**Farmer Stress**

An ECOP Program Committee draft status report of

Extension Programming related to Farmer Stress/Emotional Health

January 2020

**NIFA Grants**

Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) - The long-term goal of the FRSAN projects is to establish a Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network that provides stress assistance programs to individuals who are engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations on a regional basis. Network members must initiate, expand, or sustain programs that provide professional agricultural behavioral health counseling and referral for other forms of assistance as necessary through the following:

1. Farm telephone helplines and websites;
2. Training including training programs and workshops;
3. Support groups; and
4. Outreach services and activities, including the dissemination of information and materials.

NIFA Contact: Brent Elrod, NIFA National Program Leader, Division of Family & Consumer Sciences, [richard.elrod@usda.gov](mailto:richard.elrod@usda.gov) (link sends e-mail); (816) 926-2535

Currently Funded Projects (2019)

(Southern) 2019-70028-30434, Natalie Roy, AgriSafe Network, Inc. 8342 NICC Drive Peosta, IA 52068; Phone: 985-845-1116; Email: [nroy@agrisafe.org](mailto:nroy@agrisafe.org)

Southern Region Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, $480,000.

(West) 2019-70028-30435, Don McMoran, Washington State University, Skagit County Director, Email: [dmcmoran@wsu.edu](mailto:dmcmoran@wsu.edu); Phone: 360-395-2357

Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program (WRASAP), $480,000.

(North Central) 2019-70028-30436, David Brown, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Human Sciences Extension and Outreach; 515-298-1505; [dnbrown@iastate.edu](mailto:dnbrown@iastate.edu)

Farm and Ranch Wellness: The Next Steps, $480,000.

(Northeast) 2019-70028-30464, Martin Lemos, Co-Executive Director, National Young Farmers Coalition, P.O. BOX 1074, Hudson, New York 12534, [info@youngfarmers.org](mailto:info@youngfarmers.org), 364 Warren St., Hudson, New York 12534; (518) 643-3564; (866) 926-0438

Building an Inclusive and Comprehensive Network for Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance in the Northeast, $480,000.

**US Department of Health and Human Services**

National Prevention Strategy: America's Plan for Better Health,

(<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/disease-prevention-wellness-report.pdf>)

**Cooperative Extension’s National Framework for Health and Wellness**

Cooperative Extension System (<https://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/CFERR_Library/national-framework-for-health-and-wellness/file>)

**Association of Southern Region Extension Directors**

Alabama

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_\_5

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System has included stress management in programs where row crops are the dominant income.

Arkansas

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is farmer stress in your state? \_\_9 - 10. With several natural disasters as well as economic uncertainty and other factors, farmers in Arkansas have experienced increased stress on their operations. University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service has trained our Family and Consumer Sciences agents to deliver a program called Managing Farm and Ranch Stress (originally developed by North Dakota State University Extension). This program provides an hour-long session for farmers, ranchers, and other agriculture workers to learn about stressors, coping strategies, and local resources for managing stress. Agents have supporting resources and the ability to adapt the program to a shorter time frame or to present in an exhibit setting. In addition to this program, we have trained over 60 extension personnel in Mental Health First Aid to equip them to effectively respond to mental health emergencies with county clientele, and more training is forthcoming. We are also partners for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) working with AgriSafe to support Arkansas and the Southern Region.

Names and contact information of individuals who are leading the programs include: Brittney Schrick, PhD, Assistant Professor -- Family Life, [bschrick@uaex.edu](mailto:bschrick@uaex.edu); (501)671-2202 and Rebecca Simon, Program Associate, [rsimon@uaex.edu](mailto:rsimon@uaex.edu).

Florida

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_\_8\_\_

This is an area of growing interest to our state, and UF Extension has recently become a partner on a grant focused on farmer stress and developing a nationwide network for resources led by AgriSafe. We currently have some general stress management programs and plan to begin developing more programming specifically for the farm community over time.

Contact: Heidi Liss Radunovich, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist, Associate Professor, Extension Specialist, and Program Director for UF/Extension Engagement, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida; Phone Number: (352)273-3534; Email: hliss@ufl.edu.

Georgia

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? 8

Rural Stress: Promising Practices and Future Directions (<https://ruralstress.uga.edu/>) reports on UGA Extension’s conference on Farmer Stress held in late 2018. Additional updated information is available at <https://extension.uga.edu/topic-areas/timely-topics/Rural.html>; and a 2020 report has been released titled, Farmer Stress in Georgia - Results of a survey, January 2020; written document by Anna Scheyett, PhD, Dean and Professor University of Georgia School of Social Work (shared by Laura Perry Johnson, Director of Extension, University of Georgia; [lpj4h@uga.edu](mailto:lpj4h@uga.edu)).

