

## TECHNICAL NOTE 7

# Germany

Overview of good practices supporting  
improvements in farmers' and farm workers'  
quality of life

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## Framework

Three central fields of action were identified within [the German Priority Needs Register](#), which have been named in the Technical Note 3 ([PA 3](#)) and deepened in [TN 4](#), [TN 5](#) and [TN 6](#).

The topics presented there as priority issues were animal husbandry, tractors and machinery as well as occupational diseases and health hazards.

The objective of this technical note is to present existing good practices relating to above mentioned priority issues. These good practices aim to improve safety and health at work of insured persons and vulnerable groups on farms.

The good practices show an excerpt of the current solutions and concepts for improving occupational health and safety. The measures are in a constant state of flux and are adapted and further developed according to the evaluation results.

The best practices from Germany presented here show selected, proven and effective measures for improving occupational health and safety. These have developed over time within the framework of social insurance for the green sector and have a long tradition dating back to the end of the 19th century. Since 2013, there has been a nationwide social insurance organisation for this purpose, the SVLFG.

In selected areas (e.g. safety and health of seasonal farm workers), the SVLFG cooperates with specialised partners in order to guarantee the quality, scope and availability of its services.

The SVLFG also has a technical supervisory service that carries out inspections on farms, provides advice and information and also investigates accidents. In addition to German legislation, this is also based on the European directives on occupational safety and health (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2024).

In Germany, companies with employees are obliged to provide safety and occupational medical care in their companies in accordance with a national law (Arbeitssicherheitsgesetz, 2013). For companies with up to twenty employees, the company management can take part in SVLFG training to fulfil the legal requirements. The training provides sector-specific knowledge about health and safety in the workplace and how this can be implemented in the company (Sozialversicherung für Landwirtschaft, Forsten und Gartenbau – LUV- Modell, 2024).

Agriculture as an area of primary production has socio-cultural and economic conditions that make the use of safe and modern technologies difficult. This fundamental area is not dealt with in this paper. It is important to recognise that state-of-the-art technical measures are highly effective in improving occupational health and safety.

## Germany

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### More info

Internet: [www.safehabitus.eu](http://www.safehabitus.eu)  
[www.SVLFG.de](http://www.SVLFG.de)

YouTube: [SVLFG - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/SVLFG-YouTube)

Multilingual OSH videos:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@svlfg3082/videos>

Health and safety material for seasonal workers: <https://www.agriwork-germany.de/webapp-saisonarbeit/>



This is also reflected in the legal priority given to technology in occupational health and safety measures (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2024). It must therefore be possible to consistently pursue the legal priority of technology, especially in family, small-scale farming structures.

## Animal Husbandry

### Training programmes "Working safely and healthily in cattle farming"



Image 1: Animal husbandry – securing a cattle. Photo by [SVLFG], used with permission.

Farmers usually know their cattle from birth and work with them every day. Despite years of experience, serious and often fatal accidents occur.

The seminar on the safe handling of cattle raises participants' awareness of the natural behaviour of cattle in order to avoid dangerous situations and accidents. The training is free of charge for participants from SVLFG member companies. The costs are borne by the SVLFG.

The following content is covered in the training course:

- examples of accidents and causes of accidents
- technical options for the safe handling of cattle, including catching fences, treatment lanes, driving and catching aids
- reading and influencing the body language of cattle - methods for stress-free handling of cattle
- practice on a cattle farm

### Adaptation of accident prevention regulations

The accident prevention regulations are legally binding for insured persons. The SVLFG endeavours to adapt them to changing requirements and to develop them further. This provides legal certainty for accident prevention measures on the one hand and important guidance for practitioners on the other.

In accordance with the technical principle, the accident prevention regulations for animal husbandry have recently been amended (Vorschriften für Sicherheit und Gesundheitsschutz, 2020). From 1 April 2024, bulls kept in loose housing must be housed in a separate barn from the dairy herd. The cattle stalls must then be equipped with suitable separation and restraint systems.

**Further information on animal husbandry:**

**SVLFG Seminar - Working safely and healthily in cattle farming:**

<https://www.svlfg.de/seminar-sicherer-umgang-mit-rindern>

**Guidebook – Cattle farming:**

<https://cdn.svlfg.de/fiona8-blobs/public/svlfgonpremiseproduction/2f51bde48ea79fb7/dcacf751ba2/b20-broschuere-rinderhaltung.pdf>

**Videos – Safe cattle farming:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1YYCI5wgdE&list=PLxhmjE7PYUHRwScjk9bJ8NEB9QG9whAPK>

**Information on new regulations:**

<https://www.svlfg.de/fa-fuer-rinderhalter-vsg-4.1-neue-vorgaben-sicher-umsetzen>

## Tractors and machinery

### Driver Safety Training



Image 2: Driver safety training. Photo by [SVLFG], used with permission.

