

The Farmer Mental Health Crisis: Understanding A Vulnerable Population

Farm Aid / American Psychological Association

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AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION



Presenters



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Today's Focus

- Obtain an overview of the farming crisis in America and how it is affecting farmers' mental health
- Better understand the unique stressors of farmers and their mental health needs
- Increase cultural competency to better support farmers' mental health needs
- Gain insight into more resources that can connect APA members with the farming community



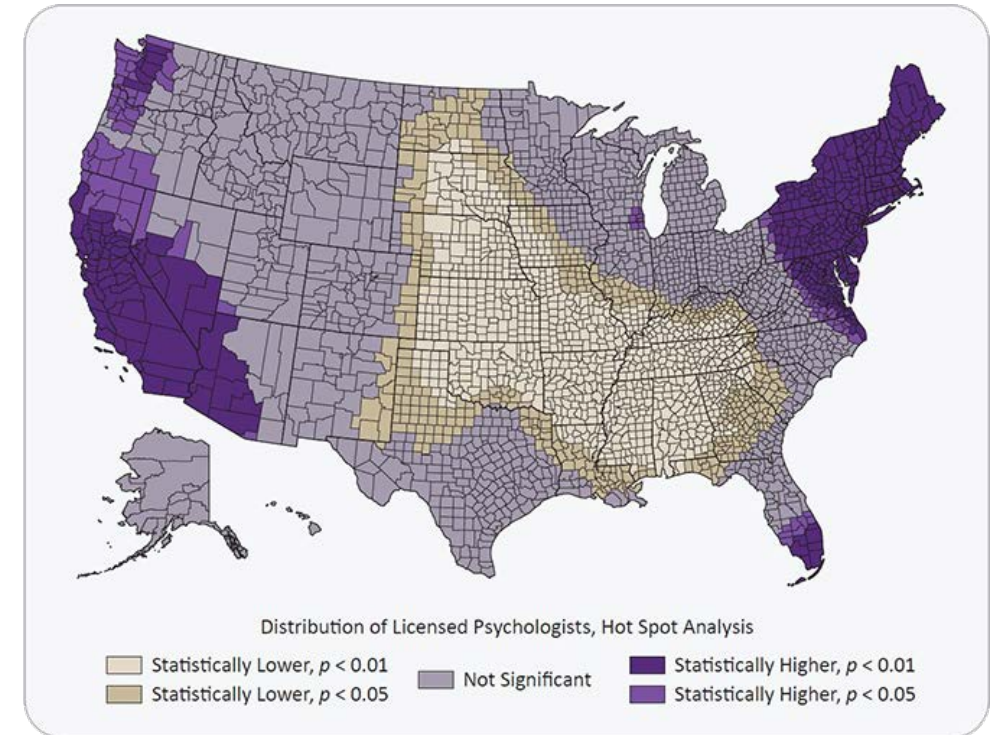
APA and Farm Aid's Interest in Working Together

- Play a positive role in addressing the issues of chronic stress and mental health care that are prevalent in America's farming communities
- Raise awareness among influential audiences that can advocate for farmers to have access to behavioral and mental health support
- Identify and develop resources about the farming and agriculture population and culture to inform APA members who are interested in working with this group



Geographic Distribution of Licensed Psychologists

- Relatively fewer psychologists in the middle of the country and South than in the Northeast and CA
- Relationships between the distribution of psychologists and health indicators
 - o More psychologists = healthier populations
 - o Fewer psychologists = less healthy populations



Source: APA, 2016, County-Level Analysis of U.S. Licensed Psychologists and Health Indicators; [APA's Center for Workforce Studies](#)



OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S FARM CRISIS

Alicia Harvie



Factors Beyond Farmers' Control

- Financial Instability

- Multi-year slump in commodity prices
- In 2018, more than half of farm households had negative income

- Ongoing Consolidation

- Limits who they can buy from or sell to
- Erodes fair competition in the market

- Changeable Production Conditions

- Weather and natural disasters
- Pests and disease

- Politics & Policy





Weather

- **Climate change = rising frequency of natural disasters**
 - Historic floods in the Midwest have caused billions of dollars of damage
 - Farmers have lost crops, livestock and infrastructure, and many could not plant their fields this year
- **Disaster relief programs fail to meet farmers' ongoing needs**
 - Rush of attention and funds in the immediate aftermath
 - Less support available in the intermediate and long term, when sense of helplessness and isolation sets in





