

HSE's Agriculture Sector Intervention Strategy

In September 2017 HSE published its sector and health plans covering 19 industry sectors. The plans set out the strategic priorities for these sectors and the actions HSE proposes to take.

Recognising that the agricultural sector (encompassing crop and animal production, forestry, logging, fishing and aquaculture) has a poor record of managing health and safety risks, this document sets out in more detail the actions HSE will take over the next three to five years to drive improvements in the industry.

Background

Around 340 000 people work in the agriculture sector, accounting for around 1% of the GB workforce, yet it accounts for 20% of worker deaths. On average, the industry kills 32 people each year including 4 members of the public.

In addition, around 4% of workers are injured in non-fatal incidents each year, and a similar percentage of workers suffer an illness they believe to be work-related. This equates to 13 000 workers injured and 15 000 workers made ill each year.¹

While the total number of fatal injuries has been falling over time, the fatal injury rate for agricultural workers has shown no clear trend, although there are some signs of improvement in the last five years.

Through 2016 and 2017 the industry has shown some significant signs of increased awareness and activity to address farm safety. Examples arise in:

- the discussions at the NFU and NLBC Councils;
- engagement of NFU Regional Groups in an HSE/NFU safety event;
- social media activity stimulated by the farming community;
- campaign activity by the Young Farmers Clubs;
- the penetration and voice of Farm Safety Week;
- the emerging discussions at the England and Wales Farm Safety Partnerships as they acknowledge the need to work to a more coherent strategy.

If these signs of improvement are to flourish and grow, HSE needs to build momentum and drive industry-wide improvements in health and safety performance.

¹ LFS estimates published Nov 2017: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/industry/agriculture/

Building momentum

Agriculture is a priority sector for HSE. Significant improvements are needed in all areas of health and safety performance, particularly in reducing the rate of fatal injury, reducing cases of occupational ill health and seeing increased ownership and action by the industry to address its poor performance.

HSE's regulatory role in this industry is an important one – the causes of death, injuries and ill health are well known, and the means of preventing these are equally well known and straightforward. Many, if not all, of the shortcomings that lead to death, injury and ill health are addressed by existing legal requirements, all of which have been in place for

decades. HSE's intervention strategy, and the actions of other industry stakeholders, must first and foremost promote legal compliance, underlining the link with an efficient and effective business.

The sector plan has five broad headings to focus HSE's regulatory and engagement activities to secure effective management and control of risk.

Each of these headings are expanded on below to highlight work under development and the specific actions to secure legal compliance. These areas will be developed to include evaluation of our activities to define and refine future approaches.

1 Effective targeting of inspection activities

HSE recognises that, on its own, one-to-one inspection activity is not a cost-effective way of securing industry-wide change in agriculture. Nonetheless, there is still a key role played by inspection in securing legal compliance. Our 2010 and 2014 strategies had a continuing aim of making public appropriate and justifiable benchmark health and safety standards for the industry and a sustainable programme of inspection and investigation to promote compliance.

We will continue this theme and deliver a rolling programme of targeted inspection activity using a number of different approaches. These will use synergies from opportunities such as:

- specific cross-sector risks (eg transport);
- specific sub-sector risks (eg harvesting);
- other criteria such as geography or audience segment (from our research into farmers' attitudes to risk).

As with all of HSE's inspection activity, the overriding purpose will be to focus on risk and assess the quality of health and safety management. Programmes will have several objectives – securing on farm compliance, promoting industry understanding of good health and safety performance, and promoting use of HSE and industry guidance. Inspection

will also be used as a means of measuring the reach and impact of other HSE activities such as educational or promotional activities.

Individual inspection campaigns may focus on one or more of the following:

- seasonal activities that carry higher risk to workers;
- activities that may involve more vulnerable groups of workers;
- linking inspection activity to HSE-run educational activities;
- geographical areas of poor health and safety performance;
- linking inspection to targeted media and promotional activities;
- inspection by appointment to focus on areas that are not understood;
- emerging processes or technologies that may introduce new risks;
- benchmarking performance at industry or local level.

