



let's talk

DEALING WITH STRESS

IFA.ie



The National Mental Health
Stigma Reduction Partnership



Message from IFA Farm Family & Social Affairs Committee

Farmers face many challenges - increasing input costs, uncertainty in commodity prices, increased environmental regulations, unpredictable weather, isolation and long working hours – it is easy to let it get to you.

The economic recession and the limited credit available have added to the stress of farming with many farm families feeling overwhelmed.

It is very important that you learn how to manage stress. Too much stress can increase the risk of farm accidents, as you may not be focussed on the task. You can protect yourself and others from the stresses of farm life by:

- learning to recognise the symptoms of stress,
- identifying the causes, and
- taking steps to reduce and manage it.

By doing these three things, you will improve the quality of your life and make your farm a safer place to work.

Margaret Healy IFA Farm Family & Social Affairs Chairwoman



What is stress?

Anyone can suffer from stress. Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand that makes you feel threatened or upsets your balance in some way. When working properly, stress helps you to stay focused, energetic, and alert. But beyond a certain point, it can stop being helpful and start causing damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships and your quality of life.

What causes stress?

Many different things can cause stress. The very nature of farming means that a lot of our daily lives are not under our control, for example changes, in weather or commodity prices. Other common causes of stress include: bureaucracy, paperwork, complexity of farm schemes, cross-compliance inspections, reduced incomes, financial problems, work load, responsibility, health and safety on the farm, feeling isolated and relationship difficulties.

Signs of stress

Every person has a different reaction to stress, here are some of the more common warning signs that it's time to manage your stress and consider getting help:

Physical signs	Mental signs	Behavioural signs
High blood pressure	Negative attitude	Loss of interest & enjoyment
Muscle tension	Reduced concentration	Withdrawal from friends & family
Disturbed sleep pattern	Forgetfulness and confusion	Irritability & mood swings
Weight change	Difficulty in making decisions	Increased drinking, smoking, or drug use
Reduced energy	Feeling uncertain or overwhelmed	Loss of sense of humour

Coping with stress

There are many things you can do to help yourself, from changing the way you look after yourself - your diet, exercise, leisure and sleep patterns - to changing the way you think about yourself, your relationships and the farm.

Talk about it.

Talk to a trusted friend, family member or neighbour. Make an appointment to see your GP. Expressing what you are going through can be very therapeutic, even if there is nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.

Manage your time better.

Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you are stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you do not overextend yourself, you can reduce the amount of stress you are under.

Set realistic goals.

Be selective and use your energy to do the most important and achievable tasks. Set realistic goals and do not blame yourself if you do not reach all of them, there is always next time.

Focus on the positive.

When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

Eat well.

Eat a variety of fresh foods in a balanced diet. Some foods actually cause increased tension, for example, coffee, tea, chocolate, alcohol and soft drinks. These are often the foods we crave when we are stressed so be aware and try to limit your intake of them.

Exercise regularly.

Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for exercise and find something you enjoy: sport, swimming, walking, dancing or cycling.

Make time for relaxation.

Even stopping for ten minutes a day to breathe slowly and deeply can help. Spend time on your own - reading, walking, or listening to music.

Put a bit of fun and laughter in your life.



Useful Contacts & Supports

The services listed below have a lot of experience in helping people deal with stress and other mental health problems.

IFA Farm Credit Assistance

1890 924 853

IFA provides a confidential helpline to assist farmers with financial difficulties.

Shine

1890 621 631 (Mon-Fri, 9am – 4pm)

Shine supports people with mental ill health and their families and friends in a number of different ways, including an information helpline, Regional Development Officers based in Dublin, Kilkenny, Cork, Ennis, Galway, Tullamore and Dundalk, support groups, resource centres and counselling services in Dublin and Cork.

Samaritans

1850 609 090

(7days, 24 hours)

Samaritans provide a befriending service to those passing through a personal crisis.

Teenline Ireland

1800 833 634

(7 days, 7pm-10pm)

Teenline is a national helpline for teenagers.

Senior Helpline

1850 440 444

Senior helpline is a confidential listening service for older people by trained older volunteers.

AWARE

1890 303 302

(Mon-Wed, 10am-10pm, Thu-Sun 10am-1am)

AWARE provide emotional support and information to those who experience depression and their families.

GROW

1890 474 474

Grow is a mental health organisation that helps people who have suffered or are suffering from mental health problems.

Parentline

1890 927 277

(Mon-Thu, 10am-9.30pm, Fri, 10am-4.30)

Parentline provides support, guidance and information to parents and guardians.

Childline

1800 666 666

(7days, 24 hours)

Childline is a service for children and young people up to the age of 18 years old.

yourmentalhealth.ie

Is a website developed by the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP.ie) to help you understand your own mental health and know how to help others.



This leaflet was produced in association with Shine as part of the See Change programme and in consultation the Health Service Executive's National Office for Suicide Prevention. For copies of the leaflet please contact IFA Farm Family & Social Affairs on 01 4500 266.

See Change is Ireland's national programme working to change minds about mental health problems. See Change works with people, communities and organisations such as the IFA to help end the stigma of mental health problems through meetings, sports events, art and cultural activities – and most importantly, empowering people to share their stories about their own experiences. For more information visit seechange.ie or by calling 01 860 1620.