
FINAL REPORT



NATIONAL STRESS AND MENTAL SURVEY OF CANADIAN FARMERS

**REPORT TO THE
CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL SAFETY ASSOCIATION**

Friday, February 11, 2005



Canada 

Canadian Agricultural Safety Association
5A-1325 Markham Road
Winnipeg, MB
R3T 4J6
casaacsa@mts.net

WESTERN OPINION RESEARCH, INC.
www.worinc.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

METHODOLOGY	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
DETAILED FINDINGS	4
CURRENT STRESS LEVELS	4
<i>Chart 1: Current Stress Levels</i>	<i>4</i>
CAUSES OF STRESS	5
<i>Chart 2: Single Biggest Factor Causing Stress (Open end)</i>	<i>5</i>
EXPOSURE TO STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS	6
<i>Chart 3: Dealings with Health Care Professionals</i>	<i>6</i>
TURN TO FOR HELP	7
<i>Chart 4: If Stressed: Who Turn to For Help</i>	<i>7</i>
AGREE/DISAGREE STATEMENTS	8
<i>Chart 5: Agree/Disagree Statements</i>	<i>9</i>
CAUSES OF STRESS	10
<i>Chart 6: Specific Causes of Stress</i>	<i>11</i>
METHODS OF COUNSELLING	13
<i>Chart 7: Preference If Looking for Help</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Chart 8: Convenient Time to Talk on Phone</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Chart 9: Prefer Someone Local/Outside Area</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Chart 10: Knowledge About Agriculture</i>	<i>16</i>
MANNERS OF STRESS COUNSELLING	17
<i>Chart 11: Interest in Types of Services</i>	<i>17</i>
WHY NOT SEEK MORE ADVICE	18
<i>Chart 12: Main Reason Farmers Not Seek More Help (Open end)</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Chart 13: Farm Stress Line</i>	<i>19</i>
APPENDIX A: FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE	21
APPENDIX B: CLARIFICATIONS	26

METHODOLOGY

Western Opinion Research Inc. completed 1100 surveys with agricultural producers across Canada. These surveys were completed representing Statistics Canada data on the distribution of farms. Surveys were completed with only active farmers/ranchers who are the decision makers. Final data results are weighted to accurately reflect actual farm population distributions.

National results of this survey are accurate +/- 3%, 19 times out of 20. Regional and other segmented results have a higher margin of error.

The survey was approximately 14.5 minutes in length and was fielded between the dates of January 24th and January 31st, 2005. English surveys were completed from our call centre in Winnipeg. The survey was translated into French and fielded from Montreal by *Createc+ Recherche* for the completions in Quebec.

The final questionnaire was approved by Prairie Global Management and the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association before fielding began.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Almost two-thirds of Canadian farmers are feeling stressed on their farms. One in five farmers describe themselves as being “very stressed” while almost half describe themselves as being “somewhat stressed”.

Financial concerns related to commodity prices, the BSE crisis, and general farm finances are mentioned by farmers as being the single biggest top-of-mind factors causing stress. This is relatively consistent across regions within Canada and across farm size.

Almost 2 in 10 farmers across Canada have spoken with a health care professional about stress and mental health. Not surprisingly, as the general reported level of stress increases, so does the propensity to speak with a professional about the condition.

If feeling stressed, the majority of farmers indicated they would turn to:

- A family doctor;
- A stress/mental health professional, and
- A priest/religious figure.

Just less than one-half of farmers strongly agree that they are aware of resources they can turn to for help in managing stress and mental health. Four in ten farmers strongly agree that they can effectively manage stress and mental health on their own. Remaining anonymous is very important to farmers when seeking help for stress and mental health issues.

Three items cause very high mean stress levels on farms:

- Poor harvests/production;
- Government policies, and
- Farm finances.

Nationally, the majority of farmers prefer to meet one-on-one with someone to talk about stress and mental health as opposed to help by group sessions and telephone help.

Farmers generally feel it does not matter to them if they deal with someone from their area with regard to stress and mental health concerns. However, it is of utmost importance for Canadian Farmers that the person they are dealing with for stress and mental health concerns is knowledgeable about agriculture.

The notion of pride and farmers independence was found to be the most important mentioned reason farmers did not seek more help in dealing with stress and mental health.

Awareness of the Farm Stress Line is generally good. Roughly two-thirds of Canadian farmers are aware of the Farm Stress Line. One-quarter indicated they are very aware of the service.

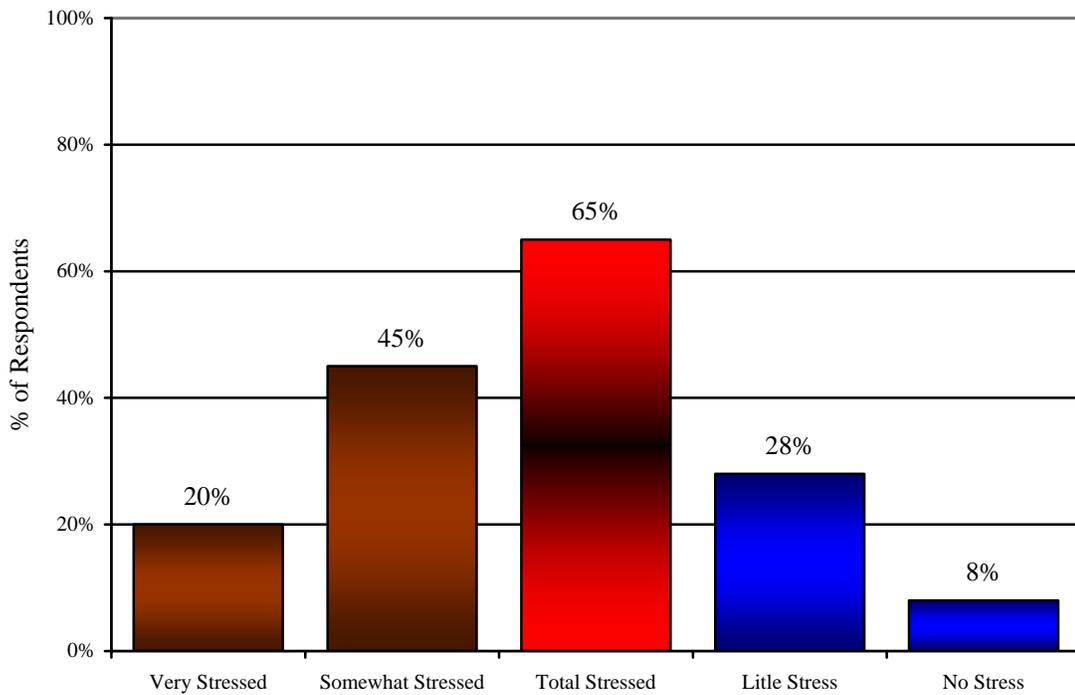
DETAILED FINDINGS

CURRENT STRESS LEVELS

Almost two-thirds of Canadian farmers are feeling stressed on their farms. One in five farmers describe themselves as being “very stressed” while almost half (45%) describe themselves as being “somewhat stressed”.

Farm stress levels tend to decrease with age and with gross income in Canada. Interestingly, reported farm stress levels are higher in Ontario and in Atlantic Canada than in other regions of Canada. Those farmers who report feeling “no stress” are more likely to live in BC or in Quebec.

