



Supporting the **MENTAL HEALTH** of Nova Scotia Farmers ❤️

## SNAPSHOT OF OUR MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN FOR NOVA SCOTIA FARMERS

*A plan to act.*

**We Talk. We Grow.** is an initiative of Farm Safety Nova Scotia raising awareness and taking action to protect and nurture the mental health and well-being of Nova Scotia's farming community, and enhance and maintain a culture where mental health is valued, prioritized and protected.

While we are happy to provide a number of diverse supports and resources, we know more work must be done. To address this need, we have developed a Blueprint for a Mental Health Action Plan for Nova Scotia Farmers, as well as the creation of the We Talk. We Grow. public awareness campaign.

We've called this a "blueprint" for an action plan, rather than an action plan itself. The reason being the approach needs to be shared-with, consulted-with and discussed-with our industry and government partners in order for the way forward to be fully embraced and supported by all necessary change makers.

What is absolutely clear is the need to act, and the need to act now.

To download a copy of the action plan, visit [WeTalkWeGrow.ca](http://WeTalkWeGrow.ca)

### *How we got here.*

To build the Blueprint, we conducted a cross-jurisdictional analysis, a literature review and consulted with farmers and stakeholders through focus groups. Through this work, we were able to determine what research had already been gathered, what best practices currently exist, and what the specific needs were in Nova Scotia. From these exercises, we learned:

- There is an existing gap in mental health supports and resources for Nova Scotia farmers.
- Stigma surrounding mental health – and accessing treatment – is still very much prevalent.
- The stressors and obstacles to treatment are consistent in farming communities across the country.
- Farming is a unique industry, with unique challenges. Any tool, treatment or support offered needs to reflect these unique aspects.



### *What we know.*

#### **STRESSORS INCLUDE:**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finances</li> <li>• Family disagreements</li> <li>• Administrative burdens</li> <li>• Long hours/workload/lack of sleep</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weather</li> <li>• High-risk tasks</li> <li>• Livestock well-being</li> <li>• Stigma/Obstacles to accessing treatment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Insurance</li> <li>• Home is work/work is home</li> <li>• Lack of access to mental health professionals who understand the industry</li> </ul> |
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Learn more

[WeTalkWeGrow.ca](http://WeTalkWeGrow.ca)



## What is needed.

The Blueprint has identified the following priority areas that need to be addressed in order to optimize mental health and wellness within the farming community. Delivering on these action items will be dependent on receiving support and collaboration from our partners; including financial support, communications outreach support and education, training and advocacy support. This is not an initiative of only Farm Safety Nova Scotia; we must come together to support our farm community – collaboration and partnerships will be key to the successful implementation of these recommendations.

WE  
TALK  
WE  
GROW

### Create and Launch Public Awareness Campaign and Online Resource

We have launched the We Talk. We Grow. campaign with a number of education and social marketing deliverables, as well as a new website [wetalkwegrow.ca](http://wetalkwegrow.ca).

### Deliver Mental Health Literacy Training and Resources

Build on Farm Safety Nova Scotia's existing programming such as the Farm Family Support Centre, Mental Health First Aid Training and various educational webinars and resources. The "In the Know" program will be delivered across the province with support from identified mental health and industry partners, and our team will continue to listen to the farm community to make sure the training and resources available are meeting their needs. Partner with us to coordinate training in your community, collaborate to develop new resources or contribute to minimize financial barriers by supporting development and delivery.

### Engage Leadership within the Farm Community

We will create and deliver the We Talk. We Grow. Ambassador and Champion programs – two unique initiatives that will help provide both direct support and help in our outreach and awareness efforts. Farm Safety Nova Scotia has also established the We Talk. We Grow. Leadership Charter, for leaders across the industry and province to make a commitment to do all they can to support the mental health and wellness of Nova Scotia's farm community. Sign onto our Leadership Charter, become an Ambassador or Champion – or all of the above!

### Develop a Peer-to-Peer Support Program

Based on successful initiatives launched in other jurisdictions, we will conduct a review of peer-to-peer programs and assess their applicability to Nova Scotia farmers with the goal of establishing a tailor-made peer support program.

### Advocate for Improved Accessibility and Farm Specific Mental Health Offerings

Specific attention will be paid to increasing mental health supports in rural communities, and addressing financial barriers to accessing support. We will also review the current Farm Family Support Centre and establish a program and network with professionals who have a keen understanding of the agriculture industry.

### Support Farmers in Taking a Break from the Farm

Where home is where you work and work is where you live, it's often hard to find the time and place to decompress and address any mental health concerns. To help with this, Farm Safety Nova Scotia is looking at partnering with relevant organizations to develop a farm relief worker program, as well as seeking member discounts for vacation rentals, hotels, etc. Being around people who "get it" is also incredibly important to farmers – so we will continue to provide social and networking opportunities. It's important that we don't diminish the value of social and networking events – continue to provide these opportunities to farmers through your outreach activities.

### Reduce Stressors Negatively Impacting Mental Health and Wellness through Advocacy and Program Delivery

While often not considered a "direct" support, it is essential that government and industry associations continue to collaborate and advocate to reduce the stressors negatively contributing to farm mental health and wellness – such as hi-speed internet, trespassing laws and addressing the regulatory burdens. It is equally as important to ensure continued delivery of programs supporting farms in managing business risks along with extension and financial assistance programs that meet the needs of the agriculture industry.

