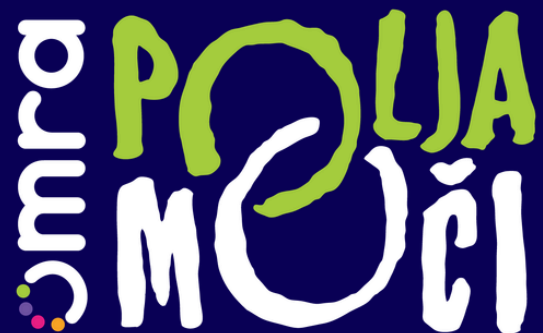


Field-Based Mental Health Education for Farmers: Insights from the PoljaMoči Project

SHWA Conference, Rome - Viterbo, September
2026



Tisa Kučan Lah

Sociomedical Institute, The Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

tisa.kucan-lah@zrc-sazu.si



Methodology

Preliminary research

- **A comparative quantitative study of farmers and non-Farmers** (N=574; 233 farmers, 341 non-farmers)
- **22 semi-structured interviews** (7 farmers and 15 experts who work with farmers)
- **4 focus groups** (representatives of professional organizations and people who farm)

Survey Conducted in Conjunction with the Workshops

- **Evaluation questionnaires for both workshops** (105 and 122 participant of each workshop)
