



# Farm Safety Partnership

*working together  
to save lives*

## Farm Safety Action Plan for Northern Ireland



November 2012 – March 2014





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## Foreword

Farming is a vital part of the Northern Ireland economy providing employment to nearly 47,000 people across 24,500 farms.

Unfortunately, the sector has a poor safety record with 32 work-related fatalities between April 2007 and March 2012. This represents a disproportionate number of deaths compared to other industries.

The death toll is unrelenting, with the first six months of 2012/13 (April to September) already having witnessed a total of nine work-related fatalities on our farms, bringing the total from April 2007 to 41.

In response to the worsening situation, a Farm Safety Partnership was launched in May 2012 by Ministers Foster and O'Neill between the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI), the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), and the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU). Since then the Partnership has also been joined by the National Farmers' Union Mutual (NFUM) and the Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU). The aim of this Partnership is to challenge all the partners to drive up health and safety standards on farms and strive to significantly reduce work-related deaths, injuries and illnesses.

Since its formation, the Partnership has been working tirelessly to examine how our combined resources might be harnessed more effectively to bring about a sea change in farm safety and to reduce, and hopefully eventually halt, the tide of deaths on our farms.

As Chair of the Farm Safety Partnership, I am pleased to introduce this first Action Plan and call upon all stakeholders with a direct or indirect link to farmers and farming families to do whatever they can to contribute to the overall aim of the Partnership.

However, the Partnership recognises that the real power to make a difference to the terrible safety record in farming ultimately lies with farmers. All of the partners involved in the Partnership are committed to do all that they can to inform, advise, motivate, influence, coerce and enforce to bring about change but, at the end of the day, the decision to take an uncalculated risk rather than to 'Stop and think SAFE' will almost always rest with the farmer.

**George Lucas, Chair of the Farm Safety Partnership**





## Introduction

The Farm Safety Partnership was established in May 2012 specifically to address the poor record of health and safety within the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland as exemplified by the unacceptable numbers of farmers losing their lives as a result of workplace accidents over recent years.

The Partnership brings together some of the key stakeholders with an interest in farm safety in Northern Ireland. It is made up of representatives from the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI), the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), the National Farmers' Union Mutual (NFUM) and the Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU). HSENI is an agency sponsored by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and it therefore represents the interests of that Department in the Partnership.

This is the first Action Plan produced by the Partnership and covers the period from November 2012 to March 2014. It is intended to both reflect the current and ongoing efforts of all the partners as well as identifying new areas for action over the coming months in order to lay the groundwork for a second Action Plan which will look to 2014/15 and beyond. In doing so, it recognises that there are unfortunately no 'quick fixes' or 'magic bullets' available to address what has proved to be such an intransigent problem within so many countries the world over.

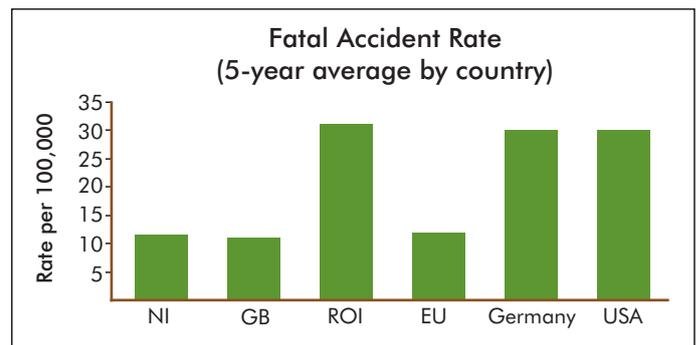
## Facts and Figures

Farming is a vital part of the Northern Ireland economy providing employment to nearly 50,000 people across 24,500 farms. 55% of farmers work their farms on a full-time basis, while the remainder seeks employment outside the farm to supplement income.

Unfortunately, the sector has a poor safety record with 32 work-related fatalities between April 2007 and March 2012. This represents a disproportionate number of deaths compared to other industries. In the same period there were 14 work-related fatalities in the manufacturing sector, 10 in construction and 17 in other work sectors. Therefore in that five-year period, the agriculture industry accounted for 44% of work-related fatalities in Northern Ireland.

There have been a further nine work-related fatalities on our farms in the first six months of 2012/13 (1 April to 30 September). These nine farm deaths are out of a total of 12 work-related deaths recorded for the same period for all work sectors. This means that farm deaths so far this year have accounted for an unprecedented 75% of all work-related deaths in Northern Ireland.

