

Agricultural and Horticultural Workers

Agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries in the UK with a high number of fatalities, including children.

Unfortunately it is also an area with very few safety representatives. The T&G has attempted to address the issue with the introduction of Roving Safety representatives but large pockets of the rural workforce are still not represented by a trade union safety representative.

Women represent a large number of the rural workforce particularly in casualised seasonal work and horticulture.

See next page for **Hazards of Agricultural and Horticultural Work & Action Checklist**

Some Relevant Law

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1999 (PUWER)

Some Further Reading/Information Sources

T & G Pesticides Reduction Booklet

HSE Books

Telephone 01787 881165 and quote the reference for these free leaflets:

Common Zoonoses in Agriculture. AIS2
Controlling Grain Dust on Farms. AIS3
PUWER 98 How the Regulations apply to agriculture and forestry. AIS 27
Farm Wise: Your essential guide to Health & Safety in Agriculture. Misc165

HSE Website : www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/index.htm

Hazards of Agricultural & Horticultural Work

- Poorly maintained tractors and other farm machinery can cause serious injuries.
- Chemicals, especially pesticides, can have multiple health effects.
- Repetitive work such as fruit or mushroom picking, pruning work and packhouse work can present a risk of RSI and other musculoskeletal injuries caused by eg twisting, and lifting above head height
- Heavy lifting of loads and animal handling can present a risk of back and other manual handling injuries.
- Animals can carry diseases such as Weil's Disease, E.Coli, and chlamydia (prevalent in the lambing season) which can present health risks especially to pregnant workers. These diseases are known as Zoonoses.
- Grain and animal hairs can cause Occupational Asthma.
- Working outdoors in extremes of temperatures
- Isolation in the rural community leading to stress and depression

Action Checklist

1. Have Risk assessments been carried out?
2. Is machinery regularly inspected and maintained and are defects reported and repaired?
3. Are workers trained in the safe use of machinery?
4. Have COSHH assessments been carried out and include animal biohazards?
5. Does the employer operate a Pesticides Reduction policy?
6. Have manual handling risk assessments been carried out?
7. Are workers trained in safe lifting handling?
8. Are there controls in place to protect workers from Occupational asthma and other respiratory diseases?
9. Are support mechanisms available for isolated workers?
10. Are workers given protection from the elements e.g. warm waterproof clothing in winter?
11. Do workers have ready access to washing and sanitary facilities and drinking water?

Pregnancy Hazards:

Biohazards (especially Chlamydia found in sheep during lambing season), exposure to pesticides, heavy repetitive work, stress and long working hours, vibration eg from travelling in off-road vehicles, working outdoors in the cold, working alone.