



## Farm Center is Here for Wisconsin Farmers

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MADISON – Work on a farm never ends, which can create added stress. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reminds farmers that Farm Center staff are available to navigate the ups and the downs of agriculture.

“We know that stress is high right now for dairy, livestock and crop farmers alike,” said Farm Center Director Kathy Schmitt. “Sometimes it can be hard to see possible alternatives in tough situations. That is where the Farm Center can help.”

The Farm Center works one-on-one with farmers and their families through all phases of the farm cycle, including start-up, growth, change, generational succession, and retirement. These no-cost services are available for both new and experienced farmers.

“Farming is a complicated and demanding business,” added Schmitt, “and it is helpful to have someone there providing support, suggestions and encouragement, whether it be family, friends, or counseling services.”

Farm Center staff can help sort out farm financial options and offer a listening ear if you need someone to talk to about your farm situation. DATCP also has a counseling voucher program that can be used to access mental health services.

“We know that chronic stress can have negative effects on our bodies, emotions, and ability to make decisions, and everyone gets a case of the blues now and then, but sometimes the blues turn to depression,” explained Schmitt. “Depression is a serious, but treatable medical condition.”

Schmitt recommends watching for signs of depression in yourself and loved ones. Some signs include increased use of alcohol or drugs, decline in personal or farm appearance, reduced interest in activities, irritability, exhaustion or negative thoughts. If you observe these symptoms, you are encouraged to call the Farm Center staff, doctor or counselor who can help.

“In agriculture, we’re used to the cyclical nature of prices, production and weather cycles constantly changing,” concluded Schmitt. “The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone in these challenges. The Farm Center is here to help farmers maneuver through the lows so we’re all ready when a new cycle begins.”

You can reach the Wisconsin Farm Center at 800-942-2474, Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m..

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