



Evaluation of HSE's farm self assessment software

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The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is currently developing an Internet based self-assessment tool for farmers (known as 'eform'). The project started in April 2002 and two of the major project milestones for 2003 - 2004 are (i) to pilot the developed eform and (ii) to perform a subsequent evaluation of the pilot. The eform has already been piloted on the Internet by a selected group of participants and this report describes the process used to evaluate the usability of eforms by collecting feedback from the participants of the eform pilot.

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Executive Summary

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is developing an Internet based self assessment tool for farmers (known as "eform"). The project was started in April 2002, with two major milestones in mind before it goes live online: (i) to pilot the developed tool and (ii) to evaluate the pilot with regard to the following objectives.

1. To measure whether the software was usable (downloading, completion and submission)? This will help to identify:
 - Whether they completed it and if not, why not?
 - If they did complete it, why did they not submit?
2. To establish whether the eform has met its primary objective in raising awareness and improving Health and Safety on farms.
3. To establish whether farmers found the eform a useful tool for managing health and safety on their farm and whether they would continue to use it.
4. To obtain any suggestions from the farmer for improving the eform question set or process.
5. To obtain enough information from the farmer to make a decision whether the pilot was a success and should be implemented nationally.

Following completion of the pilot eforms by a selected group of farmers, a questionnaire was developed to collect feedback from the farmers who had taken part in the pilot study to determine whether the eforms had met the objectives listed above. There were two main groups of participants involved in the eform pilot study. The first group, identified by the HSE, were provided with an incentive to complete the eforms in the guise of exemption from their annual health and safety inspections. The second group were made up of interested parties that had been identified through the Farmer's Weekly Interactive (FWI) website.

The questionnaires to evaluate the usability of the eforms were distributed mainly by post and a small proportion by email, according to the preferred method of the participants. As is the case with most questionnaire studies, the return rates were lower than was hoped so return rates were boosted by two reminders, initially by email and then by telephone. In total, the questionnaires were sent to 222 participants, with timely returns from 65 participants (and 2 returns that were too late to be incorporated into the analysis), giving a response rate of 29.3%. This disappointing return rate can be attributed to a number of possible factors, including a lack of time available to farmers and the timing of the survey itself in relation to work commitments.

Analysis of the results revealed a range of opinions and comments regarding the usability of the eforms. In essence the pilot eforms can be considered a success in that they were accepted by most of the respondents as a good idea and potentially useful tool. However, a number of specific issues were raised which, if addressed, would further enhance their usefulness and acceptability. In terms of the five objectives that were set:

1. Downloading the software did seem to have a few issues, which could be addressed by reviewing the technical requirements. The main issues associated with completion were the length of the forms. Most respondents who tried to submit were affected by technical problems and poor feedback to indicate whether submission was successful or not.
2. The eforms do seem to raise awareness of health and safety on farms in terms of new issues, viewing existing issues from a different perspective and increasing employee awareness.
3. Farmers did find the eforms a useful tool in assessing the health and safety around their farm, but again did
4. A small number of improvements were suggested for the forms, which reflected some of the comments received with regard to the other objectives (e.g. making the eforms available in other formats and increasing the number of farming activities covered by the forms).
5. The eform pilot study could be considered a success in that the farmers in general accepted that the concept was a good idea and an improvement on the current inspection process, but that the success of its wider implementation would depend on addressing the recommendations that were raised in this study.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is currently developing an Internet based self-assessment tool for farmers (known as 'eform'). The project started in April 2002 and two of the major project milestones for 2003 - 2004 are (i) to pilot the developed eform and (ii) to perform a subsequent evaluation of the pilot. The eform has already been piloted on the Internet by a selected group of participants and this report describes the process used to evaluate the usability of eforms by collecting feedback from the participants of the eform pilot.

1.2 Objectives

In order to establish various aspects of eform usability, several objectives were set to ensure that the evaluation results could be used to improve the usability of the eform. Thus, in accordance with the proposal (Ref 1) and discussions during the kick-off meeting, the following list of evaluation objectives was drawn up.

1. To measure whether the software was usable (downloading, completion and submission)? This will help to identify:
 - Whether they completed it and if not, why not?
 - If they did complete it, why did they not submit?
2. To establish whether the eform has met its primary objective in raising awareness and improving Health and Safety on farms.
3. To establish whether farmers found the eform a useful tool for managing health and safety on their farm and whether they would continue to use it.
4. To obtain any suggestions from the farmer for improving the eform question set or process.
5. To obtain enough information from the farmer to make a decision whether the pilot was a success and should be implemented nationally.

A questionnaire was devised to collect feedback from the eform pilot participants in order to satisfy these objectives. The response from the questionnaires is presented in Section 3 and discussed in terms of the objectives.

1.3 Scope

The scope of the assessment was limited to the evaluation of eform usability and the impact that this may have on completion and submission. Due to the nature of the eforms (a lengthy and interactive survey to be downloaded, completed and submitted via the Internet), there is significant opportunity to conduct a highly detailed usability assessment, but this was beyond the scope of the project. The questionnaire was distributed by post and / or email, as required and reminders were administered by email and telephone. There were two main respondent groups: (i) those who had been motivated to complete the pilot eform by the HSE under the promise of exemption from an inspection, and (ii) those that were already interested in the survey and participated via the FWI (Farmer's Weekly Interactive) Website. However, this distinction was not taken into consideration with regard to its effect on the completion and submission rates due to the low return rates.

1.3.1 Limitations

The main limitation to the usability assessment of the eforms was related to project timescale revisions because the pilot trial of the eform was running later than scheduled. As the eforms could not be evaluated until the pilot study was complete, the evaluation could not be started until March 2004. Due to the delayed start, farmers' workload may have had an impact on the number of returns. The questionnaire was distributed later than intended, by which time the weather was good and farmers were conducting a lot of their work outside, with less time for completion of surveys.

Although questionnaires conducted over the telephone tend to provide a higher yield, this questionnaire was distributed by post and email because there was such a high number of participants, for which telephone interviewing was considered impractical. In order to address the problem of limited returns, post-questionnaire reminder emails and telephone calls were made.

2 Methodology

2.1 Planning

At the start of the project a kick-off meeting was undertaken to verify the scope and methodology provided in the proposal (Ref 1). The meeting was conducted between appropriate representatives from the HSE and an HF specialist. A list of the participants from the eform pilot study was provided by the HSE, which later used as the mailing list for distribution of the questionnaire. In accordance with the proposal (Ref 1), it was agreed that evaluation of the eform usability would be conducted by questionnaire and that the main method of distribution would be postal, using email as an alternative route. The list of objectives from the proposal was also finalised (see Section 1.2), such that five objectives were selected from the original list of eight objectives in the proposal (Ref 1) as the remaining three were more suited to the role of the HSE.

2.2 Questionnaire Development

The starting point for the development of the eform usability evaluation questionnaire was to ensure satisfaction of the HSE's principles of good practice for survey development, distribution and analysis, as this encompasses many of the generic guidance principles for questionnaire development, distribution and analysis.

2.2.1 Literature

The generic guidance from the HSE good practice guidelines were combined with the guidance from several key human factors textbooks, including: "A Guide to Task Analysis" (Ref 2), "Evaluation of Human Work" (Ref 3) and "Evaluating Usability of Human Computer Interfaces" (Ref 4). A list of generic principles was drawn from these to be used as guidance in the development, distribution and analysis of the survey, as follows:

Preparation

- Satisfy the evaluation objectives.
- Consult the previous surveys conducted on the eforms.
- Determine an appropriate method of statistical analysis.
- Identify the target population – already carried out by the HSE
- Provide a point of contact for respondents who may require assistance.
- Provide clear instructions for completion of the questionnaire.
- Between a half and third of the time on the work should be spent on the development of the questionnaire.

Questions

- Use familiar words in short simple sentences.
- Avoid the use of negatives.
- Avoid technical language and acronyms.
- Cater for as many types of response as possible.
- Avoid sensitive issues because anonymity was not assured because names of the returned responses were necessary to conduct reminder phone calls.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Multiple choice questions are easy to analyse, but must provide valid options so there should be an awareness of all the possible options.
- Minimise open ended questions, which can generate varied, but useful responses. but require significant interpretation and analysis.
- Closed questions can prevent tangential issues from materialising.
- Motivate the respondent by indicating why their feedback is necessary.
- Ensure the respondent has the knowledge to respond.
- Take limitations and personal stance of respondent into account.

The questionnaire developed for this study, was intended to establish whether the eforms facilitated effective self assessment of health and safety levels. Thus, each of the 5 objectives (see Section 1.2) were targeted by specifically devised questions.

2.2.2 Analysis

In addition to the technical objective to assess the usability of the eforms as easily as possible for the respondents, the questionnaire was also designed with ease of analysis in mind. Therefore the questions were mainly closed: either yes / no response or multiple choice response which they are easy and quick to answer and which they lend themselves well to analysis. Only one open-ended question was included because, although they can yield extensive qualitative data, they can take a long time to answer, which can be off-putting to the respondent. However, it was considered important to allow the respondents a forum by which to provide additional feedback if they felt that they had issues with eform usability that had not been covered by the closed questions. The closed question responses were subject to descriptive statistics to illustrate the central tendency and distribution of the responses. The distribution of responses to each question was also discussed in relation to the objectives of the study. The responses to the open-ended question were subject to content analysis, which promoted systematic consideration of the varied qualitative responses.

