

# Farm Suicide: Developing a More Inclusive Methodology



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*Virtual*

**BACKGROUND:** Suicide rates vary by occupation, and prior research indicates that farmers and agricultural workers may be at higher risk. Standard methodology for identifying farmers using occupation and industry codes may miss people involved in the farming community who do not have a farming occupation listed on the death certificate. These individuals were part of a farm community and likely experienced many of the same life stressors and circumstances as farmers. This project aimed to create a more inclusive definition of the farm community in order to better inform suicide prevention efforts among farmers in Minnesota.

**METHODS:** Minnesota suicides were identified from death certificates for the years 2011-2018 (n = 5,632). Open text fields on death certificates were coded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to identify farmers by occupation and industry. Additionally, this project linked county tax records with addresses listed on the death certificates to identify farm residences. This identified individuals who lived on a farm but may not have had a primary farmer occupation (“farm-related” suicides).

**RESULTS:** The total number of farm-related suicides identified by any of the three methods (occupation, industry, and residence) was 292. Coding of farm occupations identified 134 suicide deaths among Agricultural Workers and Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers during 2011-2018. There were 142 suicide deaths in the Crop Production and Animal Production and Aquaculture industry. The farm residence classification identified more farm-related suicide deaths than standard NIOSH methods, capturing 199 deaths over the included time period; 149 of those had not been identified by NIOSH coding methods.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The enhanced methodology identifies a greater number of farm suicides, particularly among women and youth/young adults. By expanding the scope of the definition of the farming community to include those who live on a farm, researchers will be better able to identify and characterize all suicides across this community. Improved data will allow for best practices in continued efforts towards farm suicide prevention.

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