

Facilitating access to mental health formal support



Farmers and their family at the heart of policies when they are developed

Network - going local

Early intervention network - network can improve the access (as it is at local level) (FI)

MELA support started as Leader project at local level (FI)

Network of independent psychologists (BE)

Training - for advisors and beyond

Providing training to advisors (IE) - but their main activity remain technical advice (but in the position to signpost in case)

Training for advisors to determine and cope with MH issues (NL)

Programme on farm ground/signposting farmers - beyond the advisors (private VET or organisations doing inspections) - (IE)

"Quality on farm" with different tools - all the counsellors have an agri background and this strength the connection with farmers (AT)

How to reach farmers who don't get access to advisors support?

Awareness campaign

Celebrating the success of farming & respect of the occupation/culture/way of life

Recognition from a policy point of view - family members

Farm Relief available in France and Sweden and Finland too (e.g. substitute for farmers who go on holiday/sick or maternity-paternity leave)

Holistic approach not only helping MH but also the roots behind it (BE)

International experts for seasonal workers (HR)

Training - for Farmers

Prevention - seeds of happiness (learning for youngsters who go to agri schools) - how to prevent and what to do in case of MH problems (BE)

Learning/Guidance tools for farmers (how to recognise, how to start the conversation, talk about suicides and how to ask for professional advice) (BE)

Online counselling for farmers (HR)

Mobile health teams - moving in rural areas (HR)

Helpline in different countries so far (BE-DE-IE-FR-NT....)

Coping with geographical barriers

Must-haves / Key ingredients



Holistic approaches - not working in silos in proposing solutions

Strategic plan on preventing suicides and on Farmers MH

Mobile/online tools & helpline

to accompany farmers in a long term with a comprehensive approach

Network - going to local

Providing farm relief in order to allow farmers to be "on leave"

Farmers compulsory insurance system (no cost for them) - as FR

Understanding the farming background & rural aspects

Specific resources available at different levels

Increasing awareness about the problems and available tools

Training (to advisors and beyond) and farmers (youngster at school too)

Notes from the discussion on this topic

According to TG members, the needs of farmers and their families should be at the core of both formal mental health support services and related policies.

Various tools aimed at enhancing access to formal mental health support were discussed, including initiatives addressing geographical barriers like mobile health teams, online counselling, and helplines – the latter is proving effective in several countries. The importance of local networks, including local branches, early intervention, or psychologists' networks, was emphasised.

Training emerged as a crucial tool for advisors, who can identify and address mental health issues (while recognising their primary role as technical advisors), as well as for other stakeholders like veterinarians and work inspectors, to extend support to farmers without access to advisory services. It was stressed that all counsellors should possess knowledge about the agricultural world to strengthen their connection with farmers. Farmers, too, require training on recognising and discussing mental health problems, with a focus on prevention, starting with agricultural schools.

TG members advocated for a holistic approach, addressing the root causes of mental health problems. International experts for seasonal workers, with language knowledge to support them, were deemed important. Awareness-raising campaigns were mentioned as a key tool for improving access to mental health support services. Tools like farm relief services, already implemented in France, Finland, and Sweden, are important as they allow farmers to take sick leave, go on holidays, or enjoy maternity / paternity leave.

In terms of key ingredients to access formal mental health support, TG members stressed the importance of a holistic, long-term and coordinated approach. Mobile and online tools, phone helplines, and action plans for mental health (as e.g. in France), were also considered crucial. Networking and farm relief systems were identified as relevant tools; understanding the farming and rural context is a critical factor. Increasing awareness about problems and available tools, specific resources at different levels, and training for advisors and farmers were also highlighted. Lastly, a key element is making mental health check-ups part of farmers' compulsory health insurance system without any additional costs for them.