

Seeds of Wellbeing Project

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Farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers are familiar with signs of stress in plants and animals, but may be less tuned to their own stress and need for self-care. Research and studies with ag producers on the mainland suggest quite disturbing high level of stress and depression. In fact, a recent study by the CDC found farmers to have the fourth highest rate of suicide when compared to educational, service, health care, and service professions (CDC, 2020). Is this true for ag producers in Hawaii? What do Hawaii ag producers say about what stresses them out, and how they deal with it? What can CTAHR do to assist?

A recent grant administered by the Hawaii Department of Agriculture was sub-awarded to UH-CTAHR to create a project called the Seeds of Wellbeing (S.O.W.). S.O.W. includes a team of faculty and students on the Manoa campus, faculty in the CTAHR-Extension offices around the state, and additional grant funded staff to fulfill three goals: conducting a comprehensive needs assessment; developing educational materials/resources; and implementing a social marketing campaign.

Currently, we are in the midst of the needs assessment which involve:

1. Online Survey. Team members invite agriculture professionals and their families to complete an anonymous online survey about current sources of stress, tools they use to address stress, and preferred methods of learning more about tools and resources available to assist. Please access the Agriculture Producer's surveys here: <http://go.hawaii.edu/Vh6>. Family members of Ag Producer click here: <http://go.hawaii.edu/9hV>.
2. Talk Story. Last weekend at Hawaii Farmers Union United annual convention on Maui, Dr. Thao Le, the project's leader conducted talk story sessions with almost 20 ag professionals. The project team will continue these one-on-one conversations both in person, by phone, or virtually over the next couple of months. Ag professionals interested in being a part of the talk story interviews can email Dr. Le at thaole3@hawaii.edu.

We are also gearing up to develop resources by mapping out what currently exists, and where the pukas and gaps are. Resources will also include planning workshops, recording podcasts, developing website content, and creating connections with mental health professionals. Check out the project website at <http://go.hawaii.edu/4hV> or listen to the first three episodes "Seeds of Wellbeing – S.O.W. podcast" on your favorite platform.

S.O.W. intends to be sustainable by identifying common themes/trends and making plans to address the needs for years to come. For example, these results may "seed" a new multi-year program to address a specific need that is unique to Hawaii or guide the podcast series to address a topic from many different points of view. We welcome your input and collaboration!