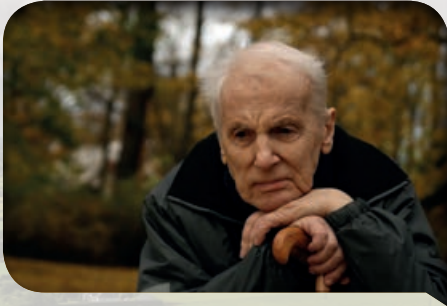


# Dealing with Stress





# Message from IFA Farm Family & Social Affairs Committee

During my term I would like to foster a new era where farmer welfare is the priority on all farms and throughout the sector; where the pressures and physical toll of farming are recognised and farmers are supported to take better care of their mental health.

We are all familiar with the demands and difficulties of farming these days, increased regulation and standards, increasing input costs, uncertain commodity prices, unpredictable weather, long working hours and feelings of isolation - it is easy to let it get to you.

Farmers face tremendous pressure between farm and off-farm work, with lots struggling to balance the farm books. Many factors that influence a farm's viability are out of a farmer's control. And it is often these issues which cannot be controlled that cause us to feel the most stress.

That is why it is so important that farmers learn how to manage stress, to accept the things that are outside of their control and concentrate on directing their energy towards problem solving and coping with stresses that are within their control.

Let's talk and start to manage stress.

**Caroline Farrell**  
Chairwoman, IFA Farm Family  
& Social Affairs

## 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 Mind Our Farm Families

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

A dedicated phone and counselling service that supports people who are feeling suicidal or are concerned about a family member or friend. It is operated by Pieta House.

### IFA's Debt Support service

**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)

Provides support to farmers that are going through a difficult time or feeling down.

### [yourmentalhealth.ie](http://yourmentalhealth.ie)

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.

### Seniorline

**1800 804 591**

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

### Parentline

**1890 927 277**

**01 873 3500**

(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.

### Childline

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

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

### LGBT Helpline

**1890 929 539**

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