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HEALTH AND SAFETY IN AGRICULTURE

Best Practices and Proposals for Action

**Report of the EFFAT (ETUC) and GEOPA-COPA
seminar**

Brussels, 22 – 24 October 2004



**With the support of the European Commission – DG
Employment and Social Affairs**

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Introduction

Following on from the work they have been conducting for many years within the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee, the European social partners in the agricultural sector, EFFAT (ETUC) and GEOPA-COPA, organized a joint seminar in Brussels on 22-24 October 2004. The theme of the seminar was "Health and Safety in Agriculture – Best Practices and Proposals for Action". Delegates from 20 European Union Member States took part in the seminar, 29 of whom on behalf of EFFAT and 32 on behalf of GEOPA. Moreover, three outside speakers presented their contributions.

Friday, 22 October 2004

Mr. Bernard LEVACHER, president of GEOPA, opened the seminar by welcoming the many delegates from national employers' and employees' organizations in agriculture. He stressed that safety at work was a major issue for GEOPA and EFFAT and outlined the programme of the two days' discussions.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S ACTION

Mrs. Patricia PEDELABAT-LARTIGAU (EU Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs) stated that she was posted at the Brussels Antenna of the Health and Safety Department of the Luxembourg-based Directorate General.

She reminded the participants that pursuant to Article 137 of the Treaty, Directives set minimum standards for safety at work, particularly the EU Framework Directive 89/391, completed by 27

Untrained personnel undertaking tasks they do not have the expertise to carry out, for example, forestry work.

HAZARDS AND RISKS CAN ARISE FROM PEOPLE, EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY, MATERIALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SOME OF THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF FALLS FROM HEIGHT

Lack of appropriate health and safety policies and procedures.
Inappropriate or no training on working at height or education on fragile surfaces.
Poor communication with staff on health and safety procedures and policies.
Under-reporting can facilitate slow change to safe systems of work for working at height.

UNDERLYING CAUSES CAN BE FAILURES BY THE ORGANIZATION OR THE INDUSTRY

HIERARCHY OF RISK CONTROL

- It is always best if possible to avoid a risk altogether, for example, replacing hay bail removal with a mechanized system rather than using a person.
- Combat risks at source rather than using measures that lessen the effects, for example, if a roof surface is fragile, prevent access rather than putting up a warning sign.
- Wherever possible, adapt work to the individual, especially when considering the design of workplaces, the selection of work equipment (including physical capabilities) and the choice of working or production methods, with a particular view to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined rate;
- Take advantage of technological and technical progress, which often offers opportunities for improving working methods and making them safer;
- Risk prevention measures need to form part of a coherent policy and approach across the workplace;
- Priority should be given to control measures which protect the whole workplace and all those who work there, and so yield the greatest benefit, i.e. give collective protective measures priority over individual measures;
- Workers, whether they are employees, contractors, seasonal workers or the self-employed need to understand what they need to do;

"FALLS FROM HEIGHT" WORKING GROUP**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The questionnaire responses received from the social partners illustrated falls from height was the third most significant cause of fatal accidents in agriculture after transport and machinery. Fatal accidents attributed to falls from height totalled 57 and six of the 14 Member States that responded (the EU-15 with the exception of Luxembourg) reported that falls from height were in their top five causes for fatal accidents. Falls from a height also accounted for over 9,000 serious accidents in the agricultural industry for the year examined. Five Member States reported that falls from height was in the top five causes for serious accidents and a further five stated that falls on a flat surface (slips, trips and falls) were in the top five causes for serious accidents. It should also be noted that the fourth highest cause of fatal accidents was being struck by a falling object and many of these types of accidents can also be addressed by dealing with safe working at height.

EXISTING COMMUNITY LEGISLATION

89/391EEC Directive: introduction of measure to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (the framework directive).

92/57EEC Directive: minimum safety and health requirements at temporary or mobile construction sites.

2001/45 minimum safety and health requirements for the use of work equipment by workers at work (temporary work at height).

DEFINITIONS

Hazard – This is defined as a property of a substance, article or situation which has the potential for harm to persons, equipment, material or the environment.

Risk – Risk is the likelihood that a hazard will cause harm, and its severity, in actual circumstances.

SOME OF THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF FALLS FROM HEIGHT

Failure of employers to provide the correct equipment for working at height. Equipment, such as ladders, in poor condition or workers not using the right equipment for the work in question.

Uneven or fragile surfaces being worked on, this includes ladders on uneven surfaces and falling through fragile roofs.

No safe system of work for works or minor repairs on farm buildings.

Climbing onto the top of vehicles or hay stacks to loosen loads or hay bails.

Incorrect use of equipment by employees, for example, forklifts and telescopic handlers for lifting people to a height.

ANNEX 3

specific Directives. There was no specific Directive for the agricultural sector, but existing Directives applied to that sector.

The assessment of the situation was unsatisfactory: there were still too many work accidents, particularly in agriculture. This was due to a large number of factors, some of which were new, such as the growing ageing of the population and feminization of society, the development of temporary work, the role of stress, etc. Mrs. Pedelabat-Lartigau explained that the new strategy communicated by the European Commission in March 2002, entitled "Adapting to change in work and society", advocated a global approach based on welfare at work and laid emphasis on risk prevention, particularly through greater awareness and training of those involved. This policy must translate into concrete actions:

- involving all players: employers, salaried workers, insurers, States;
- using existing instruments;
- better implementation of existing legislation;
- integrating the health and safety at work policy into the other EU policies, for example the rural development policy.

