

MENTAL HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE

Part One - STRESS and STIGMA



Global events, extreme weather patterns, and rising production costs can make times tough for producers in our communities. It should come as no surprise that those in the agricultural sector have higher rates stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout compared with many other industries. For example, 35% of farmers may be experiencing depression and 45% of farmers report high levels of stress leading to lower physical and mental health.

Myth: It's better to suffer in silence.

Fact: Isolation is where mental health issues thrive. So **make** time to connect. Our burdens can be unbearably heavy when carried on our own, but if we all share each other's burdens, they all become lighter.

The culture of stigma surrounding mental health within the agricultural sector can create a barrier to accessing services. However, showing that mental health is not a topic to be avoided or minimized creates the impression that you are a safe person to talk to, if needed, and helps to challenge the stigma that may accompany experiences of mental illness.

National organizations such as the Do More Agriculture Foundation are working hard to bring producers together to talk about what mental health needs exist and how they can be met to sustain the health and wellbeing for those engaged in this critical work in our communities. You can find out more about this group on their website (www.domore.ag), including accessing helpful *Wellness Tips*.

Local resources are also available. Residents of Barons-Eureka-Warner FCSS's service area can receive free in person, online, or over the phone counselling. First appointments can be booked using our online booking calendar (www.fcss.ca) or by calling 587-370-3728. Distress Line of Southwestern Alberta is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by calling 1-888-787-2880.

Stay tuned for future segments in our Mental Health in Agriculture series including Part 2 – *Signs of Stress and How to Kick It*, and Part 3 - *What to (Not) Expect from A Counselling Appointment at FCSS*.

"To our valued producers working hard out there – take care of you as you're the most valuable and irreplaceable piece of equipment on the farm!"

Visit www.fcss.ca for more information.

For references and sources email amanda.fontaine@fcss.ca

Submitted by:
**Amanda
Fontaine**
FCSS Counsellor



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