

A Brief History* of Pesticide Applicator Training and the Pesticide Safety Education Program

1964 — USDA provides \$1 million to fund a Pesticide Safety Program to enhance understanding of pesticide labels. The first training manuals are developed.

1966 — The USDA-funded Extension Pesticide Coordinator Program is implemented to inform extension personnel about safety and environmental issues and to develop educational materials for applicators, growers and homeowners.

1968 — A few states begin to establish licensing programs for several types of commercial and government applicators. Extension programs in those states launch training programs to prepare applicators for the new licensing examinations.

1970 — Pesticide regulatory responsibilities are transferred to the newly formed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), focused especially on environmental and applicator safety issues.

1972 — EPA is required by law to classify pesticides as restricted use or general use and, by 1976, to certify applicators who will apply or supervise the application of restricted use pesticides (RUPs).

1973 — A joint USDA/EPA “Project Safeguard” program provides \$2 million to educate farmers on the safe use of pesticides.

1974 — State-specific certification requirements begin, encompassing entire categories of use (e.g. aquatic uses, compensated persons).

1975 — The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) is reauthorized and amended to require EPA to use Extension to educate pesticide applicators. Section 23(c) of FIFRA states that the (EPA) Administrator shall, in cooperation with the Secretary of Agriculture, use State Extension Services to inform and educate pesticide users about accepted uses and other regulations made under this act.

1975 — EPA’s first grants for Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) are awarded to State Extension Services. A formula is developed for allocations to each state.

1978 — EPA classifies the first 12 restricted-use pesticides.

1980 — The concept of recertification is developed, to help applicators keep up with changing technology. Recertification requirements (frequency and type) are state-specific to this day.

1988 — Baseline (annual) funding is increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for each state's PAT program.

1993 — The American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators (AAPSE) is formed.

2002 — The name of the PAT program is changed to the Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP).

2007 — In addition to ongoing discretionary funding by EPA, a \$500,000 annual distribution is made by EPA to PSEP from Pesticide Registration and Improvement Act (PRIA) funds and is divided among the 50 states and some territories.

2011 — EPA eliminates all discretionary funding to PSEP, except for the PRIA distribution.

2012 — The National Stakeholder Team for Pesticide Safety Education Program Funding is formed to address the growing crisis in financial and other support for PSEP.

2013 — There are ~475,000 private and ~437,000 commercial certified applicators in the U.S. Of these, ~85,000 are newly certified and ~240,000 are recertified. PSEP impacts more than one million individuals in the general public.

2014 — The Pesticide Safety Education Program celebrates its 50th anniversary.

* Some dates are estimated.