Mrs. Pedelabat-Lartigau remarked that farming was a risk activity. EU Regulation 1257/1999 on rural development provided for two types of action:

- support to investments: a subsidy may be granted to help farmers adapt to restrictive Community standards, particularly in the field of safety of work, on the occasion of the national implementation of standards deriving from EU legislation;
- support to vocational training, which included training in the field of risk prevention.

The 1999 Regulation was being revised for the period 2007-2013 and the support policy would be stepped up.

New standards were recently set or were in the pipeline on a number of subjects: vibrations, noise, violence and harassment, and

studies were being prepared on the use of chemicals and on falls from height.

On all these issues, the Directorate General was working in cooperation with the European Agency in Bilbao. Unfortunately, statistical data on work accidents were insufficient. There was no regulation requiring Member States to provide statistics, it was more a case of a "gentlemen's agreement" and cooperation among Member States.

Discussion. During the discussion that followed this presentation, Mr. SPAHN (EFFAT) underlined that his organization wanted the issue of accident prevention to be included in the CAP reform. The EU Regulation on rural development was not easy to use from the point of view of health and safety at work. Mr. GUTIERREZ (EFFAT) indicated that the Directives in force did not apply to workplaces outside farm buildings. Moreover, many farm tractors did not comply with standards, a point which was never controlled. Mr. BARROSO (GEOPA) mentioned that in Portugal, safety devices on tractors had been compulsory since 1993, but there were still 90,000 non-compliant tractors being used. Mr. LARRAT (GEOPA) confirmed that non-compliant, old equipment was being used in France as well, even though the situation was improving. Mr. ROTUNDO (GEOPA) noted that the Advisory Committee on Health and Safety at Work, which assisted the Luxembourg-based department, only included employers' delegations from industry. Better relations with the agricultural sector were necessary.

Mrs. PEDELABAT-LARTIGAU pointed out in this respect that the role of the Brussels Antenna was precisely to establish links with the various sectors and ensure that the concern for health and safety at work should be integrated into all EU policies.

- Priority should be given to control measures which protect the whole workplace and all those who work there, and so yield the greatest benefit, i.e. give collective protective measures priority over individual measures;
- Workers, whether they are employees, contractors, seasonal workers or the self-employed need to understand what they need to do;
- The avoidance, prevention and reduction of risks at work needs to be an accepted part of the approach and attitudes at all levels of the organization and to apply to all levels of the organization and all its activities.

ILO CONVENTION 184

No provision of suitable equipment such as races, crushes, loading facilities or bull-handling equipment.

Equipment not used or not in a serviceable condition.

The person does not have the appropriate physical capability or experience to handle the animal.

No knowledge of the dangers involved when handling animals and/or lack of supervision.

**HAZARDS AND RISKS CAN ARISE FROM
PEOPLE, EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY, MATERIALS AND THE
ENVIRONMENT**

**SOME OF THE UNDERLYING CAUSES LINKED TO CONTACT WITH
ANIMALS**

Lack of appropriate health and safety policies and procedures.

Inappropriate training or no training policy for staff on the correct methods of animals handling.

Poor communication with staff on health and safety procedures and policies.

No inspection or maintenance regimes for handling equipment.

Overall poor animal husbandry.

**UNDERLYING CAUSES CAN BE FAILURES BY THE ORGANIZATION
OR THE INDUSTRY**

HIERARCHY OF RISK CONTROL

- It is always best if possible to avoid a risk altogether, for example, creating locked physical barriers between animals and staff or visitors to the farm rather than erecting warning signs on gates or doors;
- Combat risks at source rather than using measures that lessen the effects, for example, provide manual handling equipment rather than training for staff in manual handling techniques;
- Wherever possible, adapt work to the individual, especially when considering the design of workplaces, the selection of work equipment (including physical capabilities) and the choice of working or production methods, with a particular view to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined rate;
- Take advantage of technological and technical progress, which often offers opportunities for improving working methods and making them safer;
- Risk prevention measures need to form part of a coherent policy and approach across the workplace;

Mr. Jukka TAKALA, director of the I.L.O. Health and Safety at Work Programme, gave an overview of work accidents in agriculture throughout the world. In developed countries, work accidents were both numerous and serious, but in developing countries, they were three to five times as important! This being said, these figures were only estimates obtained by extrapolation, since no reliable statistics were available.

Mr. Takala presented Convention 184 on Health and Safety in Agriculture, which was adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2001 but still had to be ratified by a great many States. He also reminded the seminar participants about the importance of Convention 129 on Labour Inspection in Agriculture, which was ratified by 23 out of the 25 European Union Member States.

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Sirpa SAVE (EFFAT) addressed the specific issue of the health and safety of women working in agriculture. This concerned both women farmers and women salaried workers. With a heavier work load in all areas, the problems raised were getting worse. This was the case in particular for women isolated on their workplace: they should always have an alarm system at their disposal in the event of an accident.

Mrs. Save pointed out that the use of chemicals and contact with animals entailed specific risks for pregnant women, though the possibility of withdrawing from the job only existed in a few countries and maternity leave was not available everywhere. This obviously gave rise to a range of problems, particularly on small family farms, since a replacement had to be financed. Such financing should be included in insurance contracts.

