



WILTON
CONSULTING GROUP



FARM MANAGEMENT CANADA
GESTION AGRICOLE DU CANADA

Exploring the Connection Between Mental Health and Farm Management
CASA Conference – October 8th, 2019

Welcome



Today's Agenda

- Introductions
- Overview of Research Project
- What Do We Know and Where Are We Going?
- Highlights of Recent Research
- Learning From Each Other: Exploring the Connections

About our team



Dr. Bronwynne Wilton
Principal Lead and Agri-
food Stakeholder
Engagement Specialist



Rob Hannam
Farm Business Management
Expert Advisor



Dr. Erin Pratley
Qualitative research
methods and analysis



**Dr. Andria Jones-
Bitton**
Farmer Mental Health
Expert Advisor

Methodology

Environmental Scan



Study Design & Implementation



Results Analysis & Interpretation



Report Writing & Presentation



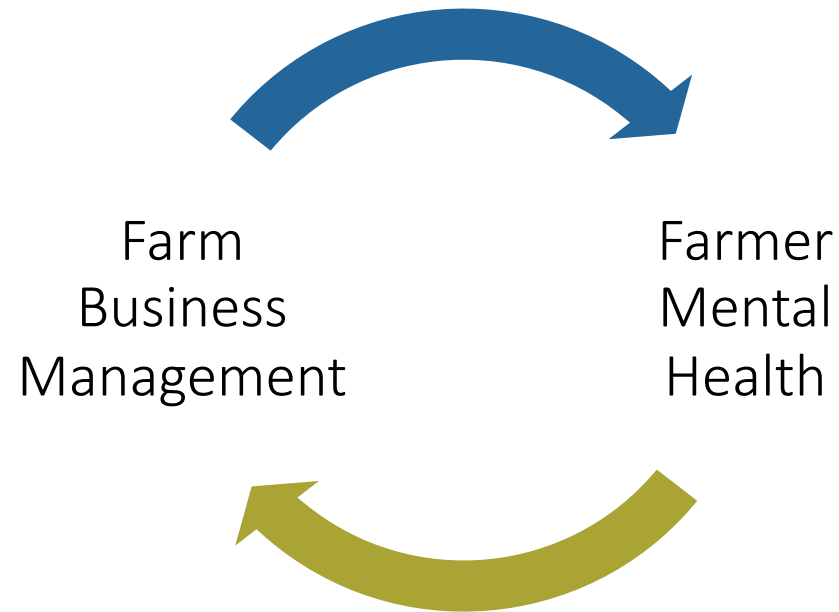
Knowledge Mobilization



We are here

Project purpose

Farm Management Canada is examining the connections between mental health and farm business management



MENTAL HEALTH: A PRIORITY FOR OUR FARMERS

Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

In May 2019, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food released a report based on testimony from 61 individuals and organizations on the mental health challenges Canadian producers face.

Ten recommendations, including:

- Examine farm audit/labour review processes to reduce stress
- Develop public awareness campaigns to combat online harassment of the farming community
- Improve mental health support and insurance coverage for farmers
- Invest in educating stakeholders who work with farmers to detect the signs of distress
- Build capacity in mental health awareness, prevention
- Seek national coordination promote help lines and e-mental health services

Environmental Scan: Exploration of international and Canadian knowledge on mental health and the farm sector

Academic Literature Search

Journal search including Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus and Web of Science.

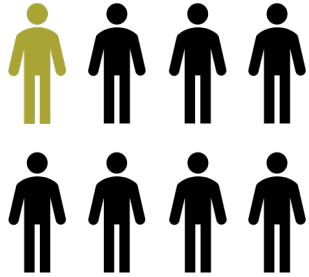
Grey Literature Search

Google searches for grey literature including websites, news articles, and social media

Resources From Project Collaborators

Resources shared from collaborators and interest groups (incl. University of Exeter, Farm Management Canada, Clinic Community Health, Farm Credit Canada)

The Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector is an economic driver.



1 in 8

Canadian jobs are in
the agricultural sector.

Agriculture contributes



\$111.9 billion

per year to the Canadian
economy.

This equates to



6.7%

of Canada's GDP.

Mental Health:

General mental well-being: an individual's emotions, thoughts and feelings, ability to solve problems and overcome difficulties, social connections, and understanding of the world.



