

Promoting total health

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Farmers between 16 and 65 are three times more likely to die of cancer than people doing comparable work in other parts of the economy. Even more shocking is that farmers are five times more likely to have cardiovascular disease (CVD) and seven times more likely to suffer injury than comparable non-farming workers.

Health and safety behaviour

Both health and safety have strong behavioural dimensions. Each person is in the driving seat and can influence health and safety outcomes.

Farm safety focuses on preventing situations where an energy source suddenly injures the body (e.g. a blow or PTO entanglement, etc.), or stops a bodily function e.g. breathing.

Poor health, by contrast, generally develops gradually and can be influenced by health behaviours.

The principal health conditions associated with farm work are musculoskeletal conditions and arthritis, respiratory conditions and infections.

Mental health

Major farm stressors include financial worries, long working hours and poor working conditions.

Over time, such stressors wear people down and reduce their mental health. Farm work accidents are more likely under stress, so good mental health helps prevent accidents.

It is important to recognise signs of stress and to target their source. Seek support from agricultural advisors for farming problems and health professionals for health issues.

Maintain both work life-balance and social support, as these play a vital role in maintaining mental health.

Farm management

Health and safety management links with overall farm management. Good farm management involves removing hazards on an on-going basis, managing time to reach a balance between work, rest and leisure.

Farmers' health findings

A recent Irish study by Teagasc PhD Walsh Fellow Ms Diana Van Doorn and colleagues reported that farmers under 45 are more likely to report harmful health-related behaviours such as smoking, binge drinking and



Discussing details of a new four-year farmers' health study were: Front (l-r): Ms Diana von Doorn (Walsh Fellow – Teagasc / IT Carlow), Professor Gerry Boyle (Director of Teagasc), Ms. Audrey O'Shea (Sustainability Manager - Glanbia). Back: Dr. Catherine Blake (UCD), Dr. Aoife Osborne (UCD), Ms. Paula Rankin (IT Carlow), Dr. David Meredith (Teagasc), Dr. John McNamara (Teagasc), Dr. Noel Richardson (IT Carlow), Ms. Janice Morrissey (Irish Heart Foundation), Ms. Marese Damery (Irish Heart Foundation).

Farm safety

Manage the farm safety of your business by completing the HSA risk assessment document. It is a legal requirement to have the new green-covered version completed by 31 December next.

Health booklet

Health booklets for farmers are available by searching for health and safety at www.teagasc.ie

non-use of health check-ups. Older farmers (45 years+) reported higher levels of health check-ups, but the level was lower than the national average among Irish males. The older farmers were significantly more likely to report arthritis.

Overall, the study indicates that all farmers, but particularly younger farmers, should give their health more attention.

Also, farm conditions associated

with arthritis and musculoskeletal disorders, such as heavy lifting and pushing and pulling, should be minimised.

New farmers' health study

A new four-year study has commenced to study approaches to assisting farmers to improve their cardiovascular health. The study will be conducted by Ms Van Doorn at the Centre for Men's Health at IT Carlow. The study is supported by Glanbia Ireland, Irish Heart Foundation, the Health Service Executive and the UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences.

Assisting the farming community to improve health and safety is a key objective for Teagasc. The research will provide opportunities for farmers attending marts in 60 locations throughout Ireland during 2018 and 2019 to undertake a health screen test and, if they choose, to participate in the study which will seek to support them to achieve their healthier lifestyle goals.