atf animal task force
A European Public-Private Partnership

16th ATF Seminar

European livestock farming in a continuously changing world

Wednesday 25 November 2026 – 9.00-13.00 CET



The social and economic challenges for farmers – how can generational renewal be achieved?

Kirsten Wosnitza - German Dairy Farmer

Success Story: Agricultural businesses have continuously increased their productivity and efficiency.

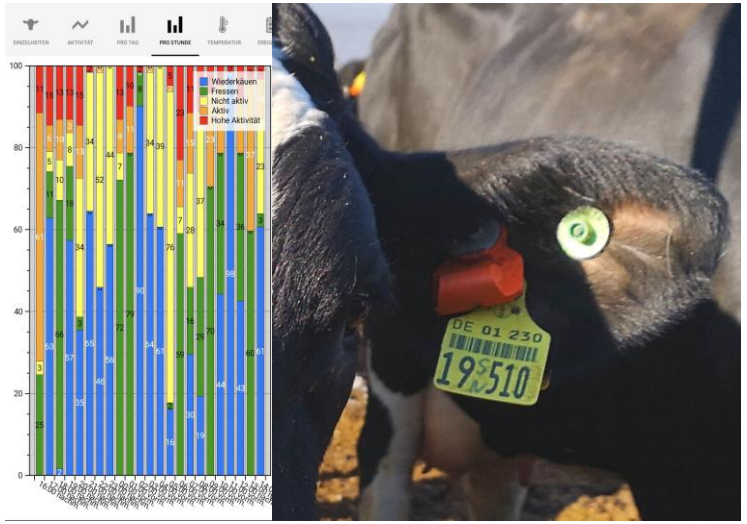












In the same time:

Increase in mental health problems among farmers

burnout

suicide

work overload



Reasons for increasing mental health challenges



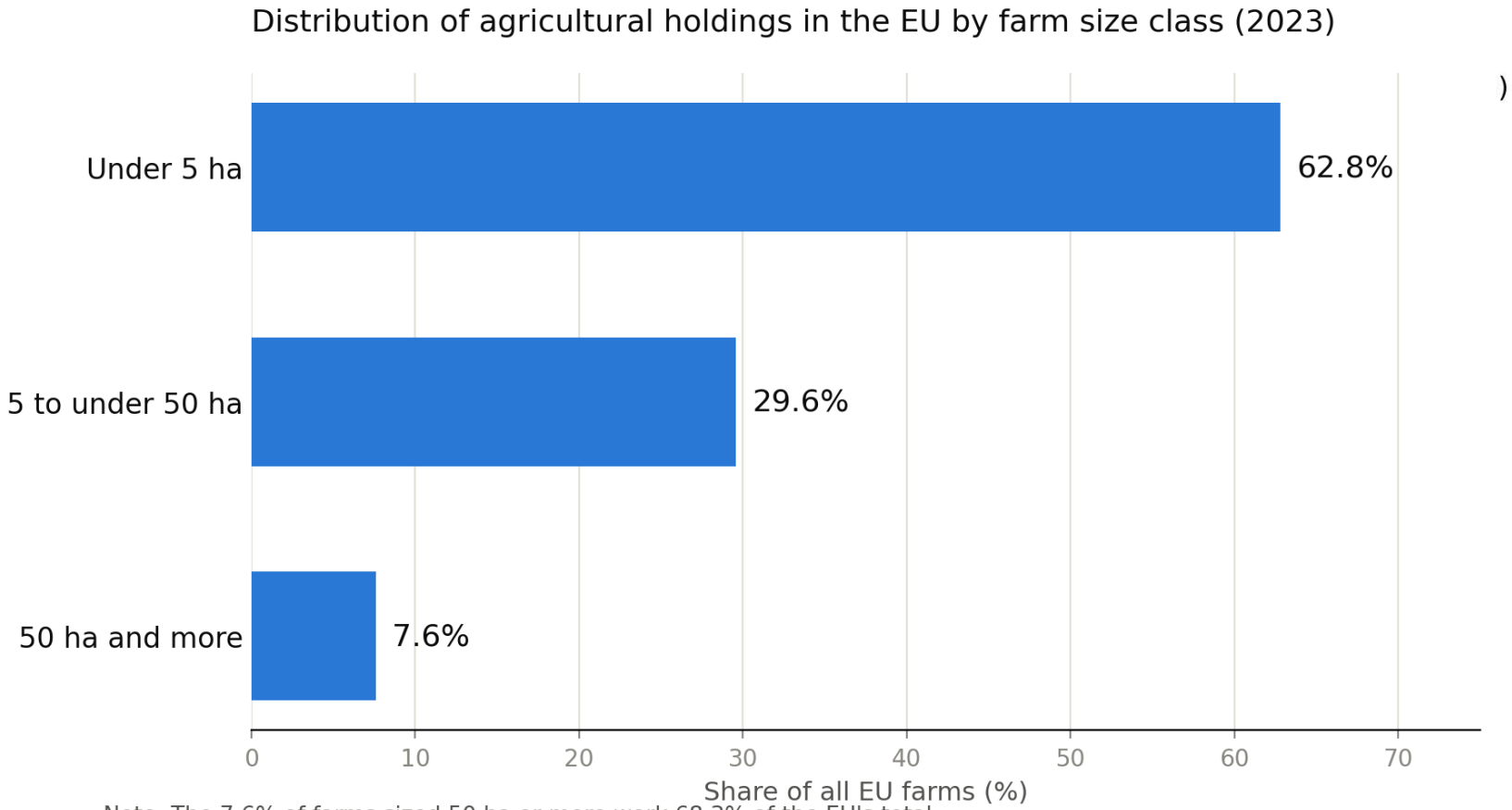
- High workload
- Few reliable options for farm relief / replacement
- High financial burdens due to large investments
- Volatile markets
- Prices that do not cover production costs
- The feeling of being unappreciated and not recognized
- Increasing regulatory requirements