2.3 Questionnaire Distribution

A pilot study was conducted in order to determine the suitability of the questionnaire to evaluate the usability of the eforms. A standard letter and questionnaire were distributed by email to ten of the respondents who had only provided an email address and by post to ten of the remaining respondents at random. The pilot group were asked to respond within two weeks, which was considered a sufficient period of time. The responses from the pilot suggested that a few minor changes were necessary before the questionnaire was distributed to the full list of respondents, as follows.

- Include some space for the respondent to provide their name (to identify who had returned for follow-up emails and phone calls).
- Re-phrase some of the questions to reduce ambiguity.
- Remove surplus questions (for example, was the feedback to your answers clear and quick; how helpful did you find the benchmark guidance for completion of the self assessment).
- Re-sequence of the questions to ensure clear grouping and a logical flow.

After these amendments were incorporated into the questionnaire, it was distributed to the remaining respondents on the list provided by the HSE. A copy of the final questionnaire is located in Appendix A.

The pilot was also conducted to identify the most appropriate method of questionnaire distribution with regard to convenience for the respondents, with a view to maximising the return rate. On the contact list provided by the HSE, most respondents had several means of contact (i.e. email address, postal address and telephone number), but some only had one means of contact, which limited the method of questionnaire distribution (e.g. no postal address provided). Thus the pilot study endeavoured to determine whether email or postal distribution received a better response rate and speed. The return rate for the pilot survey distributed by email and post were both poor, with only two responses (of a possible ten) for each method of distribution. The only difference in the return of the email and postal questionnaires was the speed of return: unexpectedly the postal surveys were returned before the email surveys. The speedier return of the postal surveys may be due to the presence of a hard copy in the home of the farmer, thus prompting a response that an email which is out of sight would not (unless they log on, which may only happen infrequently). This suggested that postal distribution would be the preferred means of distribution. A twenty percent return rate was not an encouraging start before the distribution of the questionnaire to the remaining respondents.

As a result of the pilot study, the questionnaire was distributed to the remaining respondents by post, where possible and where no postal address was provided, the remainder was distributed by email. Thus the questionnaire was distributed in the following proportions:

- Pilot (email) = 10
- Pilot (post) = 10

- Actual (email) = 21
- Actual (post) = 177

2.4 Collation of Returns

Just over half of the returned questionnaires were received within the two-week period specified, with the remainder arriving after the due date. Some returns were received after prompting, firstly by email and then by telephone call. The success of the re-prompts were limited by what are suspected to be the same reasons for the initially low response rate: i.e. general lack of respondent's time; the time of year (busy for outdoor work) and the good weather (also encouraging outdoor work). Thus during the reminders, many of the farmers who were contacted by telephone were not available.

2.5 Analysis

The responses were entered into a specifically devised database as they were received to promote systematic analysis of the results. This facilitated consideration of each question in relation to the specific objective to which it applied. Thus, the questions applicable to each objective could be considered on those groups. Descriptive statistics and a qualitative discussion of the findings for each question were undertaken and a summary of the questions relating to each objective indicated whether these had been satisfied.

3 Results

3.1 Return Rate

The total number of responses received in time to be included in the analysis of the results was 65 out of a possible 218, giving a return rate of 29.8%.. This is slightly below the minimum acceptable return rate of 30%. Although significant efforts were made to increase the response rate, these were met with limited success which was not sufficient to overcome the priority of completing outdoor work on a farm while the good weather lasts. Despite the poor rate of return, the quality of the responses was high and provided significant insight into the usability of the eforms.

3.2 Quantitative Analysis

The results from the questionnaire are presented below and grouped according to their related objective. The quantitative results for each question are presented and discussed individually. A summary of the findings is provided for each objective along with any associated recommendations for eform improvements.

The quantitative analysis includes:

- Percentage of responses to each question to show general trend of opinion (including an indication of non-responses).
- The mode, representing the most frequent response to each question.
- The range, representing the difference between the most frequent and least frequent score.

The quantitative analysis affords the reader the ability to examine the spread of responses and describes the trends reflecting the opinion towards the key issues associated with downloading, completing and submitting the eforms.

3.2.1 Was the software usable (downloading, completion and submission)?

The following questions were used to determine the usability of the eform software with respect to *downloading*.

1.1 Did you download the self assessment software (tick box)?

HSE response rate = 63

Yes	72.3%
No	24.6%
No response	3.1%

72.3% of HSE respondents did at least try to download the software. This could be interpreted as a reflection of the importance with which the management of health and safety on farms is generally considered (Q 4.2). 3.1% of the HSE respondents did not respond even although this was the first question in the survey. It is not clear why this occurred because, as the first question, it would be unlikely that they failed to notice it and it only requires a simple yes / no response.

FWI response rate = 13

Yes	30.8%
No	69.2%
No response	0%

The proportion of FWI respondents who downloaded the software was less than half of the HSE group. A possible reason for this could be the persuasion offered to the HSE respondents to use the eforms that was not offered to this group.

1.2 How did you find downloading and installing the self assessment software?

Group	No problems	A few problems	Challenging	Difficult	Impossible
HSE	74%	12%	4%	4%	6%
FWI	57.1%	0%	0%	0%	42.8%

HSE response rate = 50

Following on from question 1.1, a response rate of 47 was expected, however 50 people responded. Therefore, 3 people completed question 1.2 when they should have proceeded to question 1.4 because they did not indicate that they had downloaded the software in question 1.1. 74% of the respondents replied that downloading the eform software did not present any problems. 12% people experienced a few problems and 4% thought it was challenging. However, only 10% found it difficult or impossible to download the software. This response is encouraging and perhaps with decreased technical limitations, more respondents would find download relatively easy.

FWI response rate = 7

The findings for this group were more extreme, with 57% experiencing no problems and 42% finding it impossible to download, which may imply that the FWI group found downloading more challenging than the HSE group. One possible reason for this is the difference in motivation between the two groups, although this has not been proven. Question 1.4 indicates other possible reasons why respondents did not download the software.

1.3 Approximately how long did it take to download the software?

Group	< 5 minutes	5 – 15 minutes	15 minutes	15 – 30 minutes	> 30 minutes
HSE	15.9%	47.7%	9.1%	13.6%	13.6%
FWI	0%	75%	0%	0%	25%

HSE response rate = 44

Only 44 people (of an expected 47) responded to this question, therefore 3 people who responded that they had downloaded the eforms, did not complete this question (6 less than the previous question relating to download). The guidance provided by the HSE suggests that downloading the eform software from the Internet should take approximately 15 minutes. According to the respondents in this survey, 72% were able to download the software within this time frame. However, 28% indicated that it took them longer than the specified 15 minutes to download the eform software. It is possible that slower download was due to a mismatch between the technical requirements and the quality of telephone connections, PC specifications and user experience in performing any type of download operations.

FWI response rate = 4

75% of this group managed to download the eforms within the specified time, but 25% indicated that it took over 30 minutes. This limitation would have affected the ease with which they downloaded the eforms (see question 1.2). However it is difficult to say from these responses why the download times for the HSE group was more evenly distributed than the FWI group. It is possible that this is merely due to a random difference in the technology available to the members of the different groups.

1.4 Why did you not download the self assessment software?

Group	Download time discouraged me	I did not feel it was relevant to my work	Instructions were unclear	My PC met the minimum specification, but it would not download	My PC did not meet the minimum specification
HSE	33.3%	33.3%	0%	33.3%	0%
FWI	0%	22.2%	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%

HSE response rate = 6

From a possible pool of 16 respondents who indicated that they did not download the eforms (question 1.1), only 6 responded to this question. This may be because none of the response categories offered matched their reasons for not downloading. The three equally common reasons for not downloading were (i) discouraged by lengthy download time and (ii) not having the minimum PC specification and (iii) they did not feel the eforms were relevant to their work. The first two reasons are related to the usability of the eforms and the latter to the importance assigned to the management of health and safety. However, these were not considered to have a strong effect because most HSE respondents experienced no problems during downloading (see question 1.2).

FWI response rate = 9

Four reasons were cited by the FWI group for not downloading: (i) not relevant; (ii) unclear instructions; (iii) PC specification not met and (iv) PC specification met but would not work. Three of these were linked to the usability of the forms, hence the indication that 42% of this group found downloading impossible (see question 1.2), although the high download time was not cited as a limiting factor here. However both groups felt that the questionnaire was not relevant to their everyday work which is a reflection of user attitudes rather than the usability of the eforms themselves and this is an issue which falls outside the remit of this report.

Summary for Downloading

Twice as many HSE respondents downloaded the eforms as FWI respondents, which implies that the motivation of the individual to use the forms has a considerable effect and should be carefully considered in any future projects involving the eforms.

