



Supporting Farmers' Mental Health & Well-Being

Jessica Beauchamp MSW, LCSW, SAS, CSOTS

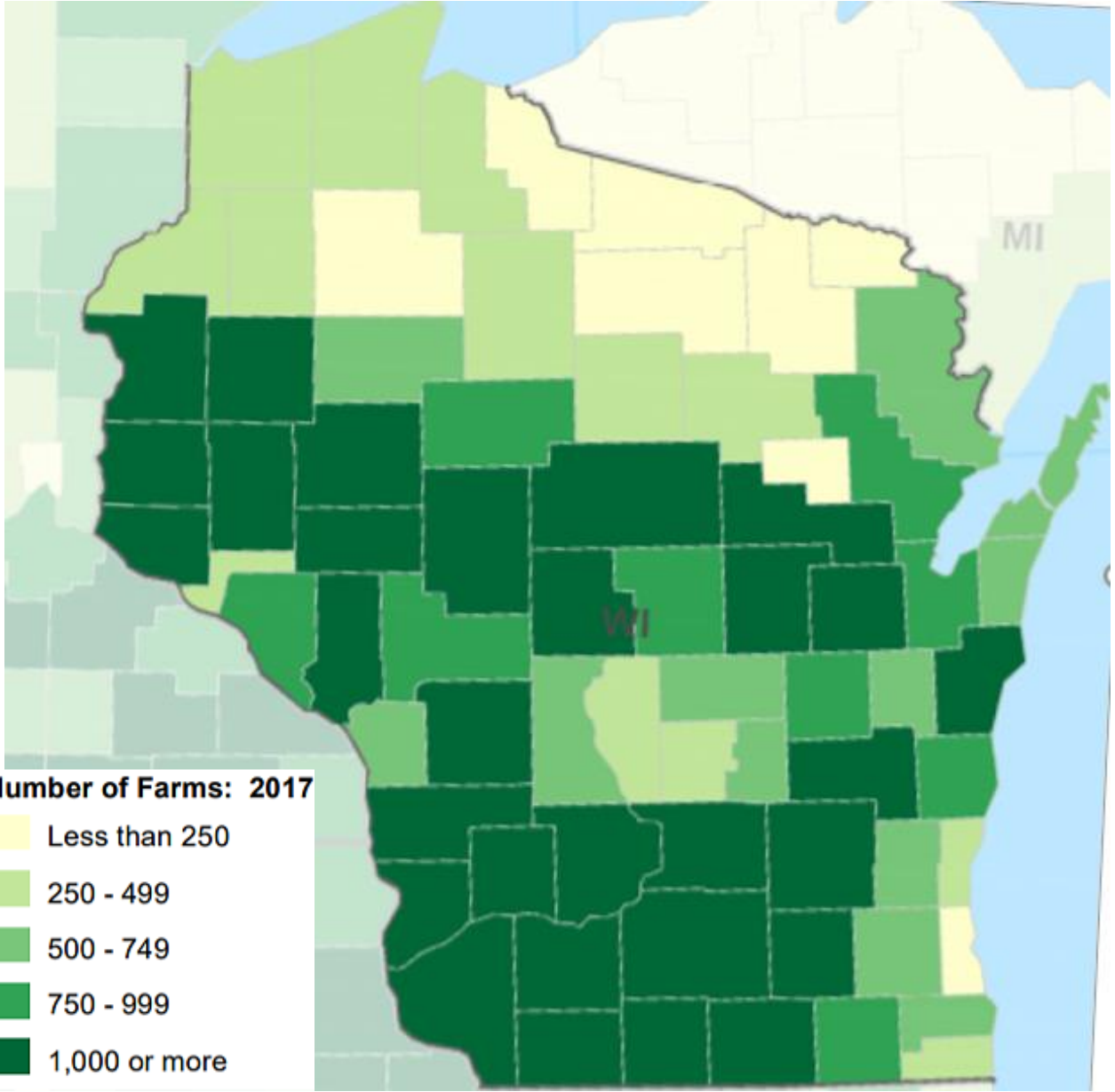
Off The Couch Counseling & Consultation

Jayne Krull

Director, Wisconsin Farm Center

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (DATCP)