The poor safety record of the agriculture sector is not unique to Northern Ireland and in some respects Northern Ireland performs better than some other countries. In terms of the Fatal Accident Incidence Rate (number of deaths per 100,000 workers), the five-year average rate (2007/08 – 2011/12) for Northern Ireland was 11.7 compared to 11.1 in Great Britain and 31 in the Republic of Ireland. The European rate is approximately 12<sup>1</sup> whilst that in the USA is around 30.



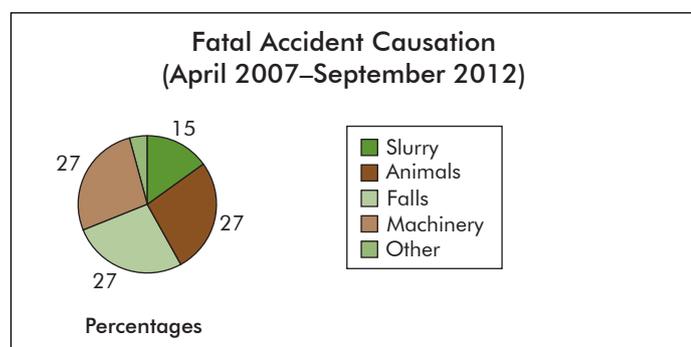
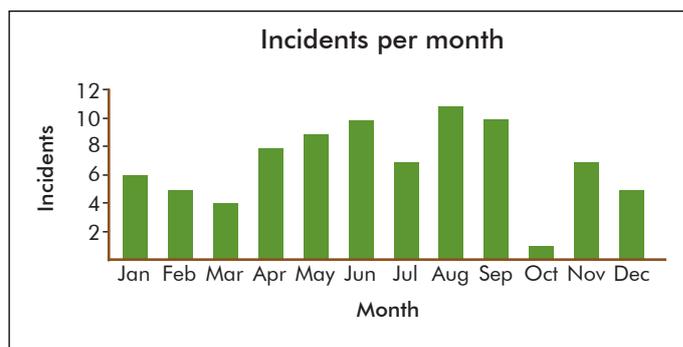
<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that a number of European countries do not include deaths to persons not of working age so that deaths to children under 16 or to the elderly over 65 are not included and therefore the statistics may not be directly comparable.



However, Northern Ireland's Fatal Accident Incidence Rate has been increasing dramatically in recent years, reaching a peak in 2011/12 at 17.1 per 100,000 workers.

Analysis of incidents since April 2007 has shown that fatal accident causation is linked to four main issues namely, animals (27%), falls (27%), machinery (27%) and slurry (15%).

Seasonal analysis of the 41 fatalities since April 2007 shows a higher number of incidents over the spring and summer months (April to September).

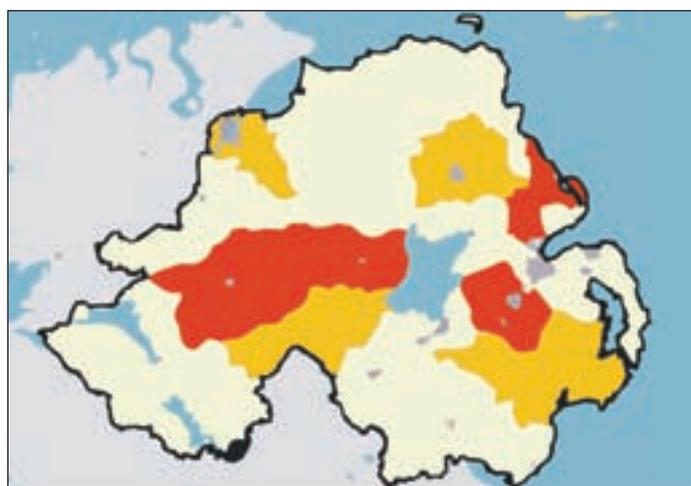


Work carried out in 2001/02 by DARD<sup>2</sup> indicated that 25% of non-fatal farm accidents result in hospital inpatient treatment, with over 1/3 of all non-fatal farm incidents resulting in the person not being able to work for 30 days or more.

