

ENASP´s Feedback : Health & Safety at Work – EU Strategic Framework (2021-2027)

The European Network of Agricultural Protection Systems (ENASP) welcomes the Commission's consultation on the Roadmap EU Strategic Framework for Health and Safety at Work [2021-2027]. The ENASP agrees with the EU Commission that a strong social Europe requires continuous improvement towards safer and healthier work for all.

The ENASP would like to point out the special situation of about ten million people working in agriculture in the EU. These people are affected to a high degree, because agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries. Experts speak of several thousand fatal accidents at work every year. **There is still a considerable need to investigate the reasons for this and to learn more about why in many places in Europe agriculture is continually lagging behind the improvements in occupational safety and health that have been achieved in other important sectors of the economy.** Although initial European research efforts in this area are underway, for example within the framework of the SACURIMA COST Action, these should be expanded. National and EUROSTAT statistics show that agriculture is uniformly considered one of the most dangerous occupations throughout Europe, but also shows great differences in national death, injury and illness rates. Initial research results of the SACURIMA COST Action reveal an extremely wide variation in the different statistics on accidents in agriculture. It must be assumed that the actual accident figures are much higher than those shown in the statistics. In the area of responsibility of the German agricultural accident insurance institution SVLFG only, there were more than 68,000 notifiable accidents at work in 2019, i.e. those that led to an incapacity to work of at least four days.

The agricultural sector is particularly affected by the COVID 19 pandemic, especially because most work cannot be restricted or done via home office. In addition, millions of seasonal workers work in agriculture, who are exposed to a particularly high risk of infection, among other things due to the working conditions and communal housing.

Like the EU Commission, the ENASP expects that this initiative will contribute to improving health and safety at work and, among other things, help prevent workers from suffering accidents at work and contracting preventable work-related illnesses. ENASP members are equally convinced that the initiative will also improve productivity and help to avoid unnecessary health costs, such as medical or rehabilitation costs, and reduce public health expenditure, thus improving the sustainability of social security systems.

It should be noted that the ENASP members represent agricultural social security systems that have been **successfully engaged in preventive work for decades**. These are Kasa Rolniczego Ubezpieczenia Społecznego (KRUS) in Poland, Maatalousyrittäjien Eläkelaitos (Mela) in Finland, Mutualité Sociale Agricole (MSA) in France, OPEKA in Greece, Sozialversicherung für Landwirtschaft, Forsten und Gartenbau (SVLFG) in Germany and Sozialversicherungsanstalt der Selbständigen (SVS) in Austria. Their work is based on the common **values and principles** of solidarity (among generations, family heads and unattached individuals, the healthy and the sick), the principle of equity, the principle of social and territorial cohesion, the principle of unselfish management and the principle of social justice, principle of single counter and specialization (several risks covered by one single organization for the whole farming population), principle of health and well-being of farming and rural populations, principle of democracy (interests held and defended by the representatives of the profession), principle of taking into account territorial cohesion and environment, principle of protection/security of agricultural employment. These values are not only **in line with European democratic and welfare principles**, they are also economic and sustainable in their orientation.

The EU Commission rightly states that the correct and full application and enforcement of existing rules is important to prevent the occurrence of occupational accidents and work-related diseases in the EU. It rightly points out that this is a particular challenge for micro and small enterprises. Such enterprises are found in many EU Member States. Their large number alone illustrates the scale of the challenge of implementing effective labour inspection and enforcement. In this context, we stress the importance of **implementing an agricultural prevention culture**, as propagated by the ISSA with its KRUS-led Agriculture Section within the framework of „**Vision Zero**“.

Finally, the **ENASP points out that the steadily worsening climate crisis is leading to new threats to occupational safety, particularly in agriculture and forestry**. Increasingly unpredictable extreme weather conditions and the spread of new animal and plant diseases also threaten people working in agriculture. Considering also this development, the ENASP welcomes the intention of the EU Commission to create a political framework to improve safety and health at work at both national and EU level.