

“The role of agricultural advisers in dealing with farmer stress- A case study of the Teagasc Kerry/Limerick region.”



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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the title page, and I have not obtained a degree elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in this submitted work

CLAIRE MC AULIFFE

10/09/2018

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKIS- Agricultural Knowledge Information System

AEAS- Agricultural extension and advisory services

HSE - Health Service Executive

MHFA - Mental Health First Aid

CSO - Central Statistics Office

ACA - Agricultural consultants associations

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Purpose: The desired outcome of this study was to have evaluated advisers beliefs in what their role should entail when dealing with farmer stress based on their own experiences. It is also expected to formulate a clear set of recommendations on what supports the adviser should have when dealing with farmer stress.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: This investigation is a case study of the Teagasc Kerry/limerick region advisers. The methods used to collect data for this case study were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Findings: The study found that while advisers believed they did have a role to play with farmer stress, it was only with regard to technical issues on farm that may be causing stress to the farmer. The research found that advisers interact with farmer stress on a weekly basis and are not comfortable with their level of skill for dealing with this element of their work with farmer clients. The most frequent causes of farmer stress according to advisers were established as, in descending order: poor weather, inspections, disease, succession, health and death. One of the main findings was that all advisers felt they needed more training in relation to farmer stress encounters in their role.

Originality/ Value: The study quantified the frequency with which advisers encounter farmers stress and qualified the types of issues which caused farmer stress within Kerry and Limerick. This is an original piece of work which had not previously been reviewed in Ireland. It is hoped it will bring value to better understanding the needs and resources required by advisers to be effective when farmer stress is encountered.

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the study and outline the background and rationale for undertaking this case study. It sets out the aim of the study, the research problem, questions and objectives of the research. It also sets out the methodology of the study, the limitations and the utility of the study. It provides a profile of the Teagasc Kerry/Limerick advisory region. The principal purpose of this study is to explore the role of the agricultural advisers in dealing with farmer stress. It sets out to explore advisers' views on what their role should be when they encounter farmer stress and to establish the frequency with which they encounter farmer stress. It is expected that a better understanding of agricultural advisers' role with regard to farmer stress will be generated from this study.

1.1 Kerry/Limerick Advisory region

The Teagasc Kerry/Limerick advisory region offices are located as shown in the following image:



Figure 10. Teagasc Kerry/Limerick region, Source Teagasc (2018e)

Agriculture is a major indigenous industry in the region and agricultural activity makes a major contribution to the economy (Teagasc, 2018e). The value of agricultural output in counties Kerry and Limerick in 2013 was €791 .2.m. This accounts for 11% of the national figure (Teagasc, 2018e). According to the 2011 Census of Population, the population of the Region was 336,354. It is estimated that 14,403 of these are active farmers – 4.3% of the total population (Teagasc, 2018f). The type of farming in the region is conveyed in figure 2:

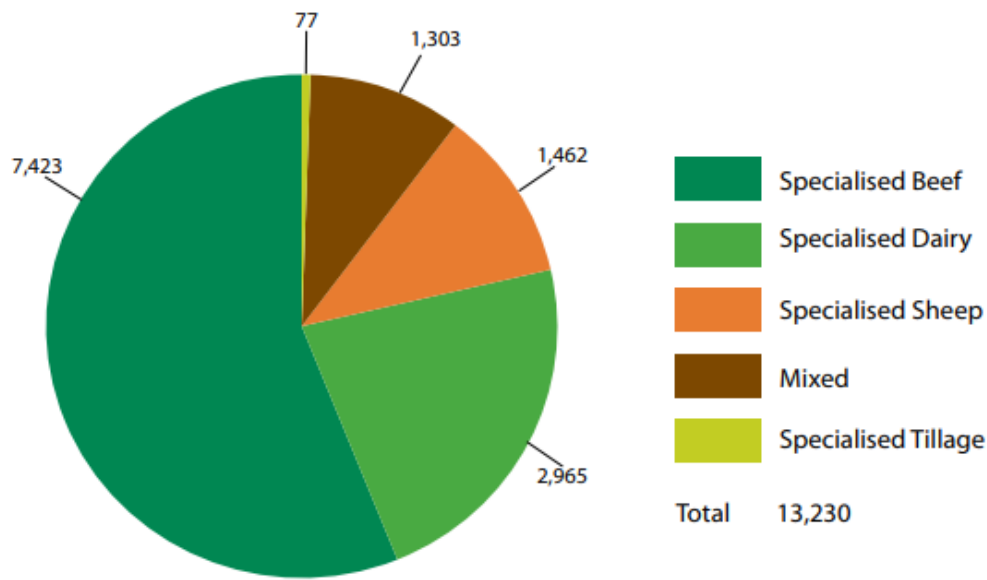


Figure 11: Farming enterprise Kerry/Limerick, source (CSO, 2010)

Large variation in soil types exist within the Region. In mid Limerick, free draining limestone soils give way to gley soils and areas of blanket peat as one approaches the border with Kerry. Gley soils again predominate in North and mid-Kerry. Further south, mountain ranges predominate in areas where hill sheep production is the predominant enterprise (Teagasc, 2018f). The average rainfall for the Teagasc heavy soils monitor farmers in Kerry is 1196mm and Limerick 1320mm (Teagasc, 2018g), compared to the Irish national average rainfall of 1075mm across Ireland (Met Éireann, 2018). It is this heavy soil type, land located at higher altitude and above average rainfall that can make for difficult farming conditions within areas of the region.

1.2 Background to the study

Agricultural advisers work through providing extension services to farmer clients in various manners. For the purposes of this paper, extension is defined as “the process of enabling change in individuals, communities and industries involved with primary industries and natural resource management”(Hunt et al, 2011). The role of an agricultural adviser in Ireland by all descriptions found, (Teagasc (2018a); Grad Ireland (2018); ACA (2018)) is a technical knowledge transfer and farm

business improvement driven role. In the day to day role of an adviser dealing with clients, it seems inevitable role can drift from a professional adviser to a friend, confidant and counsellor type role (Carlock, 2007). The level an adviser chooses to engage with a farmers stress issues could be attributed to the amount of empathy an adviser has. Riggall (2015) stated that “one can show empathy without sharing the viewpoint of the other person.” The agricultural adviser may not be professionally trained to deal with farm stress or mental health issues but may have to address them as it occurs whilst working with farmers. Molgaard, (1997) found that as extension agents had no regulatory responsibilities they were viewed by many rural people as a trusted friend, a place to turn to when things looked bleak.

Farmers can seek advice for their farm business in methods of best practice and problem solving with trained professionals, some of whom can be agricultural advisers. In Ireland the main public advisory body is Teagasc. This is a semi-state funded body and is the national authority for agricultural development in the country. These advisers are available to farmer clients for technical agricultural advice. Advisers encounter farmer stress and deal with this farmer stress as part of their job even though it may be outside of their professional remit. Australian research by Hunt (2011) found that agricultural extension agents have had and continue to fill, a broad suite of roles and functions, with many of their activities outside their core areas of responsibility. This role of the adviser towards farmer stress encounters had not previously been researched in an Irish context.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

This research aimed to explore the relationship and role Teagasc advisers had towards dealing with farmer stress, through a case study of the advisers working in the Kerry/Limerick region of Teagasc. This study aimed to quantify the occurrence of farmer stress in the role of the agricultural adviser and how equipped advisers felt to deal with farmer stress. It also aimed to explore the advisers’ viewpoint on what their role should be when it comes to dealing with issues outside of their professional expectation and what supports they felt were needed. This study also evaluated what the role of extension services should be when farmer stress occurs, from the extension agents’ point of view. The final objective was to identify what tools advisers would find useful to better equip them for encounters of farmer stress. The research objectives are conveyed in figure three:-

