

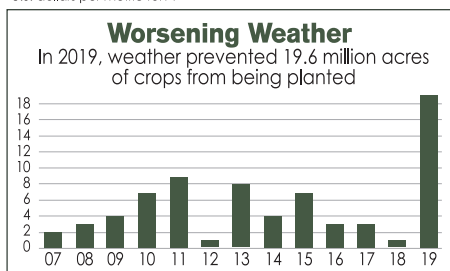
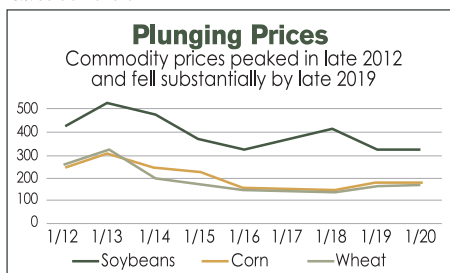
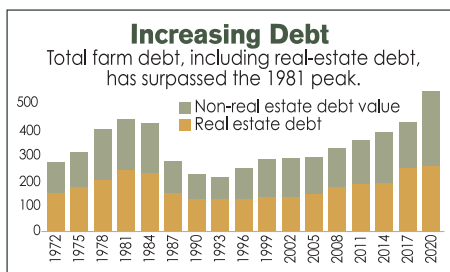
# Managing Farm Stress While Navigating this Volatile and Risky Economic Environment

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## ABSTRACT

The financial health of the U.S. farm sector has been closely watched as world markets fluctuate from regional economic activity and production impacts caused by climate variability. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, farm sector income has declined while farm debt continues to rise since 2012. Additionally, farm real estate appreciation has slowed and cost of borrowing has slightly increased.

The result is a great deal of farm financial stress across the agricultural sector. Financial stress from the current market environment including COVID-19 impacts have created an unprecedented levels of uncertainty across agriculture businesses and their families. There exists a number of decision aids to assist farmers with evaluating their financial condition. However, there is a need for expanded discussion of the resources available to assist farmers with identifying issues and managing mental health as a result of financial stress. This poster seeks to highlight mental health resources to aid farmers while they navigate this volatile and risky economic environment.



## RECOGNIZING STRESS

There are many sources of stress in agriculture — weather, input costs, erratic markets, difficult working conditions and more. It is essential to recognize stress before it snowballs out of control. Farmers' mental health impacts their well-being, family life, farm operations and productivity. In 2012, the suicide rate for male farmers and ranchers was 44.9 per 100,000 working people (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Some symptoms of stress are listed below.

### Physical Symptoms

- Headaches
- Stomach problems
- Chest pain
- Rapid heart rate
- High blood pressure
- Grinding teeth
- Fatigue
- Change in sex drive
- Change in sleep habits

### Behavioral Symptoms

- Poor diet
- Increased smoking or drinking
- Restlessness
- Lack of concentration
- Withdrawing from others
- Forgetfulness
- Neglecting health issues
- Impulsive behaviors

### Emotional Symptoms

- Anger
- Frustration
- Impatience
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Short fuse or increased fights
- Volatile emotions
- Suicidal thoughts

## COPING WITH STRESS

Farmers vary in their ability to manage stress. Some coping skills include:

- Letting go of blame, worry and guilt
- Focusing on what you can control
- Sharing responsibilities/asking for help
- Giving yourself and others credit for accomplishments
- Keeping a positive attitude
- Setting realistic goals
- Scheduling time to relax
- Connecting with a support network or mental health professional

**For immediate mental health needs, please contact one of these national hotlines:**

**Farm Aid Hotline:** 800-FARM-AID (327-6243) | Mon – Fri | 9a.m. – 5p.m.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 800-273-TALK (8255) | 24/7



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