

MENTAL HEALTH and AGRICULTURE

Farmers and ranchers take great pride in continuing the tradition and task of growing the world's food. This pride, love for the land, and life in the country are often what get farm and ranch families through the long hours, financial pressures, little separation between work and home life, and isolation that often come as part of the package.

These plus other factors that are out of a producer's control – weather, markets, and disease, for example – put them at high risk for mental illness, depression and suicide.

We have come a long way in talking about mental health in agriculture and discerning when there may be a problem, but do we know how to recognize *good* mental health in ourselves?

The following questions we can ask ourselves to check up on our mental well-being are a great place to start, based on the excellent “My Dashboard” tool found on the FCC (Farm Credit Canada) website:

Physically – Am I sleeping well? Do I have a good amount of energy? Am I motivated to take care of myself?

Mentally – Do I feel clear and focused? Am I able to see solutions to the problems that come up on a daily basis?

Emotionally – Am I as social as I normally am? Do I look forward to events or completing goals I have set? Am I able to talk about difficult things with the people I am closest to?

Just as fields need to be checked regularly and equipment needs preventative maintenance, evaluating our mental well-being on a regular basis is crucial. If you are not able to answer yes to a lot of those questions, it may be time to talk about it with someone.

Remember,

- Daily / weekly check-ins are a great way to keep mental wellness from being out of sight, and out of mind.
- Be sure to check in with everyone – farming is a family affair, whether everyone is out in the field or not!
- Take time for fun, a hobby, and connecting with others, even if (and especially when) it's busy.
- Find ways to remind yourself of what you love about life on the farm/ranch
- Keep educating yourself! There are wonderful resources to support the agricultural community in Canada. A few great places to start:
 - The Do More Agriculture Foundation (domore.ag)
 - Mental Health First Aid Training (mhfa.ca)
 - As mentioned, Farm Credit Canada (www.fcc-fac.ca/en/community/wellness.html)

FCSS offers workshops as well as individual counselling to help you learn more.

For more information call 587-370-3728
or email counsellingservices@fcss.ca.

Visit www.fcss.ca for more information.

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