3/8/2022



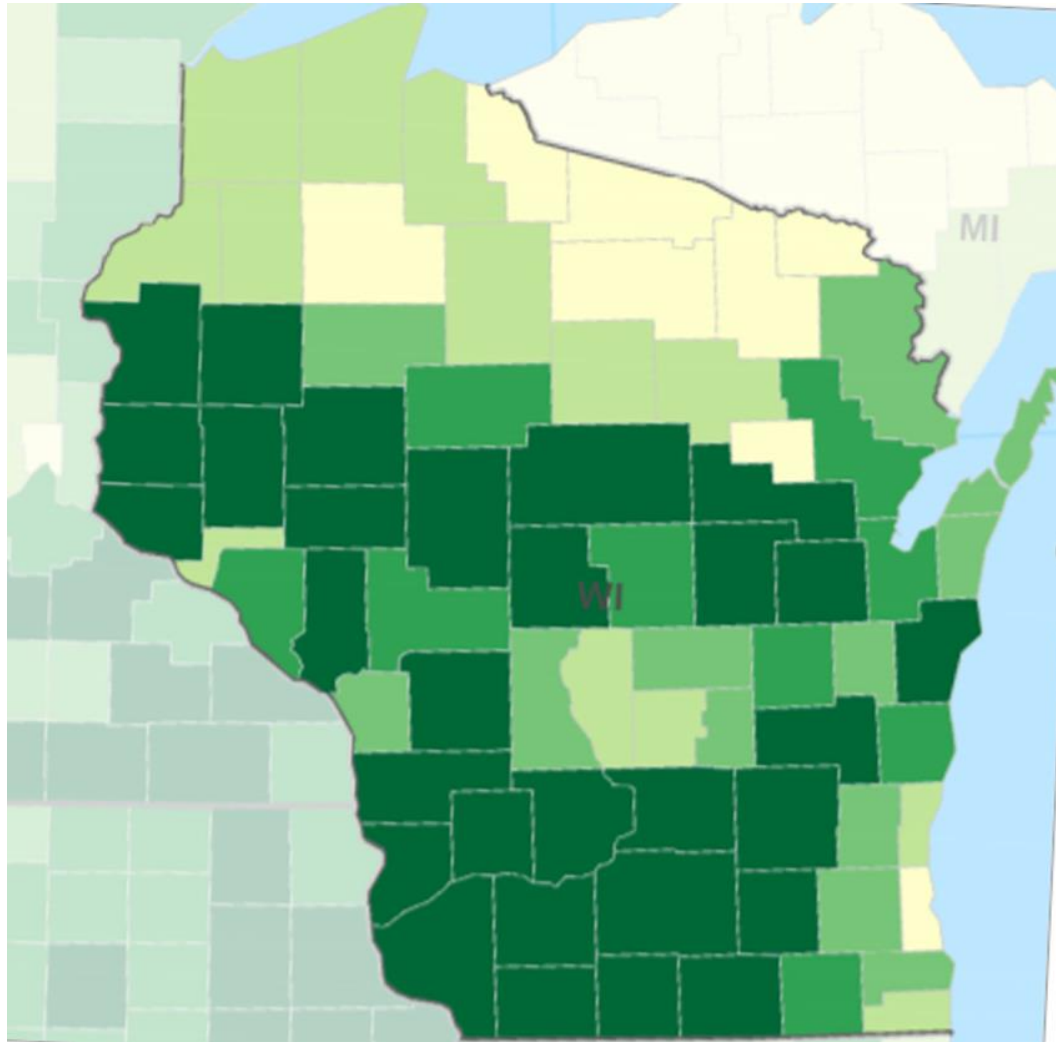
NUMBER OF FARMS IN WISCONSIN (2017)

Counties with 1,000+ farms include:

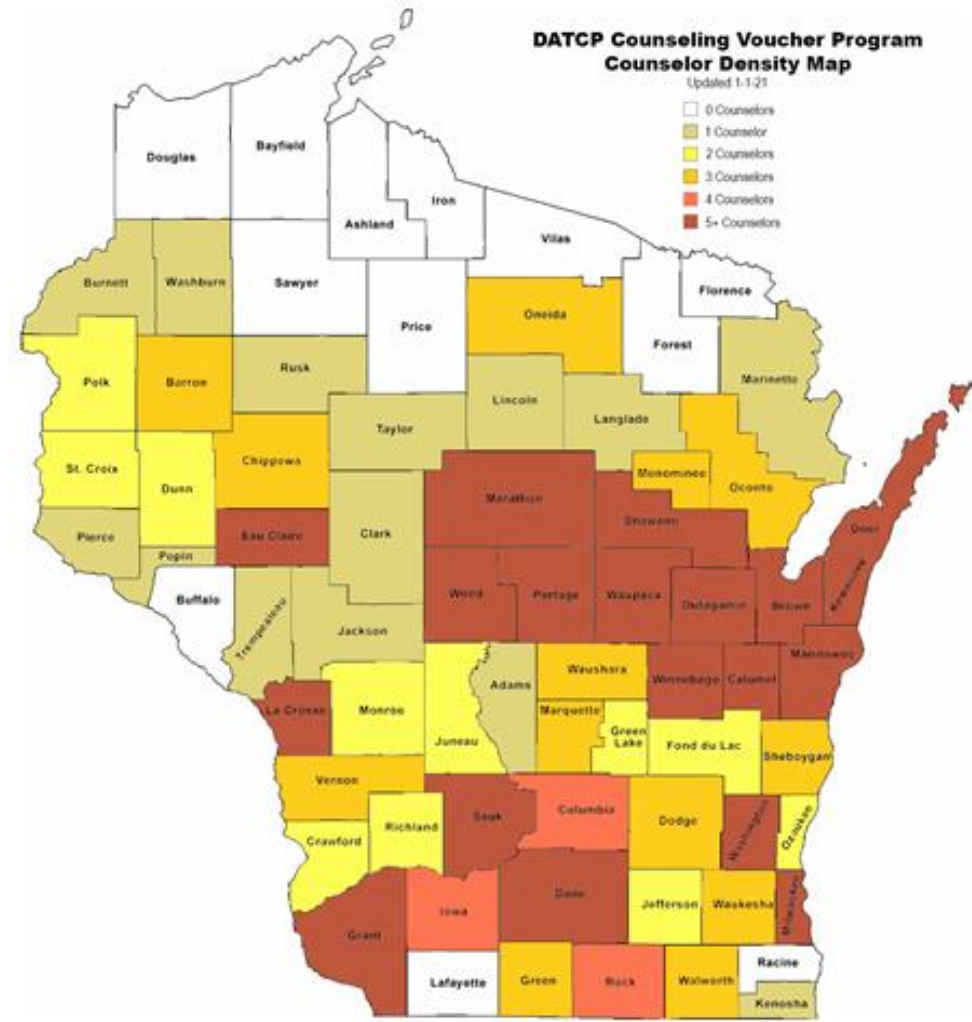
- Barron
- Chippewa
- **Clark (2,095)**
- Columbia
- Crawford
- **Dane (2,566)**
- Dodge
- Dunn
- Eau Claire
- Fond du Lac
- **Grant (2,482)**
- Green
- Iowa
- Jefferson
- Lafayette
- Manitowoc
- **Marathon (2,237)**
- Monroe
- Outagamie
- Pierce
- Polk
- Rock
- Richland
- Sauk
- Shawano
- St. Croix
- Trempealeau
- **Vernon (1,961)**
- Waupaca
- Wood



Farms



Counseling Voucher Network





FARMING & ITS UNIQUE STRESSORS

AND THE STRENGTH OF FARMERS



A FARMER IS...