Although most HSE respondents found downloading relatively problem free, 42% of the FWI group found it impossible. It is possible that in the face of technical difficulties, voluntary respondents are more likely to give up than the HSE respondents who were given an incentive to download.

Recommendation 1: When the eforms are distributed on a national basis, careful consideration should be given to the varied motivation of the respondents and how this is likely to affect response rates.

Regardless of the distribution of downloading times, a notable percentage found that it took longer than the maximum specified time of 15 minutes.

Recommendation 2: As excessive download time is likely to be both off-putting and frustrating, it would be worth considering ways to decrease the download time

The main reasons cited for not downloading by the HSE and FWI websites included usability issues, but some of the HSE respondents also questioned the relevance to their work.

Recommendation 3: As usability seemed to be a key stumbling block in downloading the eforms, it would be advisable to lower the technical requirements of the respondents where at all possible.

The following questions were used to determine the usability of the eform software with respect to completion.

The number of responses to each question in section 2 varied from question to question, the reason for which is not known. For example, the number of respondents indicating that they had completed the eforms (32, question 2.1) is sometimes lower than the number of responses to questions about the experience of completing the eforms. A possible reason for this could be that the respondents started to use the eforms without completing all questions therefore they indicated how they found using the forms, but they could not say that they had completed the full survey.

2.1 Did you complete the self assessment?

HSE response rate = 65

Yes 44.6%
No 55.4%

Despite relatively few reported problems in downloading the eform software, less than half of the HSE respondents completed the eforms. It is possible therefore that there are usability issues specifically associated with completion.

FWI response rate = 5

Yes 40%
No 60%

The completion rate for the FWI respondents was very similar to that of the HSE group, with less than half of the group completing the forms. This emphasises the notion that there are specific usability issues associated with the completion of the forms. The following questions attempt to establish exactly what it is about the eforms that support or do not support completion.

2.2 If you did not complete the self assessment, why not?

Group	It was too long	I did not feel it was relevant to my work	I could not download it	Have not had time to complete it	I don't consider it as important
HSE	36.8%	5.26%	5.26%	52.6%	0%
FWI	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%

HSE response rate = 19

Only 19 HSE respondents provided reasons why they had not completed the self assessment forms, chiefly excessive survey length and lack of time for completion. These are closely associated and should therefore emphasise that regardless of how useful eforms may be, if they are not practical for

the users to apply, they will not be used. Some of the respondents also felt that the eforms were not relevant to their work, but this is not related to the usability of the eforms.

FWI response rate = 2

Responses to this question by the FWI were related to an inability to download or a lack of time to complete the forms. The reasons for not downloading are identified in question 1.4, but lack of time has been cited again as a major factor in non-completion.

Recommendation 4: It would be worthwhile providing summary versions of each section for farmers who cover many activities in order to minimise the time required for completion.

2.3 How easy was the software to use?

Group	Very easy	Relatively easy	Acceptable	Difficult	Impossible
HSE	41.5%	31.7%	26.8%	0%	0%
FWI	40%	40%	0%	20%	0%

HSE response rate = 41

With regard to perceived ease of use, none of the 41 people who responded to this question indicated that they found the eforms difficult or impossible to use; in fact all found them acceptable or better. This could suggest that the usability associated with completion of the forms was acceptable, apart from the time required (Q 2.2).

FWI response rate = 5

However, 20% of the FWI group did indicate that they found the software difficult to use. The reason why this was the case for the FWI group and not the HSE is not clear from this question, but may become clearer through analysis of the following responses.

2.4 Is it clear where and how information should be entered on the screen?

Group	Very clear	Clear	Satisfactory	Slightly confusing	Very confusing
HSE	23.1%	56.4%	15.4%	5.1%	0%
FWI	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 39

Only 5% of the respondents indicated that inputting data was less than clear, which may indicate that the layout of the eforms is clear and supports the user to complete the task.

FWI response rate = 4

All of the FWI respondents found that the input of information to the eforms was clear, which supports the inference that the layout of the forms was clear and supported information input.

2.5 How easy was it to keep your place in the self assessment?

Group	Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	I occasionally lost my place	I frequently lost my place
HSE	27.5%	42.5%	17.5%	10%	2.5%
FWI	50%	25%	0%	25%	0%

HSE response rate = 40

Approximately 88% of respondents felt that there were no significant problems or that keeping their place was relatively easy, which is another positive reflection on usability. This suggests that the hierarchical menu assisted the users to maintain a situation awareness of their “done” and “to do” lists.

FWI response rate = 4

25% of this group found that they occasionally lost their place whilst completing the eforms which was significantly more than the HSE group. As the layout of the questions and the indication of questions completed seemed clear, it is difficult to offer an explanation for this finding.

2.6 Were the questions easy to understand?

Group	Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	A bit confusing	Very confusing
HSE	22%	51.2%	14.6%	12.2%	0%
FWI	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 41

Most people who responded to this question indicated that they found the questions relatively easy to understand, and at least satisfactory or above (36). Only 12% indicated that they found some of the questions a bit confusing.

FWI response rate = 4

None of the FWI group indicated that found the questions difficult to understand, which is encouraging. However there were only a small number of respondents from this group.

2.7 Did you use the blank areas to provide information not requested by the questions?

Group	Frequently	A few times	Occasionally	Once	Never
HSE	8.1%	18.9%	35.1	2.7%	35.1%
FWI	0%	25%	50%	0%	25%

HSE response rate = 37

The fact that few people used the blank areas in the eforms suggests two possible reasons: (i) the questions covered most relevant issues and / or (ii) the survey was so long that nobody wanted to provide additional information and / or (iii) the use of the blank spaces is an expression of the individuality of each farming business. It is always good practice to provide the respondent with a flexible response option in the form of a blank space, whether they use it or not.

FWI response rate = 4

Overall, fewer people in the FWI group used the blank areas than in the HSE group. It is possible that this was for the same reasons suggested for the HSE group.

2.11 Was the feedback to your responses clear and timely?

Group	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Only occasionally	Never
HSE	4.2%	70.8%	25%	0%	0%
FWI	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 24

Very few responses were received for this question and it is thought that this is because the question was unclear and therefore respondents did not know how to answer it. However those responses received indicated that the feedback provided by the eforms was both clear and timely.

FWI response rate = 2

This group also showed a low response rate to this question, underlining the suggestion made above that the question itself was unclear. However those responses that were received indicated that the feedback provided by the eforms during completion was satisfactory.

Although the quality of the responses to this question were generally positive, this finding should be treated with caution because the number of responses was limited. Therefore it is not considered that the adequacy of feedback can be accurately commented upon here. However it could be interpreted from the fact that few respondents lost their place that the feedback to indicate when questions has been completed was satisfactory. Although the adequacy of feedback could be re-investigated, a negative response would not be anticipated.

2.12 Did the self assessment ask you to provide information which was not easily accessible?

Group	All the time	Frequently	Sometimes	A few times	Never
HSE	0%	10%	50%	22.5%	29.2%
FWI	0%	0%	50%	25%	25%

HSE response rate = 40

The over-riding attitude towards the type of information requested from the respondents by the eforms was that they did sometimes ask for information that could not always be readily accessed (24 responses of 40). One can imagine how, when the farmer has taken time out of a busy schedule to complete these forms, the requirement to find information which is not easily accessible would be off-putting. Thus, it is possible that this could be one of the reasons why some people did not complete and/or submit the eforms.

FWI response rate = 4

The response from the FWI group was slightly more positive as nobody felt that they were frequently asked for inaccessible information, but 50% of the respondents still indicated that they were sometimes asked for information that was not easy to access. As the eforms asked both groups to access the same information, the difference between the 2 groups may be a reflection of the variation in perception as to what is considered easy or difficult to access. This, in turn, may be a reflection of the motivation of the 2 groups; the FWI being motivated out of interest in the project rather than having to be persuaded to participate, therefore the latter considering that the task was more effortful overall.

2.13 Did you find it useful to print the self assessment?

Group	Very useful	Useful	Acceptable	Not very useful	Did not try to print
HSE	31.6%	28.9%	5.3%	2.6%	31.6%
FWI	25%	0%	0%	0%	75%

HSE response rate = 48

The perceived usefulness of the printing facility offered by eforms was mixed. It was suggested by HSE that the printing facility would assist users in completion, for example by taking the print-out round the farm to collect the necessary information. 61% of HSE respondents agreed with this so it is possible that this is a reflection of the need to collect information that is not readily to hand (Q 2.12). However 2.6% did not find the printing facility useful and 25% did not even try to print.

FWI response rate = 4

The FWI group responded very differently, in that the 75% of respondents did not even try to print. A number of possible explanations are suggested for this:

- The respondents may not have access to the necessary equipment for printing, so they did not even try.
- They felt as though they did not require a print out to assist in completion of the survey.
- The users may have experienced difficulty in accessing the facilities by which the eforms can be partially printed and as such may have found the idea of printing off-putting.

Perhaps because the HSE group have an incentive to complete the eforms, they were more inclined to use the print-out than FWI respondents. The FWI group on the other hand, were interested people who volunteered to take part but who may not have felt any need to complete the survey in detail and therefore did not need to print the forms.

