



GUEST COLUMN FROM SECRETARY HARSDORF: DATCP stands ready to help

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MADISON – Below is a guest column from Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary Sheila Harsdorf:

Across the country, May is recognized as Mental Health Awareness Month, and many are working to provide education, share services and fight the stigmas associated with mental health. I ask your help in sharing the message that there are resources specifically available for farmers.

Farmers are known as nurturers of their animals, stewards of their land and caretakers of their farms. They balance the needs of their family and farm above everything else, often ignoring their own needs. As farmers continue to endure an extended period of low commodity prices, it is especially hard for many to try to negotiate financing and make due with much less while still providing for their family.

A typical day for a farmer can mean hours working independently and alone doing barn chores or fieldwork. There are times that farmers may feel there is no one to talk to, and that they are isolated in their struggles to make ends meet and address challenges in their operation.

Farmers need to know that there is help out there!

The Wisconsin Farm Center at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is there for farmers to call for guidance on finances, farm succession planning, and other issues they may be dealing with. Farm Center staff work with farmers and their families one-on-one to address each personal situation. All services are free and confidential.

Farmers, whether beginning their career or nearing retirement, can experience challenging situations. Staff are able to walk through options with farmers about how to navigate difficult personal or financial situations. While at times, alternatives may seem very limited, sometimes an outside perspective can help bring light to possibilities.

Our Farm Center staff are available to lend a listening ear and if needed, to connect farmers and their families with counseling services. Mental health professionals are a valuable resource that can help us through a tough time.

Just as taking care of our physical health is important, so is taking care of our mental health. I encourage those in need to reach out for help and utilize available resources by calling the Wisconsin Farm Center at 800-942-2474. Staff are available Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m..

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