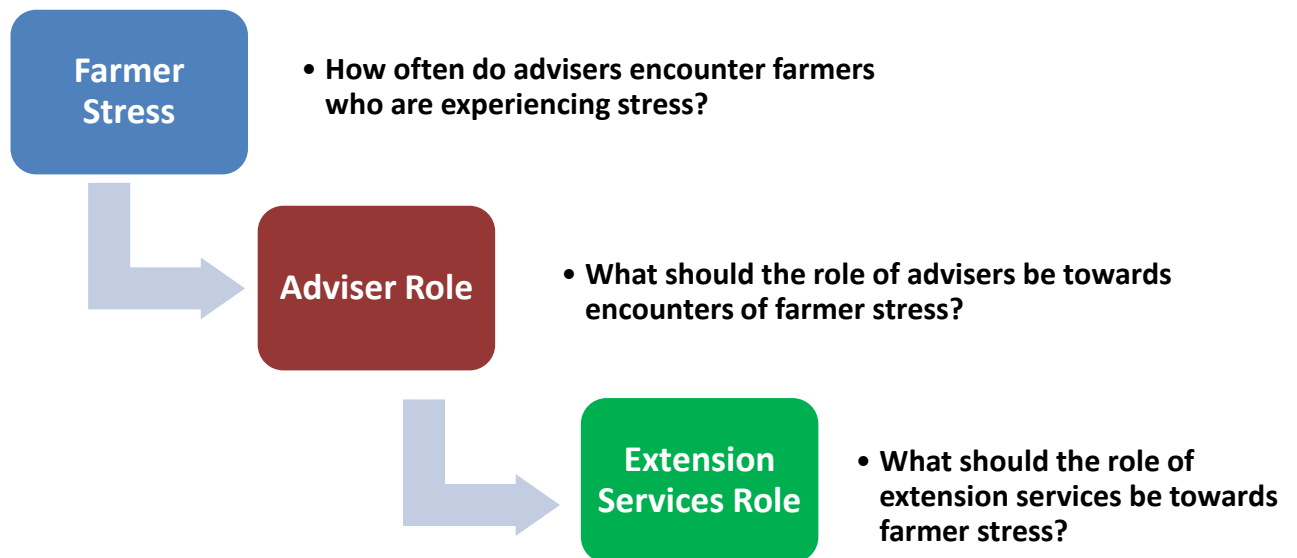


Figure 12: Objectives of study

1.4 Utility of Study

It is hoped that the study will lead to further investigation into the role of agricultural advisers and dealing with farmer stress. It is also hoped that the study will be utilised as a reason to upskill advisers in methods of stress detection.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter firstly reviews the associated literature regarding farmer stress, then extension services experiences with farmer stress and thirdly the chapter identifies what previous research has revealed on the role of extension services towards farmer stress. Finally the advisers’ role towards encounters of farmer stress is reviewed from the literature.

2.1 The occurrences of farmer stress:

Traditionally, Ireland has reported high rates of admissions to acute psychiatric facilities for mental illness in general (Morrissey, 2015). Ireland has a serious self-harm and suicide problem; with around 11,000 episodes of deliberate self-harm presenting at hospital A&E departments each year (HSE, 2007). Psychological or emotional conditions rose by 27,511 to 123,515, in the five years to 2016, an increase of 28.7% (CSO, 2016). Previous research on the small-area profile of depression in Ireland found that individuals with the highest rates of self-reported depression have poor access to acute psychiatric facilities (Morrissey et al, 2010). Mental Health Ireland (2018) defines stress as a feeling of being under abnormal pressure. Pressure turns into stress when you feel unable to cope. Another popular definition is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands

exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilise (Colgan, 2015). This can be common place in farming where the conditions farmers work in are unpredictable and physically demanding. According to Berkowitz (1984), stress in the farm setting is defined as a set of physical or mental reactions to anything that places demands upon a person which exceed his or her ability to cope. Stress affects us in a number of ways, both physically and emotionally, and in varying intensities (Colgan, 2015). Furvey et al. (2016) stated that “stress is the normal human response to difficult circumstance, but prolonged stress can undermine mental health and reduce the farmer’s ability to deal with dangerous situations”. Farming is the most dangerous industry in Ireland with a higher fatality rate than any other economic sector (HSA, 2018). A large proportion of all fatal workplace accidents occur in agriculture, even though a small proportion of the workforce is employed in farming (HSA, 2018). Due to the nature of their work farmers often work long hours, work alone, with many having limited or no support from colleagues or close neighbours. Farmers are in the more at risk category of having a workplace accident (Boys, 2007). The varied, unpredictable and often challenging weather conditions can lead to stress amongst farmers. The main stressors identified among farmers internationally according to Furvey et al. (2016) are: their evaluation of the state of the household economy, presence of unsafe working conditions, injury, ill health or disability.

In a UK survey of farmers attending an agricultural show, coping with paperwork emerged as the highest ranked stressor (Gregoire, 2002). In the US it was found that stress becomes especially palpable when commodity prices are low (Pish, 2018). Another study in the US by Leeuwis (2008) found there was no simple and ready-made solution for the intensification of rain-fed agriculture under highly diverse social and natural conditions. The distress found in Australia arising from drought is likely to be associated with mental illness such as depression and anxiety (Sartore, Kelly, Stain et al., 2008). Furvey et al. (2016) found that as farm stress increases it leads to mental distress, which in turn can then lead to depression, anxiety and expected injuries. He also found that as social support decreases and the threat to finances increases the likelihood of mental distress among farmers’ increases. These findings are conveyed in figure four. Many farmers live and work in rural areas where access to health resources and care can be limited. This is further intensified by the fact that having mental health issues carries a large stigma and may prevent farmers seeking help. Rural and remote communities suffer additional disadvantages due to their isolation and limited access to health and mental health resources (Judd, 2003). This can also lead to a loss in social support because as fewer resources are available they are less likely to leave the farm (Judd, 2003).

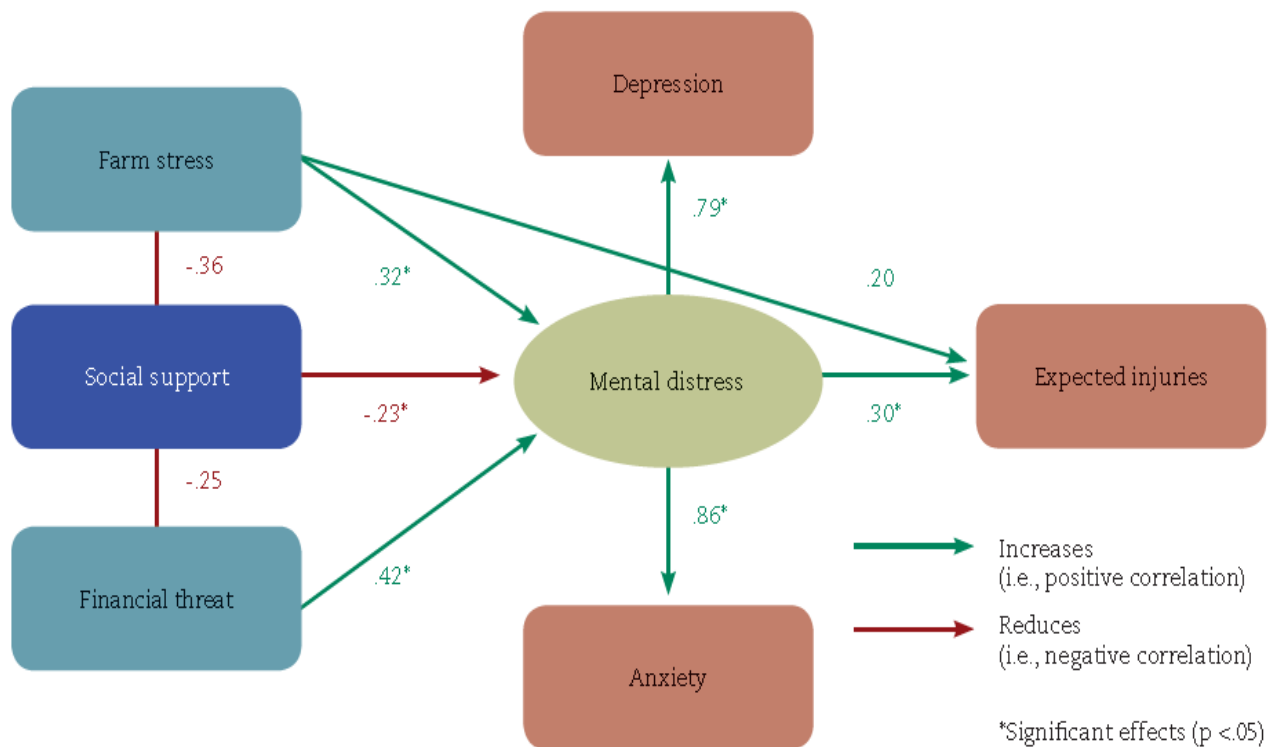


Figure 13 The effects of financial threat, farm stress and social support on expected farm injuries, Source Furvey et al. (2016).

