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AgriBalance Project Strengthens Mental Health Support Across WA Agribusiness



Over the past two years, the AgriBalance Project has equipped more than 200 agribusiness professionals across Western Australia with vital skills in mental health management and suicide prevention.

Funded by COGGO and delivered by Farmanco in partnership with Holyoake, the program was designed specifically for client-facing professionals in the agricultural sector. Drawing on Farmanco's experience supporting farmers through periods of high situational stress, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters and major weather events, the training addressed the challenges faced by consultants who often feel ill-equipped to *say the right thing* and can carry the weight of their client's stress while working in isolated rural areas.

The program aimed to build confidence and competence in recognising psychological distress, communicating effectively with clients under pressure, and providing referral pathways to appropriate support services. Participants also learned strategies to debrief after critical incidents and compartmentalise difficult conversations — skills essential for reducing the negative mental health impacts of poor seasons, natural disasters, and industry reforms.

Across the WA Wheatbelt and South Coast, the AgriBalance team delivered 22 workshops, including two pilots and two online sessions to ensure accessibility for those in remote areas. Expert facilitation was provided by Jo Drayton, Wheatbelt Suicide Prevention Coordinator with Holyoake.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

- 99% of participants reported improved communication skills, confidence in supporting distressed clients, and greater knowledge of mental health and suicide prevention.
- 99% said they would recommend the training to colleagues.

Follow-up surveys six months later confirmed lasting benefits:

- 77% reported improved personal mental health and resilience.
- 73% noted reduced stress burdens for family and friends.
- More than two-thirds had already applied the skills in their professional or personal lives.

In total, 212 professionals completed the AgriBalance course, extending the program's reach far beyond the participants themselves as they apply their new skills to support clients, friends, family and communities across WA.

"20 years of working in the Ag Industry and this was the best training I've done." — Dane McGill, Nutrien.

"Really really worth the time, would recommend to all people in ag. Such an important topic when working with people especially in remote WA." — Georgia Keeffe, Liebe Group.

The AgriBalance Project leaves a lasting legacy of resilience, ensuring that agricultural professionals are better prepared to safeguard both their clients' wellbeing and their own in the face of future challenges.