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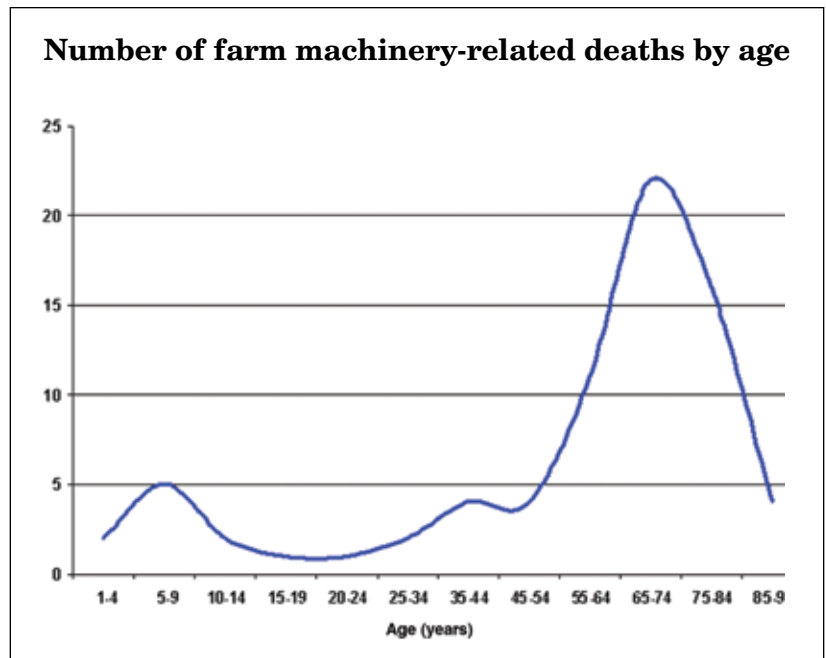
NTDB™ data points

## Down on the farm

by Richard J. Fantus, MD, FACS, Chicago, IL, and John Fildes, MD, FACS, Las Vegas, NV

Farming may date back to more than 23,000 years ago, as evidenced by the seed-collection habits of the people of Israel in the Stone Age. Over the millennia, farming has gone through monumental changes. Farm implements once constructed of sticks and rocks have become technologically advanced marvels of engineering. Farmers use high-speed Internet with live Doppler radar, hybrid and genetically engineered seeds, advanced-formula fertilizers, and sophisticated machinery. These advances have resulted in a substantial increase in yield per acre over the past several farming generations. In spite of these successes, the future of farming in the U.S. is in jeopardy.

As harvest time approaches in the heartland, those individuals who have devoted their lives to feeding the people of the U.S. need to be thanked. There are more than 2 million farms in the U.S. with an average size of 460 acres. Most of these farms are primarily family-run operations that may have been in the same family for generations. However, a worrisome statistic is that the average age of the U.S. farmer is 54.3 years. The proportion of farmers aged 55 and older has risen from 37 percent in 1954



to 61 percent in 1997. Presently, more than one quarter of farm operators are 65 years or older. The aging of the U.S. has now made its way to the farm.

As the National Trauma Data Bank™ reported last month in the *Bulletin*, elderly individuals have decreased physiologic reserve and suffer more serious consequences from a traumatic event than their younger counterparts suffer.

According to the National Agricultural Safety Database (<http://www.cdc.gov/nasd/index.html>), a project funded by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, one in nine farmers aged 55 and older had been involved in a tractor rollover, and workers older than 55 years accounted for approximately half of all farming deaths. In the records contained in the NTDB *Annual Report 2004*, there

are more than 7,000 records listing "farm" as the site of injury. Using the external cause of injury code (E code) 919.0 to extract farm machinery-related injuries, there are 1,382 records. The graph on the previous page depicts the relationship between age and number of deaths related to farm machinery.

Economic forces are wreak-

ing havoc on the U.S. farmer. U.S. farming exports are decreasing and subjected to heavy tariffs while there is an increase in imports of cheaper foreign foods. Couple this with the graying of the heartland and the lack of interest in farming among younger generations, and soon there will be no one down on the farm.

Throughout the year, we

will be highlighting these data through brief monthly reports in the *Bulletin*. The full NTDB *Annual Report Version 4.0* is available on the ACS Web site as a PDF file and a PowerPoint® presentation at <http://www.ntdb.org>. If you are interested in submitting your trauma center's data, contact Melanie L. Neal, Manager, NTDB, at [mneal@facs.org](mailto:mneal@facs.org).

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Committee for the Forum on Fundamental Surgical Problems  
The American College of Surgeons

For the 2006 61st annual Surgical Forum published in  
the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*

*Accepted abstracts\*  
will be presented at:*

American College of  
Surgeons

- Clinical Congress •  
8-12 October 2006  
Chicago, IL



\* Abstract Supplement  
published in *JACS*  
September 2006 issue.

### Who

- Young surgical investigators (principal investigator is first named author).
- Up to ten (10) co-authors allowed.

### What

- 250 maximum word abstract that presents a concise summary of research done and in progress, but not presented or published previously. Title must be brief; body of abstract must include Introduction, Methods, Results, Conclusions. One-page table may be submitted separately (see Author Instructions on Web site) if absolutely necessary; table does not count toward the 250 maximum word count.

### When

- Abstracts accepted from November 1, 2005, through March 1, 2006.

### Where

- Online submissions ONLY: <http://www.facs.org/sfabstracts>. Abstracts may not be presented in advance of the Surgical Forum program in October or manuscripts published in whole or in part before the abstract submission.

- **Final Decision:** May 2006 (principal author will be contacted).
- **Format:** Follow Author Instructions, Online Submission.
- **Questions:** [kkoenig@facs.org](mailto:kkoenig@facs.org) or: 312.202.5336.