FARM STRESSORS

Financial/
Business
Issues

Health

Afraid to
Lose Farm/
Legacy of
Farm

Economy/
Market

Safety

Weather

Long
Hours

Interpersonal
Relationships

Labor

Wages

Isolation



FROM THE FARMERS: MAJOR STRESSORS *



1. Time Pressure



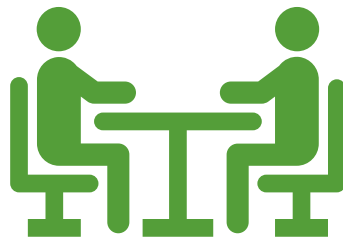
2. Management of the Farm



3. Unpredictable Income



4. Isolation



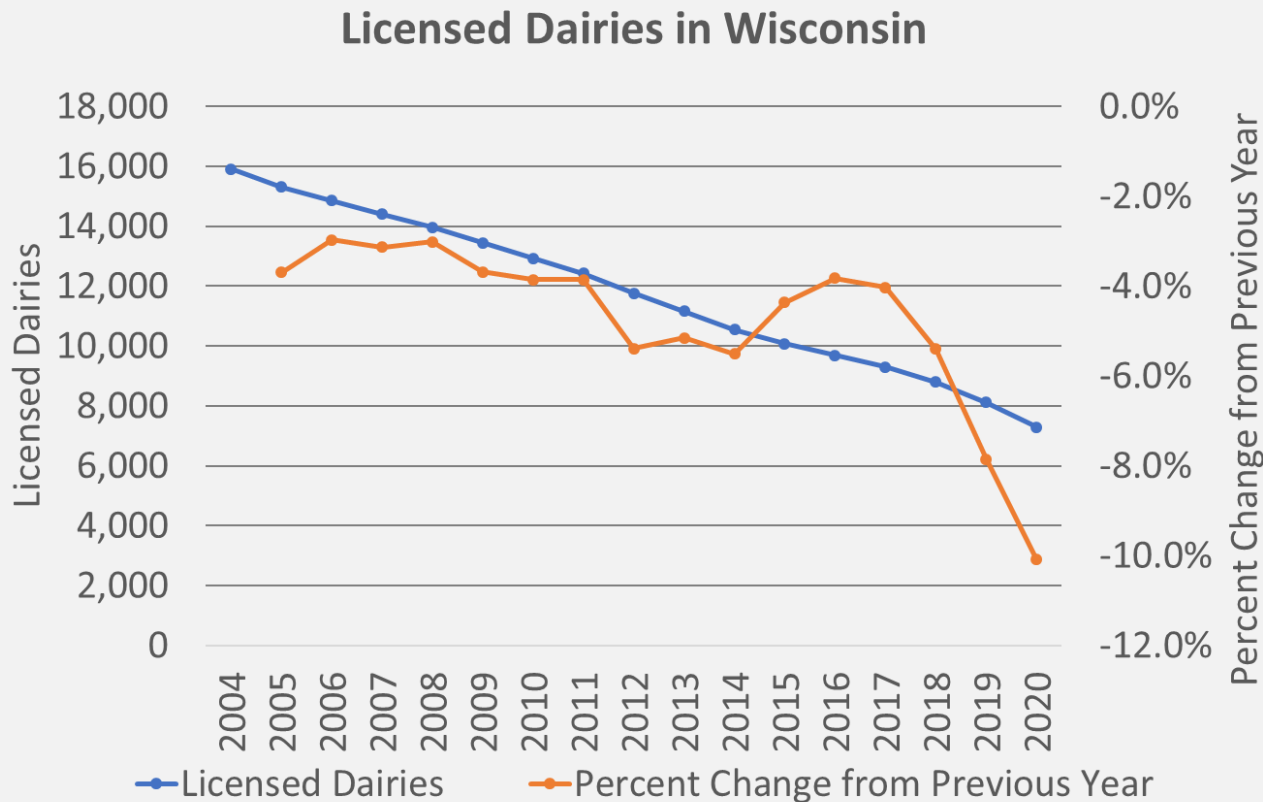
5. Farm Succession & Interpersonal Conflicts

Other Stressors include:

- COVID
- Financial Management
- Pressure to Expand & Improve
- Daily Unpredictability
- Life



A STRUGGLING WISCONSIN FARM LANDSCAPE



2019

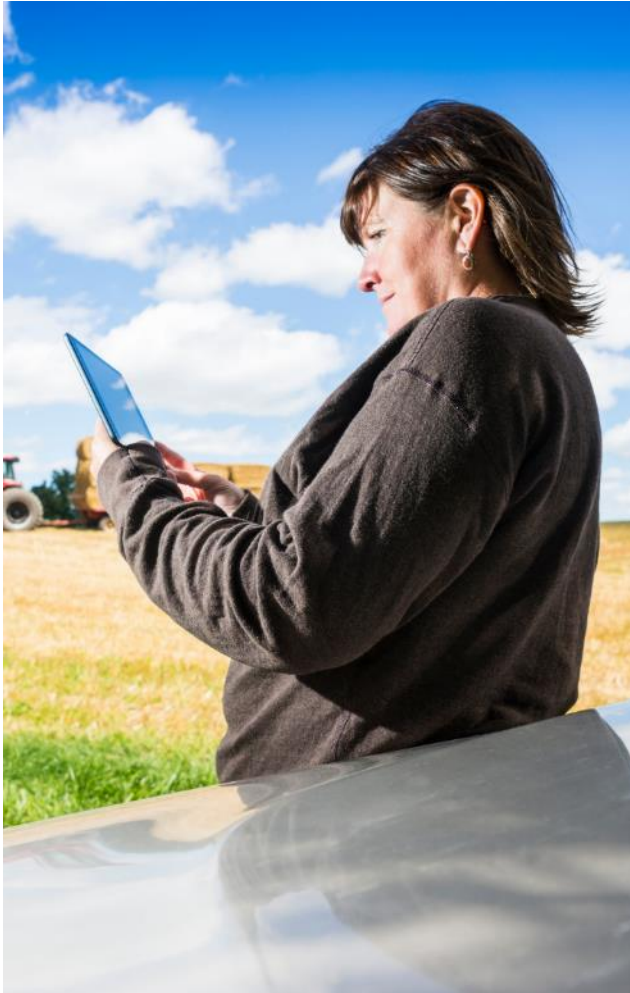
10% (818 farms) of dairy herds went out of business

