

Three Studies and What They Tell Us About the Way Forward

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A Crisis in Farmer Well-Being

- CDC study revealed Farming, Fishing, Forestry had 3rd highest suicide rate of any occupation (CDC, 2018).
- In Georgia, rate was nearly 51 per 100,000, compared with 14.9 per 100,000 for overall population of workers (Lavender et al., 2016).
- See this globally as well.

Three Studies

- CDC data on farmer suicides in GA 2005-2017
- GA Farm Bureau Conference survey Dec. 2019
- Sunbelt Ag Expo October 2021

Why talk about these studies?

- Difficult to hear
- Important to acknowledge reality
- Give us information on ways to intervene
- Give us hope for the future

CDC Study on Farm Suicides 2005-2017

- 137 cases from VDRS
- What factors associated with the deaths?
 - Relationship issues: 38%
 - Health issues: 35%
 - Mental health issues: 29%
 - Finances: 12%
- Signs and signals of suicide: 21%
 - Words
 - Feelings
 - Behaviors

Implications? If we can...

- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of farmers at high risk of suicide;
- Have caring people who know the signs at sites where farmers might feel the most stress; e.g.
 - Faith leaders
 - Funeral homes
 - Lawyers
 - Primary care
 - Financial institutions
- We can help farmers before a crisis occurs,

GA Farm Bureau Study

- 118 attendees of GA Farm Bureau Conference
- How high are farmer stress levels in GA (1=very low, 5=very high)
 - 4.13 on average. Men= 3.89 Women=4.21
- Compared to last year, stress levels are (1=much lower, 5=much higher)
 - 3.81 on average. Men=3.51 Women=3.94
- How confident are you in knowing how to help someone with very high stress, even suicidal?
 - Confident/Very Confident=36%

Implications?

- Stress levels in GA farmers are high.
 - This is *before* COVID!
- Women experience/acknowledge stress more than men.
 - Women may be more open to the conversation
 - Outreach
- Nearly two thirds of respondents are not confident they could help someone experiencing extreme stress.
 - ***Training is needed***

Sunbelt Ag Expo Survey (220 responses)

- Who will notice when a farmer is experiencing extreme stress?
 - Spouse: 91%
 - Friend: 33%
 - Other Farmers: 33%
 - Child: 32%
- Who will a farmer talk with and trust when experiencing extreme stress?
 - Spouse: 72%
 - Friend: 42%
 - Other Farmers: 39%
 - Faith Leader: 36%
 - Doctor: 25%

Sunbelt Ag Expo Survey

- What are the best methods to get information to a farmer about stress?
 - Other Farmers: 51%
 - Ag Publications: 48%
 - Social Media: 40%
 - Sites of Worship: 38%
 - Extension: 30%
 - Radio and TV Spots: 29%
- Farmers and non-farmers differ in how they perceive a farmer's support network (# of categories of people a farmer would trust)
 - Farmers: 2.13 on average
 - Non-Farmers: 2.53 on average

Implications?

- There are certain people who will notice farmer stress and who farmers are more likely to trust and talk with—*we need to connect with, support, provide training and tools to these people.*
- There are preferred modalities for communication—peers, newsletters (commodity groups, Farm Bureau, others), churches, social media and traditional media, and extension classes and agents are *important allies in education on stress and coping.*
- Non-farmers *over-estimate* how farmers see their support network—talking with farmers and not making assumptions is important.

Hopeful Take Home Lessons

- The community is filled with people who can be allies in the work to address farmer and farm family stress.
- Formal: doctor, financial professionals, faith leaders
- Informal: friends, other farmers, spouses
- Women may have important and unique perspectives
- Providing information, training, tools, strategic support to allies (like you, like today) is an important step in supporting farmers and farm families.
- Extension can be a hub for this training and support.