

TECHNICAL NOTE 10

Germany

Making farm safety work in Germany: priorities and learning that fit the job



Occupational safety and health situation in agricultural businesses

Working conditions in agriculture are more demanding than in other sectors, and the work itself carries a higher risk of accidents. Added to this are extreme weather conditions, seasonal peaks in workload and an ageing population, with all the implications this has for everyday working life. These factors have a significant impact on accident rates in agriculture, which are comparatively higher than in other sectors.

Effective measures to improve occupational safety in agriculture are well known, published, advised and also required by statutory accident insurance providers (such as the SVLFG) in numerous formats. The measures relate to both conditions and behaviour at work. Therefore, these consider work equipment such as machines and tools and workplaces as well as behaviour at work, which is reflected in the expertise, qualifications and mutual interaction of workers.

The Needs Register identifies corresponding problem-solution complexes that contain both of the above components. In cattle farming, for example, this includes safe stable equipment with catching devices to restrain the animal, as well as practical training courses on the species-appropriate and safe handling of cattle. The Needs Register is a summary of requirements and solutions for safer and healthier agriculture. It reflects the views of the profession (as identified by the German CoP) and the current prevention work carried out by the SVLFG. This work is not least the result of accidents and illnesses, which are regulated by law and result in everyday measures to prevent potential harm to the profession.

Germany's occupational safety system in function

In Germany, there is a dual occupational safety and health system based on more than a century of development by statutory accident insurance and the state legal system (for more details, [see TN8](#)). Primarily the SVLFG professional association (statutory accident insurance) in cooperation with the profession itself promotes occupational safety in agriculture. The profession plays a key role in the self-governing statutory accident insurance system, which has a preventive mandate. This ensures that the specific needs of agriculture are systematically integrated and can be developed internally in line with requirements and implemented in businesses as needed.

Germany

Location

Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG)

Weißensteinstraße 70-72
34131 Kassel
Germany

Contacts

Klaus Klugmann, CoP administrator
OSH-Prevention
E-Mail: klaus.klugmann@svlfg.de

Sarah Öztürk, CoP facilitator
International Relations
E-Mail: sarah.oetztuerk@svlfg.de

More info

Klaus Klugmann all contributing farmers and stakeholders involved working to achieve healthy and safe working conditions in agriculture

Authors

Klaus Klugmann, Sarah Öztürk

More info

Internet: www.SVLFG.de
Instagram: svlfg_de
YouTube: [SVLFG - YouTube](#)



The portfolio for occupational safety in agriculture is correspondingly broad and can be viewed at www.svlfg.de. Due to this social system, the SVLFG is at the centre of all activities (Fig. 1) aimed at promoting occupational safety in businesses. [The actor mapping method](#) clearly illustrates this fact.



Image 1: "Safe & healthy from one hand", SVLFG implements statutory accident insurance, pension fund, agricultural health insurance and agricultural care fund in agriculture working across sectors and providing tailored services

Almost all stakeholders officially signal a high level of interest and influence in occupational safety in agriculture. However, when we look at the everyday activities and visibility of occupational safety among these actors and groups, a different picture emerges. Here, the statutory accident insurance system, with its statutory prevention mandate, is unanimously seen as the focus of active consultation, information and supervision. This results in an ambivalent picture in which occupational safety and health is fully endorsed, but at the same time referred to the responsible statutory accident insurance system on a fiduciary basis. A persistent and challenging task in this context is therefore to develop a new directive within organisations and companies that sees occupational safety and health as a responsibility that must be taken on independently, developing from within rather than being imposed on companies from outside, sometimes perceived as 'by force'.

Occupational safety survey: Identifying improvements

This survey on priorities for improving occupational safety in agriculture and how knowledge can best be acquired is designed to identify how farmers and agricultural workers view these two key issues and how they could be better implemented.

To this end, members of the profession of the SVLFG's self-governing body were interviewed in person. In addition, a press release and the SVLFG website were used to invite people to participate in the survey online. In a further step, the network of the AgrarScouts (www.agrarscouts.de) was directly involved in the online survey. AgrarScouts are trained farmers (or aspiring farmers) who volunteer at trade fairs, schools, lectures and excursions to promote dialogue between urban and rural areas. They provide a realistic picture of modern agriculture and answer questions on topics such as animal husbandry, the environment, technology and nutrition.