Does this sound attractive?

Hof Sophiental – dairy farm

- Joined farm 1997, took over 2004, 1.5 family labour units
- Schleswig-Holstein, 86 ha sandy upland („Geest“), 10 ha owned land
- 19 ha maize silage, 7 ha whole-crop silage, 5 ha arable grass, 55 ha permanent grassland
- 100 dairy cows, 50 replacement heifers and calves
- Day-and-night grazing, seasonal calving
- Herd yield 10,700 kg, ProCross, forage-based milk yield 5,500 kg
- 50% of cows bred with beef bulls, no herd bull kept
- Culling Statistic (12-year average): 52,200 kg milk, 7.4 years, lifetime daily yield 19.4 kg
- 1/8 stake in biogas plant (570 kW), solar (88 kW), 30 sheep

What does agriculture in Europe look like?



Note: The 7.6% of farms sized 50 ha or more work 68.3% of the EU's total utilised agricultural area, despite their small share of all farms.

Source: Eurostat, Farm structure survey (ef_fsi_physz), 2023 data (published April 2026)

Two regions, two paths, two strengths

Farms that have grown

- Scale effects
- Low unit costs
- Efficient operations
- High production volume

Small-scale farms

- create economic value in region
- Keep rural areas alive
- Carriers of cultural heritage
- Often preserve landscapes, biodiversity and habitats


Farming comes in many colours



CAP: Generational renewal

Ø-age farmers in Europe

57 years

Source: European Commission, 2025

→ **EU-Commission proposes**

- More support for generational renewal, new entrants and women
- Supporting farm relief services



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Can we meet society’s expectations?



What about our own values?

What It Takes Now

If farming is to have a future in all kinds of regions, five things are essential:

1. **Education & Advisory Services**
   Showcasing the diversity of economically viable systems – not just an intensified farm model

2. **Well-Targeted Funding Policy**
   No structural disadvantages for small-scale farm types, differentiated payments reflecting regional conditions and groups of farmers, rewards for farmer‘s societal contributions.

3. **Economic Prospects**
   Long-term planning certainty and cost-covering market returns.

4. **Attractive Regional Conditions**
   Access to land and capital, farm relief services, processing and marketing – ensuring that good concepts do not fail due to bureaucracy.

5. **Closer Collaboration with Science**
   Taking small and medium-sized systems seriously as a research subject, rather than dismissing them as a mere transitional phenomenon.

To make generational renewal successful

- agriculture must be economically viable
- adapted to the possibilities of the region
- socially compatible
- aligned with one‘s own values
- attractive as a way of living and working
- accepted by society

Thank you for your attention!