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# **Sustainable Agriculture Means Sustaining Farmers: Surveying the Field of Farm Stress Research and Outreach**

**Dr. Courtney Cuthbertson (they/them)  
University of Illinois**

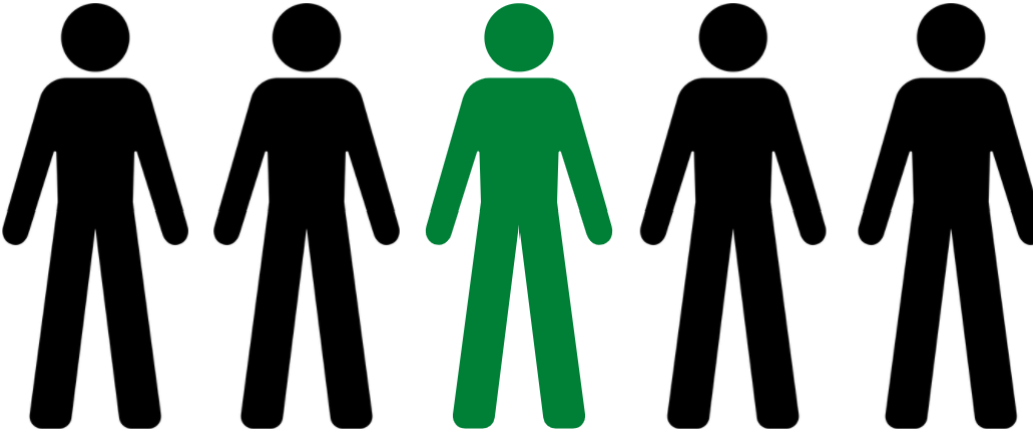
**USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum  
February 25, 2022**



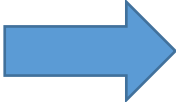
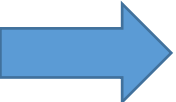

**No farming without farmers.**

**No health without mental health.**

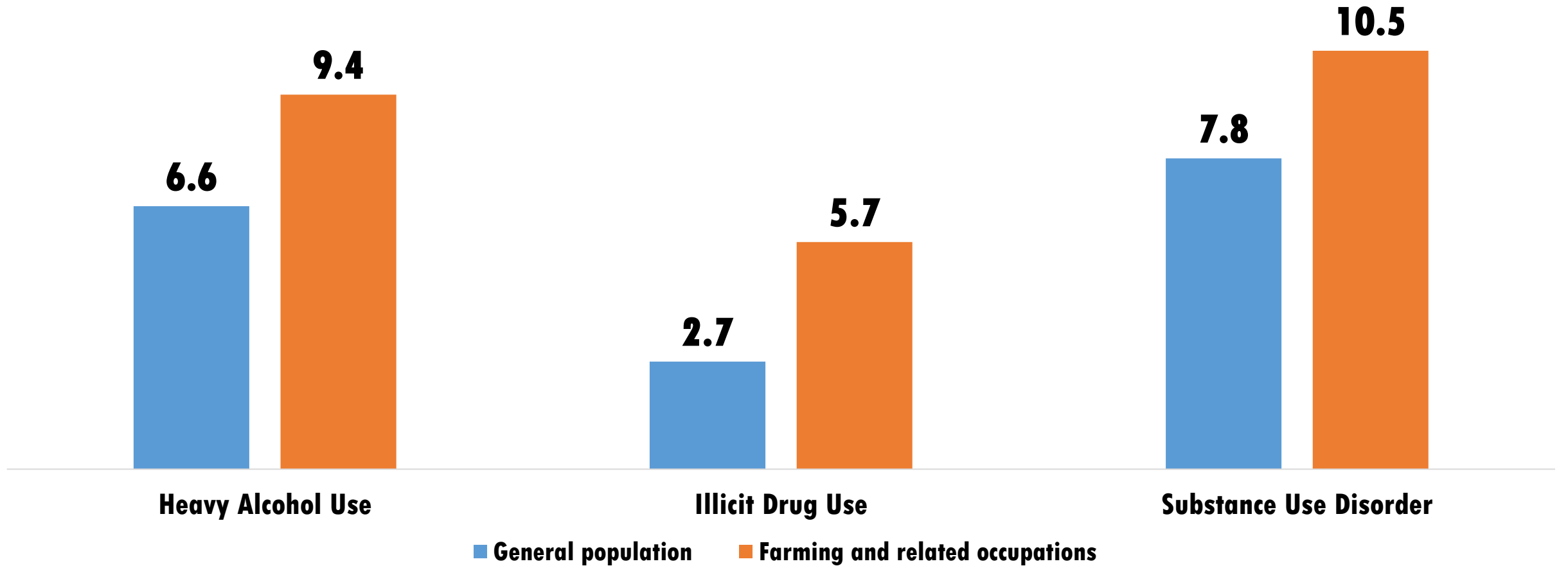




# Mental health is worse among producers.

	<b>General population</b>	<b>Agricultural community</b>		
<b>depression</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>8.7-58%</b>		<b>7-8x higher</b>
<b>anxiety</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>27-71%</b>		<b>4.5x higher</b>
<b>suicide rate – men (per 100k)</b>	<b>27.4</b> (all occupations)	<b>36.1</b>		<b>1.3x higher</b>