2020

343 dairy herds went out of business



FARM FINANCES



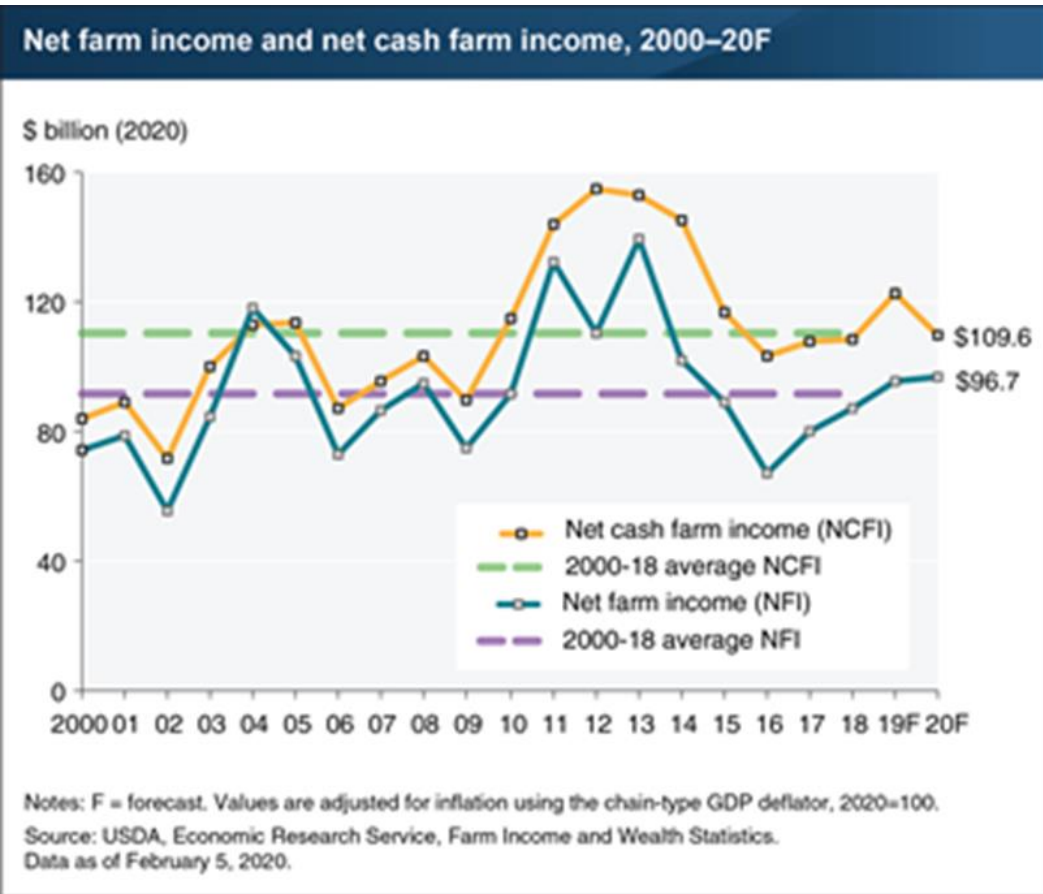
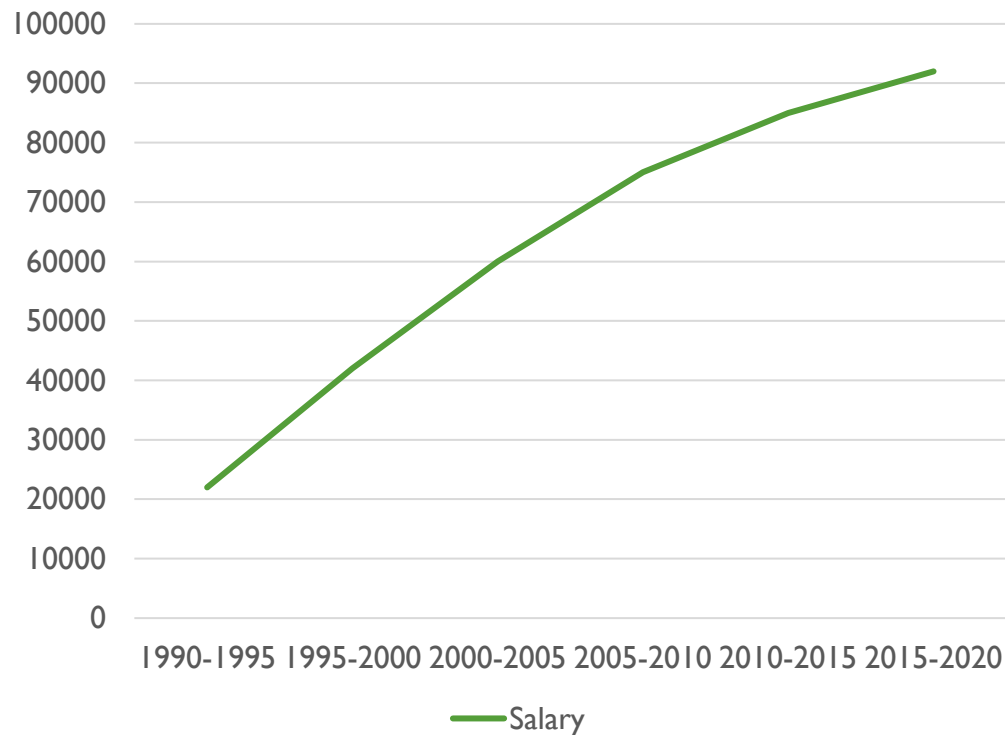
Farmers are often “Equity Rich and Cash Poor”

