

BeSafe International Farm Safety and Farmer Health Conference 2023

Understanding farm safety and farmer health behaviours

23rd – 25th August, 2023

Teagasc, Ashtown Research Centre, Dublin 15, Ireland

We are delighted to announce a Call for proposed sessions and papers at the BeSafe International Farm Safety and Farmer Health Conference 2023 which will take place in Dublin, Ireland from August 23rd – 25th. The conference is organised around three pillars; Farm Safety; Farmer and Worker Health and Wellbeing; and, Solutions and Supports.

An overview of each theme is presented below.

1. Farm Safety

Farming is one of the most dangerous occupations worldwide with farm workers exposed to a large number and wide variety of risks. The family farm model of food production also means that all members of farm households are exposed to many if not all of these risks as well under varying levels of supervision. An extensive body of research has been developed identifying risk factors and assessing the key causes of injuries and fatalities. Other research evaluates the socio-economic characteristics of those injured or killed. This knowledge has informed awareness raising initiatives, occupational safety programmes and regulatory interventions. Notwithstanding this, the level of farm injuries and deaths from workplace incidents remains high compared to other sectors. Complimenting this research is an emerging focus on understanding safe and unsafe practices, i.e. farm worker behaviour, and the social, economic and work environmental context within which these develop and are enacted. This is associated with the 'behavioural turn' in social and medical sciences, and a recognition amongst farm safety stakeholders that better design, i.e. safety engineering, and awareness raising are not, by themselves, solutions to achieve sustainable improvements in farm safety.

Themes:

- Identifying, understanding or influencing safe and unsafe occupational practices/behaviours including social determinants of farm safety e.g. age, gender, education, culture, etc.
- Safety of 'vulnerable' populations on farms including children, older adults and seasonal or migrant workers.
- The role of agricultural extension/advisory services in supporting adoption of safety practices.
- Assessing how fatigue/stress/mental health affect risk perception and risk-taking behaviours. How do these factors impact retention of safety concepts in trainings and their application in the workplace?
- What associations do farmers have with farm safety? Is it viewed negatively (imposition of external forces telling farmers what to do, activities that redirect energy from primary production) or positively (ensuring farm labour and farm sustainability)?
- The impact of farm yard design or technology on safety

2. Farmer / Farm Worker Health

A second trend increasingly evident amongst occupational health and safety stakeholders, and researchers, is the growing interest in farm worker health, both physical and mental. Whilst health researchers have produced a substantial body of knowledge focusing on the implications of exposure to chemicals, pesticides, organic dust and other hazardous substances commonly used on farms and the impacts of musculoskeletal disorders, increasingly there is interest in understanding the safety implications of poor health and mental health challenges. The increasing focus on health is associated with, in general, greater societal concern for overall wellbeing and quality of life and concerns of policy stakeholders on the impact of labour conditions on quality of life, the attractiveness of farming as a job and long term food security.

Themes

- Social determinants of farmer health/wellbeing including age, gender, education, culture, etc.
- Key factors impacting on farmer's wellbeing (i.e. Regulation, Climate Change, Loss of Autonomy, increasing job demand or other factors?).
- Measuring and evaluating wellbeing or mental health of farm populations.
- Challenges to wellbeing: Understanding the root causes of occupation stressors and their implications?
- The role of agricultural extension/advisory services or community groups in supporting adoption/maintenance of health behaviours.
- Alternative: The impact of farming systems on farmer health.

3. Targeted solutions to improve farmer health and farm safety

Greater engagement with the social and behavioural context of both health and safety has prompted growing interest in developing targeted awareness raising, risk management tools, education and training programmes, and community based initiatives. There is also emerging interest in understanding the potential of market based initiatives, e.g. corporate social responsibility or social sustainability labelling, particularly in sectors that depend on seasonal or migrant labour.

Themes

- Multi-actor or Community Approaches (e.g. farmer discussion groups, community theatre etc.) supporting the adoption of health or safety behaviours.
- Place based interventions targeting at risk populations, e.g. health initiatives delivered at livestock marts /auction houses.
- Case studies of farm safety or farmer health interventions including those associated with policy initiatives.
- Identification of innovative solutions that have moved the needle on farm health/safety improvements, i.e. trans-disciplinary interventions, widespread dissemination of evidence-based solutions or cost-effective, sustainable prevention strategies.

Registration

There is no fee for conference registration and the organisers will cover the costs associated with refreshments and lunches. All those who plan on attending the conference must register before August 31st. The conference organisers will organise a special conference rate with a hotel in Dublin. Delegates will have to email or phone the hotel to make their reservation.

Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/besafe-international-farm-safety-and-farmer-health-conference-2023-tickets-598540058427>

The conference is supported, as part of the BeSafe project, by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Grant No: 17S269).

Conference Organisation

Organised Sessions:

We welcome proposals for sessions at the conference. Each session is 90 minutes long. The session conveners should contact David Meredith at besafe@teagasc.ie with a brief outline of the focus of the session and the format, e.g. standard presentations, short presentations, panel discussions etc. Depending on the level of interest, we may have parallel sessions.

Paper Submissions:

If you are interested in presenting a paper or poster at the conference, please submit a 300 word abstract (maximum) to besafe@teagasc.ie.

- Author name(s) and Institution affiliation
- Title
- Keywords (5 maximum)
- Issue / Objectives
- Method/Approach
- Results/Discussion
- Conclusion/Recommendations
 - Policy and/or Practice

The deadline for acceptance of abstracts is June 1st.

The conference organisers intend to publish a selection of papers in a special issue of an international peer reviewed journal. Please indicate if you would like your paper to be considered for this Special Issue.

Poster Session

If you are interested in submitting a poster for display at the conference, please send a PDF of your proposed poster to besafe@teagasc.ie before June 31st.

Field Tours

We plan on organising a number of study visits to research and demonstration farms as part of the conference and will provide additional details in due course. These tours will take place as part of the conference programme, i.e. between August 23rd and 25th.