

Services Available.

- Teagasc Advisors and Farm Consultants are available to farmers to advice on farm management issues. Farming organisations offer services to their members.
- A person's GP should be consulted regularly and when needed.
- A range of both Local and National Support Groups are available.
- The Samaritans can be contacted at 1850 60 90 90. Their website <http://www.samaritans.org> gives a list of support agencies.
- St Patrick's University Hospital, Dublin provides a Support & Information Service staffed by experienced mental health nurses 9-5 Monday to Friday with an answering and call-back facility outside hours. You can contact the Support & Information service by calling 01 249 3333.



Managing Farm Safety.

It is a legal requirement to complete a Safety Statement. For farms with 3 or less employees it is permitted to complete a Risk Assessment under a Statutory Code of Practice. A Risk Assessment Document and Code of Practice are available for the Agriculture sector in Ireland. New green coloured documents have been issued and these need to be completed by the 1st January 2019 to replace the previous white coloured documents. If a person has more than 3 employees, it is advised to complete the Risk Assessment document first and then complete a Safety Statement. All documents are available on the H.S.A. website at:

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your_Industry/Agriculture_Forestry/Overview/Agriculture_Code_of_Practice/

Teagasc and Agricultural Consultants provide a Half-Day Training Course on the Risk Assessment Document. This is a mandatory requirement for drawing down DAFM TAMS11 funding.

Finally, it is advised that document completion is a means to an end: giving a focus for taking action to prevent injury or ill health.

Current Information on Teagasc services can be obtained on the web at:

www.teagasc.ie

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Positive Mental Health in Farming



We live in challenging times with the current drought, fodder shortage and associated financial issues. There are many issues in farming that can cause stress and associated ill health and injury. Many studies, however, indicate generally a high satisfaction and quality of life associated with countryside living. Individual circumstances can arise however which lead to stress.

The 'Total Health Model' indicates that, safety, health and mental health are inter-related and these components need to be promoted holistically. Managing your health and safety needs to be considered as an overall component of farm management. This means both identifying and implementing key actions to maintain both safety and health.

What is stress?

Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand that makes you feel threatened or upsets your balance in some way. When working properly, stress helps you to stay focused, energetic, and alert. But beyond a certain point, it can stop being helpful and start causing damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships and your quality of life. Anyone can suffer from stress. Every person has a different reaction to stress, Some of the more common warning signs outlined in Table 1 indicate when it's time to manage stress and consider getting help.

Stress in Farming

International studies (Australia, Ireland, USA, Norway) indicate that the major stressors among farmers include: farm finances, dealing with paperwork, poor farm work conditions such as poor safety standards, excessive workload and poor health. Thus, it can be seen that farm management practices can strongly influence stress levels. Across all sectors, having positive working and personal relationships is helpful in preventing stress.

Table 1: Signs of Stress.

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

Source: IFA leaflet- 'Let's Talk – Dealing with Stress'

Managing Stress

A key approach to managing stress is recognising the signs and responding to them. Research, however, indicates that provision of information on stress on its own does not affect behaviour. Each person must realise or 'become aware' of the issues leading to stress and then adopt positive strategies to minimise the stressor. Changes to manage stress in a farming context can include such changes as modifying the farming system to cut work time or having a health check completed.

Positive Strategies to minimise Stress:

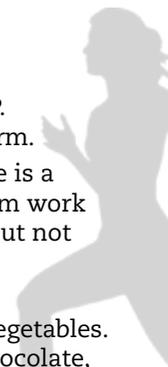
■ Social Involvement is crucial.

- Talk to trusted family members, neighbour and friends.
- Discuss farming problems with your Agricultural Advisor.
- Farm Discussion groups have a valuable social dimension as well as a practical farm one which is positive to solving problems & managing stress.
- Farming and sporting organisations perform valuable social networks in rural Ireland.



■ Health related goals.

- Have a regular health check-up with a G.P. Forming this habit is crucial in the long-term.
- Exercise regularly; being physically active is a key approach to stress management. Farm work activity, however, may lead to 'strength' but not to 'aerobic fitness' which is required for cardiovascular health.
- Eat a balanced diet, including fruit and vegetables. Some foods in excess such as alcohol, chocolate, coffee and soft drink cause increased tension.
- Two booklets are available on the web as follows: 'Staying Fit for Farming- A Health Booklet for Farmers' and 'Coping with the Pressures of Farming'



■ Farming.

- Examine your farm for hazards and remove them.
- Work organisation is crucial to avoid long hours, rushing and injury.
- Examine the profitability of your farm-complete a profit monitor. Numerous studies indicate that efficiency beats scale in terms of profitability.
- Check the length of your working day as excessively long working days can lead to isolation.



■ Leisure.

- Take time out every day for relaxation.
- Take regular breaks and a holiday from farming. These allow your mind to refresh itself.

