

Farmer Suicide Rate is Concerning

American farmers may have a [higher rate of suicide than veterans](#). While comparing these numbers from two separately conducted studies from two different entities isn't conclusive, the trends that have emerged are alarming. [According to the CDC](#), individuals in the farming, fishing and forestry occupational group are statistically more likely to commit suicide than any other. The farmers' rate of suicide is 84.5 suicide deaths out of 100,000. The most vulnerable veteran demographic (18-29 year old males) has a rate of 85.64 suicide deaths per 100,000, while veterans as a whole have a rate of 35.3 per 100,000.

This is a problem. It's widespread. We can't be silent about it.

It's a rough time economically in agriculture. There's no doubt about it, everyone is feeling it. Within the past three years, farm income levels have hit their lowest point since 1985. From 2014 to 2015, farm income dropped 95% and farm debt levels have increased by 25%.



The price of wheat has also dropped an alarming 55% since 2013. Unfortunately for farmers, this means they're still spending money on inputs, and not having much revenue in return.

If you're a farmer and this hits close to home, you are NOT alone and there ARE resources out there for you.

Finances are at the forefront of every farmers' mind. When you're feeling the strain of what seems to be a mounting debt load that's impossible to escape, talk to the experts at the [Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services](#) (KAMS.) They provide confidential financial counseling and legal assistance, as well as mediation services and farm and ranch succession planning. Agricultural credit mediations and USDA adverse decision mediation are two popular services that the organization provides that few farmers currently know about. These mediation sessions allow farmers and lenders to work together through these tough economic times and possibly find a compromise that's agreeable for both parties. The K-State Research and Extension team has provided intensive one-on-one financial consultations to more than 1,000 farm families facing many of the same issues as you.

In addition, KAMS supports the [Farm Analyst Program](#). Farm analysts, or trained extension agents, will travel directly to a producer's home to provide private and confidential business advice. These farm analysts will use a financial planning and analysis software program designed to help producers understand their financial situation and make informed decisions. The analysts are trained to offer objective and thoughtful ideas specifically tailored to your farm to help you start seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

Farmers are passionate people. In order to make it in this industry you have to be. To help an emerging seedling feel its first rays of sunshine. To pull a calf in the middle of the night and watch it take its first steps. Farmers cultivate light and life in the world, but many are personally overwhelmed by the dark and uncertain economic future. This, combined with limited access to mental health resources in rural areas and sky high health insurance costs, is a recipe for disaster for many farmers.

[Dr. Mike Rosmann](#) is a psychologist and a leading expert in agricultural behavioral health. The plight of the farmer is near and dear to his heart, simply because he is one. Dr. Rosmann points to his

Agrarian Imperative theory, the strong urge that farmers feel to produce and supply the essentials for human life.

It's a basic human instinct, but when factors interrupt a farmer's natural instincts (like economic pressure), and they can't fulfil this instinctual purpose, they fall into despair. The same drive that fuels your motivation and success is the same that intensifies perceived shortcomings and the emotions that come along with them.

Rosmann wrote that the agrarian imperative theory "is a plausible explanation of the motivations of farmers to be agricultural producers and to sometimes end their lives".

No widow or child left behind feels the relief of insurance dollars in their pocket. Instead, they feel the weight of their loss and confusion over the sudden departure. Never forget that you are more valuable than the sum of your debts.

If anything we've talked about hits home for you, please visit the resources found throughout the article, as well as below. If you hear others talking about their despair or joking about "how insurance money is the only way out," send them back to this article. An innocent joke may just be a self-deprecating cry for help. None of us can single-handedly increase the prices in the grain or cattle markets, but all of us have the ability to save a life with a listening ear and a well-placed suggestion.

For a full list of resources available, please visit kansaswheat.org or view the list below.