Given the constant change, fluctuations and challenges in farming it is easy to see why a farmer could experience stress, especially when factors that affect their livelihood are outside of their control. Farming is at the mercy of the many uncontrollable elements such as the weather, world markets, problems with animals, disease and death, all of which can contribute to feelings of stress amongst farmers. Hossain et al (2009, b) found that the distress and trauma associated with natural disasters such as prolonged drought affect the entire rural community. Raphael (1986) found that natural disasters can give rise to feelings of loss of control and mastery, fear, helplessness and futility, and in the long term there may be an increased risk of psychiatric morbidity for farmers. "In the last few decades, farming life has dramatically changed (Blainey, 2001) as farmers' age, work harder and longer, and the family farm disappears (Brumby et al, 2005)". Hossain et al (2009, a) found there is a stigma surrounding mental health issues that "inhibits the seeking of help, a tradition of stoicism and resilience in farmers further inhibits help-seeking behaviour." These factors may contribute to the situation in Ireland which places "farmers among those most likely to die by suicide" according to the Irish independent (2018). Farm men and women have been identified by therapists and educators as a group which is vulnerable to personal stress (Keating, 1987).

In the US following farm crisis's there was a development of intervention programmes on stress management (Fetsch, 1985; Lencucha, 1986; Light & Thorndal, no date). Fetsch's program, for example, is based on helping farm families develop strategies to manage farm stress. These strategies include time management, goal setting, and stress management techniques such as relaxation and exercise (Keating, 1987). He argues that the skilled educator should become informed about research on stress symptoms and stress management techniques of farm families. The adviser can then use this information to both inform farm families and encourage healthy coping strategies that they may already use (Fetsch, 1985).

2.2 Extension services experience with farmer stress:

Generally, agricultural extension can be defined as the “delivery of information inputs to farmers.” (Anderson, & Gershon, 2007). Christoplos (2010) states that agricultural extension and advisory services (AEAS) refers to any organization in the public or private sectors that facilitates farmers' and other rural actors' access to knowledge, information and technologies, and assists them to develop their own technical, organizational and management skills and practices, so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being. In Ireland extension takes the agricultural knowledge and information systems (AKIS) approach, in which the farmer is centrally positioned with access to multiple sources of knowledge and information from research, extension, and education (Furvey et al. 2016). The role of the agricultural adviser has changed significantly over the past number of years (*Manning, 2013*) and is much more than an information provider. For example, Paine et al. (2007) believed that extension supports resilience through bolstering adaptive capacity of rural producers, primarily through the use of learning relationships with farmers. They cited strong links between resilient farming systems and extension, claiming that learning from the past, technology evaluation, participation by farmers, and information systems, are integral to adaptive capacity and building resilience (Paine *et al.*, 2007). The role of extension services is invaluable in teaching farmers how to improve their productivity however the role of the adviser as an agent of change is crucial in this adaption process (Wilkening 1956; Caldwell, 2003).

In the early days extension was mainly seen as a function that fostered knowledge and technology transfer between farmers and researchers, or among farmers themselves (Leeuwis, et al. 2008,). It is also relevant that in the past, extension and extension theory has focused on supporting individual farm management, and on the promotion of farm-level innovations. Many of the challenges facing farmers today are beyond the farm gate, such as environmental regulations, world market fluctuations and managing natural resources. However agricultural extension agents have had and

continue to fill, a broad suite of roles and functions (Hunt et al 2011). Many of their activities may lie outside their core areas of responsibility. We have now come to realise that these tasks are not as simple as perhaps assumed earlier (Hunt et al 2011). Leeuwis et al. (2008) further theorises that “most of the innovations needed in present day agriculture have collective dimensions (i.e. they require new forms of interaction, organisation and agreement between multiple actors)”. Leeuwis et al. (2008) also believes that extension should place a greater emphasis on collective processes requiring that we pay more attention to issues like dealing with diverging interests, different actor perspectives, and conflicts, and hence shift our attention to processes like conflict resolution, organisation building, social learning and negotiation. “Playing a role in innovation design and process management towards innovation would mark a break-away from traditional forms of extension” (Leeuwis, et al. 2008,). He also stated that when challenges change, the organisations which are supposed to support farmers in dealing with them will have to change as well. This incorporates the idea that extension has to move with the rapid change that is occurring in the farming world or become a redundant entity.

There is a change in extension evident towards varied knowledge transfer methods, the move from more technical specialisation to supporting farm families in a wider context. This is supported by Coutts et al. (2005) who theorised that extension agents need to build capacity in rural communities and defined capacity-building more simply as increasing the abilities or resources of individuals, organisations and communities to manage change. Extension is concerned with building capacity for change through improved communication and information flow between industry, agency and community stakeholders (Hunt et al 2011). Manning et al (2013) also states that “in order to change farming practices/business strategy, one needs to understand that provision of knowledge alone is insufficient as also found by Pilling *et al.* (2008). Manning et al (2013) furthers his theory that both behaviour and knowledge flow need to be considered concurrently in order to develop an effective and resilient mechanism of influencing change. Bagdoniene and Jakstaite (2009) state that “while providing professional services, the most important role falls not to the technology, but to staff competence, experience, creativity etc.” This means that it is not the scientific information alone that clients appreciate, there needs to be other components present for the client to believe that they have been provided with a quality service. Bagdoniene and Jakstaite (2009) continue by affirming that professional service providers need not only technical, related to solution of the problem, but also communication skills. It is now widely accepted that co-operation between farmers and extension agents is essential to the formulation and solving of farmer problems (Cerf, 1999).

2.3 Advisers experiences with farmer stress:

It has been found by Turpin et al. (2007) that employees from unrelated services who have regular contact with rural residents are often the first access points for those with mental health issues. These service providers being, as mentioned, the first port of call for emotional support and referral by farmers, remain limited by their qualifications, skills and role (Fuller & Broadbent, 2006 & Turpin et al. 2007). They are at the forefront of contact with farming communities, so would benefit greatly from knowledge regarding assisting them: training them in mental health issues and individual resilience would provide the increased knowledge and skills to recognize and support those farmers in need of help, according to Hossain et al (2009, a). Hossain et al (2009, a) found that “the issues that affect farmers also affect the people who interact with them.” There was a strong view by Hossain et al (2009, a) that the pressures facing rural farmers and their families were also impacting on field staff. It was suggested that the most directly affected field staff were the farm financial counsellors who were bearing the brunt of farm stress on a day-by-day basis. Health workers considered field staff to be in a vulnerable position and being vicariously traumatised: “they're finding it really, really difficult... to deal with the stroppy client, the crying client, the person the same age as their father bursting into tears and that sort of thing” (Hossain et al. 2009, a). There was also a suggestion from the organizations that the use of sick leave may be reflective of the stress these staff members are under.

Michigan State University Extension has helped in the development of a webinar specially designed for people who work with agricultural producers and farm families who want to know more about managing farm-related stress and learn ways to approach and communicate with those in need. Hossain et al (2009, a) further states that in rural organizations and landholder sectors there is a general lack of awareness and understanding of mental health issues, which could be addressed through training. Hossain et al (2009, a) found that training in mental health areas was perceived as beneficial; and to develop an understanding of the various issues that farmers face should be a key element of training, in order to promote empathy. The study by Hossain et al (2009, a) has indicated strongly that providing training in mental health issues to rural service providers can be very beneficial to their landholder clients and their social network, to them personally and to the colleagues with whom they interact. It was also found by Hossain et al (2009, a) that greater awareness of mental health issues amongst their clientele was unanimously seen as a potential benefit of training field staff. The unanimous hope was that training would provide people with the ability to understand mental health issues and recognize symptoms, as well as have the skills to appropriately refer a person for additional help.

In Australia rural organizations and agencies are already concerned about the mental health of their staff, and have put some internal protocols in place to address this. The MHFA (Mental Health First Aid) training programme was developed by Kitchener and Jorm and has been used extensively (Kitchener & Jorm, 2006). The MHFA programme is aimed at enhancing people's knowledge and skills in recognising the symptoms of mental illness, provide initial help, and offer a referral pathway for appropriate professional help. Farm advisers, who have regular contact with farmers, are in a position to be the first to recognise a mental health concern and provide initial support, yet they are limited by their qualifications, skills and role in what support they might offer (Turpin et al, 2007). Being at the forefront of contact with farming communities, farm advisers could benefit from the knowledge of how to assist people in the community. By training them in mental health issues and individual resilience, it was anticipated that they would have increased knowledge and skills in recognising and supporting farmers who are experiencing difficult times (Turpin et al, 2007). Molgaard, (1997) stated that many states provided training to staff including listening skills, effective referrals, and dealing with conflict situations. While some staff were concerned that extension was trying to turn into counsellors, it soon became evident to most that a "rudimentary level of counselling skill were essential in order to deal effectively with distressed clients" (Summers, 1990).

