

NH Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Impact Report:

Addressing the Root Causes of Stress, Mental Health,
and Suicide in the Farming Community

New Hampshire
*Department of Agriculture,
Markets, and Food*



Extension

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NH Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Program Report

Our Farmers are Struggling

Farmer mental health challenges can result in loss of life, reduced ability to perform farm duties, lowered farmer quality of life, lost profits, and bankruptcies.

Farmers have among the highest suicide rates of occupational groups in the U.S.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publication found that the suicide frequency for farmers, ranchers, and agriculture managers averaged almost 44 deaths per 100,000 people, significantly higher than that of the overall population and the 4th highest rate among occupational groups (Peterson, et al. 2020). Experts suggest that financial stress, limited access to mental health services, and a reluctance to seek help could be associated with the elevated risk of suicide among farmers.

The benefits of farms and a sustainable agricultural economy have been well documented and include lower taxes to the public, greater tourism, vibrant rural communities, sustainable food chains, preservation of open spaces, support to numerous businesses such as tractor dealers, mechanics, fertilizer vendors, and large animal veterinarians. It is an absolute benefit to society to have successful farms dot the landscape of rural communities.

Rising input costs, low financial management skills, shrinking profits, inability to find and retain labor, family stress, and climate changes result in unsustainable levels of anxiety, suicide, and mental health afflictions for farmers nationwide, including throughout the Northeastern United States.

Addressing the Issue

UNH Cooperative Extension partnered with the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food to apply for a USDA funding opportunity through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We successfully received \$558,000.

We created a team of people from state farm organizations and agencies to shape and implement this complex program. The team's membership changed over time, which fostered innovation and fresh approaches to overcome the many obstacles we encountered and lead us to the successes we celebrate.



"We are so grateful to have found the Farm Strong NH grant program. Our extended family had been searching for guidance on how to best hand down the family farm and protect the property from forced sale or subdivision, but we hadn't been able to figure it out. Through this grant program, Seth connected us with a lawyer that has been extremely knowledgeable and helpful and is working with us to form a Family Farm LLC. It's an incredible relief to know that the farm will stay intact and in the family for generations. Being able to form the LLC protects the farm for us, the farmers, but also for the public that enjoys the views and recreational opportunities that the farm and forest land provide. It has also helped our extended family communicate about our values and priorities for the farm. I really don't know how we would have done it without this program!"

-Hillary Behr

Behr Family Farm

The Program

Our program created a replicable and scalable model to address farmer mental health through a multi-pronged approach. We focused on the following four pillars:

1. Building awareness, support, and destigmatizing farmer mental health and suicide prevention.
2. Providing direct technical assistance and services to address and manage mental health and root cause issues.
3. Creating and aggregating educational resources on UNH Cooperative Extension’s website.
4. Implementing skill-building education for both farmers and agricultural service providers.

This project was intentional about reaching historically underserved audiences. We funded coordinators to organize communities and activities, establishing previously non-existent NH Queer Farmer and NH BIPOC Farmer communities.

Building awareness, support, and destigmatizing farmer mental health and suicide prevention

In June of 2021, I called state organizations and agency staff to seek their collaboration in this program. Many asked if farmer mental health was a problem and if farmer suicides happened in NH. Few, if any, were discussing this topic or knew about its severity. There were no workshop sessions at conferences, no resources, nor even a network of professionals trained to assist farmers. Farmers themselves did not speak of this as an issue nor did they know where to turn for help. Few agricultural professionals even knew where to send farmers for help.

Our team and collaborating partners worked to build awareness of the topic and our program’s resources. We documented over 913,000 views of our outreach efforts. This number does not account for the reach of newspaper articles, radio shows, or in-person sessions events (see Table 1 and links in Appendix B).

To help address and destigmatize farmer mental health, we funded and built four farmer support networks: Western NH (47), Southeastern NH (14), NH BIPOC Farmer (25), and NH Queer Farmer (33) networks. One hundred nineteen (119) NH farmers joined.

Through these four networks, participants reported learning about program resources, met new farmers, shared stories of their stresses and triumphs, and felt supported by a community of their peers.

