

The Human Side of Farming

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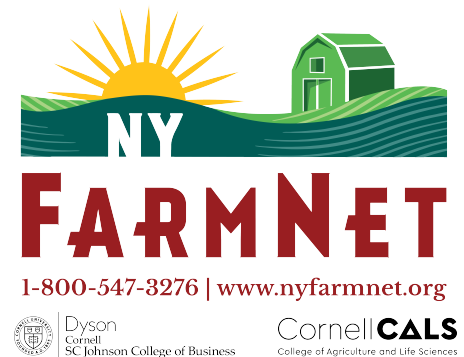


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Objectives

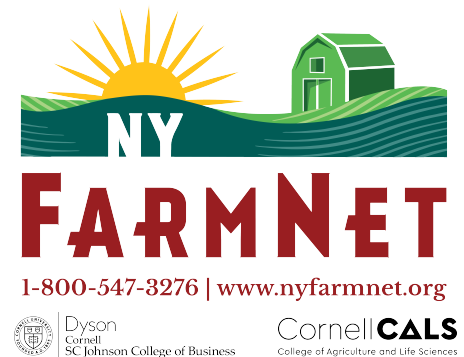
- Agriculture in New York
- Build awareness around stressful conditions affecting some farmers
 - Financial stressors
 - Social stressors
- What we know about suicide in the United States
- How NY FarmNet helps



US farmer demographics

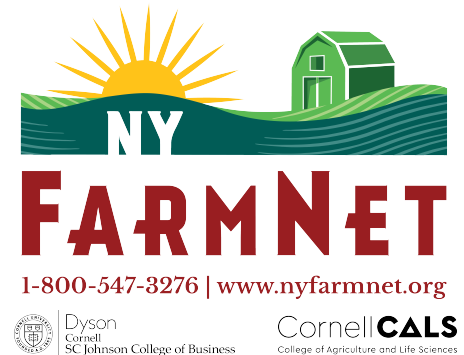
- Average age of farmer is 57
 - 2.7 million farmers are 45+
- 2.1 million producers are male; 1.2 million are female
- 3.2 million producers are white
- 2.04 million farms
 - 900.2 million acres in farming

(USDA-NASS, 2017)



New York State

- 30 million acres
 - 6.9 million acres are farmed (23%)
 - 18.9 million acres are forest (63%)
 - New York City is 205,000 acres (.68%)
- 44 of the 62 counties are rural
- 7% of the state's population lives in a rural area (1.36 million people)



NY farmer demographics

- 33,400 farms in operation in NYS (USDA-NASS, 2017)
 - 948 BIPOC farms
- Average age is 55
 - 39,537 fall into the 45+ age group
- 57,865 farmers
 - 35,985 male
 - 21,880 female

(USDA-NASS, 2017)



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Agrarian imperative

“Impels farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to endure unusual pain and hardship, and to take uncommon risks.”

Rosmann, 2010, p. 72

“The land means everything to farmers ... Losing the family farm is the ultimate loss...”

Rosmann, 2008, p. 39



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Farming is a stressful, high risk profession

- In 2016, 417 farmers and farm workers died from a work-related injury (fatality rate: 21.4 deaths per 100,000 workers) (CDC, 2018a)
- Opioids are an issue in rural areas: 3 of 4 farmers say it would be easy to access opioids (Morning Consult, 2017)
- Inadequate medical presence in most rural communities



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Financial stress on the farm