Hossain (2009, b) also found that for farm advisers training had significantly improved their mental health literacy and skills in dealing with people with a mental illness. It was found that irrespective of agricultural advisers age, sex, work experience and mental health experience, the farm advisers gained similar literacy in mental illness at the completion of training (Hossain, 2009, b). The participants expressed that they "now knew how to recognise symptoms associated with mental illness, provide initial help, and offer a referral pathway for appropriate professional help to increase wellbeing among farming communities" (Hossain, 2009, b). Molgard (1997) found that often individuals who would not consider seeking mental health assistance directly would talk about their problems to extension staff after farm meetings or on the phone. One of the most effective ways in which extension staff in local communities addressed mental health needs of rural citizens was in comprehensive networking and coalition building at the grass roots level. In many areas local community resource committees, typically called together by extension staff compiled resource directories for local services including sources of mental health counselling (Molgard, 1997). "Social support has been shown to both alleviate mental distress and help solve farming problems" (Teagasc, 2018d).

2.4 Adviser role towards encounters of farmer stress:

This social aspect of advisory work and relationship development is an area that has become increasingly important in recent years and is particularly relevant for engagement with farmer stress (Manning et al, 2013). The development of a relationship with clients is the backbone of excellent adviser-farmer interaction and problem solving. "Farming is a socio-cultural practice rather than just a technical activity" according to Vanclay, (2004). Large amounts of research have been carried out on the relationship between the adviser and the farmer and how this relationship develops; (Magne & Ingrand, 2004; Cerf, 2011; Leeuwis, 2011; Manning, Soon & Fisher, 2013; Kvam, Hansen & Straete, 2017). Advisory competence can be divided into professional and relational competence. Each is essential to the relationship building process (Kvam, 2017). Professional competence relates to the ability to share technical knowledge and experience about a topic while relational competence requires an understanding of how to communicate and interact with different clients (Kvam, 2017). This is the social aspect of an extension agent's work coming into play.

This relationship is a complex one that takes time to develop. Manning (2013) states that trust is a fragile human feeling especially as the party seeking knowledge and information by the nature of the process can make themselves and their businesses vulnerable to others. Bagdoniene and Jakstaite (2009) state that the more service provider and client trust in one another, the more they appreciate their relationship. Ko (2014) reaffirms this sentiment by stating that relationships built on competence and benevolence trust have been found to positively impact knowledge transfer. Increased emphasis has been put on the importance of the relationship between the adviser and the client through the promotion of participatory methods of interaction (Manning et al. 2013). It is this social aspect and developed trust that can lead the farmer to divulge information outside of the business of farming, which may be of a personal and mental health nature.

Manning et al (2013) furthers his finding that the ability of the adviser to provide knowledge alone is not sufficient to bring about either business change or improvements in practices. He argues that the adviser needs to identify the "specific dynamic of human and social capital in the business and also how they can engage to increase its value" (Manning et al, 2013). Carlock (2007) suggests there are four different types of professional advisers who serve family businesses in terms of their social interface with individuals namely: teachers/trainers, consultants, coaches, and therapists. Each brings a unique, yet related approach to change and innovation based on their disciplines (Manning et al, 2013). The approaches are: teachers/trainers who are transmitting knowledge and information. This may be general knowledge and the process then requires the individuals within the family business to interpret that information and then translate it to how it applies to their business

before they can implement it; consultants offering expert advice i.e. they are providing applied knowledge and information that the family business can readily adopt; -coaches supporting new interpersonal and work skills in order for individuals to lead and manage business change and the adoption of innovation; and therapists working on identifying current approaches and habits and ways in which to facilitate the adoption of new behaviour and further insight into how the approach of the person influences the efficiency and profitability of the business (Manning et al, 2013).

It has been argued that advisers that are in the role of teachers/trainers and consultants tend to be more directive and focused on rational thinking processes when interacting with businesses (Kets de Vries et al. 2007a). Conversely advisers who are seen as coaches and therapists are more reflective and facilitate a non-rational or emotional dimension to their interaction with family businesses (Manning et al, 2013). Extension working in a facilitative role can have a beneficial impact that far exceeds that created by simply achieving minor changes in on-farm agricultural production or natural resource management practices. Extension is a key mechanism that can contribute to many of the different dimensions of resilience in the rural farming community (Hunt et al 2011). Hunt et al (2011) also believed that “extension seeks outcomes of capacity building and resilience in individuals and communities.” Agricultural extension agents have had and continue to fill, a broad suite of roles and functions in rural areas (Hunt et al 2011). Many of their activities lie outside their core (institutional) areas of responsibility as found by Hunt et al, (2011). Yet these personal efforts have wider benefits to industries and communities. There is limited scholarly literature about the value that extension brings to rural industries and communities.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and analysis of data collected

This chapter outlines the methodology of the research methods used. It then explores the justification of using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The chapter next reviews the limitations of the study. The chapter also presents the profile of the questionnaire respondents and their farmer clients. It then presents the findings from the questionnaire and also the themes from the semi-structured interviews.

3.1 Research Problem

As previously mentioned this study sets out to address the role an agricultural adviser should have when it comes to dealing with farmer stress.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology employed in this study comprised mixed methods utilising both quantitative and qualitative research methods. These methods included the use of a questionnaire approach and the use of semi-structured interviews. The focus as explained to respondents was to better understand the advisers' role in dealing with farmer stress as it arose. This included quantifying the frequency with which advisers encounter farmer stress and also sought advisers' views on their role in dealing with farmer stress. The initial information was gathered via a survey distributed to advisers at a staff meeting of the Teagasc Kerry/ Limerick region. It was decided, to better examine the role of extension services towards encounters of farmer stress that it would be more appropriate if all viewpoints should come from the Business and Technology advisers. After reviewing the questionnaire results five case study advisers were selected. These advisers partook in a short semi-structured interview which was conducted both in person and over the phone for on average ten minutes. The mixed methods approach using adviser questionnaires and interviews allowed for quantitative and qualitative data to be gathered, meaning variation, relationships and patterns of association could be established. (Bryman, 2012).

3.3 Utilisation of a questionnaire:

This study collected data through semi- structured anonymous questionnaires. The research population was the Teagasc Business and Technology Drystock and Dairy Advisers of the Kerry/Limerick region. At the time of the survey in June 2018 there were 22 active advisers in the region. A questionnaire was drawn up to give insights into the research population in order to answer the research objectives (Appendix). Several drafts of this questionnaire were created before deciding on the final structure and questions. Questions ranged from general farmer client information, to advisers' experience of farmer stress and their views on extension services provisions needed to support them in their role. (Appendix).It was decided to administer the questionnaire at the regional staff meeting, with the regional managers permission, as the majority of advisers in the region would be in attendance. The purpose of the research and the questionnaire was explained to the advisers before they were administered. An explanation of each question was given by the researcher while the advisers completed the questionnaire. This approach reduced misinterpretation of questions and ensured a high response rate. The questionnaire was distributed at a staff meeting in the Kilmallock advisory office on the 22nd June 2018. 17 advisers returned the questionnaire completed out of a possible 22, giving a response rate of 77%. Responses on all questionnaires were kept confidential by the researcher. Questionnaire data was inputted in excel, coded and analysed using SPSS.

3.4 Semi-structured interview process

Advisers who completed the questionnaire were asked if they were willing to take part in a semi-structured interview. Of those willing to be further involved in the study five advisers were selected for interview randomly. As the topic being researched was potentially sensitive, it is of paramount importance that those being interviewed felt comfortable with the questions and could speak freely with guaranteed confidentiality. It was for this reason the use of a non-structured interview was justified.

3.5 Limitations of study

There is limited scholarly literature available about the role of agricultural advisers in dealing with farmer stress. This research was limited by time and scale as it was a minor thesis in partial fulfilment of a masters' degree programme. The sample size of advisers partaking and also the level of detail that could be explored were limited. The findings from this research are based on a Teagasc region that is comprised of drystock and dairy business and technology advisers from Kerry and Limerick and may not fully represent the experience of all advisers. The data gathered may also be skewed due to the extreme weather conditions experienced by Irish farmers in 2018, coming from a prolonged wet winter and fodder crisis into a severe drought may have influenced advisers' opinions regarding farmer stress. The research is also limited in that relatively little prior work could be found on this area, and none based on an Irish context.

