

# New agriculture health & safety initiative

## what does it mean to you?

### ALAN PLOM, Head of Safety Section, Agriculture & Food Sector explains

DID you realise that on average, nearly one person is killed each week on a farm and the industry has a fatal incident rate about three times higher than in construction\*?

*(Incidence rates are based on the number of people working in each industry rather than the number of deaths each year.)*

HSE's new 'Agriculture Revisited' initiative aims to drive down the very high number of fatalities and major injuries in the farming industry.

New methods are being tried to raise awareness and reduce the risk of accidents. You may have seen the various adverts in *Farmers Weekly* or even have received one of the 'Promise Knots' used to promote the 'Make The Promise - Come Home Safe' campaign earlier in the year? This campaign is based on direct marketing to farmers and their families and following the successful response, is being followed by the next phase, 'Keep the Promise'.

As part of IAgRE's support for this important initiative the new IAgRE Student Safety Award was announced in the last issue of *Landwards*. This Award has been established to encourage innovation and demonstration of good practice in safe design or operation of equipment by students, as part of their project work. Colleges are encouraged to identify and nominate suitable individuals, through the IAgRE Awards nominations.

HSE also introduced an award for safe design of machinery as part of the RASE Medals scheme. This was pre-

sented to Case IH for innovative design features incorporated in the Axial Flow combine.

In presenting the Award to Charles Blessley (Case IH Marketing Director) at the Royal Show, in my role as HSE's Head of Safety for the Agriculture Sector, I pointed out that many serious and fatal injuries are occur during maintenance and clearing blockages in agricultural machines and manufacturers can significantly reduce the risks by designing out hazards.

I was particularly pleased to present the Award on behalf of HSE as it was 30 years ago to the day that I joined HSE as an Agricultural Inspector. It was also ironic that one of the first serious accidents I investigated involved a farmer who lost his arm when he was clearing a blockage in a combine and his son started the machine, not knowing his father was still working on it.

THE Axial Flow's 'Power Plus' transmission has significantly reduced the number of mechanical drive systems and the inherent risk that they create from both routine and in-field maintenance operations and many users cited the benefits of simpler and lower daily maintenance requirements.

The manufacturer has also provided an engineering solution to the problem of clearing blockages in the threshing mechanism. By utilising the hydraulic component of the transmission to the main rotor, the operator is able to 'de-slug' the machine from the cab should a blockage occur, thus



Alan Plom with Case IH's Charles Blessley, together with Mrs Adel MacNicol, RASE President - taken at the RASE Awards ceremony during the Royal Show

removing the risks that can arise from having to gain physical access and clear material manually.

HSE is also working closely with the AEA, BAGMA and others to reduce risks and influence farmers through the 'Equipment Supply Chain'. This includes updating and developing guidance for designers, suppliers and users, and will be made freely available via the web. (This might offer a development opportunity for someone?)

HSE are also working with colleges to improve the content of the syllabus and training courses, and ultimately, the competence of new entrants to the industry, in all areas. IAgRE is liaising with HSE to see if the new 'H&S Management' VQs could fit within the structure of the LTA scheme.

These VQ were originally developed for farming and have been accredited at Levels 2, 3 and 4, so cover the range from new entrant/student, through supervisors to senior

managers. Alan sees these qualifications as enabling a wide range of land-based companies to demonstrate competence (to assess and manage risks) at all levels within their organisation.

They will also help to raise awareness of key hazards and risks avoidance and promote good practice amongst engineers and technicians. This will in turn help them to protect themselves when working on site as well as enable them to alert farmers to safer practices.

HSE and the various organisations are also looking for more effective ways to promote 'safe machine/safe operator' messages, eg through new exhibits and displays at shows and other events (eg dealer open days).

If you would like further information on this initiative, or would like to discuss any other H&S issue, please contact

Alan Plom at [alan.plom@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:alan.plom@hse.gsi.gov.uk)