CHART 1: CURRENT STRESS LEVELS

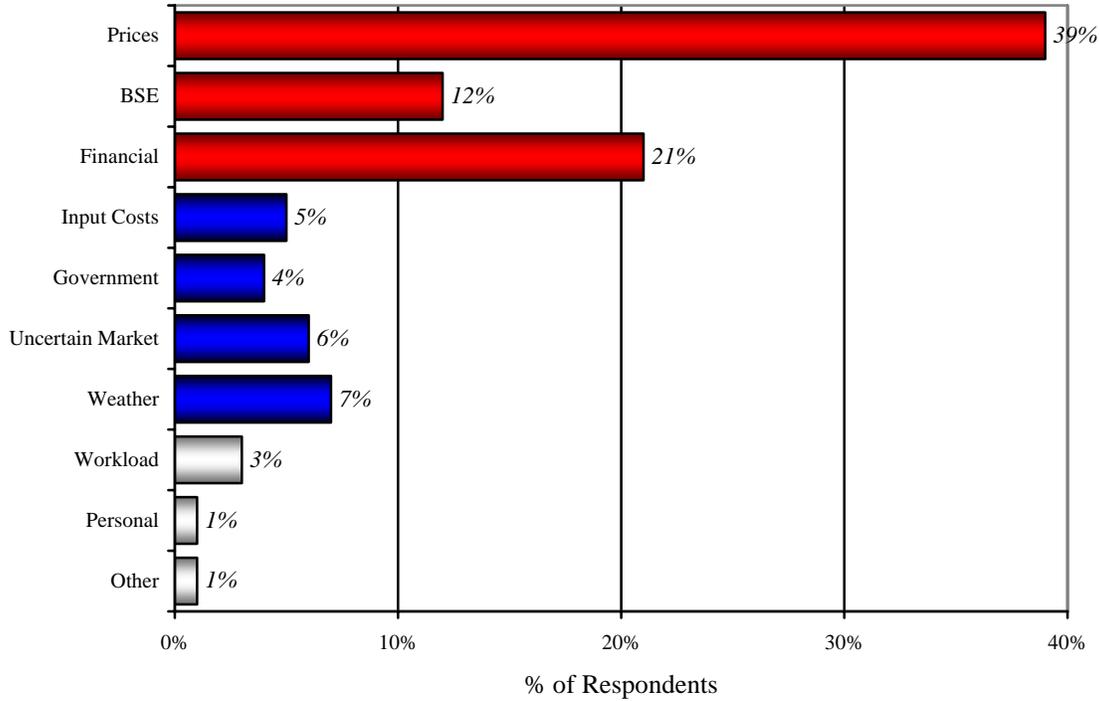


CAUSES OF STRESS

Financial concerns related to commodity prices, the BSE crisis, and general farm finances are mentioned by farmers as being the single biggest top-of-mind factors causing stress. This is relatively consistent across regions within Canada and across farm size.

Input costs, government policies, uncertain market conditions, and weather related factors are also mentioned by farmers as causing stress.

CHART 2: SINGLE BIGGEST FACTOR CAUSING STRESS (OPEN END)



EXPOSURE TO STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

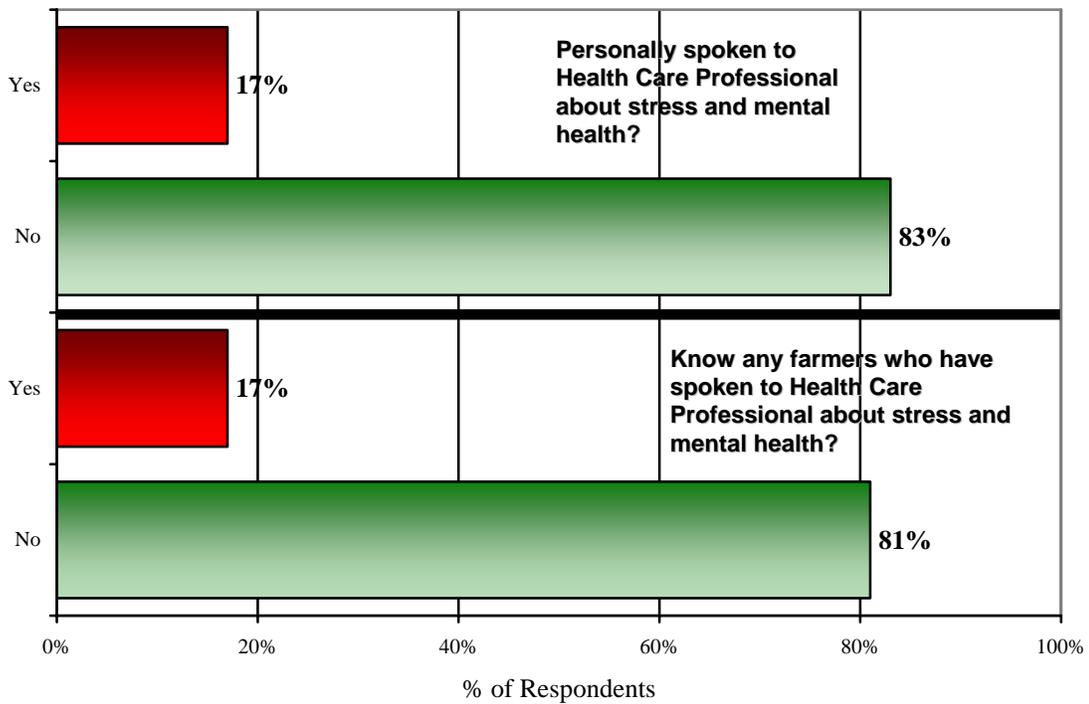
Almost 2 in 10 farmers across Canada (17%) have spoken with a health care professional about stress and mental health. Not surprisingly, as the general reported level of stress increases, so does the propensity to speak with a professional about the condition.

Farmers under the age of 35 years and over the age of 65 years are less likely to have spoken with a health care professional about stress and mental health.

Geographic location also impacts whether or not farmers seek professional help in dealing with stress and mental health. Farmers from Atlantic Canada and Quebec are more likely than farmers from the rest of Canada to speak with a professional about stress and mental health.

Similarly, farmers with livestock only operations are more likely than those with only crops or mixed farms to have spoken with a professional about stress and mental health.

