

Addressing farmers' mental health support at farm level



normalisation of the mental health discussion

promote conversations about emotions

break the taboo - so people talk more about this

peer groups on mental aid 'first help' for farmers

influence of family relationships (support or challenge)

companies, organisations provide seminars, workshops

local psychologists

key role of women to talk about mental health

learning networks for women farmers

role of media

generational renewal is key topic for discussion

create a local support system

trust

veterinarians to disseminate information

follow-up

trust (in who farmers talk to); events as "excuse" to talk about MH

volunteers who are trained to provide advice

communication about existing services & access to them

mentoring & knowledge transfer for young people

for younger farmers; insights into family and business systems

more systemic solutions: widespread support (across the territory)

webinars

phone services

risk management, diversification, cooperation... business support

older farmers can provide "less emotional"/ more mature advice

support by society

farmers are not heroes! - stop putting pressure

sustainable farming models

Notes from the discussion on this topic

According to TG members, addressing mental health support for farmers at the farm level involves several key activities. One important aspect is breaking taboos, especially in certain countries or contexts, and promoting initiatives that encourage conversations about emotions. Normalising discussions around mental health and creating peer groups for farmers are crucial as first forms of help. The role of the media was also underscored as tool for spreading awareness.

Women are key contributors to the conversation on mental health, being more open to talk about these issues and to read early signs of distress. Learning networks for women farmers are proving successful.

Another important step is to build a local support system that is based on trust. This can be done also by involving local communities and informing them about the available options and services for mental health support. Successful tools include helplines and disseminating information through veterinarians and others connected to the farming environment.

The support for mentoring and knowledge transfer was also mentioned, particularly for young people, with a strong emphasis on intergenerational discussions. Finally, the importance of societal support at large was emphasised.

Must-haves / Key ingredients



information about existing support systems/ services

booklets, online services... to build confidence in MH services

help, assistance - benefits in kind (not money, but e.g. help with animals for pregnant farmers)

involve farmers directly in info/ support provision (paid)

awareness of advisors and other actors

more trust in NGOs / non-government-funded MH services?

don't make MH the farmer's problem

prioritisation of issues

support of farming communities overall

trust & credibility of those involved in support systems

an open-minded (local) network where it's ok to talk about MH issues

adequate resources of MH services

create safe spaces (e.g. same generation)

involve farmers & their families in the design of initiatives

intergenerational discussions

coordination of MH support services

make sure someone takes responsibility for this - clear mandate for an organisation (e.g. FI-MELA)

tailor-made services (fit for farmers)

reliable service, to create greater confidence

centralised support for all farmers' need (from animal welfare to psychological counselling) e.g. Flanders, Farmers at a crossroads

single contact point for farmers (locally/ nationally)

offer anonymous counselling options

consider pressure on women inheriting farm (daughters, widows...)

create a level playing field among parties involved in e.g. farm succession

consider family / succession issues

ensure advisors too trust women in farming

TG members then focused on the key ingredients for successful mental health support on farms. These include having trustworthy and credible people in the support services; coordinating mental health services effectively; involving farmers and their families in the design and possibly the provision of mental health support; tailoring services to farmers' needs; and ensuring they are reliable safe spaces, including by offering anonymous counselling options. It's also important to provide information about existing support systems, for example through advisors and veterinarians when they visit farms (advisors don't reach all farmers).

Peer support and learning networks were also seen as essential for addressing farmers' mental health. Finally, the discussions touched on the pressure faced during successions, particularly in family farms – and especially for women inheriting the farm – and on the importance of generational renewal.

The information and views set out in this document are those expressed by the members of the EU CAP Network's Thematic Group on Nurturing Skills for a Thriving and Sustainable Agricultural Sector and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.