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Financial stress

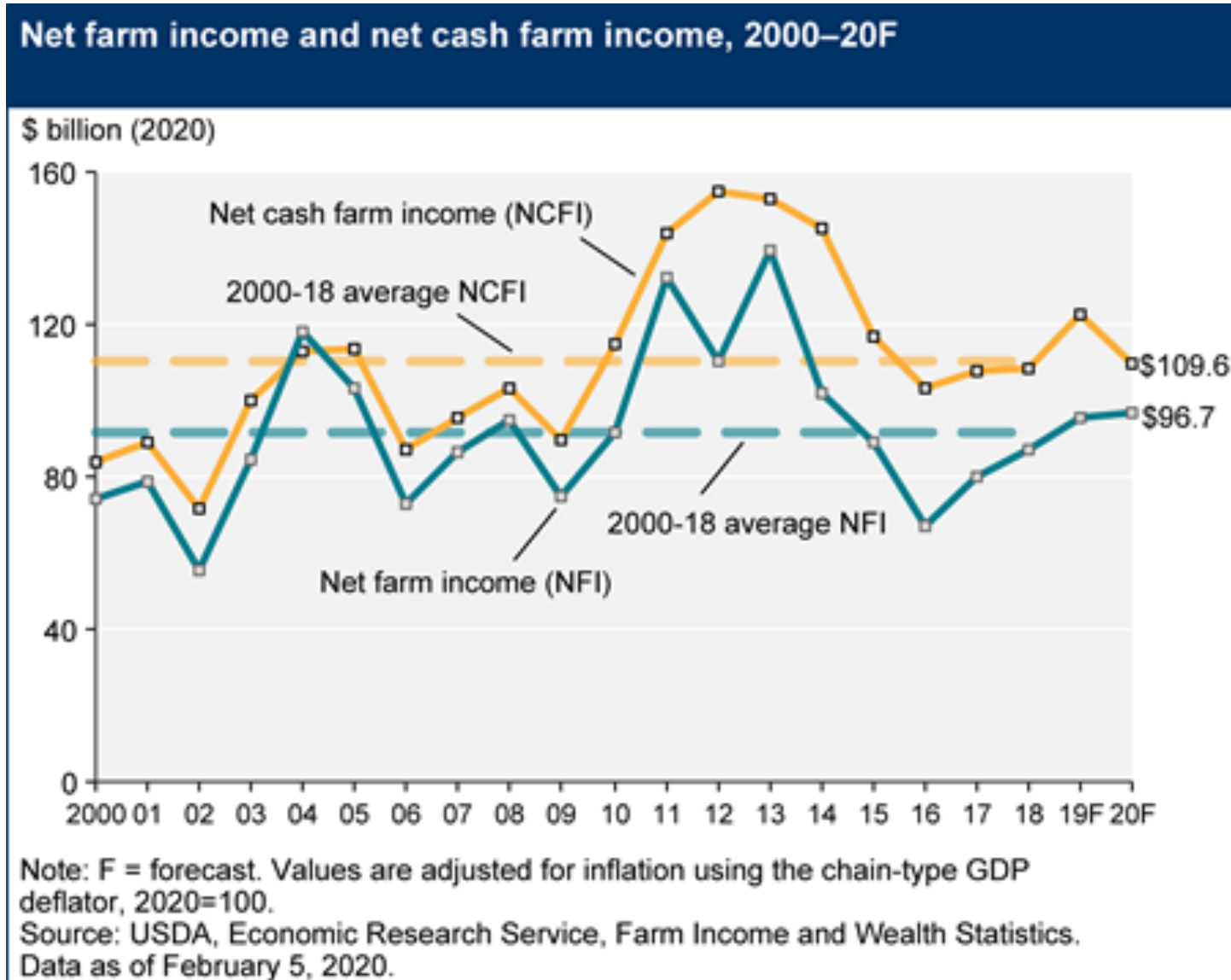
- Asset rich, cash poor
- Face food insecurity - Many don't qualify for SNAP benefits
- Farmers are price takers
- Consumers control a lot of the markets
- Government regulations – how to manage overtime, will they have enough workers, etc.
- Machinery breakdowns – lost time and efficiency, expensive
- Livestock illness
- Crop yields
- Weather events
- Interest rates
- Debt loads
- Changing markets – global and domestic



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Net farm income and net cash income from 2001-18

- Boom years from 2011-13
- Declined by half since 2013
- Slight uptick in 2017
- We were entering a plateau, but now....
- Dairy hit especially hard



