



Advancing Worker Health Protection

9th - 13th June | Aviva Stadium | Dublin

Session: Occupational hygiene in practice

***Psychosocial Challenges and Opportunities of Farmers
and Farmworkers: a Systematic Literature Review***

dr. Nataša Dernovšček Hafner & dr. Lilijana Šprah

**Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Sociomedical Institute,
Ljubljana, Slovenia**






FARMERS AND FARMWORKERS ARE EXPOSED TO VARIOUS PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

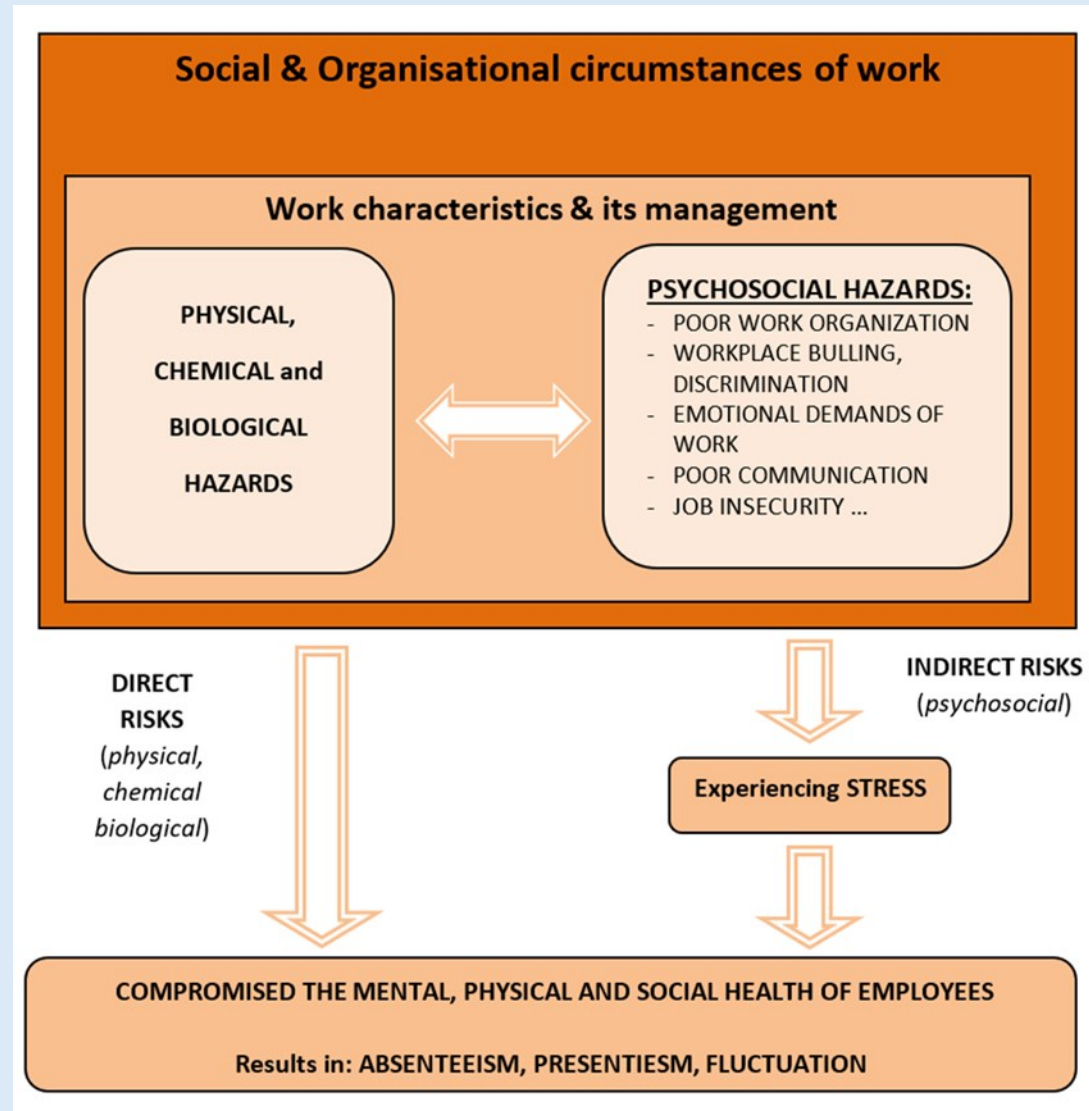


WHAT ARE THE PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS?

