# Challenges of Britain’s LGBTQ+ Farmers



In 2017, the film "God’s Own Country," directed by Francis Lee in his debut, premiered in the UK. It starred Josh O’Connor as a rural gay farmer who forms a romantic relationship with his Romanian farmhand. The film explored themes of isolation, homophobia, and loneliness, reflecting the challenges faced by farmers, particularly those who are queer.

A recent parliamentary committee report highlighted the ongoing mental health issues in rural areas, stating the government has been "complacent" about rural mental health. Farmers are identified as being at a higher risk for mental illness and suicide, exacerbated by isolation, a lack of awareness, and homophobia within the typically heteronormative agricultural industry. The report also noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and new policies may further worsen mental health in the sector.

Traditional ideologies in farming communities are often passed down through generations, making change slow. However, initiatives like the Gay Farmer Helpline, launched in 2010, and Agrespect, a rural LGBTQIA+ network, are working to support and promote diversity within the farming community.

Photographer Richard Dowker, who has a farming background in Cumbria, shared his experiences of feeling out of place in the Young Farmers club due to the lack of LGBTQIA+ representation and occasional homophobic jokes. He chose not to pursue farming as a career, partly because he did not perceive it as an accepting environment.

For support, contact the Gay Farmer Helpline at 07837931894 or visit Agrespect.