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Machinery leading cause of death for farmers over 60

Winnipeg, March 10, 2009: The most up- to-date data on farm deaths in Canada shows that in the sixteen years from 1990 to 2005, 642 farmers aged 60 or over were killed in agricultural injury events. Three quarters of the deaths were related to working with machinery, mostly tractors, in rollover and runover incidents.

The data comes from a new report from the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program (CAISP), a program funded by the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA).

Marcel Hacault is CASA's executive director. He says the trend line for older adults involved in agricultural fatalities "stayed steady from 1990 through 2005". Over the 16 year surveillance period, the average number of older adult fatalities was 40. Ninety-five percent were male.

According to the CAISP data, almost a quarter of the fatalities were caused by rollovers. Hacault says in most cases, "it's highly likely the use of Roll Over Protection Structures (ROPS) and seatbelts would have reduced the number of fatalities".

He notes that the data shows "falls are an issue for all seniors". Hacault emphasizes that "extra care should be taken where dynamic balance or static strength is required". He says engineering solutions such as safe access platforms may help prevent some falls from machinery.

Hacault adds "it's important for older farmers to assess the skills required to perform particular tasks and determine whether they can safely perform them". He recommends that older farmers who must work alone make sure they let family members know their whereabouts and schedule, and use a cell-phone or other two-way communications device that includes a geographic positioning system (GPS).

For the complete report *Agricultural Fatalities in Canada 1990-2005*, go to www.casa-acsa.ca.

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CASA-the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association - is Canada's national agricultural safety networking, co-ordinating and training agency dedicated to helping producers recognize and manage risk in the agricultural workplace. It is a non-profit organization funded through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Renewal Chapter.