

More than 50 percent of farmers remain optimistic about the future of their businesses

October 15 2021



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RABI's Big Farming Survey results have revealed that despite the farming community facing significant mental and physical health

challenges, more than 50% remain optimistic about the future of their farm businesses.

The results, which are based on over 15,000 survey responses, were launched on 14 October, to 70 influential representatives from the [agricultural sector](#) at a launch event in Birmingham.

In response to the findings, RABI has outlined five core themes informed by the hardest-hitting statistics and called on the sector to help drive an effective response to the challenges identified.

Following a welcome address by Chief Executive, Alicia Chivers, the University of Exeter's Centre for Rural Policy Research Team, Dr. Rebecca Wheeler and Professor Matt Lobley, presented their ground-breaking results. This was followed by RABI corporate partnership manager, Suzy Deeley, who shared further insight on five key stats that the industry must respond to:

1. 36% of the [farming community](#) are probably or possibly depressed.
2. Over one-half of women (58%) experience mild, moderate or severe anxiety.
3. An average of six factors cause stress across the farming community. The most commonly reported sources of stress are; regulation, compliance and inspection, COVID-19, bad/unpredictable weather, loss of subsidies/future trade deals.
4. Over half (52%) of the farming community experience pain and discomfort, one in four have mobility problems and 21% have problems in undertaking usual tasks due to health issues.
5. 59% of respondents believe their business is viable over the next five years.

Ms Deeley highlighted some of the positive outtakes within the data,

which illustrates the importance of building on the farming community's strengths.

"This survey of a generation has revealed that despite the many challenges facing our community, farming people continue to be incredibly resilient and this is something we should focus on. We owe it to every farming person to use this evidence to take action to improve farmer wellbeing," says Ms Deeley.

"We believe that farming people and the sector more widely must collaborate to develop solutions to the issues identified. Therefore, RABI will use the results to inform the evolution of our services and welcome others to participate in shaping future farming support," Ms Deeley continues.

In response to the Big Farming Survey research, Ms Deeley explained that RABI will soon be launching pilots of three new support schemes. These include an accredited, bespoke farming [mental health](#) first aid training service, access to in-person mental health support, and further trials of RABI's Community Pillars initiative.

"There is a huge amount of work going on behind the scenes at RABI to initiate a targeted and appropriate response in partnership with key partner organizations, and we look forward to being able to share more on these developments soon. The introduction of the pilot schemes will be in addition to the long-standing, traditional support services that RABI is so well known for, and to complement the online wellbeing platform, Qwell, that we launched last year," Ms Deeley adds.

"We're hugely grateful to all the delegates who attended the launch and for their valuable contribution to these important discussions. We have demonstrated that there is a real appetite to work together to address the challenges facing farmers."

Commenting on the research, Matt Lobley, Professor of Rural Resource Management at the University of Exeter and research lead explains; "The Big Farming Survey has delivered an unprecedented evidence base that has given far greater insight into the realities of life on [farm](#). There is now a unique opportunity to build on the findings which have been presented. Our recommendations are very much aligned to how RABI is evolving its services during this period of agricultural transition."

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: More than 50 percent of farmers remain optimistic about the future of their businesses (2021, October 15) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-10-percent-farmers-optimistic-future-businesses.html>

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