

Increasing Performance,  
Safety, Quality of Life, and  
Longevity in the Workplace  
for Migrant/Seasonal and  
Other Ag Workers with  
Disabilities and Other  
Functional Limitations



Rosendo  
Ramirez:  
Ingenuity,  
perseverance,  
and AgrAbility  
help  
overcome  
amputation





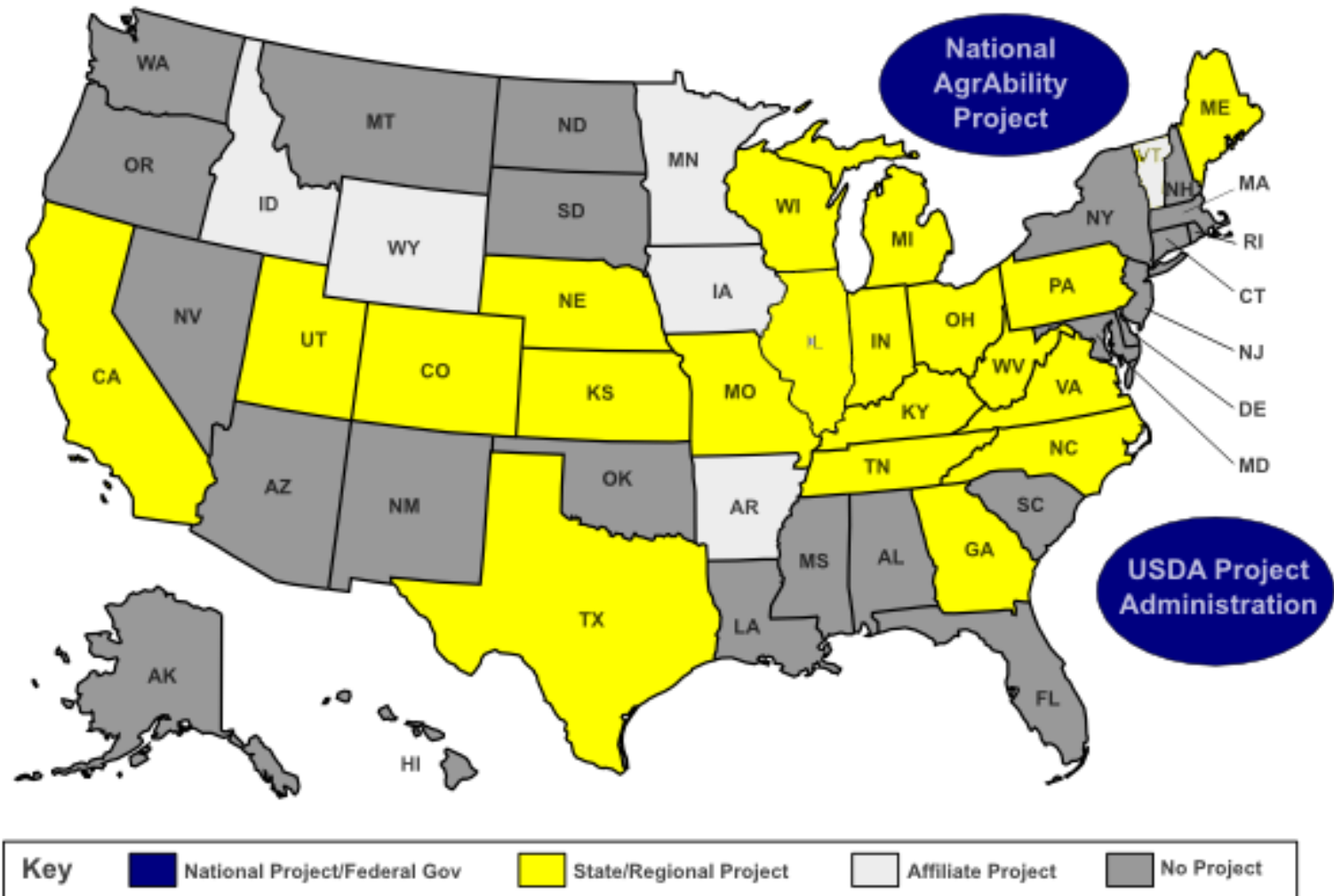
# Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

National AgrAbility Project  
Purdue University

# AgrAbility History

- AgrAbility began in 1991 as part of the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (now NIFA)
- In 1991, there were 8 funded state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPS); as of 2016, there are 20 SRAPs and several previously-funded affiliate projects
- One National AgrAbility Project (NAP) supports the SRAPs
- Competitive funding

# AgrAbility Projects 2016



# AgrAbility Partnerships

- All AgrAbility projects – state projects and the national project – are partnerships between a land-grant university and at least one disability-services program.

