

# Media Release

For Immediate Release  
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## **CASA presents National Farm Stress Survey Results.**

*Survey polled 1100 farmers from across Canada.*

The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) commissioned a national survey in late January 2005 to determine what the major stressors were for farmers, who they would turn to in time of need and how they most likely access help in dealing with stress and mental health.

“It is evident from the survey that causes of stress on the farm are different than those for the general public.” said Marcel Hacault, Executive director of CASA. “It is of the utmost importance for Canadian Farmers that the person they are dealing with for stress and mental health concerns is knowledgeable about agriculture.”

Three items caused **very high** stress levels on farms: poor harvests/production, government policies, and farm finances. **High** stress levels on farms were attributed to: weather, the BSE crisis, and the pressure to maintain the family farm.

More than 9 in 10 farmers across Canada (92%) feel it is important for the person they are dealing with to be knowledgeable about agriculture. If stressed the majority of farmers indicated they would turn to a Family Doctor, and the majority indicated they prefer to meet one-on-one with someone to talk about stress and mental health.

More detailed survey results can be viewed at [www.casa-acsa.ca](http://www.casa-acsa.ca) as part of National Stress Survey results.

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*Canadian Agricultural Safety Association is a non-profit organization funded through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Renewal chapter. Our mission is to have Canadian agriculture free of workplace injuries and illnesses.*

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## Backgrounder

### Executive Summary

Almost two-thirds of Canadian farmers are feeling stressed on their farms. One in five farmers describe themselves as being “very stressed” while almost half describe themselves as being “somewhat stressed”.

Financial concerns related to commodity prices, the BSE crisis, and general farm finances are mentioned by farmers as being the single biggest top-of-mind factors causing stress. This is relatively consistent across regions within Canada and across farm size.

Almost 2 in 10 farmers across Canada have spoken with a health care professional about stress and mental health. Not surprisingly, as the general reported level of stress increases, so does the propensity to speak with a professional about the condition. There were limitations to the survey in that respondents were not asked to comment on the use of trained peer counselors. Such services acknowledge the importance of knowing and understanding the farm situation. The “Peer Counselor’s” understanding of agriculture is supplemented with training in relevant subject matter areas including counseling skills, suicide intervention, and farm debt issues, etc.

If feeling stressed, the majority of farmers indicated they would turn to:

- A family doctor;
- A stress/mental health professional, and
- A priest/religious figure.

Just less than one-half of farmers strongly agree that they are aware of resources they can turn to for help in managing stress and mental health. Four in ten farmers strongly agree that they can effectively manage stress and mental health on their own. Remaining anonymous is very important to farmers when seeking help for stress and mental health issues.

Three items cause very high stress levels on farms:

- Poor harvests/production;
- Government policies, and
- Farm finances.

Nationally, the majority of farmers prefer to meet one-on-one with someone to talk about stress and mental health as opposed to help by group sessions and telephone help.

Farmers generally feel it does not matter to them if they deal with someone from their area with regard to stress and mental health concerns. However, it is of utmost importance for Canadian Farmers that the person they are dealing with for stress and mental health concerns is knowledgeable about agriculture.

The notion of pride and farmers independence was found to be the most important mentioned reason farmers did not seek more help in dealing with stress and mental health.

## Backgrounder

Awareness of the Farm Stress Line is generally good. Roughly two-thirds of Canadian farmers are aware of the Farm Stress Line. One-quarter indicated they are very aware of the service. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba where farm help lines have been in operation for over ten years, the awareness rate rises sharply to over 90%.

### Methodology

Western Opinion Research Inc. completed 1100 surveys with agricultural producers across Canada. These surveys were completed representing Statistics Canada data on the distribution of farms. Surveys were completed with only active farmers/ranchers who are the decision makers. Final data results are weighted to accurately reflect actual farm population distributions.

National results of this survey are accurate +/- 3%, 19 times out of 20. Regional and other segmented results have a higher margin of error.

The survey was approximately 14.5 minutes in length and was fielded between the dates of January 24<sup>th</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005. English surveys were completed from our call centre in Winnipeg. The survey was translated into French and fielded from Montreal by *Createc+ Recherche* for the completions in Quebec.