HSE's Agriculture Unit will provide support and training to field inspectors to ensure that inspections are effective and action taken is consistent. We will also work through the planning cycle to ensure that inspection work is allocated in a way that promotes expertise in our field staff.

Inspection activity will be used to underline that self-employed farmers are not exempt from health and safety at work legislation and can expect enforcement action if minimum standards are not met.

Inspection programmes may also incorporate pre- and post-media activity to help inform farm businesses about how the law applies and to

generate understanding of what inspectors are looking for, the standards encountered on farms and the circumstances that are likely to attract enforcement action (see section 3 below).

Targeting of inspection activity may also be used to benchmark industry performance as a longer-term measure of shifts in performance and the extent to which improvement is sustained.

2 A targeted programme of appropriately blended interventions using our insight research, intelligence from other government departments and the latest communication techniques to amplify messages

Our research into farmers' attitudes to risk has identified distinct segments in the farming community. There is no single action that will change the industry's performance; we need to do the right things to improve knowledge, change behaviours and bring about lasting change. To influence these segments effectively, a range of interventions will be deployed to promote sustained improvement in health and safety performance.

Where we can identify businesses that relate most to specific segments we will tailor our approach and target specific groups to optimise the penetration and impact of our messages.

HSE's direct intervention techniques will include:

- direct on-farm inspector activity;
- educational/promotional events;
- campaigns using traditional and digital media;
- partnership work with other stakeholders to promote health and safety messages.

These approaches will be used individually and in combination to maximise the impact they have in securing sustained compliance with the law. For example, a 'blended approach' to direct farmer contact may consist of traditional media activity, followed by a specific educational event (by invite), then by inspection activity supported by real-time social media activity, and concluded with reporting back to the industry on what was found.

We will also work with intermediaries, such as the Farm Safety Partnerships (FSPs) or their member

organisations, to help stimulate and target their promotional activities, offering our learning on areas such as messaging, audience make-up and event content to drive forward ownership and cultural change.

We recognise that the combination will vary for different segments and industry activities so we will develop and test different approaches, building on effective interventions.

To ensure effective interventions, HSE's Agriculture Unit will develop means of targeting, and work with other government departments, and other bodies, to share intelligence that helps us understand where our activities can have the best impact to promote long-term improvements and to target them accordingly.

The research on attitudes to risk supports a continued use of an educational approach, like HSE's safety and health awareness days (SHADs), indicating that this has a high value for engaging with some segments of the industry. SHADs have been used in the farming sector over a significant period of time with little change to their format. While the industry sees them as 'training', HSE has held the view that they are awareness-raising events and do not currently present a means of detailed education.

In more recent years some parts of the industry have started to run events on a similar format, albeit on a different scale. There is a

complimentary effect that can be used with the scope for HSE to regenerate SHADs to promote learning and pioneer development of a more progressive approach that can be used more widely.

We will redesign the SHAD approach and work on a mechanism for targeting to reach the groups that need most help. The potential to develop these as a more sustained educational approach will be explored. The intention is to develop a solution that can be scaled and is transportable so that the approach can be used by stakeholder organisations (not exclusively by HSE) with an ultimate target of industry ownership and delivery.

The early stages of this may require some testing of different approaches to get the most out of the events for different audiences. As this develops we will test ways of targeting invitations to secure attendance of different audience segments:

- splitting the audience to provide content that is most suited to their likely attitude to risk;
- using follow-up activities to build on the learning offered by the event;
- using HSE interventions to measure the impact the event has in securing on farm compliance. This latter approach will link specific events to inspection activity which will be scaled up or down depending on the measured impact of the events.

3 Highlighting our expectations of, and findings from, our inspection activities to have an educational and deterrent effect across the industry

The attitude to risk research showed a clear need for farming businesses to understand in simple terms what is the minimum expected of them and the standards that they must achieve. While the goal-setting nature of health and safety at work legislation allows businesses to adapt and choose the best risk control for their circumstances, and the suite of industry-specific and generic HSE guidance supports this decision making, it is clear that some segments of the industry would benefit from a simplified view of what legal compliance looks like across a range of activities.

