PERSUAP, available from your volunteer sending organization. Compare that list with the host country's registered active ingredients (also available from your sending organization), and ensure your recommendations are consistent with both documents. Any recommended products not listed in the PERSUAP, and any genetically modified organisms, must be approved by USAID **before** they can be discussed or recommended to your host.

Many developing countries are experiencing climate variability and change, including more intense heat waves, droughts, floods, storms and unexpected rainfall. It may be appropriate to provide assistance to prepare for and adapt to this change, including building awareness and using satellite data to help understand challenges in food security, water, climate and land use. See the SERVIR website for maps and resources.