3.6 Description of respondents

There were 17 respondents to the survey out of a possible 22 business and technology advisers in the Kerry/Limerick region of which 94.1% were male (N=16) and 5.9% were female (N=1). The age range of the advisers is conveyed in the next chart. The advisers were composed of 70.6% (N=12) dairy advisers and 29.4% (N=5) drystock advisers. There were 17.6% (N=3) of advisers in the age category of 20-35 years, 64.7% (N=11) of advisers were in the age category of 36-50 years of age with the remainder 17.6% (N=3) in the 51-65 age category. The distribution of the amount of time advisers spent in their current role was quantified with the maximum time spent in a role being 40 years (N=1) with 1 year being the minimum (N=3). The mean length of time spent in an advisory role was 11.71 years (N=17). The advisers' clients mean farm size was 37.18 hectares; this is slightly above the average farm size in Ireland of 32.4 Ha (CSO, 2016). This had a range of 40 hectares from the smallest of 20 hectares up to 60 hectare average farm size. The advisers (N=17) were also asked to quantify what percentage of their farmer clients were full time farmers and what percentage

were part time. The average adviser had 66.8% full time farmer clients with the remaining 33.2% of clients being part time farmers.

3.7 Adviser Training

Advisers were asked if they had received training in dealing with difficult clients.



Figure 14: Results of how many advisers had received training for dealing with difficult clients.

Of the advisers surveyed 12% (N=2) had received training for dealing with difficult clients while 88% (N=15) had not received training. 100% (N=17) of advisers believed that more training should be provided for advisers to better equip them to deal with farmer stress. The type of training advisers believed would be helpful included; how to identify issues farmers might have, how to approach the farmer stress situation when it arises using real life examples with solutions, to be aware of the pathways and referral options available locally and finally how to identify the signals of stress. 100% (N=17) of advisers believed guidelines should be provided to advisers on best practice for dealing with farmer stress.

3.8 Frequency of adviser encounters with farmer stress

Advisers were next asked if farm stress was an issue they deal with in their role. 100% (N=17) of advisers agreed that it was something they deal with as an adviser. Advisers were then asked to quantify how frequently they dealt with farmer stress. The results are conveyed in figure six.

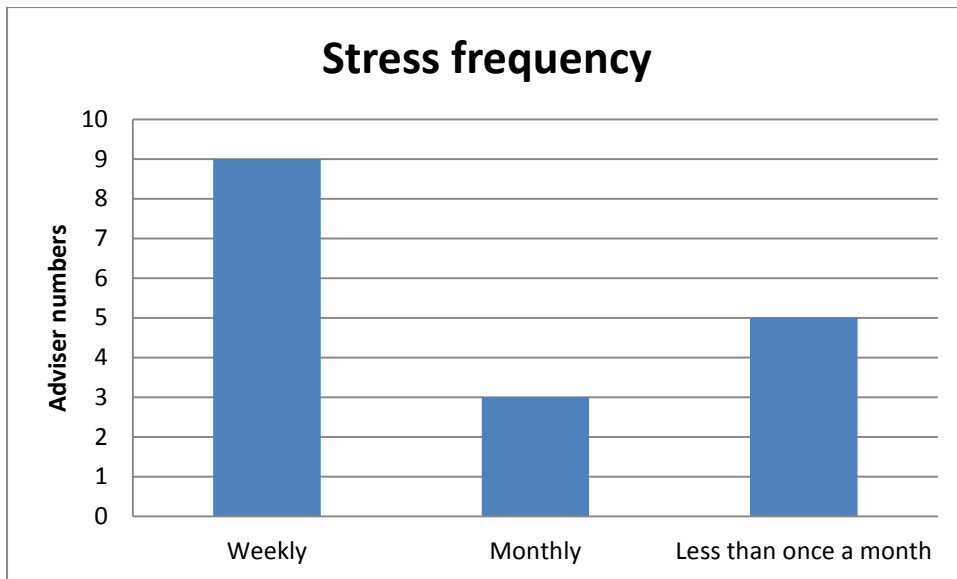


Figure 15: Frequency of adviser encounters of farmer stress results

Of the advisers surveyed (N=17) 52.9% (N=9) encountered stress on a weekly basis when working with farmers. 17.6% (N=3) said they encountered farmer stress monthly with the remaining 29.4% (N=5) stating they encountered farmer stress less than once a month. No adviser stated they encountered farmer stress on a daily occurrence or never encountered stressed farmers.

3.9 Causes of Farmer stress

Advisers were then asked to rank the factors they encountered most that caused stress to farmers with the results presented next.

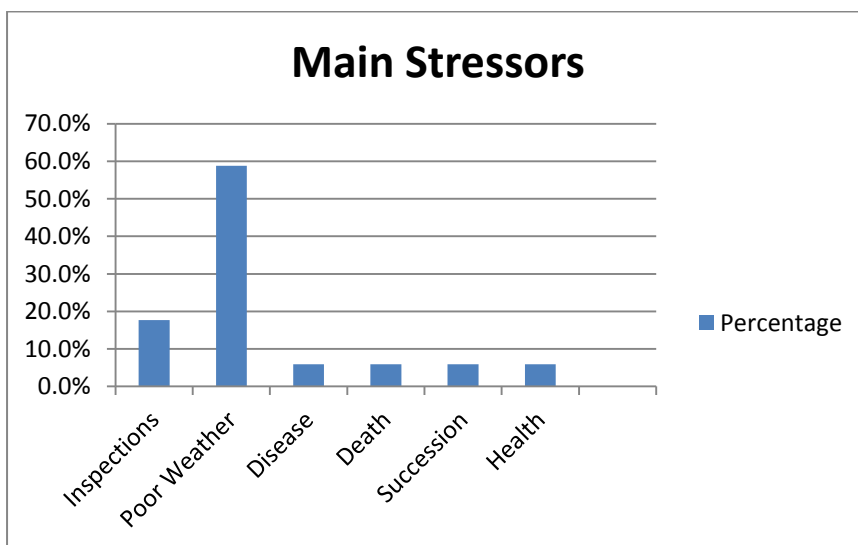


Figure 16: Main farmer stresses encountered by advisers

Poor weather was the largest stress factor encountered by advisers with 58.8% ranking. The second most frequent stressor according to the questionnaire was inspections carried out on farms with 17.6% of a ranking. The remaining stress factors encountered by adviser that farmers were experiencing included disease, death, succession and health all with a ranking of 5.9%. These factors were chosen from a large list of farm stressors (appendix ??) where advisers could also add in any extra issues they felt needed to be included as a farm stressor.

3.10 Advisers role:

When advisers were asked if they believed they had a role in dealing with farmer stress 94.1% (N=16) agreed while the remaining 5.9% (N=1) did not believe they have a role to play with regard to farmer stress. Advisers were asked to comment on whether or not their role should involve dealing with farmer stress. The following is a summary of the main points raised by advisers: advice given may have consequences- financial/ education/ health and safety, advisers should be there to support and provide a listening ear; famers come in stressed with a problem and it is the advisers job to try help the farmer solve the issue; farmers deal with advisers more often than others so it is this relationship that leads to the farmer trusting the adviser with their stress issues; finally advisers felt they had to provide solutions to farmers issues and that as they were viewed as loyal to the farmer they had to provide assistance.

Advisers were asked to distribute their role into whichever category they felt represented them as advisers. Figure eight conveys the results.

