

March 19, 2020

Managing farm stress during COVID-19

During the current COVID-19 outbreak, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is acutely aware of the level of uncertainty for farmers who have already weathered a stressful 2019 season. We want you to know that we are here for you, we understand, and that we are working hard for you.

From recent government announcements, we know that travel for trade or commerce including trucking will not be affected. Supply chains are considered essential to the health of the economy and cross-border trade and will be protected.

Of particular concern right now is the uncertainty among farmers who are expecting the arrival of essential seasonal agricultural workers. We understand this is incredibly stressful and want to offer assurance that the OFA, agri-food organizations and our federal and provincial leaders are committed to finding a workable solution to the issue.

With spring upon us, we know for many of you there are significant unknowns but rest assured that OFA is working on your behalf to ensure that the business of farming can continue as efficiently and effectively as possible. All OFA staff are now working from home offices following the implementation of a mandatory work from home strategy, and employees will be available during regular business hours (8:30 – 4:30) to serve members at 1-800-668-3276. Contact information for local Member Services Representatives can be found at <https://ofa.on.ca/about-ofa/msr/>.

Ontario's current health environment is changing rapidly and has forced our industry to be fluid and flexible. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, we will monitor its progress closely and provide updates when necessary. These are unprecedented times around the world. We recognize that the uncertainty can be unsettling. We encourage people to be respectful of social distancing, and thankfully we have technology to help us stay connected. Please take the time to reach out to your friends, family and neighbours, especially those who may be particularly isolated or vulnerable.

To help our OFA community stay connected with up-to-date information and resources, we have put together the following information:

- [OFA statement on COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [OFA statement on emerging farm labour issues](#)
- [Food security in Ontario remains strong during COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Official statement from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture regarding office closure](#)

For any farm seeking help with significant stress, or requiring mental health supports:

Where can I find mental health resources?

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

If you or anyone close to you requires support at this time, please check the resources available on the OFA website at: <https://ofa.on.ca/issues/mental-health>.

Additional mental health resources

**updated March 19*

CMHA mental health for workers during COVID-19 measures: <https://cmha.ca/news/6-tips-to-respond-to-employee-anxiety-about-covid-19>.

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs resources:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/mental-health.htm>

Mental health in the workplace: <http://thinkmentalhealth.ca/>

If your farm business and employees are feeling anxious or concerned about the COVID-19 situation, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) developed a resource specifically for Canadian employers recommending 6 tips for responding to employee anxiety:
<https://cmha.ca/news/6-tips-to-respond-to-employee-anxiety-about-covid-19>.