# What about substance use?

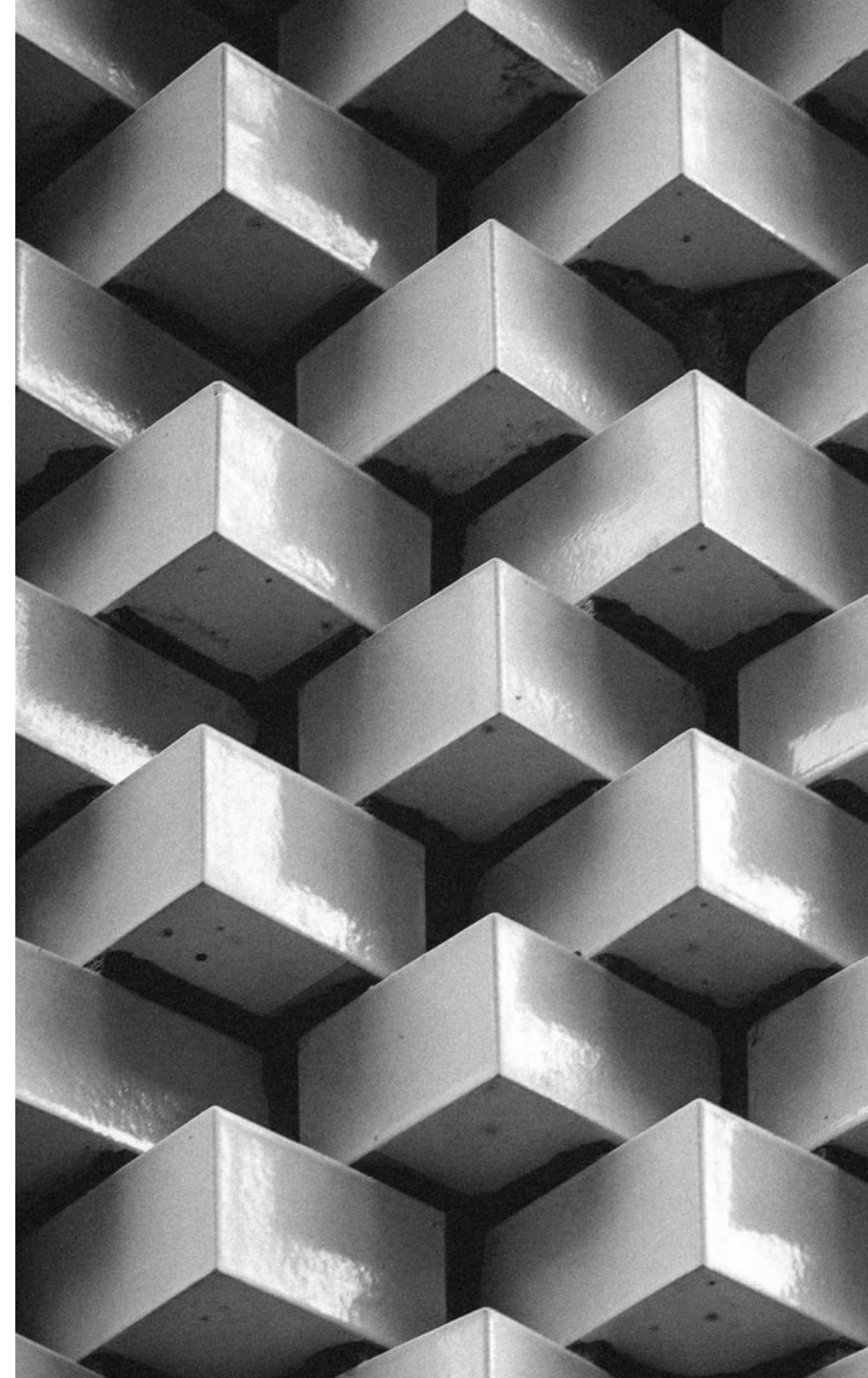


# What explains this?

- **Increased stress**
- **Poor physical health and experiencing injury**
- **Poor sleep quality**
- **Recent negative life events**
- **Financial concerns**

**Note: Higher suicide risk and rates have not been explained by higher rates of mental health problems.**

(Hawes et al. 2019; Yazd et al. 2019; Onuameze et al. 2013; Roy et al. 2013; Scarth et al. 2000; Witt, Reed, and Rayens 2020; Greig et al. 2020; Judd et al. 2006; Bjornestad et al. 2021; Kennedy et al. 2021; Stain et al. 2008; Zhao et al. 2019; Scheyett et al. 2019; Ringgenberg et al. 2018.)