Net farm income in NY

- 33% decline in net farm income since 2008

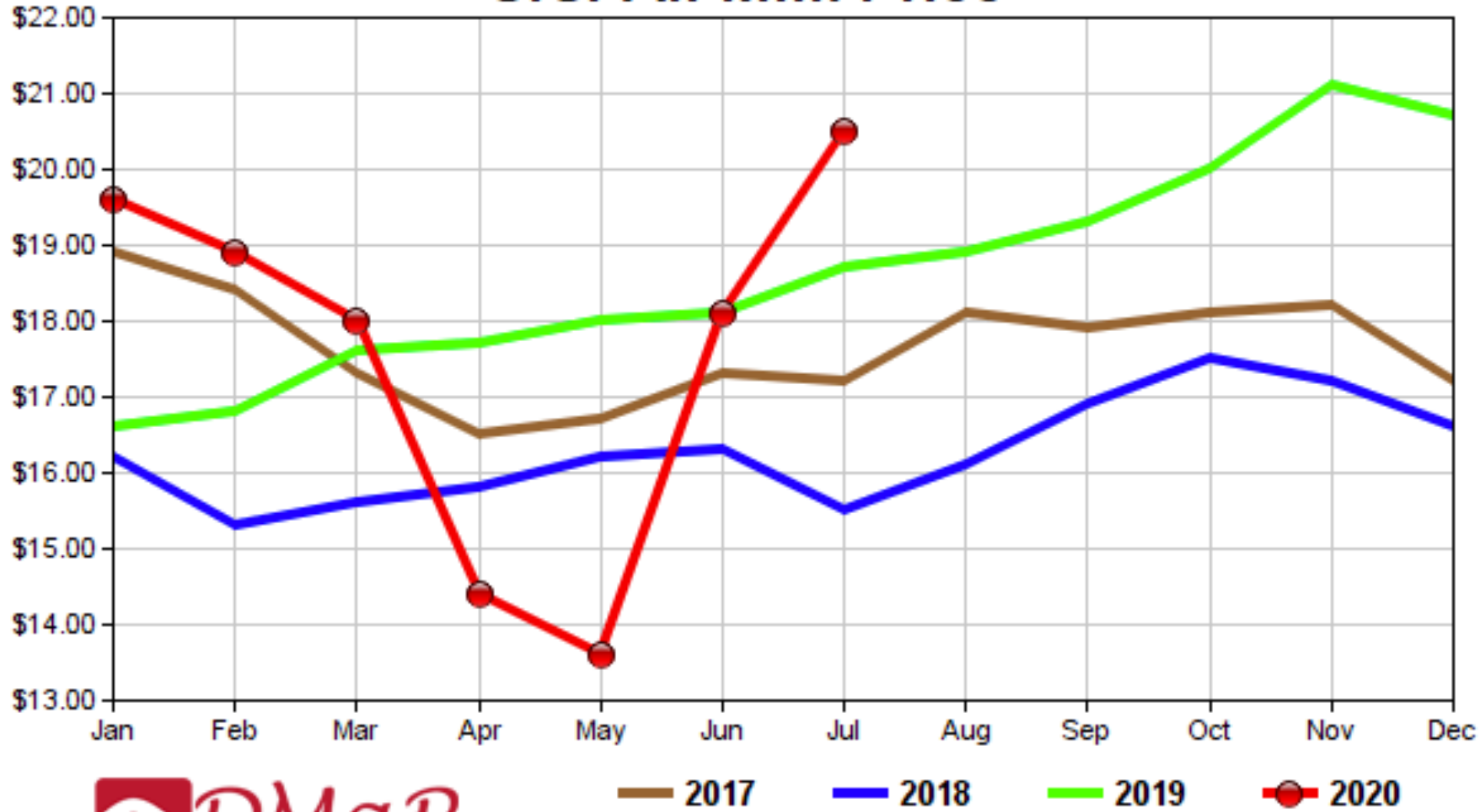


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U.S. All Milk Price



Updated 8/28/20



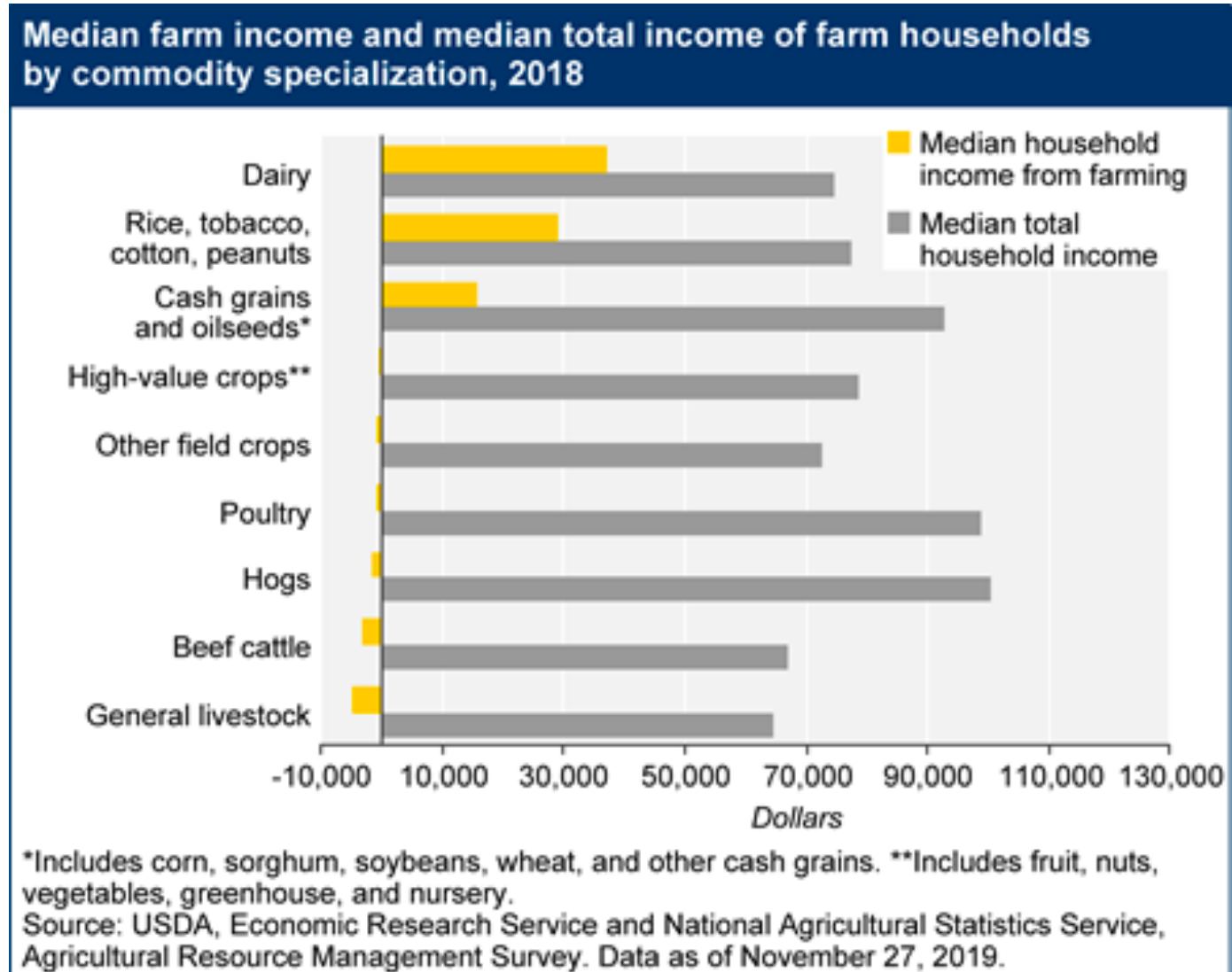
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Median farm income by ag sector

- Total household income and portion of household income from farming both vary by commodity
- Only dairy income falls below the national average (\$60,300)
- Only dairy relies on over half its income from farming



NY Farm Bureau COVID-19 Farm Impact Survey

- 43% of farms have lost sales during the pandemic.
- More than a third of farms and agribusinesses (37%) are experiencing cash flow issues.
- Almost half (47%) say they have reduced spending to local vendors and suppliers or will do so in the future.
- An overwhelming majority of farms (84%) have a plan in place to train and assist their employees to mitigate the spread of the virus.
- 46% of respondents say they are concerned about their mental health or that of someone they know.