Recommendation 5: Maintain the print facility, but perhaps make the flexible printing options more accessible and improve the help associated with these.

2.14 How helpful did you find the benchmark guidance for completion of the self assessment?

Group	Very helpful	Helpful	Helpful in places and confusing in places	Confusing	Very confusing
HSE	21.1%	50%	26.3%	2.6%	0%
FWI	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%

HSE response rate = 38

The guidance provided with regards to the benchmarks and what is required to meet them was reported by most respondents (97.4%) as being helpful. Only 2.6% indicated that they found the guidance confusing. This is an encouraging response and suggests that the guidance supports the user during eform completion.

FWI response rate = 4

Although most people in this group (75%) found the benchmark guidance helpful, more FWI respondents found it confusing (25%) than HSE respondents (2.6%). The reason for this difference is not immediately obvious, but it may be linked to the importance which they place on completion of the eforms. Perhaps the incentive given to the HSE group for completion had a mind-focusing effect which may have enhanced their perception of the benchmark guidance, but this was not present for the FWI group.

2.15 How useful were the help facilities for completion of the self assessment?

Group	Very useful	Useful	Acceptable	Not very useful	Did not use
HSE	7.7%	43.6%	25.6%	0%	23%
FWI	25%	25%	25%	0%	25%

HSE response rate = 39

23% of the respondents indicated that they did not try to use the help facilities, which could be interpreted as an indication that the general usability of the eforms was good and they did not require help. The people who did try to use the help facility generally indicated that it was at least acceptable (25.6%), if not useful (43.6%) or very useful (7.7%). Thus the majority of respondents felt that the help facilities were useful to some degree.

FWI response rate = 4

More FWI respondents considered the help facilities to be very useful than the HSE group. However, fewer categorised the help facilities as useful. Around the same percentage of each group categorised the help facilities as acceptable or not having been used.

Therefore all of the respondents found the help facilities to be at least acceptable, if not useful or very useful. This is an encouraging result which supports the continued inclusion of these help facilities in future applications of the eforms.

2.16 Did you have to order guidance in order to complete the questions (tick box)?

Yes 10.9%
No 89.1%

HSE response rate = 64

Most respondents did not order any guidance to help them to complete the eforms. This suggests that: (i) the farmers already had the information they required and / or (ii) because the respondents knew that this was a trial run of the eforms, they did not take it seriously enough to order the guidance and / or (iii) they felt that it was not important to use the guidance and / or (iv) they found it off-putting to have to order and wait for guidance.

Yes 100%
No 0%

FWI response rate = 4

The unanimously positive response to this question could have been an artefact of the low number of respondents. However, this does not negate the fact that they did actually order the guidance. The difference between the two groups here could be attributed to a reflection of the variation between different farming businesses, whereby the individual issues raised on each farm may or may not need this extra guidance.

The guidance documentation should remain available, especially if it is essential to complete some questions. However, if the farmers considered it off-putting to start the survey, but to be unable to complete unless they had ordered and waited for guidance, the availability of the guidance should perhaps be reconsidered.

Recommendation 6: If the necessary guidance could be immediately downloaded the farmers could complete the eforms in one sitting rather than having to make another slot available for completion.

2.17 How easy did you find ordering guidance?

Group	Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	Difficult	Impossible
HSE	36.4%	27.3%	27.3%	0%	9.1%
FWI	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 11

Although only 6 people indicated that they ordered guidance, 11 people responded to this question about their experiences of using the forms. Although not proven, this could be an indication that 11 people tried to use the guidance, but only 6 were successful. However of the respondents to this question, only 9.1% reported any problems in doing so. The remainder found the experience free from difficulty. This suggests that if the respondents had decided that they would have to order the guidance, the method by which this was achieved was less of an issue than having to wait for it to arrive before the eforms could be completed.

FWI response rate = 1

Only 1 out of the 4 people who ordered guidance responded to this question. The positive rating of the ease with which guidance could be ordered provides encouraging feedback about the facility. Although this underlines the finding from the HSE group, it was the opinion of one user.

2.18 How easy was it to identify **and** prioritise the actions required to satisfy the benchmarks?

Group	Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	Difficult	Impossible
HSE	2.8%	41.7%	47.2%	8.3%	0%
FWI	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%

HSE response rate = 36

Most of the respondents found the identification and prioritisation of the proposed actions to satisfy the benchmarks relatively easy (41.7%) or as presenting no significant problems (42.7%). This suggests that the guidance provided by the eforms on this matter is considered to be satisfactory. Only 8.3% of the group reported difficulties here.

FWI response rate = 4

75% of the FWI group experienced no significant problems during prioritisation of the corrective actions, but 25% of the FWI group had difficulty in prioritising their proposed actions. It is considered here that the 25% difficulty rating is due to the small number of respondents in this group.

Despite initial reservations by the analyst that this might be an area where users would show significant difficulty, the respondents have shown that, overall, the identification and prioritisation of corrective actions to meet HSE requirements did not present any significant problems.

Summary

A large proportion of the questionnaire was aimed at assessing the usability of eform completion, for which the overall response was positive. A few problems were revealed which may indicate why some respondents may not have completed the eforms (over half of the respondents). From the analysis above, possible reasons identified for the non-completion of eforms are as follows:

- Lack of respondent time.
- The length of the eforms.
- Requesting information that was difficult to access.

Although other explanations may exist for non-completion, these are the only reasons that can be gleaned from the questionnaire because most responses about usability were positive. However, few people indicated their opinion about the feedback provided by the eforms. It is likely that this was due to poor phraseology in the questionnaire, but leaves the question of whether the eforms provided adequate feedback or not, open. Those who did respond to this question, however, did provide positive feedback.

Due to the length of the eforms, it was expected that most users would find the printing facility useful, but only around half of the respondents agreed. Perhaps the users had difficulty in accessing the facility which allowed them to print off individual questions or the full set without the benchmarks. Although there is help available on these flexible printing options, this may require some improvements. Some of the users may even have had limited access to printing facilities.

Most respondents found the eforms easy to use because it was clear where to input data; keeping place in the survey was easy and the questions were easy to understand. In fact, few respondents indicated that they used the blank areas, which suggests that the eforms asked questions which allowed people to enter all of their key health and safety issues or that they felt that the eform had already taken long enough to complete.

The generic help facility was used by a limited number of people (which is a positive reflection on the eforms), and those who did indicated that they found it to be useful. From the small proportion of

respondents who ordered benchmark guidance, most people considered it to be useful and easy to order. Perhaps because the respondents were aware that this was a pilot study, they did not feel that it was essential to order benchmark guidance.

Despite the analyst’s prediction that people would find it difficult to identify and prioritise corrective actions to meet benchmarks that they had not satisfied, most respondents indicated that they found this easy to achieve.

The following questions were used to determine the usability of the eform software with respect to *submission*.

3.1 Did you submit the completed form to the HSE?

Yes 15.9%
 No 84.1%

HSE response rate = 63

Although none of the respondents in this group were expected to have successfully submitted, 15.9% of respondents indicated that they did submit the eforms. Although the higher than expected, the submission rate was low. This could be due to issues associated with the submission process itself (e.g. problems with connections) or completion of the eforms. Some respondents indicated that they did not complete the eforms due to a lack of time and therefore may not have felt it appropriate to submit incomplete information (furthermore the eform software should not allow the submission of incomplete forms). Thus it may not have been clear to the respondents that they should not attempt to submit incomplete eforms. As the main purpose of this section was to identify the key reasons for non-submission, other possible explanations for the high rate of non-submission are discussed in Q 3.2 and Q3.3.

Yes 0%
 No 100%

FWI response rate = 4

The same pattern was reported for the FWI respondents as for the HSE group, but at a unanimous level of 100% non-submission. This may be explained by the same possible reasons as for the HSE group but in addition, the FWI group were completing the forms from their own motivation and so may not have felt the need to submit the forms. Furthermore, the effect within this group was exaggerated by the small number of respondents.

Compared to the rate of completion, the rate of submission was notably lower. Initially this suggests that the submission process caused some difficulties. However, this effect could be a combination of (i) people who had completed the eforms, but were unable to submit due to difficulties with the submission process; (ii) people who did not manage to complete the eforms and so felt that they should not submit them or (iii) people who completed but chose not to submit/decided they did not want to send information to HSE.

3.2 How easy was it to submit the information to the HSE?

Group	Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	Difficult	Impossible
HSE	23%	23%	7.7%	7.7%	38.5%
FWI	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 13

Although 10 people indicated that they submitted the eforms (Q 3.1), 13 people responded to this question which was only supposed to be answered by those who had tried to submit the eforms. It is possible that the 3 people who did not submit, but responded to this question, wanted to indicate that they attempted to submit but experienced difficulty during the process. However, almost 40% of the

respondents indicated that they found it impossible to submit and another 7% experienced some difficulty. Around 53% experienced no significant problems whilst submitting the forms.

FWI response rate = 0

As all of the respondents to question 3.1 indicated that they did not submit the eforms therefore this question is not applicable.