# Special Responsibilities of the NAP

- Provide support to the state and regional AgrAbility Projects
  - Training
  - Resources
  - Consultations with NAP specialists
- Provide limited services to customers in states without AgrAbility Projects



# AgrAbility Mission

The vision of AgrAbility is to enhance quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities.

Through education and assistance, AgrAbility helps to eliminate (or at least minimize) obstacles that block success in production agriculture or agriculture-related occupations.







# Whom Does AgrAbility Serve?

AgrAbility addresses a wide variety of disabling conditions in agriculture, including, but not limited to:

- Amputation
- Arthritis
- back impairment
- Deafness/hearing impairment
- Development disabilities, such as cerebral palsy or autism
- Visual impairments
- Disabling diseases, such as cancer or heart disease
- Mental/behavioral health problems
- Respiratory diseases
- Spinal cord injuries
- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury
- PTSD





# AgrAbility and Veterans

- AgrAbility has served veterans since its inception, but in the past, veteran status wasn't identified in many cases
- Primarily worked in past with veterans from Vietnam and Korea eras
- Currently, greater public support and focus on veterans issues
- Emerging programs for farmer veterans, like Farmer Veteran Coalition, are enabling veterans interested in agriculture



# Immigrant Veterans

- According to February 2008 data from the Department of Defense, more than 65,000 immigrants (noncitizens and naturalized citizens) were serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. This represents approximately 5% of all active-duty personnel.
- The top two countries of origin for foreign-born military personnel in the U.S. are the Philippines and Mexico. Nearly 11 percent of those serving in the armed forces are of Hispanic origin.

# Disability within the Agricultural Community

- Causes of disability
  - Traumatic injury (agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations). Many injuries also come from off-farm incidents.
  - Disease
  - Aging (Average age of U.S. farmers is 57+)
  - Mental/emotional trauma
- Prevalence of disability
  - Approximately 15-20% of farm population impacted by disability
  - 1.04 – 2.23 million of the U.S. farm, ranch, and agricultural community impacted by disability



# Depresión y la Diabetes



La depresión no solo afecta el cerebro y la conducta, afecta el cuerpo entero. La depresión se ha relacionado con otros problemas de salud, entre ellos, la diabetes. Lidar con más de un problema de salud a la vez puede ser difícil, de modo que es importante contar con el tratamiento adecuado.



# Disability within Your Regional Agricultural Community

- Michigan
  - 42,727 – 59,208
- Wisconsin
  - 52,193 – 72,325
- Indiana
  - 50,536 – 70,027
- Ohio
  - 55,801 – 77,324



# Changes in the Agricultural Workforce





# Four Strategies to Deal With a Decreasing Number of Ag Workers

- Satisfy
- Stretch
- Substitute
- Supplement

# Farmers with Disabilities Generally Have the Same Needs and Goals as All Farmers

- Access to capital
- Meaningful employment
- Desire to provide
- Financial security



# Barriers to Increased Independence of Persons with Disabilities within Agriculture

- Attitudes
- Public policy that sometimes fosters dependence rather than independence
- Lack of access to appropriate assistive technology
- Cost of assistive technology and needed modifications
- Potential for secondary injuries





# What Does AgrAbility Not Provide?

- Funding
  - Most funding for assistive technology comes through state vocational rehabilitation systems (VR services require documentation)
  - Other sources of grants and loans are available
- Equipment (though some Tech Act Project partners provide certain AT)

# AgrAbility Services/Priorities

- Education
  - Workshops; resource development; online education
- Networking
  - Leveraging efforts with other groups; peer support
- Direct Assistance
  - Site visits; consultations; business planning
- Marketing
  - Publics awareness activities and materials

## Juan Magaña S.

CalAgrAbility met Juan Magaña while doing outreach work with Migrant Education in the California Delta. Mr. Magaña is a migrant seasonal farm worker and has been a great client to work with from the very start. He was extremely proactive in reporting back to CalAgrAbility and ensured that we continued to follow up with him. Juan approached CalAgrAbility staff and jokingly stated that he “had everything,” referring to chronic illnesses.



Our staff worked to schedule a LensCrafters One Sight appointment for Juan so that he could have proper eyeglasses. During the appointment, the optometrist stated that Juan’s eyes showed signs of glaucoma, thus annual check-ups would be important and necessary. He was also referred to a specialist. After the appointment was completed, Juan received various reading materials about exercise, diabetes, and arthritis. These materials were aimed to help Juan understand the small changes he can make to his daily life to help him lower his high blood pressure, control his diabetes, and prevent future injuries.