CHART 3: DEALINGS WITH HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

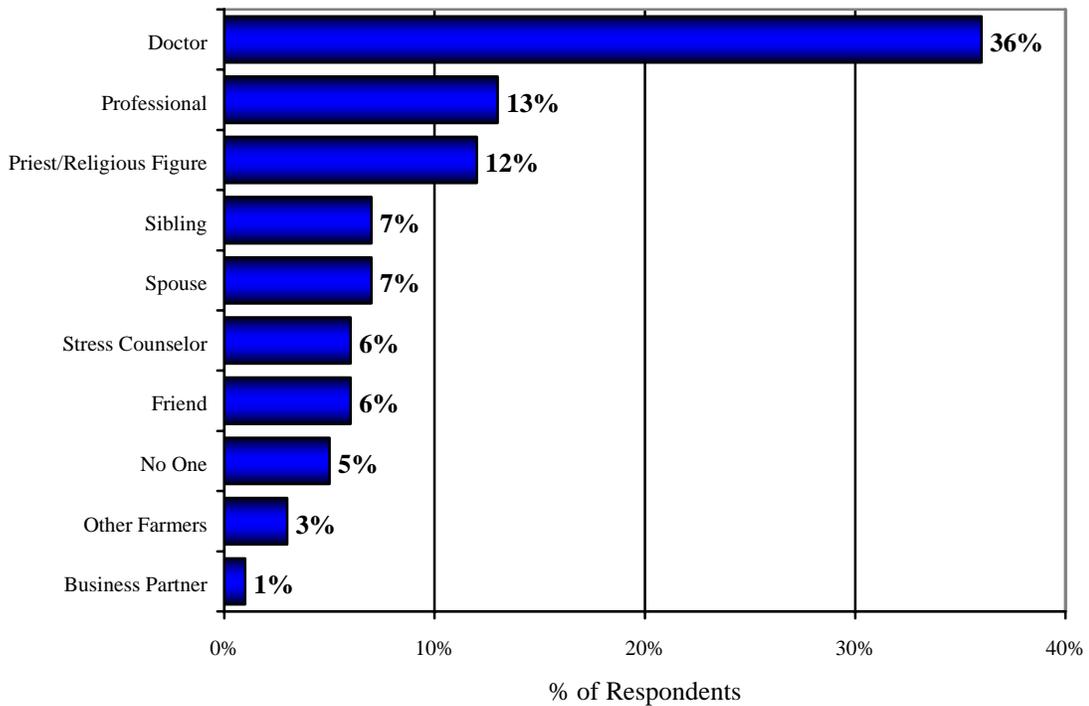


TURN TO FOR HELP

If feeling stressed, the majority of farmers indicated they would turn to a Family Doctor (36%), a Stress/Mental Health professional (13%), or a priest/religious figure (12%) for help.

Farmers are less likely to turn to a sibling (7%), spouse (7%) or a friend (6%) for help with stress and mental health issues.

CHART 4: IF STRESSED: WHO TURN TO FOR HELP



AGREE/DISAGREE STATEMENTS

Farmers were asked a series (4) of agree/disagree questions relating to:

- Awareness of stress and mental health resources;
- Managing stress on their own;
- Having more access to stress and mental health resources, and
- Remaining anonymous while seeking help is important to me.

Forty-four percent of farmers strongly agree that they are aware of resources they can turn to for help in managing stress and mental health. This number (awareness) is higher in the Prairies, Ontario, and Atlantic Canada, and lowest in Quebec (33% agree strongly).

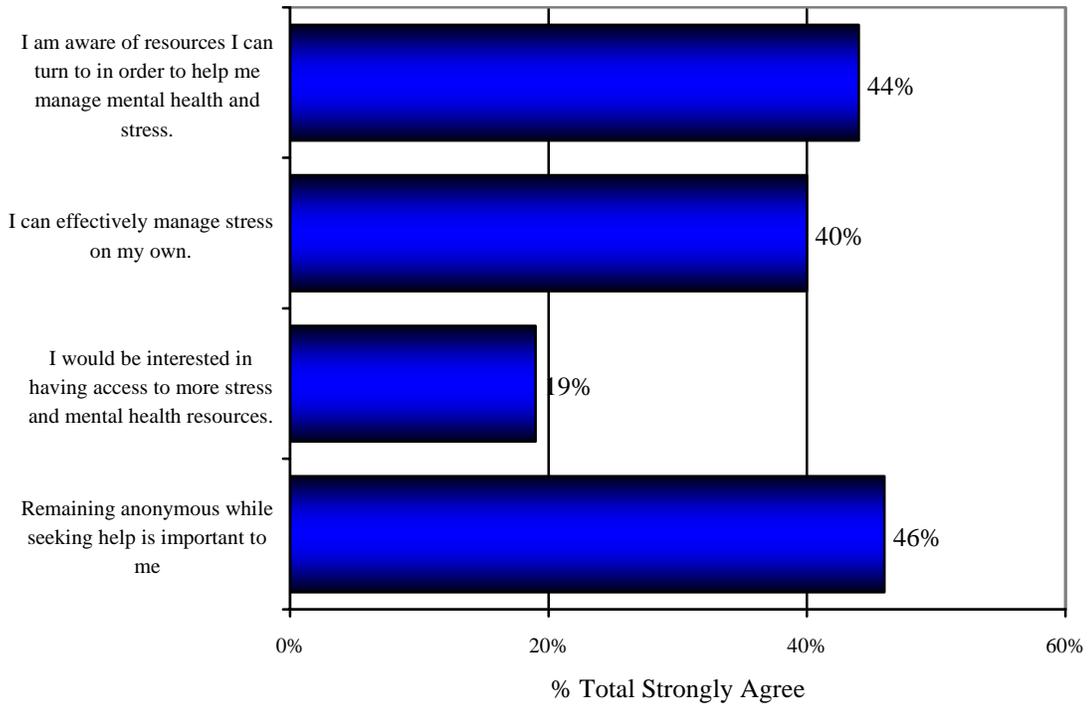
Four in ten (40%) farmers strongly agree that they can effectively manage stress and mental health on their own. Results are generally consistent across demographics, with the exception of those over the age of 65 years (48% strongly agree) and farmers from BC (53% strongly agree).

A total of 2 in 10 farmers (19%) strongly agree that they would be interested in having access to more stress/mental health resources. Levels of strongly agree increase with those who are feeling stressed (35%), those who have spoken with a health care professional (35%), those with gross farm receipts under \$50,000 (22%), and those from Quebec (25%).

Female respondents are also more likely than males (23% versus 16%) to strongly agree that they would be interested in having access to more stress and mental health resources.

Remaining anonymous is very important to farmers when seeking help for stress and mental health issues. Almost one-half (46%) of farmers strongly agree that remaining anonymous is important to them. Females are more likely than males (53% versus 43%) to strongly agree with this statement, as are those who have previously spoken with a health care professional about stress and mental health.

CHART 5: AGREE/DISAGREE STATEMENTS



CAUSES OF STRESS

Respondents were read a randomized list of factors that may affect their levels of stress on their farms and were asked to identify, on a 1 to 10 scale, to what degree these caused stress on their farms. See Chart 6 on following page.

It is important to remember that this summary is an overall average of results, and does not represent individual situations of stress and mental health concerns. Presented numbers in this section are mean levels, and do not represent individual responses. Although mean stress levels may be lower for some areas than others, individual respondents may still find these factors extremely stressful.

Extreme Stress Factors:

Three items caused very high mean stress levels on farms: **poor harvests/production, Government policies, and farm finances**. Each of these factors received a mean score of more than 7 out of 10.

High Stress Factors

A further three items caused high mean stress levels on farms: **weather, the BSE crisis, and the pressure to maintain the family farm**. These three factors received a mean score of between 6.4 and 6.7 out of 10.

