

Media Release

Agriculture remains a significant industry in Australia, however the potential for death and serious injury for those working, living or visiting farms is known to be high. The reality is that farms are amongst the most dangerous workplaces in Australia hence noting the importance of improved good Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) practices.

Management of health and safety risks is a confusing and frustrating task for many agricultural businesses. Key concerns relate to their liability, responsibilities under the OH&S legislation, protection of family and employees and the cost of addressing hazards and risks.

Farmsafe WA Alliance aims to protect farming families and workers and improve farm business performance through better safety awareness and practices. During 2010, the organisation conducted a Safety Needs Survey targeting the rural sector of Western Australia. Whilst the results show that farmers are well aware of the need to comply with OH&S law, there are many instances in which they find it difficult to do so due to lack of time and/or cost restraints. It became evident that a more user-friendly, cost effective OH&S self-audit tool was required.

Coupled with the support and funding from the Department of Health and working closely with project collaborative partners and OH&S professionals, a new self-audit tool has been produced. At this stage and with the funds at hand, focus was placed on four specific OH&S risk areas.

The tool is an interactive web-based application, loaded onto the members section of the Farmsafe WA website, whereby farmers and farm workers can easily download audit checklists, investigate best practice options and refer to current legislative requirements relative to the associated risk or hazard. With an increased understanding on legislative compliance plus the ability to source this information easily and quickly, we believe this should assist the farming community to comply with current legislation and in turn keep themselves, their families and workers safe in the workplace.

Farmsafe WA Alliance aims to continue with this initiative and add to the current four modules to ultimately provide a complete learning library that will cover all aspects of OH&S responsibilities, risks and hazards relating to the farming sector. It is hoped that this will improve farm business performance through better safety awareness and practices which is the mission of Farmsafe WA Alliance.

Acknowledgement and appreciation to our collaborative partners involved in this project:

Department of Health
 Department of Agriculture and Food
 Chemcert WA
 Ear Science Institute of Australia

Worksafe WA
 Mingenew Irwin Group
 Primary Safety