Dairy Industry Crisis

- Consolidation and unfair pricing

- Since 1970 the number of U.S. dairy farms has dropped by more than 93% (from more than 640,000 farms to about 40,000 today)
- Milk prices are consistently below cost of production

- Nature of dairy farming compounds stress

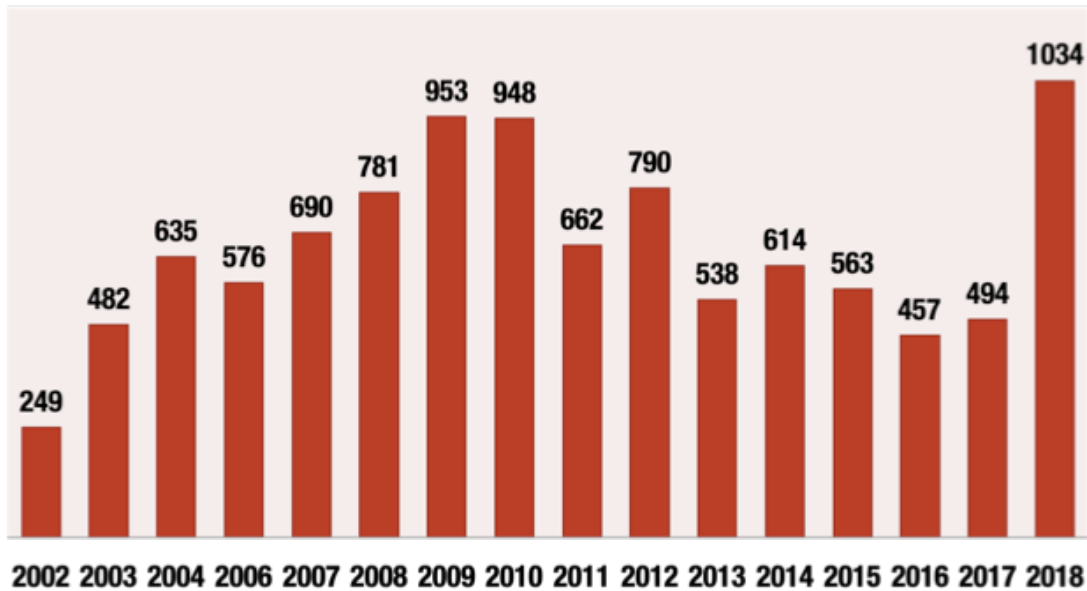
- 24/7 occupation
- When prices are below cost of production, you lose money every time you milk the cows

- Ripple effects of dairy crisis



Farm Aid Hotline

ANNUAL HOTLINE CONTACTS



- Farm Aid's hotline provides a listening ear and support, connecting farmers to:
 - Mental health support
 - Financial counseling
 - Legal services
 - Disaster relief & recovery resources
- Record-breaking hotline numbers
 - Between 2017 and 2018, calls rose by 109%
 - 53% of calls were crisis calls, in some months, as high as 75%
- Farm Aid network of family farm and rural support organizations



A man in a plaid shirt and jeans is feeding a large group of brown chickens in a farmyard. He is holding a white bucket and scattering feed on the ground. The background shows a wooden fence and trees. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

