



USDA OFFICE OF PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR FAITH BASED AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS

# Sustainable Livelihoods and Mental Health: Strategies to Address Farm Stress

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

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CONTACT: [Alex.Cordova@usda.gov](mailto: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.





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The logo for the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), consisting of the letters "NIFA" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The background of the slide features a green gradient with a stylized landscape of rolling hills and a sun or moon in the upper right corner.

NIFA

## 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)



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## 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).



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## 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).



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## 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](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/ss/ss6618a1.htm); Reporting Period: 2001–2015).



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# NIFA

## 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**







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# NIFA

## NIFA Invests in three types of activities



# 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 \(FRSAN\)](#)



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## 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)



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## 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.



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## Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (Leads FYs 20-22)

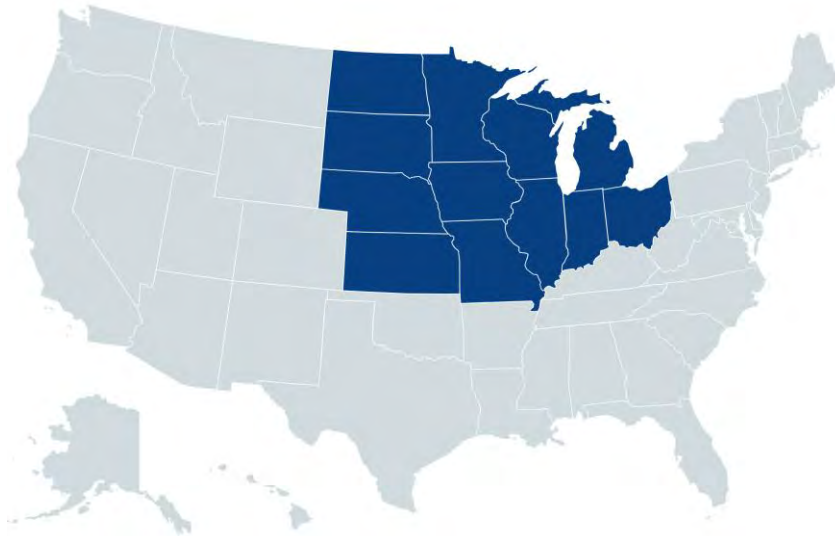
Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network: Southern Region	University of Tennessee Extension	Heather Sedges <a href="mailto:hsedges@utk.edu">hsedges@utk.edu</a>
Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Network	Washington State University	Don McMoran <a href="mailto:dmc Moran@wsu.edu">dmc Moran@wsu.edu</a>
Building an Inclusive and Comprehensive Network for Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance in the Northeast	National Young Farmers Coalition	Martin Lemos <a href="mailto:martin@youngfarmers.org">martin@youngfarmers.org</a>
North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center: Engaging Programs to Support Producer Wellbeing	University of Illinois	Josie Rudolphi <a href="mailto:josier@illinois.edu">josier@illinois.edu</a>  Courtney Cuthbertson <a href="mailto:cuthbert@illinois.edu">cuthbert@illinois.edu</a>

# 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

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

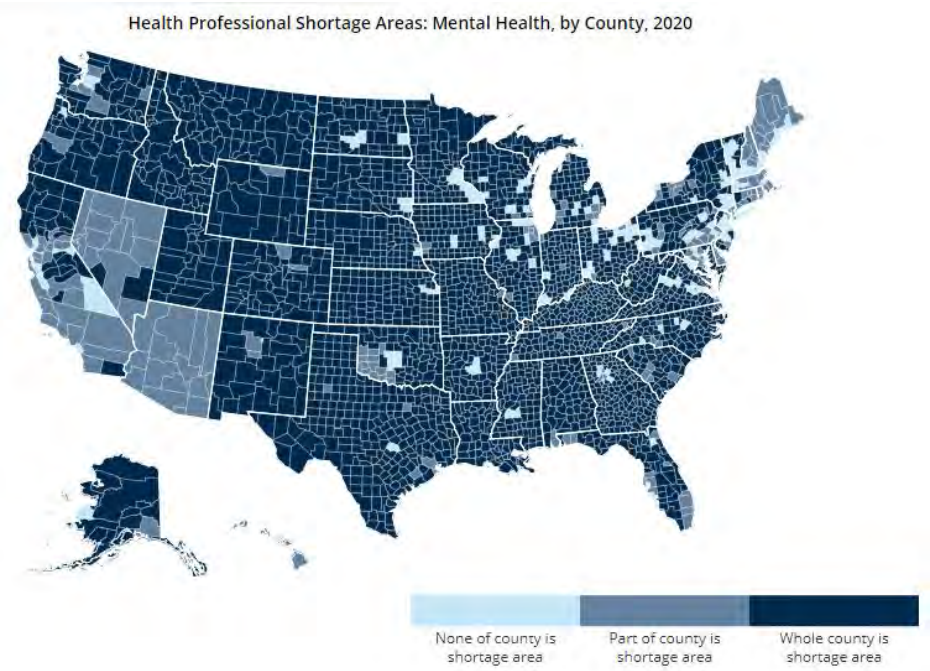
(Reed & Claunch, 2020; Rudolphi et al., 2020; Bjornestad et al., 2021; Terlizzi & Villarroel, 2020; Weinberger et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2020)



# Mental health is a spectrum.



# The majority of US counties are shortage areas



Source: [data.HRSA.gov](https://data.HRSA.gov), October 2020.





# North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center



# Collaborators



# 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](http://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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North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center

[www.farmstress.org](http://www.farmstress.org)

Email: [farm-stress@illinois.edu](mailto: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 VDACS 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
- 