



# 'Train-The-Trainer' Approach Works To Improve Farm Safety Culture

The use of the 'Train-the-Trainer' approach has shown the potential to vastly improve farm safety practices and the culture of those living and working on farms, which was a key finding of a recent PhD study conducted at the School of Psychology, University of Galway.

The study by Dr Aswathi Surendran at the University of Galway was completed as a component of the Teagasc Be Safe Behavioural Farm Safety research project, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. A video on 'Farm Vehicle Safety and Blind Spots' was launched by the Minister of State at the Department with special responsibility for Farm Safety, Martin Heydon TD.

Dr Denis O'Hora, University of Galway and study lead supervisor, explained that by empowering trainees, the 'Train-the-Trainer' model had the capacity to vastly increase knowledge transmission and adoption to more people in both

a time and cost-effective way.

He pointed out that this approach may also enhance training quality, as the trainer has to consider the practical challenges of the task and they can follow-up by empowering the trainee to adopt the training on an on-going basis.

Dr O'Hora also stated that the 'Train-the-Trainer' approach improves the practicality of training as it challenges the trainer to identify gaps in their own knowledge. He added that it proves the saying that 'teaching is one of the best ways to learn', with trainers also learn from their learners.

The 'Train-the-Trainer' approach also motivates trainers to adopt best practice themselves to avoid dissonance with knowledge and skills that they have imparted. Therefore,

trainers can act as role models for learners and can provide ongoing supports to build a culture change.

#### ENSURING FIDELITY OF TRAINING

He acknowledged that the 'Train-the-Trainer' approach has limitations, as it requires time and energy along with building and maintaining relations to allow this approach to work. In addition, strategies need to be put in place to ensure the fidelity of training.

In explaining the aim of the 'Train-the-Trainer' component of her PhD research, Dr Aswathi Surendran said it was to equip farmers with the knowledge, skills and resources related to farm vehicle stopping distances and driver visibility blind spots to reach out to others on their farm.

Over the decade to 2023, farm vehicles have caused 44% of all farm fatalities, with vehicle speed and visibility due to blind spots being a major contributory factor. Therefore, improving farmer knowledge of these aspects of farm vehicle use is crucial to cut farm workplace fatality levels.

At one of three experimental training sessions held as part of the study, attended by 19 farming participants, a training exercise required each farmer trainee to estimate the farm vehicle stopping distance at a speed of 7km/hour – 84% underestimated and nobody overestimated the correct stopping distance. Overall, the exercise



*Pictured at the launch of the 'Farm Vehicle Safety and Blind Spots' video by the Minister of State at the Department with special responsibility for Farm Safety, Martin Heydon TD (l-r): Serena Gibbons, Teagasc; Dr Denis O'Hora, University of Galway; Minister Heydon; John McNamara and Francis Bligh, Teagasc; and Dr Aswathi Surendran, University of Galway.*

convinced participants of the need to demonstrate stopping distances on their farms, with participants describing the exercise as 'eye opening'.

#### FARM VEHICLE BLIND SPOTS

Regarding farm vehicle blind spots, the farmer trainees completed an exercise in groups of three on identifying blind spots using a model of a child. The exercise caused a 'sense of disbelief' at the size and position of blind spots, leading to heightened awareness from both a driver and pedestrian perspective.

Following the vehicle stopping distance and blind spot exercises farmer trainees engaged in a facilitated discussion session where they considered how best to impart motivating training on their farms. They agreed to comply with a 'Voluntary Training Procedure Agreement' with persons participating in training, designed to gain a shared sense of responsibility, and set clear actionable goals for the training sessions.

After the farmer trainer session, 90% (17) provided follow-up training for workers, farm employees, family members and neighbours.

Dr John McNamara, Teagasc Health and Safety Specialist, stated that there are currently over 135,000 farms with up to 270,000 individuals either working or living on these farms. He pointed to the huge potential in using the 'Train-the-Trainer' approach to improve farm safety culture.

*The YouTube Seminar 'Train-the-Trainer' may be accessed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDWygdRQFvM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDWygdRQFvM)*

*The 'Farm Vehicle Safety and Blind Spots' video is available at [www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/farm-management/farm-health--safety/videos/](http://www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/farm-management/farm-health--safety/videos/)*



*Trainee farmers completed an exercise in groups of three to identify farm vehicle blind spots using a model of a child.*