

Work Health and Safety

Essentials



Work Health and Safety should underpin all decision making for every farming business.

This type of focus will support the building blocks of a strong and sustainable business.

Developing and embedding a strong safety culture is a critical ingredient to ensuring long-term business resilience, whilst also being a valuable tool in preparing for drought.

Why is this so important? The Australian Work Health and Safety Act, implemented in 2011 (WHS Act 2011), stipulates that farm owners, managers, and workers have specific responsibilities and a duty of care to provide a safe place of work.

It is critical that any business implementing a WHS system is aware of and adheres to the appropriate Australian state or territory WHS legislation, as it relates to where their business is located, as some are slightly different.

There are potentially significant fines and possible jail terms if WHS is not undertaken well. Management must take final responsibility for providing a safe workplace, and workers (paid and unpaid) must ensure their own safety and that of everyone they work with, at all times.



BENEFITS

- Reduces fatalities
- Minimises injuries
- Creates a strong safety culture
- Supports improved communication
- Ensures a documented WHS system
- Increases business efficiencies
- Increases productivity
- Develops good critical thinking skills

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Setting the Scene



Workplace Health and Safety must underpin each and every single decision, and not be an after thought.

[Charlie Armstrong, Farmsafe Australia - Retired Chair]

Don't be a statistic...

- Since 2001 a total of 1632 people have died on farms in Australia.
- Tractor-associated accidents have killed 261 people and quad-bike accidents have killed 204 people.
- 57% of all fatalities in 2021 involved a machine of some sort – including tractors, quad bikes and side by sides.

(Source: Farmsafe Australia: "SaferFarms Report 2022")

Hazard Identification, risk mitigation and control

A **hazard** is anything that has the potential to cause harm to a person or animal. A **risk** is a situation where there is the possibility that injury, damage or loss will be caused by a hazard and how severe the impact of the risk might be.

Stop and Think



To help you and your team develop risk mitigation and control strategies, ask the following important questions:

- What am I putting at risk?
- What are the consequences of the decisions I make?

These are simple but important questions to ask every team member, every day, and will support the development of a WHS culture and ultimately, good critical thinking skills.

Check for issues relating to the following hazards that may present across different kinds of enterprises, multiple locations, machinery, and livestock:

- physical
- mental
- chemical
- biological

Being safe at work, in relation to a farming business, can be challenging but it must be managed.

Laying the Foundations



Spot the hazard



Assess the risk



Ask yourself, 'What am I putting at risk; What are the consequence of my decisions?'



Employers have a duty of care to provide a safe workplace



Consider the human element - different ages and experiences, agility, fitness and fatigue levels, and cultural backgrounds.

Establish a Systematic Process

- Essential to identifying issues relating to hazards.
- Critical to developing ways to mitigate and control identified risks.
- Ensuring you are meeting your duty of care to provide a safe place of work and training, as required.
- Ensuring workers take responsibility for being safe in the workplace at all times.
- Keep a Training Register, updating it as required.
- Provide 'No-Blame' Incident Reporting process.

Complete a Risk Identification and Control Plan

- An effective process to identify hazards.
- Use a Risk Matrix.
- Apply a risk
- Develop ways to mitigate and manage the risk
- Allocate resources to make the necessary improvements
- Set a realistic timeframe with a responsible team member
- Ensure improvements are indeed completed
- There are various different kinds of hazard identification and risk mitigation templates
- Visit www.farmsafeaustralia.org.au/toolboxtalks for more information.

Making it Happen

Undertake Induction and Training

- Clarify how you expect your workers to conduct themselves at work.
- Ensure they understand the way your business operates.
- Complete inductions with workers (paid and unpaid), contractors and visitors.
- Helps to identify skills gaps and how people approach risk.
- Provide appropriate training and information.
- Supports the development of strong safety culture with workers.



Gather Information and Develop Your WHS Plan

- Seek appropriate tools and support from reputable organisations.
- Agree on resourcing and allocate accordingly (people, financial, time).
- Implement your WHS system.
- Complete inductions.
- Provide education and training.
- Organise and document safety meetings.
- Complete annual review.



Establish Policies and Procedures

- Policies act as the guidance and governance for management and workers to understand and adhere to WHS systems as they apply to each farming business.
- Workplace procedures provide the details and logistics to follow as applied to different workplace situations.
- Keep these simple and don't make them complex.

Develop Checklist and Priorities

- Checklists are a simple and effective systematised process.
- They assist the farm business managers to plan for WHS improvements.
- Identify and allocate resources appropriately.
- Complete WorkSafe Ag Checklist annually.
- Evidence you're working on WHS across your business.
- Provide historical evidence of improvements.
- Templates for improving communication.

Did You Know?



Every farming business is unique but there are four standout traits contributing to improved WHS:

- **Communication** – Regular WHS meetings.
- **Plan** – seek tools and support, then implement.
- **Resources** – prioritise and allocate.
- **Review** – informed decision making.

Increased Productivity

University research suggests that businesses with safety systems are up to 38% more productive than those that don't. Using a common banking 'rule of thumb', a 1% increase in productivity can potentially increase the EBIT (Earnings Before Interest and Tax) of a business by up to 10%.

This increase in productivity might be attributed to no 'lost time' due to no injuries and deaths in that business, or it might be attributed to increased and better communication which is a fundamental aspect of safety in the workplace.

Safe people = Resilient business.

Reduced Input Costs

Using that same concept, a 1% decrease in Variable Input Costs can potentially increase the EBIT of a business by up to 15%.

Very quickly, there can be a significant impact to a business through having WHS systems in place. Variable Input Costs, in a general sense, are the costs that vary, due to the type of business and enterprise mix (for example, labour costs or insurance).

An example of this is where a business has negotiated a reduction in their annual general insurance by up to \$3000 simply by having a documented WHS system. Improved business efficiency is a key to developing financial and economic resilience, as are reduced costs.

Staying on Track

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

Do's

- Start now;
- Seek tools and support from trusted providers;
- Complete inductions;
- Provide training;
- Conduct regular WHS meetings – toolbox talk; WH annual review;
- Commit to keeping good records;
- Underpin all decision making based on WHS.

Don'ts

- Ignore the WHS legislation;
- Be afraid of the unknown;
- Put off implementing a WHS system because it's too hard;
- Put your people at risk;
- Think that WHS doesn't apply to your business.

Useful Resources

Safe Farms WA is an independent Not for Profit, offering the **Green Card for Ag Safety** – an online induction and training tool to ensure participants understand their responsibilities relating to WHS legislation, hazard identification and risk management, as well as common issues across farms such as noise, fire, manual handling, working at heights, and more.

The online course is self-paced so you can complete it over time, and takes approximately 2-3 hours to complete, based on the Australian ASQA WHS Certificate II VET qualification. This tool is a 'want to, not a have to.'

For perspective, the construction industry White Card is a license and is based on the ASQA Certificate I.

<http://bit.ly/3B7z3mx>

Farmsafe Australia is the independent national body, based in Canberra, offering research reports, tools and templates that align with the national WHS Act (2011). For more information, visit **Toolbox Talk Templates** at:

www.farmsafeaustralia.org.au/toolboxtalks.

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