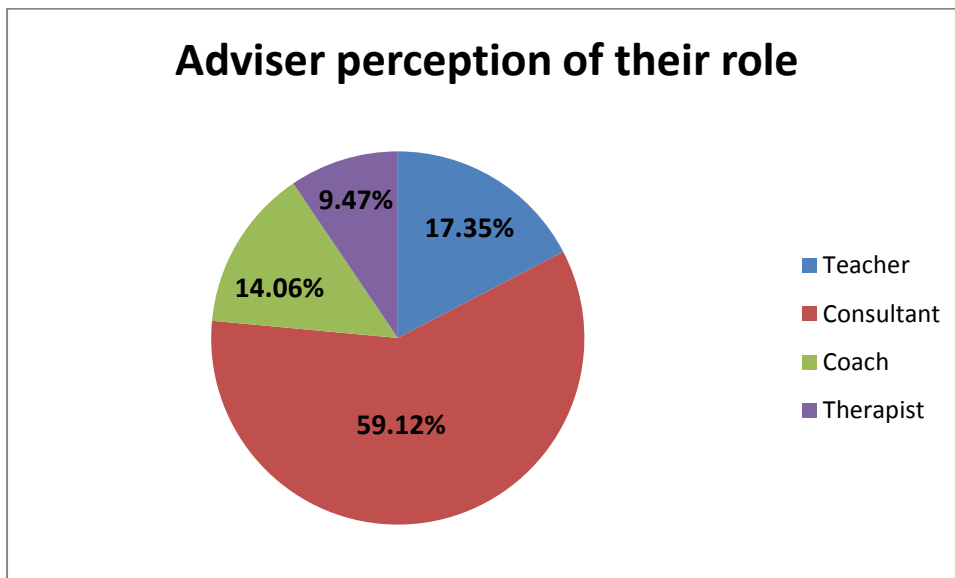


Figure 17: Results of advisers mean distribution of their role

Of the advisers who were surveyed (N=17), figure??? Conveys the mean frequency distribution of their role as advisers saw it themselves.

3.11 Adviser experiences of dealing stressed farmers

Advisers were also asked if they felt they were in a position to give advice to farmers who were undergoing stress. 58.8% (N=10) felt they were in a position to give advice to farmers who were undergoing stress while the remaining 41.2% (N=7) believed they were not in a position to give advice to farmer experiencing stress. Advisers were asked if they were aware of the referral pathways available for farmers who may be suffering from emotional stress, 82.4% (N=14) said yes they were with 17.6% (N=3) said no. The most common referral option listed by advisers was Pieta House followed by The Samaritans. Of the advisers surveyed 88.2% (N=15) had experience of a farmer becoming upset when they were dealing with them with the remaining 11.2% (N=2) not having experienced this. The advisers were then as a follow on from this asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 5 how comfortable they felt dealing with a situation where a farmer was emotionally upset. The results are presented in the next graph.

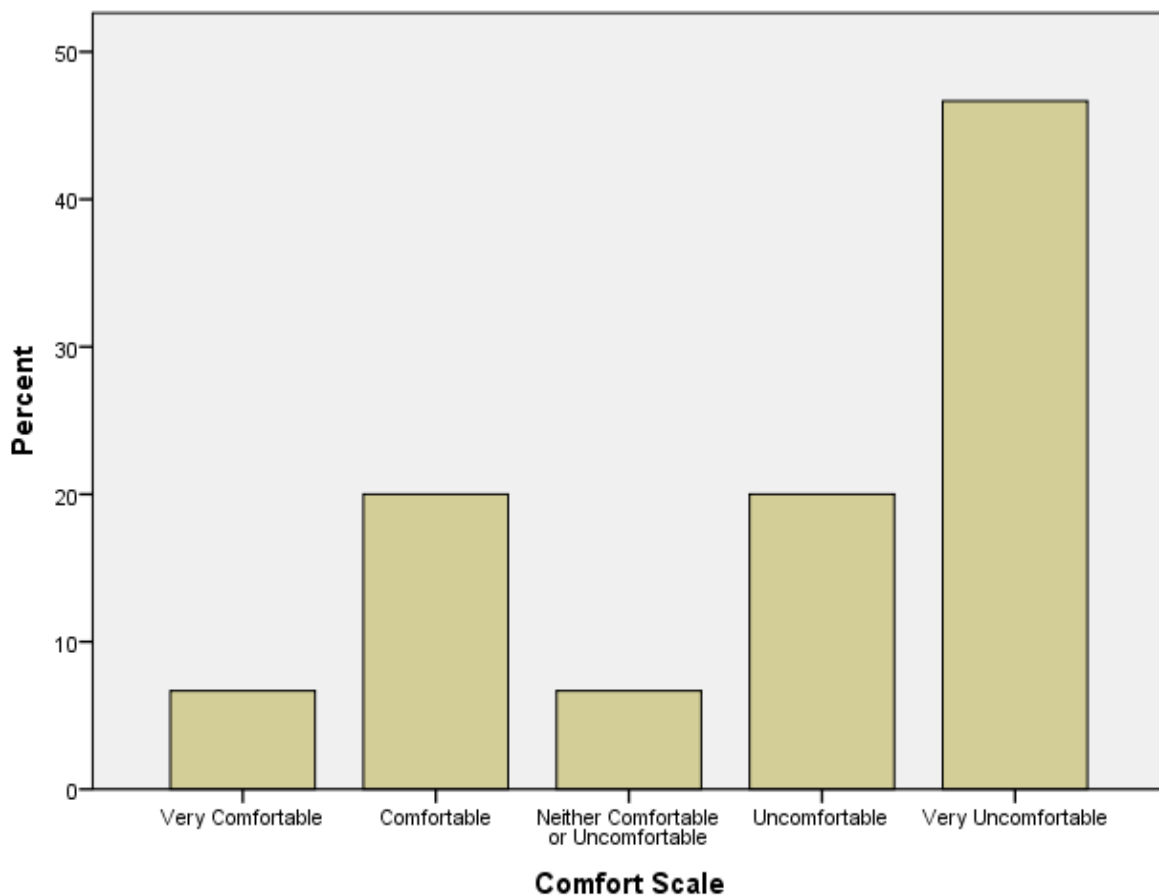


Figure 18: Results of advisers' level of comfort when faced with an emotionally upset farmer

The scale was as follows: a score of one was where advisers were very comfortable to deal with an upset farmer; two meant they were comfortable, three meant they were neither comfortable nor uncomfortable with four being uncomfortable and five being very uncomfortable. Two advisers did not rank their level of comfort in this type of scenario as they had not experienced it. The advisers were then asked to comment on their level of comfort when dealing with upset farmers. The summary of the comments from advisers were as follows: Initially it was very difficult(dealing with an upset farmers) but the more the adviser got to know their clients the easier it got; It has been tough; advisers just have to empathise with farmers, often they just need someone to talk to. Overall advisers were very uncomfortable dealing with upset farmers.

3.12 Semi-structured interview themes

The findings from the semi structured interviews provide a more in depth view on the findings from the survey, these findings are presented here.

3.13 Extension services role towards farmer stress

In the interviews advisers were asked what they felt the role of extension services should be towards farmers stress and to what level the extension services should engage with farmer stress. Across the interviews most advisers felt the extension services were well placed to normalise talking about farmer stress but didn't want to get too involved as they felt it was a whole other speciality. Interviewee one stated that:

"Teagasc probably should have a role in awareness but I certainly don't think they should be getting strongly into it, Teagasc are well placed to convey that stress on the farm is not a scary thing to talk about, but as an adviser I don't want to be dealing with it."

With interviewee three stating that:

"We can't be dealing with it any further than on a technical side as we would need huge amounts of training on that. That is whole other speciality and it is definitely not our area"

Interviewee five stated that:

"I think on the public front of the organisation we are ok. We do mention it at events about taking a break from the farm and that so I think the role we cover at the moment is enough. We can't get too involved as we are not trained for it and could do harm."

3.14 Advisers involvement with farmer stress

In the semi-structured interview advisers were asked if they thought they should play a role in dealing with farm stress or just direct farmers towards alternative support services. The main theme across the five interviews was that while advisers felt they should be aware of stress signs, they should only deal with the technical issues that may be causing stress on the farm. They felt they should refer farmers onto help or services if it was an emotional stress issue. Interviewee one stated that:

“I think it is no harm for us to be aware of it. I certainly do not think that I should be dealing with farmer stress, but if I am more aware of it and can pinpoint them towards someplace else...I don't really want to be getting involved (with farmer stress) as it's not something I feel I would be good at. If they have serious mental health issues forget it, I have no business there. If it is day-to-day stresses on farm and there are things you can try and do that help, I will do that.”

This response also resonated across the interviews with varied answers from advisers. Interviewee four stated that:

“I think advisers could play a small role in normalising talking about things that do cause stress on farms and how to reduce these things actually causing stress. If the farmer is on a more severe level of stress I think we just need to signpost him on and we shouldn't be dealing with that.”

Interviewee five further added to this by stating:

“Farmers view us as their friends at times as they know we are there to try to make them better, like we are seen as loyal to them and not trying to profit from them, which is very important and this is why they feel they can come to us with all sorts of problems really”.

