

## Press Release

### New Plan Launched to Improve Farm Safety and Save Lives

- *The Farm Safety Action Plan 2021-2024 aims to reduce the level of fatalities, serious injuries and ill health in the agriculture sector.*
- *More people died in agriculture compared with any other economic sector during the past decade*
- *The new plan focuses on five critical areas and working groups have been set up to develop and implement specific actions in these five areas*

**23rd August 2021:** The Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (FSPAC), an advisory committee to the Board of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), has today published its latest Action Plan for 2021-2024. The FSPAC is made up of representatives and experts from a variety of relevant agriculture organisations and is tasked with improving occupational health and safety in the sector.

Over the past decade, more people died in agriculture compared with any other economic sector. Of the 495 work-related fatalities in Ireland during 2011 -2020, 208 occurred in Agriculture, according to the Health and Safety Authority's *Review of Work-Related Deaths in Agriculture in Ireland 2011-2020*, also published today. 51% of the worker-victims were aged 65 years or older, while 21 of the victims were aged under 18.

Agriculture is a high-risk industry, where most are self-employed and predominantly work alone. Workers are potentially exposed to many dangers, such as large animals, heavy machinery, and liquids such as slurry and gas emitting materials.

The aim of the new Farm Safety Action Plan is to reduce the level of fatalities, serious injuries and ill health in the agriculture sector. The FSPAC has identified five critical areas for attention:

1. Behaviour, Education and Training
2. Health and Vulnerable Persons
3. Tractor, High Risk Machinery
4. Livestock Handling
5. Buildings, Work at Height

Welcoming the new Farm Safety Action Plan 2021-2024, the **Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail, Damien English TD**, said *"The new Farm Safety Partnership, with its multi-stakeholder membership, provides a broad view of the agricultural sector and will be delivering on the key areas where health and safety improvements are needed the most. This Action Plan is ambitious and achieving the objectives will be important in our drive to lowering fatalities and serious injuries in the agricultural industry. I would encourage all farmers and business operators in this industry to avail of and use the existing resources including extensive HSA guidance and the Farm Safety Code of Practice. I would also like to wish the Farm Safety Partnership well in delivering on this Action Plan over the next 4 years."*

According to the HSA's *Review of Work-Related Deaths in Agriculture in Ireland 2011-2020*, work-related fatalities were more frequent in spring and summer, with the highest number happening in July (34, 16%). This pattern may be related to the intensity of farming activity during spring and summer. Work-related fatalities involving children were most common during the summer months, particularly August (five, 24%) and July (four, 19%).

**Ciaran Roche, the FSPAC Chair**, said *"The FSPAC has made considerable progress in raising awareness of farm safety. There is also recognition that safety standards across the sector show signs of improvement. However, reducing the overall rate of fatal and serious injuries in the agriculture sector has been slow. Introducing behavioural change in relation to health and safety for farmers will be a key part of achieving a sustained reduction on the numbers of fatal and serious injuries in the sector. The FSPAC Action Plan has set out key objectives and initiatives that our members will continue to deliver on with our core aim being to improve on the health and safety of Irish Farmers and those who may influence their behaviour, such as family and peers."*

According to the HSA's *Review of Work-Related Deaths in Agriculture in Ireland 2011-2020* report, work-related fatalities in Agriculture were highest in the south-west region of Cork and Kerry (13.7 per 100,000 employed), followed by the border region of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo (8.9 per 100,000 employed). The number of work-related fatalities in agriculture were lowest in Dublin (0.2 per 100,000 employed) and the mid-east region of Kildare, Meath, Wicklow and Louth (2.0 per 100,000 employed).

Welcoming both publications **Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with responsibility for Farm Safety**, Martin Heydon T.D. said *"On reviewing the recent HSA Review of Work-Related Deaths in Agriculture in Ireland we can see that almost half of all farm deaths involve tractors and other farm machinery. As we move between seasons, now is an opportune time for farmers to carry out safety checks on machinery that will be in use in the coming weeks. A risk assessment of the farmyard should also be completed. Is there appropriate lighting? Have slats been checked for wear or tear? Taking simple steps now can help make farms a safer place over the winter. I'd ask farmers to take time to consider safety and to review the farm safety guidance available to them on HSA.ie. The latest Farm Safety Action Plan for 2021 – 2024 reminds us that education around safety is crucial and that upskilling or training should be carried out where needed."*

Delivering this report and welcoming the publication of the FSPAC Action Plan, **Dr. Sharon McGuinness, CEO of the Health and Safety Authority**, recognises the importance of this collaborative partnership stating *"A shared ownership to improving health and safety in the agricultural sector and the family farm is imperative. In the ten year period from 2011-2020, 208 work-related deaths occurred in Agriculture. 51% of these worker victims were aged 65 years or older. The high rate of work-related deaths to older workers indicates that older farmers may need to take special precautions to avoid serious injury or death, particularly when working with vehicles and livestock. This review highlights specific areas of concern and I welcome the FSPAC Action Plan in setting out clear steps to improve the health and safety of farmers, protect themselves and their families. The Authority remains committed to providing assistance and support to achieve these objectives."*

The Health and Safety Authority has many free tools, courses and supports available, including free health and safety courses on HSA Learning.ie and the farm risk assessment tool farmsafely.com.

To read the Farm Safety Action Plan click here: <https://www.hsa.ie/!JVTJYP>

To read the HSA *Review of Work-Related Deaths in Agriculture in Ireland 2011-2020* report click here: <https://www.hsa.ie/!QVXHU3>

For further information, visit [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) or follow us on Twitter @TheHSA.

## **ENDS**

To contact the HSA press office, call Aoife Moroney-Ward on 086 8036141 or email [pressoffice@hsa.ie](mailto:pressoffice@hsa.ie)

## **Notes to Editor**

### **About the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee**

The Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee was established to involve all industry stakeholders in improving occupational safety and health in Agriculture. The Committee is a consultative and advisory forum on the HSA's priorities and work programme for the Agriculture Sector. It develops and agrees a national action plan, coordinating the actions of working groups and representative organisations.

The Committee and the working groups are made up of representatives and experts from a variety of relevant agricultural organisations including the Irish Farmers' Association, Macra na Feirme, Association of Farm and Forestry Contractors in Ireland and Teagasc. Full details of all its members are available in the Farm Safety Action Plan <https://www.hsa.ie/!JVTJYP>

The Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee reports regularly and formally, at least annually, to the HSA Board and provides a final report with proposed future actions following its four-year term.