Spatial Analysis of fatal accidents since April 2007 has identified five areas (based on local council boundaries) with significantly higher incident rates (Omagh, Cookstown, Newtownabbey, Larne and Lisburn) and five areas with lower, but above average, rates (Ballymena, Banbridge, Derry, Down and Dungannon).

It is important that this Action Plan takes account of the statistical information and uses it when it comes to designing and targeting its actions.

It will also be important that the Farm Safety Partnership builds on this information and works to improve its understanding of the health and safety issues within the industry, so that its actions can be kept under review and developed as necessary into the future.



- higher incident rates
- lower (but above average) incident rates

<sup>2</sup> Farms and Farm Families in Northern Ireland Social Survey 2001/02.



## Key Areas and Objectives

In order to have a meaningful impact on health and safety standards in agriculture, the Partnership believes that action needs to be taken under four key areas, namely:

- 1 Provision of Information and Promotion of Safe Working;
- 2 Health and Safety Training;
- 3 Motivating Good Practice and Discouraging Poor Practice; and
- 4 Collection and Analysis of Information.

The Partnership has established key objectives for each of the four key areas as set out below:

### Key Area 1: Provision of Information and Promotion of Safe Working

**Objective 1:** To ensure that straightforward, appropriate information is produced in ways that are understandable and easily accessible to the farming community and those that influence the farming community.

**Objective 2:** To ensure that information is effectively communicated through a wide range of channels with the aim that every person involved in farms and farming is made aware of the key risks and how to reduce/remove these risks.

**Objective 3:** To ensure that there is a clear perception that:

- accidents and ill health are avoidable;
- there are positive benefits from the proper management of health and safety on farms; and
- there are negative consequences for poor health and safety management and practices.

### Key Area 2: Health and Safety Training

**Objective 4:** To ensure that appropriate, specific and accessible health and safety training is designed, provided and reviewed to meet the needs of the farming community.

**Objective 5:** To promote the inclusion of relevant health and safety messages in other agricultural training and educational activities.

### Key Area 3: Motivating Good Practice and Discouraging Poor Practice

**Objective 6:** To ensure that, where possible, good health and safety management and practices are incentivised.

**Objective 7:** To ensure that poor practice is not rewarded and penalised where appropriate.

### Key Area 4: Collection and Analysis of Information

**Objective 8:** To capture and analyse relevant information that will inform future legislation, policy, strategy and procedures in respect of health and safety on the farm.

**Objective 9:** To collect and provide appropriate information to assist in targeting messages and influencing different sectors of the industry.



## Action Plan

### Key Area 1: Provision of Information and Promotion of Safe Working

Ref	Action	Lead Partner	Target Date
1.1	Develop farm visit packs to include safety checklists covering each of the four priority risks of slurry, animals, falls and equipment.	HSENI	November 2012
1.2	Develop a new suite of farm safety leaflets highlighting the main causes of accidents and promoting simple solutions.	HSENI	March 2013
1.3	Develop case studies based on actual occurrences that demonstrate clearly the consequences of accidents focusing on the four priority issues.	NFUM	March 2013
1.4	Publish topical farm health and safety issues via the HSENI's farm safety website, e-newsletter and facebook page.	HSENI	November 2012 onwards
1.5	Explore the potential for a new farm safety DVD targeting farmers and their families to address the key health and safety issues associated with farming in Northern Ireland.	HSENI	December 2013
1.6	Design and launch an effective and targeted multi-media campaign aimed at raising awareness of farm safety in Northern Ireland.	HSENI	March 2013
1.7	Issue media releases and articles to inform the farming community of important relevant farm safety issues at strategic times in the farming year.	HSENI	November 2012 onwards
1.8	Explore the possibility of all 'one-2-one' contacts undertaken by each of the partnership organisations being used to disseminate health and safety information and promote good practice. <sup>3</sup>	All Partners	March 2013
1.9	Explore the potential of an all-island Farm Safety Week in May of each year.	HSENI	March 2014
1.10	Ensure the websites of all partnership organisations provide a clear homepage link to the HSENI 'Stay Farm Safe' website.	All Partners	December 2012
1.11	Publish farm safety information via social networking channels.	All Partners	November 2012 onwards

<sup>3</sup> 'one-2-one' contacts include events such as inspections, farm safety visits, meetings regarding insurance renewal or insurance claims (e.g. NFUM Agency network contacts), advisory visits by DARD, etc.