- Farmland values can make farmers appear wealthy on paper
- Profit does not equal cash flow
- Might have a negative cash flow – more cash is going out than coming in
- Profit margins are often thin or negative
- Rates of return on assets and equity are low



FARMERS LIVE WITH VOLATILITY

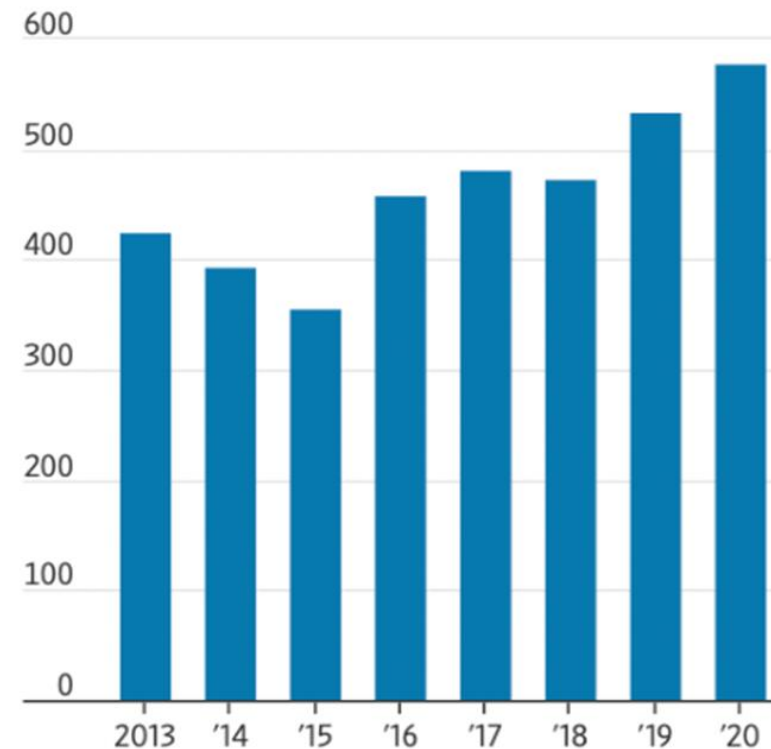
Typical Individual's Income Growth: Example
(non-farm occupation)



FARM BANKRUPTCIES

Wisconsin currently ranks **HIGHEST** in the nation for farm bankruptcies.

