

Occupational Health and Safety Development Strategies for Agricultural and Forestry SME's

Framework

The creation of an Agricultural Advisory System (SAA) in the Portuguese territory, defines the obligations of the entities involved in the scope of the subject areas covered by mandatory Agricultural Advisory Service, which include besides to the obligations relating to compliance defined in Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003, of 29 September, the rules on safety at work, as defined in Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September;

The membership organizations that are highly linked to the territory constitute is a network that covers virtually the entire continent. As they are in direct contact with farmers, they are also the essential element in the transmission and application of agricultural legislation, as well as required to take a strategic role in rural areas for the sake of farms and to learn how to face new challenges.

Specificities of the sector and preventive methods

Since farming activities are amongst the most dangerous and painful ones throughout economy, it is urgent to create an overall environment strategy that raises synergy among all actors, towards the establishment of intervention priorities in the scope of Health and Safety at Work.

Aiming at this goal, we feel that it is important:

- To develop skills in the field of occupational risk prevention
- To improve the capacity for intervention of all actors involved in implementing good safety practices
- To develop relations between associations
- To learn more about accidents in the sector and raise awareness of the inherent problems

The need for partnerships and approaches for action

Given the importance of agriculture in rural areas, it is important that the different actors involved in rural development processes clarify the role they can play in promoting health and safety at work and how synergies can be arranged in view of a more effective intervention. It is important to identify strategies and practices that can facilitate the involvement in the processes of rural development

In this context, small and medium enterprises which constitute about 90% of the Portuguese enterprises and that, because of their characteristics poorly structured, are usually more distant from the information procedures, the Directorate of Services for Supporting the Inspective Activity in the Work Conditions Authority has been having meeting with organizations from the Agriculture and Forestry sector with the objective of promoting a strategic action in the development of activities with specific approaches to the prevention of occupational risks that may contribute to develop the Campaign for the Prevention for Small and Medium Enterprises entered in the Action Plan inspecting 2008-2010.

Regarding to the Action Plan for the Agriculture and Forestry sector it is urgent to implement a strategy to establish priorities of intervention in the scope of the Safety and Health at Work, aiming to create of specific skills in the area of the prevention of occupational risks, to strengthen the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of good security practices.

So, we think that plan means the development of activities with specific approaches to the prevention of occupational risks together with agricultural organizations with which partnerships should be established as well as with official bodies:

It is, so, necessary:

- To develop initiatives to promote the improvement of working conditions in the sector, taking into account the demands of the emerging needs identified by stakeholders;
- To promote the development and dissemination of information to make the public aware of the problem (posters, leaflets aimed at workers) as well as technical information on the safe use of various types of machines more representative to Portugal;
- To ensure an exchange of information aiming at a technical advice regarding design, restructuring and rehabilitation of work places in agriculture.

In a more general framework, concerning the implementation of several measures, priority was given to those involving the structuring of a network to support farms and the implementation of a program of training for technicians and farmers.

In that program, training is clearly considered as tool which, together with others, pursues the following more general strategic objectives:

1. Improve quality of life of the farming population;
2. Reduce accidents and incidence of diseases;
3. Efficient use of agricultural production, on an economic, social and environmental point of view.

So and taking also into consideration certain targeted populations, some objectives have been identified for training:

4. Develop technical training towards farmers' organizations to help them carry out the tasks of trainers and advisers in SHST in specialized technical areas;
5. Promote a multi-institutional training project for aiming at the involvement and participation of various partners and specific recipients;

6. Promote the conception and the implementation of pedagogic tools for teaching and training technicians and farmers;
7. Prioritize training on activities involving higher risks, such as:
 - Operations with agricultural and forestry machinery;
 - Forestry work;
 - Plant protection application products;
 - Working livestock
8. Promote the technical framework of businesses, especially those who come for training.

Action Programs

General Purpose

- Contribute to an effective improvement of safety, hygiene and health conditions in different methods of agricultural work in Portugal, at information, training and supervision level;
- Promote the strengthening of the capacity of intervention of social partners and institutions in the prevention of occupational risks in agriculture.

Specific Objectives

- Make various stakeholders, employers, workers and their representatives aware The necessity to prevent occupational risks;
- Establish an information system that allows monitoring the process of counselling in the area of agricultural safety and health at work;
- Support a network for sectorial information on health and safety at work

Scope

The whole continent, especially those areas where actions can assume multiplying effect.

Target audience

Leaders and managers of associations and agricultural cooperatives and forestry

Agricultural and forest entrepreneurs

Agricultural and forestry workers

Manufacturers and suppliers of agricultural and forestry machinery and equipments

Manufacturers and distributors of plant protection products and other chemicals for agricultural use

Managers of units of agricultural exploitation

Entities involved

Social partners in the sector

Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development

National Authority for Forestry

Plan development

It is expected that the Action Plan is divided into several actions that can be classified as follows:

- Awareness-raising actions promoted by ACT
- Implementation of information and awareness activities promoted by the social partners, cooperatives and other associations, technically and / or financially supported by the ACT
- Availability of tools for technical information by ACT to these entities
- Development of information actions to the media, both at local and regional level

The activity will be diverse, including:

- Measures of disclosure
- Awareness and information actions (conferences, seminars and so on),
- Training activities;
- Inspective actions towards farms and forests.

Conclusions

With this strategic plan, we intend to alert the agricultural sector for the need to implement security regulations and give the respective actors a set of Know how, techniques and working tools on prevention of occupational risks, that may enable them to cope with effectiveness and quality the different practical situations, aiming to improve working conditions in the sector.

Thank you for your attention

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