The program assembled a community of service providers to work with farmers addressing root causes of their stress. A network of 16 mental health businesses, 14 law offices, two tax firms, and four financial analysts assisted farmers under this program - many had never previously worked with farmers.

Organization	Media Type	Number	Reach
UNH Extension	Facebook	14 posts	776,430
UNH Extension	Brochures	2,000	2,000
UNH Extension	Magazine	2,000	2,000
UNH Extension	E-magazine (Radius)	80	80
UNH Extension	E-magazine (Spark)		Unmeasured
UNH Extension	Blog Posts	3	
NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food	Weekly e-newsletters	9 articles	2,000
Weekly newsletters	9 articles	2,000	
NH Farm Bureau	Facebook	34 posts	6,156
NH Farm Bureau	e-newsletters	13 articles	1,605
NH Farm Bureau	Newsletters	3	3,077
Vital Communities	Instagram	10	22,400
Vital Communities	Facebook	10	39,000
Vital Communities	e-newsletters	8	29,094
Kearsarge Food Hub	Instagram	8	29,848
Kearsarge Food Hub	Facebook	8	
NHPR	Article	2	
Valley News	Article	1	
Total			913,690

Table 1 - Media Outreach to NH Farm Community

Providing direct technical assistance and services to address and manage mental health and root cause issues

The program funded both mental health services and provided direct technical assistance to address underlying root causes of farmer distress. Our grant allocated over \$218,700 to cover farmers’ costs for therapy, financial analysis, succession planning, legal assistance, debt assessment and restructuring, tax planning, and farmer to farmer support systems. Table 2 summarizes the services and number of farms and farmers who utilized them. To illustrate the impact of raised awareness and reducing obstacles of cost, 52 farmers from 50 farms received 580 therapy sessions. Most impactfully, providing funded services removed barriers to farmers accessing needed assistance.

A total of 38 farmers and their families accessed legal services to address an array of topics: complete trusts, wills, and end of life documents, new business formations, operating agreements to transfer farm ownership or assets, succession planning, neighbor conflicts, and leases and easements for access to farmland. Fifteen (15) farmers utilized tax advisors to address tax issues or engage in tax planning and/or had an in-depth financial health analysis of their operations (see Table 2). It bears repeating without removing the barriers of access and costs, educational efforts are limited at best.

<i>Service Category</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Number of Farms</i>	<i>Number of Farmers</i>	<i>Number of Sessions</i>
<i>Mental Health</i>	<i>Therapy</i>	50	52	580
<i>Legal</i>	<i>Trusts/Wills/end of life documents</i>	14	27	120
<i>Legal</i>	<i>Business Formation</i>	10	20	30
<i>Legal</i>	<i>Succession Plans</i>	9	46	36
<i>Legal</i>	<i>Neighbor/Town Conflicts</i>	3	8	11
<i>Legal</i>	<i>Leases & Easements</i>	2	4	6
<i>Legal</i>	<i>General Questions</i>	31	31	31
<i>Taxes</i>	<i>Tax Planning</i>	12	36	36
<i>Financial</i>	<i>Financial Analysis</i>	15	45	45
<i>Appraisal</i>	<i>Appraisal</i>	5	18	5

We can educate farmers to recognize signs of stress or suicidal tendencies in themselves or others, but if resources are not there to offset the cost and access to therapy, our impact is inadequate. Likewise, for years we have educated producers on the value of end-of-life documents and the consequences of not having them. Although producers experienced hardships by not having these documents, few addressed this issue until the obstacles of access and cost were removed.

Table 2 – Direct Services for Farmers

“Being able to access more affordable mental health counseling via FRSAN was crucial during some stressful times at the farm. Growing is hard, crop loss is devastating and having to put on a brave face for the public is hard to do day in and day out so having someone to talk to without breaking the bank was important to me.

Thank you for all of your hard work getting these grants approved and monies dispersed!!”

-Anonymous Participant

Creating and aggregating educational resources at UNH Cooperative Extension’s website

As a result of this program, educational resources, developed or aggregated, are on our program’s webpage. From November 1, 2021, to November 3, 2023, our website received 5,462 views from 4,186 separate users. This site can be found at <https://extension.unh.edu/farmer-stress>.