FARMER AND FARM ADVOCATE POINT OF VIEW

Meg Moynihan



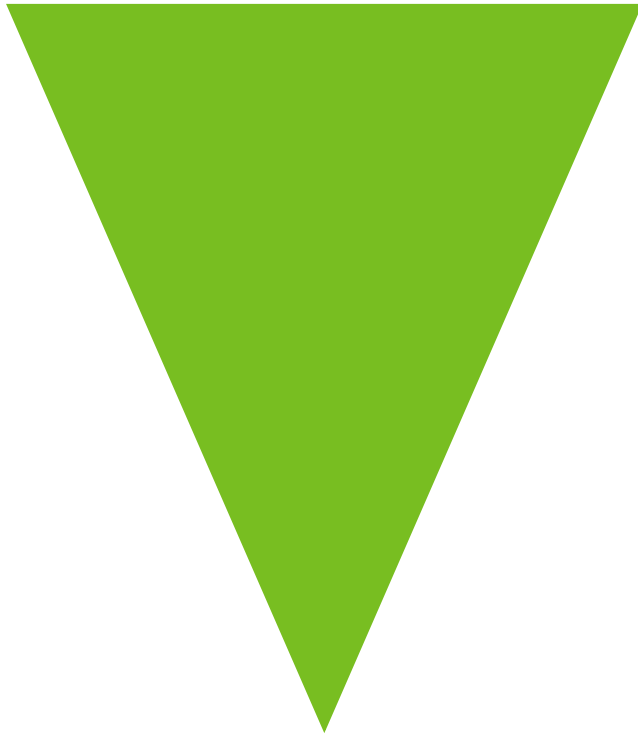
Why People Farm

- Intrinsic part of their identity; not what they do, but who they *are*
- Obligation (to forebears, to offspring)
- Married into it
- Can't imagine doing anything else
- Don't think they are capable of doing anything else



The Challenges Farmers Face

RESPONSIBILITY



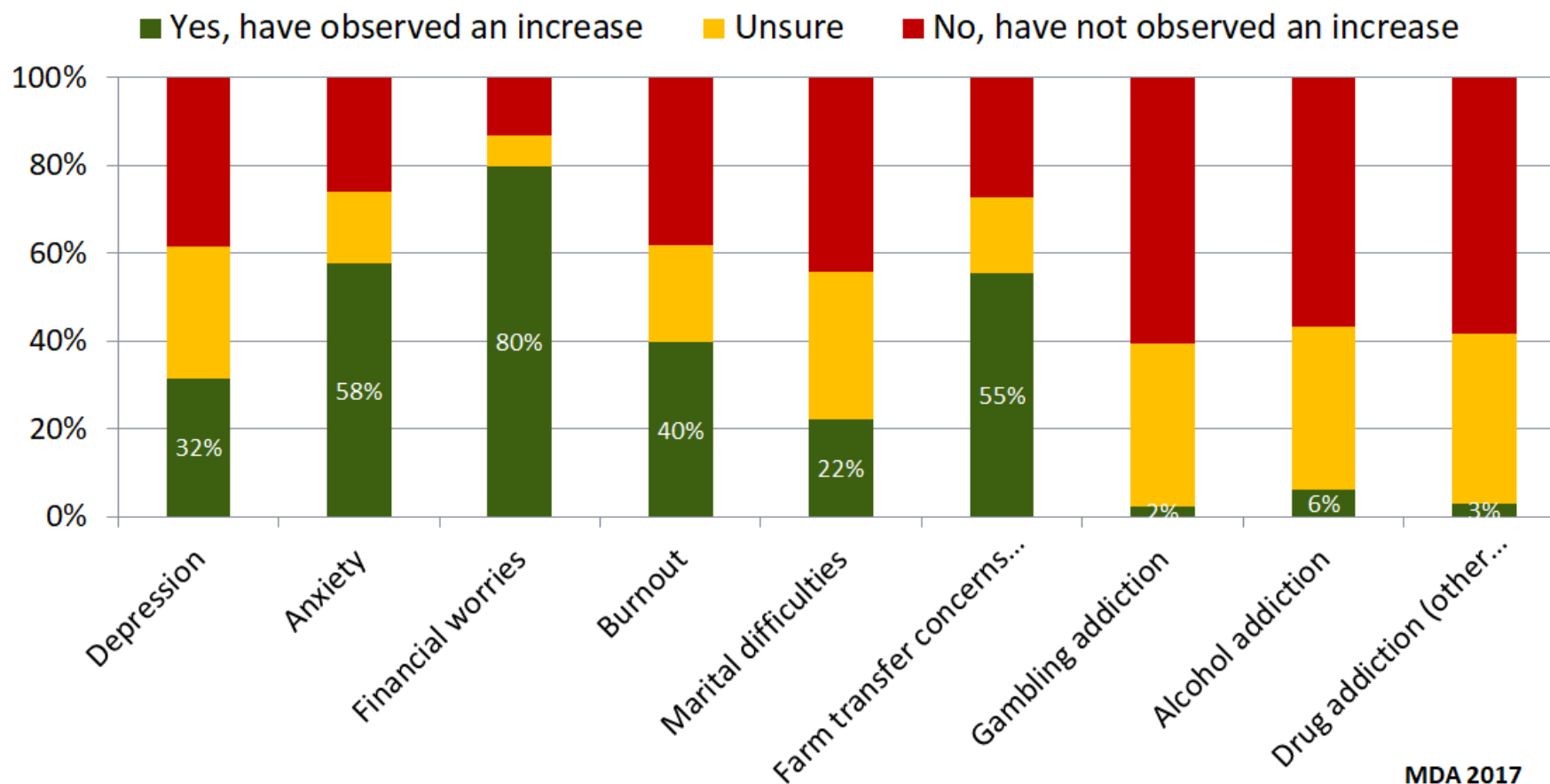
CONTROL

- Farmers work where they live
- Coworkers can be mostly family
- Multiple roles
- Competition and envy
- Loss of peers/community
- Praise/blame



Recent Research

In the last year, have you observed an increase in...



