

Call for abstracts

Addressing current and future challenges of work in agriculture: research, policy and practice

International Symposium on Work in Agriculture, 7-10 July 2026
Berne, Switzerland

Work in the agri-food sector is an increasingly complex topic. There are many intersecting challenges, such as ageing of the workforce, digitalisation, migration, impacts from a changing climate and integration of supply chains. The people working in the agri-food sector play a critical role in adapting and transforming work in the face of these challenges. Advancing the research agenda in this context is essential for informing responsible policy and practice relating to work in the agri-food sector.

The International Symposium on Work in Agriculture ([ISWA](#)) is the only global forum that brings together researchers, policymakers and practitioners to address questions of work in the agri-food sector. Together with the Committee of Labour Science in Agriculture of the Max Eyth-Society for Agricultural Engineering ([Fachausschuss für Arbeitswissenschaften im Landbau der Max-Eyth-Gesellschaft für Agrartechnik im Verein Deutscher Ingenieure – AKAL](#)) and the annual event of the [Hugo P. Cecchini Institute](#) at Berne University of Applied Sciences, ISWA 2026 will provide a forum to present and discuss research on challenges of work in the agri-food sector from diverse disciplinary perspectives. It aims to facilitate exchange and collaboration between the different stakeholders to tackle challenges related to work that the agri-food sector is facing currently and in the future.

The symposium covers the following themes:

- I) Attractiveness of work in the agri-food sector
- II) Decent work in the agri-food sector
- III) Knowledge, skills and education
- IV) Dynamics of work
- V) Health and safety
- VI) Agricultural workforce development systems

Abstract submission is now open until 11 January 2026. Decisions on acceptance will be communicated by 15 February 2026. Accepted abstracts will be published in a book of abstracts.

ISWA 2026 is organised by Working Groups that are reviewing the abstracts submitted to them and convene sessions on their specific focus. We are very happy to have attracted a diverse range of Working Groups with committed convenors from many different countries and backgrounds that address work in agriculture comprehensively from various angles.

You will find the list of Working Groups with short descriptions below. You can contact the convenors for more detail, if needed. Some Working Groups aim to publish additional output from their sessions. Note that sessions of individual Working Groups can have different formats that should be reflected in your abstract. When submitting your abstract, please choose the Working Group to which your abstract fits best. We treat this choice as your preferred Working Group.

Abstracts are submitted as unformatted text via Conftool and should have a short and clear title of maximum 18 words. In the main text please describe the rationale and objectives as well as methods, findings and implications of your submission. The maximum length of

abstracts is 3000 characters, including spaces. ConfTool will also ask you to indicate the preferred format of your contribution.

To submit your abstract, follow this link: [ISWA 2026 - ConfTool Pro - Login](#).

For any queries contact the ISWA 2026 organisation office: iswa2026.hafl@bfh.ch

Working Groups (WG) of ISWA 2026

WG1 – The impact of digitalisation on agri-food labour and production systems

Convenors: Katja Heitkämper (Agroscope, Switzerland - katja.heitkaemper@agroscope.admin.ch), Marianne Cockburn (Agroscope, Switzerland - marianne.cockburn@agroscope.admin.ch)

This working group focuses on the double-edged impact of digitalization on agricultural and food systems and looks for holistic approaches to address the changing landscape of work and production in the agri-food economy. It acknowledges that these technologies can improve productivity, resource efficiency and traceability, but also pose significant challenges especially for labour dynamics. The group aims i) to share current research results on technological advances and digitalization in agriculture, ii) to promote dialogue between scientists, practitioners, and policy makers, iii) to develop recommendations for action such as best practices and policy recommendations for improving working conditions, and iv) to identify research gaps and opportunities for future collaboration.

Format: Traditional research presentations and interactive follow-up.