ENQUIRY ON SAFETY AT WORK IN AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Lisa WISE (GEOPA) presented the findings of the enquiry she carried out among EFFAT and GEOPA national member organizations during the preparatory phase of the seminar.

Purpose of the enquiry. The purpose of the enquiry was to make an inventory of the main risks which farm workers were exposed to in terms of work accidents and occupational diseases. It was necessary to record data on the number and frequency of accidents and

- The avoidance, prevention and reduction of risks at work needs to be an accepted part of the approach and attitudes at all levels of the organization and to apply to all levels of the organization and all its
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"CONTACT WITH ANIMALS" WORKING GROUP

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The social partners reported only 12 fatalities caused by contact with animals when responding to the questionnaire. However, the number of serious accidents reported was a staggering 21,398, the most significant cause of serious accidents in the 14 Member States that responded (EU-15 with the exception of Luxembourg). Additionally, eight Member States reported contact with animals in the top five causes for serious accidents and five reported it as being in the top five causes of fatal accidents. Hazards relating to contact with animals can be difficult to control as people are dealing with animals that can be unpredictable. However, there are steps that can be taken to minimize risks. Musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) also need to be kept in mind; the agricultural industry and society in general, incurs significant financial costs associated with these injuries.

EXISTING COMMUNITY LEGISLATION

89/39 EEC Directive: introduction of measure to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (the framework directive)
90/269 EEC Directive: minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk, particularly of back injury to workers

DEFINITIONS

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Risk – Risk is the likelihood that a hazard will cause harm, and its severity, in actual circumstances.

SOME OF THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES LINKED TO CONTACT WITH ANIMALS

Poor manual handling techniques when dealing with animals.
Animals that are in poor health or not used to being handled are not handled in a way that is appropriate to the situation.
Lack of training of both farm workers and veterinary workers in correct handling techniques.

Driver unaware of the vehicle or machines capabilities.
Incorrect hitching or unhitching of trailers and appliances or failure of these devices.

**HAZARDS AND RISKS CAN ARISE FROM
PEOPLE, EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY, MATERIALS AND THE
ENVIRONMENT**

**SOME OF THE UNDERLYING CAUSES LINKED TO
TRANSPORT/MACHINERY**

Lack of appropriate health and safety policies and procedures.
Inappropriate or no driver awareness training or training on the use of work equipment and vehicles.
Poor communication with staff on health and safety procedures and policies.
Under-reporting can facilitate slow changes to vehicle and machinery design improvements.

**UNDERLYING CAUSES CAN BE FAILURES BY ORGANIZATION OR
THE INDUSTRY**

HIERARCHY OF RISK CONTROL

- It is always best if possible to avoid a risk altogether, for example, by not using a piece of machinery if it is not essential to the business;
- Combat risks at source rather than using measures that lessen the effects, for example, if vehicle access steps are slippery, treating or replacing them is better than providing a warning sign;
- Wherever possible, adapt work to the individual, especially when considering the design of workplaces, the selection of work equipment (including physical capabilities) and the choice of working or production methods, with a particular view to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined rate;
- Take advantage of technological and technical progress, which often offers opportunities for improving working methods and making them safer;
- Risk prevention measures need to form part of a coherent policy and approach across the workplace;
- Priority should be given to control measures which protect the whole workplace and all those who work there, and so yield the greatest benefit, i.e. give collective protective measures priority over individual measures;
- Workers, whether they are employees, contractors, seasonal workers or the self-employed need to understand what they need to do;

occupational diseases in order for the joint working group responsible for preparing the seminar to specify the topics to be considered by the participants.

Problems faced by the enquiry. The enquiry was conducted in 14 Member States of the EU-15, since the data relating to Luxembourg were unavailable. Most of the indications provided concerned the year 2000.

Unfortunately, it was confirmed on this occasion that there were no harmonized statistics in the European Union. There was no common definition of notions such as "agricultural holding", "agricultural employer", "permanent agricultural salaried worker", "seasonal worker", etc. Even the definition of the agricultural sector was not the same everywhere. By way of example, Mrs. Wise indicated that forestry and logging were part of agriculture in some countries, but not in all of them. Moreover, when statistics on work accidents in agriculture were available, they were not always broken down into the categories of agricultural workers and self-employed farmers.

Characteristics of agricultural holdings. For reasons set out in the previous paragraph, it was not relevant to reproduce here the quantified data collected during the enquiry. Mrs. Wise noted, however, that in the vast majority of cases, agricultural holdings were small, or even very small businesses, and only a minority of them employed salaried workers all year round, or even for part of the year.

To give a more concrete idea of the situation, it was pointed out that an internal enquiry conducted by GEOPA for the year 2000 estimated the number of agricultural holdings employing salaried workers in the EU-15 at slightly above 1 million, out of a total of over 8 million holdings. The number of permanent salaried workers was thought to be around 1 million, while the number of seasonal workers was estimated to amount to at least 4.5 millions. These approximate figures were significant enough to account for the

"TRANSPORT AND MACHINERY" WORKING GROUP

difficulties to be overcome in order to conduct an effective prevention policy for work accidents and occupational diseases.

Serious and fatal accidents. The ambition of the enquiry was to evaluate the number and causes of serious and fatal work accidents. For several countries, trade organizations were unable to provide statistics, or could only give partial information. There was even some uncertainty as to whether the notion of fatal accident was defined in the same way everywhere. At any rate, differences were considerable as regards the notion of serious accident: in some countries, this meant an injury giving rise to permanent work incapacity while elsewhere, this notion extended to injury that caused workers to go on sick leave for more than three days.

