

FARMRes Report - Ireland

Irish young farmers social and labour situation and its
relationship with mental health and wellbeing

European NGOs. Project N^o: 101049292



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Introduction

It is well established and accepted that farmers experience a disproportionate amount of physical and mental health issues due to the nature of their work (Coping with the Pressures of Farming¹). Additionally, farmers have been identified as an occupational group with high rates of suicide in Ireland.

There are a number of key challenges and barriers that have to be overcome to reach out with mental health promotion programmes to the farming community which will be addressed within this report. At the outset these can be primarily identified as loss of income; health problems; depression; loneliness, compliance with Government Regulations, a 24/7 existence, additionally the public perception of farmers particularly in relation to climate change is not at all helpful. It is not necessarily helpful. Necessary in many cases to have off farm income

Undoubtedly nationally and internationally as recognized by FRAMRes, there is recognition for the need to address mental health within agricultural with a view to improving their overall health and well-being. It is necessary to continue to increase awareness of mental health topic among the farming community. The approach needs to be holistic and inclusive in relation to not just the family member that is farming but the entire family.

The Agri- Sector and the Economy²



¹ Coping With the Pressures of Farming

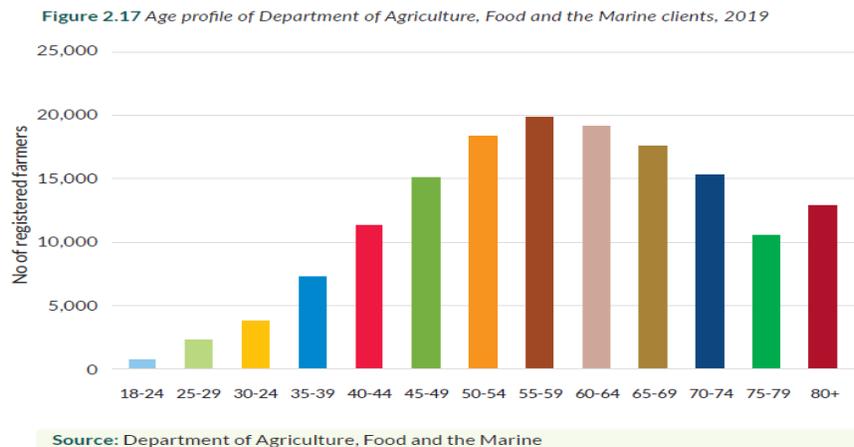
² Fact Sheet of Irish Agriculture September 2020 - Appendix 1

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Farm Structures in Ireland³

Irish agriculture is primarily a grass - based industry with a total number of 135,037 farms with an average farm size of 33.5 ha. Farm ownership is 116,936 (86.6%) male and 18,101 (13.4%) female. A further breakdown of those statistics indicates that 44,135 are holders over the age of 65 (32.7%) and 9,338 are age under 35 years of age (6.9%)

Employment in the agri-food sector on average accounted for 7. % of total employment in Ireland in 2019. The farming sector labour force is 278,600 persons – 73.04% male and 26,96% female.



60%
say the biggest challenge for their business in 2022 is input costs

IFAC Report 2022

Farm Income

The average farm income rose to €34,300 in 2021, up 26% from the previous year, according to figures released by Teagasc⁴. The increase in income was driven mainly by rising output prices and higher levels of production. The rising input costs are causing issues for farmers as the agricultural input price index increased by 39.6% in the year from April 2021.

The increase in income was driven mainly by rising output prices and higher levels of production. Such increases outweighed the steep rises in input costs.

³ <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/agriculture/>

⁴ <https://www.teagasc.ie/news--events/news/2022/farm-incomes-up-in-2021-d.php> Report 14 June 2022

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The figures from the Teagasc National Farm Survey showed that there were large variations in income from sector to sector.

- Dairy farms recorded the highest level of income, at €97,350 on average. This was up €18,000 or 18% from last year. Although farmers faced higher input costs, dairy farmers were buoyed by higher milk prices and increased milk volume outputs.
- Tillage farms saw their average annual income rise 77% to €59,000. The rise in income was driven by "good production conditions" which generated higher crop yields.
- However, tillage farms faced a significant increase in costs with higher prices for feed, fertiliser and contracting charges with production costs rising by 34% from the previous year.
- Sheep farmers had an average income of €20,500, an increase of 14% from 2021.
- Farmers purchasing cattle for fattening and finishing saw an average annual income of €16,400, up 6% from the previous year. While farmers rearing cattle had an average annual income of €11,000, an increase of 30%.
- The main factor in generating an increase in income levels was the rise in output prices for the majority of farmers.
- Dairy farmers saw milk prices rise by 13%, while lamb prices were up 30%. Prices for younger cattle increase by 8% compared to the previous year and there was a 12% increase in the price for prime cattle. Cereal prices rose by 30%.
- However, there is a large distribution of farm family incomes, 35% of farms have an income of under €10,000, while 9% of farms earned an annual income of €100,000.

Population Health and Mental Health

Rural population health in Ireland has been identified as having been in steady decline over the past 20 years. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) are the leading cause of death in Ireland, accounting for 90% of deaths in 2018 (WHO, 2018). Irish farmers are not exempt from falling victim to these statistics and experience disproportionately high prevalence of cardiac disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders, and stroke compared to their peers. Recent research⁵

⁵ by Van Doorne et al., 2017

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concluded that Irish farmers are seven times more likely to die from cardiovascular diseases than those with salary paid occupations.

Similar studies report very poor health literacy amongst farmers, particularly in relation to nutrition. Poor physical health has been linked to decline in mental health and decreased capacity for resilience. In addition to this, farming has been identified as the most hazardous occupation in Ireland.⁶ Therefore improving the current status of Irish farmer health both physical and mental has the potential to impact on the sustainability of the farmer, recruitment, and retention into farming as a career and improve public perception and the farmer image.⁷

Given that there are a significant number of people employed in the agricultural sector in Ireland, with more than half this figure representing farm holders themselves, it is important for service providers and policy makers to be aware of that farming is a demanding job, It can present a number of challenges and stressors undermining individual mental health

Relationship between Physical and Mental health

These key aspects of health are interdependent and cannot be addressed in isolation. Recent research is indicating that farming is like no other occupation when it comes to stress related illness and health concerns. Farmers feels like the work never seems to be done.⁸ It can be said that farmers regularly pay more attention to the welfare of their animals and other farming enterprises often at the expense of their own health and wellbeing. It has been noted that poor accessibility to mental health resources coupled with a reluctance in mental health issue reporting poses a significant difficulty in rural areas⁹

Mental Health

“without mental health there can be no true physical health”¹⁰

There are a number of different definitions of mental health which include that of the World Health Organization i.e.

⁶ Health and Safety Authority www.hsa.ie

⁷ Are we Fit to Farm? Investigating Irish Farmer Health Status and Sustainability A report for NUFFIELD IRELAND Farming Scholarships Alison Holmes 2019 Nuffield Scholar November 2020

⁸ Daghigh Yazd et al., 2019).

⁹ Johnson et al, 2011.

¹⁰ Dr. Brook Chislom, the first Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO)

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"A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." (World Health Organisation, 2004)

More recently the Irish Department of Health issued their definition:

"Mental health describes how we think and feel about ourselves and our relationship to others, and how we interpret events in everyday life. It also relates to our ability to cope with change, transition, and significant life events, and to understand how to deal with the stresses that often come our way." (Department of Health, 2020)

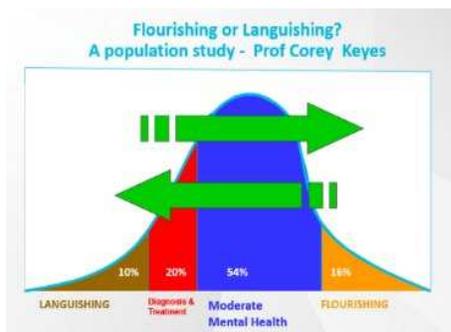
In essence mental health can mean different things to different people and society. It can often be defined in positive or negative terms. However, mental health is just like physical health and can fluctuate depending on a number of different factors impacting on a person's life for example loneliness, financial worries, compliance, climate change. The key message is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life." (World Health Organization, 2001)

This definition of wellbeing is largely reflective of a person's also experiencing positive mental health. As stated with in, wellbeing is associated (as is mental health) with having a sense of purpose, being resilient, self-care and feeling part of a community.

Flourishing and Languishing



To illustrate the scale and scope of mental health needs across the whole population – Prof Corey Keyes, wide scale, public health research studies show a Standard Distribution / Incidence confirming that:

16% of the Population enjoy Good Mental Health (Flourishing),

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- 54% enjoy adequate or moderate Mental Health (sufficient to meet the demands of life),
20% will have a mental health diagnosis and be in treatment.
- 10% Languishing, – not mentally ill, but finding life a struggle, these people (in families, workplaces, community) can often be a bit angular and difficult to be and be around. They don't choose to be this way but can place extra demands on colleagues and family members.



In relation to languishing this can manifest itself, not wanting to get out of bed, look after their animals, in attentive to compliance. The key message to be conveyed is that a person's mental health can fluctuate in the same way as their physical health.

It's normal for people to experience some periods of poor mental health and for performance to dip at times i.e.,

languishing. Promoting the importance of help seeking skills and or to encourage a positive response to offers of help are crucial and will reduce the risk of this languishing state to developing into a mental illness making the recovery journey more demanding.