Dr. Johnson and Andrea Scarrow ([ascarrow@uga.edu](mailto:ascarrow@uga.edu)) are contacts.

Kentucky

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_\_\_7\_\_\_

Substance Use and Mental Health, A PowerPoint presentation about a multi-program area strategy to address substance abuse and mental health in Kentucky.

Contact: Craig H. Wood, Ph.D., Interim Assistant Director, Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Kentucky

Mississippi

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_7\_\_\_

MSU Extension’s Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Program in-service training for Extension Agents has been a great first-step in raising awareness about and meeting some of the mental health needs of producers in the state, but it is a very basic first step. This program and in-service training has been provided by Dr. David Buys, Associate Professor and MSU Extension Health Specialist.

MSU Extension also recently sponsored Dr. Ted Matthews (https://www.farmcounseling.org/) to come to the MSU Extension Row Crops Short Course on campus last December where he spoke about the mental health challenges facing farmers and farm families. We believe the message was very well-received, but we are checking the survey data for impact now.

Dr. Buys and Dr. Amanda Stone, Assistant Professor and State Dairy Specialist are involved with AgriSafe, a national organization who works on physical and mental health-related issues affecting farmers. Drs. Stone and Buys have a USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network funded grant to AgriSafe. They are also interested in leveraging this partnership to further explore developing a farmer helpline.

MSU Extension Contacts: Dr. David Buys, Associate Professor & State Health Specialist, Email: [david.buys@msstate.edu](mailto:david.buys@msstate.edu), Telephone: 662-325-3060, Fax: 662-325-8728, Department: Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion, Mailing Address: 107 Herzer, 945 Stone Boulevard, Mississippi State, MS 39762, Physical Address: 945 Stone Blvd, Mississippi State, MS 39762 and Dr. Amanda Stone, Assistant Professor & State Dairy Specialist, Email: [amanda.stone@msstate.edu](mailto:amanda.stone@msstate.edu), Telephone: 662-325-3516, Fax: 662-325-8873, Department: Animal & Dairy Science, Mailing Address: Box 9815, Mississippi State, MS 39762, Physical Address: 4025 Wise Center Drive, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

North Carolina

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? 8

The NC Agromedicine Institute's (interinstitutional partners include East Carolina University, NC State University, and NC A&T State University) Tape & Twine Program is training people to deal with extreme farm stress. The training includes teaching people what to look for in a person's behavior that could indicate that they are at risk of suicide or battling depression. They are also working on finding psychiatrists and therapists who are familiar with the unique nature of farming.

<http://www.ncagromedicine.org/tapeandtwine.php>

<https://www.ncagromedicine.org/pdf/Farm%20Stress%20Resources319.pdf>

<http://www.ncmedicaljournal.com/content/79/6/378.full#ref-7>

Contact person: Robin Tutor Marcom, EdD, MPH, OTR/L, NC Agromedicine Institute, 1157 VOA Site C Road, Greenville, NC 27834; [tutorr@ecu.edu](mailto:tutorr@ecu.edu); 252-744-1045.

Oklahoma

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_**5**\_\_

We have historically had programs that offered one-on-one financial assistance to stressed farmers, but participation dwindled when state funding ended and it became fee based. We currently are in the initial stages of formalizing initiatives to tackle the issue of farm stress and mental health awareness.

Contact persons: Matt Brosi, [matt.brosi@okstate.edu](mailto:matt.brosi@okstate.edu) and Rodney Jones, [rodney.jones@okstate.edu](mailto:rodney.jones@okstate.edu).

South Carolina (Clemson)

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_\_8\_\_\_\_

Clemson Extension provides programming to those that work directly with farms and farm families to understand how the markets and farm financials have contributed to the problems that exist. The program includes how to appropriately communicate with those in these circumstances and provide information on resources that can be accessed. Programs include:

<https://www.clemson.edu/extension/agribusiness/farmstress/index.html>

Contact persons are: Mr. Scott Mickey, Clemson Extension Associate, Agribusiness; [smickey@clemson.edu](mailto:smickey@clemson.edu); 803-788-5700 and Dr. Adam Kantrovich, Clemson Extension Associate Professor of Agribusiness and Director of the Clemson Extension Income Tax School; [akantro@clemson.edu](mailto:akantro@clemson.edu); 803-788-5700.