- **Questionnaire to assess mental health literacy at the workshop “When Life on the Farm Gets Too Hard: Recognizing Mental Health Issues”** (Questionnaire 1 = 119 workshop participants and Questionnaire 2 = 101 workshop participants).

Identified Needs

- There is still more stigma among the rural population than elsewhere.
- Upholding the ideals of the “good farmer” can reinforce the stigma.
- We need to start a conversation about mental health challenges among the rural population; to that end, we have developed two workshops.

“ An individual who confides in others that they are experiencing a condition such as stress is quickly met with judgement and is regarded as ‘foolish’.

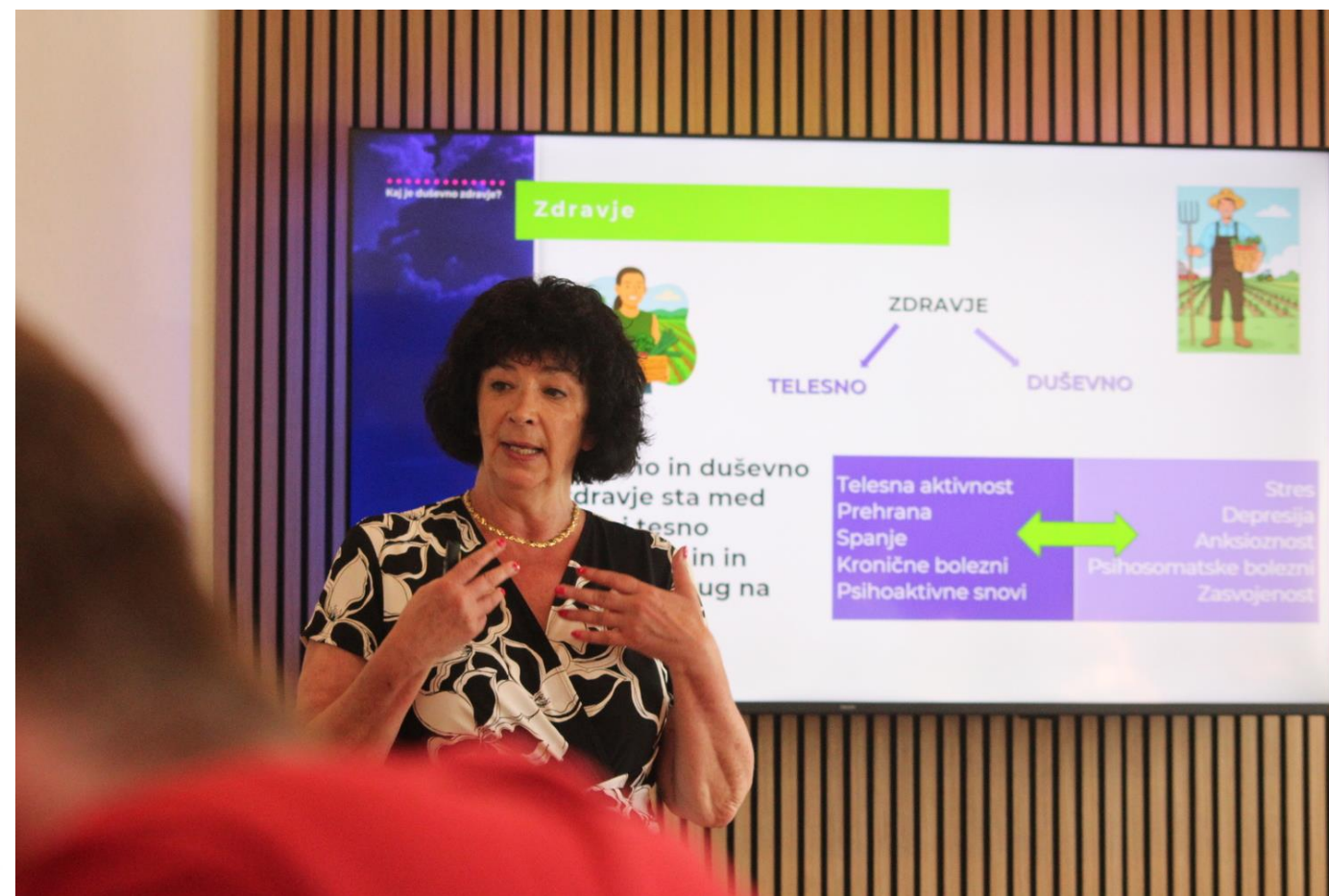
”

