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State agriculture officials advocate for long-term mental health funding to support rural communities

Saratoga Springs, N.Y. - At the 2022 [National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Annual Meeting](#) today, NASDA members urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Congress to make long-term funding available to support rural mental health programs.

In 2021, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture announced a [onetime investment of \\$25 million](#) for 50 grants supporting the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network. As a result, state departments of agriculture were offered noncompetitive grants up to \$500,000 to combat farm stress.

“The funding provided to support our farmers and help them access important mental health programs has been critical to our industry, in particular, as we continue to, as a nation, recover from the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. State commissioners, secretaries and directors of agriculture want to build on progress made and ensure our rural communities thrive now and into the future,” NASDA 2021-2022 President Richard A. Ball said.

At the meeting, NASDA members amended the organization’s rural mental health [policy](#) to read “NASDA urges the USDA and NIFA to make long term grant funding available exclusively to state departments of agriculture to combat farm stress. Specifically, NASDA encourages Congress to fund additional noncompetitive grants supporting Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network state department of agriculture projects.

“Suicide among farmers and ranchers is a critical issue. The loss of life due to suicide ripples through rural communities across our country. It is felt in our homes, schools, and throughout our everyday life,” Ball said. “NASDA continues to stand in strong support of policies and programs that promote awareness of mental health issues in our communities.”

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NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.



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