3.3 Why did you not submit the self assessment?

Group	I have not yet completed it	I tried to submit without success	I did not realise I was supposed to submit	I forgot	I did not want to supply the information to HSE
HSE	33.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	25%
FWI	50%%	0%	0%	0%	50%

HSE response rate = 12

From the 53 respondents who indicated that they did not submit the self assessment form, only 12 responded to this question. This is probably due to an error in the questionnaire which directed the respondents on to the next section, therefore omitting Q 3.3. However, of those who did respond, 3 possible reasons were identified for non-submission: (i) they had not completed the questionnaire; (ii) they tried to submit without success, (iii) they did not want to supply the information to the HSE. 41% of the unsuccessful submission attempts relate to the usability of the submission process. However, this could also be explained by a lack of user experience and / or limited PC specification or poor telephone connections (common to rural areas).

FWI response rate = 2

From the 4 respondents who did not submit the eforms, only 2 people indicated why: 1 respondent did not want to supply information to the HSE and the other had not completed the eforms. This underlined the reasons selected by the HSE group, but the small number of respondents exaggerated the quantity of the responses.

Summary

Despite the positive response regarding downloading and completion of the eforms, a relatively small proportion of people indicated that they had submitted the eforms. Some users indicated that this may have been due to eform usability, i.e. that they tried to submit but without success. However, this could also be attributed to user experience and technical limitations. The other reason given for non-submission was due to non-completion of the eforms for which several reasons were offered (Q 2.2). Of those who did submit, there was an even split between those who found it easy and those who found it difficult, which could also relate to the process itself and the technical limitations.

Downloading / Completion / Submission

Although most respondents found few difficulties in downloading, the two factors that may be off-putting and which should be addressed are excessive download time and excessive technical requirements. Completion also received a relatively good response, with a few issues: (i) request for difficult to access information should be minimised, (ii) improve access to and help for the more flexible printing options, (iii) provide high level shorter versions for those farmers short of time or who have a lot of different farming activities (otherwise their eform would be lengthy). Apart from this, most of the aspects associated with completion of the eforms were received very positively. The submission rate was poor (as expected) and is thought to be attributed to (i) non-completion of forms (for the reasons stated), (ii) unwillingness to submit health and safety information and difficulties with the submission process. It would appear, therefore, that a low submission rate during the eform pilot study can be attributed to any one or a combination of the following:

- Lengthy download times and excessive technical requirements (PC spec too high and limited by telephone line quality).
- Lengthy eforms and lack of time leading to non-completion, therefore non-submission.
- Unwillingness to submit information to HSE.
- Problems submitting information, although it is not clear whether this was due to technical or usability difficulties.

3.2.2 Objective: To establish whether the eform has met its primary objective in raising awareness and improving Health and Safety on farms.

The following questions were used to determine whether the eforms have raised awareness of and improved health and safety on the farms where they were piloted.

4.3 Did the self assessment help you to identify and assess health and safety issues on your farm that you were unaware of?

Group	A large number	A significant number	Some	A few	None
HSE	2.6%	2.6%	58.9%	25.6%	10.3%
FWI	25%	0%	50%	25%	0%

HSE response rate = 39

A notable proportion of respondents in the HSE group (approximately 64%) indicated that the eforms raised their awareness about some health and safety issues. However, 10% of the HSE group indicated that they had not learned anything new about health and safety issues from the eforms. Despite some issues with the usability of the forms, most HSE respondents felt that the eforms had been of assistance in raising awareness of health and safety.

FWI response rate = 4

All of the FWI respondents indicated that they learned something about health and safety from the eforms, compared to 90% of the HSE respondents. This is possibly due to the difference between the 2 groups regarding their reasons for completing the forms: the HSE were offered a reward for completion and the FWI did it out of interest in the project.

The results for both groups suggest that the eforms have been a useful tool in the assessment of health and safety levels on their farms, which is their ultimate objective.

4.4 Does the self assessment provide you with better awareness of health and safety than the inspector assessments?

Group	I prefer self assessment	Self assessment is slightly better	They are equally effective	Inspections are slightly better	I prefer inspections
HSE	15%	42.5%	32.5%	5%	5%
FWI	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 40

90% of the HSE group agreed with the suggestion that the using the eforms provided farmers with an improved awareness of health and safety than on-site inspections.

FWI response rate = 4

100% of the FWI respondents indicated that they agreed with this statement, which supports the opinion of the HSE group.

Perhaps the eforms encourage greater ownership of health and safety issues through interactive assessment.

4.5 Have you taken any action as a result of completing the self assessment?

Group	A large number	A significant number	Some	A few	None
HSE	0%	17.6%	55.9%	2.35%	2.9%
FWI	25%	0%	25%	0%	50%

HSE response rate = 34

73% of the HSE group responses indicated that the increased information about and awareness of health and safety executive provided by the eforms has resulted in actions being taken to address some of the issues identified. None of the respondents took a large number of actions which may be indicative that they are responding to safety issues in terms of urgency/priority on an everyday basis rather than a perceived need to conform to the benchmarks on the eforms.

FWI response rate = 4

Only 50% of the FWI group indicated that they had taken actions as a result of the information from the eforms. This is much lower than the HSE group, but the FWI respondents were only completing the forms out of an interest in the project and so would not feel any need to take actions in response.

It is a positive reflection of the eforms that even as a pilot study, they appear to have prompted actions from most of the HSE group and around half of the FWI group.

Summary

The responses permit a guarded suggestion that the eforms raise awareness of health and safety issues and are more popular with the respondents than the current system of inspections. Furthermore, some of the respondents have tackled health and safety issues highlighted by the eforms which, given that this was a pilot study is an encouraging outcome. The key difference noted between the response groups was that FWI farmers were less likely to take any action, which is possibly due to their voluntary status.

3.2.3 Establish whether farmers found the eform a useful tool for managing health and safety on their farm and whether they would continue to use it.

The following questions were used to determine whether the eforms were useful for the management of health and safety and therefore its continued use.

2.8 Did you think that the range of questions covered your main farming activities (e.g. livestock, cereals, etc)?

Group	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Only a few	None of them
HSE	25%	55%	10%	7.5%	2.5%
FWI	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 40

The majority of HSE respondents (90%) felt that the eforms covered at least some, most or all of their key farming activities. Only 10% felt that the eforms did not cover their key farming activities. Some of the areas which were not covered are highlighted in Section 3.3.

FWI response rate = 4

All of the FWI respondents indicated that they though most, if not all, of their farming activities were covered by the eforms.

2.9 Do you think the number of questions was appropriate to help you manage the health and safety on your farm?

Group	Too many questions	Some questions could have been removed	Number of questions was just right	Some questions could have been added	Too few questions
HSE	17.9%	20.5%	46.2%	12.8%	2.6%
FWI	50%	25%	0%	25%	0%

HSE response rate = 39

The number of question applicable to each farm varies depending on the type and range of activities carried out there. For farms which cover a large range of activities, there is a potentially large number of applicable questions, but this also allows smaller farms to cut out extraneous questions. About 38% of the HSE group felt that there were too many questions in the eforms and that some of them were unnecessary for effective health and safety management. 46% felt that the number of questions was suitable for the management of health and safety. A very small number of people felt that there were not enough questions to manage health and safety.

HSE response rate = 4

Nobody in the FWI group thought that the number of questions was appropriate to manage health and safety. 75% of the FWI group indicated that there were too many questions in the eforms, while 25% thought that there were not enough questions.

2.10 How relevant did you think the questions were to everyday health and safety issues?

Group	All questions relevant	Most questions relevant	Some questions relevant.	A few questions relevant	No questions relevant
HSE	7.5%	77.5%	12.5%	2.5%	0%
FWI	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 40

The majority of HSE respondents (97.5%) indicated that some, most or all questions were relevant to everyday health and safety issues.

FWI response rate = 4

All of the FWI respondents

Thus it is considered unlikely that there was a perceived lack of relevance to health and safety that would adversely affect completion and submission rates.

4.1 How useful did you find the self assessment tool as a means of assessing health and safety on your farm?

Group	Very useful	Useful	Acceptable	Not very useful	Did not use
HSE	29.2%	51.2%	9.8%	4.9%	4.9%
FWI	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 41

Most people in the HSE group (around 90%) indicated that they found the eforms a useful means of assessing the health and safety on their farms. Only 10% of the HSE group respondents considered that the eforms were not very useful or did not use them.

FWI response rate = 4

All of the FWI respondents to this question indicated that they thought the eforms were at least acceptable, if not (very) useful in the assessment of health and safety on farms.

This suggests that the ease of use of the forms would not have an adverse effect on the completion or submission rates.

4.6 Would you continue to use the self assessment software?

Group	Definitely	Likely	Probably	Not likely	Never again
HSE	23.1%	33.3%	33.3%	7.7%	2.6%
FWI	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%

HSE response rate = 39

Approximately 10% of the HSE respondents, who were persuaded to participate in the pilot, thought that they would not use the eforms again, which means that about 90% would consider using the eforms again. Given that they were persuaded to take part in the pilot, this is an encouraging response.

