



Workshop 1: Good practices in management leadership and worker participation

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In 2012 our discussion group undertook a project to incorporate farm health and safety into every meeting we had that year. Each member used the Irish HSA website www.farmsafely.com to complete an electronic 'Risk Assessment Tool' for their own farm in advance of group meetings. The website breaks down farm safety into nine separate headings/hazards and over the course of nine on-farm meetings the group spent approximately 30 minutes concentrating on one individual category of safety hazard and how it applies to both the host farmer and other group members. At meetings, group members bring a 'fresh pair of eyes' to the farm and help identify hazards that mightn't be so obvious to the host due to over familiarity. Members discuss and agree different options for reducing/eliminating any hazards identified. The experience gained from this project has allowed them to develop a step by step guide which other discussion groups around Ireland will be able to replicate.

A total of 226 corrective actions, or an average of 16 per member, taken as part of the project. This level of safety improvements would not have happened unless members of our group were committed to improving health and safety on their own farms not just for themselves but also for their families and any visitors to their farm. Group members agreed that the success of their project can also be attributed to the setting out of clear objectives and using the existing discussion group structure. The healthy 'peer pressure' that exists among discussion group members ensured that each member of the group made a genuine effort to improve safety on their farms.

The very user friendly and excellent websites www.hsa.ie and www.farmsafely.com were an essential feature of the project. Before we commenced this project, none of our group members had ever accessed the HSA website or were aware that you could complete a user friendly online safety self-assessment for their farms. Furthermore, only three members of the group had safety statements for their farms (a legal requirement for all Irish farmers). The consensus among West Offaly group members is that most other discussion groups around Ireland are similar to them and would have very little awareness of the HSA website and the information available on it. They believe that if other groups were to undertake a similar project and follow the model that we have used for the past year, it would go a long way to making Irish farms a much safer environment to live and work for everybody.