

TOOLS FOR TODAY'S FARMER PODCAST

Heidenreich, A.¹; Andrew Hays²; Rachel Dillhoff³

FARM STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

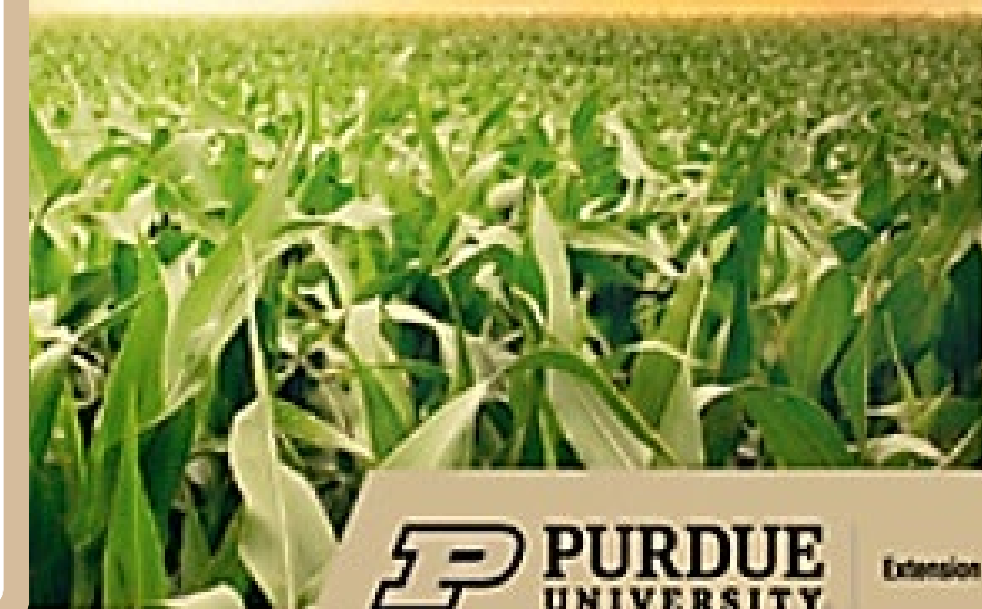
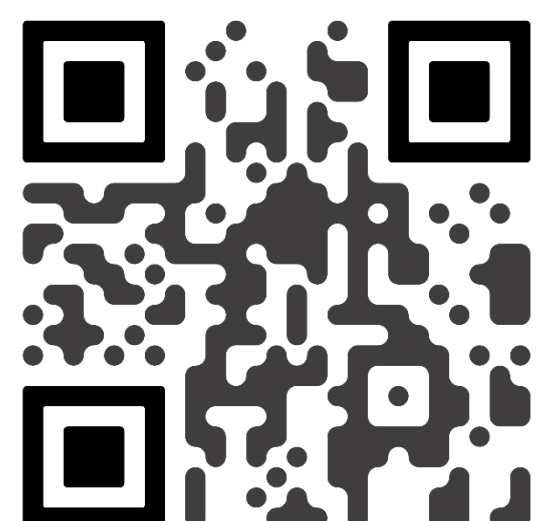
Farm Stress is an issue that is quickly becoming a priority effort by Extension Professionals in many states. A recent American Farm Bureau Federation poll revealed that 82% of farmers/farmworkers say mental health is an important issue to them and/or their family (2019). In Indiana, the Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team emerged to create, deliver and aid mental health programming for farmers and rural communities across the state. Since January of 2019, 21 Purdue University Extension Educators have attended a Farm Stress Training conducted by Michigan State University. The Farm Stress Team is comprised of Health & Human Sciences and Agriculture & Natural Resources Educators from across the state of Indiana. This team provides tools, resources, and programs to help farmers address the day-to-day stresses and difficulties of owning or operating a business which is subject to so many challenges and uncertainties. Team members are trained to deliver two programs adapted from Michigan State University, each focused on the health and well-being of farmers. These programs include Communicating with Farmers under Stress and Weathering the Storm in Agriculture: How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset. The Farm Stress Team also provides custom programs that fit the needs of communities who desire mental health programming. Outside of programming, the team utilizes other tools to increase mental health awareness and reduce stigmas tied to mental health in rural communities. The Farm stress team manages a Facebook page to circulate positive messages as well as upcoming events in social media realms. A subcommittee of the Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team focuses on spreading mental health awareness to farmers and their families through a podcast. This podcast is a unique effort to reach rural audiences in new ways.



WHY PODCASTS?

