



Policy Position: Farm Stress

We have now added the pandemic crisis to the many farm and ranch concerns today. Producers have been struggling because of the current market conditions. We are seeing some producers who are almost broken with financial and health issues. Often health problems accompany financial problems. Montana farmers have always asked for a fair market environment to sell the state's commodities. It is difficult to get a fair market today because of trade conflicts and monopolistic actions within the packing industry. Low commodity prices mixed with increase in farm expenses and the cost of health care and education has created some very difficult situations.

Today, Montana producers need help more than ever with financial strategies, government programs and mental health resources. A great concern now is the ability to access the Economic Relief funds and other federal assistance programs that address markets, transportation and conservation. Mediation services are needed for conflicts with federal, state and private programs.

Bankruptcies are on the rise in rural Montana. The low commodity prices over the last couple years has driven many to sell or file bankruptcy. This lends to severe depression and often suicide is a solution. Rural medicine is extremely limited across the state. Additionally, state funding has been cut for mental health services leaving rural Montana in dire straits. Farmers are worried for themselves and their neighbors.

There are some services available in Montana for crisis and suicide but they are toll free national numbers. Montana State University received federal funds to implement an education program that will utilize Agriculture Extension. The Mental Health Centers and Alluvian Health offer assistance also. While that is something, often farmers need more comprehensive assistance. There are long waiting lists to make appointments with qualified mental health therapists

For those who are feeling desperate can reach out to:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line

Text "GO" to 741741

The National Farmers Union is offering an online training to help family members, friends and neighbors address the farm stress crisis in their own communities. This training is free to all Farmers Union members and employees and will teach participants how to recognize the signs of stress and offer help.

<https://nfu.org/education/farm-stress-education/>