

# MEDIA COVERAGE OF AGRICULTURAL, FORESTRY AND FISHING HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

Farming, by the very nature of the occupation, is riddled with uncertainty. The risks associated with the agriculture industry are just as diverse as the industry itself. For all risks, one challenge is the development and dissemination of safety communication materials tailored for diverse audiences. Researchers from the University of Florida recently conducted a study to describe the agricultural, forestry and fishing health and safety issues discussed in Florida news media during the year 2016. This study discussed the prominence of the following frames: conflict, human interest, responsibility and economic consequences.

In this study, researchers evaluated agricultural health and safety messages in the media by analyzing frames. A frame is the way in which media is presented with the goal of encouraging specific interpretations. The most prominent frame in this study was human interest, followed by responsibility, economic consequences and conflict. Frames are an important factor in shaping individuals' opinions on agriculturally based messages. This framing analysis provides agricultural communicators with a foundation on which to best position and frame their messaging

issues, pesticide exposure/safety, seafood/fishing safety, tractor safety and worker transportation/vehicle accidents.

## Human interest frame

Human interest was the most prominent frame in this study. The human interest frame is used to personalize a news story, potentially dramatizing or emotionalizing the issue. The articles in this study with a human interest frame often used an individual's story to convey an agricultural health/safety message. The human interest frame appeals to the emotions of the reader.

**“Dozens of farmworkers looked up at the little yellow plane buzzing over the Florida radish field, a mist of pesticide falling from its wings” (Dearen, 2016).**

## Responsibility frame

The second-most prevalent frame was the responsibility frame, which shapes understanding of who is responsible for causing or solving key problems (Valkenburg et al., 1999, p. 552). In this study, the responsibility frame appeared in similar

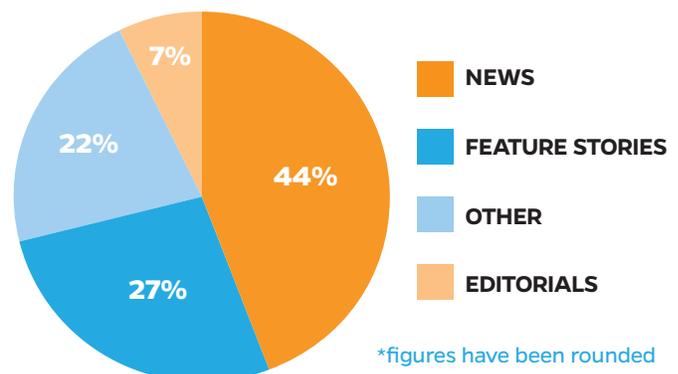


**97**  
ARTICLES WERE  
PUBLISHED IN  
FLORIDA IN 2016  
ON AGRICULTURAL  
HEALTH & SAFETY  
TOPICS.

A keyword search through the Access World News database produced 97 articles which were considered for this analysis. January, August and September were the months with the most prominent coverage of agricultural health and safety topics. November was the month with the lowest coverage. Of the 97 analyzed articles, 43 (44.33%) were classified as news, 26 (26.80%) were found to be feature stories, 21 (21.65%) were coded as “other,” and seven (7.22%) were editorials.

Topics found in the articles included agritourism/ U-pick accidents, ATV safety, child labor, drowning, farm accidents, forestry safety, heat or thermal exposure/stress, hunter safety, migrant worker

## AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES IN FLORIDA MEDIA OUTLETS



\*figures have been rounded

fashion, often projecting blame for a certain issue. Responsibility was placed on segments of the government, political institutions, organizations or individuals. In this study, the responsibility frame was prominent in news stories surrounding legislation, accidents and workers' issues.

**“Why negotiate with landowners when it’s really the large corporations that have the power as they buy enormous quantities of tomatoes for their grocery shelves...” (Solomon, 2016).**

### **Economic consequences frame**

The economic consequences frame presented agricultural health and safety issues through a monetary lens. The economic consequences tied to each issue were either actual or potential consequences. In this study, the articles with an economic consequences frame were tailored towards a certain demographic or geographical region. This frame can be used to make an issue more relevant to the audience, as it allows readers to understand the perceived economic impact of certain issues.

**“The penny-a-pound premium can amount to as much as \$100 a week in a worker’s paycheck, lifting a farmworker’s annual salary from about \$10,000 to \$17,000 a year, advocates say” (Solomon, 2016).**

### **Conflict frame**

The least prominent frame in this study was the conflict frame. The conflict frame was characterized by conflict between stakeholders of agricultural health/safety issues. The conflict frame is increasingly prominent during election cycles, as winning or losing becomes the central focus of the issue. Characteristics of this frame include competitive language and a central theme of a winner and loser.

**“Benitez recalled how his supervisor drove a pickup closer to confront him.... the boss wanted to show who was in control, and it was not the teen.” (Solomon, 2016).**



**WAS THE MOST PROMINENT FRAME IN FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL HEALTH & SAFETY NEWS IN 2016.**

### **Conclusions and future research**

Understanding frames is important for agricultural communicators in order to tailor their message to best reach the audience.

The most prominent frame in this study was human interest. While human interest can be an effective method of framing, there are concerns regarding its effect on readers' ability to recall information. The prevalence of the human interest frame in agricultural news could create a potential obstacle regarding message retention.

It is recommended that further research be conducted to determine the most effective way for agricultural communicators to build relations with media institutions outside of the agriculture industry. Research should also be conducted to understand how individuals interpret and process the framing of agricultural health and safety news stories.

**The information in this issue guide was retrieved from the following journal article:**

Lundy, L. K., Rogers-Randolph, T. M., Lindsey, A. B., Hurdle, C., Ryan, H., Telg, R. W., & Irani, T. (2018). Analyzing media coverage of agricultural health and safety issues. *Journal of Applied Communications*, 102(4). doi: 10.4148/1051-0834.2222

---

#### **Additional sources:**

Dearen, J. (2016, February 3). Review reveals problems protecting workers from pesticides. Associated Press. Accessed online at <https://apnews.com>.

Solomon, L. K. (2016, January 3). Through years-long push, farmworkers persuade big food companies to sign on to human-rights movement. Sun Sentinel. Accessed online at <http://www.sunsentinel.com>.

Valkenburg, P. M., Semetko, H. A., & Vreese, C. H. (1999). The effects of news frames on readers' thoughts and recall. *Communication Research*, 26(5), 550-569. doi:10.1177/009365099026005002