WG2 – Critical perspectives on agricultural robotisation

Convenors: Olivier Ejderyan (FiBL, Switzerland - olivier.ejderyan@fibl.org)

This working group will interrogate the relationships between agricultural workers/farmers and robots and the meanings of robotised agricultural work. It considers emancipatory perspectives, political ecologies of robotisation and robotisation in the broader context of digitalisation. The working group aims to contribute to critical agricultural research on digitalisation and automation by i) compiling empirical and theoretical contributions examining labour, meaning, inclusion, and political ecologies of robotisation in agri-food systems; ii) fostering dialogue across disciplines including agrarian studies, STS, political ecology, labour studies, and responsible innovation research; iii) mapping competing narratives and imaginaries of agricultural robotisation, and iv) exploring how agricultural robotics can be understood not only as technical artefacts but also as socio-political projects with implications for justice, sustainability, cultural heritage, and the transformation of agri-food systems.

Format: Traditional research presentations and plenary discussion.

WG3 – Work dynamics within and beyond the farm gate

Convenors: Priscila Duarte Malanski (INRAE, France - priscila.malanski@inrae.fr), Sylvie Mugnier (Institut Agro Dijon, France - sylvie.mugnier@agrosupdijon.fr), Ezequiel Bernardo Gonzalez (INTA, Argentina - gonzalez.ezequiel@inta.gob.ar), Marcos Horacio Easdale (CONICET, Argentina - markeasdale@gmail.com), Marcela Crovetto (CONICET, Argentina - mmcrovetto@conicet.gov.ar)

Work-related issues on farms and within their socio-technical networks are prompting a rethink of farm development pathways such as diversification. This working group aims to better understand i) how farm work is reconfigured by the expansion into non-agricultural activities and their embeddedness in socio-technical networks, including the reliance on external labour and services; ii) how these diversified farms promote attractive workplaces for workers, iii) share lessons learned across farm work contexts to identify common bottlenecks, successful strategies, and emerging patterns; iv) develop a research agenda on

work dynamics, diversification, and socio-technical networks in agriculture, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue. Another purpose is to facilitate networking based on knowledge sharing to encourage future collaborations.

Format: Traditional research presentations and non-traditional formats.

WG4 – Mapping the territory of youth careers in agriculture and food

Convenors: Catherine Waite (University of Melbourne, Australia - cwaite@unimelb.edu.au), Michael Santhanam-Martin (University of Melbourne, Australia - mpmartin@unimelb.edu.au), Ruth Nettle (University of Melbourne, Australia - ranettle@unimelb.edu.au), Fiona Williams (Harper Adams University, United Kingdom - FWilliams@harper-adams.ac.uk), Conor Hogan (Teagasc, Ireland - conor.hogan@teagasc.ie), Amy Cosby (Central Queensland University, Australia - a.cosby@cqu.edu.au), Callum Eastwood (DairyNZ, New Zealand - callum.eastwood@dairynz.co.nz), Caroline Nye (University of Exeter, United Kingdom - cn293@exeter.ac.uk)

This working group explores pathways, junctures and experiences of youth careers in the agri-food sector. Youth attraction and retention is a crucial element in the discussion about supporting a sustainable agriculture workforce. It implies a need to map the territory of youth careers and experiences in the agri-food sector, considering various junctures shaping career decision-making throughout. The working groups thus aims to showcase recent scholarship and policy research with a view to soliciting academic dialogue, international collaboration and networking that focuses on 1) Empirical research of young people's engagement in agricultural work, training and careers, 2) Policy approaches shaping young people's work experiences in the sector, 3) Research building theory and policy.

Format: Traditional research presentations with facilitated discussion.

WG5 – Seeds of succession

Convenors: Adriana Borsellino (Rural Youth Europe - adriana.borsellino@ruralyouth europe.com), Anja Fortuna (Rural Youth Europe - anja.fortuna@ruralyouth europe.com)

This working group aims to create an interactive space for sharing and reflecting on the experiences of young family members working on farms and engaging in succession processes. It provides a space for reflection on how farm succession unfolds in practice, what enables or hinders youth involvement, and how this process can be better supported. Bringing together diverse perspectives, the working group will examine both shared patterns and contextual differences, with attention to the roles young family members play on the farm. By fostering open dialogue and exchange, the workshop seeks to generate new perspectives, build connections, and collectively explore pathways to better support and empower the next generation of farmers in sustaining family farms and revitalising rural communities.

Format: Interactive workshops.