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Increased financial and social hardships increases suicide risk.

- Shame about debt, bankruptcy, and financial failure: reasons for suicide, especially among men (West, 2003; Dandekar & Bhattacharya, 2017; Akotia, 2000; Hagaman, 2018; Mehl-Madrona, 2016).
- Shame is associated with financial hardship, anxiety and depression (Starrin et al, 2009).
- Financial hardship is personal failure (Oscar Jimenez-Solomon, MPH, Research Scientist at NYS Psychiatric Institute + Sr. Research Staff Assoc at Columbia Psychiatry)

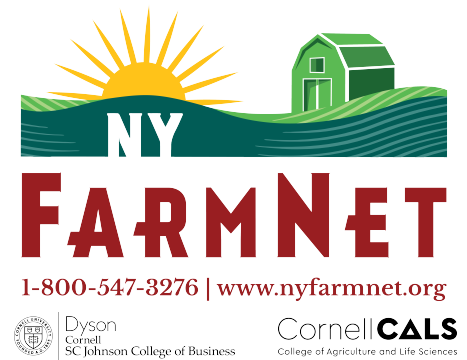


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Social stress on the farm



Rural social determinants

- Isolated – geographically and socially
- Lack of appropriate health care
- Long work hours
- Don't have appropriate health insurance
- Rural per capita income lags the average per capita income in NYS
- Increased rates of poverty in rural areas compared to urban centers
- Lower educational levels
- Higher rate of unemployment



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Social stress

- Farms are family run
- Stereotypes – BIPOC, farmworkers vs farmers, farm wives vs farmers
- Access to land
- They're farmers to the core – if they can't farm, who are they?
- Don't want to be the generation who loses the farm – if they lose the farm, what about their housing
- Farming isn't a 9-5, Monday through Friday job
- Their own health isn't typically a priority
- Stress is a concept they associate with white collar jobs
- Stigma – lack of language - shame



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American Farm Bureau Federation and Morning Consult Farm Stress Poll 2019

- 91% of rural residents agreed that mental health is important to them, and 75% agreed it's important to reduce the MH stigma in the ag community
- A majority of rural adults agreed that cost (70%), embarrassment (65%), and stigma (63%) would be an obstacle if they were seeking help or treatment for a MH condition
- 30% of farmers/farmworkers would not be comfortable talking to a friend or family member about solutions for a MH condition.



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American Farm Bureau Federation and Morning Consult Farm Stress Poll 2019

- Stress, weather, the economy, isolation, and stigma negatively impact the MH of farmers
 - 81% of rural adults said financial issues and fear of losing the farm impacted farmer MH
 - 91% of farmers/farmworkers said financial issues, 87% fear losing the farm, and 88% said farm or business problems impact farmer MH
- Nearly half of rural adults (48%) said they're experiencing more MH challenges compared to a year ago
- 31% vs 21% of rural adults compared to farmers/farmworkers sought help for a MH condition
- 11% of rural adults have self-medicated as a result of stress
- 42% of farmers/farmworkers know someone who has self-medicated as a result of stress



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What we know about suicide in the US

- Rate of suicide is highest among middle-aged white men
- In 2018, men died by suicide 3.56x more often than women
- White males accounted for 69.67% of suicide deaths in 2018
- In 2018, firearms accounted for 50.57% of all suicide deaths



