



Agriculture is Everyone's Business

Saskatchewan's Ag Producers take to social media to raise concerns about mental health supports and suicide rates among farmers

June 27, 2017 – For Immediate Release – A conversation about mental health in the Agricultural community has caught the attention of Premier Brad Wall after it exploded on Twitter over the weekend.

It started with a tweet Saturday morning from Kim Keller (@kimkkeller), a farmer from Gronlid, Saskatchewan: “#Ag we gotta do more. I received a message yesterday that kept me up thinking of how we do more. Farm stress is real. Suicide is real.”

Keller felt compelled to speak out after being contacted by an Ag Industry professional looking for resources to help the family of a client who had taken his life. Her tweet was shared 37 times, received over 100 likes and prompted dozens of people to respond and continue the discussion over the next several days.

One of the people who took notice of the conversation was Premier Brad Wall, who reached out to Keller to ask that she meet with the Department of Agriculture to discuss the issue.

“I have lost count of the direct messages, texts and phone calls I’ve received from people sharing their stories and offering to help and support any way they can,” Keller says. “This shows me that as an industry we are ready to tackle this issue head on.”

Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan President Todd Lewis agrees that the conversation is long overdue and says the mental health of the province’s young producers is of particular concern.

“For some, this is the first time they’ve experienced a drought or a spring harvest. It’s been a tough year,” he says. “We need to keep talking about this. We know our producers are feeling the pressure.”

Lewis adds that APAS is working to incorporate the issue of mental health and suicide into its upcoming midterm meeting, and will be looking at addressing the gaps in policy and supports available.



For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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Background:

APAS is Saskatchewan's general farm organization – formed to provide farmers and ranchers with a democratically elected, grassroots, non-partisan, producer-run organization based on rural municipal boundaries. As the united voice of thousands of agricultural producers and ranchers in Saskatchewan, we strive to represent the views of a wide variety of agricultural stakeholders in order to form comprehensive policies that can benefit all sectors of society.

Kim Keller is a member of the APAS Young Agricultural Producers Committee and Co-Founder and Vice-Chair of Saskatchewan Women in Agriculture. She farms in the Gronlid area and can be found on Twitter @kimkkeller.