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'In the Know': Building Our Knowledge and Capacity Around Mental Health in Agriculture

'In the Know' (ITK) is a 4-hour mental health literacy (MHL) training program, developed for Canadian agriculture in partnership with stakeholders. ITK was developed as research indicated an agriculture-specific approach to MHL was necessary. Objectives of this study were to evaluate changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours toward individuals struggling with mental health.

Six pilot-sessions across Ontario farming communities were conducted between October-November, 2018 with a total of 96 participants, including farmers, veterinarians, and people from agricultural industry and government. Pre- and post-training data were collected at the sessions. Surveys were developed using validated questions designed to assess improvements in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in other MHL training programs. Additional questions explored participants' perceptions of training (e.g. logistics and content) in the post-training survey. Additionally, 3- and 6-month follow-up surveys were administered online, assessing whether improvements remained over time. Friedman ANOVAs were performed to test for statistically significant differences across the four time periods.

We anticipate that ITK will significantly improve knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours around mental health between timepoints 1 and 2, and that these improvements will not change over timepoints 3 and 4. Next steps include disseminating the program across Canada and assessing the programs' effectiveness on a larger scale.