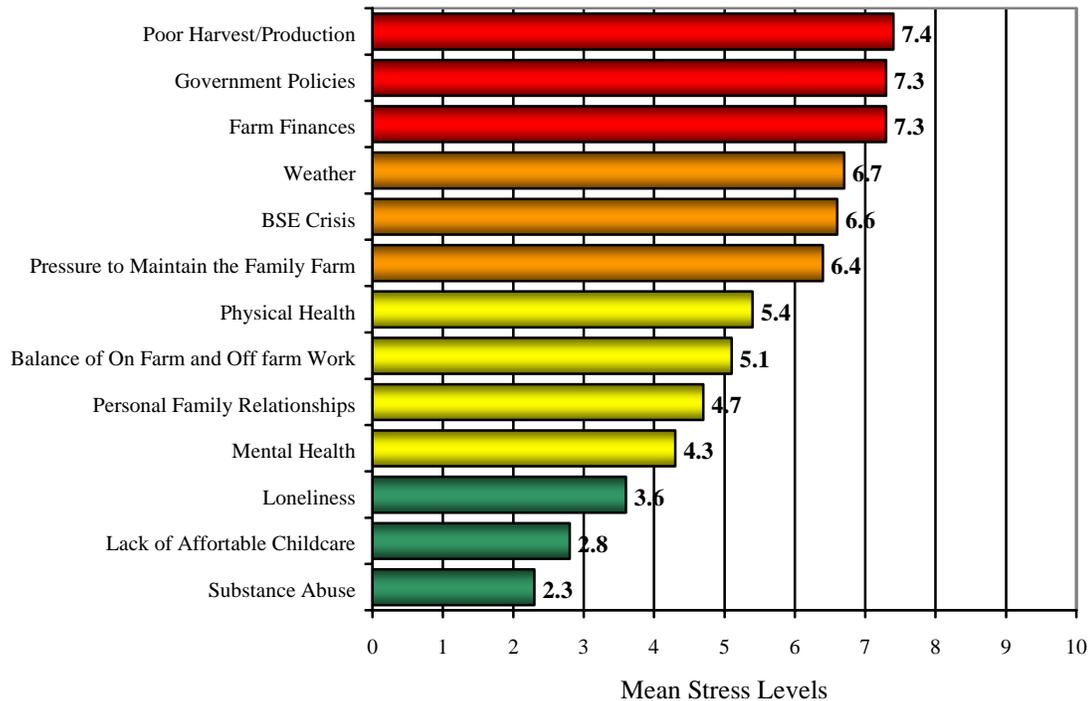
Medium Stress Factors

Four factors were grouped together in causing relatively moderate mean levels of stress: **physical health concerns** (5.4), **balancing on farm and off farm work** (5.1), **personal family relationships** (4.7), and **concerns about mental health** (4.3).

Lower Stress Factors

A final 3 factors were found to have relatively low mean levels of stress on Canadian farms. These factors are **loneliness** (3.6), **lack of affordable child care** (2.8), and **substance abuse** (2.3).

CHART 6: SPECIFIC CAUSES OF STRESS



Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***farm finances*** are under the age of 65 years

- With gross farm receipts under \$150,000
- Ontario (7.4) and the prairies (7.5)
- Mixed (crop and livestock) farms (7.6)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***poor harvest/production*** are:

- Crops or mixed farms (7.5)
- Less than \$500,000 in gross receipts
- Prairies (7.7) and Quebec (7.4)
- Females (7.9)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***personal family relationships*** are:

- Between the ages of 35-54 years of age (5.1)
- University/College graduates (4.9)
- Ontario respondents (4.8)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***mental health*** are:

- Those who have spoken with a mental health professional (5.5)
- Between the ages of 35-54 years of age (4.6)
- Ontario respondents (4.5)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***BSE Crisis*** are:

- Those feeling very stressed (7.9)
- Those over the age of 34 years
- Livestock (7.4) or mixed farms (8.0)
- Less than University or college education
- Lower gross farm receipts
- Prairie (6.9) or Ontario (6.8) location
- Females (7.3)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***Physical Health*** are:

- Quebec respondents (6.0)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***Substance Abuse*** are:

- Those over the age of 35 years
- Crop and mixed farmers
- Less than High School education (2.9)
- Males (2.6)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***Loneliness*** are:

- Crop only (3.6) or mixed farms (3.8)
- Less than HS education (4.2)
- Quebec (3.9)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***Lack of Affordable Childcare*** are:

- Under the age of 35 years (3.5)
- Quebec (3.2)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***Government Policies*** are:

- Over the age of 35 years
- Fairly consistent across all other demographics

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***The Weather*** are:

- Crop only (6.8) or mixed farmers (6.9)
- Quebec (7.1)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***Pressure to Maintain the Family Farm*** are:

- Mixed Farms (6.7)
- Those with gross receipts under \$50,000
- Females (7.0)

Those more likely to give higher mean ratings for ***Balancing on and off farm work*** are:

- Under 35 years of age (5.4) and between 35 and 54 years of age (5.5)
- Less than \$50,000 in gross receipts
- Quebec (5.8)

METHODS OF COUNSELLING

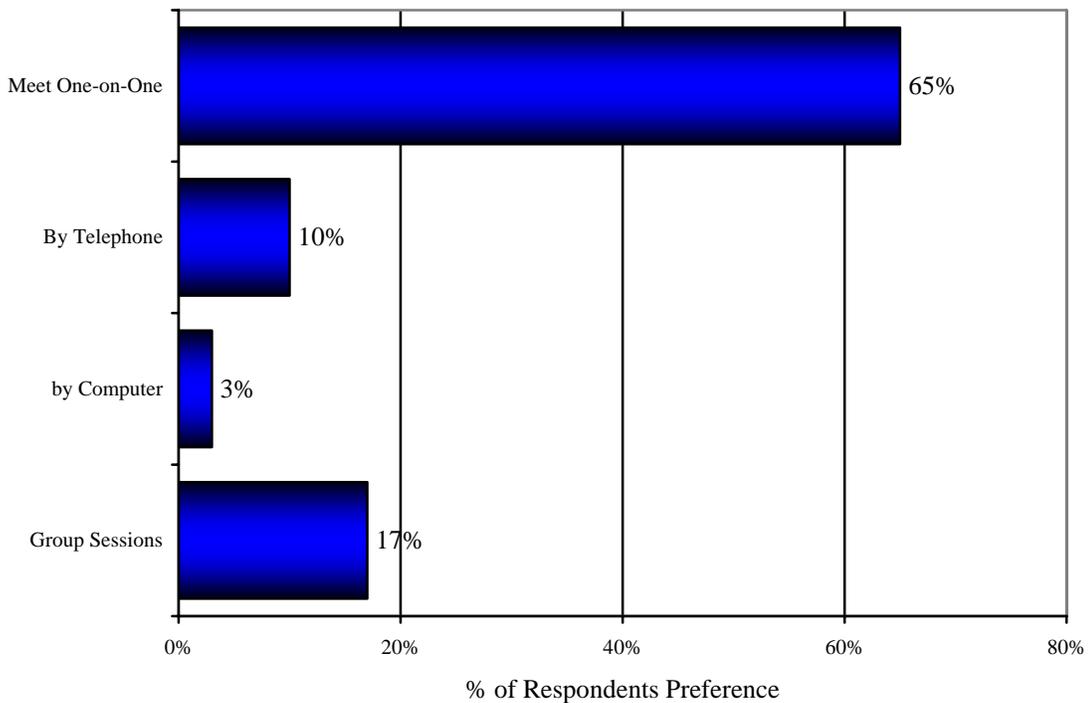
Nationally, almost two thirds of farmers (65%) would prefer to meet one-on-one with someone to talk about stress and mental health as opposed to help by group sessions (17%) and telephone help (10%).

Male and female respondents have similar preferences related to group sessions with other farmers (17% males and 16% females prefer group sessions).

Farmers between the age of 35 and 64 years are more likely than others to prefer to meet one-on-one with someone to discuss stress and mental health. Farmers in Atlantic Canada and Quebec place higher preference on the one-on-one meetings, than farmers from the rest of Canada.

Young farmers, under the age of 35 years, are more likely than others to prefer to speak on the telephone (20%), although the majority in this age group still prefer one-on-one meetings.