Consequently, it was stressed that the table below only had an indicative value.

Causes of work accidents	Number of fatal accidents	Number of serious accidents
Transport (collision, overturning)	128	489
Contact with machinery and equipment	83	15,855
Contact with animals	12	21,398
Falls from height	57	584
Falling objects	16	201
Falls on a flat surface	-	9,066
Others	88	25,326

This table highlighted three sets of circumstances which were at the root of most of serious or fatal work accidents:

- **Use of tractors and farm machinery.** Accidents either took place during transport (overturning of a tractor, collision by a tractor or by a self-propelled machine), or when working with a farm machine. Several elements were likely to be

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The questionnaire responses received from the social partners illustrated that transport and machinery-related accidents were the two most significant causes of fatal and major accidents in agriculture. These ranged from vehicle accidents both on and off the road as well as contact with farm machinery. The number of fatalities recorded from a transport related accident (struck by or an overturning vehicle) was 128, and 13 out of the 14 Member States that responded (the EU-15 with the exception of Luxembourg) reported transport as one of the top five causes of fatal accidents. Similarly, contact with machinery or equipment accounted for 83 of the deaths recorded and 11 out of the 14 Member States stated that this was in the top five causes for fatal accidents.

EXISTING COMMUNITY LEGISLATION

89/391/EEC Directive: introduction of measure to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (the framework directive)
 89/655/EEC Directive: minimum safety and health requirements for the use of work equipment by workers
 95/63/EC Directive: minimum safety and health requirements for the use of work equipment by workers at work
 2003/37/EC Directive: type approval of agricultural and forestry tractors, their trailers and interchangeable equipment.

DEFINITIONS

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Risk – Risk is the likelihood that a hazard will cause harm, and its severity, in actual circumstances.

SOME OF THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES LINKED TO TRANSPORT/MACHINERY

Driver error or driver misjudging a situation, including uneven or sloping surfaces and poor weather conditions.

Mechanical failure or failure of safety devices on vehicles or equipment or design failure.

Lack of visibility or segregation when combining vehicles and pedestrian.
 Failure to follow safe stop procedures or stop moving equipment before clearing blockages.

No roll-over protection or safety helmet in the case of four-wheel drive vehicles.

In order for these proposed missions to be fulfilled, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee:

- *should be linked upstream with all the health and safety at work initiatives of the Commission and its Services;*
- *needs a high-level expertise capacity as well as financial means.*

Hence the social partners will call upon the Commission to this effect.

Mr. HOLM (EFFAT) closed the seminar by thanking all participants.

involved during these accidents: protective devices against overturning, safety equipment on a machine, state of the roads or fields, training of drivers, instructions given to users, etc.

- **Falls and falling objects.** Falls from height were at the root of many fatal accidents, while falls on a flat surface or from a very low height provoked many serious accidents. There was also another cause: objects falling on workers. The following elements were clearly involved in these work accidents: instructions given to workers and control measures, safety devices on scaffolding and platforms, personal vigilance, and awareness of risks when working at a height, on a roof for example.
- **Contact with animals.** Accidents belonging to this category could be ascribed to a variety of causes: poor training on working with animals, lack of safety equipment such as a cattle crush, wrong manipulation of doors and gates, not to mention the hazards linked to animals' horns.

These three main causes of accidents would be the subject of discussions during the seminar.

Occupational diseases. The enquiry also tried to determine the importance of occupational diseases. Here as well, the information gathered was very partial, though nonetheless statistically significant.

Causes of occupational diseases	Number of cases
Musculo-skeletal disorders	918
Dust – Asthma (lung problems)	198
Dermatitis (skin problems)	159

Musculo-skeletal disorders (MSD) were the main cause of the occupational diseases recorded. This was due to various circumstances: poor knowledge of manual handling techniques, weight and size of handled objects, vibrations, etc. Other problems were mentioned, such as defects in dust and spore evacuation, problems in the use of protective equipment against dust inhalation or skin damage. Zoonoses and noise pollution were also mentioned, but no statistics were available.

different competent bodies, in particular Eurostat, the Agency in Bilbao, etc.

Subsequently, the Committee should ask the European Commission to give the appropriate instructions to the Member States with a view to collecting the statistical data that is needed for the creation of indicators that are likely to serve as the basis of a concrete and effective European prevention policy. It is also essential that an Observatory for occupational risks in agriculture be created.

2. ***As far as prevention actions are concerned, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee should take up contact with all entities concerned with a view to, in particular:***

- *To systematically take an inventory of the prevention actions in Member States companies;*
- *To assess the effectiveness of these actions and disseminate these experiences in the Member States by setting up a database that can be consulted in the European Union languages on a website developed by common agreement between the social partners. To this end, one must take account of the conclusions of the three working parties that met during the Seminar, the meeting reports of which can be found in annex.*
- *To take an inventory of the likely improvements to farm machinery in collaboration with builders and the services of DG EMPLOYMENT at the European Commission;*
- *To make prevention a priority in all vocational training programmes, both basic and continuous.*
- *To organize a European Year for the prevention of work accidents and occupational diseases in agriculture.*
- *To promote the implementation of prevention instruments and methods in the new Member States.*

high places, etc., and can involve workers that are isolated at their place of work.