WG6 – Enhancing the attractiveness of work in the agri-food sector

Convenors: Meena Pandey (University of California, Davis, USA - mdpandey@ucdavis.edu)

This working group focuses on strengthening workers' rights and socio-economic security, such as fair pay, access to benefits, and retirement systems in the Global North contexts, and expanding basic protections for informal and seasonal workers in Global South. It aims to foster dialogue among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners on transforming agricultural work into a more attractive and sustainable career choice. The group will generate comparative insights and highlight innovative practices by bringing together perspectives from the countries of Global North and South and other comparable contexts. It will also identify systemic barriers and co-develop policy and practice recommendations. The group further aims to stimulate future collaboration to better understand how to attract and retain agricultural workers across regions.

Format: Traditional research presentations and interactive roundtable and world café for participatory dialogue.

WG7 – Innovative approaches to enhancing the attractiveness of agricultural work in rural Africa

Convenors: Marouane Chaami (National Higher Agronomic School – Kasdi Merbah, Algeria - m.chaami@edu.ensa.dz), Yirgalem Nigussie (Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia - yirgalem.nigussie@aau.edu.et), Edward Mutandwa (University of Zimbabwe - mutandwa.edward@gmail.com), Fatima Lambarraa-Lehnhardt (ZALF, Germany - Fatima.Lehnhardt@zalf.de)

This working group will examine the root causes of labor scarcity in rural Africa and explore strategies to improve the attractiveness of agricultural jobs, focusing on wage trends, working conditions, and job satisfaction for vulnerable groups including women and youth. It will also explore systemic approaches to agricultural workforce development, focusing on collaborative strategies that can be implemented at local and regional levels. Sessions will highlight case studies, empirical or statistical data analyses, as well as methodological and theoretical contributions that explore the topic's objectives from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Participants share their insights in workforce development and potential solutions to enhancing labour management and workforce attractiveness.

Format: Traditional research presentations, short presentations, round table discussions and poster sessions.

WG8 – How effectively can production systems attract workers and support decent work?

Convenors: Marion Beecher (SETU, Ireland - marion.beecher@setu.ie), Nathalie Hostiou (INRAE, France - nathalie.hostiou@inrae.fr)

This working group explores effects of the on-going transformations of different production systems (animals and/or crops, pasture based or housing system, etc.) in countries of the Global North and South on the attractiveness of work and support of decent work. It analyses the diversity of forms of work related to the production systems considering different challenges (work organisation, productivity, labour flexibility, capacity to transform, etc.), effects of technical choices (combination of production, livestock and crop management, processing and marketing) on work, discussing also frameworks, concepts and methodologies. Contributions from diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives are welcome.

Format: Traditional research presentations and non-traditional formats.

WG9 – Decent work in family farming and the agri-food sector

Convenors: Caroline Jacques (University of the Extreme South of Santa Catarina, Brazil - carolinejacques@unescc.net), Dimas de Oliveira Estevam (University of the Extreme South of Santa Catarina, Brazil - doe@unescc.net)

This working group explores efforts to promote decent work in family farming and the wider agri-food sector considering global changes. It conceives family farms as closely connected farm enterprises and households that co-evolve. In family farms economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions interconnect. Global changes, such as climate change, demographic change, migration, pandemics and technological transformations that affect the agri-food sector and family farms need to be considered, when exploring decent work and its promotion, including differences in scale and other characteristics between countries. Hence, comparative analysis of policies that target rural labour forces in the Global North and South warrant attention.

Format: Traditional research presentations with discussion, English and Spanish.

WG10 – Rethinking labour in agri-food models in Africa

Convenors: Sandrine Michel (Université de Montpellier, ART-Dev, France - sandrine.michel@umontpellier.fr), Fred Mawunyo Dzanku (University of Ghana, Ghana - fdzanku@ug.edu.gh), Sara Mercandalli (CIRAD - French Agricultural Centre for International Development - ART-Dev, France - sara.mercandalli@cirad.fr), Dzifa Torvikey (University of Ghana, Ghana - gdtorvikey@ug.edu.gh)

This working group explores sustainable agri-food models that can provide decent jobs for the cohorts of young people entering the labour market. It defines agri-food models as the specific combination of agricultural production systems and the valorisation of production by agri-food value chains. The working group aims at advancing the conceptualisation of labour in agri-food models by discussing the current approaches and available data. It will shed light on the socioeconomic and institutional conditions for more and better jobs in differentiated African territories. The group will share new conceptual knowledge and empirical findings on labour in agri-food models in a diversity of South and North contexts.