The resource topics listed in Table 3 were identified by farmers and the agricultural service providers with whom they work. Additionally, we provided the opportunity for up to 100 farmers to utilize the Farm Commons legal information portal where they could access articles, podcasts, ask legal questions, and attend legal educational events. Thirty-one (31) farmers utilized this resource/opportunity.

Implementing skill building education for both farmers and agricultural service providers

Table 4 lists the educational programs and their intended audiences that we conducted. In addition to the educational programs, presentations about our program took place at every major agricultural conference and numerous other workshops.

One indicator of the impact and sustainability of our program is that federal and state agencies and organizations are conducting their own professional development around farmer mental health and suicide prevention. This includes the NH Farm Service Agency, and NH Farm Bureau. Our program participants and leaders have been invited as presenters, panelists, and instructors.



Photo Credit: Caroline Cavalieri

“Recently I was reading an article from the Farm Bureau that cited some alarming statistics regarding farmer mental health. I was shocked to read that 87% of farmers fear losing their farm and that 91% feel that financial stress from the farm affects their mental health.

As first-generation farmers, we also have had struggles working through financial analysis of implementing new programs or assessing profitability on our farm and wondered what would happen to all of our hard work building our farm when we pass on the meet the good Lord.

Over the last year, we were fortunate to be able to participate in the Farm Strong-NH Grant to have assistance with a financial review of our farm that gave us direction on potential growth areas, return on investments and continued profitability. We also utilized the legal portion of the grant to put our farm into a trust so that in the unfortunate event of our passing, our three children have structure and guidance on how to handle the assumption of our farm and homestead.

The grant also helped us receive tax planning and record keeping assistance. We were able to work with a professional in our area that has a vast knowledge base on farm tax planning. She was able to offer

us guidance on much improved record keeping and educate us on depreciation schedules. This work enabled us to get compliant with regulations and be able to maintain them going forward. While this way of life is quite rewarding on many levels, we can also honestly say that working through these two things via the grant has allowed us to unburden some of the mental stress that comes with owning and operating a farm. The statistics the Farm Bureau quoted are nothing to shake a stick at, especially with an industry as important as feeding our community, and thoroughly demonstrate the importance and need for these types of grants.

We are grateful to the grant writers/managers, the State of NH, and the UNH Cooperative Extension for this opportunity and encourage the legislature to continue to support these vital grants for our farming and ranching community.

Thank you.” -Kristy & Keith Brodeur of Bascom Road Blueberry Farm

Impacts

- Significantly raised public awareness and destigmatized farmer mental health issues. Today farmer mental health and suicide prevention are discussed in all circles of NH agriculture, irrespective of commodity, political affiliation, years farming, age, race, or gender. State and Federal agencies, decision makers, non-profits, and organizations continue to address this topic and offer support for farmers and agricultural service providers.
- Therapists reported helping farmers develop tools and practices to manage and heal from their disparate causes of stress.
- \$200,000 was funded in the 2023-2025 NH State Biennial Budget for farmer mental health. This funding, housed in NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food's budget, covers the costs of therapy for farm owners as well as financial analysis for 15 farms per year.
- Three farmer-to-farmer peer support network coordinators are pursuing funds on their own to continue the work of their support networks.
- Our model has been recognized nationally, with coordinators and farmer mental health educators contacting us to learn how to replicate our model. Our model has also been studied to be used with non-farming business groups.

The impact of this project is further illuminated through the words of some program participants, service providers and coordinators which are sprinkled throughout the report and further listed in Appendix A.

Conclusion

This was a collaborative project; our primary team members are listed in Table 5. I am inspired and grateful for the passion, innovation and hard work of our partners and collaborators. Further, I am excited that this public-private collaborative model is itself a program outcome that can be replicated and applied to many other societal needs. Table 6 lists the vendors who engaged farmers in this program. We are grateful for the funding that supported this opportunity to make a difference in NH's farming community.



Photo Credit: Jake Kitterman

“The value of this grant was bringing in knowledge and a third party to look at the numbers, as sometimes you think you know your numbers so well that you don't see other possibilities. It was so valuable that others who saw other different operations were able to see our operation, use our data and make suggestions to improve our farm and meet our goals.”