This approach was appropriate because the SVLFG provides social security for the entire profession and their families and therefore covers a wide range of insured persons. The survey was thus able to take this broad spectrum into account, with more older than younger participants, more farmers than employees, and more men than women. In addition, almost all types of farms and combinations thereof could be accounted for in this sample.

Method of the survey

In around 30 cases, the survey was conducted in a face-to-face interview following a meeting of the SVLFG Prevention Committee. This was a good opportunity, as farmers were present and occupational safety is a familiar topic for them. In addition, a press release was published inviting people to take part in the online survey. The AgrarScouts network (including 900 recipients) was contacted directly via a mailing. This combined effort produced a total of 111 participants in the questionnaire.

Translation into German

The translation of an original English template into German was carried out with virtually no adjustments or deviations in terms of content, producing an almost identical version in German. For the sake of clarity, instructions were added to explain that, for example, each number may only be assigned once in the ranking (Appendix 1 – Germany's questionnaire).

Participants and demographics

Eight of the completed questionnaires could not be evaluated because rank numbers were assigned more than once, rather than once, as required for evaluation. A total of 111 evaluable questionnaires were collected. Of these, 63 were completed by men and 37 by women. In 11 cases, gender was not specified. In one case, gender was specified as diverse.

As Table 1 shows, the age structure of the 111 respondents was balanced and covers all working age groups.

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents (111 total)

Age (years)	Result graphically	Answers in total	Proportion
15-24	█	8	7.21%
25-34	█	25	22.52%
35-44	█	23	20.72%
45-54	█	23	20.72%
55-64	█	26	23.42%
65+	█	6	5.41%
No Answer		0	0%

Table 2 shows the occupational position in the farm business. Farm managers make up the majority of respondents (62%). In 10 cases, respondents also have a degree in agriculture, with some respondents indicating this twice (e.g. family member studying agriculture).

Table 2: Participants and their position on the farm

Occupation position	Result graphically	Answers in total	Proportion
Farm manager / owner/ operator	██████████	69	62.16%
Farm worker / employee	█	24	21.62%
Farm family member	█	18	16.22%
Agricultural student	█	10	9.01%
No Answer		0	0%

As Table 3 shows, multiple responses were possible for a question on the type of farm industry. Over 48 % of the farms that participated in the survey work in animal husbandry (items 4, 5, 7, 8). Field crops without animal husbandry came in second place in the survey with around 37 %. Permanent crops accounted for over 22 %. In seven cases, no information was provided.

Table 3: Types of farm businesses in which respondents are primarily engaged

Farm types	Result graphically	Answers in total	Proportion
1. Field crops (e.g. Cereals, Rice, Root crops)	█	42	37.84%
2. Horticulture (e.g. Vegetables, Mushrooms)	█	9	8.11%
3. Permanent crops (e.g. Fruit, Vinyards, Olives)	█	25	22.52%
4. Grazing livestock (e.g. dairying, beef cattle, goats)	█	20	18.02%
5. Animal husbandry in general (e.g. pigs, poultry)	█	12	10.81%
6. Mixed cropping (a combination of 1, 2, or 3)	█	13	11.71%
7. Mixed livestock holdings (a combination of 4 or 5)	█	6	5.41%
8. Mixed crops-livestock (any combination of 1 - 5))	█	16	14.41%
No Answer	█	7	6.31%

In terms of land size, the largest area was 5,000 hectares, belonging to an employer cooperation in eastern Germany, and 3.5 hectares belonged to a part-time vineyard in Baden-Württemberg. The average land size among participants was around 350 hectares.

Farm Safety Priority Results

The ranking was calculated using the weighted average and is shown in the last column of Table 4. In the results, a low mean score means high priority.

The question, **In your opinion, what are the highest priorities for making a farm safer?** was answered according to the results in Table 4. Well over half (55%) consider 'awareness/mindset' to be the most important factor for occupational safety in agriculture. In second place, with an average of 3.07, is the use of PPE. This is closely followed by safe machinery and equipment, with an average of 3.23, which over 40% consider to be particularly important (priority 1 and 2). Significantly behind and ranked lower, with an average score of over 4 (4.46), are work support/time, support from family/friends, money and even training/expert advice for safety on the far



Table 4: Results for the question, In your opinion, what are the highest priorities for making a farm safer? (Rank the following options, with 1 as the highest priority, 2 as the second priority, etc.)

