

Farm Safety

Background

The issue of farm safety is an ongoing concern shared by all stakeholders including farm owners, operators, managers, workers, and the federal and provincial governments. While the prevention of injury accidents and fatalities is a common objective shared by all, opinions differ on the most effective way to enhance safety on Alberta's farms. Some believe that agriculture should be placed under Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), Employment Standards Act (ESA), and the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). Others believe that a legislative and regulatory approach will be ineffective.

Guiding Principle

While the safety record of Alberta farms is comparable—if not better—than that of other provinces, ACFA believes in continual improvement. Safety on Alberta's farms is a key part of our social license to operate. As such, ACFA is supportive of efforts that will enhance farm safety.

Position

- *Prevention:* ACFA believes that reducing on-farm injuries and fatalities depends on creating a culture of safety within the industry that is built in a collaborative fashion, and is widely accepted and embraced by producers. The best way to achieve this goal is to implement the recommendations of Alberta's *Farm Safety Advisory Council (FSAC)*, including the creation of a new provincial coordinating body to lead the development and delivery of awareness, education, and training. ACFA believes this forms the framework of a "made-in-Alberta" solution with the potential to reduce farm injuries and fatalities.
- *Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S):* ACFA believes that a simple legislative or regulatory response—such as the wholesale application of provincial OH&S—would ignore the unique needs of agriculture and would not be effective. While ACFA does see the benefit of applying the basic requirements of the OH&S Act, ACFA does not support the application to agriculture of the OH&S Regulation or Technical Code. In place of these, Alberta's agricultural boards and commissions must have the flexibility to develop specialized industry safety practices.
- *Employment Standards Act (ESA):* ACFA does not support the wholesale application of provincial employment standards to agriculture. Again, the unique needs of agriculture must be respected. ACFA opposes any legislative or regulatory prohibition on young farmers and other restrictions (such as hours of work during busy seasons and nighttime deliveries) that would jeopardize the caring for animals, seeding, irrigating, and harvesting.
- *Incident Investigation and Reporting:* ACFA supports a more robust system of incident investigation and reporting. To maximize learnings and reduce future safety risks, on-farm investigators must, however, be fully qualified in the assessment of agricultural safety practices and processes.
- *Insurance and Compensation:* ACFA believes that a minimum level of insurance and compensation coverage should be mandatory for all farm workers, but does not support compulsory WCB coverage. ACFA believes employers should have a choice of WCB coverage or equivalent private insurance. Private insurance often has the benefit of more comprehensive coverage than WCB. Choice is a primary organizational value for ACFA. In matters of insurance and compensation, employers and employees should have the ability to choose from competing alternatives. ACFA believes the focus must be kept on outcomes—that workers are covered, families are protected, and workers can be returned to health and take up their responsibilities.

Actions

- ACFA will continue to advocate for the adoption of the recommendations of the *Farm Safety Advisory Council (FSAC)*, including the establishment of a provincial coordinating body, as the best way forward for improved farm safety.

- Should OHS and ESA be made to apply to agriculture, ACFA will work with government and industry partners such as the ILWG to ensure that technical rules and standards, and how they are applied, are both safe and practical for cattle feeders.
- ACFA will be proactive in its commitment to farm safety by exploring the development and delivery of safety programs, services, and training for the benefit ACFA members. ACFA will take farm safety initiatives to its members.
- ACFA will continue to insist on insurance coverage for all farm workers and advocate for the principle of choice in insurance and compensation. ACFA will work to ensure that private coverage remains an affordable option for cattle feeders.

Key Messages

- *Alberta has a good track record on farm safety, and cattle feeders are committed to keeping Alberta's farms safe.*
- *Cattle feeders are dedicated to having Alberta's farms consistently rank among the safest in Canada, if not the world.*
- *ACFA is committed to creating a culture of safety on Alberta's farms.*

Approved by the Board on: November 19, 2015

Subject to Review by: November 19, 2017