*-Joyce Brady
CJEJ Farm*

Table 3 - Educational Materials in Resource Library

Podcasts

- Protecting Your Long-term Lease
- Leasing Farmland to Your Farm Business
- Farmland Leasing 101
- Decoding Your Food Safety Liability Coverage
- Disabling Dangers on the Farm with Insurance Options
- Legal Considerations for Working Interviews
- Legally Sound Internships for Your Farm
- Hiring Workers Through the H-2A Visa Program
- Unlock the Potential of Farm Employee Handbooks
- Getting on a Roll with Payroll
- Why Some Farms Pay Wages as Salary
- Avoiding Discriminatory Questions During an Interviews
- Avoiding Discrimination in Hiring and Firing on New Hampshire Farms
- Choosing a Business Structure Together
- Farm Couples - Managing Stress through Paperwork
- Farming with Family - Getting in and Getting Out
- Strategies for Paying Yourself as a Business Owner

Publications

- 2023 Legal Guide for NH Agricultural Producers
- New Hampshire Selected Essentials in Farm Employment Law
- Farm Financial Management Report Generator and Analysis Tool

Tip Sheets

- Why Some Farmers Pay Wages as Salary
- Avoiding Discriminatory Questions During an Interview
- Hiring Workers Through the H-2A Visa Program
- Legally Sound Internships on Your Farm
- Legal Considerations for Working Interviews
- Getting on a Roll with Payroll
- Strategies for Paying Yourself as a Business Owner
- Disabling Dangers
- Decoding Your Food Safety Liability Coverage
- Leasing Farmland to Your Farm Business
- Protecting Your Long-Term Lease

Videos

- Last Wills and Testaments & Trusts
- Medicaid Look-back and Disqualification Period
- Revocable vs. Irrevocable Trusts
- How to Transfer Assets to The Next Generation
- What is Probate Court
- Putting Your Assets into a Trust
- Prenuptial Agreements
- Limited Liability Companies

From 11/1/2021, to 11/2023, the Resource Library received 5,462 views by 4,186 separate users.

Table 4 - Educational Programs

<i>Program/Training Title</i>	<i>Audience</i>
<i>Preparing Farm Taxes</i>	<i>New American Farmers</i>
<i>Resolving Conflicts with Co-farmers</i>	<i>New American Farmers</i>
<i>Effective Family Communication</i>	<i>New American Farmers</i>
<i>Holistic Whole Farm Planning Series</i>	<i>NH Queer Farmers</i>
<i>Farm Stress and Resiliency</i>	<i>NH Agricultural Service Providers</i>
<i>Family Communication and Conflict Resolution/Management Techniques</i>	<i>NH Agricultural Service Providers</i>
<i>Ergonomic Farmer Health Series</i>	<i>NH Farmers</i>
<i>Recognizing Stress</i>	<i>NH Farmers</i>

Table 5 - Primary Project Team

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>
<i>Seth Wilner</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Olivia Saunders</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Sherrie Fontaine</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Janet Davis</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Julie Sabol</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Kim Johnson</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Elaina Enzien</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Dan Birnstihl</i>	<i>UNH Cooperative Extension</i>
<i>Commissioner Shawn Jasper</i>	<i>NH Department of Agriculture Markets and Food</i>
<i>Gail McWilliam-Jellie</i>	<i>NH Department of Agriculture Markets and Food</i>
<i>Josh Marshall</i>	<i>NH Department of Agriculture Markets and Food</i>
<i>Andy Pressman</i>	<i>National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)</i>
<i>Rob Johnson</i>	<i>NH Farm Bureau</i>
<i>Cara Cargill</i>	<i>NH Agricultural Mediation Program</i>
<i>Nancy LaRowe</i>	<i>Vital Communities</i>
<i>Ray Connor</i>	<i>Farmer and Therapist</i>
<i>Eve Klotz</i>	<i>Farmer and Therapist</i>
<i>Amy DeLisle</i>	<i>Home Healthcare, Hospice & Community Services</i>