Preset answers / Ranks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rank (average)
Awareness of health and safety risks in farming	54.95%	16.21%	8.1%	10.81%	7.2%	2.7%	0%	1 (2,07)
Number of answers	61	18	9	12	8	3	0	111
Support to farm safely from family, friends, and important others	4.5%	8.1%	11.71%	14.41%	21.62%	19.81%	19.81%	5 (4,79)
Number of answers	5	9	13	16	24	22	22	111
Personal protection use (Hi-vis jackets, eyewear, helmets, etc.)	13.51%	23.42%	25.22%	18.91%	11.71%	5.4%	1.8%	2 (3,07)
Number of answers	15	26	28	21	13	6	2	111
Training or support from advisors / farming organisations	0.9%	5.4%	9.9%	14.41%	22.52%	24.32%	22.52%	7 (5,15)
Number of answers	1	6	11	16	25	27	25	111
Help on the farm or time to get everything done	9.9%	5.4%	15.31%	15.31%	17.11%	26.12%	10.81%	4 (4,46)
Number of answers	11	6	17	17	19	29	12	111
Safe machinery or equipment	10.81%	30.63%	19.81%	17.11%	9%	9.9%	2.7%	3 (3,23)
Number of answers	12	34	22	19	10	11	3	111
Money to upgrade buildings / farmyard / machinery	5.4%	10.81%	9.9%	9%	10.81%	11.71%	42.34%	6 (5,14)
Number of answers	6	12	11	10	12	13	47	111

Learning Preferences Results

The ranking was calculated using the weighted average and is shown in the last column of Table 5.

The question, **How would you prefer to learn about farm safety?** was answered according to the results in Table 5. Most significantly, digital tools for risk assessment and written materials such as brochures were ranked in last place, with 34% of participants doing so. Discussions with family and friends (rank 6) and classroom learning (rank 5) are also considered less suitable for acquiring knowledge. According to the respondents, technical discussions among colleagues are most suitable, and individual support through direct discussions with experts is also considered very important, ranking second.

Table 5: Results to the question How would you prefer to learn about farm safety? (Rank the following options: 1 as the highest priority, 2 as the second priority, etc.)

Preset answers / Ranks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rank (average)
In a training course/classroom	14.41%	15.31%	15.31%	14.41%	9.9%	5.4%	25.22%	5 (4,07)
Number of answers	16	17	17	16	11	6	28	111
Talking with other farmers and specialists such as in a discussion group	30.63%	23.42%	16.21%	9.9%	12.61%	5.4%	1.8%	1 (2,74)
Number of answers	34	26	18	11	14	6	2	111
One-to-one support from an advisor / specialist, e.g. vet or contractor	18.01%	24.32%	24.32%	14.41%	8.1%	8.1%	2.7%	2 (3,05)
Number of answers	20	27	27	16	9	9	3	111
Reading about it in the agri-media / on social media	7.2%	14.41%	12.61%	22.52%	21.62%	18.01%	3.6%	4 (4,05)
Number of answers	8	16	14	25	24	20	4	111
Talking with family and friends	0%	8.1%	9.9%	17.11%	22.52%	25.22%	17.11%	6 (4,98)
Number of answers	0	9	11	19	25	28	19	111
Learning on the job or through experience ernen am Arbeitsplatz oder durch Erfahrung	22.52%	4.5%	14.41%	11.71%	15.31%	16.21%	15.31%	3 (4,03)
Number of answers	25	5	16	13	17	18	17	111
Through an easy to use risk assessment tool booklet or online app	7.2%	9.9%	7.2%	9.9%	9.9%	21.62%	34.23%	7 (5,07)
Number of answers	8	11	8	11	11	24	38	111

Evaluation of results

Online meeting with CoP and focus group

In an online meeting held on 22 July 2025, representatives of the German CoP participated together with representatives from the AgrarScouts focus group. The results of the survey were presented and discussed in detail.

The statements and messages conveyed in the evaluation can be summarised as follows: All participants confirmed that the survey results were accurate or mostly accurate. Not a single participant rated the results as inaccurate or less accurate. As the possible answers were predetermined and therefore limited, participants were also asked about other aspects that they felt were not covered in the survey. These included economic competition that favours larger farms and companies, the quality of training and the general level of education, as well as the availability of workers and existing language and cultural barriers.