Unfortunately at European level there are no comprehensive, precise and more importantly consistent statistics on the amount, frequency, causes and seriousness of the work accidents and occupational diseases as well as coherent definitions of the parts of the population concerned.

- **On the other hand, the Member States are making several efforts to prevent work accidents in agriculture.** Many players are taking part in this effort at varying degrees: worker trade union organizations, employer organizations, joint organizations created by the social partners, social security, mutual benefit organizations and insurance companies, State services, etc.

These prevention efforts are implemented at national level according to very distinct methods and results.

Under these circumstances, the Seminar participants propose two lines of action to the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee in Agriculture:

1. **As far as statistics are concerned**, to agree on the definition of a certain amount of indicators common to all Member States, for instance:
 - The definition of the professional sector concerned (e.g. forests, maintenance of green areas, etc.);
 - The definition of the people concerned (employers, salaried workers, family members);
 - The definition of the concepts of frequency and seriousness, etc.

To create these indicators, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee in Agriculture could ask for the cooperation of

PRESENTATION OF SIX EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES

Rapporteurs were appointed during the preparatory phase of the seminar in order to present examples of best practices relating to prevention of accidents at work.

FRANCE (Jean-Paul LARRAT, GEOPA): Observatory for Occupational Hazards in agriculture.

SWEDEN (Lars Eric LIDMAN, EFFAT): Regional safety delegates.

UNITED KINGDOM (Tony MITCHELL, GEOPA): Safety Awareness Days focusing on safety at work.

CZECH REPUBLIC (Bohumir DUFEK, EFFAT): Accident prevention in animal farming.

NETHERLANDS (Ad DE ROOIJ, GEOPA): Prevention comes first.

SPAIN (RODRIGUEZ-GUTIERREZ, EFFAT): Safety training of seasonal workers.

EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES

THE OBSERVATORY FOR OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS IN FRANCE

Mr. Jean-Paul LARRAT (GEOPA) presented the Observatory for Occupational Hazards (French acronym: ORP) organized in France by the MSA (Mutualité Sociale Agricole – agricultural mutual benefit society). He explained that the MSA was the social security body for agricultural trades, which meant it managed the compulsory insurance cover which agricultural salaried workers had to take out against work accidents and occupational diseases.

The mission of the Observatory was to contribute to knowledge about work accidents, occupational pathologies and, more broadly, about all aspects of occupational hazards in agriculture. The Observatory's studies, surveys and appraisals were addressed to occupational health and safety managers and specialists. They served as a means of providing information on hazards and targeting preventative action.

Mr. Larrat indicated that the ORP mostly worked on the basis of the statistical indicators at its disposal while also working on more limited issues proposed by occupational physicians, safety coordinators of the MSA national network, or public authorities. The Observatory formulated enquiries, controlled and processed data, interpreted and summarized results and took part in their dissemination and utilization.

Data sources were the following:

Mr. TREGENZA explained that at the level of the European Agency, the "Agriculture" project was initially quite unclear. It was roughly known to be a risk sector, but there were very few statistics that could be used. Meetings should be organized on a specific theme, a field to deal with, and a short list of key priorities should be drawn up. The Agency would certainly be willing to cooperate with the Social Dialogue Committee along those lines.

Mr. LEVACHER (GEOPA) read the **Final Declaration** which was prepared during the seminar. It was approved by all participants.

FINAL DECLARATION

The seminar on health and safety in agriculture organized in Brussels on 22 to 24 October 2004 by GEOPA-COPA and EFFAT (ETUC) has made it possible to draw the following two-fold conclusion:

- *On the one hand, there are still very many work accidents and occupational diseases in European agriculture. The accidents concern different categories of people: the self-employed, permanent and seasonal salaried workers, but also the family members of holding managers and especially spouses and children.*

These accidents are of a very diverse nature and take place as a result of driving tractors, the use of farming machinery, contact with animals, the use of chemical products, falls from

machinery, chemical-related risks, etc. There was a need to be both precise and easy to understand!

3. Translating and circulating information among the new Member States. They should be asked what information they lacked, the copyright of what already existed elsewhere should be bought in order to be able to put content on line as from 2005 and they should be asked to appoint a competent expert in the agricultural field to validate the whole set of documents put at their disposal.

Finally, Mr. Tregenza commented that risk prevention was a never-ending task, with the need for constant updates and the emergence of new hazards: musculo-skeletal disorders, stress, young workers issue, migrant workers, noise at work, etc.

Discussion.

Mr. SPAHN (Secretary General of the Agricultural Department of EFFAT) explained that he would like relations to be developed with the European Agency and organize a networking of skills. Both parties were willing, but institutional relations did not follow naturally. For example, there were hundreds of films in all Member States on tractor driving. Mr. Spahn pointed out that this documentation could be provided free of charge, as it was generally produced by public institutions or public services. It would therefore be useful to meet in order to organize cooperation. Mr. GOUR (GEOPA) reminded the seminar participants that the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee had been concerned for many years with the issue of safety at work in agriculture. When the Agency took an initiative in this field or defined a priority, they should come and talk about it with the Committee. Mr. LEVACHER (GEOPA) agreed with both speakers. The Agency and the Committee should be brought closer in order to avoid dissipating efforts.