# **What stressors impact mental health for farmers?**

- **Financial concerns**
- **Work environment**
- **Navigating potential problems**
- **Managing farm wellbeing/survival**
- **For migrant farmworkers: distance from family, working conditions, language barriers, fear of deportation, acculturation**



# Impacts on agriculture

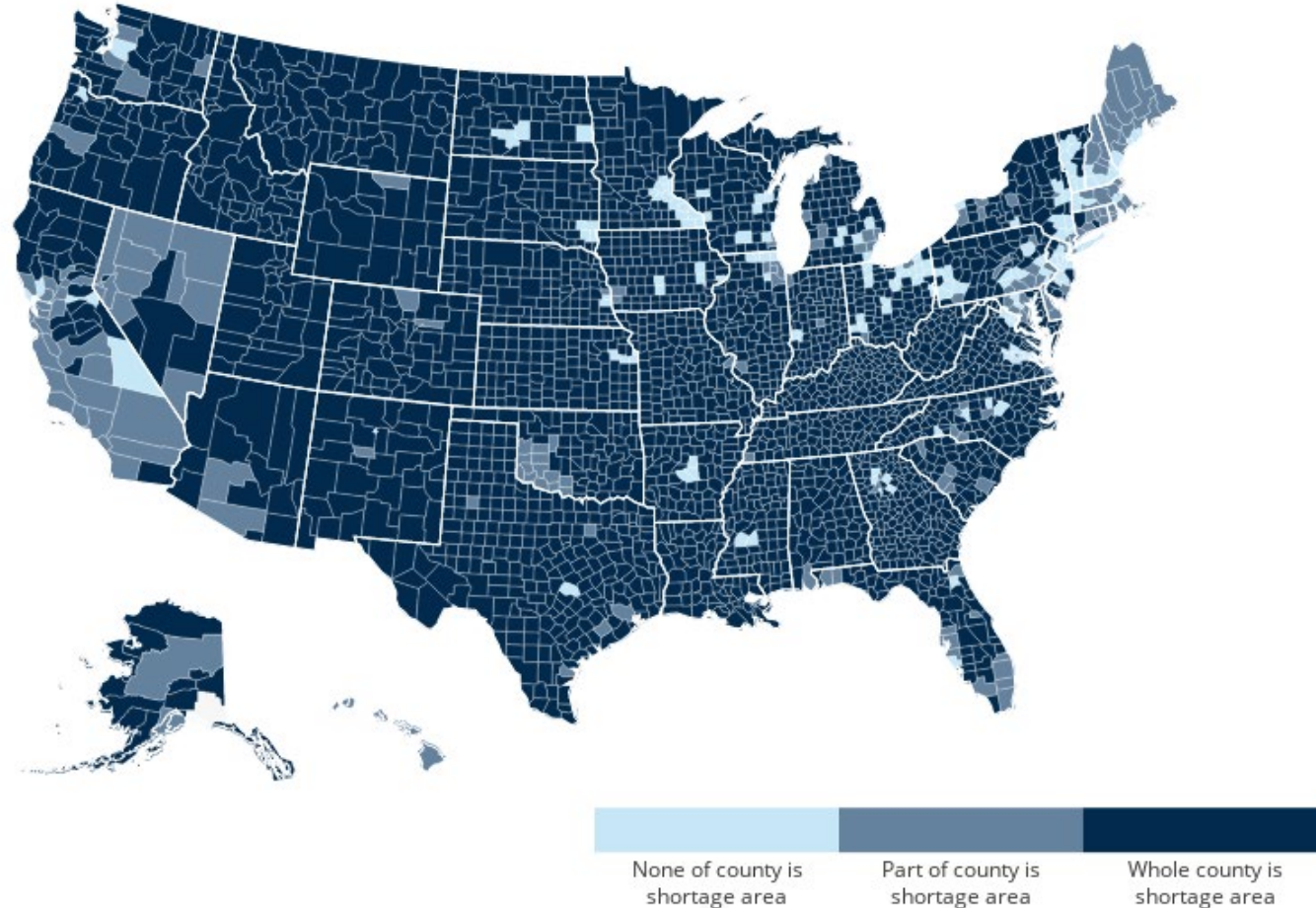
- **Higher risk of injury**
- **Impacts on farm efficiency**
- **Ripple effects on family**

(Stoneman and Jinnah 2015; Xiao et al. 2013; Hounsome 2006.)



