

Farm Bureau: COVID-19 taking toll on mental health

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

A survey of rural adults in December found the mental health of most farmers and farmworkers has been impacted by the pandemic. More than half said they are experiencing more mental health challenges than a year ago.

The survey was commissioned by American Farm Bureau Federation to gauge the effects of the pandemic on mental health and to see what has changed since its first rural mental health survey in April 2019.

Three in five rural adults said the pandemic has impacted their mental health, and that response was even higher among farmers and farmworkers, said Ray Atkinson, Farm Bureau director of communications.

Two in three farmers and farmworkers said the pandemic has impacted their mental health, and that response was really high in younger people, he said.

Among 18 to 34 year olds, 71% said the pandemic has affected their mental health, and 36% said the pandemic has affected their mental health "a lot."

In addition, two-thirds of that group said they were experiencing more mental health challenges than a year ago, he said.

"That's certainly concerning," he said.

Among all rural adults, 56% said they were experiencing more challenges than a year ago, a 6% increase from the 2019 survey — which also noted a large increase in challenges over the previous year, he said.

The survey also asked about symptoms, including feeling nervous, anxious or on edge. Farmers and farmworkers were 10 percentage points more likely to feel nervous, anxious or on edge than rural adults as a group (65% versus 55%).

"One of the things that really stuck out to me was that farmers and farmworkers were more likely to experience that," he said.

Respondents also weighed in on what circumstances could be contribut-

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Farm Bureau offers numerous resources to support mental health, including crisis hotlines, tips for talking to people who are struggling, how to recognize the warning signs and information on managing stress, anxiety or depression.

It also offers farm stress training in partnership with Farm Credit, NFU and Michigan State University.

To access those resources, visit www.farmstateofmind.org.

ing to mental health challenges. One of the biggest changes was the impact of social isolation. The number of farmers and farmworkers who said it had an impact increased more than 22% from the earlier survey. Those who thought it had "a lot" of impact went from 18% in the earlier survey to 41% in the latest survey.

"We know that's a contributor to mental health, and farmers spend a lot of time working alone," he said.

"The conclusion is obviously there's still a lot of work to be done," he said.

Farm Bureau and its partners have been working on the issue for a long time, he said.

"We really want to point people to resources," he said.

The survey also showed progress in people's awareness of mental health, with 95% of rural adults saying mental health is important to them and 75% saying it is "very important" — an increase of 6%.

"That tells you in all the challenges we have, there's opportunity there. People realize and they're open to talking about mental health and recognizing the problem," he said.

And 87% of farmers and farmworkers say it's important to reduce the stigma about mental health, he said.

"That's what most of our efforts are about ... it's OK not to be OK and you don't have to go it alone," he said.

To read the survey, visit www.fb.org.

How pandemic altered what Oregonians eat and the way they think about food

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

A new survey found that COVID-19 dramatically altered how people in Oregon's Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties eat and think about food.

Among respondents in the three counties:

- 75% said they prepared more meals at home.
- 59% said the pandemic changed how they think about food.
- 44% said they changed how they shop.
- 43% said they've become interested in gardening.
- 35% said they eat more local food.

These findings were not surprising, because farmers and supermarkets reported many of these trends anecdotally, but this is the first time the region has substantial data to back up stories.

The survey was done by Ten Rivers Food Web, an Oregon group dedicated to fighting food insecurity and supporting local food systems. The surveyors, according to Heidi Noordijk, a small farms coordinator at Oregon State University, received 624 responses.

"What we found encouraging was the shift in how people think about their food because of COVID-19, their deeper understanding of the difference between a global and local food system and their commitment to supporting our local food economy," the survey's leaders said in a statement.

Local food was big in 2020, and experts say they anticipate that trend will continue.

During the year, residents of Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties bought more food from CSAs, shopped more at farmers markets and sought out local food co-ops.



Shawn Linehan/PACSAC

CSAs were one of many food models consumers turned to in 2020 as they sought different ways of eating and shopping.

A CSA, the acronym for community supported agriculture, involves customers pre-paying for crops that will be available in weekly installments through the harvest season.

This was reflected anecdotally. Throughout the year, numerous small-scale farmers told the Capital Press they were experiencing record CSA and other direct-to-consumer sales, and many organizers of farmers markets that pivoted their models saw huge sales growth.

Forty-three percent of respondents reported an increased interest in gardening and home food production. This was demonstrated by the "pandemic victory gardens" that swept the nation through the spring and summer.