To continue our strategic objective of ensuring guidance and core messages are disseminated effectively to the industry, we will develop some simple statements of 'what a good farm looks like' in terms of compliance. This will be shared with farms so that they understand what HSE inspectors look for, and will be used by inspectors as a benchmark when interacting with farm businesses, especially in relation to enforcement action. This guidance will not replace more

comprehensive documents such as *Farmwise*, but will provide the quick easy reference that our research has shown is needed.

We will also promote the 'what good looks like' approach through partnership routes and through traditional and digital media, in general and around specific campaigns.

The Agriculture Unit will carry out periodic analysis of the findings of our inspection activities and share these with industry to highlight good practice, straightforward means of compliance and to underline areas where the industry needs to act, as typified by enforcement activity. Our research on attitude to risk has indicated that highlighting findings of poor performance and enforcement has an impact, but a significant component of this approach is the need to celebrate successes using our messaging to focus on and normalise examples of good practice and effective risk control.

4 Maximising the reach and impact of our investigation and enforcement activities

The current industry performance on health and safety means enforcement remains a key component of the sector strategy. Our enforcement activities secure justice and provide opportunities to shine a light on the benchmark standards expected.

Alongside sharing the findings from our inspection activity, we will make more of our investigation and enforcement activities in the industry. Since February 2016 the Agriculture Unit has taken a proactive approach to informing the industry of fatal injuries in the sector using a system of 'initial notifications' to stimulate industry discussion of good practice. Feedback from stakeholder organisations, and the reaction of their members, has shown this to be an effective way of prompting discussion and promoting industry activity to improve health and safety performance. Effectively, the activity has moved the industry perception of fatal incidents from being remote and unfortunate incidents, to being frequent and undesirable occurrences.

The use of HSE's findings from investigation and enforcement activities in the industry also provides opportunities to stimulate that conversation

and increase the industry response to their performance. The Agriculture Unit will therefore carry out periodic analysis of these interventions and use them as case studies and stimuli to highlight good practice, straightforward means of compliance and to underline areas where the industry needs to act.

HSE's Agriculture Unit will work with operational colleagues to gather proportionate and consistent levels of data from investigations to highlight failings, promote good practice, and to underline the consequences of incidents in terms of the human cost and the impact on businesses.

The outputs from these activities will be adapted to suit the way in which these are used. The overall provision of information and data to the industry will encompass a range of materials, including the continued production of an annual report of fatal injuries in agriculture. This may be broadened to encompass case studies from investigations, press releases covering prosecutions, or more generalised and 'packaged' information that can be used by stakeholders, such as the FSPs, to increase industry action.

5 Supporting and promoting industry ownership, collaboration and engagement

For many years HSE has recognised that the key to improving the industry's performance lies with the industry itself. While this strategy sets out HSE's plans for its interventions, based on our role as a regulator, we have not moved from the fundamental principle of working with the industry to build momentum and act on the signs of improvement that appear to be emerging in its fatal injury rate.

A key objective in the strategy for agriculture set out by HSE in 2010 and 2014 was for industry stakeholders and intermediaries to accept ownership of its poor health and safety performance and demonstrate leadership in

promoting the necessary cultural change to address the problem through their respective memberships. Our aim is that the ownership and leadership shown by key stakeholders continues and is sustained to deliver improvement.

Role of the farm safety partnerships

The formation of the farming industry safety partnerships and other bodies, such as the Forestry Industry Safety Accord (FISA) and independent charity the Farm Safety Foundation (FSF), was the industry's declaration of intent to tackle the poor record and take on ownership of the industry's health and safety performance.

This has coincided with the signs of improvement that have emerged in the last five years.

