

6 steps to develop farm workplace policies

Working through the following steps will help to ensure that your farm workplace policies are successfully introduced and implemented.

1. Consult with your employees

Include the people working on the farm in the development and implementation of the workplace policies. Employees often have good ideas and including them in the development process will help to promote their understanding and ownership of the policies, awareness of the policy content and, importantly, increase the chances of compliance.

2. Draft the policy document

A policy should:

- set out the aim of the policy;
- explain why the policy was developed;
- define all the key terms in plain English so that the meaning is clear;
- list who the policy applies to, for example is it just people working on the farm or does it include contractors and visitors;
- describe what are acceptable or unacceptable behaviours (you may like to include examples help illustrate what is expected);
- have guidelines and procedures to be followed to achieve the policy aim;
- set out the consequences of not complying with the policy and, if necessary, what to do in the case when it isn't possible to comply; and
- provide a date of when the policy was developed or updated

Case study: policies for a better workplace

Ben and Laura run a dairy farm near Malanda in Queensland and have 2 full time employees, 2 part-time employees and a casual milker. They are committed to providing a workplace where everyone feels comfortable. As part of that commitment, they created a workplace policy for their farm covering all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment. One of the issues they addressed in their farm policy was workplace bullying. This is what they wrote about bullying in their farm policy:

Malanda Farm is committed to providing our employees with a healthy and safe work environment that is free from bullying.

Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed toward an employee, or group of employees, that creates a risk to health and safety. Examples of bullying include verbal abuse and yelling; humiliating someone through sarcasm, criticism or insults; exclusion of a person from workplace activities; giving someone the majority of unpleasant tasks.

Malanda Farm expects all employees to treat each other with dignity and respect when at work. We encourage all employees who experience bullying to report it. Any reports of bullying will be treated seriously and investigated promptly, confidentially and impartially. The reporting and investigation procedures for bullying are explained in the farm policy and procedures manual as are the disciplinary and appeals procedures.

Managers and supervisors have responsibility to ensure employees are not bullied. The contact person on this farm is Laura Delany. *August 2008*

3. Tell everyone

For farm workplace policies to be effective, tell everyone who works on the farm about them and give them a copy.

If you have any employees whose first language is not English and whose understanding of written English is limited, you should arrange to have the policies translated into an appropriate language. It is important that everyone understands the policies.

Similarly, if you have employees who have limited literacy skills you should ensure that the policies are read to them and understood by them.

Contractors, labour hire firms and work experience students also need to be aware of your policies and it may be necessary to consult with them to ensure consistency and compliance with their policies and procedures.

Make copies of the policies easily accessible on the farm by keeping copies in folders in a central location and in staff areas and displaying them on noticeboards. Make sure that policies are provided to new staff, contractors and, where relevant, visitors as a part of their induction.



Ask employees to sign the policy: You may request that employees sign a copy of the policy to acknowledge that they have seen and understood it.

4. Explain the policies

Explaining the policies to everyone on the farm can be done at information or training sessions, staff meetings or when a new staff member or contractor is doing their induction.

Explain how to comply with the policies and the implications of not doing so. Make sure that everyone understands they must comply with the policy.

Regularly discuss policies with the people working on the farm. This could be done at staff briefings or meetings whenever relevant.

Managers and owners should show others working on the farm how to behave by endorsing and modelling those behaviours.

5. Implement the policies

Be consistent when applying the workplace policies and dealing with someone who doesn't comply. Deal with any breaches of policies promptly and always use the procedures that are set out in the policy. The consequences of breaching a policy could be a warning, disciplinary action or dismissal. The consequence should be suited to the severity of the breach.

6. Evaluate and review the policies

Regularly review the policies in conjunction with employees and contractors to make sure that they match any changes that have occurred on the farm and reflect new regulations and state of knowledge so they remain relevant to the people who work there.

If a policy is changed significantly give a revised copy to all staff and update any other copies that are on the farm. Explain to everyone why it has been changed and what the changes are. Policies may need to be changed when there is new equipment being used or work procedures change.