Several Oregon nursery leaders in December told the Capital Press they had a strong year in sales of edibles, and many are planning to expand their fruit, vegetable and herb garden offerings in 2021 because customers seem to have a sustained interest.

Shopping habits changed,

too. Of those who reported changes in their shopping behavior, 28% avoided big or crowded stores, 12% shopped by delivery or curbside pickup only and 8% limited their weekly shopping to one or a few stores.

The pandemic also changed the way nearly 60% of respondents think about food. Many said they thought more about where their food comes from and considered supporting local producers. Others became more aware of food insecurity because they or their friends had to use food pantries for the first time. Another 14% said the pandemic highlighted to them "the fragility and complexity of global food supply chains" in ways they hadn't thought about before.

Oregon State University food experts say this is a key moment for farmers to tell their stories and reach out to consumers who had otherwise been somewhat oblivious about their food sources and are now more aware and interested.



Lloyd's Northwest LLC
Kirk Lloyd
503-559-2239 (cell) or Kirk@LloydsNW.com

Appointed agent for SAIF. Over 30 years experience.

Serving Oregon employers statewide; specializing in Agriculture.

Workers' Comp is ALL we do!



Coastal
www.CoastalFarm.com

**PROUD TO SUPPORT
Members & Families of FFA**

Albany - Eugene - Roseburg - Woodburn - Cornelius - Oregon City - Gresham - The Dalles - White City
Redmond - Klamath Falls, OR • Yakima - East Wenatchee - Auburn - Mount Vernon, Marysville, Sequim, WA





D. Stutzman FARMS
www.stutzman-environmental.com
Proud Supporter of FFA
P.O. Box 307 • Canby, OR 97013
888-877-7665



**4-H & FFA Members receive
10% OFF**
on select categories. See store for details.
CASCADE FARM & OUTDOOR
5013 River Rd., N. Kelzer • 3111 Ocean Blvd., SE, Coos Bay



Pacific Hometown Insurance Inc.
Auto • Home • Farm Commercial • Health
615 Holly St., Junction City
541-998-2383
155 N. 3rd St., Harrisburg
541-995-6397
24957 Hwy. 126, Veneta
541-606-4616
Proud Supporter of FFA

Idaho FFA adapts to overcome challenges

As the worldwide pandemic rages onward, Idaho FFA finds new ways to adapt to unrelenting challenges.

This fall, the Idaho FFA State Officers traveled across the Gem State to visit as many chapters as possible. These visits started the first week of October in the Northern Idaho District and ended the first week of December with visits in both the East and North Magic Valley Districts.

While traveling to the East Magic Valley Chapters, the State Officers were able to teach many skills, like leadership and teamwork.

They were also able to take part in some exciting chapter events. Clayton Beene, Bailey Grove, and Riata Chandler were able to attend a Christmas Meeting at the American Falls Chapter. There they were able to craft wreaths and connect with members. Prior to the social, Chandler and Grove visited the chapter during school hours to teach the importance of agricultural advocacy and teamwork skills.

"American Falls welcomed us with open arms!" Says Bailey Grove, Idaho FFA State Reporter, "It was a wonderful experience, getting to know these amazing FFA members!"



State officers join with members of the American Falls Chapter to make Christmas wreaths during a chapter visit.

Midway through chapter visits, the State Officers took a break to celebrate the National FFA Convention. Idaho State Officers gathered with officers from Utah, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming in Cascade, Idaho, to celebrate the National FFA Convention. There they not only bonded over their passion for agriculture but also found new ways to engage members regardless of mask mandates and fear of infection.

It is obvious the coronavirus outbreak continues to impact Idaho FFA; however, its members are strong and resilient. There is no doubt that Idaho FFA will continue to thrive, no matter what challenges arise.

Proud Supporter of



Doerfler Farms
12333 Silver Falls Hwy SE
Aumsville, OR 97325
Phone: (503) 769-2205


Proud Sponsor of FFA



THE TRACTOR STORE
(541) 342-5464
5450 W. 11th, Eugene, OR



FRONTIER TRAILER
Sales & Service
FFA SUPPORTER
541-883-2003
www.frontier-trailersales.com
5013 Washburn Way
Klamath Falls, OR 97603




503-932-0766
klopfensteinag.com | Silverton, OR

TREE & BRUSH REMOVAL



TREE PLANTING



DRIP LINE INSTALLATION

