



Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO Michigan Greenhouse Growers EXPO

December 5-7, 2017

DeVos Place Convention Center, Grand Rapids, MI



Farm Marketing I: Keynote Session

Where: Ballroom A

Moderator: Bob Tritten, District Fruit Educator, MSU Extension, Flint, MI

- 9:00 am Being Strong During Tough Times: How Farmers Weather the Storm - Keynote Presentation
- Val Farmer, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Farm Family Consultant and Mediator, Wildwood, MO
- 10:00 am Ten Years of Michigan Agritourism: Building a Supportive Network for Michigan Farm Marketers
- Beth Hubbard, Michigan Agritourism Association President and Corey Lake Orchards, Three Rivers, MI
 - Janice Benson, Executive Director, Michigan Agritourism, Traverse City, MI
- 10:15 am Creating the Ultimate Farm Experience for Customers at Saunders Farm - Come Hear Their Story
- Angela Grant Saunders, Saunders Farm, Munster, Ontario, Canada
 - Mark Saunders, Saunders Farm, Munster, Ontario, Canada
- 11:00 am Session Ends

Being Strong During Tough Times: How Farmers Weather the Storm

Val Farmer – 12/5/17

Predisposing factors in vulnerability of farmers to stress

- Nature. Nature is neutral and has to be respected. Many urgent demands of farming are driven by reaction to havoc of nature...weather, biology, and disease.
- Debt management. Farming is a gambling profession based on risk management. Vacillating prices due to free market economy, global markets, changing technologies, managing debt and investment decisions laced with uncertainty.

- Physically demanding. Work is need based. Work hours can be long and seasonal. Work demands push humans to the limit.
- Multiple skill sets. Financial management, record keeping, and management of human resources are vital skills sets that take farmers well beyond production-oriented agronomics.

- Family heritage. Knowledge, experience, and resources (land) passed through the generations through positive parent-child relationships.
- Succession management. The most important aspect of farming is grooming and cultivating the next generation of leaders on a family farm.
- Marital partnership. The quality of the marriage is the key to succession management.

Attachment bonds

- Profitable
- Attention to detail produces visual accomplishments
- Challenge and variety to daily life.
- Freedom. Being one's own boss.
- Need based work. Crops are alive. Livestock need attention. People grow to love what they serve. Work is love made visible.
- Lifelong relationships with neighbors, friends church friends and associates, and close relatives. Genuine caring and hospitality.

Good place to raise children. Animals, nature, family togetherness, work ethic, responsibility.

- Sense of community. Another place to grow, serve and improve oneself and the world around you for everyone's well being.
- Sense of place and belonging. There is an integrated wholeness to life and a value system gives meaning and context to everything you do.

Appreciation of nature...a starlit night, a timely rain, a mighty wind, an electric storm, a ferocious blizzard, the birth of new life.

- Caregiving. Children are supported and are in the limelight. The elderly are valued. The disabled are accepted. Genuine caring is given to those whose experience loss and disaster.
- Identity. One's purpose in life is enveloped within lifelong connections with family, farming, neighbors and community, nature, and faith in God.
- Relationship to God. Kinship and belief in God come easier because of the closeness to nature and goodness of the people around them. Prayer comes easier when one's livelihood depends on what the heavens may bring.

Why is the loss or threatened loss of a farm so hard?

It is challenging when one's very identity is threatened by potential loss of: financial well-being, marriage, farming futures for offspring, face in community, occupation, community, the place where you belong, and of faith in God.

It is even more challenging when negative coping involves denial, social withdrawal, anger, self-blame, conflict, addictive behavior, depression, anxiety, and guilt over failure.

Farm marriages

- It is important for husbands and wives to share the emotions, struggles and triumphs of daily life with each other.
- When faced with financial and emotional pressures, it is important to share one's dilemma with a confidant.
- **During a time of crisis, a couple needs to go through adversity together and communicate well, minimize conflict and be mutually supportive.**

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12 King James Version (KJV)

9. Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

10. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

11. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

12. And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

"Thee lift me and I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together" (Quaker proverb).

It is important to seek help for marital difficulties before problems become magnified and too much damage has been done.

- It is important to learn to manage personal stress rather than have stress spill over on to family members.
- It is important to live a balanced lifestyle where farm work is offset by positive relationships, recreation and leisure, reflection, spirituality, service to others, and deep communications.

- During times of crisis, a couple needs to go through adversity together and communicate well, minimize conflict and be mutually supportive.

How to help others during hard times

1. Give love and acceptance
2. Little things help
- 3. Give information, tangible help and technical support**

5. Encourage communication. When pain, fear, anger, guilt and confusion are expressed, their hold on the person is weakened. By verbalizing his or her problems, a process of considering alternatives and problem-solving begins.

6. Encourage financial and legal advice, also with ag financial counselors, communication with lender - break through denial and avoidance

If debt looms as an emerging concern, farmers need to seek financial and emotional advice a lot sooner in the process of gaining control and confidence in their plans.

7. Help farmers understand the role of adversity in their lives and to turn to God for help and comfort.

8. Help farmers know it is OK to ask for help when overwhelmed by stress, pain and confusion.

9. Seek out those individuals who have stopped being at their normal social functions and draw them out about their lives.

10. Familiarize oneself with local and regional resources and make referrals: medical, behavioral health, addiction recovery, ag financial counselors, social services, self-help information, etc.





Lifting a burden off each other's shoulders

www.valfarmer.com

Email -drvfarmer@gmail.com

Phone (636) 323-9060

www.valfarmer.com

Email -drvfarmer@gmail.com

Phone (636) 323-9060