The effectiveness of driver safety training has been confirmed in various studies (Institut für Arbeit und Sicherheit, 2011). Drivers who have completed driver safety training are more experienced and can react more confidently in dangerous situations to prevent accidents.

Together with providers who have many years of experience in the field of driver safety training, the SVLFG developed courses specifically for drivers of tractors with trailers or other attachments. Special training is also offered for drivers of narrow-track tractors.

Against this background, the following is subsidised: participation in one-day driving safety courses for cars, vans, motorbikes, lorries, construction machinery and tractors, if these are carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the German Road Safety Council (DVR).

Every insured person can claim the subsidy once a year, provided that funds are still available at the time. The subsidy can be applied simply and informally by fax or e-mail before the training, stating the number of participants from the company, the membership number, the type of vehicle and the provider.

The company can also apply for a subsidy if it decides to take advantage of the assistance offered by a regional advice centre.



### Retrofitting old tractors

Old tractors can be found on many farms and are often part of everyday life, especially on part-time and smaller farms. Accident analyses show that the steps are particularly critical points.

Older farmers in particular use these tractors and the new steps make their work easier and safer.

Due to the advanced age of the tractors (Year of construction 1980 and older), the manufacturer's approval, which is usually required, takes a back seat. Nevertheless, the retrofit steps must fulfil the technical requirements and be designed according to manufacturer type.



Image 3: Before and after example of retrofitting a step on an old tractor. Photo by [SVLFG], used with permission.

Therefore, the construction and distribution was organised together with a specialist company. The SVLFG advises and promotes retrofitting, and the retrofitting contract is concluded between the farmer and the specialised company.

### AI-supported Reversing Cameras with Person Recognition

Reversing camera systems are measures that increase the safety of people in the vicinity of the machine. The prerequisite for this is a view into the monitor when reversing. Newer, AI-controlled models automatically warn the driver visually and acoustically with a warning tone if there are people in the danger zone. They recognise people in any posture and distinguish between animals, objects and people, regardless of their posture. The signal tone only sounds if people are at risk. AI-supported camera systems make the green professions significantly safer. For example, in Falkenberg/Bavaria, such a system demonstrably saved the life of a child (Sozialversicherung für Landwirtschaft, Forsten und Gartenbau, 2024).



Image 4: Surveillance situation and acoustic warning for an AI camera system. Photo by [SVLFG], used with permission.

Financial support for such camera systems requires product quality in accordance with the GS BAU 71 test standard (GS BAU 71, 2023). Last but not least, campaigns will soon be organised on the well-known topic of "wearing a seatbelt when driving a tractor"



## Recognised training courses for working with chainsaws

Almost all accidents involving chainsaws are caused by a lack of specialist knowledge. Working safely with a chainsaw requires appropriate knowledge and skills.

The SVLFG has therefore developed programmes for chainsaw courses aimed at acquiring basic manual skills. Participation in such a course is obligatory for employees. All insured persons, including farmers with family members, receive a subsidy towards the course costs at recognised, quality-assured training centres.

Training courses to acquire specialised knowledge are important, but can only take individual aspects into account to a limited extent. One person needs less time, another more to master the use of a chainsaw equally well.

For this reason, efforts are being made to support and disseminate the European Chainsaw Certificate (ECC), especially among employees of foreign contractors.

The ECC does not require a training course, but instead assesses in theory and practice whether the operator has basic knowledge of safe chainsaw work. It does not matter how the operator has acquired the specialised knowledge, only the safe handling of the chainsaw following the ECC-Standard plays a role in the assessment.

The ECC standard was developed by the European Forestry and Environmental Skills Council (EFESC) as part of a Leonardo project and continues to be maintained and managed by them. Due to a lack of professional funding for the EFESC, this and the ECC are not developing as they could.



Image 5: Assessment situation during an ECC assessment at the ECC assessment CNFPC centre in Luxembourg in spring 2024. Photo by [Klaus Klugmann, SVLFG], used with consent.

### Further information on tractors and machinery:

#### Safety driving Courses for agriculture:

<https://www.svlfg.de/fahrsicherheitstraining>

#### Tractor steps retrofitting - specialist company's web shop:

<https://www.archus-neumeier.de/schlepperaufstiege/>

#### Demonstration AI reversing camera technology:

[Kameras mit Personenerkennung - Agrar - YouTube](#)

#### Recognised training courses for chainsaws:

[SVLFG | Lehrgänge für Arbeiten mit der Motorsäge](#)

#### The European Chainsaw Certificate – EFESC:

<https://efesc.org/>



## Occupational Diseases and Health Hazards

### Individual prevention of recognised Occupational Diseases

Occupational diseases (OD) occur when certain groups of workers are exposed to health risks at a significantly higher degree than the rest of the population.

