

# Tractors rolling over is top cause of agricultural deaths

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Tractors rolling over is top cause of agricultural deaths. Credit: José Luís Canales.

The people in Spain at greatest risk of suffering farming accidents are those aged over 65, followed by people under 16 and people from outside the agricultural sector. These are the results of a study by the Public University of Navarre (UPNA), which shows that most of these deaths are due to people being crushed by tractors.

"Aside from recognised farming workers, other employees die in this sector and these deaths are not recorded. Our objective was to compare the real and official data on fatal farming accidents and to classify the most commonly associated risks", Carmen Jarén, a researcher at the UPNA and co-author of the study, tells SINC.

The study, published in the Revista Española de Investigaciones Agrarias, compared the data on occupational accidents related to farming activity published annually by the Ministry of Employment with news articles on such accidents appearing in the media for the period between 2004 and 2008.

Most fatal accidents are caused by tractors with no cabin rolling over. Out of the 272 such incidents in this period, only one took place involving a [tractor](#) with an officially authorised driver cabin. However, "since the use of such cabins was made obligatory in 1979, only three fatal accidents have occurred in cases where this protection was in place", points out Jarén.

The experts found details about 388 fatal accidents involving agricultural machinery, of which only 61.85% were officially reported. According to the Ministry's statistics, the number of deaths caused in workplace accidents during farming activities in 2004 (with or without tractor) stood at 40, rising to 58 in 2005. However, the media reported 88 deaths caused by tractor accidents in 2004 and 74 in 2005.

## **Most deaths are avoidable**

"Many people work in the [agricultural sector](#) as a secondary activity, and this means they never show up in the statistics about deaths in workplace accidents", says the expert. In addition, these deaths are not usually caused by one single factor, but rather by a combination of several. "All of which are recognised and preventable", she stresses.

Another striking detail from the study shows that [Spain](#) is ahead of India in terms of such accidents, though behind the United States. "The situation in India could be due to the low level of industrialisation in agricultural work there", she concludes.

**More information:** I. Arana, J. Mangado, P. Arnal, S. Arazuri, J. R. Alfaro, C. Jarén. "Evaluation of risk factors in fatal accidents in agriculture", *Revista Española de Investigaciones Agrarias* 8(3): 592-598, 2010.

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