3.15 Advisers ability and comfort towards farmer stress encounters

Advisers were asked how equipped they felt to deal with farmer stress issues they had encountered on the job. On dealing with a stressed a farmer interviewee two stated:

“Everybody has a different level of comfort. Some people will draw up the shutters quicker so there is no set boundary. I would think, well for me anyway, I would probably throw in the towel quicker in certain areas and say hang on there is other people that would know their profession better than me.”

Interviewee three stated:

“As I go further on through my career I feel pretty well equipped. With experience I feel I’m better able to deal with it but definitely I think we could get more support...We should try to refer on farmers but I don’t know how to do that, I know if I mentioned the word counsellor to a farmer I’d say he would fall of the chair. He would have a very poor opinion of that and that would be the perception with and older rural population.”

Interviewee four stated that:

“I would feel fairly poor towards my skills for handling farmer stress. I think I need a lot more resources than what I have so far but I do think the more you are faced with a fella who is obviously stressed out the more better able to handle it I become, like with experience”.

Interviewee five stated:

“If the stress is related to farm goings on, I am fine with that as I know it and have probably dealt with it before. When it is outside of the farm gate I wouldn’t feel equipped at all no.”

From the responses it was concluded that as advisers gained experience through their career they became better equipped to deal with the farmer stress issues they encountered. It was also clear that advisers felt they needed more support and resources with regard to dealing with farmer stress.

3.16 Advisers needs to better prepare them for farmer stress encounters

Advisers were asked what they felt they needed to better prepare them to deal with farmer stress issues that come up. It was evident in the interviews that advisers felt training was needed on identifying the signs of stress, how to deal with an upset farmer and where to refer them onto locally. Advisers also felt they need a boundary guideline to know when they have done as much as they should do to help the farmer. Interviewee one stated:

“We had somebody in from Pieta House once to adviser training and that was no harm just to highlight signs of severe stress. It is a small percentage where you would have to think about referring farmers to mental health services but it would be no harm to know of local places to send them.”

Interviewee five stated that:

“We have good support in terms of helping with farm performance but beyond that we probably need more. Like when a farmer has got upset in front of me I don’t know how to deal with that or what to say, I just listen to what he has to say and trying to make sure I don’t get too involved. I just don’t think I should get involved so maybe a protocol on what we are and aren’t supposed to do would help.”

Interviewee three added to this by stating:

“We need to know where to keep the boundaries when you are dealing with somebody who is stressed. We should manage ourselves first before we even think about how to manage farmers’ issues”

Overall while advisers felt they needed more training to be better able to handle a situation which involves a stressed out farmer they felt they shouldn’t be getting too involved as it was beyond their professional capabilities.

3.17 Issues causing farmers stress

Finally advisers were asked to explain what issues of stress they came across most frequently with farmers. Poor weather interlinked with fodder issues was a theme across four of the interviews with advisers stating it was the most frequent issues they encountered. Interviewee two stated that:

“The most frequently is probably weather related, as in weather and housing and therefore then fodder issues...realistically speaking it’s the same issues around here the whole time. So heavy ground and rainfall and weather conditions, as we saw this year dry can be equally as bad as wet. It is generally the same thing, as in the weather leads to all other issues.”

Interviewee one stated that:

“The most frequent stress issue is most definitely to do with fodder and feeding every year, there is something all the time with fodder. So either trying to get cows out to grass or keep them out on grass, either being short of grass or worse short of silage, definitely feed is the most frequent stress issue.”

Inspections also arose as a stressor that advisers encountered which was reflected in interview four whereby the interviewee stated:

“I suppose department inspections can link up with financial, as the inspection usually leads to a penalty that was not expected in the budget of the farm, and often if farmers have loans they schedule the repayments for October and December as they know the basic payment will be in the account, so if they get an inspection it usually delays payment, so this causes major stress of how the loans are going to get paid.”

Succession also arose as a stressor amongst farmers however was not a frequent stressor. On succession interviewee four stated that:

“Like succession doesn’t come up too often but when it does come to that time it can be very stressful on the older farmer. The last thing they want is a falling out between their children.”

Interviewee four also raised the stress succession can cause by stating:

“Family problems like maybe inheritance and that kind of area. How to distribute the land or who gets what. Well I suppose that might not be the most frequent, that might only come up once when dealing with a farmer for a number of years.”

To conclude the adviser survey and interviews revealed a high level of weekly encounters with farmer stress in the advisers’ role. It revealed the main stressors in the Kerry/Limerick region encountered by advisers were related to poor weather, inspections, death, succession, disease and health. It revealed the majority of advisers felt their role consisted mostly of being a consultant, followed by a teacher, coach and therapist. It also revealed while the majority of advisers had a farmer become emotionally upset with them and the majority of advisers were also uncomfortable or very uncomfortable with the situation. Finally there is a clear desire for further training and guidelines to be provided for advisers to better equip them to deal with farmer stress.

Chapter 4 – Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents a discussion on the research study findings and analysis coupled with findings from different studies. It also draws the conclusions of the study and follows up these conclusions with recommendations on the betterment of the advisers’ role in dealing with farmer stress encounters. These objectives have been established through the analysis of the data gathered and presented in the findings. The chapter then presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The conclusions have been developed based on the findings of the study and the literature that was reviewed. The conclusions review the aim and objectives of the study, while also making recommendations for the benefit of the extension services. The research questions of the study are

briefly considered below with conclusions drawn on them and leading onto recommendations from the study.

4.1 Introduction

It was expected that a better understanding of agricultural advisers' role when dealing with encounters of farmers stress would be generated from this study. The focus of the study was to quantify the frequency of interactions advisers have with farmer stress, what supports they felt they needed and how equipped they felt towards these occurrences of farmer stress. It also aimed to explore the advisers' opinion on what their role should be when dealing with encounters of farmer stress and also what they perceived the role of extension services should be towards farmer stress. The aim of the research was also to establish and examine the factors surrounding farmer stress encounters, as perceived by advisers themselves.

4.2 Adviser role towards farmer stress:

Advisers could provide support for stressed farmer with regard to technical issues on the farm. This could possibly be done through social support; this has proved beneficial to farmers coping with known stressors and financial uncertainty (Furvey et al. 2016). This social support is often provided by the adviser as they are trusted by the farmer. Boss (2007) stated that farmers look to advisers for help, "so you probably would be called before the local psychiatrist or some other professional." This social support was evident in the research as advisers wanted to help with the technical aspects of running the farm. Interviewee one stated that; *"If it is day-to-day stresses on farm and there are things you can try and do that help, I will do that."* Advisers could play a mentoring and coaching role towards farmers under stress and if they are struggling with the technical aspects of their farms. Mentoring by advisers is characterised by positive role modelling, promotion of raised aspirations, positive reinforcement, open-ended counselling, and joint problem-solving (Topping, 2005). Shoup Olsen et al. (2009) concluded that, in the case of individual family operations, mentoring and coaching are important for embedding knowledge and enabling reflection which will ultimately drive the adoption of new practices and behavioural change. This is a role advisers may be more comfortable to adopt. As referenced in the literature review, Carlock (2007) theorised that "there are four different types of professional advisers who serve family businesses" broken down into the separate categories of teacher/ consultant/ coach/ therapist. However in this survey advisers separated their roles across the categories. This conveys that advisers in this region have been adopting varied methods of extension to convey their message. The development of trust between adviser and farmer requires the adviser to portray aspects of each of these roles throughout

interactions. Advisers need to develop trust between the farmer and themselves as this is essential to ensure adoption of technical advice by the farmer (Molgard, 1997). Interviewee five explained why farmers trust advisers by stating; *“Farmers view us as their friends at times as they know we are there to try to make them better, like we are seen as loyal to them and not trying to profit from them, which is very important and this is why they feel they can come to us with all sorts of problems really”*.

4.3 Role of extension services and farmer stress:

Gregoire (2002) stated that because we know that farming is associated with high levels of stress, that farmers and their families often know little about mental health difficulties, and that the stigma of mental health problems is often a barrier to seeking help, there is clearly a role for targeted mental health problem strategies. This stigma was found in interview three whereby the adviser stated that; *“I know if I mentioned the word counsellor to a farmer I’d say he would fall of the chair. He would have a very poor opinion of that and that would be the perception with and older rural population.”* These mental health problem strategies should aim to increase awareness, provide education about the issues and coping strategies, and generally contribute to the de-stigmatization of both the problems themselves and the seeking of help. Government and non-government organizations associated with both health and the farming community all have contributions to make. The role of agricultural extension in Ireland uses the AKIS approach which provides a framework through which interventions can be developed to enhance farmer health and safety including mental health (Furvey et al. 2016). Farmers would also benefit from interventions, such as mental health first aid, that normalise healthy coping strategies and minimise exposure to mental health stigma (Furvey et al. 2016). By educating farmers it means we can utilize and build the capabilities of clients through improved decision making, problem solving and management (Vanclay, 2011). Such promotion could take the form of articles in the farming media, self-help materials distributed to farmers and leaflets available in appropriate locations, such as at auctions and in veterinary practices.

