Where do Agricultural Producers get Health and Safety Information?

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Purpose/Objective:
Although some information on sources of health and safety information among farmers is available, little is known about the frequency of use nor the extent to which specific routes of delivery of health and safety messages are trusted among agricultural workers in the upper US Midwest.

The objective of this study was to allow for better understanding of the use of a range of information sources and the extent to which such sources are trusted. An additional objective was to explore differences in use and level of trust across age, gender, and farm characteristics.

A survey was administered to a convenience sample of self-identified farmers at three county fairs in East-Central Iowa. Survey questions assessed demographics, farm characteristics, and ratings of the frequency of use and level of trust for 14 electronic and legacy media channels. The specific media channels about which information was collected were university programs, medical clinics, product manufacturer's information, internet, radio, television, 4-H and FFA, community or family members, equipment-implement dealers/agribusiness supply stores/grain elevators, newspaper/magazine articles, agriculture extension agent, commodity trade associations, community college, insurance providers.

Results/Findings:
The mean age of the 195 respondents was 50 y (SD=16 y) and 72% were male. Three quarters of the respondents were owner-operators. Substantial differences in use frequency were observed across the 14 information sources. Newspapers and magazines were most frequently used for information about agricultural health and safety (almost 80% reported use > once/month). Other sources used > once/month by >50% of respondents were radio, television, product manufacturer's information, community of family member, the internet, and equipment-implement dealers/agribusiness supply stores/grain elevators. Sources with the lowest frequency of use were community colleges (less than 10% reported use > once/month), insurance providers (16% reported use more than once per month) and universities (18% reported use > once/month). The largest gaps in level of trust to frequency of use (i.e., high trust and low use) were observed for universities, medical clinics, community colleges, and insurance providers.

Application to Field Research:
These results suggest substantial underutilization of trusted channels for dissemination of safety and health information. Greater use of these channels may improve the health of agricultural populations.

Additional analyses examining differences in use and trust by gender and age are in progress and may provide important insight into channels of communication that may preferentially target selected demographic groups.