Ref	Action	Lead Partner	Target Date
1.12	Ensure that the websites of all partnership organisations contain a link to the NFUM Design-A-Sign website. <sup>4</sup>	All Partners	December 2012
1.13	Deliver an annual programme of promotional events that capitalises on existing and new 'one-2-many' contact opportunities. <sup>5</sup>	All Partners	November 2012 onwards
1.14	Explore the potential for large supplier organisations to assist in the dissemination of information and the promotion of safe working, and report back to the FSP with recommendations.	HSENI	March 2013
1.15	Approach local agricultural suppliers to seek their agreement to make farm safety information, e.g. leaflets, video loops, etc., available to their customers.	HSENI	March 2013
1.16	Explore the potential for large employers, whose work forces may be involved in part-time agriculture, to assist in the dissemination of information and the promotion of safe working, and report back to the FSP with recommendations.	HSENI	December 2013

**Note:** All information and training material to incorporate the following elements where appropriate:

- theme of 'Stop and Think SAFE' with SAFE representing the four priority risks of **S**lurry, **A**nimals, **F**alls and **E**quipment;
- signposting to other relevant information;
- information on incentives and penalties; and
- reinforcement of the following key messages:  
'accidents are avoidable'  
'good health and safety management is good business'  
'ignoring basic health and safety standards is unfair and unjust'  
'accidents and near misses incur a significant societal cost'

<sup>4</sup> This is a tool to help farmers produce clear signs which can be translated into different languages to help those workers who struggle with English. See [<http://www.nfumutual.co.uk/design-a-sign/>]

<sup>5</sup> 'one-2-many' contact opportunities could include meetings/events held by UFU, NFUM, Young Farmers' Clubs, Women's Institute and Mother's Union and events where farmers congregate such as Farmers' Marts. Other opportunities may exist with sporting clubs and voluntary organisations.



## Key Area 2: Health and Safety Training

Ref	Action	Lead Partner	Target Date
2.1	Draw up a list of all Health & Safety Awareness/Training Courses being delivered by Partners.	All Partners	March 2013
2.2	Develop new health and safety training materials and presentation slides for new course for farmers.	DARD	November 2012
2.3	NFU Mutual Risk Management Services Ltd to piloting its Level 2 Award in Safe Working in Agriculture and Production Horticulture to farmers and family members.	NFUM	March 2013
2.4	Deliver 6 regional Safety & Health Awareness Days.	NFUM	March 2014
2.5	Undertake an intensive programme of farm safety visits over a four-week period with the aim of delivering key safety messages to 600 farms in targeted district council areas.	HSENI	December 2012
2.6	Deliver a new health and safety awareness course to 3,000 farmers using existing Farm Family Options, Focus Farms and existing trainers by March 2014.	DARD	December 2012 onwards
2.7	Deliver key farm safety messages to 90 rural primary schools throughout Northern Ireland annually.	HSENI	March 2014
2.8	Deliver key farm safety messages at all BeeSafe events held in rural council areas throughout Northern Ireland.	HSENI	March 2014
2.9	Hold an annual Child Safety on Farms Poster Competition in June.	HSENI	June annually
2.10	Deliver appropriate health and safety messages at DARD events attended by farmers, which would include CAFRE'S training events, open days and focus farm visits.	DARD	November 2012 onwards
2.11	Deliver key health and safety presentations to all CAFRE students studying agriculture or horticulture.	HSENI/DARD	September annually



### Key Area 3: Motivating Good Practice and Discouraging Poor Practice

Ref	Action	Lead Partner	Target Date
3.1	Examine the potential for health and safety standards to be taken into account when awarding grants or loans to farmers and report back to the FSP with recommendations.	DARD	March 2013
3.2	Explore the potential for financial assistance to farmers to promote improved health and safety on farms.	DARD	January 2013
3.3	Continue to explain the impact of how positive health and safety management can affect the costs of insurance for farmers.	NFUM	December 2012
3.4	Engage with machinery manufacturers and suppliers to explore the potential for 'designing out' inherent risks in farm machinery.	HSENI	March 2013
3.5	Respond to all requests from farmers and their families for assistance in managing health and safety with offers of free and confidential advice and mentoring services via the Health and Safety Works NI helpline on 0300 020 0030.	HSENI	November 2012 onwards
3.6	Explore the potential for large supplier organisations to motivate/influence farmers to adopt good practice in managing health and safety and report back to the FSP with recommendations.	HSENI	May 2013