# So producers should seek help, right?

Health Professional Shortage Areas: Mental Health, by County, 2022

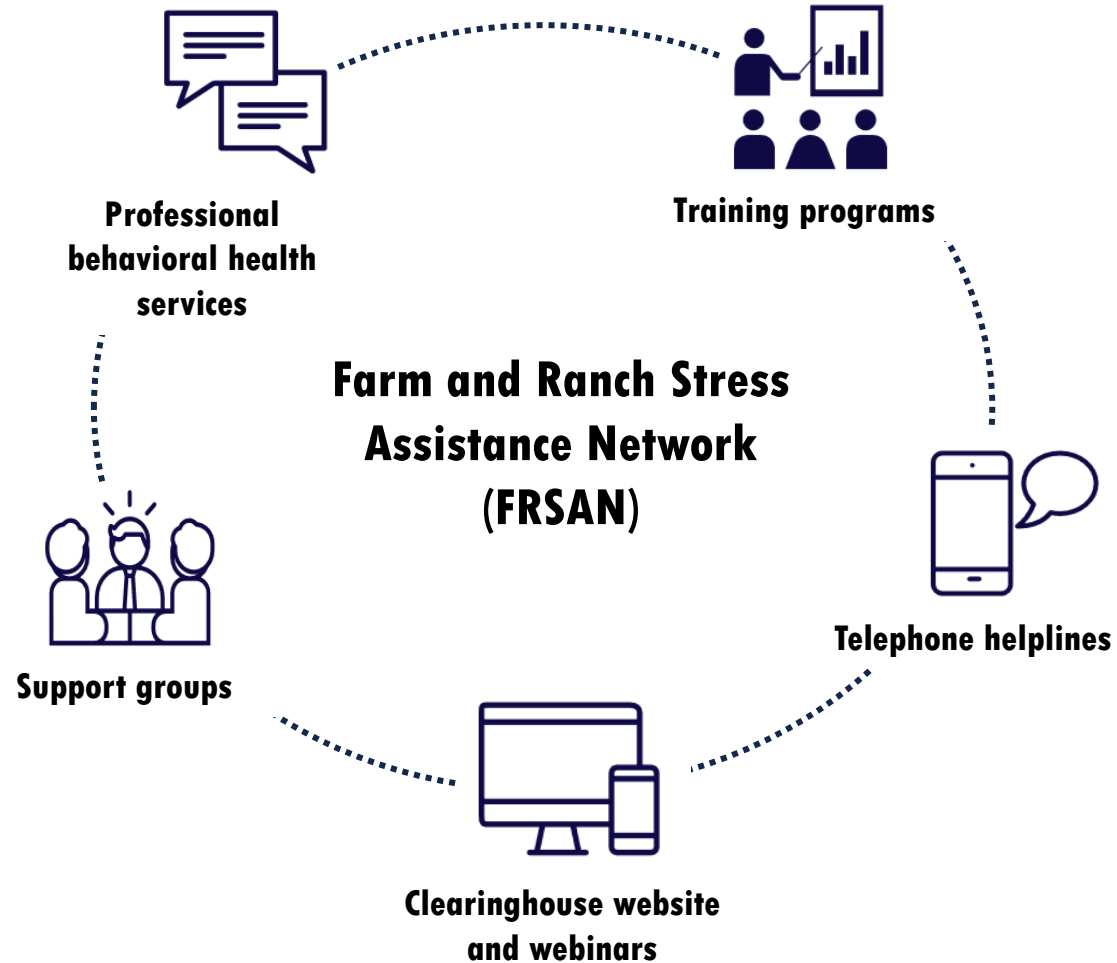


# **Stigma is another barrier to care.**

- **Negative beliefs about mental health, illness, people**
- **Lead to isolation, negative self-perceptions**
- **Contributes to less help-seeking**
- **Values of stoicism, independence, aspects of masculinity decrease help-seeking in producers**



# Outreach programs help producers.



USDA-NIFA 2020-70028-32728

# Example: Mental health literacy training

- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)**
- **Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR)**
- **Communicating with Farmers under Stress**
- **Weathering the Storm**



# Remaining questions

- **What are effective ways to deal with stigma?**
- **How can we go upstream?**
- **How can we create resources inclusive of diversity in agriculture?**



# What else should I know?

- **Everyone always has mental health.**
- **Asking for help is a sign of strength.**
- **You don't have to be in crisis to ask for help.**
- **There are people who care and want to help.**
- **Finding the right mental health provider can take time.**



# What can I do?

- **Connect with and listen to producers.**
- **Start conversations about mental health in your community.**
- **Visit [www.farmstress.org](http://www.farmstress.org) for a listing of useful resources.**
  - **Iowa Concern Hotline: 1-800-447-1985**
- **Contact Cooperative Extension in your state and ask about farm stress programs and resources.**
- **Learn more about mental health.**
- **Help host a training.**
- **Share resources with others.**
- **Advocate for more resources, programs, and funding to support producer mental health.**







**Thank you.**

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