Tennessee

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? 7

In May 2019, Assistant Professor and Human Development Specialist in Family and Consumer Sciences, Dr. Heather Sedges Wallace, published the “Farmer & Family Stress Toolkit.” This resource provides those working with farmers information about: 1. what do to if someone is in immediate danger, 2. educational ready-to-use presentations and community activities, 3. Printable resources and links to others doing similar work at the national, regional, and state-levels, 4. Infographic about the issue of Farmer Stress, and 5. Social Media Posts. A webinar about this toolkit will be presented live on January 15, 2020, with recorded version available to access thereafter. This is in addition to various related webinars and in-person presentations hosted by Tennessee AgrAbility Project. UTIA is also represented at a state-level taskforce initiated by TN Dept. of Ag and the TN Suicide Prevention Network.

Contact persons are: Heather Wallace, PhD (Primary Contact), Assistant Professor/State Specialist Human Development. Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, heather.wallace@utk.edu, (865) 974-7193 and Matthew Devereaux, PhD., Professor/State Specialist, Human Development, Interim Assistant Dean and Department Head, Family and Consumer Sciences, mdeverea@utk.edu, (865-974-7193).

In addition to the Farmer & Family Stress Toolkit, FCS has developed several others programs that focus on emotional heath that could and have been used with the agriculture community as well as youth and families. These programs are listed below with a short description:

RELAX, ALTERNATIVES TO ANGER: This is a series that actively engages adult learners in a group setting to increase knowledge and skills around anger management and gives constructive ways to deal with anger. Aspects of promoting social emotional health are woven throughout the training and include expressing emotions, navigating stress, resolving interpersonal conflict, taking another’s perspective, feeling capable and whole and building skills for forming and maintaining satisfying, healthy and supportive relationships.

BRAINWISE: BrainWise is a comprehensive, evidence-based program designed to teach children, youth, and adults concepts on brain science, recognizing and responding to stress and hardship, weighing good and bad choices, avoiding impulsive behavior, making responsible decisions, and building emotion regulation skills.

MIND & BODY: Program teaching adults, youth and children successful practices to promote a healthy well-being to decrease stress using practices such as mindfulness, yoga and self-awareness.

GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH: General programming and resources on topics such as life balance, suicide awareness and mindfulness practices.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (Coming in 2021): Mental Health First Aid is a course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. This is a national program by supported by the National Council on Behavior Health.

QPR (Coming in 2021): QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer — the 3 simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. Just as people trained in CPR and the Heimlich maneuver help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.

Texas

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_\_fairly high, 8.

Texas Extension is doing a good deal of Mental Health First Aid training, including work with rural communities. The team is hoping to reach more rural audiences and partner with entities like Farm Bureau. There is a rural designation within MHFA so the program can be geared toward rural audiences, but there is no farmer-specific designation.

Texas also has a list of resources for county agents behind the agent firewall, including resources from Extension in other states as well as other agencies and organizations. The mental health team is currently deciding what resources to post on a planned public webpage/site. There is also a link there to SRMEC/AFPC Surviving the Farm Downturn pub (<https://www.afpc.tamu.edu/extension/resources/downturn-book/>) and the related fact sheets (pubs EAG-042, EAG-043) on farm stress and suicide (which are also in the AgriLife bookstore at <https://www.agrilifebookstore.org/default.asp>. There is also an Ag education/leadership grad student doing a survey to assess perceived stress from farmers, so we hope to know more soon.

Contact persons are: Miquela G. Smith, MPH, Extension Program Specialist | Healthy Texas, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 6500 Amarillo Blvd. West | Amarillo, Texas 79106, (806) 677-5668, [Miquela.Smith@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Miquela.Smith@ag.tamu.edu); <https://healthytexas.tamu.edu/> and Rick Peterson, PhD., LMFT, CFLE, Professor and Extension Family Life Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, [rlpeterson@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:rlpeterson@ag.tamu.edu); 979-845-1877.

Virginia

On a 10 point scale (10 highest), how much of an issue is Farmer Stress in your state? \_\_7\_\_\_\_ .

The Commissioner of Agriculture for Virginia has established a task force to study the issue of farmer stress in Virginia and to develop some recommendations. Contact person: Dr. Kim Niewolny at niewolny@vt.edu.