“ A physical injury is easier to understand than mental distress, because it is visible and usually temporary.

”

How should we go about planning workshops?

- Stigma as a barrier to participation.
- Engaging with the community and established organizations.
- Adjusting the time and place.
- Offering in-person and online workshops.



Workshops

“When life on the farm gets too hard: recognizing mental health issues”

- 90 minutes.
- Raising awareness about the most common mental health issues - stress, anxiety, depression and addiction.
- How to recognise early signs of mental health problems in themselves and those close to them.
- Stressors contributing to mental health issues on farms.
- Options for (self-)help and support.
- Where to find professional help and the resources available in their local community.

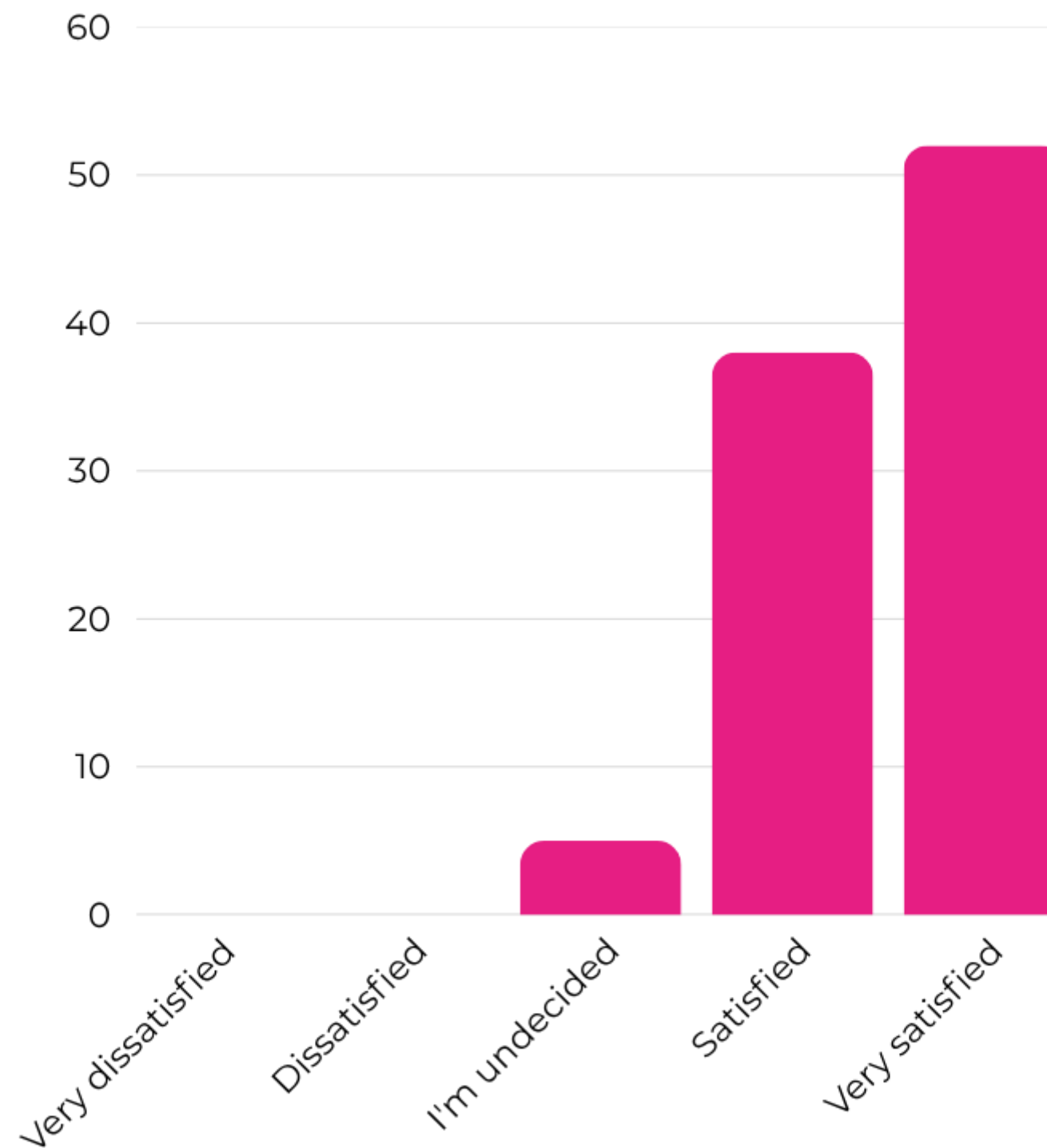
“From dawn to dusk – where is the line: on burnout on the farm”

- 90 minutes.
- A clear explanation of burnout and its signs.
- Practical recommendations for reducing stress, whilst focusing primarily on the challenges faced on a daily basis by people who farm.
- Options for (self-)help and support.
- Where to find professional help and the resources available in their local community.