DEFINITION:

The aspects of work performance, the characteristics of  and their , the climate of work organisation and the other socio-demographic circumstances that may affect psychophysical health,  susceptibility to STRESS, BURNOUT, ABSENTEEISM, PRESENTEEISM, TURNOVER, PROBLEMS in reconciling work and family life.

PSIHOSOCIAL RISKS AND HEALTH OF FARMERS AND FARMWORKERS





WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN?

FARMERS' PSYHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES



Source: Farmers' psychosocial work environment and mental health, Systematic literature review: 2022: 8, SAWEE



SafeHabitus

Duration: 01/2023 – 12/2026
Funding: Horizon Europe
Partnership: 20 partners; 13 countries



SafeHabitus is a multi-actor project that aims to **strengthen Farm Health and Safety Knowledge Innovation Systems (FHS KIS)** and support the EU transition to social sustainability in farming. Through novel methods and a collaborative approach, the project aims to advance safer practices on farms across the EU.





Advancing Worker Health Protection

9th - 13th June | Aviva Stadium | Dublin



IOHA



OHSI

OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE
SOCIETY OF IRELAND

BOHS

British Occupational
Hygiene Society

SafeHabitus CORE THEMES



HEALTH



SAFETY



REDUCING
RISKS



ATTRACTIVE
VENUES OF
FARMING



WELL-BEING



CORPORATE
SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY



SafeHabitus



Funded by
the European Union

WP4 : ENHANCING THE ATTRACTIVITNES OF FARMING



SafeHabitus

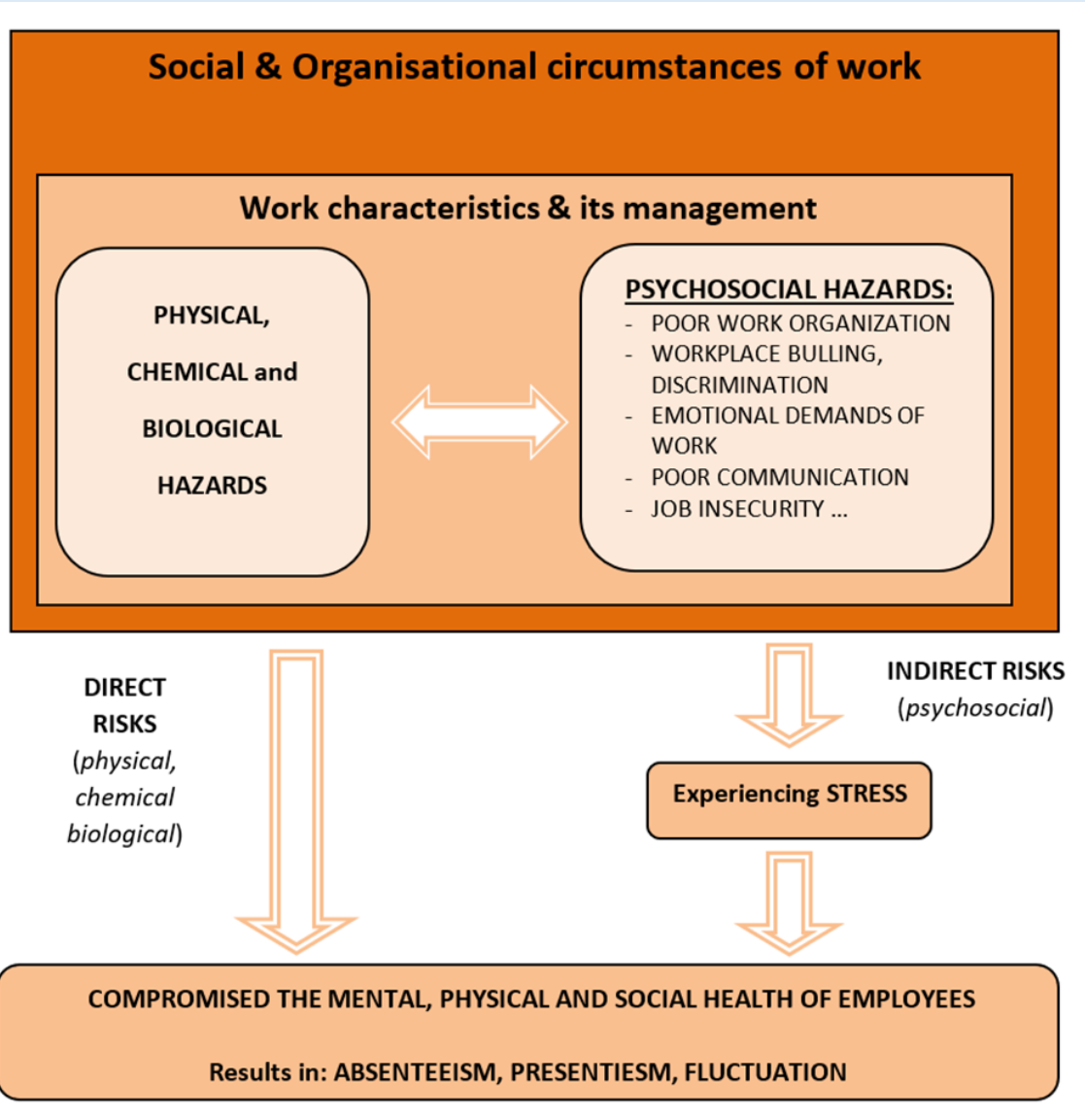
To equip the farming sector with innovative solutions that increase opportunities for the most vulnerable groups, improve the attractiveness of agricultural work and reduce the feeling of being left behind.

- **Task 4.1** Anticipating farming futures
- **Task 4.2** Assessing the future attractiveness of farming
- **Task 4.3** Innovating to build resilience, protect health and wellbeing and improve quality of life



Funded by
the European Union

PLANNED WORK IN WP4



Sources of psychosocial risks in the rural environment affecting the health and well-being of farmers and farm workers!

METHOD AND PROTOCOL OF THE SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

- Database: Web of Science and Scopus
- Included studies: published in peer-reviewed journals, in English
- The systematic review followed the PRISMA protocol:
4932: core collection
603: studies screened by abstract

ORGANIZATION OF RESULTS

4 TOPIC

CULTURE OF FARMING

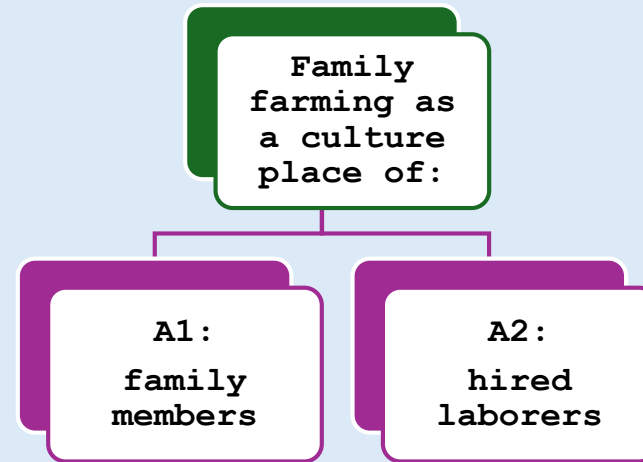
SOCIAL PROTECTION

STRESS IN FARMING

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Preliminary results **TOPIC 1: CULTURE OF FARMING, FARM SAFETY AND WELL-BEING**

Q: How is farming culture related to the safety, health and well-being of farmers and farmworkers?

