

## April Update from the Field

Hi everyone! We hope all of you are staying healthy as we handle the uncertainty of the world together. We know that COVID-19 is at the forefront of everyone's minds and we encourage you to continue to follow along as new scientific evidence is being released every day as we learn about the virus. The CDC is a great source of information.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Spring in agriculture is a busy time and we hope each of you are taking care of yourselves and are able to do the things that need to get done. For this update from the field, we have provided you with a mixture of resiliency and economic articles during times of stress. Please email me for full copies of the articles.

Best regards,  
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### **The role of agricultural professionals in identifying, mitigating and supporting farming families during times of stress: Findings of a qualitative study**

Stanley-Clarke, N. (2019). The role of agricultural professionals in identifying, mitigating and supporting farming families during times of stress: Findings of a qualitative study. *Australian Journal of Rural Health, 27*(3), 203-209.

**Objective:** The prevalence of suicidality within the farming community, especially during time of stress, is well documented. During 2016, the global milk prices fell, impacting the New Zealand dairy farm profitability and viability, as well as taking a toll on farmer well-being. This article discusses the role of agricultural professionals as a support mechanism for farming families during times of stress and their ongoing contribution in recognising and mitigating stress on farmers. **Design:** Qualitative, using thematic analysis. Setting: North Island, New Zealand. Participants: Dairy farming women, large animal veterinarians, farm consultants and members of rural support organisations. **Results:** Thematic analysis demonstrated the following aspects: the value of the long-term relationships between agricultural professionals and their clients; the duty of care agricultural professionals feel towards their clients; and the benefits of the planning and practical problem-solving services offered by these professionals, especially in times of crisis. **Conclusion:** Farmers prefer to use established relationships with agricultural professionals and focus on problem-solving in times of stress. Agricultural professionals should therefore be included as part of any integrated approach to addressing farmer stress.

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### **Evaluating financial stress and performance of beginning farmers during the agricultural downturn**

Katchova, A., & Dinterman, R. (2018). Evaluating financial stress and performance of beginning farmers during the agricultural downturn. *Agricultural Finance Review*, 78(4), 457-469.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to examine the financial performance and stress of beginning farmers in the USA with emphasis on the agricultural downturn experienced since 2013. **Design/methodology/approach:** Using the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) data, probit models are estimated to study the personal and farm characteristics that affect whether or not the financial ratios fall into critical zones as defined by the Farm Financial Standards Council. The financial ratios involve liquidity, solvency, profitability, efficiency, and repayment capacity. **Findings:** Beginning farmers are at a greater risk of financial stress on average, with higher likelihood of financial stress in liquidity and efficiency. Further, the recent agricultural downturn has negatively affected liquidity, solvency, and profitability for farmers while repayment capacity does not appear to be affected. During the downturn, beginning farmers are better positioned than the general farming population with respect to liquidity and repayment capacity.

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### **Farm Financial Stress in Oklahoma: The Effects of Price Change and Debt**

Stefenoni, J., Jones, R., Doye, D., & Riley, J. (2018). Farm Financial Stress in Oklahoma: The Effects of Price Change and Debt. *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc*, IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc, 2018.

After historically high levels of net farm income in 2012 and 2013, low commodity and livestock prices have combined with other factors to dramatically reduce farm income. These changes create financial stress for farmers, degrades the value of farmland and other farm assets, and has implications for agricultural credit markets and relationships. Most farmers and ranchers are looking for ways to improve financial performance, but more importantly are looking for information on how to mitigate the effects of financial stress in their operations. Active farmers and ranchers need information to survive the current and future periods of farm financial stress. The purpose of this research is to explore the extent of recent farm financial stress, and to determine what factors are contributing to the current cycle of farm financial stress. Specifically, we explore recent trends in farm income and farm debt, compare current farm financial position and performance to previous years, and determine factors that are associated with successful transition through periods of farm financial stress. This research examines the effect that leverage, and prices have on the intermediate survival of a farm business. The findings of the research will provide further insight into the conditions that create and enhance farm financial stress.

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### **Scenario planning: The future of the cattle and sheep industries in Scotland and their resiliency to disease**

Boden, L., Auty, H., Bessell, P., Duckett, D., Liu, J., Kyle, C., . . . Mckendrick, I. (2015). Scenario planning: The future of the cattle and sheep industries in Scotland and their resiliency to disease. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*, 121(3-4), 353-364.

In this paper, we present a description of foresighting activities undertaken by EPIC, Scotland's Centre of Expertise on Animal Disease Outbreaks, to investigate the future uncertainty of animal health security in the Scottish sheep and cattle sectors. Using scenario planning methodologies, we explored four plausible but provocative long-term futures which identify dynamics underpinning the resilience of these agricultural sectors to animal disease. These scenarios highlight a number of important drivers that influence disease resilience: industry demographics, the role of government support and regulation and the capacity for technological innovation to support the industry to meet local and global market demand. Participants in the scenario planning exercises proposed creative, robust strategies that policy makers could consider implementing now to enhance disease control and industry resilience in multiple, uncertain futures. Using these participant-led strategies as a starting point, we offer ten key questions for policy makers and stakeholders to provoke further discussion about improving resiliency and disease preparedness. We conclude with a brief discussion of the value of scenario planning, not only for the development of futures which will inform disease contingency plans and improve industry resilience, but as a mechanism for dialogue and information sharing between stakeholders and government.