Farming Bankruptcies



Note: For 12 months ending June 30

Source: U.S. Courts



WHERE YOUR FOOD DOLLAR GOES

2019 Food dollar: Industry group (nominal)



THOUGHTS

- Impossible to judge the financial condition of a farm from appearances
- Some farmers don't have a strong understanding of their farm finances
- Farm families that work together all day, every day, may have never had a conversation about the farm's financial situation or how the future looks
- The stress can lead to a whole host of other issues like anger, depression, domestic violence, and suicide
- Being the third or fourth generation to operate a family farm can be a wonderful opportunity or a great burden – sometimes both





SO, WHY DO THEY DO IT?



STRENGTHS OF FARMERS

- Resilient
- Creative/Adaptable
- Passionate
- Hardworking
- Family oriented
- Dependable
- Spiritual
- Perseverance
- Motivated



FARM CULTURE

- Proudful and Stoic – “Pull yourself up by the bootstraps.”
- Identity – “It’s not just a job.”
- Legacy of Farm Riding on Their Success

There's a heavy pressure - - the weight of expectations from previous generations and a sense of failing the next generation.

U.S. Representative J.T. Wilcox WA
speaking to farmers in 2018



WHY FARM?

(Farmer Videos)

<https://youtu.be/hJDEB2sr3Xc>





HOW THIS IMPACTS FARMER MENTAL HEALTH



FARMER MENTAL HEALTH

According to the American Farm Bureau Federation (2019), farmers/farm workers:

- **21%** sought out care.
- **46%** found it difficult to access help locally.
- **82%** think mental health is important for them/their family.

According to the American Farm Bureau Federation (2020), farmers/farm workers:

- **66%** thought their mental health was impacted by pandemic.
- **65%** were nervous, anxious, or on edge during pandemic.



FACTORS IMPACTING FARMER'S USE OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



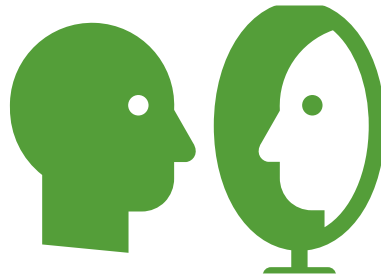
- **Affordability**
 - Mental health services can be expensive (especially with certain insurance plans or no insurance)
- **Accessibility**
 - Getting to services – time, transportation, etc.
- **Acceptability**
 - Stigma – taboo nature of mental health
- **Availability**
 - Lack of services



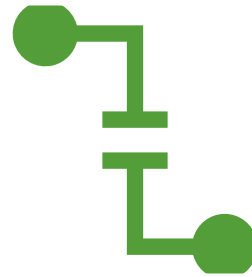
FROM THE FARMERS: BARRIERS *



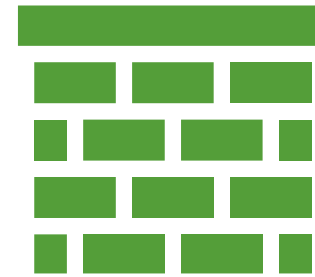
1. Time & Timing



2. Self-Reliance



3. Disconnect



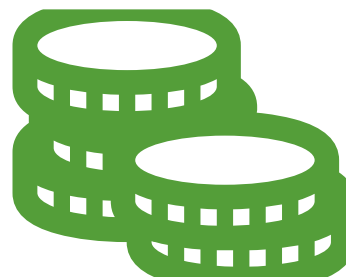
4. Stigma



5. Fear of Interventions



6. Access to Providers



7. Cost



8. Other Reasons



FROM THE FARMERS: COPING TECHNIQUES

Negative Coping Strategies:



Overwork

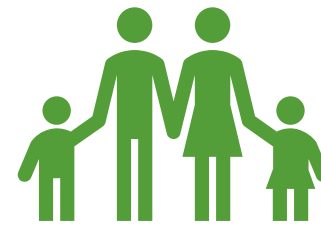


Self-Isolation



Substance Use

Positive Coping Strategies:



Support System



Social Activities



Self-Care



Time Off the Farm



FARMER SUICIDE



According to USA Today:

- **Over 450 farmers** died by suicide from 2014-2018 in 9 Midwest states

According to the National Farm Medicine Center:

- **14.3 suicides per 100,000 farmers/farm workers** in Wisconsin from 2017-2018





WHAT CAN WE DO?