FWI response rate = 4

All FWI respondents to this question indicated that they would probably use the eforms again. This was not surprising as this group participated in the pilot out of interest and were therefore enthusiastic about the eforms before they even used them.

The general level of enthusiasm for continued use of the eforms is good, which is possibly because it is convenient to pick up the eforms at a time that is suitable to them. This supports the findings of Q 4.4, where the respondents indicated that in general, they would prefer to use the eforms than have a pre-arranged HSE inspection.

4.7 Would you recommend the self assessment to other farmers?

Group	Definitely	Likely	Probably	Not likely	Never
HSE	30.1%	20.5%	33.3%	12.8%	2.5%
FWI	25%	0%	25%	50%	0%

HSE response rate = 39

The HSE responses to this question indicated that approximately 63% of the HSE group would recommend the eforms to other farmers to assist with the assessment and management of health and safety.

FWI Response rate = 4

Unexpectedly, 50% of the FWI group said that they would not recommend the eforms to other farmers. Given the general positive reaction to the eforms by the FWI respondents, this result was not expected. It is possible therefore that this result is exaggerated due to the relatively small number of respondents.

Summary

The responses analysed in this section suggest that, on the whole, the number and subject matter of the eform questions was applicable to the assessment and management of health and safety associated with most farming activities of the pilot group. Thus, the eforms were generally considered to be a potentially useful tool in the assessment and management of health and safety on farms and on this basis a significant number of respondents indicated that they would use the eforms again and recommend them to others.

3.2.4 Obtain any suggestions from the farmer for improving the eform question set or process.

It is difficult to determine potential improvements to the eforms using a closed question survey for which the results could be quantified without (i) leading the respondent and (ii) omitting key improvements from which to select. Therefore the user recommendations for improvements to the eforms were captured in Q5, which was an open ended question. The findings from this question are discussed in Section 3.3.

3.2.5 Obtain enough information from the farmer to make a decision whether the pilot was a success and should be implemented nationally.

The findings from the closed questions were largely positive in that the farmers were generally receptive to the concept of the eforms. However, the survey did bring a few issues to light that may be used to improve the eforms. It is considered that if the usability issues raised are adequately addressed, the eforms could be applied to a wider group of respondents. The usability issues identified suggest that the limited submission of completed eforms cannot be attributed to problems with one particular aspect (i.e. downloading, completion or submission) of the process. On the basis of the findings here, it is considered possible that eform completion and submission rates are affected by a combination of issues associated with downloading, completion and submission. The following section discusses the qualitative responses received from the respondents.

3.3 Qualitative Analysis

Question 5, the open question, facilitated the collection of a range of information from the respondents because it gave them the freedom to discuss issues that the closed questions did not tackle. Only those respondents who felt strongly enough about certain issues responded to this question, however the responses that were received are categorised according to the objectives of the survey. The full listing of qualitative responses is provided in Appendix B and is discussed in relation to the applicable objectives below.

3.3.1 Objective: To establish whether the eform has met its primary objective in raising awareness and improving Health and Safety on farms.

Some of the farmers commented that using the eforms alerted them to the existence of some health and safety issues on their farms of which they had been previously unaware. One person also commented that it encouraged them to consider certain issues, of which they were already aware, in a different manner. On one farm, the farmer used the eform to highlight the importance of health and safety to their employees and found that it encouraged them to take ownership of the issues.

The attempt to cover such a wide range of farming activities, increases the potential of the eforms to increase awareness of health and safety on farms. Although the overall response rate to the survey, by the HSE and FWI groups was poor, the qualitative responses suggest that they did improve awareness of health and safety on farms.

However, the qualitative responses did not provide any indication as to whether this increased awareness translated into improved health and safety on the pilot farms. While the eforms appear to highlight a number of health and safety issues that can affect a range of activities conducted on

different types of farm, on the basis of a comment received from one farmer, they don't clearly indicate what is actually required of farmers to comply with health and safety legislation.

Recommendation 7: It would be advisable to increase the clarity of the guidance notes regarding (i) whether meeting the benchmark is necessary to meet the legislation, and (ii) what constitutes ALARP and whether this meets the benchmark / legislation.

3.3.2 Objective: To establish whether farmers found the eforms a useful tool for managing health and safety on their farm and whether they would continue to use it.

In terms of the usefulness of the eforms for the assessment and management of health and safety on farms, there were 9 positive and 4 negative responses. Although one farmer commented that completion of the eforms required a significant amount of time and effort, they did seem to think that it was worthwhile because the eforms were useful to health and safety on farms. Furthermore several farmers indicated that (i) the eforms were very effective and helpful, (ii) it provided a useful structure to follow in assessing the various hazards on the farm, (iii) they would recommend the eforms to other farmers and (iv) they could see it becoming an essential tool in agriculture. Several people even commented on the fact that the eform would be a useful checklist in conducting assessments in order to determine whether they are going to be able to meet the requirements of the various inspections to which farmers are currently subjected, but that the latter are probably still essential in order to encourage farmers and staff to take time to consider safety issues.

Smaller businesses indicated that the lengthy content of the eforms, provided in order to cover as many farming activities as possible, meant that the eforms were perhaps less applicable to them because only a small number of questions actually applied to them. This comment was made even though the eforms already allowed the farmer to select only those questions that applied to those activities conducted on their farm.

Recommendation 8: Consider the identification of those issues which are common to smaller farms and offer shorter sections in addition to the selection of additional questions.

Several comments were received from soft fruit growers, who considered that the eforms were not particularly applicable to health and safety in their business. However this seems to be a significant farming which is worthwhile assessing.

Recommendation 9: Consideration should be given to the identification of the health and safety issues associated with soft fruit growing in order to provide a relevant section in the eforms for this specialist area of farming.

The health and safety issues associated with the interface between contractors and farmers is not addressed in the eforms; one contractor commented that not many of the questions were relevant to their role on the farm. For example, the eforms do not clearly indicate who is responsible for the maintenance and safety of contractor machinery which is owned by the contractor, but is being used on the farm. As increasing numbers of farmers now use contractors (and their machinery, rather than buying their own), this is an important issue.

Recommendation 10: It would be advisable to investigate the health and safety issues associated with the farmer-contractor interface for inclusion in the eforms, as many farms now operate on this basis.

3.3.3 Objective: To measure whether the software was usable (downloading, completion and submission)

Downloading

Several issues were raised with regard to the problems experienced during downloading of the eforms, including:

- it takes too long to download;
- limited computer capabilities affect the success of downloading;
- downloading was a bit daunting for those who prefer to avoid using computers;

- downloading success was a little inconsistent as it worked sometimes, but not others with no obvious pattern;
- not everyone has unlimited access to a suitable PC;
- unsuitable versions of software on PC that did not support the downloading process.

As the comment above demonstrate, there are several reasons why downloading could be unsuccessful. Therefore it may be worth considering an alternative mode of access to the eforms for those farmers who do not have easy access from the Internet.

Recommendation 11: It would be beneficial to devise an alternative means of accessing the eforms, such as a telephone ordering system, CD-rom or hard copies.

Completion

Several comments were received regarding the completion of the eform software, including a mixed report that using the eforms was relatively easy, but probably only for those with sufficient computer-literacy. Another person indicated that they like the concept of the eforms and found them easy to use. However, a couple of people thought that the eforms were complicated and tedious, so completing them on the computer was quite difficult, so they suggested that it would be useful to have a choice between completing the forms online or by paper and post. This would also address the issue that was raised about smaller farms perhaps not having access to a PC with a suitable specification for downloading the eforms and the problems that some people reported with printing the eforms. There was also a comment that the survey has too many questions and as a result takes far too long to complete (even though the farmers can select only those questions applicable to their farming activities). With limited time and high workloads, the time to complete the eforms could have had a significant impact on completion rates. As a result, some respondents predicted that they would use the eforms as a useful reference or checklist, but not to complete and submit information to the HSE.

Recommendation: See recommendation 11.

Submission

The third main category of usability issues were associated with the submission of the completed eform, namely:

- some people received no feedback to indicate whether their submission had been successful or not;
- other people received ambiguous feedback to indicate that submission had not been successful and the feedback provided did not help to correct the problem;
- some of the problems encountered with submission were related to having the inappropriate version of software on the PC;
- It was not always clear to those who had not completed the eforms that the software would not allow them to submit.

Recommendation 12: It would be worthwhile reconsidering the presentation of feedback for submission to indicate when it has been successful and when it has not (and why and how to solve the problem, e.g. “you have the wrong software version - install version X” or “you have not completed the eform”).

Recommendation 13: It would be useful to provide a telephone support line where farmers could speak directly to HSE staff for downloading, completion or submission assistance.

3.3.4 Objective: To obtain any suggestions from the farmer for improving the eform question set or process.

The first comment on eform improvement is related to increasing the flexibility of the format, to increase access for those farmers who do not have high specification PCs and who do not have very good quality internet access, through the provision of a CD-rom or paper and postal approach. This does seem to be a very helpful suggestion, but the practicalities may not be in keeping with the concept of putting the eforms on the Internet in the first place. For example, the completed eform would still have to be emailed or printed off and posted back to the HSE, which may still prove to be problematic where there are technological limitations.