# Educational Resources:

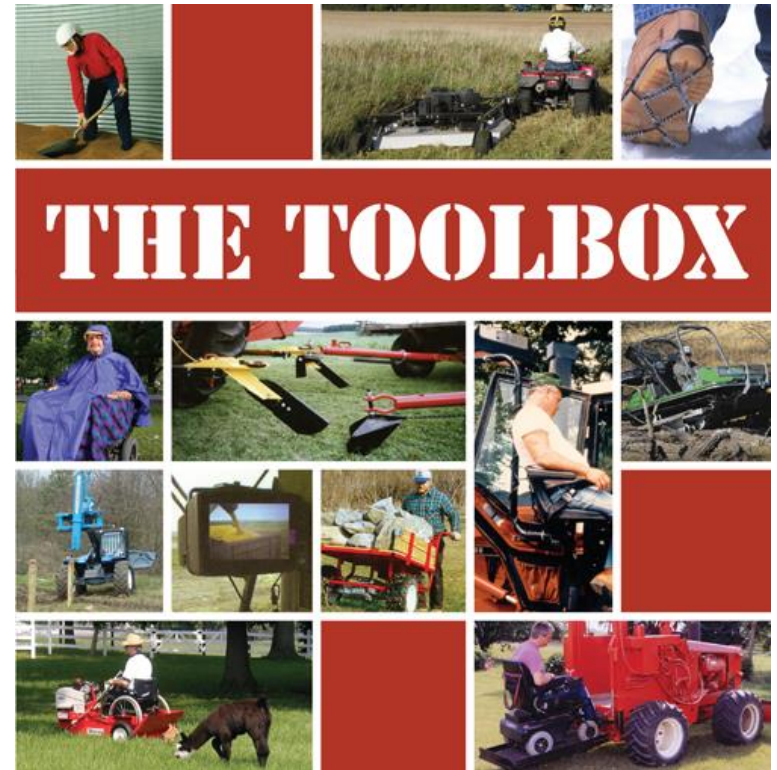
## [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org)

- Project information and contacts
- Downloadable resources
- Online training
- News and upcoming events



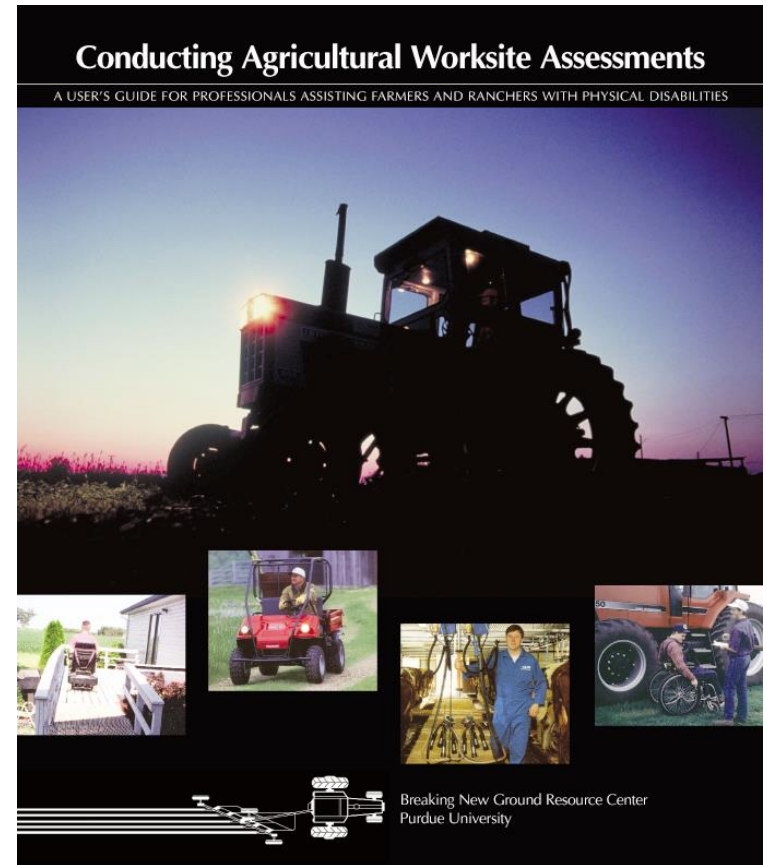
# The Toolbox Assistive Technology Database

- Print, CD, and web versions  
[www.agrability.org/Toolbox](http://www.agrability.org/Toolbox)
- More than 1200 products to help farmers and ranchers with disabilities