HOW TO ADDRESS BARRIERS



Affordability



Accessibility



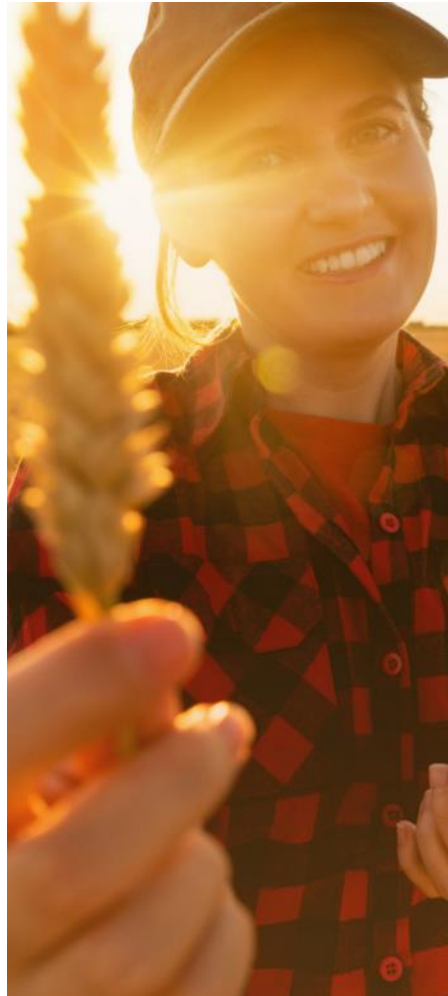
Acceptability



Availability



WISCONSIN FARM CENTER



Farmer Wellness



Conflict, Legal, &
Financial Mediation



Financial & Business
Consultation



Veteran Farmer
Assistance



Succession &
Transition Planning



Herd-Based
Diagnostics



FARMER WELLNESS PROGRAM

- 24/7 Wisconsin Farmer Wellness Helpline
 - **1-888-901-2558**
- Tele-Counseling (Phone or Video)
 - **1-888-901-2558**
- Counseling Vouchers
 - **1-800-942-2474**

All services are free and confidential



FARMER OR FARM COUPLE SUPPORT GROUPS

- Bring farmers/farm couples together to share ideas, provide encouragement and build community
- 8 p.m. | 4th Monday of every month
- Held online via Zoom (registration required)
- Led by trained peer leaders with assistance from a licensed mental health professional



ONLINE FARM CULTURE TRAINING



- “Supporting Farmers’ Mental Health and Understanding Farm Culture and Farm Family Dynamics”
- Created in partnership with DHS / UW-GB

Available at

<https://bit.ly/3jdKVdt>



RURAL REALITIES PODCAST



Available at
<https://farmcenter.wi.gov>

**Breaking the Stigma
on Mental Health**
*Renee Sutkay
Journey Mental Health*

Your Brain on Stress
*John Shutske
UW-Division of Extension*

**Navigating Change
When the World has
Changed**
*Dianne Deaton Vielhuber
author & pastor*

**Discussing the
“Undiscussabull”**
*Elaine Froese
Farm Transition Specialist*

**Farm Financials: When
to Reach out for Help**
*Paul Dietmann
Compeer Financial*

**Finding Fairness in
Farm Transfer**
*Elaine Froese
Farm Transition Specialist*

**Farm Children: They
Experience Stress Too!**
*Monica McConkey
Rural Mental Health
Specialist*

**Keep Farmers Doing
What They Love**
*Amanda Harguth
AgrAbility of Wisconsin*



RESILIENT FARMS NEWSLETTER



Resilient Farms and Families

A project of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension and the Wisconsin Farm Center at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

- Partnership between Farm Center & UW-Extension
- Monthly e-newsletter
- Financial curriculum for farms
- Farmer focus groups
- Future survey to providers
- Future regional workshops

Available at

<https://farms.extension.wisc.edu/farmstress>





Jessica Beauchamp MSW, LCSW, SAS, CSOTS
wifarmerwellness@gmail.com

Jayne Krull
jayne.krull@wisconsin.gov

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (DATCP)