Why Don't More Farmers Seek Help?

- I should be able to handle this myself
- Where would I go?
- They wouldn't understand
- Other people would find out
- Costs too much
- I don't have time
- Nobody can fix what's wrong





TransFARMation - You are not alone

- Farmer Doug Kramer remembers the stress of the '80s.
- After an equipment salesman told Doug about seeing a therapist, Doug decided to try it himself

“The first few times I went, I felt like I didn’t want anyone to know or to see me. But after a couple visits, I guess I didn’t care if anyone saw me because I knew I needed help.”

<https://www.rrfn.com/transfarmation/>





PSYCHOLOGIST POINT OF VIEW

Michael Rosmann, PhD



Building Credibility and Trust Among Farmers

- Providers must know something about agriculture and be familiar with the work of those they are serving
- Providers must coach and educate the clients rather than try to cure their maladjustments—the implementation part is up to the clients
- Beneficial to see farmers at their homes or in neutral settings, with sessions varying from a brief check-in to several hours in length





Culturally Competent Language

- Use “Behavioral” Instead of “Mental” Health
 - Farmers like to think in behavioral terms because many of them are experts in animal behavior and have more familiarity with the term “behavior”
 - It’s helpful for farmers to view psychologists as professionals who are able to help farmers manage their behaviors more effectively
 - We are in charge of most of our behavior and can manage ourselves





Be Mindful of the Four “A”s of Agricultural Behavioral Healthcare

- Acceptable (culturally attuned) services suited to client needs and delivered by providers who understand agriculture
- Accessible when needed, which includes 24/7 emergency calls and emails
- Affordable without filing insurance claims
- Available in languages and delivered by persons familiar with the backgrounds of those being served





Agriculture Behavioral Health Best Practices

- Telephone and email hotlines/helplines
- Follow-up counseling is necessary
- Capacity to refer for ancillary assistance such as legal, medical, emergency, mediation, business consultation and other services
- Community workshops that build relationships and provide education and emotional support
- Evaluate and modify the services as needed





Partners for Psychologists to Consider

- Family doctors or primary care physicians
- Law enforcement community
- Schools and extension services
- Faith-based community





The National Health Service Corps (NHSC)

- The NHSC provides financial assistance in exchange for providing health care services in designated underserved areas known as Health Professional Shortage Areas
- Participating psychologists agree to work for two years at an NHSC-approved site
- Full-time professionals can receive up to \$50,000 in loan assistance



Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) Program

- The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized the FRSAN, a program intended to create a network that provides stress assistance programs to farmers, ranchers and others engaged in ag-related occupations.
- Congress *authorized* up to \$10 million in annual funding for the program through 2023. Full funding for this program will require an annual push to get money appropriated each year.
- A \$2 million pilot program was funded for this year (FY 2019) to establish four regional networks that will establish “frameworks for stress assistance programs, training and services.” Each region will receive \$488K to create network infrastructure.





QUESTIONS?

Type questions in “Questions” box in the dropdown menu above “Handouts” on your screen

Resources

- National Health Service Corps: <https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/>
- APA's Center for Workforce Studies: <https://www.apa.org/workforce/>
- Journal of Rural Mental Health: www.apa.org/pubs/journals/rmh/
- National Association for Rural Mental Health: www.narmh.org
- Farm Aid's Farmer Resource Network: www.farmaid.org/ideas
- Farm Aid Fact Sheets: www.farmaid.org/blog/fact-sheet/
- SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center: www.samhsa.gov/dtac
- Some state-level hotlines that you can support:
 - o Iowa Concern Hotline: 1-800-447-1985
 - o Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline: 1-833-600-2670
 - o Nebraska Rural Response Helpline: 1-800-464-0258
 - o NYFarmNet: 1-800-547-3276
 - o Vermont Farm First: 1-877-493-6216
 - o Wisconsin Farm Center: 1-800-942-2474





Thank you for joining.