In the case of OD relevant to agriculture, recognition was previously only possible if the person concerned gave up the hazardous activity. As of 1 January 2021, this "obligation to cease and desist" no longer applies. This means that additional benefits from the employers' liability insurance association may be possible. For the green sectors insured with the Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG), the following illnesses are the most common:

- Skin diseases
- diseases of the spinal discs
- diseases of the respiratory tract

The aim of individual prevention is to counteract the development, worsening or recurrence of the disease.

Individual prevention offers for the noise, spine and respiratory tract (Image 6) reduce the health risk at the workplace. The technical supervisory service provides on-site advice on workplace conditions and individual protective measures. Further measures can include substitution, reorganisation and internal implementation.



Image 6: Respiratory protection with blower support is often the only way to enable stable work in the event of respiratory. Photo by [SVLFG], used with permission.

### Advisory and training courses on health protection

Health protection is handled by a separate "Work and Health" department in line with the needs of insured persons. The department supports the technical supervisory service in its advisory and surveillance activities and develops health protection concepts and services. The offers and services range from occupational medical care to seminars on the use of exoskeletons or slackline training in agriculture.

The "Trainee fit for green" health programme deserves special mention. The green sector thrives on young, healthy and highly trained specialists. They are the key to the future, and therefore the protection and promotion of health begins during vocational training. To this end, a programme has been developed that takes into account all groups of people involved in training.

As a basic service, the current prevention knowledge of health protection has been made available to the professional group and the general public in the form of user-orientated information for many years. An example of this is the personal protective equipment (PPE) information (see below in the link box to biogenic agents and protective measures).



Image 7: PPE, as shown here for suitable harvesting gloves for skin protection, are proven topics in health protection. Photo by [SVLFG], used with permission.

The situation is similar with biological hazards. These are currently on the increase, not least due to climate change. Therefore, up-to-date practical guidelines on the occurrence of biological and biogenic agents and possible protective measures are necessary in order to provide people working in agriculture with up-to-date information and are kept up to date and published (see below in the link box).



## Farm and Household Help

If farmers are absent due to illness, the SVLFG ensures that the farm and household are supported. The SVLFG bears the costs of a professional replacement provided by the SVLFG or reimburses the costs of an appropriate replacement procured by the farmer himself.

The SVLFG ensures that the agricultural business is continued and that the farmer's income base is maintained. In certain cases, the SVLFG will also provide household help to maintain your business (so-called farm-related household help).



Image 8: the farmer is unable to work due to illness; agricultural social insurance ensures that the farm and the household are supported. The costs for a professional replacement are covered or the costs for a replacement procured by the farmer himself are reimbursed at an appropriate level. Photo by [SVLFG], used with consent.

### Further information on occupational health:

#### Services on occupational diseases- online portal for insured persons:

[SVLFG | Maßnahmen bei Berufskrankheiten / Individualprävention](#)

#### Overview of offers and services for healthy work:

<https://www.svlfg.de/gesunde-arbeit>

#### Program `trainee fit for green`:

<https://www.svlfg.de/azubiaktiv-fit-for-green>

#### Knowledge hub PPE:

<https://www.svlfg.de/koerperschutz>

#### Biogenic agents and protective measures:

<https://www.svlfg.de/biologische-arbeitsstoffe>

#### Farm and household help:

<https://www.svlfg.de/betriebshilfe-haushaltshilfe>

## SVLFG Symposium and Berlin Declaration on Mental Health

With the SVLFG symposium "Mental health in the green sector - who cares?" on 9 and 10 May 2023 in Berlin, the sector drew attention to mental health and mental stress in the green sector. At the symposium, stressful situations were highlighted, those affected had their say, and selected health services from the SVLFG campaign "Mit uns in Balance" and evaluation results were presented. In addition, various social service providers for the green sector presented themselves and their work. The aim of the symposium was to include the human and social aspects in the social discussion about the image of agriculture and the transformation of the green sector.

The "Berliner Erklärung" (2023), which was adopted by the participants with the following measures, is a success in itself:



- Support through networked services such as counselling, training, certification and coaching
- Campaign to remove taboos from the topic of "mental health / stress in the green sector"
- Measures to strengthen the family in general and against bullying of children from the green sector
- special research projects on suicide prevention
- Establishment of a dialogue platform / online counselling with professional initiators as a low-threshold counselling option.
- Establishment of an interdisciplinary network to present the various activities to the public and to optimise cooperation between all stakeholders.



Image 9: SVLFG Symposium "Mental health in the green sector - who cares?" Spokesman of the Management Board - Walter Heidl. Photo by [SVLFG], used with consent.

