

EU Policy Recommendations

Proposed by members of the COST Action 16123, Safety Culture and Risk Management in Agriculture (SACURIMA)

- 1. Protect the safety, health and well-being of agricultural producers and workers in Europe by integrating OSH into all current and future agricultural policies. Update the CAP policy objectives to include workplace risk management using 'Safety Culture', 'Zero Vision' and 'One Health' principles.**

Justification: Labour is a key factor in agricultural production, along with natural resources, capital and entrepreneurship. However, the current high risk of occupational fatalities, injuries and ill health within the sector is a significant threat to the sustainability and development of the agricultural sector. With significant under reporting of death and injury in the sector, the over 500 reported fatalities and 200,000 disabling injuries and work-related diseases result in considerable financial and social losses. Farmers are ageing, and the image of farming as a dangerous occupation makes it difficult to attract young people into agriculture. Current CAP Objectives fail to recognize the importance of ensuring the competence, safety, health and well-being of producers and workers. CAP objectives should support and protect those who work in agriculture by building a better safety culture, adopting vision 'zero injuries' on all farms, and using the 'one health' principle in protecting the welfare of farmers, workers, animals as well as the environment.

- 2. Establish a European Network for Agricultural Safety and Health with regional and state affiliated organizations focusing on the safety, health, well-being and sustainability of people involved in agriculture.**

Justification: Currently safety, health, and well-being programs are not well coordinated and supported at agricultural enterprises in Europe. While EU Directives, International Standards and Conventions are in place, their application, coordination and implementation within agriculture at EU level is lacking. Given the high level of risk and resulting death, injury and ill-health in the sector, consideration should be given to the development of an EU OSH Directive for Agriculture, to cover both employed and self-employed workers. SACURIMA COST Action has brought together a highly competent multi-disciplinary network of experts representing over 30 countries. This network is capable of organizing a coordinated EU initiative that generates new knowledge through research and helps implement evidence-based programs in occupational safety and health in member states. This proposed network would include a central coordinating unit, managed as part of an existing organization such as EU-OSHA. The network of affiliated institutions and experts from member states would collaborate at the EU, regional and national levels on specific existing and emerging risks utilizing the strengths and interests of the participants.

- 3. Allocate specific funding for agricultural safety, health and well-being research in Horizon 2020 / Horizon Europe.**

Justification: Currently, there are no sources of funding at EU level to support research and development in the health, safety and well-being of farmers and agricultural workers. Horizon 2020 has no calls that are specifically applicable to this critical field. Some EU member countries have national funding sources, but funds are limited, and not coordinated to enable significant international projects. The plans for Horizon Europe need to be updated to allocate funding that can be used for competitive research and development projects advancing the safety, health and well-being of agricultural producers and workers.

4. Develop and implement a safety, health and well-being risk assessment, education and skills program for primary producers, including self-employed farmers, family members, workers and students in agricultural schools.

Justification: SACURIMA surveys have identified great variations in organizations and programs that deal with the safety, health, and well-being of farmers in EU member states. In some countries, the limited resources are placed in regulatory agencies and enforcement. Some countries have invested primarily in university-based research while other countries focus on dissemination through agricultural advisory services. Risk assessment and training programs have been developed for farmers. Specific agricultural occupational health services have been developed and implemented in some member states. Countries with strong social insurance institutions may include preventive services to members. Agricultural schools include safety and health training in many cases. While all of these programs can contribute to building a competent labour force in agriculture, the effectiveness of these approaches has generally not been evaluated, and the different programs are not coordinated at the EU or even national level. There is a need to evaluate programs and support the development of an effective mix of preventive efforts, which can be implemented in all member states to help reduce the level of death, injury and ill-health in the sector.

5. Improve Eurostat and national statistics to reflect the true incidence and severity of agricultural workplace death, injury and ill-health.

Justification: SACURIMA research has identified great variability in most recent (2013) Eurostat statistics of accidents in agriculture. Significant under-reporting is common, illustrated by comparing fatal accidents in four neighboring countries: Germany (76 cases), Austria (49 cases), Poland (4 cases) and France (1 case). The great variation in Eurostat agricultural accident statistics is predominantly due to the non-reporting of workplace fatalities that involve self-employed farmers, family members or casual labour not having a contract of employment. The significant under reporting is also partially due to: a) differences in farm structure, b) use of different reference populations, c) under-reporting at the national level due to lacking surveillance, d) different inclusion/exclusion criteria for accident cases and e) interpretation of data by users. Some inconsistencies are structural due to lacking social insurance and surveillance programs for farmers, family labour and undocumented workers. Some inconsistencies could be addressed by updating and better implementation of ESAW harmonizing rules. Alternative methods, such as adding questions to agriculture census surveys and conducting standardized injury, illness and exposure surveys, should be considered to augment Eurostat statistics.

These policy recommendations were prepared by SACURIMA Working Group 5 (Dissemination) members as a working document with input from the SACURIMA Management Committee, which includes members and observers from the following countries: AU, BA, BE, BG, CH, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IL, IT, JO, LT, LV, ME, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, TR, UK, US

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