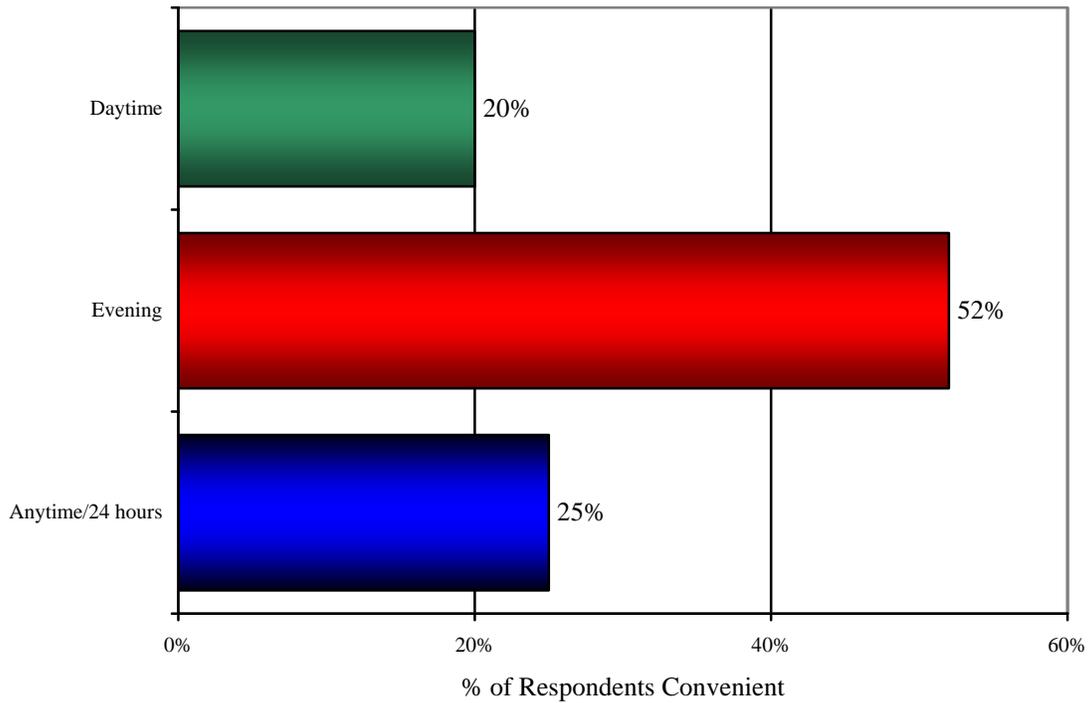
CHART 7: PREFERENCE IF LOOKING FOR HELP



Farmers indicated that they prefer to have access to telephone stress and mental health assistance during the evening or 24 hours a day. More than one-half (52%) of farmers prefer to be able to make contact during the evening, while one-quarter prefer to be able to have contact 24 hours a day.

A smaller proportion, 1 in 5, prefers daytime access to stress and mental health advice over the phone. Interestingly, Quebec farmers place more preference on daytime calling (43%) than farmers from the rest of Canada. Consequently, as a group they place lower importance on evening or 24 hour availability.

CHART 8: CONVENIENT TIME TO TALK ON PHONE

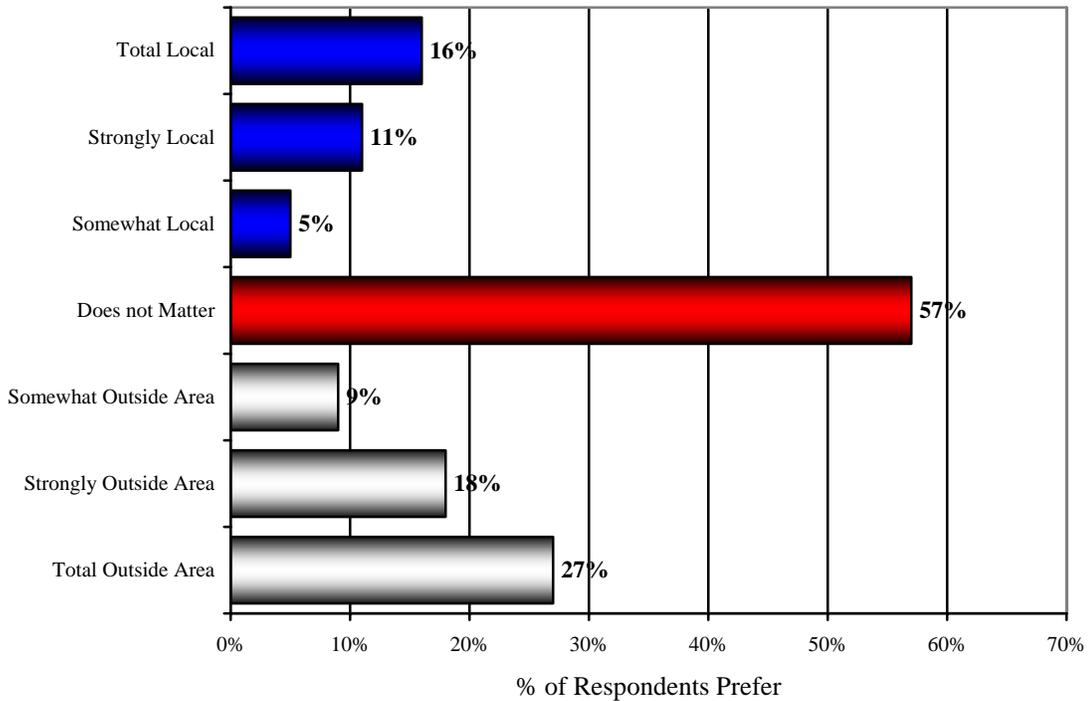


Farmers generally feel it does not matter to them if they deal with someone from their area with regard to stress and mental health concerns. Specifically, 57 percent of farmers indicate it does not matter to them.

However, a significant proportion of farmers (27%) prefer to meet with someone from outside their area, a feeling more prominent with those between the age of 35-54, crop and mixed farmers, and farmers from the prairies.

Only 16 percent of farmers prefer to meet with someone local. This feeling is stronger with Quebec farmers (29%) than farmers from the rest of Canada.

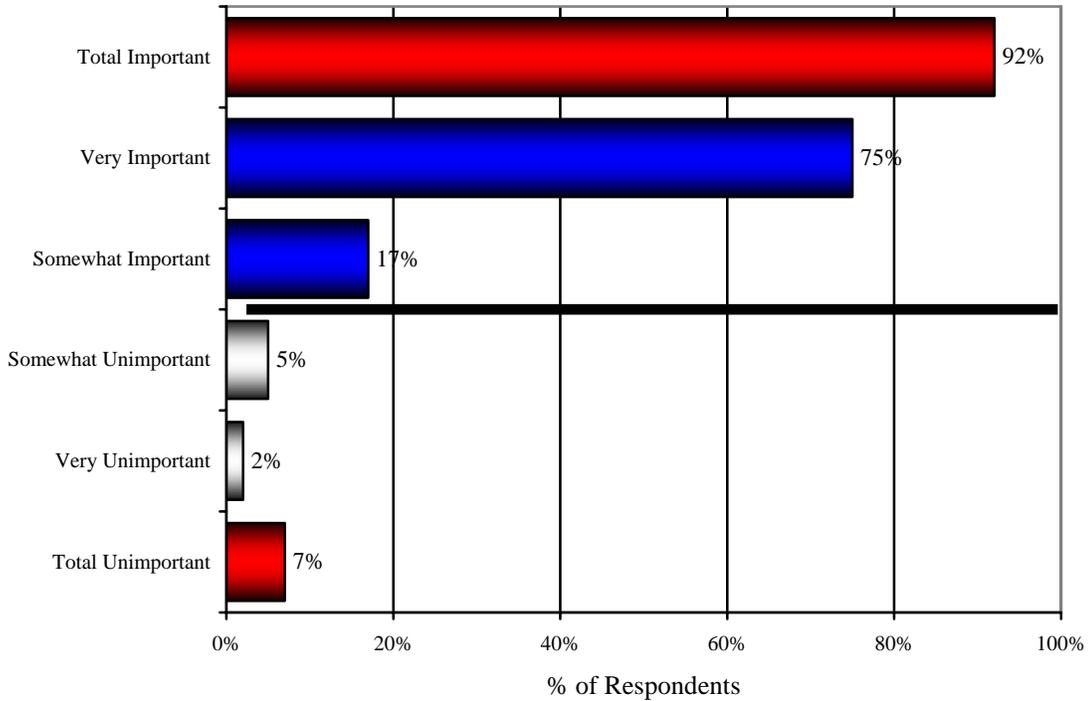
CHART 9: PREFER SOMEONE LOCAL/OUTSIDE AREA



It is of utmost importance for Canadian Farmers that the person they are dealing with for stress and mental health concerns is knowledgeable about agriculture.

