



# Agriculture

## Overview

By many measures, agriculture trails among the four priority sectors. Agriculture places the lowest emphasis on health and safety of any of the sectors. Just 26% of workers and 59% of employers rank staying safe among their top three priorities. Furthermore, a fifth of workers do not think employees themselves have a big responsibility for health and safety.



Agriculture workers also have the lowest confidence in their knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities (58%).



Employers' awareness of their legal obligations and how to comply with them is also the lowest of any sector (64%).

## Shared outlook

Unlike the other sectors, employers and employees feel similarly about worker involvement in health and safety. Indeed, workers are slightly more positive than their employers. More than 80% of employers and employees are positive about worker involvement in decisions, and about open and helpful discussion of workplace risks. More than 70% of workers say hazards, near misses and accidents are reported most or all of the time. Involvement is greatest among supervisors, long-serving workers and those with recent training.

## 'Little encouragement'

However, workers say they don't receive strong support or encouragement to act safely:

**NEARLY 70%** of employers say they praise workers and reward them for safe behaviour, but only 49% of workers share this view.

**ABOUT 33%** of workers say everyone from the boss down is trying to improve safety - unchanged from 2014.

**69%** of workers feel they would be totally supported if they suggested stopping work because of a possible hazard or risk - unlike 90% of employers who consider they would offer such support.

## Participation

Agriculture does not score well on participation practices. Almost a third of workers say their workplace has none (compared with 6% and 12% for forestry and construction workers respectively who say this is the case). Only one in three employers says there are regular formal safety audits.

## Communication

Communication can be improved. Nearly all employers say they encourage workers to speak up if they feel something is unsafe, compared with 73% of workers who think this is so. Nearly four in five employees say workers will tell other workers if they are not working safely (such as not wearing the right protective equipment). But only six in 10 workers say their boss will say something to a worker taking a risk or shortcut. Employers and employees agree there is always sharing of relevant health and safety information, but fewer employees think the information is always easy to understand.

Only about half of employees think they are told how their views are considered when bosses make decisions about health and safety matters (compared with three-quarters of employers).

## Training

Formal health and safety training is lowest in the agriculture sector. Just 28% of workers report receiving some sort of training in the previous 12 months - a figure well below the cross-sector average (51%) but up on 2014 (22%). On the positive side, those who have received recent training are more likely to report near misses than those who haven't (54% compared with 35%) and to feel employers are genuinely concerned about health and safety (93% compared with 79%).

## Perceptions of risk

Agriculture workers are the least likely to believe they are at higher risk of serious injury than workers in other industries. All but 6% feel safe at work, and 57% feel very safe. Reporting of serious accidents and near misses by workers is the lowest of the four priority sectors, although subsequent action is high when there is reporting, both among employees and employers.

Agriculture workers are less likely to identify new hazards than those in other priority sectors (59% compared with the priority-sector average of 71%), although the proportion identifying a new hazard has been rising since 2014. The most common safety practices are maintaining machinery and equipment well, fitting safety devices when necessary, and taking action immediately after identifying a hazard. However, less than half of workers report that machinery and equipment is always fully checked, or that personal protective equipment is always used when it should be.

## Risky behaviour

Workers report the following risky behaviour from time to time or a lot:



working when overtired (44%)



working when sick or injured (41%)



deliberately taking risks or shortcuts (27%)



working carelessly from not having their mind on the job (26%).

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Such behaviour is generally lower than in other priority sectors, although little changed from 2014. Employers are less likely to say that such behaviour happens in their workplace.

## Changing health and safety practices

Just under half of employers say they have made significant changes to health and safety practices in their workplace in the previous 12 months.

## WorkSafe

Nearly all workers have heard about WorkSafe, but only a third know a reasonable amount about its work. About 40% of both employers and employees have significantly less trust in WorkSafe than those in other sectors. They are sceptical about health and safety, see it as excessively bureaucratic and want more pragmatic, common-sense regulations.