



## BREAK-OUT ROOM SESSIONS

### BREAK-OUT GROUP 1 (Elke Rogge, ILVO)

#### What are the most important messages that you would like to convey to the European commissioner for agriculture?

- A first crucial point is the necessity to put farmers wellbeing on the political and societal agenda! This an important contribution this project could and should have.
- We are asking a lot from our future farmers. They will need to be part of some major transition (a.o. everything that has to do with climate change). If you expect people to set in motion or to go through such a major transition then they need to be mentally fit. So we are not talking about the limited group of farmers that is experiencing difficulties at the moment. We are talking about all farmers, because they all need the mental space to be able to make this transition.
- Setting in motion this change is something that farmers cannot do alone. Therefore we would like to stress the importance of social networks. Networks that include both farmers and non-farmers. We would call to facilitate and strengthen cooperation, communication and knowledge/experience sharing between farmers as well as farmers and the rest of rural residents. Networking should be facilitated and supported alongside formal policy making.
- Recognize the importance of social innovation to address farmer’s well-being and give greater emphasis to the fostering of social innovation in the context of EIP-AGRI and other policy programs. Diversified rural entrepreneurship can definitely be a part of this social innovation. It can help find solutions for macroeconomic processes, and environmental threats.

#### Which actions would you suggest in order to deal with the social challenges presented?

- This depends hugely on the national context! It is very difficult to generalize actions. A start is to raise awareness and secure broad "political" commitment to address this issue.
- The abandonment and decline of public services in rural areas is an important issues related to farmer’s wellbeing. Re-population in general is an important issue and incentivize doctors and their families to come back to live to these small villages is a specific action.
- We should give all ‘visitors’ of farms (eg. vet, suppliers,...) the right tools to recognize mental problems as farmers are not very much inclined to seek help themselves.





We should also start up the conversation with the women of the countryside as they are the ones that often take action.

- Working with testimonials (such as Lut) is a very powerful tool. Show that it is necessary and possible to talk about mental problems.
- Public funding for NGOs and others already committed to working to support farmers is important as today a lot of these work on a voluntary basis with limited funding.
- Increase the availability and quality of preventive care for farmers as well as psychological and job support for them.





## BREAK-OUT GROUP 2 (Evelien Cronin, ILVO)

### 1. Improving connections between farmers and the communities

A first idea was raised on organising sessions to bring farmers and people interested in helping farmers together. This might be more attractive for farmers to attend, than meetings where they can go if they have a problem. Building on this, another participant talked about connections between farmers and the wider community. Three key additional points were made:

- The role of local fairs to build a relationship and trust between farmers and customers
- To extend the role of village extension services, which were described as organised by municipalities. Currently their role is mainly located in helping people living in rural areas overcoming barriers in access to services (e.g. by the organisation of minibus services to help the elderly to go to the closest bank office). So why not expand their focus to farmers and to use them as a sort of community developers to build the local networks
- The importance of food as a way to connect people: such sessions could also include food or a meal prepared with the produce of the farmers as an additional dimension. How can we include this more when thinking about solutions?

We came back to this topic later in the conversation with the example of a Community Supported Agriculture farm: they basically “buy time”: by having helping hands available, the workload is lowered and finances are freed up (because they don’t have to pay someone extra) for the farmers to attend education and training.

### 2. Education and training

The importance of also paying attention to courses focussing on health and healthy work habits (physically and mentally) and soft skills. The point was raised that farmers feel the need to discuss things, but how to get it out of the taboo sphere? Here the potential role of advisory services to normalise these types of conversations was highlighted.

### 3. Building on existing peer-to-peer exchange platforms

There came the idea that there are currently hubs for demonstration farms which are often focus on production aspects or to have economically positive effects, but these hubs could also be used as a way to link farmers which are working in a similar or the same sector for different ends. As a way to relate to each other and share the barriers they face. The effects of sharing the more day-to-day issues could also be economically positive. It would be helpful to also consolidate this on the EU level.





### BREAK-OUT GROUP 3 (Lies Messely, ILVO)

The group has identified different target groups that should be informed about the mapping papers. Furthermore we have collected a number of channels to reach the different target groups. This table gives an overview of the collected information.

Target audience	Communication channel/strategies to reach this target group	How/what can this group communicate about the topics?
Agricultural journalists	Direct emailing, ag-press.eu, youtube, social media,	Television, agricultural TV shows, farm friendly publications in national papers
Farmers’ organizations	Social media, direct emailing, using the Farmwell network	Cultural and art-related activities, role-playing techniques
Policy makers at local & regional level	Farmers’ organization house/infrastructure, social media, agri journal, direct mailing, webinars/workshops	
Trespassers, eg veterinary practitioners, public health nurses, postal services, input providers	Social media	
Citizens	Social media, farm visits, local shops that farmers collaborate with,	
Farmers	Social media, paper material in local language, school for farmers, farm visits, activists, webinars/workshops	
Psychologists	Direct emailing, network events, farmers could meet psychologists at local meetings facilitated by local council/mayors	





- Importance of using local language: the mapping papers are in English, but in order to reach the identified target groups, it is necessary to translate them into the local language.
- It is necessary to think about actions to take farmers out of their bubble, in order to open up about these topics of wellbeing. It will be important to create a context where farmers feel comfortable to talk about their challenges. They are not used to this.
- It is important to integrate wellbeing in the education of young farmers, to organize workshops in schools with real life examples.
- Agricultural workers are also an important target group, that are not addressed in all countries, but it is very difficult to reach them.
- In many countries, there is a need for reconnecting farmers and citizens and stimulate their dialogue.





## BREAK-OUT GROUP 4 (Jeroen Adam, ILVO)

- 1) **Who are the different target groups that we can communicate the research findings to + how can we communicate/disseminate our research?**
  - a. Confirmation that farmers themselves will not read the reports; but: visualization of the papers is useful and can be further used
  - b. Differentiation between research findings + actions to be undertaken. Be precise about the actions and connect this with specific organisations. Above all representative organisations at the national level (farmers unions... ) might be targeted
  - c. Make sure that this is not another problem for a farmer to solve. It should not add to the burden farmers are already being confronted with
  - d. How to align this with new policies + projects designed within the framework of the CAP (quite technical explanation)
  - e. Building up of personalized relationships and proactive communication strategy targeting different organizations
  - f. Local action groups that are very close to the field/farmers.
  - g. As researchers/policy makers we might need to take a step back. Importance of brokers in between/organisations + individuals with a close connection to farmers and their problems.
  
- 2) **What type of materials might we need**
  - a. Short presentations targeting organisations/even individuals
  - b. People in the countryside to provide technical advice/targeting gatekeepers that have a direct connection with farmers
  - c. Voices of the people themselves. Stimulate farmers to participate with their own videos.
  - d. Peer to peer learning should not be underestimated. Farmers learning from each other.
  
- 3) **More general points**
  - a. Think of a range of support/actions that prevent farmers from being confronted with very considerable problems in terms of mental wellbeing. Stresses the importance of preventive measures.
  - b. Importance to encourage farmers to share their problems.
  - c. Very little support for real small farmers + CAP seems to have very little attention for small farmers