Format: Traditional research presentations.

WG11 – Coping with work constraints within complex crop/livestock systems in the African farming sector

Convenors: Mohamed Taher Sraïri (Hassan II Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine Institute, Rabat, Morocco - mt.srairi@iav.ac.ma), Nathalie Hostiou (INRAE, France - nathalie.hostiou@inrae.fr), Teatske Bakker (CIRAD at University of Parakou, Bénin - teatske.bakker@cirad.fr)

This working group focuses on the actual uses of work in the African agricultural sector and its perspectives. It aims to bring researchers interested in the African agricultural sector to present updated knowledge on work uses. Presentations will be particularly focused on methods and results assessing work uses, work organization, such as the 'Work Balance' or 'QuaeWork' methods. Case studies should encompass situations from North Africa or sub-Saharan Africa. Analyses will focus on work efficiency and remuneration. Studies distinguishing the nature of the workers involved in agricultural activities (whether from family of the farmers or hired) are also encouraged.

Format: Traditional research presentations.

WG12 – Work in agriculture: its measurement and remuneration

Convenors: Sébastien Bainville (Institut Agro Montpellier, France - sebastien.bainville@supagro.fr), Claire Aubron (Institut Agro Montpellier, France - claire.aubron@supagro.fr), Axel Magnan (Institut de recherches Economiques et Sociales, France - axel.magnan@ires.fr), Théo Martin (INRAE – UMR Selmét, France - theo.courriel@gmail.com)

This working group explores methodological challenges in measurement of agricultural labour and of its remuneration. It considers both independent and salaried labour, both in the Global North and South as well as effects of global transformations such as increased international labour division, work migration and capital concentration. The working group aims to draw on both field studies and statistical approaches based on databases to support advancement of methods for precise and factual evaluations of agricultural labour remuneration. These should help addressing questions such as how to quantify agricultural labour, what productivity indicators are relevant, what role should labour productivity play, how indicators of labour remuneration and work quantity can be adapted to different types of agricultural enterprises and agricultural workers and to different countries.

Format: Traditional research presentations.

WG13 – Assessing and Interpreting Farm Workload: Pathways, Practices and Perspectives

Convenors: Rita Saleh (Agroscope, Switzerland - rita.saleh@agroscope.admin.ch), Sarina Altermatt (Agroscope, Switzerland - sarina.altermatt@agroscope.admin.ch), Emile Spar

(Agroscope, Switzerland - emile.spahr@agroscope.admin.ch), Sabine Liebenehm (Agroscope, Switzerland - sabine.liebenehm@agroscope.admin.ch)

This Working Group explores diverse methods for assessing and interpreting farm workload, while also addressing questions of decent work, social sustainability and the future of farming. It aims to i) map methods for assessing farm workload and evaluate their pros/cons, ii) investigate how workload is experienced in different contexts (e.g. farm type, gender, mechanisation/digitalisation, sustainability issues), iii) to discuss pathways for assessing workload as a farm-level social sustainability indicator in different farm contexts (e.g., farm types and labour arrangements, mechanization and digitalisation, etc.). We invite contributions from researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to discuss conceptual, methodological and applied perspectives across different farming contexts.

Format: Traditional research presentations and more interactive approaches such as world café.