Impact of Stigma and Mental Health

There is a stigma attached to mental health within society. Such stigma has a significant impact on people's willingness to seek help. Making such a step is necessary for meaningful recovery, consequently it is important to tackle it. It has been noted that rural dwellers, and male farmers in particular, have been shown to demonstrate significant hesitation in acknowledging mental health difficulties and the impact these may have on physical health, them personally and their enterprise.¹¹

The Healthy Ireland Survey¹² is an interviewer-administered survey of health and health behaviours of people living in Ireland, commissioned by the Department of Health, and carried out by Ipsos MRBI.

Negative mental health was measured using the Mental Health Index-5 (MHI-5). Respondents were asked five questions relating to their negative mental health over the previous four weeks, including the extent to which they felt 'downhearted and blue,' 'worn out,' 'tired,' 'so down in

¹¹ (Johnson et al, 2011; Richardson et al, 2014; Hammersley et al, 2020).

¹² <https://assets.gov.ie/206555/260f3b84-bf78-41a2-91d7-f14c7c03d99f.pdf> Seer Appendix 2

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the dumps that nothing could cheer you up' and been 'a very nervous person.' This was used to calculate their MHI-5 score, ranging from 0-100. Lower scores indicate greater levels of psychological distress.

The average MHI-5 score is 76.0. This is a decline from an average score of 81.2 in the 2016 survey wave, indicating rising levels of psychological distress among the population as a whole.

15% of respondents have an MHI-5 score of 56 or lower, indicating a 'probable mental health problem'. The corresponding figure in the 2016 wave was 10%.

Mental Health & Covid-19

More people report that their mental health worsened during the pandemic than report an improvement. 30% of respondents say their mental health worsened since the beginning of necessary public health restrictions in March 2020. 64% report no change, with only 5% saying their mental health has improved. Among those whose mental health has worsened, 28% say it has declined "a lot", while 71% say it has declined "a little".

- Women (45%) are more likely to have consulted a mental health professional than men (31%), with women aged 15 to 34 particularly likely to have done so (57%).
- Non-parents (43%) are also significantly more likely than parents (29%) to have spoken to a mental health professional in the previous six months.
- 72% of those who consulted a mental health professional in the previous six months due to a significant deterioration in their mental health cite the Covid-19 pandemic as the reason for doing so.
- 75% of those who consulted a mental health professional said they found it helpful, while 13% said it was unhelpful.

In another recent annual research study by St. Patricks' Hospital **Attitudes to Mental Health and Stigma Survey**¹³ show that there have been significant improvements over the last five years, but increased education and understanding around mental health is still required to tackle the stigma that is ongoing.

¹³ <https://www.stpatricks.ie/media-centre/news/2022/august/mental-health-stigma-survey-ireland>

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- Six in 10 are more comfortable talking openly about their mental health now than they were before the pandemic.
- Eight in 10 believe Irish society is more open to talking about mental health difficulties since the pandemic.
- Almost half had also introduced new ways to manage their wellbeing since the pandemic.
- 91% of people believe that there is a worrying prevalence of anxiety in Irish society
- 58% of people are afraid of experiencing mental health difficulties in the future
- 68% believe being treated for a mental health difficulty is seen as a sign of personal failure

Mental Health Services in Ireland

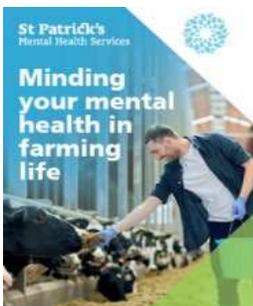


Change.'

Mental Health Services in Ireland are provided both publicly and privately. The public Mental Health Services are managed by the Health Service Executive and is currently guided by the **Sharing the Vision - A Mental Health Policy for Everyone**¹⁴ is Ireland's national mental health policy. It was published in June 2020. It is a policy framework for the continued development and enhancement of mental health services in Ireland from 2020 to 2030. It replaces the previous policy, 'A Vision for

Private Mental Health Services

There are a number of such providers, however St. Patrick's University Hospital is Ireland's largest independent mental health service provider. They are a Not-for-Profit organisation dedicated to providing the highest quality of mental health care, promoting mental health, and advocating for the rights of those who suffer from mental illness.



They have a dedicated area on their website **Minding your mental health in farming life** (<https://www.stpatricks.ie/media-centre/news/2019/september/farmingte>) that provides downloadable resource with helpful tips and supports to help farmers live a mentally healthy life.

¹⁴ Available to download at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/mentalhealth/sharing-the-vision/sharing-the-vision.html>

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Factors Impacting on the Mental Health of Irish Farmers

Farmers play a significant role in the functioning of day-to-day functioning of society let it be Ireland, America, or Australia. They produce much a nation's food. By and large they are dependent on their peers and family members in their output production. In addition to the potential for fatal injuries, farmers are faced with a number of unique challenges and stressors, including, among others:

- Shifting government policies.
- Animal and/or crop disease outbreaks.
- Loneliness.
- Misrepresentation in the media.
- Financial loss, and many more.
- Succession and inheritance matters,
- illness (mental and physical)
- family relationships,

These stressors can negatively impact farmers' mental health, their families and loved ones. Additionally, farmers have to contend with a variety of risk beyond their control such as the weather, price fluctuation in relations to crops, climate changes, Government, and trade policies. They also have to contend community isolation - living at a distance from urban/village centres and social isolation due to working long hours

“It is well established that, compared to other occupational groups, farmers in Ireland experience a disproportionate burden of health problems, which undermine the profitability, competitiveness, and sustainability of farming. The research findings recommend that when designing the ‘On Feírm Ground’ training programme it focuses on the individual social determinants effecting the health and wellbeing of both male and female farmers and adopts a strengths-based approach to farmers’ health and sets out clear roles, responsibilities, and boundaries for advisors in their health role.”

National Strategic Responses to Mental Health and Farm Management.

The Department of Agriculture Marine and Food have and continue to prioritise farm safety, health, and wellbeing. Dedicated funding of €2.25m was allocated in Budget 2022 for a range of initiatives to support increased awareness of the importance of mental health among farmers.

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**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

The Department in 2021 funded eight farm safety European Innovation Partnerships (EIP's) projects to the value of €1.8m. The successful projects were selected following an Open Call for proposals under the European Innovation Partnerships Initiative (EIP). The

successful applicants will work closely with a large cohort of farmers to co-develop comprehensive pilot schemes, which will identify and implement innovative ways to change behaviour and attitudes in this vital area. Four of these projects are focused on mental health in the farming community. Their general aim is to address challenges around farm safety, health and well-being through innovative approaches which encourage a change in behaviour from the bottom up.

The EIP Project with a Mental Health Focus

These initiatives are closely monitored and evaluated by the Department to establish their outcome with a view to inform future policy and initiatives in this area.

F.A.R.M. Connect The Fitness, Awareness, Resilience, Meitheal¹⁵ (F.A.R.M) Connect Initiative is work with farmers in Roscommon and Waterford to train the farmers on physical health, mental health, and wellbeing.¹⁶ The author of this report is a member of the development and steering group of the project



FarmConnect

Farm Family CPD (Online)

The Farm

Family Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Online will develop an online Health and Safety training

programme to positively change people's behaviour to mitigate risks which exist on family farms.

Béal Átha na Muice Project¹⁷ is working with farmers in Mayo to explore the mental challenges and strains associated with the process of farm succession and to provide supports to help the farm family to address these challenges.

¹⁵ Meitheal – Irish word for

¹⁶ <https://farmconnect.ie>

¹⁷ <https://www.con-telegraph.ie/2021/08/08/mayo-project-to-address-strain-and-mental-challenges-of-farm-succession/>

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An Meitheal Feirme Project: This project will provide farm families affected by sudden fatalities and traumas on farms with support and guidance in the aftermath of such an event to help the family deal with such challenges. It is managed and developed by Embrace

Farmer4Safety - Managing Risk Together¹⁸ offers a bottom up initiative that is tailored to each region to ensure it will capture a change in farmer's attitudes and behaviors by tackling and improving the social norms around farm safety, health and wellbeing, Farmers Inspiring Farmers



to be Safe is a unique pilot project supporting 'peer-to-peer' mentoring and champion approach to engage farmers in an attitudinal and behavioural change towards farm safety by tackling social norms around farm safety including personal health safety and mental health through network of trained farm mentors in Counties with significant farm fatality rates i.e., Cork, Tipperary and Wexford.

The author provided spoke mental health awareness training to the mentors on the project on several occasions and has co-produced resources with the Project mentor on the **Five Ways to Wellbeing- Mind Body and Health Safety**¹⁹

Safe Farm The Safe Farm project will develop, deliver, assess, and evaluate a bespoke farm safety farmer training programme using a bottom up, participatory approach. Initially a pilot of 200 farmers will take part in the Safe Farm programme, with the aim of establishing an accredited industry standard training programme.

Eco-T project - a Collaborative Response to Farmer Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Wellness aim to promote positive mental health in the farming community through a series of facilitated eco therapy, adventure therapy, Peer to Peer Support and Stress Management Programmes.

Sláinte agus Beatha Feirmoirí Conamara (SBFC) The SBFC project is aimed at promoting and enhancing on-farm health and safety at a local level on farms across the Connemara Region. This will be achieved through a series of tools including risk assessments, training programmes, radio shows and active presence in schools across the region.

