



# Educated Employees Drive Proactive Safety

In a complex regulatory environment, ResponsibleAg helps California agribusinesses stay ahead of the curve

An old ladder and a brand-new tanker truck might not seem to have much in common. But for Danielle Dusina and Sam Robinson, those objects represent a profound change in thinking among employees at the agribusinesses for which they handle environmental, health and safety (EHS) compliance. In both situations, employees themselves were the first to address potential safety issues — and voice concerns.

"We had a ladder that didn't seem sturdy, and four or five people came up to me and said, 'Hey, we don't think this is safe. Let's toss it out and order a new one,'" says Dusina, regulatory coordinator for North Valley Ag in Chico, CA. That's just one example, she says, of how safety has improved since they went through a ResponsibleAg audit.

Three hours to the south in Oakdale, CA, a similar scene occurred at Mid Valley Agricultural Services Inc., a full-service chemical and fertilizer retailer. Before setting up a new tanker truck, shop employees called Robinson, their safety compliance officer, to discuss safety considerations.

"A few years ago, I don't think anybody would have called me about setting up a new truck," Robinson admits. "Now, there are a lot more conversations about how that process unfolds and

more collaboration among our locations. They're sharing knowledge instead of just working in their own bubbles."

Such safety improvements are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg for these agribusinesses. While North Valley has a single location and Mid Valley has seven, both are finding untold value through participating in ResponsibleAg. Launched in 2014, the industry-led initiative is committed to helping agribusinesses ensure compliance with EHS and security regulations to keep employees, customers and communities safe. The initiative offers a systematic approach to facility evaluation, recommendations for improvements and a comprehensive collection of resources members can turn to for information and education.



**SAM ROBINSON**  
Safety Compliance Officer, Mid Valley Agricultural Services



**DANIELLE DUSINA**  
Regulatory Coordinator, North Valley Ag Services

## Two months, four audits, lasting results

Soon after ResponsibleAg began assessing agribusinesses in 2015, Robinson recalls Mid Valley's CEO asking if he planned to sign up the company.

"What do you say when the boss asks if you're going to do something?" Robinson says with a chuckle. "You say, 'Of course!'"

When it came time for audits at Mid Valley facilities, Robinson, a military veteran, devised a plan



Ensuring safety signage is in place and correct was a major component of the ResponsibleAg assessment, Mid Valley's Robinson says. "I never realized how many elevated walkways we had," he says. "Truth of it is, I didn't have a full understanding of how those were defined."



Participation in ResponsibleAg has heightened safety awareness among employees. Shop employees consulted Sam Robinson, MVAS's safety compliance officer, before setting up this brand-new tanker truck.

for efficiency and scheduled four facility audits over the course of two months.

"Our idea was that once one facility was audited and we received the auditor's feedback and corrective action plan, we'd share that with the other locations that hadn't been audited yet," he explains. "Usually, when you get a list of your deficiencies, you don't want to share it with anybody. But that's how we learn. We use the certification process to help improve safety even before the auditor got to the next location."

**"We share findings among all locations and use the certification process to help improve safety even before the auditor gets to the next location."**

— Sam Robinson

Those four facilities received ResponsibleAg certification by early 2019. A fifth location was audited later that year and is currently addressing issues on its corrective action plan. Robinson expects that facility to be certified this summer.

## Educating single-location employees

Dusina's experience was similar at North Valley, a single-location ag supply cooperative. After the co-op's president suggested they participate in ResponsibleAg, Dusina put the wheels in motion.

"I've been in this position for about four years now, so ResponsibleAg was a great

compliance and where regulators might look for errors," she says.

North Valley went through the auditing process in summer 2019 and received certification that August.

"Overall, it was educational for our employees," Dusina adds. "Everyone saw what we've had to go through, so now they know what to look for."

## Complying with California directives

The Golden State's stringent regulatory environment requires additional documentation for agribusinesses like North Valley and Mid Valley. Fortunately, ResponsibleAg created a California-specific assessment list in 2018. Robinson participated in the working group that helped develop the checklist.

"Regardless of whether it was a state-specific or federal regulation, the ResponsibleAg auditor left us more in compliance," he says of Mid Valley's audits.

Both Robinson and Dusina believe the time and capital their agribusinesses invest in the ResponsibleAg certification program are quickly returned in terms of a safer workplace.

"You'll never know the cost of the accident that didn't happen," Robinson says. "Start the ResponsibleAg certification process as soon as you can. You're going to help protect your workers, your business and your community."

To learn more about ResponsibleAg, visit [www.ResponsibleAg.com](http://www.ResponsibleAg.com) or call 270.683.6777.

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## MISSION

ResponsibleAg is an industry-led initiative **committed** to helping agribusinesses properly store and handle farm input supplies. The program helps members ensure they are **compliant** with environmental, health, safety and security regulations to keep employees, customers and our communities **safe**.



Agriculture is exceptionally diverse in California's Central Valley. Retailers provide crop protection and nutrition products to growers whose crops range from wine grapes like these to walnuts, almonds, cherries, apples and tomatoes.