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September 2026

SMARTSKILLS Empowering Rural Farmers & Educators for a Sustainable Future **Newsletter 5**



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1. Technology-Driven

Learning for Rural Development:

Empowering Communities Through Innovation.

Across Europe, rural communities are facing profound challenges, from labour shortages and climate uncertainty to digital divides and economic shifts. But there is also unprecedented opportunity: with the right skills and tools, rural regions can become thriving hubs of **green innovation, smart agriculture, and sustainable enterprise**.

Traditional training models haven't always kept pace with these needs; this is why Smart Skills is changing the game with a free, open-source digital learning platform designed to make education more inclusive, accessible, and impactful. Whether you are a farmer, trainer, or rural advisor, discover how we are bridging the gap between tradition and innovation

 [Read the full blog post here](#)

[Click to start learning](#)

[Start Your SMART SKILLS Learning Journey](#)





2. Facing the Elements: Summer Heatwaves and Europe's Fodder Crisis

This summer has dealt an unprecedented blow to agricultural communities across Europe, with successive intense heatwaves and weeks of severe, continent-wide drought plunging the farming sector into crisis. Persistent high temperatures, frequently exceeding 35°C, coupled with almost no rainfall have severely stunted plant development and scorched fields in western and central Europe.

For livestock farmers, the dry conditions have snowballed into a major winter fodder crisis. Pasture availability and biomass accumulation have plummeted, with hay production for winter cattle feed running roughly 30% below historical averages in key regions. At the same time, critical summer feed crops like maize have suffered drastic yield reductions, and dairy cows suffering from heat stress have driven milk yields down by 10% to 20%. [Source](#)

This mounting pressure underscores why initiatives like **Smart Skills** are more vital than ever. Equipping farmers with climate-smart agricultural techniques, efficient resource management, and precision farming strategies is a critical step in building long-term resilience against extreme weather volatility.

3. Expanding Our Reach:

The ARID Workshop in Poland

In June 2026, our Polish partner, **Association ARID**, successfully hosted a dedicated face-to-face implementation workshop in Gładyszów. Bringing together **a group of agricultural advisors**, the session focused on the practical application of the Smart Skills Digital Learning Platform and our core training courses.



The attendees explored how to leverage all the Smart Skills digital resources to support local farmers tackling modern agricultural challenges.

A key highlight of the day was the Action Plan exercise, where each participant developed a tailored roadmap detailing short-, medium-, and long-term steps to integrate smart and sustainable practices into their daily advisory services. The strong engagement and positive feedback from Poland underline the massive potential for wider knowledge transfer across European farming communities.



Momentum's Regional

Design Thinking Workshop in Ireland

Irish partner Momentum also hosted an energetic Regional Design Thinking Workshop at **The Food Hub** in Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim.

Led by Momentum's Paula Whyte, this vibrant event brought together 17 multidisciplinary stakeholders, including 10 local farmers, agricultural science students, representatives from the National Organic Training Centre, and local development specialists.

Set against the backdrop of a renowned artisan food innovation hub, participants collaborated in mixed groups to address real-world farming hurdles. Rather than working in silos, the farmers united to form **5 concrete regional action plans**



Join our Regional Collaboration Design Thinking Workshop

Discover Innovative Solutions to Everyday Farming Challenges

- Hands on creative session to ideate new digital & sustainable farming practices
- Develop Action Plans Collaboratively

Register Today

 **SCAN OUR QR CODE**

 The Food Hub, Drumshanbo, N41 WR22

 Wednesday Sept. 2nd 2026, 11.00am
Networking lunch, 12.30pm

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Action Plans Initiated...

- **Smart Grazing Systems** for optimised pasture and fertiliser tracking.
- **Digital Skills Upskilling** in partnership with higher education institutions like ATU, TUS, and Teagasc.
- **Regional Digital Equipment Sharing Facilities** to cut high upfront technology costs for smallholders.
- **Farm Cost & Environmental Impact Tracking** to monitor inputs and lower emissions.
- **Farmer Focus Groups & App Prototyping** to ease digital adoption for older or less tech-confident producers.

4. Demonstrating Value:

WP3 Train-the-Trainer Toolkit & Regional Workshops Co-creation and Collaboration...

Over the coming weeks, SMART SKILLS partners will continue organising regional design thinking workshops and collaborative sessions with farmers, VET educators, agricultural trainers, rural development agencies, and agricultural businesses and organisations.

These activities build on our earlier expert reviews and foundational piloting to demonstrate the true value and impact of the **WP3 Smart Skills Train-the-Trainer Toolkit**. These events allow key stakeholders to explore these comprehensive training resources firsthand and collaborate on real-world farming solutions.

What Will Participants Evaluate?

Participants will be invited to consider:

- **Practical applicability** to real farm management challenges
- **Relevance** for vocational education and advisory services
- **Clarity and usability** of trainer materials and guides
- **Collaborative potential** to foster peer-to-peer learning and regional action planning

The feedback and insights gathered will help the consortium finalise the WP3 Train-the-Trainer resources, ensuring they deliver maximum impact for agricultural educators and advisors across Europe.

We Want to Hear from You

No advanced technical background or prior experience with smart farming technology is required. We want to involve people with diverse perspectives—from confident digital innovators to those taking their very first steps into sustainable agriculture. Keep an eye on our channels to join an upcoming workshop near you!

**Were you at a
workshop...Give us
your FEEDBACK**



[Evaluation Survey LINK](#)



A red tractor is visible in the background of a field. Overlaid on the foreground is a digital network of white dots connected by thin lines, suggesting a smart agriculture theme.

5. What's Next:

Upcoming Project Mini-Launches

The momentum doesn't stop here! Over the coming weeks, the SMART SKILLS consortium is rolling out a series of project mini-launches designed to put our finalised digital resources directly into the hands of rural communities.

These events in all partner countries will feature specialised feature reveals, localised resources in multiple European languages (**English – Polish – Slovakian – Italian – Czech – Danish**), and fresh educator toolkits to help vocational organisations and agri-advisory bodies integrate our 6 comprehensive courses, case studies and workshops into their regular day-to-day teaching activities.

The Train-the-Trainer Toolkit will be hugely useful in this regard, expanding the project's impact and in turn allowing learners to gain a better understanding of the topics covered – such as Precision Agriculture, Smart Irrigation and Climate-Smart Techniques.

Stay tuned to our **website** and social channels as we open the next chapter of smart, sustainable European agriculture!



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Follow our journey



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