The second main suggestion was that the eforms should actually increase the potential number of categories, which would also increase its applicability to different types of farming activities and therefore the potential subject pool. While this seems feasible because the users can select only those farming activities that apply to their business, it would still add to the length of the eforms, possibly increasing the download and submission times further and increasing the required spec of the PC.

Recommendation: See recommendations 8 and 9.

One respondent indicated that the guidance regarding legal requirements and how these can be met is not clear. Furthermore, when the eforms advised that they contact the relevant specialist for advice, they received mixed and confusing responses.

Recommendation 14: The HSE should consider the provision of guidance about legal requirements, perhaps on the HSE website, to be referred to as required.

In relation to the flexibility of the eforms, one respondent commented that it would be useful to be able to print out specified sections rather than the whole eform, which is very lengthy and therefore expensive, wasteful and time consuming.

See recommendation 5.

3.3.5 Objective: To obtain enough information from the farmer to make a decision whether the pilot was a success and should be implemented nationally.

From the qualitative feedback obtained regarding the eforms, it seems that most people approve of the concept, and that the ownership and responsibility involved in their completion would enhance farmer's knowledge and management of health and safety issues. However, respondents predicted that the eforms would also add to farmer's already high (paper) workload and it actually repeats some of the issues being covered by paperwork from other organisations.

Recommendation 15: To minimise farmer workload it is advised that the HSE ensure that the eforms interface well with paperwork from other organisations.

The eforms are likely to be successful if the comments of the respondents are taken on board within a practical context, i.e. by implementing only those improvements which do not compromise existing positive features of the eforms. Otherwise, it is likely that the significant number of issues that have been raised against the eforms would continue to lower the potential return rates.

3.3.6 Summary

In summary the results suggest that the eforms could increase farmer's awareness of health and safety in three ways:

- (a) by highlighting some new health and safety issues;
- (b) by encouraging consideration of existing from a different perspective;
- (c) by increasing employee awareness and ownership of issues.

In terms of their usefulness for the day to day management of health and safety issues, mixed comments were received, suggesting that although the eforms were generally perceived as being useful, there were a few specific problems which, if addressed, would transform the eforms into a really useful tool for agricultural health and safety. Although most respondents experienced little difficulty in downloading the eforms, those who did found that the problems were technical, such as the excessive time required or PC and software limitations. Completion was generally well received with a few comments referring to the fact that the eforms were lengthy and therefore time consuming to complete. Submission did not receive a very positive response in that the feedback about success of submission provided was limited and did not give any assistance regarding rectification. The main suggestions for improvement of the eforms are related to increasing the flexibility of the format, so that those without adequate technical capability could also use the system and to increase the number of farming activities covered to widen its applicability across agriculture. Most respondents agree that the eforms are a good idea in principle and that the basic structure is good, but feel that to maximise their potential, then the comments and issues raised in this usability assessment should be addressed. A word of caution should be applied to further development and application of the eforms.

While the eforms are potentially a very useful tool, they are effectively another addition to farmers' paperwork and perhaps the interface and overlap with paperwork requirements from other organisations should be considered.

4 Conclusions

Analysis of the results revealed a range of opinions and comments regarding the usability of the eforms. In essence the pilot eforms can be considered a success in that they were accepted by most of the respondents as a good idea and potentially useful tool. However, a number of specific issues were raised which, if addressed, would further enhance their usefulness and acceptability. In terms of the five objectives that were set, the following inferences have been made from the responses received.

1. **To measure whether the software was usable (downloading, completion and submission)? This will help to identify:**
 - **Whether they completed it and if not, why not?**
 - **If they did complete it, why did they not submit?**

Downloading the software did seem to have a few issues, which could be addressed by reviewing the technical requirements. The main issues associated with completion were the length of the forms. Submission was hampered for most people by technical problems and poor feedback to indicate whether they had been successful or not.

2. **To establish whether the eform has met its primary objective in raising awareness and improving Health and Safety on farms.**

The eforms do seem to raise awareness of health and safety on farms in terms of identifying new issues, viewing existing issues from a different perspective and increasing employee awareness.

3. **To establish whether farmers found the eform a useful tool for managing health and safety on their farm and whether they would continue to use it.**

Farmers did find the eforms a useful tool in assessing the health and safety around their farm, but the findings suggest that they would use it again if some of the key issues raised were addressed.

4. **To obtain any suggestions from the farmer for improving the eform question set or process.**

A small number of improvements were suggested for the forms, which reflected some of the comments received with regard to the other objectives (e.g. making the eforms available in other formats and increasing the number of farming activities covered by the forms).

5. **To obtain enough information from the farmer to make a decision whether the pilot was a success and should be implemented nationally.**

The eform pilot study could be considered a success in that the farmers in general accepted that the concept was a good idea and an improvement on the current inspection process, but that the success of its wider implementation would depend on addressing the recommendations that were raised in this study.

4.1 Summary of Recommendations

Success of the wider implementation of the eforms will depend on how the issues raised by this report and the associated recommendations (summarised below) are addressed.

Recommendation 1: When the eforms are distributed on a national basis, careful consideration should be given to the varied motivation of the respondents and how this is likely to affect response rates.

Recommendation 2: As excessive download time is likely to be both off-putting and frustrating, it would be worth considering ways to decrease the download time

Recommendation 3: As usability seemed to be a key stumbling block in downloading the eforms, it would be advisable to lower the technical requirements of the respondents where at all possible.

Recommendation 4: It would be worthwhile providing summary versions of each section for farmers who cover many activities in order to minimise the time required for completion.

Recommendation 5: Maintain the print facility, but perhaps make the flexible printing options more accessible and improve the help associated with these.

Recommendation 6: If the necessary guidance could be immediately downloaded the farmers could complete the eforms in one sitting rather than having to make another slot available for completion.

Recommendation 7: It would be advisable to increase the clarity of the guidance notes regarding (i) whether meeting the benchmark is necessary to meet the legislation, and (ii) what constitutes ALARP and whether this meets the benchmark / legislation.

Recommendation 8: Consider the identification of those issues which are common to smaller farms and offer shorter sections in addition to the selection of additional questions.

Recommendation 9: Consideration should be given to the identification of the health and safety issues associated with soft fruit growing in order to provide a relevant section in the eforms for this specialist area of farming.

Recommendation 10: It would be advisable to investigate the health and safety issues associated with the farmer-contractor interface for inclusion in the eforms, as many farms now operate on this basis.

Recommendation 11: It would be beneficial to devise an alternative means of accessing the eforms, such as a telephone ordering system, CD-rom or hard copies.

Recommendation 12: It would be worthwhile reconsidering the presentation of feedback for submission to indicate when it has been successful and when it has not (and why and how to solve the problem, e.g. you have the wrong software version - install version X).

Recommendation 13: It would be useful to provide a telephone support line where farmers could speak directly to HSE staff for downloading, completion or submission assistance.

Recommendation 14: The HSE should consider the provision of guidance about legal requirements, perhaps on the HSE website, to be referred to as required.

Recommendation 15: To minimise farmer workload it is advised that the HSE ensure that the eforms interface well with paperwork from other organisations.

5 References

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Appendices

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Appendix A	Eform Evaluation Letter and Questionnaire
Appendix B	Qualitative Responses

Appendix A

Eform Letter and Evaluation Questionnaire

Appendix A Eform Letter and Evaluation Questionnaire

SA/SMS/12431001
HSE Self Assessment Software

XXXX
XXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

4th May 2004

Dear XXXXXXXX

RE: Health and Safety Executive Agricultural Self Assessment Software

You recently provided your details on the HSE website prior to downloading a self assessment software package which has been developed and piloted by HSE. The webpage mentioned that we would like to gain views of farmers who either took part in the pilot or downloaded the software as part of an evaluation exercise. The evaluation will enable HSE to make a decision whether the pilot was a success and to release the software nationally.

With this in mind, I have developed a short questionnaire on behalf of the HSE, which is enclosed with this letter. Your feedback is essential to identify any issues which you experienced and to maximise the benefits that can be gained from the self assessment tool.

Kind regards

Joyce Lindsay
Human Factors Consultant

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETION

If you still have the software installed on your PC, we recommend that you open it and have a print-out to hand to assist in completion of this questionnaire. It may also be worthwhile taking a few minutes to recall particular issues that you identified while completing the self assessment before you complete this questionnaire. If you have difficulty completing the questionnaire, please contact me on any of the following:

Email: Joyce.Lindsay@sercoassurance.com
Tel: 01925 254 128
Fax: 01925 254 437

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it using the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Name: _____

Section1 – Accessing and Downloading the Self assessment Software

1.1 Did you download the self assessment software (tick box)?

Yes No

If yes go to question 1.2. If no, go to question 1.4.

