

FARMING STRONGER 4 LONGER CAMPAIGN: CULTIVATING FARMER WELLBEING IN LANCASHIRE AND BEYOND

Executive Summary:

This report outlines the activities and objectives of our community-driven initiative dedicated to improving the health and well-being of farmers in Ribble Valley, Pennine Lancashire and extending our reach beyond. Recognising the unique physical and mental demands of agricultural work, our campaign provides practical resources and fosters a supportive community to empower farmers to prioritise their health, ensuring their longevity and the sustainability of their farms.

Background and Mission:

Farmers face significant challenges, demanding physical labour, long working hours, geographical isolation, exposure to hazards, and significant financial pressures contribute to high rates of musculoskeletal disorders, mental health challenges, and long-term health conditions within the farming community. Our initiative directly addresses these concerns by partnering with experts in health, fitness, and agriculture to develop tailored resources and support systems.

Our core mission is simple: To empower farmers to prioritise their well-being, enabling them to remain strong, healthy, and resilient, ensuring the continued success of their farms and the agricultural sector as a whole. We operate on a principle of listening to the farming community, ensuring our resources are relevant and directly address their needs and feedback.



Key Activities and Initiatives:

Our campaign employs a multi-faceted approach to reach and support farmers:



- **Comprehensive Health and Fitness Booklet:** We are currently developing a booklet containing practical advice and targeted exercises designed specifically for the physical demands of farming. This resource will include:
 - Targeted Exercises: Demonstrations and guidance on exercises to improve strength, flexibility, and endurance relevant to farming tasks.
 - Safe Lifting Techniques: Education and practical tips on proper lifting mechanics to prevent injuries.
 - Cardiac Health on the Farm: Information on the risks of cardiac disease within the farming community and the role of physical activity in prevention and management.
 - Mental Health Support: Signposting to relevant mental health resources, coping strategies for stress and isolation, and encouragement for seeking support.
 - Nutrition Advice: Providing information and advice highlighting simple and realistic recipes and nutritional guidance to effectively fuel farmers for their demanding work.
 - Community Safety Advice: Contributions from the Police and Fire Department on farm safety and security.
 - Sustainable Farming and Farmer Health: Highlighting the intrinsic link between sustainable farming practices and the long-term health and well-being of farmers, emphasising that "farmers are the farm."
- **Online Exercise Video Library:** A series of short, accessible exercise videos tailored to farmers' needs, available online for easy access and integration into their daily routines.
- **Targeted Leaflets:** Development of informational leaflets focusing on specific health concerns and conditions prevalent within the farming community, providing focused advice, exercises and support.
- **Active Social Media Presence:** Utilising social media platforms to raise awareness about farmer health, share exercise tips, promote our resources, and foster a sense of community and support.
- **Engagement and Outreach:** Conducting talks and presentations with various farming groups, including Young Farmers Clubs and agricultural societies, to promote our initiative and engage directly with the community.
- **Podcast: "Moo-ve it!":** Launching a podcast that will:
 - Encourage farmers to incorporate physical activity into their lives.
 - Share inspiring real-life stories of farmers who have embraced exercise and experienced positive benefits to their physical and mental well-being.
- **6-Week Exercise Study:** We are currently recruiting farmers in the Northwest of England to participate in a FREE 6-week exercise study. This crucial research aims to:
 - Understand the barriers: Identify the specific challenges that prevent farmers from engaging in regular physical activity.
 - Develop effective solutions: Use the insights gained to create more tailored and effective support programs for the farming community.
- **Contribution to Research:** By participating, farmers will directly contribute to vital research that will inform the development of future support programs designed specifically for their needs.



Partnerships and Collaborations:

Our campaign benefits from the invaluable support and collaboration of several key organisations:

- **The Field Nurse Trust:** Partnering with this established charity dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of farmers and their families.
- **Bowland Fitness:** Providing fitness expertise and guidance in the development of exercise resources and programs.
- **Together An Active Future:** Receiving backing and support from this initiative focused on promoting physical activity within the community.
- **Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI):** co-producing and mutually supporting their mission to support the farming community.
- **Harper Adams University:** A leading agricultural university providing expertise and credibility to our resources and outreach efforts.
- **Wider Livestock Auction Marts:** Utilising their networks to disseminate information and engage with a broad range of farmers.



Objectives and Goals:

Our overarching goals for this campaign are to significantly improve the physical health and fitness levels of farmers while simultaneously raising crucial awareness of the mental and physical health challenges prevalent within the farming community, actively encouraging help-seeking behaviour. We aim to achieve this by providing practical and easily accessible resources that seamlessly integrate into the daily lives of farmers, fostering a strong and supportive community where individuals feel connected and empowered to prioritise their well-being.

Central to our mission is highlighting the vital link between farmer health and the long-term sustainability of their farms. Furthermore, we are committed to increasing engagement in physical activity among farmers and, through dedicated research, gaining a deeper understanding of the specific barriers they face in this area. Ultimately, we will utilise the findings of our study to develop more effective and tailored interventions designed to promote physical activity and overall well-being within the farming community.



Impact and Measurement:

While this is an ongoing initiative, we anticipate measuring our impact through various means, including:

- Distribution and engagement with our booklet and leaflets.
- Reach and engagement on our social media platforms.
- Attendance and feedback from talks and presentations.
- Podcast downloads and listenership.
- Data collected from our 6-week exercise study, including changes in wellbeing survey scores, health check measurements, and qualitative feedback from interviews.
- Anecdotal evidence and testimonials from farmers who have benefited from our resources and the exercise study.
- Potential future surveys to assess changes in health behaviours and well-being within the target community.

Call to Action:

We encourage all members of the farming community and supporting organisations to get involved with our campaign. This can be through:

- Sharing our resources and information with fellow farmers.
- Participating in our online activities and engaging on social media.
- Attending our talks and events.
- Tuning into our podcast.
- Providing feedback on our resources and suggesting future areas of focus.
- Volunteering time or expertise to support our initiatives.

By working together, we can cultivate a healthier and more resilient future for our farmers, ensuring the continued success and vitality of the agricultural sector.



Conclusion:

This campaign represents a vital step towards addressing the often-overlooked health and well-being needs of our farming community. Through the provision of practical resources, the fostering of a supportive network, and strong collaborative partnerships, we are committed to empowering farmers to prioritise their health and well-being, ensuring they can continue their essential work for years to come. We believe that by investing in the health of our farmers, we are investing in the future of British agriculture.