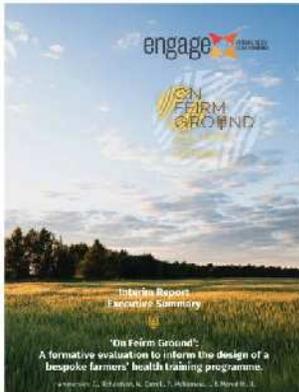
¹⁸<https://www.farmers4safety.ie> and <https://www.irishrurallink.ie/project/project-in-conjunction-with-farmers4safety/> The author. is a member of the Project Monitoring Steering Group

¹⁹ Conducted an Interview with Farmers4Safety Appendix 4

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On Feirm Ground ²⁰

This is a co funded project by the Department with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health encouraging farmers to look after their health & wellbeing. The aim of this project is to develop a bespoke farmers’ health training programme that equips frontline agricultural advisors employed by Teagasc with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to engage and signpost farmers on health issues, and to mainstream a health promotion/prevention focus into farming practices and farm discussion groups.



A multistakeholder Project Steering Group, chaired by the Men’s Development Network²¹

is overseeing the project. The author is currently a member of this steering group and has contributed to the development of the training resources and materials being developed under the auspices of Engage, Ireland’s National Men To date, over 200 agricultural advisors have been trained with a target to deliver the programme to 800 farm advisors by the middle of next year.

In launching the Programme Martin Heydon²² T.D., Minister of State for Research & Development, Farm Safety and New Market Development stated that:

“I know that the training of agricultural advisors to engage with and signpost supports to farmers over the farm gate will have a significant impact and I am delighted to be supporting such a collaborative initiative.”

It was noted in the AN Feirm Research Report that it is well established that, compared to other occupational groups, farmers in Ireland experience a disproportionate burden of health problems, which undermine the profitability, competitiveness, and sustainability of farming.

“The report highlights a multitude of challenges concerning experiences with farming and the broader occupation of farming, including isolation and the decline of rural communities, issues relating to succession and inheritance, increasing pressures to scale up, changing farming roles

²⁰ An Feirm Ground “ _ Feirm (firm) is the Irish word for Farm. <https://hsehealthandwellbeingnews.com/on-feirm-ground-encouraging-farmers-to-look-after-their-health-wellbeing/>

²¹ <https://mensnetwork.ie/>

²² First Minister of State appointed in Ireland with a special remit for Farm Safety Health and Wellbeing – including Mental Health

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and increasing paperwork demands, stresses associated with seasonal workloads, financial stress, and the pressures associated with being self-employed.

“The research findings recommend that when designing the ‘On Feirm Ground’ training programme it focuses on the individual social determinants effecting the health and wellbeing of both male and female farmers and adopts a strengths-based approach to farmers’ health and sets out clear roles, responsibilities, and boundaries for advisors in their health role,” Dr. Richardson added²³.

The Health and Safety Authority

Fatalities on farms account for nearly half of all fatal workplace incidents in Ireland. However, farmers only represent 6% of the workforce.



With around 2,800 serious injuries annually on farms, many are life changing and place the farmers’ livelihood and farm at risk.

The HSA has a designated area on its website with a special focus on Farmer Health and Wellbeing and addressing farm accidents the tragic reality for many farmers and their families. Someone has died every two weeks on an Irish farm in recent years. Many more suffer life-changing injuries. The vast majority of these accidents are preventable <http://hsa.agtel.ie/>

The principal causes of ill health were associated with manual handling, lung problems, infections, and noise. Of farmers with occupational ill health, 50% suffer from chronic back pain. Regarding personal health, farmers have been identified as a group with a poor personal health profile (O’Shea, 1997). Male farmers between the ages of 15 and 64 have a death rate much higher than that of most other workers.

Farm Safety Week celebrated its tenth anniversary in April of 2022. It is a collaborative campaign, initiated by the Farm Safety Partnership in the UK and led by the IFA in Ireland. It brings together farming organizations from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England on the topic of farm safety. Mental Health Ireland promotes and participates in the week

The authority said there were 197 deaths on Irish farms in the last ten years, including ten in 2021 and 20 the previous year. 44% of deaths involved vehicles and machinery, 19% involved livestock. Tim Cullinan President Irish Farmers Association (IFA) has stated that at present "farms are the most dangerous workplace in Ireland and that has to change".

²³ <https://mensnetwork.ie/ofg/>

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To address the issue the HSA has produced a new guide **“Farmers’ Health and Wellbeing - A Guide to Staying Healthy While Farming”**. It is a guide for farmers or about looking after themselves in order to continue to enjoy life and farming for a long time to come. It provides simple tips to stay healthy and well such as being more physically active, eating a healthy diet, and minding their mental health. A clear message in the guide is that small changes over time can make a big difference. It was launched at the Teagasc Beef 2022.

Coping with stress – minding your mental health

Even though you love farming and may not want to do anything else, you may still be feeling stressed. Not only is stress a risk factor for heart disease, it is also linked to higher levels of farm injuries. Most farmers work better when they are not stressed so it is important to manage your stress to stay healthy and safe on the farm.

Stress is described as 'a feeling of being overwhelmed, worried or anxious'. It is completely normal to feel this now and again, but feeling stressed regularly can affect your health and wellbeing. For example, stress can cause headaches, stomach aches and worry, and it can affect your ability to concentrate.

Feeling stressed influences your thinking and problem-solving, reducing your ability to think clearly and calmly. It is not always easy to recognise stress or admit to feeling stressed. But remember: 'It is OK to say you are not OK'!

Coping with stress – minding your mental health starts with:

- Taking time out if you feel overwhelmed;
- Staying connected with others but disconnecting from your source of stress;
- Practising good self-care by healthy eating, being active, getting a good night's sleep and minimising your alcohol intake;
- Talking to someone and sharing the burden to find ways to deal with the stress, both in the short term and longer term.

Many of us withdraw from social contact when we feel stressed, but this is not a good idea. Closing in on ourselves can make it harder to cope because we have no-one to share our worries with or get support from. If you are struggling, look for help. It is important to talk to someone you trust. Contact your GP or the Samaritans on 116 123. You can also find help online, for example at www.yourmentalhealth.ie. If you – or others around you – need support with feelings of depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts, you can also contact Pieta House on 1800 247 247.

Tips

- Watch out for poor sleep, angry outbursts or being short-tempered which can isolate you from much needed supports.
- Identify and write down what is making you feel stressed during the day.
- Try to plan and prioritise your work. Review how you organise your time. Rank tasks in order of importance, make lists and reward yourself for completing them.
- Take time to relax or do something you enjoy such as meeting a friend or neighbouring farmer, going to a match or taking exercise.
- Practise relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises or simply enjoying the landscape.

YourMentalHealth.ie or Mentalhealthireland.ie offer support and resources to help deal with stress, anxiety and isolation.

Ask yourself:	Yes	No
Do I recognise the signs of stress?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I know how to 'deal' with stress and look after myself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I know where to go for support if stress affects my wellbeing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Embrace FARM²⁴

Embrace FARM is a farming organisation which was founded by Brian and Norma Rohan, a farming family from Shanahoe, County Laois in 2014. After losing their father Liam to a sudden farm accident in 2013. Their mission is **to grow and sustain a support network for those affected by farm accidents & trauma**. Embrace FARM is committed to supporting the well-being of those affected by farm accidents in Ireland. Their valuable support and work with the

²⁴<https://embracefarm.com/>

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community reveals that mental wellbeing is an important part of a person's journey towards recovery and for those who have been bereaved by the tragic loss of their loved one.

'Encircle' Programme²⁵ Embrace FARM in conjunction with operational group members IFAC, Agricultural Solicitors, Agricultural Consultants Association, Rural Support and the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention have come together to formulate the 'Encircle' Programme to support farm families in the aftermath of a sudden accident or trauma on the family farm.



The programme aims to address the gap in rural support services by providing a structured, single point of contact access to local professional and peer to peer supports to families and communities affected by sudden trauma on farms

IFA Farm Family & Social Affairs Committee

The Committee provides a voice to farm families on social issues within the Association, as well as at National and European levels to ensure that policies are developed to help farm families. The Committee strives to keep farm families notified of changes in procedures or policies, as well as dealing with individual cases that affect them and their community. Some of the issues that the Committee are currently working on are:



- Pensions – Securing entitlements for farm women so they qualify for pensions in their own right and updating farm families on changes to the pension system.
- Fair Deal Scheme – Lobbying for a cap on the maximum charge that can be applied to non-residential, productive assets.
- Farm Safety – SAVE LIVES – Think Safety, Farm Safely campaign to encourage farmers to improve working practices and take preventative action to reduce risks.
- Health – Supporting farm families to make positive changes to improve overall mental health and well-being through awareness and education.



²⁵ <https://embracefarm.com/services/encircle/>

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Farming Resilience and Mental Health Ireland



Mental Health Ireland was one of the first NGOs to address and promote the topic of mental health with farmers and farm families through the development of relevant programmes and resources e.g., **Coping With the Pressures of Farming**²⁶ and the formation of strategic alliance with Farm Organisations²⁷ which included at the outset Teagasc, Irish Farmers Association (IFA), Irish Farm Family association



Suicide and Self Harm

Suicide is a major public health problem and a leading cause of death worldwide (WHO, 2012). Men are generally three times more likely to complete suicide than women and rural populations are more at risk of suicide than urban communities. The Irish Times reported on the 17th March that "Costs and pressures creating psychological strain, farming body says 'If there was ever a year we were going to be wiped out, this is the year,' ICSA meeting told Soaring costs and ever-increasing financial pressures are weighing heavily on the farming community with suicide or suicidal ideation a growing concern, a meeting of the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association (ICSA) in Mitchelstown, Co Cork, has heard.