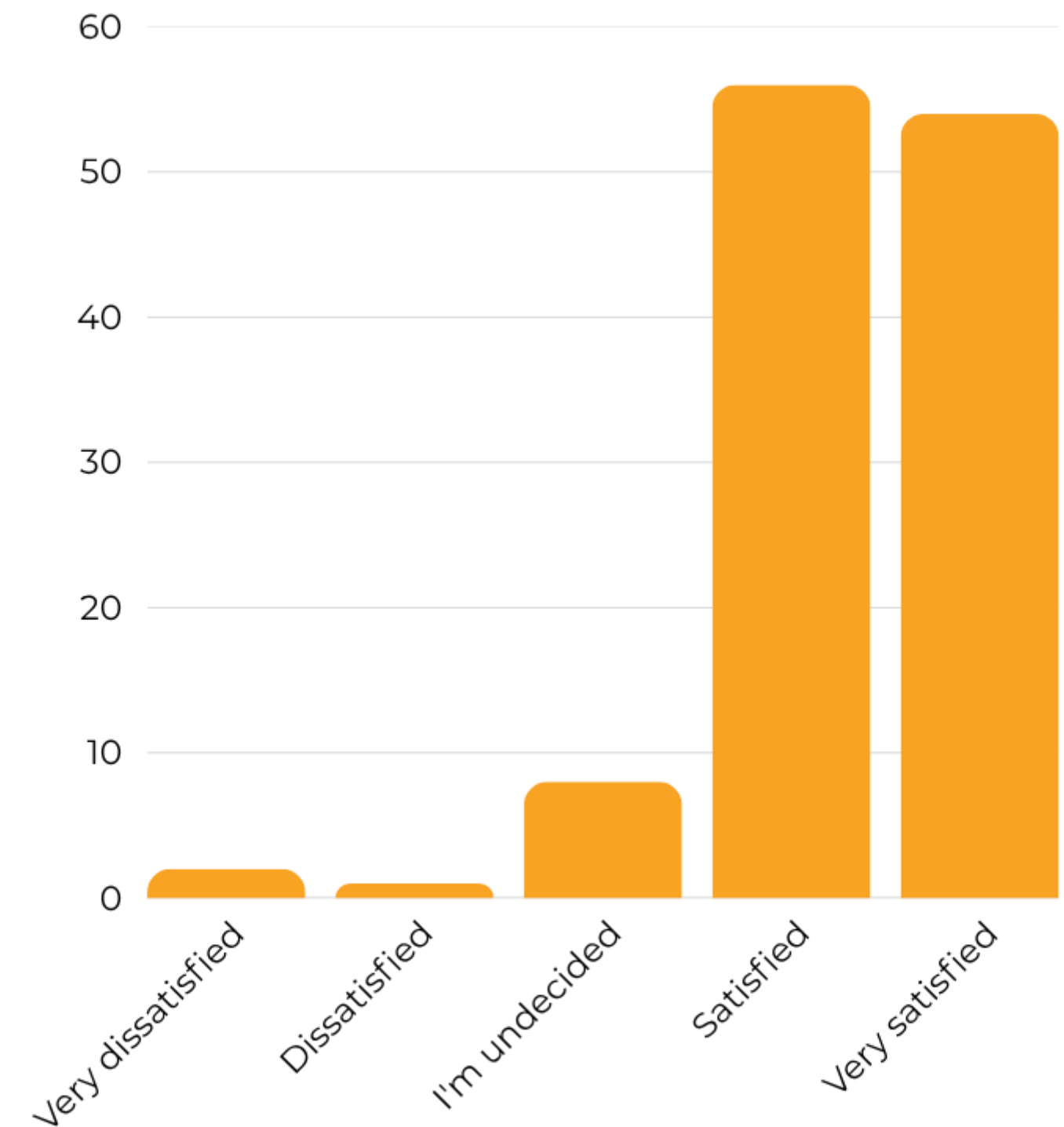




How satisfied were you overall with the training in terms of its organization, the content presented and its relevance, as well as the timing and location of the event?



“Workshop on recognising mental health issues”



“Workshop on burnout”

Improvements in Mental Health Literacy

- ✓ Self-help strategies: 6.5% improvement
- ✓ Seeking help and first aid skills: 17.4% improvement
- ✓ Misconceptions/stereotypes: 2.4% improvement
- ✓ Knowledge of mental health issues: 14.5% improvement

Conclusion

- Farming involves multiple, persistent stressors.
- Limited opportunities to rest can affect well-being and mental health.
- Stigma, low mental health literacy and self-reliance can hinder seeking help.
- The “good farmer” ideal emphasises resilience, hard work and independence.
- PoljaMoči promotes mental health education, dialogue and seeking help.
- Mental health care can be framed as part of caring for the farm and family.
- Farmers’ mental health is also shaped by broader structural conditions.



Thank you!

tisa.kucan-lah@zrc-sazu.si

Project Co-
Funding Partner



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA ZDRAVJE