Table 6 - Contracted Vendors

Legal

- Ansell & Anderson
- BCM Environmental
- Burnham Legal, PLLC
- Caldwell Law
- Farm Commons, Inc
- KSW Law
- Marbury & Marbury, PLLC
- Martin, Lord, Osman, PA
- McSwiney & Wood Law, LLC
- Patricia M. Panciocco Law, LLC
- Rye Law
- Seven Rivers Law Office
- Sheehan Phinney Bass & Green, PA
- Waystack & Frizzel
- Wescott Law

Mental Health

- Alyssa Hamel
- Andrea Parsons
- Astrid Wolf-O'Hern, LLC
- Cecelia Tarr, Insights Group
- Clement Kigugu
- Counseling Associates of New London, PLLC
- Elyse Corbett
- Eve Klotz
- Goodwin Counseling Services, LLC
- Hanover Center for Cognitive Behavioral Therapies, P.C.
- Mark Horan, Mt. Washington Valley Psychological Services
- Nate Manlove, Mountain Wellness Associates
- Sheila H. Gardner
- Thomas M. Christian
- William "Bill" Demars
- William Hyde

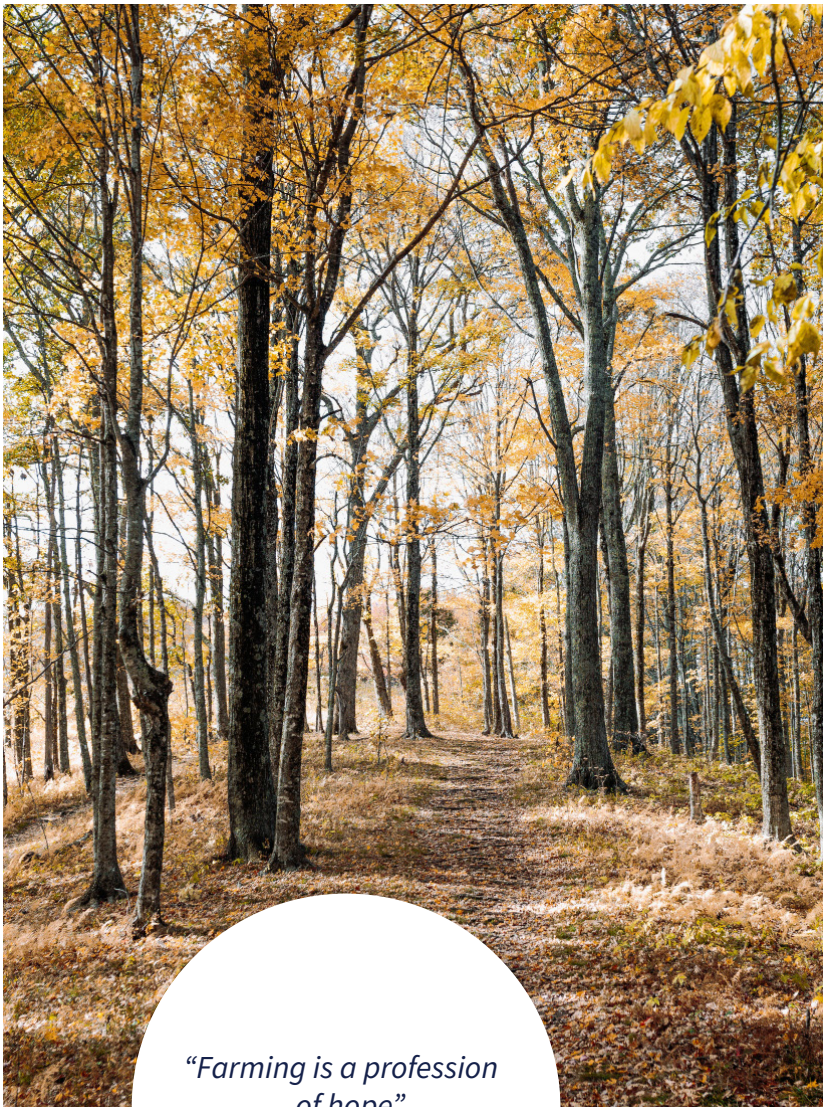
Financial & Tax

- Faith Gilbert
- Rose Wilson
- Mike Sciabarrasi
- Farm Credit East
- Cohos Advisors, PLLC, Michelle McVetty