In response to the first question with the first answer priority, participants were asked to explain what risk awareness ultimately means to them. Various aspects were highlighted in this context. In particular, they mentioned knowledge of risks and appropriate measures, i.e. a high level of risk competence, as well as the importance of thinking, reflecting and taking time instead of turning a blind eye to potential hazards in everyday working life. In addition, specific protective measures such as wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety measures were also mentioned.

When asked how they preferred to learn, technical discussions with colleagues were given the highest priority. When asked how such technical discussions should be structured, a clear picture emerged: they should take place regularly, be prepared in advance, well organised, binding and accompanied by professional moderation. It was also considered useful to hold the meetings at different locations, especially at colleagues' workplaces, in order to establish a regional connection, as people know each other in this context.

Finally, the meeting discussed the expectations and wishes that the participants associate with the technical discussions. It became clear that many hope to sharpen their awareness of risks and measures, stay up to date and know what is currently happening in occupational safety. In addition, it was emphasised that participating in such discussions makes it easier to carry out upcoming inspections. Finally, the desire was expressed that safety should become a genuine, living part of everyday working life, from which everyone benefits.

Application of results to SVLFG activities

The SVLFG has a statutory mandate to monitor occupational safety on agricultural businesses and to advise employers and insured persons. Together with the professional self-governing body, an approach has been developed that focuses on understanding, knowledge acquisition and development, with control, orders and enforcement only coming into play as a second step.

The survey results clearly show that raising awareness of hazards through practical learning in exchange with professional colleagues is considered ideal. Therefore, two measures taken by the SVLFG – farm inspections and refresher courses using the alternative support model - are worth considering in light of the survey results and could be adjusted on a trial basis. These measures are recurring, mandatory measures on the part of the SVLFG as the statutory enforcement authority for insured companies. Both measures serve to promote the sustainable acquisition of knowledge in occupational safety and health, enabling employers to take responsibility for safety in their own companies. In both cases, and in-line with these results, joint knowledge acquisition and professional exchange could be facilitated through the sharing of experiences. In addition, professional and didactic moderation with authorisation to issue instructions must be ensured. This is where considerations for optimising the existing system in-line with this direct feedback from end-users fall on fertile ground.

Firstly, the SVLFG regularly conducts company inspections to review and promote occupational health and safety in agricultural businesses. The aim is to work with the farm owner to identify hazards in their farm business and recommend measures to improve safety. Only in cases of persistent uncooperative behaviour on the part of the

farm owner will the matter be escalated to legal action. This current approach to company inspections and refresher courses in the alternative support model could be adapted with the aim of improving risk competence, making it more sustainable and improving the efficiency of supervisory action.

Under the current inspection procedure, individual farms are visited and inspected. Advice is provided on occupational health and safety at the farm and this is assessed jointly. At the end, the farmer receives a list of instructions for remedying the deficiencies. Once the deficiencies have been remedied, the farmer returns the list to the SVLFG. Random checks or checks triggered by specific events are carried out to verify that the deficiencies have been remedied. Based on the results from this evaluated survey, we recommend the following expansions and improvements to the farm inspection measures to ensure that they prioritise identified safety and learning priorities and consider farmers' material needs:

- Group inspections instead of individual tours with workshop/seminar character,
- Bringing together farms with similar risk profiles,
- Voluntary participation in a binding context,
- Compatibility with the legal rules of the current procedure,
- The host's farm is 'officially' visited and inspected,
- Participating 'guest farmers' then inspect their own farms and report on the measures they have identified and documented their implementation,
- Incentives for participation that offer a genuine and obvious advantage.

On the other hand, the so-called "alternative support model" provides regional training in safety management methods and practices. The legal basis for this is a national law dating from 1973, which regulates the deployment of safety specialists in companies to support management in occupational safety (Occupational Safety Act - [Arbeitssicherheitsgesetz](#)). In the industry-specific implementation regulation (Accident Prevention Regulation for Safety and Occupational Health Support, VSG 1.2 - [Unfallverhütungsvorschrift Sicherheitstechnische und arbeitsmedizinische Betreuung, VSG 1.2](#)), farms and companies with fewer than 20 employees can participate. They are intended to gain the knowledge they need to continuously develop occupational safety in their companies.

In addition to basic and advanced training courses, regular refresher courses are planned to keep the topic of occupational safety and health up to date. These refresher courses on alternative support model includes online formats and one-day seminars on site focusing on farm type-specific topics. Depending on the specific sector, the content is tailored to the current accident and illness situation. We recommend that these refresher courses leverage peer-to-peer learning, and implement the following to best support health and safety awareness raising:

- Regional focus and current challenges in occupational health and safety,
- Workshop format with expert moderation,
- Practical demonstrations of safe procedures followed by a discussion to exchange ideas.