Ref	Action	Lead Partner	Target Date
3.7	HSENI to increase its total number of farm safety visits by 50% in 2012/13 and maintain the level of visits in 2013/14 compared to 2011/12. (Note: equates to 2,000 visits over the two-year period 2012/13 to 2013/14).	HSENI	March 2014
3.8	HSENI to take action with regard to work activities encountered on farms that give rise to the potential for significant danger.	HSENI	November 2012 onwards
3.9	Examine the potential for the introduction of alternative sanctions to the current enforcement options available to HSENI, such as attendance at safety awareness courses.	HSENI	March 2014
3.10	Publish details of enforcement action taken against farmers to both (a) act as a deterrent to others and (b) raise awareness of the risks involved and solutions required.	HSENI	November 2012 onwards
3.11	UFU to assist in communicating summaries of HSENI action taken against farmers, e.g. Improvement and Prohibition Notices to both (a) act as a deterrent to others and (b) raise awareness of the risks involved and the solutions required.	UFU	November 2012 onwards
3.12	Explore the possibility of running a Farm Safety Competition that will motivate the adoption and sharing of good health and safety practice in relation to the four main risk areas of Slurry, Animals, Falls and Equipment.	UFU	March 2013





## Key Area 4: Collection and Analysis of Information

Ref	Action	Lead Partner	Target Date
4.1	Explore the potential to repeat the Farms and Farm Families in Northern Ireland Social Survey, in order to update information on non-fatal farm accidents, farm safety awareness and training in the use of hazardous equipment.	DARD	June 2013
4.2	Develop and make available information for case studies based on actual occurrences that demonstrate clearly the consequences of accidents.	NFUM	January 2013
4.3	Undertake market testing and focus group activity to assist in the design and development of an effective and targeted media campaign aimed at raising awareness of key farm safety messages.	HSENI	December 2012
4.4	Consider undertaking research into human behaviour and motivation to determine the most effective interventions to be adopted in seeking to change farmers' attitudes/ behaviours to health and safety at work.	HSENI	March 2014
4.5	Continue to liaise and share information, materials and lessons with sister organisations in Great Britain, Republic of Ireland and further afield where appropriate.	All partners	November 2012 onwards





## Plan Implementation and Monitoring

To oversee the successful delivery of the Action Plan, the Farm Safety Partnership (FSP) Steering Group has set up four Action Teams based on the Key Areas.

The FSP Steering Group will provide strategic leadership for the Partnership and FSP Action Teams, monitor the implementation of the Farm Safety Action Plan, review the effectiveness of the Plan and make recommendations for future work.

Reporting to the Steering Group, the Action Teams will monitor the delivery of the actions within the four key areas and act as a conduit to ensure sharing of information and, where appropriate, resources, and to co-ordinate activity. The Action Teams will also identify issues or opportunities around the delivery of the actions and produce plans to address issues and capitalise on opportunities.

The delivery of specific actions set out in this Action Plan will remain the responsibility of the named lead partner/s.





## Appendix 1: Membership of the Farm Safety Partnership

The members of the Partnership at the time of the publication of this first Action Plan were as follows:

- Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI).
- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).
- Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU).
- National Farmers' Union Mutual (NFUM).
- Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU).



## Farm Safety Partner Contact Details

### **Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)**

Dundonald House  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Ballymiscaw  
Belfast  
BT4 3SB

Helpline: 0300 200 7852  
Web: [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

### **Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)**

475 Antrim Road  
Belfast  
BT15 3DA

Tel: 028 9037 0222  
Web: [www.ufuni.org](http://www.ufuni.org)

### **Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)**

83 Ladas Drive  
Belfast  
BT6 9FR

Tel: 028 9024 3249  
Helpline: 0800 0320 121  
Web: [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)

### **NFU Mutual (NFUM)**

Harvester House  
4-8 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 86E

Tel: 029 9081 8604  
Web: [www.nfumutual.co.uk](http://www.nfumutual.co.uk)

### **Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU)**

475 Antrim Road  
Belfast  
BT15 3BD

Tel: 028 9037 0713  
Web: [www.yfcu.org](http://www.yfcu.org)





