

# STORY OF THE CASE

## Learning network on mental wellbeing (Belgium)





## Story of the Case

### The Challenge & Needs – What is the situation?

Ferm voor agrarvrouwen (female farmers) is an organisation that brings together female farmers for networking and education. Coming together gives female farmers the opportunity to talk about the things they share. Because they all are active in agriculture, the farm, the work at the farm and their concerns about the farm, are often common. Wellbeing is a theme that always has been high on the agenda at Ferm but in recent years, we have noticed that the stress of our (female) farmers has increased enormously. Especially the administrative burden, the negative media coverage of agriculture, uncertain prices and legislation are often mentioned stressors.

Because we noticed that the wellbeing of our female farmers was coming under increasing pressure, we decided to pay extra attention to this topic within our operations. We brought together a group of female farmers to provide input for a training on well-being, more specifically about the triangle of happiness. You can compare the triangle of happiness with the food triangle, but in terms of mental well-being. The triangle of happiness consists of 4 components: 1. being well surrounded, 2. being able to be yourself, 3. feeling good and 4. things that can throw you off balance.

At that meeting, the idea of starting a learning network about well-being was born. One of the female farmers told a story about her husband. She explained the stress her husband had started to feel because of the arrival of the milking robot. Any problem with the robot would send out an alarm on his cell phone, requiring him to keep his phone next to him at all times and being available all times. She shared her concern about her husband and the other female farmers present recognized themselves in her story and showered her with tips on how they themselves would handle this situation.

That is exactly **the concept of a learning network**: a small group of people who come together on a regular basis to learn from each other and each other's experiences on a certain theme. There is the possibility to invite external speakers, but this is not necessary (the group decides this itself). In this specific case, the learning network consists of female farmers, coming together to strengthen each other in terms of mental well-being.

Thanks to FARMWELL, we had the opportunity to set up a real learning network about well-being (as a social innovation) and so we invited those same ladies (6 farmers) to a **kick-off meeting**.

At this kick-off meeting, we presented the concept of the learning network about well-being and we asked the farmers about their own expectations and how they wanted to organise and fill in the learning network themselves. All female farmers present at this first meeting





wanted to participate in the learning network and they decided to come together 6 times, in the autumn and winter because there is less work to do at the farm in these months.



Photo: At the kick-off meeting, the farmers formulated their own expectations about the learning network (Journey of Change).

If you would like to learn more about this Social Innovation and about the process and findings we went through in FARMWELL (Pilot Action -> Social Return On Investment (SROI) -> Policy Recommendations) please click on the other tools in the matrix or read the rest of our study on the [Belgian Country Page](#).

