

GENDER DIVISION OF FARM WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES

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Abstract. Farm work, particularly with livestock, exposes farmers to adverse health outcomes, which may result in loss of work ability and early retirement. We investigated the gender division of farm work and occupational injuries in the Finnish farming population covered by the mandatory workers' compensation insurance. Claims data were augmented with data from a postal survey containing questions about the relative division of farm work between male and female farmers. Over the 5-year study period (2009-2013), the average number of farmers was 73,870 (males 67% and females 33%) with a total of 23,004 compensated occupational injuries (males 75% and females 25%). Claims most frequently involved work tasks related to animal husbandry. Altogether 319 usable responses were received to the postal survey (12.9% response rate). Farm work time and occupational injuries differed by gender. In general, crop production, construction work, forestry work, and few other farm work tasks including repair and maintenance of machines, and farmstead and road maintenance were male-dominated, whereas females took the main responsibility for domestic work and caretaking work as well. Animal husbandry was divided more evenly between males and females with their relative work contributions of 56% and 44%, respectively. Animal husbandry-related injuries were divided correspondingly between the genders (males 57% and females 43%) but all other types of injuries occurred mostly to males. While many studies have shown that male farmers have a much greater risk of injury than females, our study shows that given equal work time, the risk of injury was also equal. Therefore, rather than a risk factor, gender is an indicator of different work exposures in farming. This finding can contribute to better understanding of the risk of occupational injury among farming populations and could help design more effective interventions.

Key words: agriculture, exposure, farmer, insurance.