- national information systems providing data on contributions and allowances, which made it possible to develop an exhaustive database on the characteristics of insured persons, declared work accidents and recognized occupational diseases;
- supplementary surveys carried out with the help of occupational physicians and safety coordinators. For example, topics recently addressed included the assessment of the state of cardan drive protectors on farm holdings, felling in forests, musculo-skeletal disorders in meat-cutting plants, psittacosis, and the working conditions of cattle farmers.

Prospects: Mr. Larrat underlined that the ORP information system of general data would be more detailed and more accessible in the future. Developments were planned as regards a toxicant monitoring scheme for pesticides, zoonosis monitoring on diseases transmitted by animals and an observatory for machine-related risks involving agricultural machinery.

REGIONAL SAFETY DELEGATES IN SWEDEN

Mr. Lars Eric LIDMAN (EFFAT) described the safety scheme set up in Sweden in the agricultural sector. He explained that in businesses of over 5 salaried workers, there were local safety delegates while in large businesses, there was a local safety delegate for each establishment or workshop, with their action coordinated by a head delegate. These delegates were appointed by the farmers union. For businesses of up to 5 salaried workers, the trade union appointed inter-company roving delegates. All in all, there were 1,700 safety delegates in Sweden, performing their mission full-time or part-time. They were appointed for a three-year term and the trade union informed their employer and the Labour Administration about their nomination.

The role of **roving delegates** was to assist workers and employers. Mr. Lidman indicated they regularly visited companies, proposed accident prevention actions, and carried out enquiries about accidents in cooperation with employers and salaried workers. Their mission was also to assist and train local delegates and organize training sessions for employers and workers.

There were currently 10 full-time roving delegates in the Swedish **agricultural sector**. Last year, they visited around 2,000 companies.

SAFETY AWARENESS DAYS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Mr. Tony MITCHELL (GEOPA) set out a method used in the United Kingdom to raise the awareness of hard-to-reach groups of farmers: Safety Awareness Days (SAD), focusing on safety at work.

The concept was the following: for half a day, seven scenarios were presented to an audience of around 200 people. Mr. Mitchell explained that the ideal venue for this type of meeting was an agricultural college, which had the necessary infrastructures: miscellaneous machines and equipment such as forklift trucks as well as facilities like a car park, a meeting hall, a canteen, etc.

The scenarios focused on identifying and demonstrating the hazards and appropriate preventive measures associated with those farming activities known to be the principal cause of accidents. The scenarios were presented by instructors, who themselves were usually small farmers and could talk to the audience in their own language. Inspectors and workplace contact officers from the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) were also present at each scenario.

Mr. Mitchell stated that the **target audience** was single-person farm businesses and small family farms. Meetings were organized by sending out invitation letters, specifying that those who would attend



Mr. Tim TREGENZA, project leader at the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in Bilbao, presented the Agency and described its activities.

The Agency was set up seven years ago. Mr. Tregenza indicated that it had a staff of 50 and was administered by a Board made up, for each Member State, of an employer's representative, a salaried worker's representative and a government representative, on top of which there were European Commission representatives, which meant over 80 people! Moreover, the Agency had "focal points" in each country, with these correspondents being appointed by national governments. The Bilbao Agency mostly published information in electronic and paper formats, targeting three types of audience:

- political decision-makers, including governments and the social partners;
- research circles;
- people directly involved at work.

The "Agriculture" project was started in January 2004. Mr. Tregenza indicated that its purpose was to disseminate good practices and complete existing information. This work was subcontracted to various bodies in different Member States. The target audience included farmers, agricultural salaried workers, employers' and employees' organizations, and administrations. The programme had a three-fold objective:

1. Setting-up a website for agriculture. This site would be launched in the near future and include all the information available in the EU Member States, replies to frequently asked questions and case studies.
2. Preparing documents for training programmes, which could be used by organizers of training sessions. The aim was to create a scalable instrument, on Power Point and in paper format, notably on risk assessment, the use of tractors and

- the worker concerned: gender, age, seniority, physical condition, qualifications, training in accident prevention, etc.;
- organization of work: isolated worker or team member, paid per hour or per task, type of instructions given by the employer, usual or exceptional work at the time of the accident, etc.;
- work equipment: type of tool or machinery used when the accident occurred, state of the equipment and appropriateness, etc.

These statistical data should be pooled in a "European Observatory for Occupational Risks in Agriculture".

2) A prevention methodology. Several instruments should be developed at a European level to help the social partners pursue a prevention policy in the Member States, for example:

- a method to make workers acquainted with the farm, in particular in the case of seasonal workers: visit to the farm and the work post prior to employment, explanation of potential risks, etc.;
- training programmes for employers and salaried workers;
- ergonomic aspects to be taken into account when designing machinery, appropriateness of the equipment, for example to avoid work at a height.

The organization of a European Occupational Risk Prevention Year in agriculture could be an opportunity to launch preventive actions in all EU Member States.

**EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT
WORK**

would not receive an inspection visit for 12 months. The response rate was 55-60%, with many of the non-respondents turning out to be retired farmers or having very low agricultural activity. The provision of a lunch also helped to create a social type feeling to the event. An information pack containing a selection of HSE publications was given to every farmer attending a SAD.

Mr. Mitchell specified that since 2000, the number of participants had ranged from 4,500 to 6,000 a year, with 193 participants on average for each half-day session. He indicated that the cost of the exercise was around 4 £ per participant, which was ten times less than the cost of direct contact time with one farmer.

