



Specialists gather to identify ways of improving working conditions for farmers and farmer workers in the European Union.

20-21-22 September 2023, Carlow, (Ireland) - Over three days in September, 40 specialists from across the EU came together to share their knowledge and experience of farming and farmers, the health and safety challenges that they face and how these can be improved. The group met as part of the first SafeHabitus* Summer School which was held in Ireland to coincide with the National Ploughing Championship.

The summer school focused on sharing knowledge and experience of the diversity of challenges faced by farmers across the EU. Whilst many of the risks are similar, e.g., tractors, machinery and livestock, the context in which safe farm practices can be developed and promoted is varied. The main aim of the Summer School was to support the establishment of the 'Communities of Safe Farm Practice (CoPs) to address these issues, laying a strong foundation for collaborative efforts.

The goal of SafeHabitus CoPs is to empower farm health and safety actors and relevant stakeholders, to increase learning and exchange knowledge, to co-design and pilot practical solutions for occupational health and safety and assess their implications for farmers, farm workers, farm stakeholders and rural communities. Each Communities of Practice will identify and work on specific needs and topics in their national/regional context.

Participants visited the National Ploughing Championships to see different approaches to a range of farm safety and farmer health challenges that have been developed in Ireland. These included meeting with Ms Alma Jordan, a social entrepreneur, who established AgriKids to enhance the safety of children on farms by working with primary schools, to live demonstrations of safe use of farm machinery by the Health and Safety Authority of Ireland. Participants also heard from EmbraceFarm and Macra about programmes that have been developed to support the wellbeing of farmers and farm families.

Speaking after the Summer School, Dr David Meredith, the leader of the SafeHabitus Project, stated that *"What is clear from the formal and informal discussions that took place during the summer school, is that whilst there are similarities in the challenges that farmers face, there are no simple solutions. Understanding work practices, how these are linked with people's traditions and beliefs, and the influence of the wider farming community is critical."*

David Meredith added that *"The participants of the Summer School saw first-hand a number of initiatives that use this type of knowledge and, by working with farmers, farm families, farm advisors, and those responsible for the development and implementation of policies targeting farms, develop targeted and practical initiatives that help improve working conditions of farms. They will, over the next 24 months, apply what they learnt and, by working with farmers and other stakeholders, identify, test and implement initiatives to improve working conditions."*

* SafeHabitus (2022-2026), funded under Horizon Europe, is a multi-actor project that aims to strengthen Farm Health and Safety Knowledge Innovation Systems (FHS KIS) and support the EU transition to social sustainability in farming. Improving farm health and safety requires action from a range of stakeholders. At SafeHabitus, we bring together farmers, farming organisations, farm advisors, researchers, trade unions, health authorities, policy stakeholders, and other relevant actors from across Europe to tackle the urgent occupational health and safety challenges faced by farmers and farm workers.

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