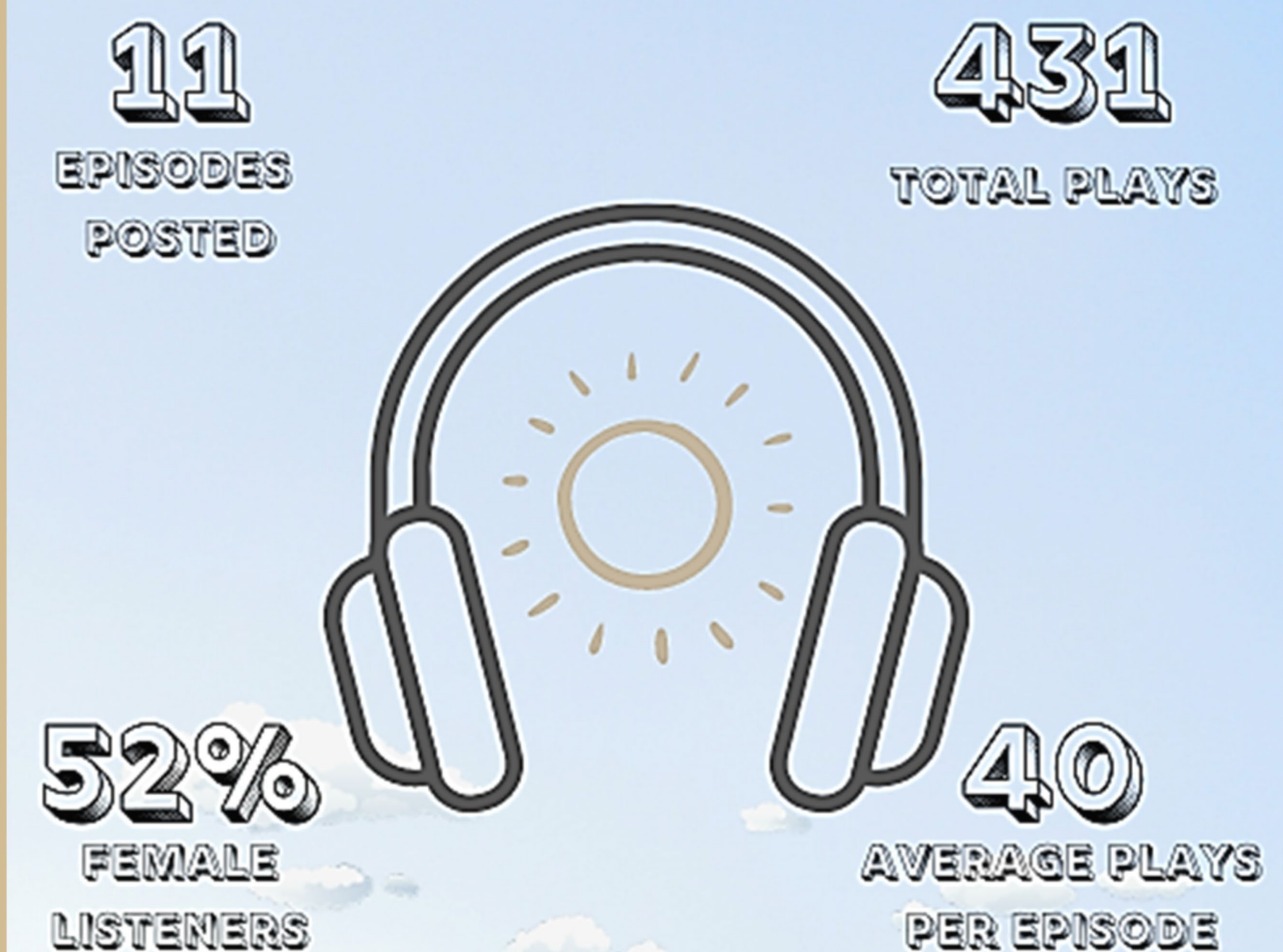
The primary method of educating individuals through extension has been in-person programs that require active participation and data-dense information distribution. Through technology, however, the methods of providing educational opportunities have diversified. Virtual programming, social media use, recorded videos and podcasts are just a few of the avenues used to distribute meaningful programming to communities. These methods have proved especially helpful in reaching rural communities who do not have abundant access to resources like healthcare or educational programming for adults. According to Farrell and McKinnon, "Technology has the potential to decrease the gap in services and improve education, support and connectedness between the client and the provider (2003). Podcasts have been identified as innovative and portable methods for educating listeners, which is ideal for farmer audiences who tend to multitask or spend time driving equipment (Rajic 2013). The Tools for Today's Farmer Podcast team has crafted a format for content that is unique and designed to create empathy as well as forge new connections between members of the agriculture community. Through interviews with agricultural leaders, public figures and local farmers, the team is able to emphasize positive stress coping strategies to farmers. Initiating conversations on sensitive topics that are often stigmatized by media, community members and others provide opportunities for the farmer audience to relate emotionally with interviewees without requiring active sharing of personal experiences by the audience (AFBF 2019). This format of the podcast allows listeners to feel like they are directly involved in the conversation and is intended to provoke self-examination of mental health as well as stress responses. In this respect, the subcommittee of the Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team finds podcasts to be mobile, user-friendly and straightforward in application.

TOOLS FOR TODAY'S FARMERS



THE TOOLS FOR TODAY'S FARMER PODCAST

The Tools for Today's Farmer Podcast has been on the air since September of 2020, with a new episode published on a biweekly basis. To date, 11 podcast episodes have been published with 431 plays as of March 2021. The subcommittee identified important topics in mental health and farm stress, then identified individuals who could potentially speak to those issues. Podcast guests were identified through the subcommittee's personal and professional social networks, as well as taking suggestions from past podcast guests for individuals who could potentially be guests in the future. All interviews were conducted virtually through zoom, partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual interviews proved to be simple and effective ways to connect with guests across the country. To date, podcast guests have included public figures, extension professionals, agriculture professionals, and local farm families. As a result, the podcast averages 40 plays per episode. The most popular episode boasts 71 plays and features an interview with farm broadcaster Max Armstrong, who discusses his personal experiences with agriculture and stress. The Tools for Today's Farmer Podcast has reached multiple countries around the world, while most occur within the U.S. Demographically, 52% of listeners identify as female, 20% male, and 29% did not provide data. The primary podcast audience ranges in age from 28-34 years old, followed by individuals 45-59 years old. The podcast subcommittee is optimistic in regards to future episodes and continued reach of the podcast platform. Tools for Today's Farmer Podcast is just one effort in working towards the goal of destigmatizing mental health issues in rural communities.



¹Extension Educator - Agriculture & Natural Resources, Purdue Extension, Paoli, IN, 47454

²Extension Educator - Health & Human Sciences, Purdue Extension, Princeton, IN, 47670

³Extension Educator - Health & Human Sciences, Purdue Extension, Decatur, IN, 46733

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