



# FACT SHEET #9

**THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE**  
1101-75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7  
Tel: (613) 236-3633 Fax: (613) 236-5749 [info@cfafca.ca](mailto:info@cfafca.ca)

## Older Farmers at Greater Risk

One-quarter of Canada's population is now over 50 years of age. Half of Canadians 65 and older living in a private household drive a motor vehicle. And, drivers over 80 are the fastest-growing segment of the driving population, according to Transport Canada.

In 2000, the average Canadian farmer was 59 years old. Each year in Canada farmers and ranchers aged 60 or greater accounted for over one-third (36%) of farm-related fatalities and one-quarter (24.5%) of farm-related hospitalized injuries, says a study done by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program.

The normal ageing process often results in the quick onset of fatigue, reduced hearing, balance and vision, and a decrease in depth perception. Also, many seniors suffer from disorders that reduce mobility, such as arthritis and rheumatism, which can slow down response times and seriously impact safe job performance. All these factors can increase risk among older agricultural workers. And finally, the older people get, the less able they are to withstand and recover from the usually severe injuries of farm incidents.

Farmers or ranchers and their families need to ensure that tasks done by older workers are appropriate for the reduced physical abilities that come with age. Here are some practical suggestions to reduce risks for aging farmers.

- Remember that vision is hampered the most at dawn and dusk - avoid driving tractors at these times. Have your vision checked by a doctor regularly, and if required – wear your glasses. The ageing process also can decrease peripheral vision, which may affect driving performance.
- Have your hearing tested regularly, and if required – wear your hearing aid. Minimize background noise by keeping the radio volume, air conditioning or heater blowing unit on the lowest setting.
- Be familiar with any medication you take and its effect on your reaction time. Even over-the-counter medications can hamper reflexes and diminish alertness, limiting your ability to operate farm tractors and other machinery. With some medicines, you may not be able to drive at all.
- Get plenty of rest during planting, harvest and long work periods. Take frequent breaks to protect against fatigue and physical stress. Drink plenty of liquids and keep them available in your work area. Accidents are more likely to occur after fatigue has set in.
- Have something to eat regularly, at least every four hours.
- Use extreme caution when operating equipment and give your task your full attention.
- Always wear your seatbelt.

### **Older Farmers at Greater Risk continued...**

- Keep windows clean inside and out, and use rearview and outside mirrors often.
- Be alert for obstacles, especially when driving on roads.
- Never drive machinery on the shoulder of the road and be alert for parked cars, pedestrians, cyclists, signs, mailboxes, and other objects.
- Make sure that a family member or fellow worker knows where you will be working. Bring a cell phone if you can, so you can get help if you need it.
- Know your limitations. Don't push your mind and body past their safe and healthy limits.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture along with the Farm Credit Canada, the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada want to remind Canadian farmers that "*Farm Safety Means Farm Safely*" – know your limits and those of your elderly co-workers.

- 30 -

**For more information call:**

Theresa Whalen-Ruiter, CFA Farm Safety Coordinator  
Tel/Fax : (613) 731-7321 E-mail: [twr@magma.ca](mailto:twr@magma.ca)  
or visit web sites [www.cfa-fca.ca](http://www.cfa-fca.ca) or [www.casa-acsa.ca](http://www.casa-acsa.ca)