²⁶ Available at www.mentalhealthireland.ie

²⁷ See Appendix 3

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The Health Service Executive (HSE)²⁸ - National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) supports the implementation of Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide. It is involved in a range of education and training initiatives encompassing suicide prevention and mental health promotion. Amongst its objectives are to

- Provide a suite of standardised training programmes for the general public, community care givers, professionals, and volunteers
- Provide suicide prevention and mitigation education and training programmes focused on supporting the practice of frontline health and social care professional

There is a team of National Suicide Prevention Officer who provide a number of Training Programmes including SAFETalk, ASSIST Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) -

Available Supports for Person in Crises

[YourMentalHealth.ie](https://www.yourmentalhealth.ie) is a place to learn about mental health and how to support yourself and the people you love. You can find support services near you and learn about the #littlethings that can make a significant difference to how we all feel. Brought to you by the HSE, the National Office for Suicide Prevention and partner organisations across the country.

Mental Health Ireland – Farming Resilience www.mentalhealthireland.ie

IFA has teamed up with Mental Health Ireland and Teagasc to develop a Farming Resilience programme to help farmers develop resilience in overcoming serious setbacks in life and business. www.mentalhealthireland.ie

Pieta 24hr Crisis Helpline

Call our 24-hour freephone helpline [1800 247 247](tel:1800247247) or

Text the word HELP to 51444 (standard message rates apply) to speak to a qualified therapist if you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts, self-harming or have lost someone to suicide.

Financial Support#

Farm Assist is a means-tested payment for low-income farmers. Farm Assist is paid by the Department of Social Protection. To qualify for Farm Assist, the applicant must be a farmer, be farming land in the State, be aged between 18 and 66 and satisfy a means test. The scheme considers a farmer if he/she farmland that they own or lease and that can be used for the purpose of husbandry (means working the land with the aim of taking produce from the land)

²⁸ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/nosp/>

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Appendix 1

**Fact Sheet on Irish Agriculture
Department of Agriculture Food and Marine**



1. Agri-Food Sector and the Economy

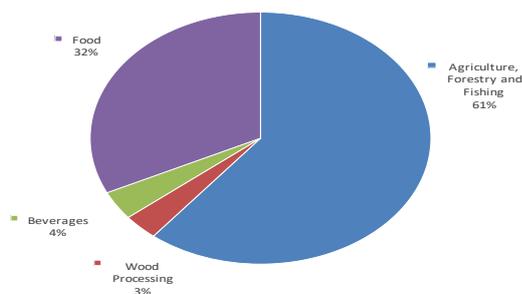
Key Indicators for Agri- Food Sectors

Source : [CSO](#)

	% of Total (2019)
164,400 - People employed in the agri-food sector	7.1% of total employment
€14.4 billion - Gross Value Added at Factor Cost in agri-food sector	4.3% of total GVA
€7.9 billion - Value of goods output at producer prices on livestock and tillage farms	6.7% of GNI* (Modified Gross National Income) generated by the agri-food sector
€14.5 billion - Value of total exports (2019)	9.5% of Irish merchandising exports

Employment

Employment in the agri-food sector on average accounted for approximately 164,400 jobs, or 7.1% of total employment in 2019 .



Source: Labour Force Survey

Expenditure

Total public expenditure by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine was €2.89 billion in 2019.

Payments to farmers totalled over €2 billion including Single Farm Payment, Rural Development and Forestry Payments.

Expenditure on Irish Agriculture, 2019

(Period 1 January to 31 December 2019)

€m

EAGGF Guarantee direct expenditure	1,251
Voted Expenditure (excluding Administration)	1,362
Administration	280
Total Voted Expenditure	1,642
Total DAFM Expenditure	2,893

2. Farm Income and Structures

Estimates of Aggregate Agricultural Output, Input and Income.

The CSO has released its final estimate of output, input and income in agriculture 2019 (link [here](#)). This shows that aggregate farm income (operating surplus) **increased** by **+4%** to **€3,055.2 million** in 2019. This follows a **decrease** of **-14%** in 2018 vs 2017 figures.

The overall value of goods output at producer prices **decreased** by **-3%**, or **€258 million**, to **€7,960.90 million**. Intermediate consumption **decreased** in value by **-6%** in **2019** versus **2018** figures, to **€5,647.70**. The main item giving rise to this **decrease** in intermediate consumption was feeding stuffs, which decreased by **-11%** to **€1,489.90 million** in 2019.

An analysis of the results for 2019 compared to 2018 identified the following main changes:

- There was a **2% increase** in the value of milk output, increasing from **€2,556.70 million** in 2018 to **€2,601.90 million** in 2019. While the volume of Milk production did **increase** by **5.1%** in 2019, lower prices resulted in the value of milk increasing by just **€45 million**.
- While the volume of cattle produced **increased** by **2%**, lower prices resulted in the value of cattle **decreasing** by **€111.1 million (-5%)**, from **€2,262.2 million** to **€2,151.1 million**.
- While there was very little change in the volume of pigs produced in 2019 (**+0.4%**), large price **increases** resulted in the value of pig production **increasing** by **€84.0m (+18%)**, from **€459.1 million** to **€543.0 million**
- The output value of sheep **increased** by **1%** in 2019, to **€260.8 million** in 2019. A **€2 million increase** in 2018 figures.
- The value of crops output **decreased** by **-11%** to **€1,897.10 million** in 2019 versus 2018 figures. While the volume of crops produced by Irish farmers **increased** by **7.8%**.



Output, Input and Income in Agriculture 2019

Main Aggregates	Value €m	Main Commodities	Value €m	% of G/O
Goods Output @ Producer Prices¹	7,960.9	Goods Output (exc. forage)	6,896.9	100
+ Contract Work	461.2	of which		
+ Subsidies - Taxes (Products)	99.5	Cattle	2,151.1	31.2%
Agricultural Output @ Basic Prices	8,521.7	Milk	2,601.9	37.7%
- Intermediate Consumption	5,647.7	Pigs	543	7.9%
Gross Value Added @ Basic Prices	2,874.0	Sheep	260.8	3.8%
- Fixed Capital Consumption	970.1	Crops excel Forage	833.1	12.1%
Net Subsidies	1,737.6	Other Livestock products	507.1	7.4%
- Compensation of Employees	586.2	Forage Plants	1,064.0	
Operating Surplus	3,055.20	Goods Output @ Producer Prices¹	7,960.90	

Source : CSO

¹ Including Forage

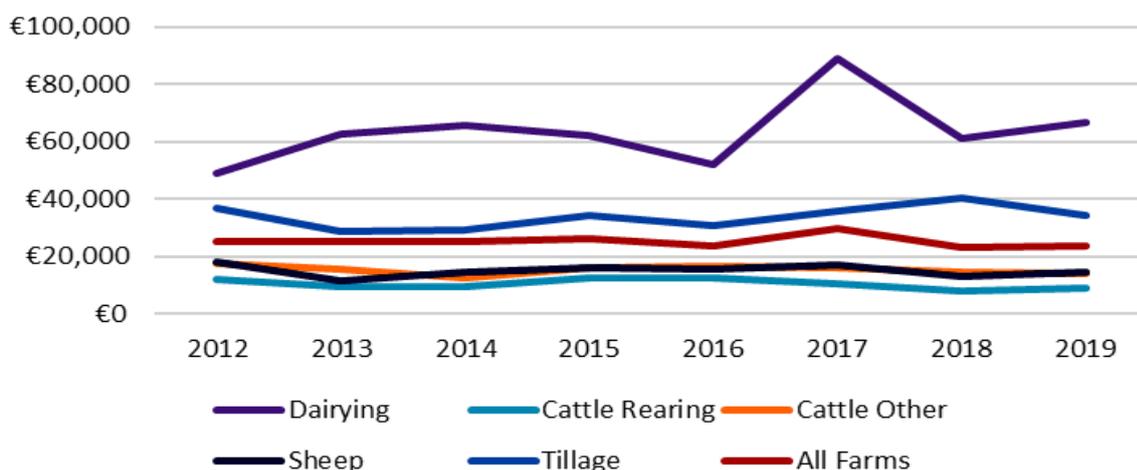
Average farm income 2017, 2018 & 2019

The preliminary results of the [Teagasc National Farm Survey](#) (NFS) issued in June 2020 shows that the average Family Farm Incomes (FFI) across all systems, in 2019 was €23,934 an increase of 2% on 2018 figures, Following a decline in the average income level in 2018, largely due to extreme weather, there was a recovery in average FFI in 2019. However, this recovery was uneven, with the average FFI concealing differences across the various farm types.

	2017	2018	2019	2019 v 2018
	Euro			% change
Dairy	88,829	61,446	66,570	9%
Cattle Rearing	10,642	8,311	9,188	11%
Cattle Other	16,115	14,560	13,893	-6%
Sheep	17,357	13,297	14,604	9%
Tillage	36,048	40,650	34,437	-15%
Weighted Average	29,474	23,333	23,934	2%

Family farm income varies considerably by farm system. The large variations illustrated below are driven by differences in farm size and profitability and production costs. Dairy farms are consistently the most profitable farms. Cattle rearing (11%), Dairy (9%) and Sheep (9%) saw an increase in Family Farm Income compared to 2018 while Tillage farms (-15%) and Cattle other (-6%) saw a decrease on 2018 figures.