WG14 – Climate shocks and labour market transitions in agriculture

Convenors: Shireen AlAzzawi (Santa Clara University, USA - salazzawi@scu.edu), Vladimir Hlasny (UNESCWA, Lebanon - vhlasny@gmail.com), Yasmine Abdelfattah (University of Prince Edward Island, Cairo campus, Egypt - yasmine.abdelfattah@uofcanada.edu.eg)

This working group engages with the effects of climate shocks and the green transition on agricultural and rural labour market dynamics. It aims i) to share recent empirical evidence and case studies on how climate shocks affect employment, informality, and decent work outcomes, ii) to explore the adjustment costs of labour reallocation, considering occupational skill specificity and mismatches, and impacts on welfare and labour mobility, iii) to discuss the implications of climate- and technology-driven changes for agricultural workforce development systems, iv) to identify policy solutions that can reduce vulnerability, support decent work, and ensure inclusive transitions for all, and v) to foster collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Format: Traditional research presentations with moderated discussion.

WG15 – Risk and resilience in agri-food labour markets

Convenors: Margaret Jodlowski (The Ohio State University, USA - jodlowski.1@osu.edu), Alexandra Hill (University of California, Berkeley, USA - alihill@berkeley.edu), Katie Ricketts (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia - katie.ricketts@csiro.au), Sarah Whitnall (University of Western Australia, Australia - sarah.whitnall@uwa.edu.au)

This working group investigates what it means for agri-food labour markets to be resilient in the current, yet heterogeneous geopolitical, environmental, and social climate. In terms of resilience it questions whether a return to the “status quo” is a desirable feature of labour markets in developed countries’ agricultural systems. The group will confront various pressures that impact agricultural employees, particularly migrants and temporal workers, including risks of extreme weather, socio-political shifts and of demand and supply. It will also explore the effects of current policies and market-based tools on risk and resilience in agri-food labour markets. The group aims to share new knowledge on current challenges shaping agri-food labour markets in different developed country contexts.

Format: Traditional research presentations and group discussions.

WG16 – Climate change and transformation of work in animal husbandry

Convenors: Christa Gotter ((PECO-Institut, Germany - christa.gotter@peco-ev.de) Alexandra Voivozeanu, (PECO-Institut, Germany - alexandra.voivozeanu@peco-ev.de)

This working group examines perspectives of workers in the animal husbandry sector on climate-related transformations, related working conditions and worker opportunities to actively shape transformations. It explores the following questions: How is climate change changing the working conditions of employees in agriculture? How do employees in agriculture perceive climate change? What experiences do workers have when farms adopt

measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or increase biodiversity? What political measures help cushion the potential negative consequences of these changes for workers? Finally, what role do trade unions play in these transformation processes? The working group encourages cross-border knowledge exchange and will explore opportunities for cooperation on joint future projects.

Format: Presentations followed by discussion.

WG17 – Impact of animal welfare improvement on working conditions

Convenors: Caroline Depoudent (Chambre d'agriculture de Bretagne, France - caroline.depoudent@bretagne.chambagri.fr), Carole Jousseins (Institut de l'élevage, France - carole.jousseins@idele.fr), Xavier Boivin (INRAE, France - xavier.boivin@inrae.fr), Elsa Delanoue (Institut de l'Élevage, France - elsa.delanoue@idele.fr)

This working group explores how regulatory, structural, technological and farming practice changes deemed to improve animal welfare impact the way farmers work, how farmers interact with animals and affect their respective welfares. The aim of this working group is to describe the impact of the changes due to animal welfare improvement on the agricultural work in all its dimensions: working hours, job content, physical or psychological strain, meaning of work, skills, fulfilment, etc. Participants will present the results of studies from a variety of production sectors, countries and disciplines (animal husbandry, ergonomics, psychology, sociology, applied ethology). One welfare approaches are welcome.

Format: Traditional research presentations and plenary discussions.

WG18 – Documenting strategies of preservation in agricultural work

Convenors: Goutille Fabienne Goutille (Université Clermont Auvergne, France - fabienne.goutille@uca.fr), Cécile Barbier (Université Paris 8, France - cecile.barbier@univ-paris8.fr), Sophie Chauvat (IDELE, France - Sophie.Chauvat@idele.fr)

This working group documents and compares differentiated strategies developed by women and men farmers to sustain health, quality of work, and relationships with living beings, at different scales: within farms, within working collectives, and across territories. It explores how situated practices contribute to the vitality of farms, the transmission of knowledge, and the transformation of production models towards more decent and desirable forms of work. The group aims i) to document concrete strategies of preservation of self, others, and the living in agricultural work, ii) to identify the effects of these strategies on health, attractiveness, and sustainability, and iii) to compare practice-based approaches to documenting and transforming actual work across different agricultural contexts.