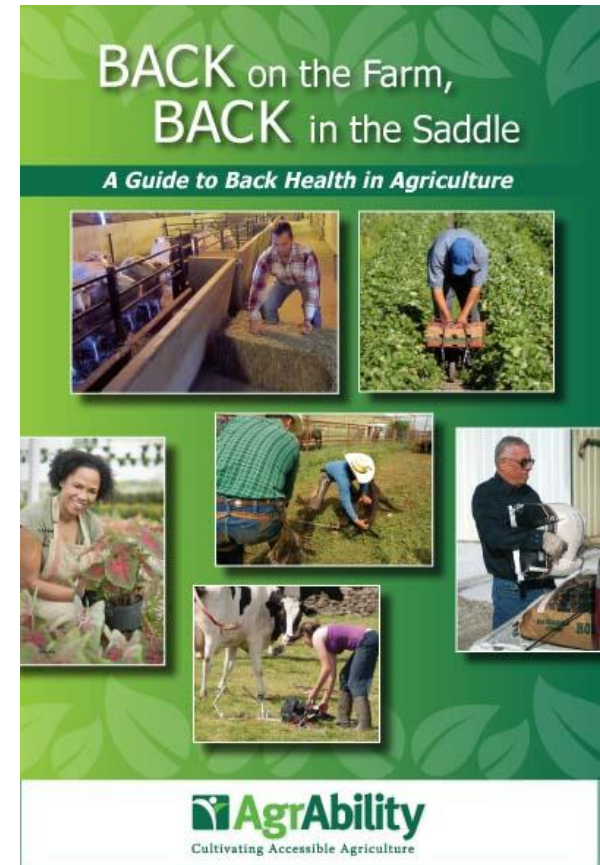
# Conducting Agricultural Worksite Assessments

- Step-by-step guide for evaluating farms and ranches
- Reproducible assessment form
- Electronic database for recording data and printing reports



# BACK on the Farm, BACK in the Saddle

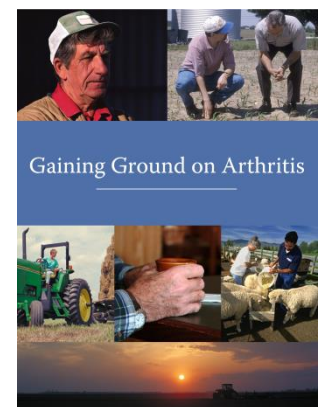
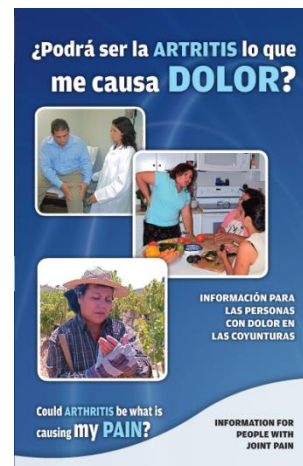
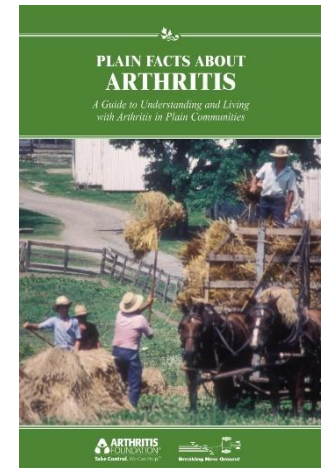
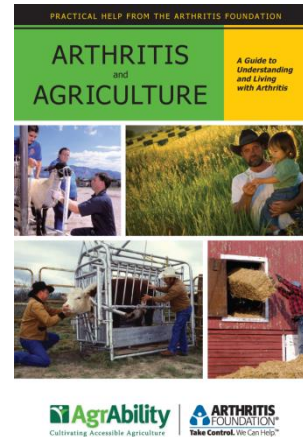
- Back problems = most common disabling conditions reported by AgrAbility clients.
- 21-page booklet discusses many aspects of back problems in ag settings
- [www.agrability.org/resources/back](http://www.agrability.org/resources/back)





# Arthritis Resources

- [www.arthritis-ag.org](http://www.arthritis-ag.org)
- Arthritis and Agriculture
- Plain Facts about Agriculture
- ¿Podrá ser la Artritis lo que me causa Dolor?  
(Could Arthritis be the cause of my Pain?)
- Gaining Ground on Arthritis DVD



# What can We Accomplish?

- AgrAbility services to migrants vary by state in type and intensity
- How can you assist people with functional limitations in agriculture?
  - With an AgrAbility Project in your state
  - Without an AgrAbility Project in your state
- What topics or resources could AgrAbility produce that would be most helpful to you in your work with migrant/seasonal workers? And in what format (Flipchart, fotonovela, etc.)?

- Would it be helpful to do trainings for the promotores about AgrAbility?
- Are there student engineering projects that could help migrants via better engineered tools?
- Dealing with farm OWNERS as opposed to the farm WORKERS when wanting to do training for the workers; helpful input to that process?



**1-800 825-4264**

**[www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org)**