4.4 Training for agricultural advisers:

Training to advisers could be provided through collaboration between farmer representative groups, development groups, and Government departments of health and agriculture to facilitate appropriate interventions (Furvey et al. 2016). Every adviser surveyed felt there was a need for further training in relation to farmer stress. This theme was also evident across the interviews, with interviewee one stating *“We had somebody in from Pieta House once to adviser training and that*

was no harm just to highlight signs of severe stress". Hossains (2009, a) work developed a training programme which aimed to improve the mental health of farmers through training industry advisory staff to not only recognise behaviour that raised concerns about the mental health of their clients, but also to provide advice on the location of resources (such as educational materials or health professionals). This programme introduced the five steps of MHFA (i.e., assess risk of suicide or harm, listen non-judgementally, give reassurance and information, encourage to seek professional help, and encourage self-help strategies). The participants in Hossains (2009, a) course believed that when working with people they should understand mental illness. Training of the non-health sector has been shown to be a valuable approach in supporting people with mental health problems (Kitchener & Jorm, 2002). During focus groups run Hossain (2009, a), the need for this training was identified by the employers of Farm Advisers who recognised that those advisers are often the first access point to farmers with mental health problems. As a result of attending the course, the majority of the farm advisers indicated that they would be able to recognise the symptoms of mental illness, provide initial help, and offer a referral pathway to appropriate professional help. The fact that the farm advisers felt more competent to handle situations is extremely important. Whilst this is just one of a wide range of strategies to address mental health issues, access to someone with the ability to understand and where necessary advice on where further help can be accessed is a critical first step. Farm advisers spend considerable time talking to the farmers about their concerns and this training puts them in a better position to deal with difficult situations faced by the farming community (Hossain, 2009, a). The majority of advisers indicated that they knew where to refer farmers onto (Pieta House and The Samaritans), however there was a clear indication from advisers that there was a need for information on locally available services. Interviewee one stated; *"it is a small percentage where you would have to think about referring farmers to mental health services but it would be no harm to know of local places to send them."*

4.5 Conclusions

4.6 Farmer stress conclusion

The research findings suggest that advisers interact with farmer stress on a weekly basis and are not comfortable with their level of skill for dealing with this element of their work with farmer clients. The most frequent causes of farmer stress according to advisers were established as, in descending order: poor weather, inspections, disease, succession, health and death. While poor weather was the most common issue identified in the survey to cause farmer stress, when explored in the interviews a clear theme of fodder issues emerged as the main farm stressor, driven by poor weather.

4.7 Advisers role towards farmer stress encounters conclusion

This case study explored the role of the agricultural adviser in dealing with encounters of farmer stress. The advisory role is diverse and multifaceted as viewed by the advisers themselves. The majority of advisers adopt multi aspects of the roles of Carlocks theory (2007) of teacher, consultant, coach and therapist rather than confine themselves to one role type. One of the main findings was that all advisers felt they needed more training in relation to farmer stress encounters in their role; however advisers do not want to enter into a situation where they end up counselling farmers who are undergoing stress. They expressed the need for supports in terms of training to identify signs of stress in farmers, how to refer a farmer to specific help and also the provision of a list of locally available services for mental health referral of farmers. Advisers felt that although they didn't want to become too involved with farmer stress, as they were not professionally trained in the areas of stress management, they did feel they were well positioned to discussing stress alleviating options.

4.8 Extension services role towards farmer stress conclusion

Overall advisers believed that extension services had a role to play in normalising talking about farmer stress. They felt Teagasc was in a good position to create awareness and de-stigmatise talking about stress amongst farmers and rural dwellers. They did feel that the extension services were making a good effort on the public front to include some element of stress management or discussion at national events. A strong theme from the research was that advisers felt they should only be dealing with the technical farm issues that may be contributing to farmer stress.

4.9 Recommendations

On the basis of the conclusions from this study the following recommendations are made on how advisers could better deal with farmer stress encounters. Training should be provided to advisers on recognising the symptoms of farmer stress and how to broach the subject of getting help if needed. Clear guidelines should also be provided to advisers on what is expected of them when encounters of farmer stress occur and define boundaries on how far the adviser is expected to assist the farmer. This study also recommends that a list of local resources should be established in each Teagasc region, to ensure advisers know where to send farmers if required. It is recommended that extension services should include, where feasible, a discussion of farm stress causes and methods to better manage farm stress, whether through national events or through discussion groups. The final recommendation of the study is that there should be more comprehensive research carried out on the area of farm stress in Ireland.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Survey administered to advisers

Questionnaire No: _____



This Research Questionnaire is part of a thesis for MAgrSc Extension and Innovation programme in association with UCD and Teagasc.

This questionnaire is for completion by Teagasc Advisers.

The topic of the research is:

“The advisers role in dealing with farmer stress”

The aim of this study is to examine the advisory services approach to dealing with farmer stress. The study aims to quantify the level of advisory encounters with farmer stress and further investigate what is the role of extension services with farmers stress.

All information given will be treated confidentially by Claire Mc Auliffe.

Your responses to this questionnaire are anonymous and will not be linked to any individual

Background:

1. **Gender:** Male
Female
2. **Age Range:** 20-35
36-50
51-65
66+
3. **Area of advisory:** Dry stock
Dairy
Environment
Forestry
Tillage
4. **Length of time in current advisory role (years):** _____
5. **Average farm size of clients (Hectares):** _____
6. **What percentages of clients are full time or part time:**
Full time _____
Part time _____

Adviser Experience:

The following are widely accepted definitions of Farmer stress:

Stress is “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension”. Another popular definition is “a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilise.”

7. Have you received any training in dealing with difficult clients?

- Yes
- No

8. Is farmer stress an issue you deal with in your advisory role?

- Yes
- No

9. How often do you encounter farmer stress in your advisory role?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than once a month
- Never

10. Which of the below listed farm scenarios do you believe to be the most stress inducing for farmers?

Please rank 1 to 5 with 1 being highest stressor and 5 being less stress inducing.

- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Inspections | <input type="checkbox"/> | Family issues | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Farm Debt | <input type="checkbox"/> | Death | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor weather | <input type="checkbox"/> | Succession | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disease outbreak | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prices received | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Poor performance

Health

Land availability

Isolation

Other (please explain) _____

11. Do you believe advisers have a role in dealing with farmer stress?

Yes

No

Please comment on your answer:

12. What percentage of your role would fall into these four categories:

Teacher

Consultant

Coach

Therapist/ Counsellor

13. Do you feel you are in a position to give advice to farmers who are undergoing stress?

Yes

No

14. Do you believe as an adviser you are personally capable of dealing with farmer stress?

Yes

No

15. Are you aware of referral pathways for farmers who are under emotional stress?

Yes

No

If yes please list them

here _____

16. Have you had a farmer become emotionally upset when you were dealing with them?

Yes

No

How comfortable did you feel in this situation please tick:

1-Very comfortable 2- Comfortable 3-Neither comfortable or uncomfortable

4-Uncomfortable 5-Very uncomfortable

17. Have you ever had to refer a farmer onto mental health services?

Yes

No

18. Do you believe training should be provided for advisers to better equip them to deal with farmer stress?

Yes

No

If yes what training or supports do you believe should be there for advisers_____

19. Do you believe guidelines should be provided to advisers on best practice for dealing with farmer stress?

Yes

No

Thank You for your participation!

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview

What farmer stress issues do you come across mostly frequently?

Find out the nature/ the severity and how commonplace the different types of farmer stress are-

How equipped do you feel to deal with the farmers stress issues that come at you?

Are there additional supports that they think would be useful and if so what are they?

What do advisers need to aid in dealing with encounters of farmer stress?

What boundaries should there be when dealing with farmer stress?

What is the role of extension services with farmer stress?

How far should the extension services be going into dealing with farmer stress?

Do they think advisers should play a role or should it just be signposting farmers to specific services or do they think it depends on the particular issue