Format: Traditional research presentations and practice-based discussions.

WG19 – Gendered work and working gender

Convenors: Maya Rastouil (UMR LISST Dynamiques Rurales, DYNAFOR, France - mayarastouil99@gmail.com), Eva-Marie Meemken (ETH Zurich, Switzerland - emeemken@ethz.ch)

This working group explores the gendered dimensions of global agricultural labour, focusing on the specific challenges women face, including low wages, limited access to land and resources, precarious employment, and heightened health risks. It also engages with the data, methods, and theoretical frameworks needed to study gendered agricultural labour, highlighting the importance of intersectional, feminist, and transnational approaches. The aim is to bring together gender and labour researchers to share ongoing research on gendered work and conditions in global agricultural labour, identify key research gaps, advance gender sensitive methodologies and explore theoretical approaches.

Format: Traditional research presentations with discussion.

WG20 – The human element of sustainable farming

Convenors: Martina Jakob (ATB-Potsdam, Germany - mjakob@atb-potsdam.de), Prathamesh Bachche (ATB-Potsdam, Germany - PBachche@atb-potsdam.de)

This working group explores how to effectively implement policy relevant to workplace health and safety by using practical tools from ergonomics and risk assessment. It aims i) to showcase new knowledge on how a proactive, ergonomic approach can solve long-standing health and safety challenges in agriculture, ii) to discuss various risk assessment methodologies that prioritize the degree and the severity of the risks, enabling farmers to make targeted changes, iii) to develop a collaborative, actionable plan for implementing ergonomic solutions on different types of farms, from small-scale to large-scale operations, and iv) foster networking and future collaborations among participants to continue sharing best practices in agricultural health, safety, and policy compliance.

Format: Traditional research presentations and interactive follow-up.

WG21 – Management of occupational health and safety (OHS)

Convenors: Caroline Jolly (IRSST, Canada - caroline.jolly@irsst.qc.ca), Jessica Dubé (IRSST, Canada), Anouk Aubert-Simard (IRSST, Canada), Marion Poirier (IRSST, Canada)

This working group explores health and safety of very small companies in the agricultural sector. Very small businesses pose several challenges for all countries with occupational injury prevention and compensation systems and workers in the agricultural sector are exposed to a range of risk factors. The working group aims at a systemic view on the organizational of the health and safety (OSH) management in the very small companies in the agricultural sector. Hence it also discusses workforce sustainability, sharing of practices, ecosystem of intermediary players and policy environment. With the international point of view of the participants, a diversity of knowledge and practical examples will be discussed.

Format: World café.

WG22 – Health and safety in farming (Gesundheit und Sicherheit in der Landwirtschaft)

Convenors: Elisabeth Quendler (BOKU University, Austria - elisabeth.quendler@boku.ac.at)

This working group dedicates itself to the challenges of health and safety in agriculture, a matter often overlooked yet essential. Beyond physical perils such as accidents and health strains caused by heavy lifting, machinery operations, and harsh environmental influences, increasing attention is given to psychological aspects such as burnout, stress, and isolation. Hence, the working group covers i) physical hazards and preventative measures; ii) mental health (burnout, stress, and social isolation) and strategies for prevention; iii) political and legal frameworks to prevent and reduce workplace hazards, and iv) innovative approaches and technologies to improve working conditions. It aims at exchange of knowledge, discussion and networking, development of recommendation and exploration of future perspectives.

Format: Research presentations with discussion and world café, English and German.