While the apparent correlation may indicate that the FSPs are making a difference, an objective analysis of their activities would conclude that they are far from reaching their potential in changing the industry. It is important to recognise the considerable efforts and work done by the FSPs over the last few years but they are missing a few important elements that are needed if they are to succeed. They need to have effective strategies rather than what some have described as a list of disjointed actions, calling on the experience of other sectors where it can be applied to agriculture. They also need clear roles for the organisations that form the partnerships, a commitment of partners to work to an agreed FSP plan and a proper mandate from their member organisations, including support from the very top of all the key organisations that have an interest in the health and safety agenda.

HSE will continue to engage and support the FSPs and FISA, their member organisations and others, acting to provide information, advice, guidance and inspiration to focus their activities to promote legal compliance and to build this momentum and improve health and safety performance across the industry. In particular, our sector plan sets out our intent to help change behaviours and attitudes through an industry-wide strategic approach in the following key areas.

Sharing information and insight

We will share research into attitudes to risk to identify audience segments, channels and trusted messengers and help the industry use these findings to achieve behaviour change. HSE will seek ways to publish and share the research in a way that assists recipients in making sense of it and turning it into useful and practical applications to engage the industry.

Engaging workers and employers

In sharing research across the industry, we will continue our tripartite approach, bringing together workers, employers and the regulator. This will be coupled with the challenge to existing

partnership groups to demonstrate their ownership of the problems, develop shared solutions and deliver consistent actions and messages. Each stakeholder will have different routes to influence their members, and different touch points with the farming industry, so it is important that we help them develop an approach that suits their position if we are to achieve wide coverage and consistent messaging across the industry.

The combination of tripartism and shared understanding of attitudes to risk is a major contributor to the effectiveness of our messaging. One key mechanism for HSE to engage with employers and employees in the same forum is through the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC), established to help inform HSE policy decisions. Recognising this, and acknowledging that the FSPs can provide an alternative forum to engage with these organisations, we will continue to run the AIAC until we are confident that the industry partnerships offer a stable and reliable forum to replace the AIAC function of advising HSE.

Working with training organisations

The current climate requires the farming industry to demonstrate its professionalism and efficiency for a sustainable future. Key players in this are those organisations that are involved in the education of the next generation of farmers, such as the colleges, and those that play a significant part in the continued professional development of the industry, such as Lantra. HSE has established links with organisations including Lantra, Landex and NLBC and will continue to engage with these organisations to ensure that the curricula of land-based colleges and other training organisations, integrate health and safety compliance into the course programmes.

Industry initiatives, such as the Lantra-accredited Introduction to Farm Safety training course, developed and delivered by the FSF, and the FSF Farm Safe Curve Module, delivered at YFC level, are starting to define the industry's expected basic standards of health and safety training. Work with training organisations and the FSPs will focus on helping the industry define what is necessary for farmers to meet the legal requirements to provide

the necessary information, instruction and training to ensure the health and safety of their employees and themselves. Farming unions also recognise the potential value of qualifications linked to training and the potential to develop this further.

Continuing from our strategic goal of promoting assessment of competence and industry uptake of competence-based training in managing health and safety our fundamental message is that management of health and safety is an integral part of a modern, professional business and learning and development activities have a key role in demonstrating that health and safety is not an additional and separate activity.

Self-employed farmers

In October 2015 changes to legislation generally exempted self-employed people from health and safety law where their activities did not pose a risk to others. However, the risks in agriculture, and the poor record, was sufficient that Parliament decided that agriculture should be an activity where the full remit of health and safety law applies to a self-employed person looking after themselves. HSE's interactions with stakeholders, and the enforcement action we take when engaging directly with farming businesses, should reinforce the message that farmers are not exempt from health and safety law.

Areas to develop

Finally, there are areas that HSE needs to explore and develop to increase impact and reach. As the farming industry changes in response to events and the introduction of new technology, we explore common challenges and synergies with other bodies, such as Defra, devolved governments, EA and AHDB.

Some stakeholders have expressed concerns that impending changes in the industry may trigger

erosion of standards. These changes may similarly present significant opportunities to improve the industry's approach to risk management, the links to farm support and professionalism and the industry's resilience in meeting these challenges. These also provide potential opportunities to build on health and safety management as an everyday part of business management and to dispel the idea that health and safety is something that is done separately.

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