

# 'On Feirm Ground' – Supporting Farmer Well-being

## Farmer Mental Health BeSafe Project

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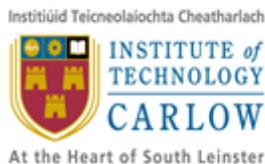
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AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



NATIONAL MEN'S  
HEALTH TRAINING



**Men's  
Development  
Network**

Better Lives for Men, Better Live



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# 'On Feirm Ground' a unique partnership model



**Men's  
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Better Lives for Men, Better Lives for All



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# The 'why' of farmer health

Doing. 'Man'.  
Masculine  
cultures

Cultural



Rural men report lower rates of stress and depression, but much higher rates of suicide ([Roy et al., 2019](#)). Research has shown that rural men are less likely to seek services for their mental health and men, in general, hold more stigmatizing views toward mental illness ([Ogrodniczuk et al., 2016](#) [Oliffe et al., 2016](#) [Wilson and Cordier, 2013](#))

Context



Heart Health



Cancers



Mental Health

Farmers are 7.35 times more likely to die from any cause of death than the lowest risk groups (Smyth et al, 2013)

Outcomes  
& Risk  
Factors

Socio-geographical

Sense of loneliness



Farmers were *less likely* to have intimate social relationships than non farmers (O'Reilly et al. 2021)

'hard to reach  
group'



Unique occupational Stressors

'..being the good farmer...'

Succession/inheritance



Financial strain

Agricultural  
change



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# Supporting Farmer Wellbeing: A role for the advisor

- Advisors noted having an inherent duty of care for the farmers they serve

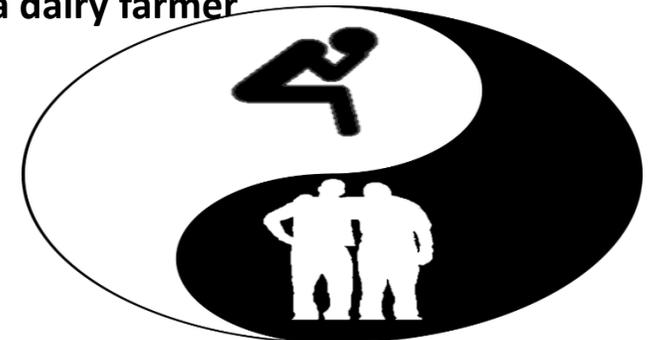
*If we are trying to help with the welfare of the farm, looking after the welfare of the farmer is central to that” – Ag Advisor, South Midlands*

- Farmers frequently saw advisors as trusted companions

*“I would feel he (the advisor) has my best interest at heart” – Dairy farmer, midlands*

- Wives/partners of farmers noted the advisor as being an objective outsider, with an added layer of professional and relational trust

*“local areas might not help with this kind of stuff (mental health).. The advisor is a bit more removed, and they would trust him with the on farm work – Partner of a dairy farmer*



# Conclusion

## **Lessons learned**

- The stoicism so typical of normative rural masculinity prevents men from seeking help when their health is severely compromised, particularly around mental health
- As agriculture changes farmers health challenges change also – something that is uniquely associated with farmers identity within particular social geographies.
- A key aspect of engaging with farmers on health, is on creating a ‘safe space’ and empathising with the world of farmers, and this is a core element in the roll-out of the ‘On Feirm Ground’ training – ultimately adapting the programme to cultural context to maximise its impact
- Advisors are strategically positioned to support, encourage and signpost farmers in relation to their health; but in the absence of training and guidance, feel ill-prepared to do so.

## **Broader learnings**

The high-rates of adverse health outcomes among farmers in Ireland (Smyth et al., 2013; van Doorn et al., 2020) needs to be looked at through the lens of the social, cultural and political nature of farming and rural life – and in conjunction with medical and psychological practises – thus, tracing back the distressing layers that eventually knot together as quantifiable adverse medical outcomes (Price & Evans, 2009).

# Next/current steps...