Family Farm income by system, 2015-2019



Source: [Teagasc National Farm Survey](#)

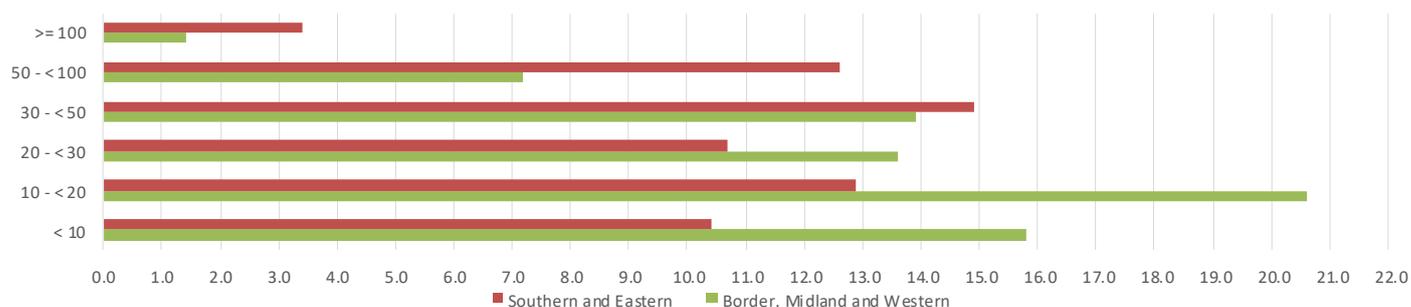


CSO Farm Structures Survey, 2016

According to the [CSO Farm Structures Survey, 2016](#) there were 137,500 farms in Ireland, 52.7% of which were located in the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region. The average farm was 32.4 hectares. Farms in the Southern and Eastern (SE) region were 41.3% larger than those in the BMW region, with an average farm size of 38.3 hectares compared to 27.1 hectares.

Almost one in five of all farms (18.0%) were 50 hectares or more in size while just over two in five farms (43.4%) had less than 20 hectares. Over 60% of farms of 10 hectares or less were in the BMW region, while almost 70% of farms of 100 hectares or more were in the SE region. The number of farms and the average farm size remained relatively stable between 2013 and 2016.

Farm size (AAU) - Hectares



Source: [CSO Farm Structures Survey, 2016](#)

Farm Structures Data for Ireland, 2016

No. of Farms	137,500
of which Family Farms	137,100
Total Agricultural Area (incl. commonage)	4,883,600
Average Farm Size	32.4 hectares
Family Farm Holders by Age	
Under 35	7,400
65 and over	41,200

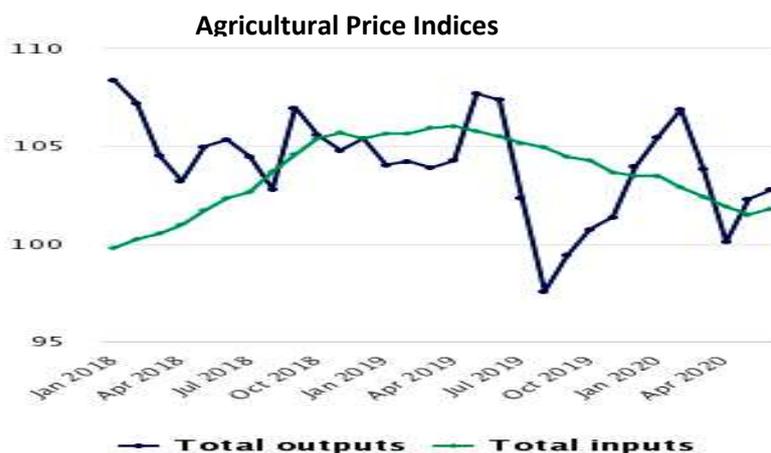
Land Prices

1,331 farms were offered for sale in 2019, covering over 61,206 acres of land, with the Average land price in 2019 estimated to be €8,971 per acre.

Source: Irish Farmers Journal, Agricultural land price report 2019

3. Agricultural Price Indices

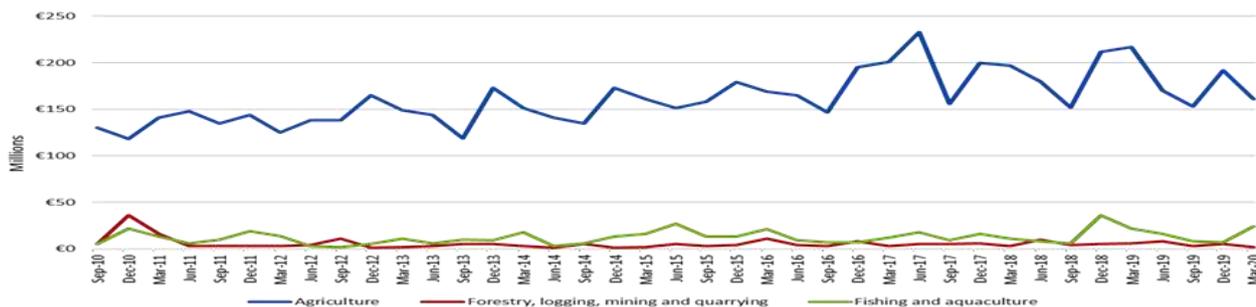
The [CSO's Agricultural Price Indices](#) measures (a) index of producer prices of agricultural products - the Output Price Index, and (b) index of purchase prices of the means of agricultural production - the Input Price Index. On an annual basis, the agricultural input price index decreased by **-3.5%** in June 2020 compared with June 2019, the agricultural output price index decreased by **-4.3%** in June 2020 compared with June 2019. Thus, the resulting terms of trade index was down **-0.8%** in this period. On a monthly basis, agricultural input price index increased by 0.2% in June 2020 compared with May 2020. The agricultural output price index increased by +0.5% in June 2020 compared with May 2020. The resulting terms of trade index was up +0.3% in this period. A further comparison of the June 2020 output sub-indices with the June 2019 sub-indices shows that wool and pigs decreased by 66% and 3.3% respectively. On the input side, the June 2020 sub-indices show that energy and fertilisers were down 12.7% and 10.7% respectively on June 2019 prices.



Source: www.cso.ie



4. Agriculture Lending



Source: [Central Bank of Ireland, Business Credit and Deposits 2020](#)

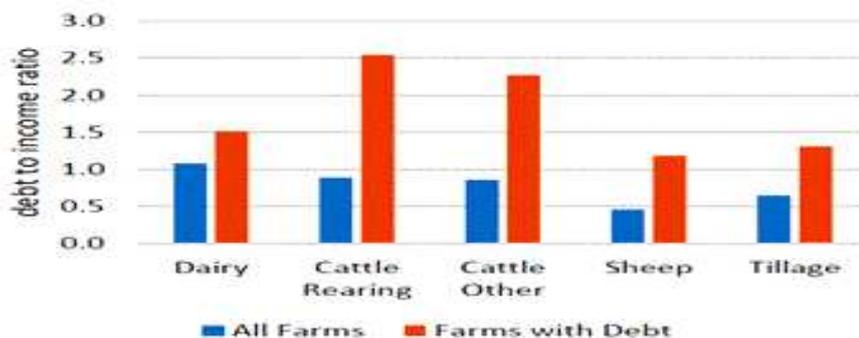
New borrowings by Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries SMEs

New lending to the primary agriculture industries in the year to March 2020 was €749m down about 10% from a year earlier at €830m. This may be due to some uncertainty regarding investments in the context of Brexit and the impact of COVID 19 restrictions imposed in mid March.

Farms with Borrowings and Average Debt

Across all farm systems almost two-thirds of farms have no farm business related debt although this varies considerably by farm type. Six out of ten dairy farms had borrowings in 2019 compared to three out of ten on sheep, cattle and tillage farms. While the average debt on dairy farms is over €110,000 compared to close to €30,000 for cattle and sheep farms the debt to Family Farm Income ratio on cattle farms having debt is relatively high at 2.54 for cattle rearing and 2.27 for cattle other farms compared to 1.5 for dairy farms.

Debt to Income Ratios for all Farms and those with Debt 2019



Source: [Teagasc, National Farm Survey – Preliminary results 2019](#)

Future Growth Loan Scheme

The Future Growth Loan Scheme supports strategic long-term capital investment by SMEs, farmers and fishermen and has been open since April 2019. The Scheme has been a success with very strong demand for investment loans, including from the agri-food sector. As a result of the significant and sudden financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses, a second tranche of €500million, with up to 40% available to the agri-food sector, has now been launched: <https://sbci.gov.ie/products/future-growth-loan-scheme#>.

5. Agri-Food Sector and the Environment

Agriculture has a key role to play in helping meet these GHG emissions and energy related targets. Our absolute agricultural GHG emissions rank 8th across EU, contributing approx. 4.4% of EU agricultural emissions.

The Green Low Carbon Agri-environment Scheme pays farmers to promote biodiversity, protect water quality, and also to help combat climate change on their farms. GLAS was launched in 2015 and supports farmers to manage lands of conservation value. To date 50,000 farmers have been issued over €745 million as part of GLAS payments . GLAS payments amounted to €213.8 million in 2019 to 47,614 farmers (98%).

The Beef Data Genomics Programme (BDGP) is one of a range of sustainability actions for Irish Agriculture under Ireland's Rural Development Programme. BDGP is designed to accelerate genetic improvements in the quality of the beef herd, leading to associated climate benefits such as reduced emission intensity. By December 2019, almost 23,500 farmers had received €212 million in respect of BDGP payments since the inception of the scheme. BDGP payments amounted to nearly €42 million in 2019 for 22,972 recipients.

