



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario



Ontario
Federation of
Agriculture



Agriculture Wellness Ontario Launches with Three Free Farming Mental Health Programs

Toronto / September 14, 2022 – The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture are proud to announce [Agriculture Wellness Ontario](#), a suite of programs designed to ensure farmers are getting mental health support when and where they need it.

Agriculture Wellness Ontario programs currently include the Farmer Wellness Initiative, a free individual counselling service; The Guardian Network, a volunteer suicide-prevention network; and, In the Know, a mental health literacy workshop tailored to the agriculture community.

About the programs

[Farmers Wellness Initiative](#): Farmers across Ontario and family members working on the farm have access to free counselling 24/7/365 in English and French at 1-866-267-6255. Counsellors have received training to understand the unique stresses that face the farming community. [FarmerWellnessInitiative.ca](#)

[The Guardian Network](#): The Guardian Network is a community-based and evidence-informed volunteer suicide prevention program. Any individual over the age of 18 who is in contact with farmers through their work or place in their community and has successfully completed the training, can [become a Guardian](#). [GuardianNetwork.ca](#)

[In The Know](#): In the Know is a free mental health literacy training program developed at the University of Guelph by members of the agricultural community for the agriculture community. Through this free, four-hour workshop, participants cover the topics of stress, depression, anxiety, substance use and how to start a conversation around mental well-being. The workshops are facilitated by one of CMHA's mental health professionals using real-life examples from agriculture. [IntheKnowOntario.ca](#)

"We know that farmers experience chronic stress at a higher rate than the general population. The many constant and growing demands that come with farming can result in farmers putting their work ahead of their own well-being. With Agriculture Wellness Ontario we are aiming to destigmatize and reduce barriers in asking for help," says Camille Quenneville, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario.

"Between supply chain issues, climate change events, animal diseases and inflation, farmers have to deal with more and more stress," says the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. "While we are redoubling our efforts to break the stigma around mental health issues, producers must have resources tailored to their experience."

The agricultural community plays a vital role in ensuring all Ontarians enjoy a healthy economy and local food security.

"Our government is listening to the needs of the agricultural community and appreciates just how stressful running a farm can be," said Lisa Thompson, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food



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and Rural Affairs. “From dealing with unpredictable weather, commodity prices or increasing costs of production, these pressures are having a real effect on the mental health of farmers and their families. That’s why our government is providing the necessary funding for these programs to help support the mental health of our famers and their families across Ontario.”

“As an organization, we are thrilled to be part of the launch of this program,” says Peggy Brekveld, Ontario Federation of Agriculture President. “Increasing our awareness and confidence discussing mental health will contribute to resilience for farm families and rural communities across Ontario. The targeted initiatives will be invaluable to farmers and throughout the agriculture sector.”

Research shows that farmers have much higher rates of stress than the rest of the population. Living in rural areas and stigma can make it more difficult for those in the agricultural community to seek help. Talking about mental health helps save lives.

To learn more: [Agriculture Wellness Ontario](#)

About Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario is a not-for-profit, charitable organization. We work to improve the lives of all Ontarians through leadership, collaboration and continual pursuit of excellence in community-based mental health and addictions services. Our vision is a society that embraces and invests in the mental health of all people. We are a trusted advisor to government, contributing to health systems development through policy formulation and recommendations that promote positive mental health.

About Ontario Federation of Agriculture

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, representing 38,000 farm families across the province. As a dynamic farmer-led organization based in Guelph, the OFA works to represent and champion the interests of Ontario farmers through government relations, farm policy recommendations, research, lobby efforts, community representation, media relations and more. OFA is the leading advocate for Ontario’s farmers and is Ontario’s voice of the farmer. For more information, visit ofa.on.ca.

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For more information, contact:

Tammy Thorne, Senior Strategic Communications Advisor

Email: tthorne@ontario.camh.ca

Phone: 416-822-7910



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