Sustainable Livelihoods and Mental Health: Strategies to Address Farm Stress

WEDNESDAY | JUNE 16, 2021 | 1:00 - 3:00 PM EDT

REGISTER HERE! CONTACT: Alex.Cordova@usda.gov
• Microsoft Teams meeting
• A Q&A opportunity will be held after the first panel presentation, and after the Federal presentations.
• We invite you to unmute and ask a question when requested, opportunities will be provided to do so.
• If you wish to come off of mute and ask a question, please utilize the raise hand feature located in the top corner.
• You can also submit questions or comments using the Q&A function in the upper right corner of your screen.
• Please also identify yourself when asking a question to help us best address your inquiry.
• This Microsoft Teams meeting is being recorded.
Sustainable Livelihoods and Mental Health: Strategies and Partnerships Panel

USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
USDA Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
16 June 2021
Panelists

- **Brent Elrod**
  - National Program Leader, National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

- **Pam Hess**
  - Executive Director, Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture

- **Courtney Cuthbertson**
  - Co-Director, North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center

- **Anna Seymour**
  - Special Projects Manager, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
Challenges

- Agricultural work is one of the most hazardous professions, with risk of injury, disability, and death higher than most other career paths (International Labor Organization).

- Financial performance varies across farm size. Most small farms have an operating profit margin (OPM) in the red zone (America’s Diverse Family Farms, Economic Research Service, 2019).

- Farmers and ranchers are experiencing more than 50% reduction in net farm income since 2013 (Farm Bureau, 2018).
Challenges

• Farmworkers have greater risk for poor self-rated physical health and elevated depressive symptoms (Grzyacz, J., et. al., *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 2014).

• Poor mental health among farmers has consequences for farming: Lower rates of adoption of new technology, products, and policies (Hounsome, B., et. al., *Agricultural Systems*, 2006).
Challenges

• There were 14-billion-dollar weather disasters in 2018 ($91 billion) and another 14 such disasters in 2019 ($45 billion) (https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/weather-disasters.html).

• Factor in tariffs and a global pandemic interrupting labor, production, and food supply chains.

• Research shows that suicides in rural areas occur at much higher rates than those occurring in more urban areas. (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/ss/ss6618a1.htm; Reporting Period: 2001–2015).
So Why NIFA?

- Lead federal agency providing extramural funding for food and agricultural sciences
- Created through the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.
- NIFA funding
  - 1.95B budget in FY2021
  - Competitive and capacity funds
- Mission
  - Agricultural research, education, and extension
- Vision
  - Catalyze transformative discoveries, education, and engagement to address agricultural challenges
NIFA Invests in three types of activities

**RESEARCH**
Provides answers to complex issues facing our nation and our world.

**EDUCATION**
Strengthens schools and universities to train the next generation of scientists, educators, producers and citizens.

**EXTENSION**
Takes knowledge gained through research and education to the people who need it the most.
NIFA Competitive Grant Program
Examples

- AgrAbility
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)
- Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans (AgVets)
- Extension Risk Management Education (ERME)
- Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN)
FRSAN Program Goal

• To establish a nationwide Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network that provides stress assistance programs to individuals who are engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations on a regional basis.

• 4 regions covering all US states and territories

• 3-year periods of performance (FYs 20-22)

• State Departments of Agriculture added (FY21)
Program Components

- Network members must initiate, expand, or sustain programs that provide professional agricultural behavioral health counseling and referral for other forms of assistance through:
  - Farm telephone helplines and websites;
  - Training, including training programs and workshops
  - Support groups; and
  - Outreach services and activities, including the dissemination of information and materials.
## Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (Leads FYs 20-22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network: Southern Region</th>
<th>University of Tennessee Extension</th>
<th>Heather Sedges</th>
<th><a href="mailto:hsedges@utk.edu">hsedges@utk.edu</a></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building an Inclusive and Comprehensive Network for Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance in the Northeast</td>
<td>National Young Farmers Coalition</td>
<td>Martin Lemos</td>
<td><a href="mailto:martin@youngfarmers.org">martin@youngfarmers.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center: Engaging Programs to Support Producer Wellbeing</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Josie Rudolphi</td>
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<td>Courtney Cuthbertson</td>
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North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center

Courtney Cuthbertson, PhD

Sustainable Livelihoods and Mental Health: Strategies and Partnerships Panel
June 16, 2021
North Central Region
Agriculture in the US

• Producers and workers experience unique work-related stressors
• High rate of work injury, including fatal work injuries
• High prevalence of depression and anxiety
• Higher rates of suicide when compared to other occupations
## Mental health worse among producers

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<th>Agricultural community</th>
<th>General population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>depression</strong></td>
<td>6-58%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>anxiety</strong></td>
<td>27-71%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>suicide rate – men (per 100k)</strong></td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>27.4 (all occupations)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Reed & Claunch, 2020; Rudolphi et al., 2020; Bjornestad et al., 2021; Terlizzi & Villarroel, 2020; Weinberger et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2020)
Mental health is a spectrum.

Poor health

Excellent health
The majority of US counties are shortage areas

Source: data.HRSA.gov, October 2020
Professional behavioral health services
Support groups
Training programs
Telephone helplines
Clearinghouse website and webinars

USDA-NIFA 2020-70028-32728
Interest Groups

- Farm workers
- Farm families and youth
- Women producers
- Healthcare providers
- Agribusiness and financial decision-making
- Mental health and suicide prevention
Example Programs

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
- Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR)
- Communicating with Farmers under Stress
- Weathering the Storm
How can I get involved?

• Contact Cooperative Extension in your state and ask about farm stress programs and resources.

• Visit www.farmstress.org for a listing of useful resources.
  • Iowa Concern Hotline: 1-800-447-1985

• Learn more about mental health by taking a training like MHFA.

• Offer to host a training at your organization.

• Start conversations about mental health with others in your community. Ask people how they are doing.

• Connect with and listen to agricultural producers.

• Share resources with others.
Things to remember:

- Everyone always has mental health. Where our mental health is can tell us what kinds of supports we need.
- You don’t have to be in crisis to ask for help or support.
- Asking for help is a sign of strength.
- Finding the right mental health provider might take time and patience. It’s okay to encourage people to try and try again.
- We can all play a role in creating supportive communities.
- Resources are available for emergencies:
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-8255
  - Crisis Text Line – Text “GO” to 741741
To learn more
Reach out to learn more, get involved, or subscribe to the monthly newsletter!

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Email: farm-stress@illinois.edu
Twitter: @farm_stress
Facebook: North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center
Sustainable Livelihoods and Mental Health: Strategies and Partnerships to Address Farm Stress
How VDAC S Supports Farmers

- Farmer Stress Task Force
- Partnerships are KEY
  - Virginia Cooperative Extension/Land Grant Universities
  - Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
- AgriSafe
New and Expanded Initiatives

- Completion and dissemination of digital media
- Developing new partnerships and sustain current ones
  - Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
  - Virginia Tech/Virginia Cooperative Extension/AgrAbility
  - AgriSafe
- Credit Counseling
Securing a Sustainable Livelihood

- Understanding the stressors
- Speaking the language
- Supporting the whole farm family
- Finding support from those farmers trust