



Thematic Group on Supporting the Mental Health of Farmers and Farming Communities

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#RuralMentalHealth



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Discussion on the transferability of the best practice examples

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Structure of the presentation

- › The EU and mental health
- › Mental health and mental wellbeing
- › Examples of best practices
- › Recommendations and strengths of initiatives
- › Final thoughts





The EU and mental health

- In June 2023 the European Commission issued a comprehensive mental health strategy.
- Mental health is described as ‘an integral part of people’s health. It enables individual to realise their own abilities, to cope with the stresses of life, to socialise, work and contribute to community life’ (European Commission, 2023).
- Mental health initiatives need to be horizontal across policies, asking for more consideration through existing and new European and member states’ policies.
- The European Commission advocates for the use of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funds, the European Social Fund+ or the European Fund for Regional Development, to be used for initiatives on mental health for people living in rural areas like farmers.





Mental health and mental wellbeing

- There is a lot of overlap in the literature between mental health issues and mental wellbeing.
- What do we mean?
- Need to identify the specific characteristics of mental health and mental wellbeing in farming.



What is mental health in farming?

- What do we mean by mental health?
- Due to the specific work-life balance in farming, mental health in farming is often associated with occupational and safety health measures.
- If it is agreed that the farm has specific requirements that make it unique in terms as a place of home and business, why is this not reflected in a more specific approach to mental health in farming.





Examples of best practices

- Embrace FARM, Ireland;
- CCMSA (Caisse Centrale de la Mutualité sociale agricole), France;
- MELA (Farmers' Social Insurance Institution of Finland - Maatalousyrittäjien eläkelaitos), Finland;
- FARMRes, Europe.





Recommendations and strengths of initiatives



Initiative: Embrace FARM (Ireland)

- › Addresses the need for post-traumatic stress support following accidents and bereavements
- › Bottom-up
- › Trained team of professionals

RECOMMENDATION:

- › Pilot local based responses to bereavement and accidents





Recommendations and strengths of initiatives

Initiative: MELA (Finland)

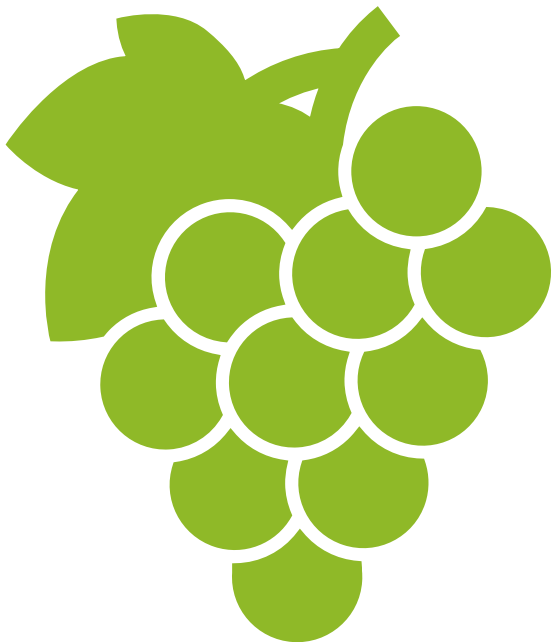
- › 'Support the farmer' – personal consultation to farmers
- › Support staff trained to recognise symptoms of inability to work
- › Mental health first aid courses, farmer welfare days
- › 26 days paid cover to take leave

RECOMMENDATION:

- › Pilot research to see if 26 days leave replicable across Europe (different welfare states; need trained relief workers)



Recommendations and strengths of initiatives



- › **Initiative: CCMSA (France)**
- › National programme to prevent suicide amongst agricultural workers
- › 35 regional branches
- › Telephone service run by health care experts

RECOMMENDATION:

- › Pilot replication of this model in other Member states





Final thoughts

- All initiatives suggest that a direct involvement with farmers' context and environment is necessary.
- Importance of trained staff or volunteers.
- New initiatives need to be blended in with already existing national projects.





Final thoughts

- › What do farmers want? (David Meredith/ CEJA)
- › Who do they want it from?
- › How will these initiatives be funded?
- › Need for targeted training
- › Not just the 'farmer'
- › Considerable variation across the EU in terms of mental health awareness in agriculture



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