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Demetra: A survey on work safety in 103 agricultural farms in Friuli Venezia Giulia

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate current levels of work safety in agriculture, based on interviews conducted in a composite sample of 103 farms located in the region Friuli Venezia Giulia (North-East of Italy). The survey has outlined a number of patterns that were consistently found across all types of farms and only slightly varied depending on farm size, type of production and location. The results were used to define guidelines for safety experts on the field with new, updated approaches for risk assessment and accident prevention in the farms.

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1. Introduction

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous sectors of economic activity in Italy, in relation both to injuries at the workplace and occupational diseases. More important, the frequency of fatal accidents is particularly high, although

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not well recognized since many of them involve unprofessional conditions such as retired persons or young people. This makes it very important to properly assess work safety conditions (Meeker, Carruth & Holland, 2002;).

Specific surveys on health and safety conditions of working people have been conducted at both European and national level (Niskanen, Naumanen & Hirvonen, 2012a; Niskanen, Naumanen & Hirvonen, 2012b). Recently, the Ministry of Health has promoted a Research Programme on occupational safety and health. One of the priorities has been to establish a national, permanent infrastructure to monitor how workers awareness about risks at the workplace, consistently with the objectives of the National Health Service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale; Inail, 2014; Cecchini, Colantoni, Massantini & Monarca, 2010; Marucci, Monarca, Cecchini, Colantoni & Cappuccini, 2013). This kind of investigation is based on telephone surveys involving both the workers and their employers. Another survey was conducted in the agricultural sector (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2014) based on face-to-face interviews conducted by specialists (Proto & Zimbalatti, 2010; Proto & Zimbalatti, 2015). The legal framework in Italy has evolved in recent years, following the adoption in 2008 of Decreto Legislativo (Decree) n. 81 of April 9, 2008, on the regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare. This fundamental text (Testo Unico), modified by Decreto Legislativo n. 106 of 2009, contains 306 articles and 51 attachments and introduces the principle of organisation in risk prevention, since both the employers and the workers are committed to safety management practices. Unlike other European legal standards (e.g. for food safety, environment protection of animal welfare), work safety standards are not part of the common rules for direct support schemes under the European common agricultural policy (Cecchini, Cossio, Marucci, Monarca, Colantoni, Petrelli & Allegrini, 2013).

However, compliance with work safety rules and national guidelines is required by many Italian Regions as a mandatory condition in order to apply for public support schemes, including those of the Rural Development Plans (Cecchini, Massantini, Frangipane, Monarca & Moscetti, 2011). As indicated by previous work, risk prevention and safety rules, while representing substantial requirements for any agricultural farm, are often difficult to introduce and partly still unattended in many cases (Cividino, Vello, Zucchiatti, Gubiani & Pergher, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). Thus, the first objective of this study was to investigate current levels of work safety in a sample of 103 agricultural farms located in the region Friuli Venezia Giulia (North-East of Italy). Another objective was to define guidelines for safety experts on the field with new, updated approaches for risk assessment and accident prevention in the farms.

2. Materials and methods

The data used in this study derived from two separate surveys, conducted to assess safety levels in the Animal husbandry sector and in the Vine growing – Wine producing sector in the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia. In the second case, a number of other farms with different specialisation or mixed production were also included. For the purpose of the present study, this made up a sample of 103 agricultural farms, with a prevalence of dairy farms and farms with vineyard and/or horticultural crops (Table 1).

Table 1 - The farm sample.

Type of farm	No.	%	Average size (ha)
Dairy farms	36	35.0	67.5
Other livestock	17	16.5	89.9
Vineyard and winery	24	23.3	55.6
Horticulture and nursery	12	11.7	9.4
Other	7	6.8	14.9
Mixed	4	3.9	240.5
Cereal crops	3	2.9	42.3
All farms	103	100.0	63.9

These farms were located in all of the six Health Districts in Friuli Venezia Giulia, each controlled by the

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