More than 9 in 10 farmers across Canada (92%) feel it is important for the person to be knowledgeable about agriculture.

CHART 10: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT AGRICULTURE



MANNERS OF STRESS COUNSELLING

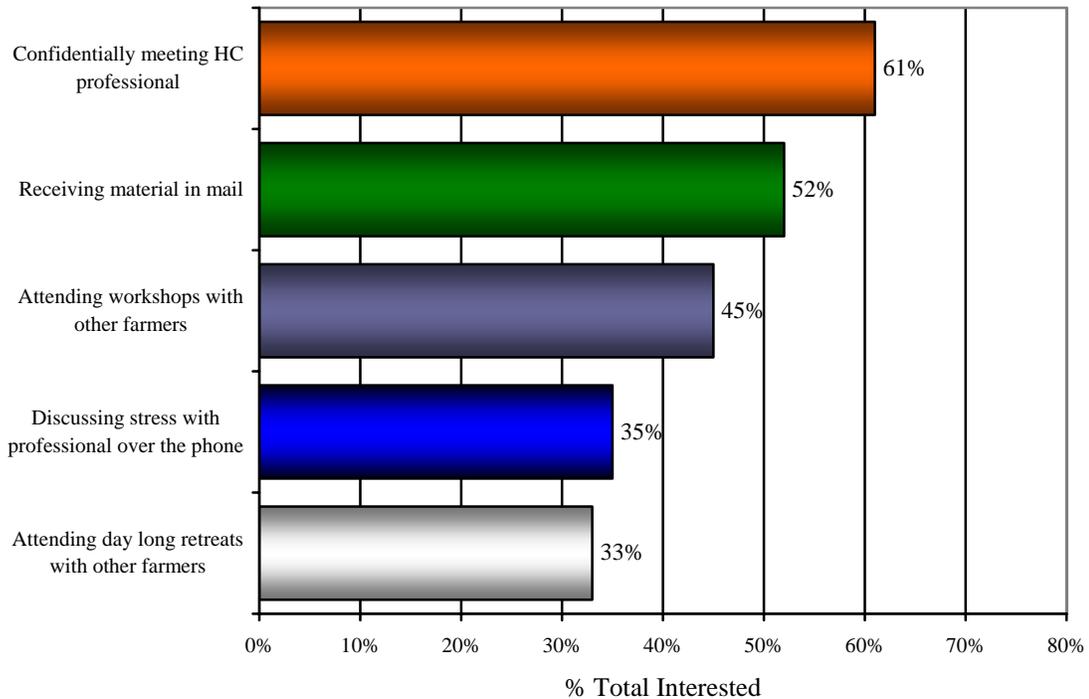
In identifying which potential resources farmers would be most interested in utilizing in order to deal with stress and mental health a few trends emerged. Firstly, farmers were most interested in confidentially meeting with a health care professional or receiving material in the mail. These are the only two presented options where more than 50% of farmers indicated they were interested.

Secondly, discussing stress over the phone is not an important resource to farmers as other options appear to be. However, the telephone resource is **more interesting** to farmers who are feeling very or somewhat stressed, those between the ages of 35-54 years (40% interested), and those from the prairies (40%).

Attending workshops with other farmers (45% interested) and attending day long retreats with other farmers received a warm level of interest from farmers.

Females were somewhat more likely than males to be interested in attending workshops with other farmers (49% females interested versus 44% males). Similarly, females are somewhat more likely than males to be interested in attending day long retreats with other farmers (36% females versus 32% males).

CHART 11: INTEREST IN TYPES OF SERVICES



WHY NOT SEEK MORE ADVICE

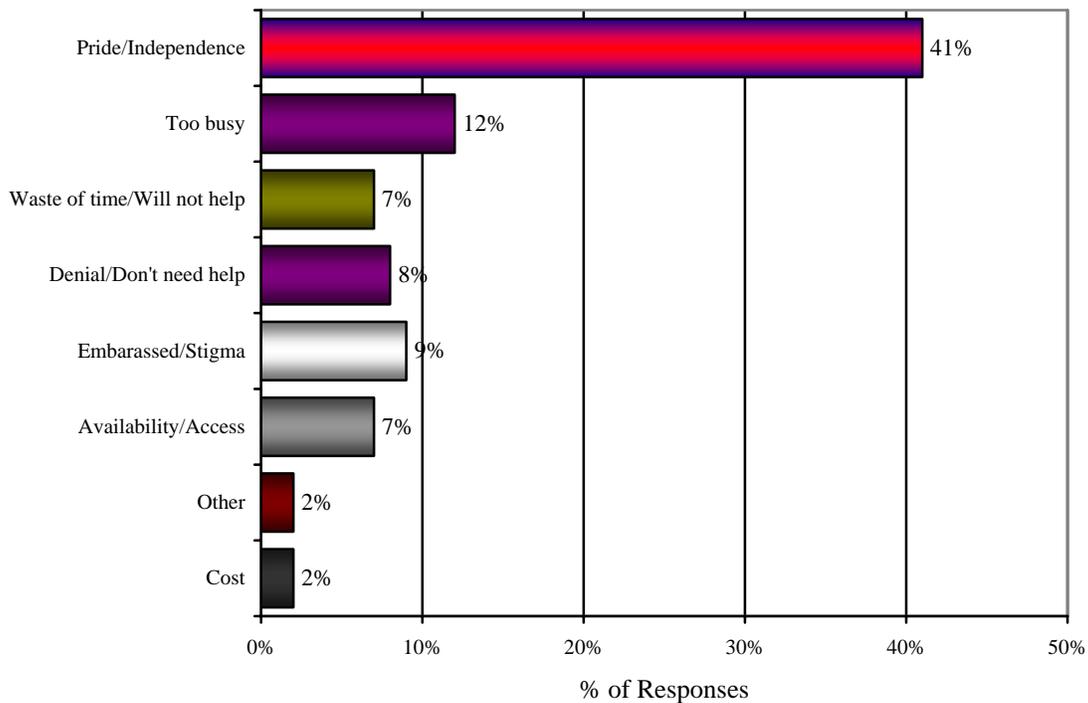
Farmers were asked what they thought is the main reason more farmers do not seek help in dealing with stress and mental health. The notion of pride and farmers independence was clearly the most frequently mentioned reason farmers did not seek more help in dealing with stress and mental health.

Forty-one percent of all responses mentioned pride and farmer independence. This result was consistent across more demographics, although somewhat less popular with young respondents, and with those with less than High School education.

Smaller proportions of farmers feel that farmers are too busy to seek help (9%), seeking help is a waste of time (7%), that farmers do not feel they need help (7%), and that they may feel embarrassed or there is a stigma attached to needing help (7%).