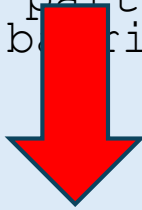


Ad1) Threatened masculinity and self-esteem, stoicism, perception of moral injustice, entrapment and limited agency, self-exploitation (work ethic), **farm safety-risk paradox**, and **self-medication affect** → S&H of all genders and generations.

Ad2) Culture of migration (hopes & lived experience), **farmers' view of migrants as ethnic others and outsiders** (reproduction of racialised workplace hierarchy), **failed acculturation**, (self-)exploitation (good worker), **risk-taking** and **health beliefs affect S&H of migrant/seasonal farmworkers** (men, women and children).

Preliminary results **TOPIC 2: SOCIAL PROTECTION** **OF FARMERS AND FARMWORKERS IN THE EU**

Q: How high is the level of SP for farmers and farm workers?

- **Formal (programmes and services) and informal (family, friends, community, etc.) social protection are important**, research mainly addresses formal protection measures;
 - **Low uptake of social protection measures in farming** as a sector/occupation – structural factors, culture of farming, lack of access;
 - **Pronounced issue in the analysed articles:** Lack of access to social security and health services, particularly for migrant farmworkers – reasons: language and cultural barriers, discrimination, legal/migration status;
- 
- **Low levels of social protection have a negative impact on health and safety of farmers and farmworkers** – pronounced need for particular support/help interventions.

Preliminary results **TOPIC 3: WHAT CAUSES STRESS IN FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS**

Q: What causes stress in farmers/farmworkers?

- **Economic pressures:** financial instability, debt.
- **Social and community issues:** isolation and loneliness, family dynamics
- **Environmental factors:** climate change, pesticide exposure
- **Occupational factors:** workload, long working hours, performance pressure, labour force availability
- **Health and safety risks:** injuries lack of access to (mental) health services, pandemics
- **Regulatory and policy changes**
- **Market dynamic:** global competition ↓ consumer trends

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES: anxiety, depression, suicide risks, substance abuse, PTS

Preliminary results **TOPIC 4: TECHNOLOGY- IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE H&S OF FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS**

Q: What are the hazards/stressors/sources of work-related stress in connection with the use of modern agricultural technology?

- **Cost of agri-tech:** the high prices of equipment and maintenance increase the pressure to offset the debt acquired through the purchase of new technologies. **Cost of recruiting highly skilled workers** who can handle big data and high tech. More data is not necessarily better, unless farmers manage to turn the data into useful management information..
- **Adapting to agri-tech:** restructuring and adapting farms to new working systems and a different management style. This includes **training farmers** in the correct and safe use of new technologies. Particular attention should be paid to the stress caused by **working alone** and the loss of contact with the animals.
- **Unsynchronized activities between humans and robots in the current state of agri-tech development:** lack of understanding of the human perspective, leading to stress-related reactions, i.e. technostress. This manifests itself in the form of techno stressors such as techno-overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-security and techno-uncertainty. To avoid technostress, farmers need support during and after the installation of new technologies to improve their competence and self-efficacy and reduce financial downtime.
- **Mistrust and a feeling of total dependence on high-tech companies:** more cooperation and proof of the effectiveness of the new technology. Regulations and safety standards are needed to boost farmers' confidence.

Take home message

Addressing presented farmers risks requires:

- proactive strategies, including policy interventions
- technological support
- community-building initiatives
- enhanced access to MH services tailored to the unique needs of the farming community



IOHA²⁰²⁴

Advancing Worker Health Protection

9th - 13th June | Aviva Stadium | Dublin



natasa.dernovscek-hafner@zrc-sazu.si
lilijana.sprah@zrc-sazu.si

Thank you!



Acknowledgments: This presentation was prepared as part of the Research Program Group "Studies on Distress and Being Well" (code: P5-0115-23), which is co-funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency and Horizon Europe Project SafeHabitus, co-funded by the European Commission.

