



### **Farms and Farmers under Stress: How can Service Providers Build Resilience?**

Program Planning Forum – March 26, 2021 – 9-11:00 a.m.

---

#### **Background**

The goal of the forum was to solicit feedback about various topic areas in farm stress, available resources, and the agricultural industry that could become part of multi-part series for agricultural services providers.

For the past two years, the University of Maryland Extension developed and delivered educational sessions related to farm stress and mental health. We learned that some of our stakeholders and organization partners wanted to learn how to serve the farming population dealing with multiple stressors.

We applied for and received funding to increase understanding and build skills among Maryland's agricultural services providers. This capacity-building professional development program aims to help our farming population decrease stress by building resilience.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions on group meetings, we decided to conduct an online program planning forum held March 26, 2021. The purpose was to engage Maryland agricultural services providers in telling us how best to provide professional development educational programs that would help them build capacity with the farming population they serve.

---

#### **March 26, 2021, Forum**

(See agenda on next page)

Over 42 invitees participated in a 2-hour session with two presentations and facilitated breakout discussions on five topics. At the start, they identified these top 4 observations about farmers in the past year: **Anxiety, Financial Worries, Depression, and Burnout.**

---

#### **Results of Forum**

After the forum, they were invited to complete a short survey. Over two-thirds (69%) preferred 1-5 hours of professional development done virtually and in person held mid-week.

Participants were asked to rate their preferred topics for professional development on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest). The results are listed below along with the mean score:

- 1. Physical and Mental Health (8.69)**
  - 2. Stress Management (8.46)**
  - 3. Financial Well-Being (7.77)**
  - 4. Legal and Regulatory (7.33)**
-

---

## COMMENTS

Participants were asked to comment on this topic and provide feedback during the breakout sessions:

*“Reflecting on the meeting - please continue to tie these resources together, so that people understand the interconnection of physical and mental well being with farm/financial/legal stress levels. It will reduce the barriers for people who need mental help but who still feel the stigma. Wrap all these topic areas into all outreach so if they say they need legal resources but are also curious about mental health resources, they get it all as a package.”*

*“Great information. We need to continue to make the information sources available to ALL farmers, producers, growers, landowners, especially our non- traditional, female, veteran and beginning, new agriculturalists and conservationists. Including their families, relatives, friends and others.”*

---

The project team has begun designing curriculum based on results to be conducted in the fall of 2021.

---

### **Farms and Farmers Under Stress: How can Service Providers Build Resilience?**

**March 26 2021, 9am-11am**

#### **Agenda**

Welcome - Shannon Dill, Extension Educator, AgFS

Feedback Poll 1

Farm Stress Overview - Dr. Bonnie Braun, Professor Emeritus

Farm Stress Education - Dr. Jesse Ketterman, Extension Educator, FCS

Feedback Poll 2

Break/breakouts and time for feedback on the following areas:

Stress Management

Physical and Mental Health

Financial Well Being

Legal and Regulatory Issues

Education and Training Program

Reconvene and Wrap Up

Announcements

Thank you for your time

Short follow up survey to share reflection and resources

*This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number ENE20-160-34268*

---

**Contact: Shannon Dill, [sdill@umd.edu](mailto:sdill@umd.edu)**  
**[www.go.umd.edu/farmstressmanagement](http://www.go.umd.edu/farmstressmanagement)**