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Appendix 2
Mental Health and Wellbeing
Healthy Ireland Survey Extract

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Positive mental health was measured using the 'Energy and Vitality Index' (EVI). Respondents were asked four questions relating to their positive mental health over the previous four weeks, including the extent to which they felt 'full of life', 'calm and peaceful', had 'a lot of energy' and had been 'a happy person'. These scores were then aggregated to generate an EVI score for each respondent, a measure of their positive mental health ranging from 0-100. Higher scores indicate greater positive mental health.

Negative mental health was measured using the Mental Health Index-5 (MHI-5). Respondents were asked five questions relating to their negative mental health over the previous four weeks, including the extent to which they felt 'downhearted and blue', 'worn out', 'tired', 'so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up' and been 'a very nervous person'. This was used to calculate their MHI-5 score, ranging from 0-100. Lower scores indicate greater levels of psychological distress.

Positive Mental Health

- The average EVI score for the population as a whole is 62.4. This is a decline from the previous survey wave where this question was asked in 2016, when the average EVI score was 67.8.
- 12% of respondents have an EVI score that places them in the 'High Energy and Vitality' group, defined as an EVI score equal to or over one standard deviation from the population mean. The corresponding figure in the 2016 wave was 13%.
- Higher positive mental health is reported by men than women (64.6 and 60.3, respectively).
- Positive mental health is highest among those aged 25 to 34 and those aged 65 to 74 (both 64.0) and lowest among those aged 45 to 64 (60.8). Men aged 25 to 34 report significantly higher positive mental health than women of the same age (66.6 and 61.6, respectively).



Average EVI Score 2016: 67.8

Negative Mental Health

- The average MHI-5 score is 76.0. This is a decline from an average score of 81.2 in the 2016 survey wave, indicating rising levels of psychological distress among the population as a whole.
- 15% of respondents have an MHI-5 score of 56 or lower, indicating a 'probable mental health problem'. The corresponding figure in the 2016 wave was 10%.

- Those aged 15 to 24 were identified as having the lowest MHI-5 scores (72.4). Women in this age group (69.2) are of especially heightened risk, with results indicating that 27% of young women have a 'probable mental health problem'.
- Those living in Dublin report lower MHI-5 scores than those living outside of Dublin (73.4 and 77.1, respectively).
- Those whose self-reported health is 'bad' (55.9) and those who are unemployed (71.8) are also more likely to have elevated levels of psychological distress, compared to those whose health is 'good' and those who are employed (both 78.0).



Average MHI-5 Score 2016: 81.2

Positive and negative mental health (by age and gender)

Proportion with positive mental health

(% with an EVI score equal to or over one standard deviation from the mean EVI score for the population, placing them in the 'High Energy and Vitality' group)



Proportion with negative mental health

(% with an MHI-5 score of 56 or lower, indicating a probable mental health problem)

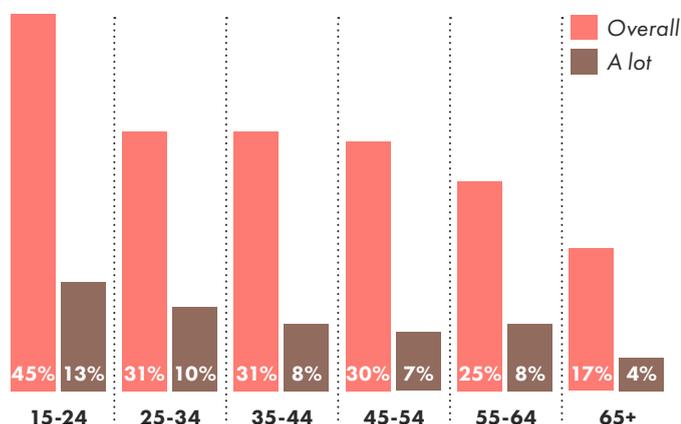


Mental Health & Covid-19

- More people report that their mental health worsened during the pandemic than report an improvement. 30% of respondents say their mental health worsened since the beginning of necessary public health restrictions in March 2020. 64% report no change, with only 5% saying their mental health has improved.
- Among those whose mental health has worsened, 28% say it has declined “a lot”, while 71% say it has declined “a little”.

Decline in mental health compared to before Covid-19 (by age)

Proportion saying their mental health “worsened” during the pandemic (including those saying it worsened “a lot”)



- Those aged 15 to 24 (45%), as well as females (34%) and those whose self-reported health is ‘bad’ (55%) are most likely to say their mental health has declined during the pandemic.

Treatment for Mental Health

- Overall, 23% would like to improve their mental health. This is highest among women aged 15 to 24 (30%), students (28%), those whose self-reported health is ‘bad’ (36%) and parents (26%).
- Respondents whose mental health had declined “a lot” in the previous six months were asked a number of questions about treatment through a mental health professional. Among this group, 40% have discussed the problem with a mental health professional.



- Women (45%) are more likely to have consulted a mental health professional than men (31%), with women aged 15 to 34 particularly likely to have done so (57%).
- Non-parents (43%) are also significantly more likely than parents (29%) to have spoken to a mental health professional in the previous six months.
- 72% of those who consulted a mental health professional in the previous six months due to a significant deterioration in their mental health cite the Covid-19 pandemic as the reason for doing so.
- 75% of those who consulted a mental health professional said they found it helpful, while 13% said it was unhelpful.

23%

would like to improve their mental health as part of making changes to their health and wellbeing

40%

of those whose mental health worsened “a lot” in the previous six months sought help from a mental health professional

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Appendix 3
Mental Health Ireland

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Mental Health Ireland -Rural Mental Health²⁹

Introduction /General Comments on Farming and Mental Health

Nationally and internationally, there is recognition for the need to address mental health in order to improve overall health and well-being. It is well established and accepted that farmers experience a disproportionate amount of physical and mental health due to the nature of their work (Coping with the Pressures of Farming). Additionally, farmers have been identified as an occupational group with high rates of suicide in Ireland.

Key challenges and barriers to reach out with health promotion programmes to the farming community including male and female farmers and their families are location and isolation. Teagasc, Mens Development Network and the recently established pilot programme FARMConnect is researching the delivery of health education programmes at local level to the farming community.

It is necessary to continue to increase awareness of mental health topic among the farming community and needs to be inclusive of family in the dissemination of information on mental illness as well as mental health and available supports so that they realise they are not on their own.

Issues that facing farmers included: loss of income; health problems; depression; loneliness, compliance with Government Regulations, 24/7 existence, hence can be difficult to have holidays or days off. Climate change and perception of farmers in this regard by the general public is not necessarily helpful. Necessary in many cases to have off farm income.

Mental Health Ireland (www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

Mental Health Ireland has been to the forefront since for many years specifically addressing mental health in rural Ireland with a strong focus on the farming community through the work of our Development Officer Finola Colgan and who continues to be our National Lead in this area of work,

A key objective of Mental Health Ireland as highlighted in all National Strategies is to promote mental health across communities. The following is representative of Mental Health Ireland's commitment to mental health in rural settings

AGM/National Conferences: We have delivered mental health awareness presentations to AGMS such as the Irish Cattle Breeders Association— over four hundred in attendance.

Exhibition/Teagasc Road Shows in partnership with the Health & Safety Authority and Teagasc at the World Ploughing Championship and the Annual National Ploughing Championships held throughout Ireland.

Coping with the Pressures of Farming was co-authored by Finola Colgan Development Officer and Barry Caslin Teagasc. It was launched by Mairead McGuinness MEP at the National Ploughing Championships in Sept 2017 and has been updated and reprinted on several occasions since.

This publication was adapted with the support and approval of both organisations by the Northern Ireland Rural Network and launched in 2018

²⁹ The Author is the National Lead for Mental Health Ireland Farming and rural Mental Health and has a strategic role in the development of National Mental Health Promotion Programmes

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Social Farming Ireland: provides people who use services with the opportunity for inclusion, to increase self-esteem and to improve health and well-being by taking part in day-to-day farm activities on a family farm. We have developed and co-produced a Mental Health workshop with relevant case studies which is delivered as a core programme for their Training to Farm Families that are registered with the organisation.

Teagasc, we have delivered Mental Health Workshops at various Teagasc Centres throughout the country as part of their Knowledge Transfer Programme

On Feirm (Farm) Ground Finola Colgan Development Officer was invited to be a member of this specially commissioned working group to inform the development of a bespoke farmers' health training programme to equip frontline farm advisers (Teagasc staff) with the competencies to engage and signpost farmers on health issues including Mental Health. The group has been established under the auspices of Men's Development Network. Since its formation they have hosted a

- National Networking Day for agencies within the agricultural sector Sept 2021
- Successful in their application to the Department of agriculture to establish a Pilot Project

FARMConnect. Its aim is to

FARMRes – Erasmus + Programme of the European Union Mental Health Ireland was a successful partner in securing funding to develop this project. Finola Colgan Development Officer took the lead and conducted research on behalf of Mental Health Ireland to complete our application process and is representing us on the Project Team. Membership comprises representatives from Spain – Belgium, Germany and Finland. FARMRes- Farmers Assistance Resources for Mental Resilience. The overall aim of the Programme is to exchange share and develop appropriate mental health promotion, materials resources, and workshops to meet the needs of young farmers. All work undertaken will be co-produced and evaluated

Farmers4Safety. Aims include to Embed farm safety, health, and wellbeing in knowledge transfer in discussion groups and Signpost farmers and farm families to the relevant supports/services that they may require, Create a permanent farm safety, health, and wellbeing network by using appropriate discourse for farmers. Mental Health Ireland is represented by Finola Colgan on their National Steering Group and has provided Mental Health Awareness training to their staff providing this programme.

