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RABI extends support for farmers with new wellbeing initiative

Charity's evolving strategy aims to reach more farming people

With 2020 bringing ever greater levels of uncertainty and unexpected changes, pressures on the farming community continue to grow. As part of a new package of services designed to assist people deal with these complex challenges, RABI is launching an online wellbeing community and counselling service for farming people across England and Wales on 19 October.

Against a backdrop of continuing strains and demands, this new online initiative is a significant step in RABI's plans to evolve its services, to better meet the changing needs of farming people.

"We know that farmers have continued to face exceptionally difficult times. Managing mental wellbeing and maintaining good mental health has emerged as one of the most significant issues facing our sector, which is already known for its higher than average levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and suicide," says Alicia Chivers, RABI's Chief Executive.

"Our aim is to make a real difference to the farming community that RABI has been dedicated to for the past 160 years. We believe early intervention and one-to-one support are essential to ensuring good mental health and tackling the root causes of poor wellbeing. We believe that providing confidential, easily accessible, free online support can make a real difference to a wide audience."

The initiative features two distinct sites - [Qwell.io/rabi](https://qwell.io/rabi) for adults, while [Kooth.com/rabi](https://kooth.com/rabi) is tailored to those aged 11-17. These safe and confidential online platforms are being delivered in partnership with a specialist online mental health provider. The websites include dedicated farmer friendly content that addresses farming sector specific challenges such as loneliness, Brexit anxiety, animal health and crop disease and farm debt.

Users will be able to anonymously access farmer specific and more generic content, as well as a wealth of discussion boards, case studies and messaging functions. There are many tools, such as a journal to record and track progress against personal goals, as well as tips and articles.

In addition, all users can access one-to-one counselling support from BACP recognised, qualified professionals through a chat function. The practitioners are trained in different forms of counselling, allowing them to meet individual needs and preferences.

“No one should take mental wellbeing for granted. We believe offering practical support through these sites is a constructive and hugely positive step forwards. It forms a key aspect of RABI’s ambitious five-year strategy that will extend our offering to a broader audience. We understand the issues that farmers face and really care about finding and developing tools that can assist. Our role is to offer encouragement so people can access the services they need, early enough to make a difference, hopefully preventing them from reaching crisis point,” continues Alicia.

“We also need to initiate frank and honest discussions throughout agriculture to tackle this complex subject. Therefore, we are also reaching out to numerous stakeholders and organisations, who I hope will join us by raising awareness more widely and amplifying these important messages.”

“The launch of the online wellbeing community is a significant step towards achieving our vision that ‘no farmer should ever face adversity alone,’” concludes Alicia.

To access the online counselling platform, visit the RABI website: <https://rabi.org.uk/>

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Established in 1860, RABI was founded on the belief that every member of the farming community matters and should never have to face difficulties alone.

We continue to develop our services to address the unexpected challenges that farmers sometimes face. Either whilst working or when they are no longer active in the sector – through ill health, bereavement, or retirement.

Whatever the issue, we aim to offer practical, effective solutions and partner with other key service providers to facilitate positive outcomes. We provide confidential advice, practical support and care, as well as training and financial assistance, including one-off and regular grants.

Our work is funded by voluntary income, including donations from individuals, businesses, charitable trusts and fundraising activity by supporters and a network of county committees, as well as investment income and legacies.

To find out more visit www.rabi.org.uk