Ergonomics

- Labor-Movement LLC, Cynthia Flores





“Farming is a profession of hope”

- Brian Brett



Appendix A

Farmer Testimonials

“It was another exceptionally challenging Summer for farmers in New Hampshire in 2023. Beginning with the late Spring hard frost that eliminated orchard fruit and hammered other just planted tender crops. Midsummer was met with heavy rains that brought flooding to our region and our fields throughout the months of July and August. These constant rains wreaked havoc on crop farmers, hay, and forage ground. Not to mention the mental toll it took on our hearts and our bodies.

I serve on the FSA board for my county and with my family, I operate a fruit and vegetable farm. Also, I have a whole extended family of farmers down the road who run a maple and dairy farm and it seems as though we- farmers- are all carrying a heavy load.

FRSAN has been a revelation for Edgewater Farm. Succession planning that had been tabled for years was funded and assisted and actually completed. Some of us had our first experiences with therapy and were given tools to move through stress and help manage trickier times. We also took advantage of an ergonomics specialist that came to the farm and gave us tips on how to use our bodies. This was amazing!

Overall, this program is absolutely beneficial to our farm and other farms in our community.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for our nearly 50-year-old farm to learn some new tricks to keep myself, my family, and our crew moving forward as we step into the next generation of Edgewater Farm, and all the totally unpredictable weather events that come with it.”

*- Ray Sprague
Edgewater Farm*

Appendix A Cont'd

“Our farm was started by my grandfather in 1950. My grandparents passed on the farm to my dad and uncle who managed it with my mom and aunt. Since they took over management of the farm it has evolved several times, with the most significant change being the addition of a milk processing plant in 1998. My brothers and my cousins all wanted to come back to the farm. To help support this we added a maple syrup operation in the early 2000s and an egg operation in 2007. Both enterprises have grown significantly and are now large successful businesses.

Three years ago, my parents and uncle and aunt began conversations regarding transferring the farm. It was a chaotic, confusing, and difficult thing to tackle.

This grant allowed us to work with specialists from UNH Cooperative Extension, Yankee Farm Credit, Farm Credit East, a lawyer knowledgeable in farm transfer, and a private appraiser. We were able to hold really hard conversations that were facilitated to help us all have a voice and reach decisions. We were able to work to get the different businesses integrated into a record-keeping system and improve our financial recordkeeping. We also got super helpful tax advice on how to set up business structures and transfer assets to be as tax friendly as possible. We got our new business entities and operating agreements done with a great lawyer. And in the end, after three years, the farm was officially transferred to me and my two brothers and two cousins last winter.

We are so thankful for this funding. It by no means covered the costs, but it got us started and kept us going and introduced us to public and private people to help us along the way!”

-Liz McNamara of Macs Happy Acres

“Being able to get an appraisal of the farm and some consulting input on transfer options helps us more intelligently weigh our options and have better discussions with any potential successors.”

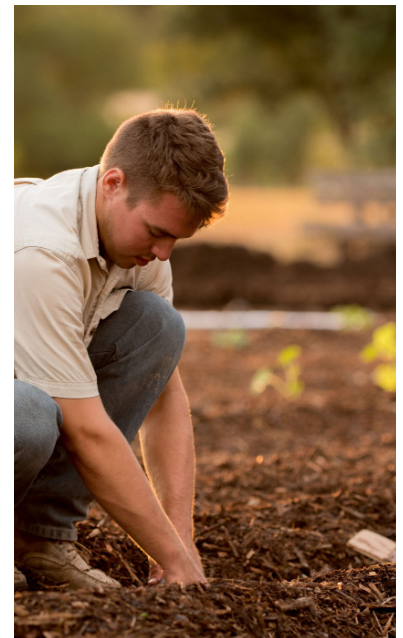
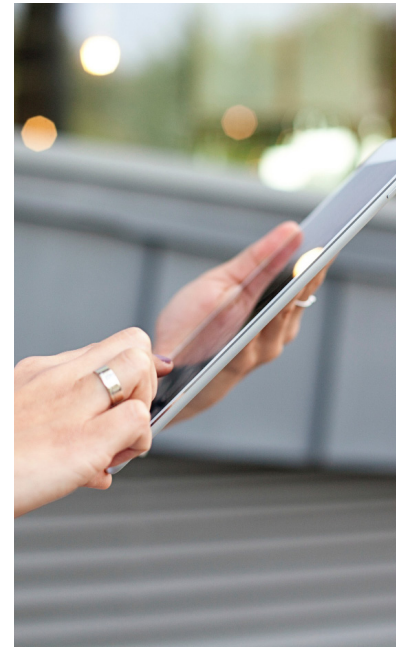
-Paul Franklin of Riverview Farm