Mens Shed: Men's Sheds offer a unique opportunity to reach a captive audience of "hard-to-reach" men. The Shed for Life initiative tailored to the Shed setting. Mental Health Ireland through co production has developed a bespoke workshop that is a core module within this programme.

On behalf of Mental Health Ireland Finola Colgan Development Officer has presented and or written articles as follows

Mental Health Climate Change and Farming

1: Assessing The Mental Health Impacts Of Climate Change On Farmers: A Cross Sectoral Approach

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Conference organised by – Department of and EAP the Environment Protection Agency
Organised by Dr. Tracey Skillington Director of the BA Sociology Department of Sociology &
Criminology University College Cork Visiting Fellow, Uppsala University, Sweden

2: Mental Health and Climate Change (Online) British University of Egypt – Research Centre for
Irish Studies

3: Published articles on Farming and Mental Health

- Health and Safety Authority
- Irish Farmers Journal
- Irish Farming Independent
- Teagasc Publication Today's Farm
- National Farm Safety Handbook 2022
- IFAC Irish Farm Report 2021
- That's; Farming – online publication

4: **Farming Resilience** Developed and co-produced and moderated Farming Resilience
webpage on Mental Health Ireland Website in response to the Covid and in partnership with
the Irish Farmers Association and Teagasc. <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/your-mental-health/farming-resilience/>

The Welcome message for the site was made by Mairead McGuinness MEP, First Vice-President
of the European Parliament. Key weekly themes include:

- Resilience in Farming
- Mental Health and Stress Management and Mindfulness
- Supporting Yourself Supporting Others
- Physical and Mental Health

<https://www.ifa.ie/mental-health/#:~:text=Mental%20Health%20Ireland,Resilience%20programme%20here.>

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Appendix 4

Survey on Attitudes to Mental Health

Farmers4Safety

Farmers Health and Safety – Information Flyer

Age: 37(1), 54 (2) 35(() 44 (4) 5 - **Gender:** Male x5 **Full time Farming** 5 Off Farm Job

[Type here]

1: Are you the only person working on the farm, or do you have other people working with you?

- 1.1 My wife also works on the farm
- 1.2 I am the only fulltime worker. However, I use family and FRS when we can.
- 1.3 Myself mainly have other working with me during busy times
- 1.4 Only person full time family members help sometimes
- 1.5 No. 2 people working with me

2: What does having good mental health mean to you?

- 2.1 Being able to be aware of the natural stresses and anxieties that happen, but not letting it overwhelm me. Being able to act with clarity and respond to situations without letting them get the better of me. Being able to relax when I finish working, and not bring the stresses of work home with me.
- 2.2 Everything. Management of a farm has many variables outside our control which push your mental health to limits and beyond
- 2.3 Having an easier life
- 2.4 Feeling good about within myself, being able to cope with challenges
- 2.5 Positive in life very important

3: What does having good physical health mean to you?

- 3.1 Being able to function to the height of my capability, allowing for natural fluctuations, without being inhibited by any pains, illness, or discomforts
- 3.2 Everything...but don't pay enough attention until something goes wrong
- 3.3 Being fit and active daily
- 3.4 Being able to do my work having energy for hobbies
- 3.5 Important- good energy to keep going

4: Do you attach the same level of importance to your mental health with your physical health?

- 4.1 Yes
- 4.2 Not sure
- 4.3 No
- 4.4 yes
- 4.5 No =probably not

5: In general, how would you rate your mental health?

[Type here]

Excellent Very Good Fair

5.1 Excellent

5.2 Very good

5.3 Fair

5.4 Very good

5.5 Good to fair - anxiety

6: What in your opinion contributes to good mental health?

6.1 Allowing time for yourself, self-care, and rest. Working without living too much for the outcome, instead learning to enjoy more the process itself. When stresses in life become too much, having a routine or a place to go that allows me to come back to myself and relax.

6.2 God/spirituality family and meaning in your life. Keeping things in perspectives and having strategies to recognise and help yourself.

6.3 Coping with stress, relationships work, family

6.4 Social life, hobbies family friends

6.5 healthy diet

7: Has your state of mental health ever impacted on your ability to get through the day and to farm?

Sometimes, Often, Not at all

7.1 Not Often at all

7.2 Often

7.3 Not often at all

7.4 Not often at all

7.5 Sometimes- not often at all

8: Do you view mental health as a weakness or a strength?

8.1 Strength

8.2 Weakness

8.3 Weakness

8.4 Strength

8.5 Weakness

Please comment.

[Type here]

8.1, Quite often we are expected to have a brave exterior, but this to me is not bravery, just habit. True bravery is being honest about feelings and emotions, how we really are and being brave enough to ask for help when we need it

8.2. Anything that holds you back from being the best version of your self is weakness. But I will discuss with anyone who will listen

8.3. Left blank

8.4 It is hard to be a good farmer these days if you are isolated and can't cope

8.5 You are not enjoying life

9: When you experience stress do you?

Reach for help Confide in someone Would not reach out for support

9.1. Reach for help and Confide in someone

9.2 Confide in someone

9.3 Confide in someone

9.4 Confide in someone

9.5 Would not reach out for support

Please comment /mentioned who would you confide in e.g., Help Line Service? A close friend Family Member What causes you the most worry? e.g., ability to pay farm/. household bills on time, energy costs, seasonal farming

9.1 always reach for help most of the time with my wife, sometimes my mother. Depending on the situation it would be a friend, usually when I have a physical challenge related to the farm or machinery.

My main stresses are related to the government and the bureaucracy involved, especially inspections as they are rarely to help the farmer. I'm basing this mainly from listening to recounts from my neighbours and the inspections are reportedly more an exercise of authority and intimidation than assistance and helping the farmers constructively improve. This usually ends up with the suffering the farmer financially and mentally. Personally, I had great stress trying to recuperate a grant for sheep fencing from the government which was met unfairly for not meeting a single criterion of insignificant detail that could easily be permitted if due and fair consideration was taken. Considering the time and expense involved on our part (which we are now in debt as a result of) and the strenuous attention to detail undertaken, to be failed was unacceptable. We have heard similar stories from neighbours also with much agitation.

Also, energy costs and inability to pay all the farm bills, sometimes not being paid also.

9.2. Tend to deal with things until I reach a point then I share with my wife and family...if I think they can help. I'd never reach for professional help. Stress of finance weather and

[Type here]

animal welfare are all part of my job. I try to plan for mitigation when things turn on you like the weather it can push you to the limits.

9.3 Family member, seasonal farming sustaining the business for their future

9.4 I can confide in my wife and friends. I find dealing with drought very distressful

9.5 Left blank

10: Do you take any breaks from your farm work during the day?

10.1 Yes, most of the time, depending on the urgency of the task as sometimes the job must be completed and is time pressured. However, on the day to day running of the farm I would take regular breaks.

10.2 No.... always on duty

10.3 Rarely, if I have time, I will take it

10.4 Sometimes

10.5 Not as much as I should

11: How often do you see other people you are close to, such as family or close friends (apart from those who live with you)?

11.1 Infrequently

11.2 Every month or so

11.3 Daily

11.4 Weekly

11.5 Every day

12; Do you feel isolated?

12.1 No

12.2 Somewhat

12.3 No

12.4 No

12.5 Not really

13: Would you visit your family doctor if you are feeling stressed or struggling?

13.1 No

13.2 Not really ...not unless it was physical

13.3 No

13.4 Yes

13.5 Yes - sometimes

14: Do you have conversations about mental health?

[Type here]

Frequently Occasionally Not at all

14.1 It's important for personal growth to talk out all personal issues with a person whose advice you trust.

14.2 Occasionally I am open to talking about most things and I would be terrified my children (teenagers) would have any issues, so I try to draw out conversation on that basis. Many young people in me are mostly males have committed suicide

14.3 Not at all

14.4 Occasionally

14.5 Occasionally

15: What in your opinion can be done to improve understanding about mental in farming

15.1 Without a doubt to make it common language in every publication and must be taken seriously by all farming related bodies and agencies. It must feature in every major agricultural show and event until such a point it becomes completely a normal feature and conversational topic. This to be coupled by well supported and well-funded facilitated workshops for farmers regularly.

15.2 Use advisory services who call to the farm to be trained to spot people who need help. Use a buddy system or farm mentors Tap into off farm interest like social dancing, Sport *-vintage machinery, women networks and men's shed. Increase income... A lot of mental health stems from turn over v profit

15.3 Supports available to them, how they can access them

15.4 Peer to peer groups

15.5 Talk more about it



Farmers4 Safety

Managing Risk Together

Farmers4Safety – Managing Risk Together EIP-AGRI research was undertaken by project manager Niamh Nolan along with the 6-part time farm mentor's to assess farmer's attitudes and behaviours towards farm safety, health and wellbeing. Irish Rural Link (IRL) are in partnership with the BRIDE (Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairying Environment) project, the Duncannon Blue Flag Farming & Communities Scheme, the New Futures Farming Group, and the Health and Safety Authority in carrying out this piloted project in their catchment areas. The Farm Safety EIP-AGRI adopts a peer to peer mentor approach to engage farmers in an attitudinal and behavioural change towards farm safety by tackling and improving the social norms that surround farm safety, health and wellbeing.