### In Balance With Us - Mental Health

The aim of the offers and services is to strengthen mental and physical health. With offers specially adapted to the green sector, SVLFG aims to support insured persons as early as possible before they fall ill. Group offers, online courses, telephone counselling and crisis support are provided so that various ways of promoting health can be easily integrated into everyday life. Special services, such as socio-economic counselling, should also be highlighted. Mention should also be made of the online health training courses, where farmers can find help quickly, easily and anonymously as part of a scientifically supported online health training programme. They are offered the opportunity to take part in personalised online health training. The programme can be used anywhere and at any time and is free of charge for insured persons. Lessons include video and audio files, images, texts, experience reports and exercises to tick and complete. They are versatile, varied and entertaining. Great emphasis is placed on close practical relevance with the help of examples. At the end of each lesson, participants receive feedback on the exercises completed from their personal trainer by telephone or online.

### Crisis Hotline

Worries about the farm, stress at work, conflicts in the family, and critical life events can at some point simply become too much to cope with alone. The SVLFG supports farmers in such situations with a crisis hotline. The team from cooperation partner IVP Networks, which is made up of experienced psychologists and psychiatric nurses, is available to farmers around the clock with a telephone crisis hotline to provide anonymous advice. The services offered by the crisis hotline go far beyond a "helpline". SVLFG policyholders are supported in their current situation by an employee of the crisis hotline. Together they discuss individual solutions in order to achieve the best possible long-term improvement. If farmers wish, they can also be referred to suitable SVLFG services or opt for help from a regional advice centre. The experience of the crisis hotline is used (Image 10) to optimise the offers and approach to the vulnerable group.



## Do you recognise yourself?

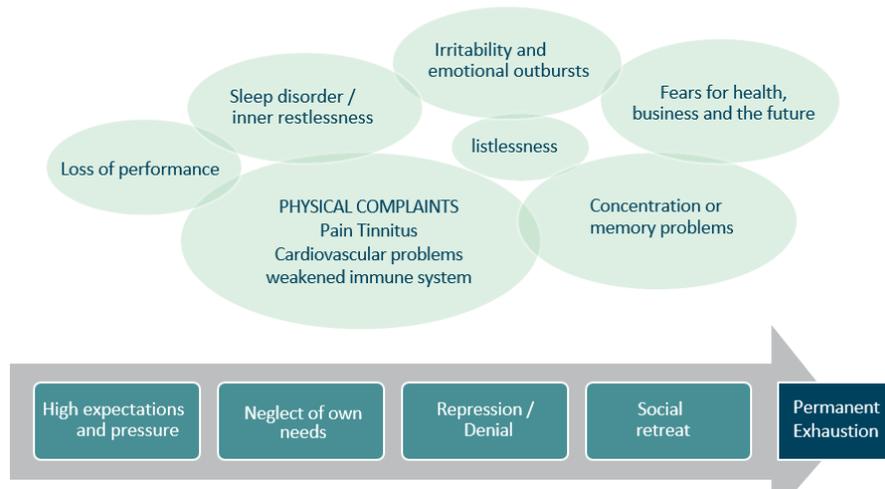


Image 10. Progression of mental exhaustion as revealed by the results of the crisis hotline. These results and the illustration created from them are used as an impulse card for counselling on mental health.

### Further information on mental health and wellbeing:

#### Berlin declaration on mental health:

[SVLFG | Symposium "Psychische Gesundheit"](#)

#### Mental health services `in balance with us`:

<https://www.svlfg.de/gleichgewicht>

#### Special services on socio-economic advice:

<https://www.svlfg.de/soziooekonomische-beratung>

#### Online trainings on mental health and wellbeing:

<https://www.svlfg.de/online-training>

#### Information on individual case coaching:

[Flyer-intensives-einzelfallcoaching.pdf \(svlfg.de\)](#)

#### SVLFG crisis hotline:

<https://www.svlfg.de/krisenhotline>

#### Network partner:

<https://www.ivpnetworks.de/>



## ■ Main achievements and future needs

The agricultural social security system administered by the SVLFG is in a constant state of flux, which must satisfy the economic, political and professional demands of the sector.

Finding a balance between the different interests and further developing occupational health and safety is therefore a permanent challenge. In doing so, a workable balance must be found again and again, which includes self-responsibility in occupational health and safety as well as appropriate support.

Free training courses that also provide financial compensation for loss of working hours are particularly popular with insured persons. It is obvious that this is not affordable. Therefore, all measures and support must be geared primarily towards occupational health and safety and not towards the actual performance of work.

Against this background, the annual prevention reports document how prevention can be realised in agricultural social insurance and which priorities and results can be seen. How the future of the social security system is changing and what challenges it faces are also the subject of public debate.

### **Further information on prevention and challenges:**

#### **Prevention reports:**

<https://www.svlfg.de/svlfg-kompakt-in-zahlen>

#### **Agri-social challenges Update 2.0:**

[broschuere-agrarsoziale-herausforderungen-update-2-0.pdf \(svlfg.de\)](#)



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