1.2 How did you find downloading and installing the self assessment software?

No problems	A few problems	Challenging	Difficult	Impossible

2.19 Approximately how long did it take to download the software?

< 5 minutes	5 – 15 minutes	15 minutes	15 – 30 minutes	> 30 minutes

2.20 Why did you not download the self assessment software?

Download time discouraged me	I did not feel it was relevant to my work	Instructions were unclear	My PC met the minimum specification, but it would not download	My PC did not meet the minimum specification

If you did not download the software, you have now completed the questionnaire.

Section 2 – Completing the Self Assessment

2.1 Did you complete the self assessment?

Yes No

If yes go to question 2.3. If not, go to question 2.2.

2.21 If you did not complete the self assessment, why not?

It was too long	I did not feel it was relevant to my work	I could not download it	Have not had time to complete it	I don't consider it as important

2.22 How easy was the software to use?

Very easy	Relatively easy	Acceptable	Difficult	Impossible

2.23 Is it clear where and how information should be entered on the screen?

Very clear	Clear	Satisfactory	Slightly confusing	Very confusing

2.24 How easy was it to keep your place in the self assessment?

Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	I occasionally lost my place	I frequently lost my place

2.25 Were the questions easy to understand?

Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	A bit confusing	Very confusing

2.26 Did you think that the range of questions covered your main farming activities (e.g. livestock, cereals, etc)?

All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Only a few	None of them

2.27 Do you think the number of questions was appropriate to help you manage the health and safety on your farm?

Too many questions	Some questions could have been removed	Number of questions was just right	Some questions could have been added	Too few questions

2.28 How relevant did you think the questions were to everyday health and safety issues?

All questions relevant	Most questions relevant	Some questions relevant.	A few questions relevant	No questions relevant

2.29 Did you use the blank areas to provide information not requested by the questions?

Frequently	A few times	Occasionally	Once	Never

2.30 Was the feedback to your responses clear and timely?

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Only occasionally	Never

2.31 Did the self assessment ask you to provide information which was not easily accessible?

All the time	Frequently	Sometimes	A few times	Never

2.32 Did you find it useful to print the self assessment?

Very useful	Useful	Acceptable	Not very useful	Did not try to print

2.33 How helpful did you find the benchmark guidance for completion of the self assessment?

Very helpful	Helpful	Helpful in places and confusing in places	Confusing	Very confusing

2.34 How useful were the help facilities for completion of the self assessment?

Very useful	Useful	Acceptable	Not very useful	Did not use

2.35 Did you have to order guidance in order to complete the questions (tick box)?

Yes No

If yes, go to question 2.18. If no, go to question 2.19.

2.17 How easy did you find ordering guidance?

Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	Difficult	Impossible

2.18 How easy was it to identify **and** prioritise the actions required to satisfy the benchmarks?

Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	Difficult	Impossible

Section 3 - Submitting the Self assessment

3.1 Did you submit the completed form to the HSE?

Yes No

If yes, go to question 3.2. If no, go to Question 3.3.

3.3 How easy was it to submit the information to the HSE?

Very easy	Relatively easy	No significant problems	Difficult	Impossible

3.3 Why did you not submit the self assessment?

I have not yet completed it	I tried to submit without success	I did not realise I was supposed to submit	I forgot	I did not want to supply the information to HSE

Section 4 - Health & Safety on Farms

4.1 How useful did you find the self assessment tool as means of assessing health and safety on your farm?

Very useful	Useful	Acceptable	Not very useful	Did not use

4.2 How important do you regard the assessment and management of health and safety on your farm?

Essential to everyday work	Important to safety, if a little tedious	I do it because I have to	A bit of an inconvenience	A hindrance to everyday work

4.3 Did the self assessment help you to identify and assess health and safety issues on your farm that you were unaware of?

A large number	A significant number	Some	A few	None

--	--	--	--	--

4.4 Does the self assessment provide you with better awareness of health and safety than the inspector assessments?

I prefer self assessment	Self assessment is slightly better	They are equally effective	Inspections are slightly better	I prefer inspections

4.5 Have you taken any action as a result of completing the self assessment?

A large number	A significant number	Some	A few	None

4.6 Would you continue to use the self assessment software?

Definitely	Likely	Probably	Not likely	Never again

4.7 Would you recommend the self assessment to other farmers?

Definitely	Likely	Probably	Not likely	Never

Appendix B

Qualitative Responses

Appendix B Qualitative Responses

QUALITATIVE RESPONSES

5.1.1 Establish whether the eform has met its primary objective in raising awareness and improving Health and Safety on farms.

- The depth of questions helped to increase the maintenance program overall.
- But I do admit it forced me to consider some issues in a different light.
- The result of the exercise was brilliant. I completed the assessment with both the farm employees and not only did we highlight some areas where we could improve safety, they started taking an ownership of the whole issue.
- However the exercises made one think.
- I also think that farmers are still very unsure as to what to do to actually comply with HSE legislation. Although the software was useful, what do we do next to fully comply?
- We have always endeavoured to be conscious of the safety aspects involved in our day to day farming activities. The self assessment software has shown me that there are a number of areas where we have fallen behind.
- The self assessment tool has thus far been useful in drawing attention to a number of issues that might not otherwise have been thought of.

5.1.2 Establish whether farmers found the eform a useful tool for managing health and safety on their farm and whether they would continue to use it.

- Although seemed a bind at the time it will have longer term advantages.
- I would recommend the program to a farm business to help manage the day to day running of its work.
- We are a low intensive farm, nearly dog and stick so many questions did not really apply.
- I found the self assessment program very effective and helpful.
- Although I appreciate different agencies are involved, it would be far better to achieve compliance through one system rather than several.
- I see this assessment becoming an essential tool throughout agriculture.
- I found it quite interesting and useful but definitely informative.
- We were generally outside the scope as we grow soft fruit.
- A yearly self assessment update will be very satisfying to the various inspection groups that we as farmers have to adhere to.
- As a contractor some questions not much use to me (although clients could learn a lot). Found form very interesting, some bench marks are pie in the sky with most farmers (written in an ideal world) but you can only try to achieve what you can afford.
- I used the software as a checklist as I was due a visit from an inspector the following week.
- Although the self assessment was thorough in covering all aspects of health and safety on the farm.... The assessment was useful in that looking through the questions asked and benchmarks provided, assured that nothing significant was being omitted from the inspections regularly carried out on the farm anyway.
- The self assessment was useful in that it gave a structure to follow in assessing the various hazards on the farm. Inspections are probably still essential in order to encourage farmers and staff to take time to consider safety issues. The busier we get makes it difficult to think safety at all times.

5.1.3 Was the software usable (downloading, completion and submission)?

- I found that, not having broadband, it took 1.5 hrs to download.
- When I tried to submit, there were difficulties - I still don't know whether it has been submitted or not.
- No confirmation, no help and you left us to cope on our own.
- Using the program was fairly easy but you need a fair knowledge of computers
- The computer on the farm needs to be capable of downloading the program.

- I had major problems with the submission of the completed information which the HSE helped with eventually and when we got the correct version.
- I had to rebuild the PC and as a result the software etc was lost.
- I found the form easy to use and personally quite liked the idea.
- The computer bit was a bit of a trail but probably because I'm nearly computer illiterate. But I can't see why this can't be a paper-based exercise for those who are equally technologically challenged.
- I tried to download three times but could not get it to run at all so I gave up. I managed to download this time when I was completing this questionnaire.
- The main concern I have is that the smaller farmer may not have access to a PC etc.
- Could not print - all I got was method "of object" failed.
- Tried to submit update but told error code 12037 security certificate number invalid.
- unable to submit form as it required a CPH number, don't have one, so unable to submit form (catch 22).
- We are complete technophobes, but we will have another go after sillaging. We think that the site is a good idea, it's just us.
- Initially I could not access the self assessment package. It turned out that this was because the Acrobat reader on my computer was not the latest version. It would have saved me a lot of time if it had been stated that the program would not operate unless the latest Acrobat reader was installed on the computer.
- The self assessment software has shown me that there are a number of areas where we have fallen behind. This is the reason that we have not yet submitted our completed form. But we are getting there. For example we now realise that we need a proper platform to attach to the forklift to work at height rather than a potato box roped onto the forks.
- It is not user unfriendly, there were too many relevant questions to print them all out
- The inspection would have taken far too long to complete.
- It will only be used for reference in the future and will not be completed and submitted back to the HSE.
- I am in the middle of completely reviewing out whole H&S approach / policies.
- Would like to see it extended to include additional items - especially environmental standards and animal welfare requirements.

5.1.4 Obtain any suggestions from the farmer for improving the eform question set or process.

- Definitely I suggest future versions are made available on CD as telephone connections in rural areas can be unreliable and download times can be unreasonably long.
- On the contrary, one person suggested that the eforms could contain additional categories in order to cover more types of farm (e.g. environmental issues and animal welfare requirement).
- A larger supply of online information on the legal requirements for preventing individual hazards would be useful. An example was that self assessment highlighted my lack of RCD circuit breakers at certain power points. Information from different electricians on legal requirements was wildly different. We need the truth online.
- I could not see a way to print out the sections applicable to us, as to print the lot was quite a lot.



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