Evaluation. Over 90 % of participants said that their awareness of safety matters had been raised and that they would attend another event of this type. 70 % claimed to have taken at least one action as a result of attending and in follow-up inspections, those attending a SAD had better performance in all the topic areas.

AGRICULTURAL TRENDS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Mr. Bohumir DUFEEK (EFFAT) described agricultural trends in the Czech Republic. After recounting the history of the Czech agriculture (trends in the number of businesses, trends in the number of workers and changes in the privatization and structuring of agriculture), Mr. Dufek reviewed the current situation of the Czech agriculture and the impact of EU membership. In the food product sector, excess production was recorded. Veterinarian controls were modernized, mainly as a result of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). Mr. Dufek underlined that the financial situation of agricultural businesses, cooperatives and farmers was still a source of concern.

He then described the position of his trade union confederation within the Czech agricultural sector. Workers were totally integrated

into the accident prevention scheme. The implementation of accident prevention in practice involved the inspection work carried out by the confederation. The speaker compared work accidents in agriculture with those in other national economic sectors and mentioned the number of inspectors as well as the number of safety inspections on the workplace from the point of view of trade unions. Mr. Dufek gave a brief overview of the most frequent types of accidents and their weighting as well as of occupational diseases. Finally, he emphasized that prevention issues and information on work safety were integrated within the framework of the conclusions of collective agreements.

PREVENTION POLICY OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Mr. Ad de ROOIJ (GEOPA) presented the action undertaken by the social partners in the Netherlands in the field of accident prevention.

The "STIGAS" Foundation was set up in 1984 by collective bargaining. Mr. De Rooij explained that it had a board of representatives of the agricultural sector (both workers and employers) which decided about prevention strategies and actions in the field. It was financed through the payment of a fee by agricultural businesses, representing 0.07% of wages.

Mr. De Rooij indicated that STIGAS had a team of highly motivated and competent safety and health professionals, which included occupational physicians, safety specialists, occupational hygiene engineers and primary health care advisers, who had an agricultural background and good contacts with people in the field.

The Foundation collected data relating to the most effective preventive measures. For example, studies were carried out on legionella, leptospirosis, noise prevention, skin disorders, and ergonomics.

control male bovine animals, thus avoiding serious accidents. The problem was that this practice was fought against by animal welfare organizations, whereas it was the health and safety of workers that was at stake.

Group 3: FALLS FROM HEIGHT

Under the chairmanship of **Mr. Pierre SUPLICE (EFFAT)**, the working group perused the introductory note annexed to this document [EA(04)189]. Discussions led to a report being presented by **Mr. Chris BOTTERMAN (GEOPA)**.

The working group mainly insisted on the fact that any prevention policy must be based on a thorough knowledge of risks and a prevention methodology.

1) A thorough knowledge of risks. The social partners and all those involved in accident prevention at work should be given precise and detailed statistical indicators, especially on:

- the nature of accidents, for example by making a distinction between "falls from height", "falls on a flat surface", and "falling objects";
- the seriousness of accidents: fatal, serious (with after-effects, permanent partial or total incapacity), or other accidents;
- the circumstances of the accident: work indoors or outdoors, in fine weather or in the rain, in daytime or at night, etc.;

- 1) **Statistics.** Apparently, not all work accidents were declared. In certain countries, the proportion was said to amount to 25% of accidents. Moreover, not all EU Member States established statistics, or these statistics were very rough, and for those who did compile statistics about work accidents in agriculture, indicators were inconsistent, which made it impossible to draw up European statistics. The problem was that statistical data on risks was the precondition for any effective prevention policy. An action should therefore be undertaken at a European level in order to require Member States to provide statistics on work accidents and occupational diseases.
- 2) **Information.** The working group indicated that workers and their employers were often very ill-informed about the risks they ran and the basic precautions they should take to avoid these risks. On the subject of contact with animals, they ought to know, for example, that a pregnant mare behaved differently from a cow in calf, that the diseases likely to be passed on by cattle were not the same as those passed on by sheep, and that dust in cowsheds might provoke a range of allergies and occupational diseases. By way of example, the working group examined an information brochure on these issues, published in one of the Member States. This type of document should be translated and circulated throughout Europe.
- 3) **Work equipment.** The need to make two significant adjustments to work equipment was highlighted by the working group. Firstly, workers were increasingly isolated in fields and meadows, particularly in mountainous areas and rural regions in which the population size went down a great deal. It would be vital to equip these workers with mobile phones or other communication devices in order to be able to warn their employers in the event of an accident. Secondly, putting a nose ring in was said to be particularly effective to

Action in the field. Mr. De Rooij stated that a group of some twenty primary health care advisers visited farms regularly in order to help employers assess risks and establish an action plan. They also took note of the simple, practical solutions found by farmers, which could be used during training sessions. An Agriculture Health and Safety Innovation Prize was actually awarded every year in this context. Leaflets were also published and used during training sessions with salaried workers.

This prevention policy had positive results. Over the past twenty years, the number of fatal accidents in the agricultural sector dropped from around 40 a year to 11 in 2003. This figure included accidents with farmers' children living on the workplace; unfortunately, accidents with children did not go down very much.

Mr. De Rooij remarked that **the agreements concluded between the social partners and government** were a continuation of that policy. In 1994, a first agreement for a four-year term organized the joint financing of health and safety issues at work by the agricultural sector and the Dutch government. This led to the publication of educational material, the setting-up of an instrument for risk assessment at small farms, the development of safe working methods with chemicals and greater awareness of skin problems.