“Thank you for all your help in assisting us with our farm legacy plans. Without this grant program, we would have delayed any thoughts about trusts and legacy, not knowing where to turn, perhaps to a disastrous end. All of the experts we have dealt with in these efforts have been tremendously helpful in making extraordinarily complex processes understandable and in guiding us through to an end that fits our family plan perfectly.

Your help was especially poignant in helping us sit down as a family and come to common ground on where we are headed and how to get there. We are wrapping up legal documents that will put our conserved farmland in the hands of generation next and are putting the rest of our properties in a trust as we decide our next steps in retirement. The work through the grant program has sparked additional interest in the younger generation and they are preparing to take over the business portion of the farm over the next several years. Thank you, thank you.

This has been an amazing, eye opening and satisfying ride.”

-Becky & Ben Nelson of Beaver Pond Farm





Appendix A Cont'd

Service Provider Testimonials

“Participating in FR SAN has given me the unique opportunity of being and sharing both my experience as a farmer and a therapist. In typical outpatient therapy the identity of a therapist’s “other” life is usually kept private because the theory is that sharing a therapist’s personal information takes away from the client’s experience and muddies the water of their healing and recovery. With farmers, a lifestyle shared with one another is an important part of the work because most people, including therapists do not understand why a person would slog through life, well, farming. It is a unique life and most of the stressors that farmers experience is intrinsic in the experience. Many therapists will tell a farmer, change the lifestyle and you will reduce the stressors. Although true, this is not what farmers need to hear because there is no way they can shed that lifestyle which in many cases is intergenerational and fundamental to the fabric of the person’s being since infancy. I have been honored to work with farmers both of us, from the get-go, confident in the understanding that shedding the stressful life of farming is not a consideration.

Working through the stress, supporting, validating the experience of farming as an unchallenged given (as fundamental as ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, cultural reality, etc.) is the work we do. I am also a big supporter of peer support for farmers as a method to assist with the intrinsic stressors of farm life. Newer generation farmers are using collaborative models among themselves to create this support and to me, that is the future for farmers going forward in a shared life working with each other’s strengths to feed their communities.”

-Eve Klotz, LICSW Farmer

“The FR SAN program provided an amazing opportunity for a specialized community to get necessary legal needs met. Family farms provide an amazing resource to everyone; however, farmers are incredibly busy people and trying to make the time and find the funds to handle issues like business succession planning is extremely hard for them. It is easier to focus on their day-to-day and to put off planning that would allow the farm to continue successfully in the event of a death or family tragedy. I met with over fifteen separate farms, comprising more than twenty different families, all with unique needs. It was a wonderful opportunity to help them get these legal matters handled, they were incredibly relieved and grateful for the support that they received from the FR SAN program to get these necessary issues addressed. I am thankful for the opportunity that I had to help these farmers and their farms set the stage for continued success and to provide them with the legal tools that they need to hopefully keep these farms in the family and running for generations to come.”

-Stephanie K. Burnham, Esquire

Appendix A Cont'd

Support Group Coordinators

“Over the period of two years, I worked with 25 refugee farmers to facilitate health therapy and education services to address root causes. The farmers I worked with are African and Nepal women and men, most of them were women. They came from different countries, Burundi, Rwanda, DRC Congo, Sudan, Somalia, and Nepal. All the farmers I worked with have experienced war, racism, separation, isolation, and grief from losing family members (husband children and sibling) from war and others who vanished.