This survey analysis gives you a flavour of the most noteworthy survey responses to date. We have gathered 152 Pre Evaluation and Attitudinal Survey Responses from Farmers/ Farm Families, 52 Attitudinal Survey Responses from Partners, and 28 Attitudinal Survey Responses from Service Providers (Vets, AI technicians, Scanners, Advisors). The Pre Evaluation and Attitudinal Surveys allow this Farm Safety EIP AGRI Project to gain a greater insight into Farmers/Farm Families attitudes and behaviours towards Farm Safety, Health and Wellbeing. Farmers4Safety – Managing Risk Together EIP AGRI Project has effectively engaged with 326 farmers to-date and in meeting with 326 farmers 33 subjects were mentioned when talking to the farmer's/ farm families on the ground. Each of the surveys took participants approximately 7 to 15 minutes to complete the survey. Below illustrates a flavour of some of our findings to date. To find out more information about our project visit www.farmers4safety.ie.



Key Findings: Survey Responses from Farmers/Farm Families

On average, how many hours of the week do you work on the farm?

30 - 40 hours	30%
41 – 50 hours	11%
365 days a year	1%
51- 60 hours	23%
60+ hours	31%
Less than 30 hours a week	4%

On a Scale of 1 – 10 how important is farm safety, health and wellbeing on your farm?
7 out of 10

How important is your health and wellbeing in carrying out jobs on the farm?
7 out of 10

How often do you monitor your mental health?

Monthly	6%
Weekly	14%
Never	57%
Quarterly	8%
Annually	15%

How often do you monitor your physical health and book a check-up with a doctor?

Monthly	4%
Weekly	1%
Never	19%
Quarterly	9%
Annually	67%

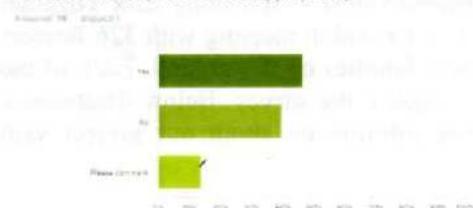
Do you take risks that you would not allow anyone else to take on the farm?

Yes	48%
No	52%

How many injuries/ near hits have occurred in the last three years on your farm?

Injuries/ Near Hits	46%
None	52%

Do you actively engage and implement your farm safety statement or farm risk assessment? (Tick the most appropriate)



Do you actively engage and implement your Code of Practice Risk Assessment?

Yes	52%
No	45%



Key Findings: Survey Responses from Partners

Do you work on the farm?

Yes 59%

No 41%

Does your partner knowingly take risks on the farm?

Yes 35%

No 65%

Do you find it difficult to spend time with your partner when he/she is constantly working and thinking of the farm?

Yes 55%

No 45%

If something happens on the farm such as the death of an animal, machinery breaking down it can lead to pressures and anxieties in the household.

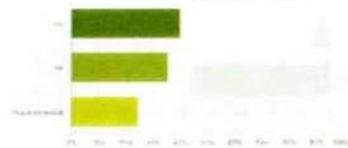
Strongly Agree 14%

Agree 49%

Neither Agree nor Disagree 17%

Disagree 20%

Does your partner find it very difficult to trust people to do the farming for him/her when taking time off? (Tick the most appropriate)



Does your partner find it very difficult to trust people to do the farming for him/her when taking time off?

Yes 51%

No 49%

How often does your partner monitor his/her physical health and book a check-up with a doctor?

Weekly 0%

Monthly 8%

Annually 60%

Quarterly 10%

Never 22%

How often does your partner monitor his/her mental health?

Weekly 8%

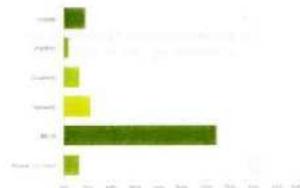
Monthly 4%

Annually 12%

Quarterly 8%

Never 68%

How often does your partner monitor his/her mental health? (Tick the most appropriate)





Key Findings: Survey Responses from Service Providers

Do you think farmer's/farm families plan for safety, health and wellbeing on their farm on a regular basis?

Yes 33%
No 67%

On a Scale of 1 – 10 how important is farm safety, health and wellbeing on farms for farmers and farm families?

6 out of 10

Do you think farmer's/farm families actively engage and implement their Code of Practice Risk Assessment Document?

Yes 25%

No 75%

Do you and the farmer consider farm safety, health and wellbeing when on the farm?

Yes 87%

No 13%

Do you think farmer's/farm families knowingly take risks with animals/machinery?

Yes 79%

No 21%

Do you feel there is pressure from the farmer/farm family to carry out the task set out for you to do when on the farm?

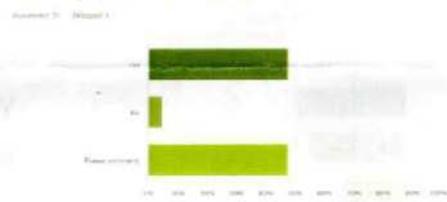
Yes 58%

No 42%

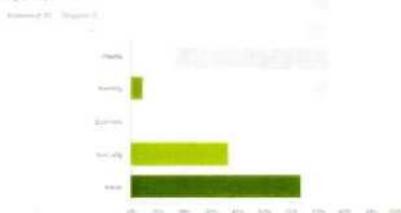
How often do you think farmer's/farm families monitor their overall mental health?

Weekly 0%
Monthly 4%
Quarterly 13%
Annually 33%
Never 55%

Do you think farmers and farm families knowingly take risks with animals/machinery? (Tick the most appropriate)



How often do you think farmers and farm families monitor their overall physical health and book a check-up with a doctor? (Tick the most appropriate)



How often do you think farmer's/ farm families monitor their overall physical health and book a check-up with a doctor?

Weekly 0%
Monthly 4%
Quarterly 0%
Annually 25%
Never 71%



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
Investing in rural areas

FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

MIND BODY SAFETY MATTERS ON THE FARM

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are evidence-based steps that everyone can take to maintain and or improve their mental health and wellbeing. Undoubtedly, it is most important to maintain safe farming practices to reduce the risk of injury and untimely loss of life. Equally it is most important to maintain wellbeing practices to reduce the risk of mental health challenges or mental illness. The two go hand in hand and for once it is probably ok to disagree with the adage that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush". We are all better off if we keep both farm safety and mental health and wellbeing together in the one hand as important safety matters on and off the farm.



www.mentalhealthireland.ie & www.farmers4safety.ie

CONNECT

Social interaction and feeling valued by other people are fundamental human needs. Combined they contribute to wellbeing and are a cushion against loneliness and isolation. Research shows that people with strong social connections are happier and healthier.

Due to the nature of farming, the long hours, demanding situations and unexpected events, it can be difficult to form regular social connections. It is good self care to create off farm opportunities to get out and about to socialise that best suits your needs. It can be for example meeting a friend for a cup of tea, going to a local match, a cycle . seek out a suitable volunteering opportunity



BE ACTIVE

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety, It promotes both physical and mental health well-being.

It is established that planned exercise releases endorphins that can help a person feel more alert, more energised and better able to cope with challenges. Undoubtedly, this increased energy improves your awareness which is beneficial in terms of reducing farm accidents that may occur due to lack of concentration. It can also be a gamechanger in lifting your mood from a low spot to a better place.

The message is, to make off farm physical activity a regular habit.

TAKE NOTICE

It goes without saying that farming is a very demanding way of life. When a person is busy there is a risk of physical and mental overload. The body can become physically exhausted and the mind vulnerable to being cluttered. Unfortunately, and sadly farm accidents regularly happen because of being in a hurry to get something done. Is it worth the risk?

The most practical thing to do is stop, pause, collect your thoughts by being aware of the generous nature around you – taking a few random minutes of self care can help you feel calm and in control. It can also reduce the risk of incurring an accident.



KEEP LEARNING

There is no evidence to show that *"you cannot teach an old dog new tricks"* - quite the opposite! The more we keep our brains stimulated the more we thrive no matter the age!

Being interested about all sorts of matters on and off the farm is good for the mind. Learning about new ways of farming while at times maybe challenging, it can also be motivating and rewarding.

It is important for self esteem to embrace new opportunities and experiences. Local ETBs provide excellent adult Education Programmes - participating in one that is of interest also provides the opportunity to develop new friends and to socialise.



GIVE

Giving can make you feel good about yourself. It is very satisfying when your time, words and deeds benefit others and gratitude is expressed. It is like an emotional endorphin that creates positive feelings and energises you. Giving can be connecting with a neighbour that is struggling, listening and offering your hand of friendship. However, once again take a moment out to pause and think about your own needs. Be kind to yourself. It is not a selfish thing to do.



"YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR WEALTH"

Embracing The Five Ways can make difference to your quality of life and most importantly contribute to safe farming practices. They are five keys that you can unlock every day in small meaningful ways that will benefit you and the people in your life. By embracing them you can feel connected with others, pay attention to being active, taking notice of how you and others are feeling, and learning about opportunities around you to feel calm and relaxed, give regularly to others and yourself. These Five Ways are in your hands.

Further Information

1. Survivor Stories Real Farmers Real Accidents
2. Farmers Health and Wellbeing
3. Mental Health Ireland – Farming Resilience
4. Farmers4Safety Managing Risk Together

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2



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