



Farming can be a life full of joy, love, heartache, and challenges. Many aspects of the job are beyond a farmer's control – market prices, government regulations, drought, and disease outbreak, to name a few. Combined with long hours and financial pressures, farmers can experience high levels of stress.

Stress can impact all aspects of a farmer's life. Symptoms of stress can differ from person to person. It is important to recognize when you are feeling stressed before the stress becomes chronic.

The following include symptoms of stress:

Emotional:

- Moodiness, Irritability
- Anger
- Feeling overwhelmed; lacking control
- Difficulties relaxing; restless
- Loneliness; avoidance
- Feeling worthless; hopeless
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety; panic

Physical:

- Lethargic; body fatigue; lack of energy
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal issues (upset stomach, diarrhea, constipation, nausea)
- Aches and pains; tightness in muscles
- Chest pain; rapid heartbeat; short breathing
- Too much sleep or too little sleep
- Frequent colds or infections
- Loss of interest in activities; sex
- Nervousness; anxiety
- Dry mouth; difficulties swallowing
- Clenched jaw; grinding teeth

Cognitive:

- Forgetfulness
- Racing thoughts; lacks focus
- Constant worrying
- Poor judgment
- Pessimistic

Behavioral:

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Procrastination
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes
- Nervous behaviors – nail biting, fidgeting, pacing

From the list, how many symptoms are you currently experiencing? Once you have identified your symptoms of stress, it is important to try different stress management strategies to manage your stress. Here are some tips to help decrease stress:

- **Practice breathing and find inner peace.**
Some people find it helpful to learn and practice relaxation techniques such as mindfulness or yoga. A mindfulness app might work for you (e.g. Headspace, Smiling Mind, iMindfulness, Mindfulness Daily).
- **Exercise regularly.** Try to incorporate exercise into your daily routine.
- **Eat Healthy.** (fruits, vegetable, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean protein)
- **Utilize effective time management.** By managing your time wisely, you may feel less overwhelmed.
- **Engage in hobbies or interests.** Your stress levels will be high if you do not make time to have fun.
- **Try to obtain enough rest and sleep.**
- **Avoid relying upon alcohol, drugs or food to help you feel more relaxed.**
- **Laugh.** The act of laughing can help ward off stress.
- **Try to keep a positive attitude.** You cannot control everything, but you can control how you respond.
- **Politely stand up for yourself.** Do not become angry or passive; rather, thoughtfully share your feelings, opinions, and beliefs.
- **Spend time with the people you love.** A support system may be helpful in managing stress.
- **If you become too stressed, talk with a counselor.** Visit <http://www.helplinecenter.org> or dial 211 to access community resources. For immediate assistance with mental health concerns or suicidal thoughts, please call **1-800-273-8255**.