Quadrant of Mental Wellness and Illness (developed by Jones-Bitton, A., & Hagen, B.)

What do we know about the **state of farmer mental health** in Canada?

Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton, et al. surveyed 1,132 Canadian farmers:

Farmers are more stressed than the general population

- **45%** of farmers classified as having **high levels of perceived stress**
- Compared with **27%** of **general population** classified as having high levels of perceived stress

57% and 33% of farmers were respectively classified as possible and probable cases for **anxiety**, and 34% and 15% respectively classified as possible and probable cases for **depression**.

How does mental health impact **decision-making** on the farm?

- Decision-making typically involves deliberating pros and cons of a choice
 - Stress can influence this balanced, logical approach to decision-making
- Stress can be productive and create action, but too much stress for too long can negatively affect decision-making and compromise health and safety

This altering of the decision-making process as a result of stress influenced the safety decisions made on the farm. This draws a clear connection between how stress can affect decision-making on the farm.

Injuries in Agriculture: Quick Facts*

In Canada, farming is the **fourth most dangerous industry** in terms of rates of fatal injury, and it is the most dangerous industry in terms of absolute numbers of fatalities.



There were **843** agriculture-related fatalities from 2003-2012 in Canada...



this works out to an average of **84 agriculture-related fatalities** per year.

Agriculture-related injuries cost the health-care system **\$465 million ...**



of this, **\$374 million** (or 80%) was as a result of avoidable injuries.

Studies have shown that **stress and injury co-exist** on farms and can both be a factor in the other.

What do we know about **decision-making and business management practices** on the farm?

The 7 business management practices driving farm financial success:

1. Lifelong learning, skills development
2. Business decisions made using accurate financial data
3. Seeking the help of business advisors and consultants
4. Having a written business plan, following it, reviewing it annually
5. Knowing, monitoring your cost of production and what it means for profit
6. Assessing risks and having a plan to manage and mitigate risk
7. Using a budget and financial plan to monitor financial position and options

What are the mental health stress factors for Canadian farmers?

The research shows:

1. Workload Pressures & Lack of Time

- Limited time to interact with family and friends and participate in leisure activities

2. Isolation

- Lack of social interaction, healthcare and recreational/social services due to rurality

3. Financial Pressures

- Financial pressures including price margins, payment of debts, employee payroll, rising input costs and other expenses

4. Conflicts with Family and/or Associates

- Difference in opinions over farm management decisions or professional values associated with the farm business leading to family or associate conflict

What are the mental health stress factors for Canadian farmers?

The research shows:

5. Farm Transition

- Transition planning and the stress associated with maintaining the farm legacy

6. Unpredictable Interference

- External stressors including weather, price/markets, policy and legislation, machinery breakdowns and disease outbreaks

7. Public Trust

- Criticism of farming in media reducing pride and confidence

8. Social Stigma

- The perceived social "shame" of having mental health challenges

How can these stressors impact the farm & farmer health?

- Farming has been identified as one of the most dangerous industries due to the broad and changeable range of physical, biological, chemical, and mechanical hazards
- During high-stress times such as planting or harvesting, as well as when there are higher financial stressors, injuries tend to increase

Next Steps: Gaps for further exploration

GAP 1: Limited scope of Canadian research related to mental health in agriculture

Limited Canadian-specific data

May not be fully representative of the Canadian farming population

Lack of comparison between demographic variables

Next Steps: Gaps for further exploration

GAP 2: Connection between mental health, farm management & operations

Animal
welfare

Farm safety

Family & employee
dynamics,
interpersonal
relations, and
conflict

Financial success,
decision-making, farm
business management
and mental health

Next Steps: Gaps for further exploration

GAP 3: The effectiveness of mental health support programs and resources

Successes and challenges of programs

Support network and extension services, especially in rural communities

Learning From Each Other: Exploring the Connections

1. What connections do you see between mental health and farm business management?
2. What do you wish you knew more about in terms of the connection between business management practices and farmer mental health?
3. In what ways could difficulties with mental health influence farm business management practices? In what ways could difficulties with farm business management practices influence mental health?
4. How could positive mental health contribute to farm business management practices? How could farm business management practices contribute to mental health?



Thank you for your time today!

Questions?

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