This partnership was positively assessed, with the Dutch Labour Ministry now having agreements on specific issues with over 40 different industrial sectors. The agricultural agreement was renewed in 1998 with the objective of developing prevention in terms of physical workload, then in 2002 in order to help 1,500 disabled workers get back on the labour market.

SAFETY TRAINING NEEDS OF SEASONAL WORKERS IN SPAIN

Mr. Miguel RODRIGUEZ-GUTTIEREZ (EFFAT) gave an overview of the study performed by the FTA-UGT trade union in order to determine the training and information needs of Spanish seasonal farm workers.

Its purpose was to study working conditions, examine the resources for protection available in small and medium-sized agricultural holdings, analyze the different types of work accidents that have taken place and their causes, identify the reasons why workers resort to unsafe working systems despite warnings and instructions, carry out an assessment of risk factors and suitable preventive measures, and determine the procedures to be recommended to employers, workers and prevention agents in the technical field as well as in terms of labour organization.

The evaluation of the study highlighted a series of positive and negative points.

Negative points: The number of accidents increased. Only 17% of workers claimed they used preventive means and only 14% underwent safety training. Over 40% of workers driving a tractor were not trained to do so. When handling sharp objects, only one worker out of four used gloves. In almost 30% of cases, no protection at all was used when working with a power saw. Only 40% used waterproof work clothes when working with phytosanitary products, and only 15% used eye protection. No training was provided as regards working with animals or how to extinguish a fire.

Positive points: There was a significant level of awareness of the risks entailed, with 68% of the people surveyed considering that some accidents were avoidable. Many were those with a first-aid kit and two people out of three limited their working time in very high temperatures or as a result of strenuous effort. Agricultural machines were generally equipped with protective devices while tractors were equipped with light road safety devices. Phytosanitary products were kept in their original packaging in over 90% of cases.

- distress alarms for operators or communication equipment for use in emergencies by lone workers;
- the fitting of closed circuit television (CCTV) systems for reversing and visibility as well as reversing alarms to warn pedestrians when vehicles are reversing.
- Better design for power-take off guards.

3. Information for the social partners on the second pillar of the CAP. Members of the working group agreed that there was grant money available from the European Commission to facilitate health and safety improvements. These included improving the farm road infrastructure in some of the new Member States to minimize mud being deposited on the road; the removal of old and non-compliant equipment from the industry (for example, tractors which do not have roll-over protection fitted); and the funding of health and safety training. It was agreed that detailed information should be provided to the social partners on funding available through the Rural Development Regulations.

Group 2: CONTACT WITH ANIMALS

Under the chairmanship of **Mr. Heinz FLUCH (EFFAT)**, the working group perused the introductory note annexed to this document [EA(04)214]. Discussions led to a report being presented by **Mr. Markus von SCHNURBEIN (GEOPA)**.

The proposals put forward by the group participants may be classified under three headings: statistics, information and work equipment.

1. Recommendation for Certified Vocational Training for tractor driving. The social partners should draw up a recommendation for Certified Driver Training on agricultural tractors and mobile machines (combine harvesters, self-propelled sprayers, off-road forklifts, potato harvesters etc.). The certificate should be recognized across the European Union in line with the European Agreement on Vocational Training in Agriculture. This should assist with improving health and safety with regard to agricultural vehicles particularly taking into account the free movement of labour across the EU. The recommendations should include the following elements:

- technical information and assessment;
- practical on-farm experience (hours of operation) and assessment;
- information on safety procedures and features of the vehicle; and
- the ability for certificates to be issued based on past industry experience (i.e. grandfather rights).

2. Dialogue with agricultural vehicle manufacturers. Members of the working group felt that there were a number of issues that could be dealt with by technical or engineering solutions. It was agreed that the social dialogue should open a dialogue with agricultural vehicle manufacturers with regard to the construction of new vehicles and equipment. It was also thought that some of these issues could be addressed under the next review of Directive 2003/37 on type approval of agricultural and forestry tractors, their trailers and interchangeable equipment. Some of the situations that could be solved with engineering controls included:

- replacing revolving power-take offs with hydraulic systems on new vehicles;
- automatic engineer cut out devices – that could be manually overridden (by the employer) in cold weather conditions or where power was required without the driver being in the vehicle cab;

Saturday, 23 October 2004

Mr. Peter HOLM, president of the Agricultural Department of EFFAT, chaired the work carried out on that day, which was mainly devoted to working groups then to the presentation of their reports in plenary.

WORKING GROUPS ON RISK SECTORS

The seminar participants were divided into three working groups:

Group 1: TRANSPORT AND MACHINERY (English-speaking group).

Group 2: CONTACT WITH ANIMALS (simultaneous translation).

Group 3: FALLS FROM HEIGHT (French-speaking group).

These groups met at the end of the afternoon and the next day in the morning.

Group 1: TRANSPORT AND MACHINERY

Under the chairmanship of **Mr. Bob FIDDAMAN** (GEOPA), the working group perused the introductory note annexed to this document [EA(04)188]. Discussions led to a report being presented by **Mr. Jesper LUND-LARSEN** (EFFAT).

The proposals put forward by the group participants may be classified under three headings: recommendation for certified vocational training for tractor driving, dialogue with agricultural vehicle manufacturers, and information for the social partners on the second pillar of the CAP.