Younger farmers and those with less than High School education were more likely than others to not be able to provide an answer as to why they thought more farmers do not seek help in dealing with stress and mental health.

CHART 12: MAIN REASON FARMERS NOT SEEK MORE HELP (OPEN END)



AWARENESS OF FARM STRESS LINE

Roughly two-thirds (64%) of Canadian farmers are aware of the Farm Stress Line. A total of 25 percent indicated they are very aware of the service. This result excludes farmers from Quebec, who were not asked this question.

Those more likely to be very aware of the Farm Stress Line are from the prairies (33% very aware) and those with at least high school education.

Of those farmers who indicated they are aware of the Farm Stress Line, nine (9) percent indicate they know someone who has used the Farm Stress Line. Livestock farmers were more likely than others (13% versus 9% overall) to know someone who has used the Farm Stress Line.

CHART 13: FARM STRESS LINE

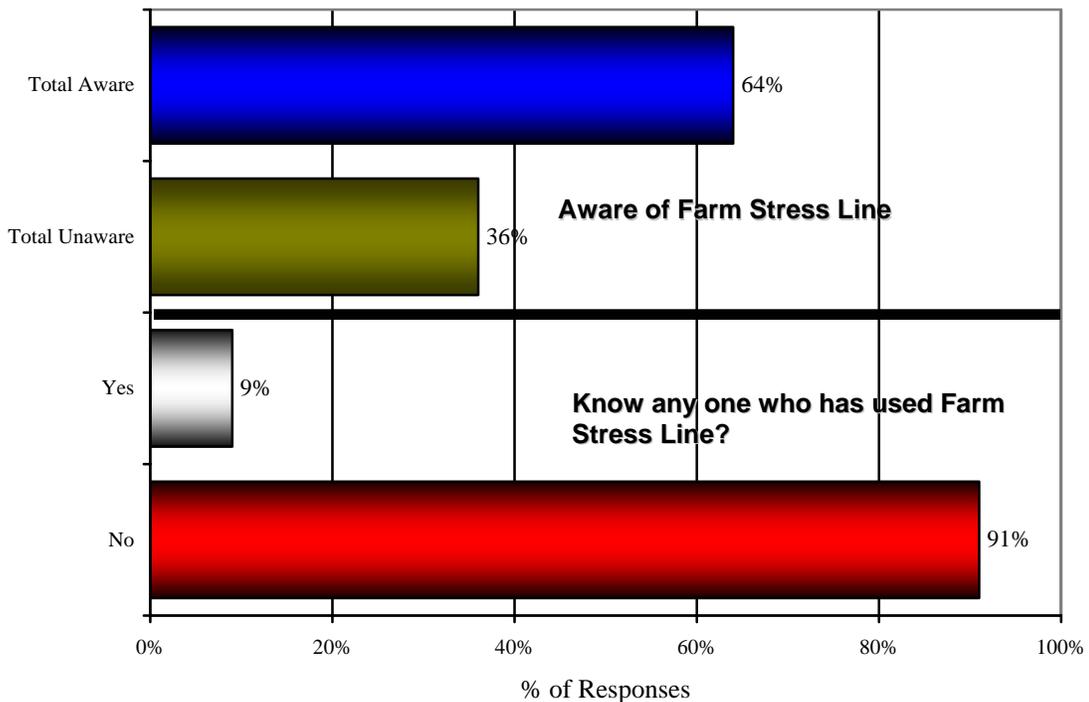


TABLE 1: FARMOGRAPHICS

	Total (N=1101) %
Current Farm Situation	
Will not make it, financially, past this year	3
Will make it past this year, but if the next couple are the same, will be out of business	37
Not making as much money as I would like, but am in no real danger of going out of business	45
Am doing just fine	14
Primary Industry	
Primarily field crops	34
Primarily livestock	21
A mix of livestock and field crops	43
Other (Greenhouse, Orchard)	4
Gross Receipts	
Less than \$50,000	20
\$50,000 to less than \$100,000	19
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	13
\$150,000 to less than \$200,000	9
\$200,000 to less than \$250,000	8
\$250,000 to less than \$300,000	5
\$300,000 to less than \$500,000	6
\$500,000 or more	12
Gender	
Male	73
Female	27
Age	
<25	1
25 – 34	6
35 – 44	23
45 – 54	33
55 - 64	24
65+	13
(Weighted Results) Region	
BC	8
AB	18
SK	19
MB	14
ON	23
QC	13
Atlantic	4

APPENDIX A: FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello, this is _____ calling from Western Opinion Research Inc., a national public opinion research company. Today we are speaking with a random sample of Canadian Farmers about on farm stress and mental health. Results from this survey will be used to help farmers directly deal with farms stress and mental health.

All of your answers will be confidential.

The survey will take less than 10 minutes and your answers are very important.
Are you a primary decision-maker for your farm? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: If required, read: "In other words, do you make some or most of the business and day to day decisions regarding your farm?")

- Yes 1
- Joint 2
- No 3
- Not a farm Terminate

IF YES OR JOINT, SKIP TO Main questionnaire; OTHERWISE, CONTINUE

May I speak with that person?

- Yes 1
- Not available 2
- No 3

*IF YES: When respondent answers, repeat intro and begin interview with Q. 1
IF NO, NOT AVAILABLE NOW: Arrange a call-back
IF NO: Thank and terminate*

Thank and terminate: "We apologize for the disturbance and thank you for your time."

1. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel? (Read all before accepting answer)

- I generally feel very stressed 1
- I generally feel somewhat stressed..... 2
- I generally feel little stress 3
- I generally feel no stress 4
- DK/NR 9

2.Thinking about the potential causes of stress that you or other farmers in your area may be feeling, what is the single biggest factor causing stress in your area? (Record open end)

3. Have you personally ever spoken to a health care professional or another professional (For example a pastor or lawyer) about the stress and mental health concerns that you may have?

- Yes1
- No2

4. Do you know of any farmers in your area who have spoken with a health care professional or another professional about the stress and mental health concerns that they may be feeling?

- Yes1
- No2

5. If you or someone else in your family were feeling stressed or needing advice with mental health issues, who would you turn to for help? (Select all mentions, record first mention, do not probe for others)

- a. Spouse
- b. Friend
- c. Sibling
- d. Business Partner
- e. Other Farmers
- f. Health care or mental health professional
- g. Family Doctor
- h. Priest/Rector/Religious Figure
- i. No one/Never spoke about it
- j. Stress Line Councilor
- k. Other(Specify)

6. I am going to read you a number of statements and I'd like to find out if you agree or disagree with each statement. Please use a 7-point scale where 7 means you totally agree with the statement, 1, means you totally disagree with the statement, and 4 means you neither agree nor disagree. (Rotate)

- a. I am aware of resources I can turn to in order to help me manage mental health and stress.
- b. I can effectively manage stress on my own
- c. I would be interested in having access to more stress and mental health resources.
- d. Remaining completely anonymous when seeking help for stress and mental health issues is important to me.

7. I would like to find out how certain specific things may cause stress on your farm. Using a scale from 1 to 10 where 10 means it causes a great deal of stress and 1 means it causes no stress at all, to what degree does cause stress. (Rotate List)

- a. Farm finances
- b. Poor harvest/poor production
- c. Personal family relationships
- d. Mental health
- e. The BSE crisis

- e. Physical health
- f. Substance abuse
- g. Loneliness
- h. Lack of affordable child care
- i. Government policies
- k. Weather
- l. The pressure to maintain the family farm
- m. Balancing on farm and off farm work

8. Hypothetically, if you were looking for someone to help you with stress or mental health advice, which of the following would you prefer? Would you prefer to:

Confidentially meet one on one with a professional	1
Confidentially speak with someone on the phone	2
Receive advice remotely by computer	3
Attend a group stress and mental health session with other farmers	4
DK/NA	9

9. Again thinking hypothetically, if you were to meet one on one with someone to help you with stress and mental health would you prefer that that individual was from your area, would you prefer that that individual was from outside of your area, or does it not matter. Would that be strongly or somewhat someone local/someone from outside area?