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Office of Mental Health

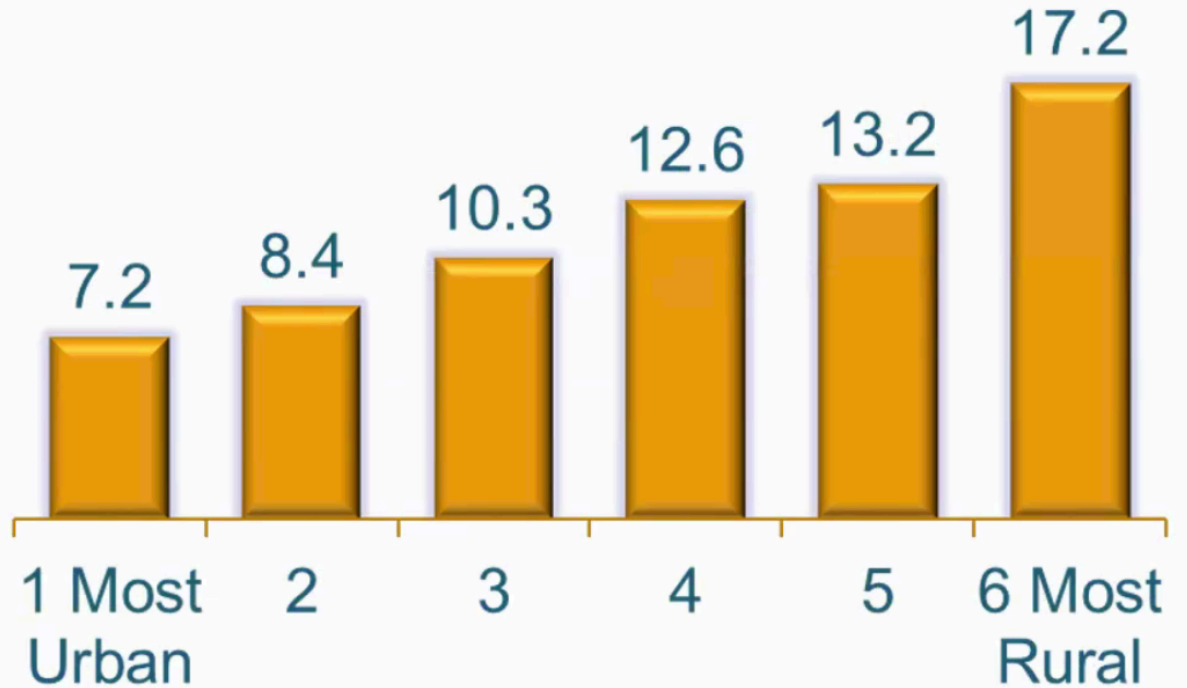
Method (2017)

Suffocation	40%
Firearm	26%
Meds/Drugs	13%
Fall	8%
Other	13%

Households w/ Guns (BRFSS- early 2000s)

US	33%
NY	18%

NY County Suicide Rate by Level of Urbanization, 2013-2017



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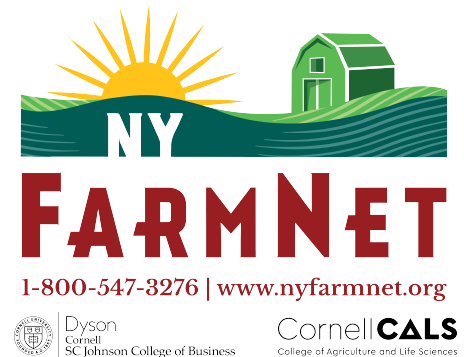
How NY FarmNet helps

- Free and confidential
- Program that works directly with farmers/farm families/agribusiness employees
- Family consultants are LCSW, MSW
- Financial consultants worked in ag lending, retired from farming, extension
- Take a holistic approach – both a financial and family consultant work with client
- Work with community organizations, local MH offices, social services, etc.



How NY FarmNet helps

- Business planning, estate and retirement planning, transfer planning, budgeting, financial analysis
- Family communication and interpersonal relationships
- Personal well-being, loss and grief
- Family business meetings, time management
- Outreach programs



In 2019...

- Consultants worked on 775 cases, representing more than 160,000 acres of land in NYS
- 90% of farms we worked with remained in farming
- 14% of open cases were deemed high stress by consultants on the first farm visit.
- 55% of these high stress cases saw a reduction in stress levels at the conclusion of their work with NY FarmNet



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