Appendix 1 – Germany's questionnaire

1. Was ist Ihrer Meinung nach wichtig, um einen landwirtschaftlichen Betrieb sicherer zu machen? (Bitte Ziffern 1-7 eintragen: „1“ am wichtigsten, „2“ am zweitwichtigsten, usw.)

Für mich am wichtigsten = 1, Zweitwichtigsten = 2, usw.	Reihenfolge 1-7 eintragen
Bewusstsein für Gesundheits- und Unfallrisiken in der Landwirtschaft	
Unterstützung für sicheres Arbeiten auf dem Betrieb durch Familie, Freunde und wichtige andere Personen	
Verwendung von persönlicher Schutzausrüstung (Sicherheitsschuhe, Schutzbrillen, Helme usw.)	
Schulung und Unterstützung durch Fachberater/ Landwirtschaftsorganisationen	
Hilfe auf dem Bauernhof oder Zeit, um alles zu erledigen	
Sichere Maschinen und Ausrüstungen	
Geld für die Modernisierung von Gebäuden/Hof/Maschinen	
Sonstiges _____	

2. Wie würden Sie am liebsten etwas über die Sicherheit in der Landwirtschaft lernen?

(Bitte Ziffern 1-7 eintragen: „1“ am liebsten, „2“ am zweitliebsten, usw.)

In einem Schulungskurs/im „Klassenzimmer“	
Im Gespräch mit anderen Landwirten und Fachleuten, z. B. in einer Diskussionsgruppe	
Einzelunterstützung durch einen Fachberater/Fachmann, z. B. Sicherheitsfachkraft, Berufsgenossenschaft, Sicherheitstechnischer Dienst	
Informationen in den Agrar-Medien/in den sozialen Medien	
Gespräche mit Familie und Freunden	
Lernen am Arbeitsplatz oder durch Erfahrung	
Durch ein benutzerfreundliches Risikobewertungsinstrument, z. B. eine Broschüre oder eine Online-App	
Sonstiges _____	

3. Demografische Daten (Bitte ankreuzen oder Information eintragen)

Alter:

15-24 _____

25-34 _____

35-44 _____

45-54 _____

55-64 _____

65+ _____

Geschlecht:

Weiblich _____

Männlich _____

Andere _____

Beruf:

Betriebsleiter/-inhaber/-betreiber _____

Arbeiter/-angestellter _____

Familienmitglied auf dem Bauernhof _____

Student der Agrarwissenschaften _____

Landwirtschaftlicher Betrieb, dem Sie den Großteil Ihrer Arbeit oder der Arbeit des Betriebs widmen:

1. Feldfrüchte (z. B. Getreide, Reis, Hackfrüchte) _____

2. Sonderkulturen (z. B. Gemüse, Pilze) _____



3. Dauerkulturen (z. B. Obst, Wein, Wald, Oliven) _____
4. Weidetiere (z. B. Milchkühe, Rinder, Ziegen) _____
5. Tierhaltung allgemein (z. B. Schweine, Geflügel) _____
6. Mischkulturen (eine Kombination aus 1, 2 oder 3) _____
7. Mischbetriebe (eine Kombination aus 4 oder 5) _____
8. Gemischte Kulturen-Viehzucht (jede Kombination von 1–5) _____
9. Sonstiges _____

Gesamtfläche des bewirtschafteten Betriebs (bewirtschaftete/eigene/gepachtete Hektar):



SafeHabitus

www.safehabitus.eu



@SafeHabitus_eu



SafeHabitus



SafeHabitus

Subscribe to our [newsletter](#)



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



NATURAL RESOURCES
INSTITUTE FINLAND



ZRC SAZU



CIHEAM
ZARAGOZA



EMU Estonian University of Life Sciences



EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF YOUTH FARMERS

CONFEDERATION OF YOUTH FARMERS



European farmers

European agri-cooperatives



European Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations



SVLFG

sicher & gesund aus einer Hand



VYTAUTO

DIDŽIOJO UNIVERSITETAS



UNIVERSITATEA
LUCIAN BLAGA
DIN SIBIU



COMILLAS

UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA

ICAI ICADE CIES



SAVONIA

ammattikorkeakoulu



UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE
IN KRAKOW



Funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.