Strongly prefer someone local	1
Somewhat prefer someone local	2
Does not matter	3
Somewhat Prefer someone from outside area	4
Strongly prefer someone from outside area	5
DK/NA	9

10. Do you think it is important or unimportant that someone you are meeting with to discuss stress and mental health is knowledgeable about agriculture? Would that be very important/unimportant or just somewhat important/unimportant?

11. I am going to read to you a number of different ways farmers can get help in dealing with stress and mental health. Thinking about your own personal situation, how interested would you be in receiving stress and mental health assistance in the following ways? Would that be very or somewhat interested/not interested?

- a. Attending workshops with other farmers?
- b. Attending day long retreats with other farmers?
- c. Confidentially meeting with healthcare professions to discuss stress and mental health?
- d. Confidentially discussing stress and mental health with a professional over the phone?
- e. Receiving material in the mail about dealing with stress and mental health?

12. (If interested in Q12.d Ask) What time of the day would be most convenient to contact a professional on the phone, would it be....

- a. Daytime
- b. Evening
- c. 24 hours/Anytime
- d. DK/Refused

13. What do you think is the main reason more farmers do not seek help in dealing with stress and mental health? (Open-end record response)

14. Would you say you are aware or unaware of a service called the Farm Stress line? Would that very/somewhat aware or unaware? (If unaware, skip to question 19)

15. Do you know anyone who has used the Farm Stress Line to help deal with stress and mental health concerns?

- Yes 1
- No 2

There has been much discussion about the financial position of farmers in Canada. I want to get a bit of information on how current circumstances have affected you personally.

16. Among the following options, which best describes your situation?

- Will **not** make it, financially, past this year 1
- Will make it past this year, but if the next couple are the same, will be out of business 2
- Not making as much money as I would like, but am in no real danger of going out of business 3
- Am doing just fine..... 4

Now I have just a few final questions for statistical purposes only.

17. **SEX (RECORD SEX FROM VOICE – DO NOT ASK)**

- Male 1
- Female 2

18. What is your approximate age?

- Under 25 1
- 25 to 34 2
- 35 to 44 3
- 45 to 54 4
- 55 to 64 5
- 65 and over 6

DK/NA 9

19. Which of the following best describes your farm operation?

- Primarily field crops..... 1
- Primarily livestock 2
- A mix of livestock and field crops..... 3
- Other (specify) 4
- DK/NA 9

20. Please tell me which of the following indicates your level of schooling?

- Did not graduate from high school 1
- High school graduate 2
- Some college, university or technical school 3
- University/College graduate (one or more degrees) 4
- DK/NA 9

21. Approximately what were your gross receipts from farming last year? Were they...

- 1 Under \$50,000
- 2 \$50,000 to under \$100,000
- 3 \$100,000 to under \$150,000
- 4 \$150,000 to under \$200,000
- 5 \$200,000 to under \$250,000
- 6 \$250,000 to under \$300,000
- 7 \$300,000 to under \$500,000
- 8 \$300,000 or More
- 9 [DO NOT READ] Don't Know/Refused

Appendix B: Clarifications**Stress and the Importance of Telephone Counselling**

When Canadian farmers are asked what delivery method they prefer in dealing with stress and mental health, not surprisingly the majority (65%) prefer to deal with someone one-on-one. As a preference, only 10 percent prefer to speak with someone by telephone. This result may be somewhat misleading, as it places a lower preference on telephone stress counselling.

Diverting monies away from telephone stress and mental health counselling for Canadian farmers would be a mistake. Many Canadian farmers live in relatively remote areas, and are faced with the difficulty of traveling to small rural or even urban centres for the counselling they may need. The telephone stress line offers farmers immediate and universally accessible help, especially during times when they are feeling very stressed and are dealing with overwhelming issues and feelings of despair. On a lonely Canadian farm, where stress and mental health issues are at a climax, a knowing that there is a friendly professional voice just a phone call away must be comforting for farmers.

Ideally all farmers would have open and affordable access to one-on-one counselling for long term stress and mental health issues, but that situation may be far from reality. However, the telephone stress line offers a more realistic option for Canadian farmers, especially during:

- Situations of high immediate high stress and mental health anguish.
- If financial situations prohibit and individual farmer from being able to afford counselling, even if counselling fees kept to a minimum. To this point, finances and financial issues are some of the biggest drivers of stress on Canadian farms and adding a fee for counselling to those already feeling stressed by finances may be counterproductive.
- When travel to a councillor is not realistic because of inclement weather, on farm commitments, off farm work commitments, and
- If the individual is not comfortable meeting one-on-one with a councillor.

To reinforce the importance of telephone stress counselling, individual farmers who are feeling moderate or high levels of stress more strongly prefer speaking to someone by telephone, as opposed to those who are feeling relatively lower levels of stress.

Causes of Stress: Government Policies and “Price”

Open ended questions are extremely useful in survey research because they allow the respondent to tell us the first thing that comes to mind regarding a certain issue or concern.

In general population survey research, the most important issue that comes top of mind to Canadians around election time is always health care. However, when presented with a battery of questions asking about education, taxes, crime and punishment, and health care; other issues come out of the woodwork, and the importance of health care is somewhat diminished. Health care is a emotional issue that is used as a wedge issue in many political campaigns.

Similarly when you ask a Canadian farmer what the most important issues are to them (or in

this case what the single biggest factor is causing them stress) they will typically respond that issues relating to finances and income are the most important. These are the top of mind issues that are relatively easy for respondents to talk about and describe in some detail. However, it does not mean that other issues are unimportant to them.

Specifically in this study, when presented with a detailed battery of questions regarding the potential causes of stress, farmers gave different answers that in the open ended portion of the study. For example, three items were found to cause very high mean levels of stress on Canadian farms from the battery question: poor harvests/production, Government policies, and farm finances.

As was presented in the top of mind responses, farm finances is indeed a popular response to the cause of farm stress. However, poor harvest and Government Policies were found in the batter section to be high causes of stress, but were near the bottom in the open ended portion of the results. This results in not unusual and is not surprising.

Just like in general population surveys when respondents mention "*health care*" as the most important tissue, farmers typically mention "*Prices*" as their most important issue. This certainly does not mean that other issues are not important to them or are not causing them stress, and it simply means that the top of mind response to this open ended question was "Prices". By presenting a battery of options to Canadian farmers and getting their opinions on specific issues that may be causing them stress, we can further measure the degree to which specific prompted items are causing them stress.

Even more interesting is the fact that in agriculture, everything can be related back to price. All factors, including: BSE, gross income, and especially government policies and support programs obviously affect prices and income. Just because an individual farmer mentions "Price" in the open ended portions of a study, this does not exclude his answer from being further related to things like the BSE crisis, government policies and exogenous factors like weather and world trade functions; all of which can and do impact domestic prices and income.

The purpose of the open ended question was to gather some general information from Canadian farmers about the single greatest factor causing stress, and the detailed batter questions provided specific and more precise information on those factors. The two responses do not contradict each other, they actually supplement each other.