WG23 – European farmers' mental health

Convenors: Uta Devries (Thünen Institute of Farm Economics, Germany - uta.devries@thuenen.de), Christine Niens, (Thünen Institute of Farm Economics, Germany) Elke Baranek (Thünen Institute of Farm Economics, Germany), Zazie von Davier (Thünen Institute of Farm Economics, Germany)

This working group explores the state of mental health in agriculture (e.g., prevalence of burnout, depression, suicidality) in different countries to identify risk factors. It also investigates how to make mental health measurable and quantifiable and how and to what extent government can influence the factors affecting mental health. The working group aims to bring together experts from science and practice to discuss mental health issues among farmers. The focus is on documenting and structuring the current state of research and reveal potential research gaps. The group further aims to identify risk factors and protective factors that determine the extent of exposure, and pinpoint specific risk groups. Another goal is to share experiences, particularly regarding surveys and policy measures.

Format: traditional research presentations and discussion

WG24 – Landscapes and lifescapes of support

Convenors: David Christian Rose (Harper Adams University, United Kingdom - drose@harper-adams.ac.uk), Jennifer Howse (Royal Agricultural University, United Kingdom - jennifer.howse@student.rau.ac.uk), Rebecca Wheeler (University of Exeter, United Kingdom - R.Wheeler3@exeter.ac.uk), Sarah Kyle (University of Exeter, United Kingdom - S.Nyczaj-Kyle@exeter.ac.uk), Conor Hammersley (New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, USA - conor.hammersley@bassett.org), Tomás Russell (University College Dublin, Ireland - tomas.russell@ucd.ie), Linda Reissig (Agroscope, Switzerland - linda.reissig@agroscope.admin.ch)

This working group explores how life and work (in all its forms) in the agricultural sector can affect mental health and what types of support networks and interventions, including those provided through, or for, networks of advisors or other so-called ‘accidental counsellors’, can help to reduce stressors and help individuals cope with challenging situations. It investigates how strengthening mental health across these interconnected groups not only reduces harm but also enhances the sustainability and attractiveness of farm work, helping to retain a skilled and healthy rural workforce. The working groups aims to shed further light on how the mental health of those who live and work in farming communities (including farmers, workers, family members, and ‘accidental counsellors’) can be better supported including from a structural or psychological perspective.

Format: Traditional research presentations and more creative contributions.

WG25 – Living and working in agriculture

Convenors: Florence Becot (Pennsylvania State University, USA - Florence.becot@psu.edu), David Meredith (Teagasc, Ireland - david.meredith@teagasc.ie), Sandra Contzen (Bern University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland - sandra.contzen@bfh.ch), Majda Černič Istenič (University of Ljubljana/The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia - majda.cernic-istenic@zrc-sazu.si), Duška Knežević Hočevar (The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia - duska.knezevic@zrc-sazu.si), Julie Sorensen (Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety, USA - julie.sorensen@bassett.org)

This working group is about understanding farm populations’ lived realities in agriculture and identifying solutions that support decent and fair living conditions as a conduit to increasing social sustainability and the attractiveness of the agricultural sector. It conceives social sustainability as that farmers, farm workers, and their families can meet their households’ social and economic needs along their life course and are satisfied with their quality of life. The aim of this working group is 1) to further the scientific debates on social sustainability in agriculture with an eye towards understanding who works on the farm, under what conditions, and how to best support them and 2) to develop new networks of scholars to work towards transnational and transdisciplinary collaborations. The group invites theoretical, empirical, and discussion paper submissions along with interactive session proposals that explore aspects connected to the social sustainability of farming.

Format: Traditional research presentations and interactive follow-up such as panel debates, fishbowl and world café.

Scientific Committee of ISWA 2026

- Melf-Hinrich Ehlers, Agroscope, Socioeconomics Group, Switzerland (Co-Head of Scientific Committee)
- Katja Heitkampfer, Agroscope, Socioeconomics Group, Switzerland (Co-Head of Scientific Committee)
- Sandra Contzen, Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest & Food Sciences (BFH-HAFL), Switzerland (Head of Local Organisation Committee)

- Bruno Dorin, French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development CIRAD/CIRED, France
- Nathalie Hostiou, INRAE, UMR Territoires, France
- Priscilla Malanski, INRAE, France
- Ruth Nettle, University of Melbourne, Australia
- Mohamed Taher Sraïri, Hassan II Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine Institute, Morocco
- Zenebe Uraguchi, Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest & Food Sciences (BFH-HAFL), Switzerland