



# IFA

# let's talk

## DEALING WITH STRESS



# 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.

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.



*Maura Canning* 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.**



# IFA

# IFA.ie

## Useful Contacts & Supports

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

### IFA Mind Our Farm Families

**1890 130 022** (Mon-Fri 9am – 6pm & Sat 10am – 2pm)

Is a dedicated phone and counselling service for IFA members operated by Pieta House that supports people that are feeling suicidal or a concerned family member or friend

### IFA Farm Credit Assistance

**1890 924 853**

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

### Samaritans

**Free call 116 123**

(7 days, 24 hours)

Samaritans provide immediate support for whatever is getting to you

### Farm and Rural Stress Helpline

**1800 742 645** (7 days, 24 hours)

Is operated by Console and provides support to farmers that are going through a difficult time or feeling down.

### yourmentalhealth.ie

Is a safe place to learn about mental health, how to support yourself and the people you love and where you can find support services near you that have been vetted by the HSE National Suicide Prevention Office.

### Childline

**1800 666 666** (7 days, 24 hours)

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

### 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.

### Console

**1800 247 247** (7 days, 24 hours)

Is a suicide prevention and

bereavement service for anyone in suicidal distress or bereaved through suicide.

### Parentline

**1890 927 277**

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

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

### 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.

### LGBT Helpline

**1890 929 539**

Is a national support service that provides confidential, non-judgmental support and information to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people and their families and friends.



The National Mental Health Stigma Reduction Partnership

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](http://seechange.ie) or by calling 01 860 1620.