These farmers lived in refugee camps and experienced a lot of challenges such as poverty, hunger, and lack of possessions. The participants with whom I worked farm separately but shared common farmland and infrastructure. Their stress and anxiety really affected farmers' relationship with each other.

Through this program and the resources they received, even though it was incredibly challenging and difficult, as time went on, they became more open to sharing about what happened to them and how it's like for them daily. They now have a more understanding that they do not have to carry their burdens alone.

Another success is that the conflicts they used to have while out on the farm together have decreased tremendously. They have become more patient with their colleagues in acknowledging when someone is in a bad mood and now seeks to know why they are in the bad mood instead of lashing out to match that same bad energy. They now share with one another, if someone is missing something, whoever has it, they are willing to lend a hand.

*Thanks to the therapy sessions which helped farmers be sensitive and mindful of each other's needs they were able to: **share and create watering schedule without competing (!), share the plots without arguments(!), care for each other, order supplies in bulk together, strengthened relationship with each other, and cooperatively work together to manage greenhouse maintenance. Culturally appropriate approach was the breakthrough for this audience, as was patience and trust for all the farmers to listen, commit and stay focused.***

*- Anthony Munene, Project Director for New Americans Sustainable Agriculture Project
Organization for Refugees and Immigrant Success*

“When Seth and the folx at UNH reached out to us back in 2021, we were excited to jump in and help not only support other queer farmers in NH, but also to be part of building a supportive queer farming community in the state. Since our first meeting, that community has certainly grown through gatherings, knowledge sharing, and transitions in, as well as the sharing of, the coordination and leadership of the group. We have been so grateful to be a part of this group, certainly in its creation, but even more so as it has grown. We continue to benefit from the network and the friendships that we have formed as a result of the connections and community.”

-Liz & Rachel Freierman of Highwater Farm

“Therapists and support staff, alike, in this program regularly expressed gratitude at having this unique opportunity to work with farmers, a population we do not always have the opportunity to serve. It has been a privilege to work with these families who may have previously believed this resource was not for them.

As someone who grew up in a small family business, it has been a unique opportunity in my career to draw on that experience in supporting this group.”

*- Betsy Harrison, MA LCMHC, NBC-HWC
Counseling Associates*

Appendix A Cont'd

"I want to express deep appreciation for the vital support provided by the NH Farm Strong program. The financial support programs played a crucial role enabling Vernon Family Farm to establish the Farmer Fireside chats. This was a crucial space where local farmers openly shared their challenges and experiences. This initiative not only allowed for meaningful idea exchange, but also served as a support system for our community. We were able to participate and staff this time appropriately and provide substantial wood for the fires. These chats were extremely popular during the cooler 'off season' months of November – April.

The funds also facilitated mental health coverage, addressing a critical need in a profession where the pressure can be overwhelming. I wish this were still available for us, the farmers, and our family. We were able to use our social media platform to share with the greater public about the programs that NH Farm Strong offered and involve many other needy farmers to obtain access to these monies as well.

Thanks to the NH Farm Strong program, our farm became a hub not just for agricultural discussions, but also for the well-being of our farmers, ensuring they have the resources they need to navigate both the practical and emotional aspects of their work."

Nicole Vernon of Vernon Family Farm

References:

Peterson C, Sussell A, Li J, Schumacher PK, Yeoman K, Stone DM. Suicide Rates by Industry and Occupation — National Violent Death Reporting System, 32 States, 2016. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2020; 69:57–62. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6903a1external> icon.

Appendix B

Links to Media Outreach Available Online

- https://issuu.com/unhmag/docs/unh-ce_radius_5_2020_issuu
- <https://apnews.com/article/health-new-hampshire-mental-health-keene-us-department-of-agriculture-6808061d3cc3231a15279e4159979c7a>
- <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2023-07-29/extreme-weather-exacerbating-farmer-mental-health-crisis>
- <https://spark.unh.edu/issue/2023-research-review/cultivating-well-being/>
- <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2021-09-17/nh-farmers-mental-health>
- <https://extension.unh.edu/blog/2021/11/extension-helps-farmers-mental-health>
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