

Self-evaluation chart to measure stress levels of farmers

STRESS is known to cause all kinds of diseases. Life without stress does not exist. The important point for an ideal life is how to manage well the various stresses. Farmers suffer more than urban workers from fatigue and stress caused by hard manual labor. They are also more vulnerable to stresses from poor rural living conditions.

Many measures have been suggested for proper stress management. A self-evaluation chart developed in Korea aims at evaluating quantitatively the level of farmers' stress, and helping them manage their stress properly.

The chart consists of a checklist, an evaluation guide, and suggestions on stress management strategies. The 24 questions in the checklist were selected as the most common causes of stress from an earlier survey of 200 male and female farmers. Four questions were identified as more important than the others, and are marked with a check (✓) sign for extra consideration.

The feedback principle is applied to promote follow-up after use of the stress management strategies recommended, and re-evaluation of stress levels as a check of the efficiency of this system.

How to measure your stress

1. Check your level of stress on the checklist shown in Table 1.
 - Give your answer to each question a score, as shown below.

No stress :	0
A little stress :	1
Some stress :	2
A good deal of stress :	3
A great deal of stress :	4

Add up all the points. The highest possible score for the 24 questions is 96 points.

Count the number of questions marked with a check (✓) where you score more than 1 point, and add this to your total. This number adds additional points for extra weight. Thus, the number of maximum points for extra weight is 4, from the four checked questions, making the highest possible score 100.

Dealing with stress

Now you can diagnose your stress level using the following guideline.

Under 40 points: Your level of stress is tolerable

41-60 points: Your level of stress is not too bad, but needs some improvement

More than 61 points: Your level of stress is too high, and needs immediate attention.

If you want to reduce your stress level, refer to the stress management strategies shown in Table 2. Among the strategies provided, select a couple that you can practice, and follow them.

Follow-up

After a month, re-evaluate your stress levels, using the same chart, to see how much you have reduced your stress by implementing the strategies you have chosen.

Table 1. Stress check list

Level of stress perceived	None (0)	A little (1)	Some (2)	A good deal (3)	A great deal (4)
1. Personal injury disease ✓					
2. Injury or disease of family members ✓					
3. Burden of farm work					
4. Burden of household chores					
5. Conflict with the husband/wife					
6. Conflict with family members					
7. Economic problems with household expenses					
8. Increase in unresolved problems					
9. Lack of information on child education					
10. Tedious rural life					
11. Lack of sufficient time for own interests					
12. Lack of entertainment					
13. Poor crops					
14. Fall in price of harvested crops ✓					
15. Low farm income ✓					
16. Difficulty in managing farming					
17. Feeling that farming is in crisis					
18. Lack of information about farming					
19. Alienation from the role of farmer					
20. Lack of helping hands					
21. Increase in debt					
22. Lack of farming funds					
23. Lack of regular income					
24. Lack of regular off-farm employment					

Table 2. Stress management strategies

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- Accept the stress as it is. Do not try too hard to get rid of it.
 - Analyze the stressful situation to see whether the situation can be changed by your efforts.
 - If the cause of the stress cannot be changed, stop trying to change it as soon as possible.
 - If the cause of the stress cannot be changed, accept it positively.
 - If the cause of the stress cannot be changed, try to improve it.
 - Bestow goodwill, but do not expect as much goodwill in return.
 - When your role is too much of a burden, ask family members for help.
 - Relax, and do your work in an easy way.
 - When stress is acute, keep your mind under control by counting from 1 to 10.
 - Ignore odd things that do not significantly influence your life.
 - Be content and even thankful, even though you are not completely satisfied.
 - Ignore your routine from time to time, and take a few hours for traveling around.
 - Enjoy chatting with others.
 - Sing songs and shout loudly when you are alone in an isolated place.
 - Take enough sleep.
 - Smile to yourself in the mirror.
 - Cut down on the hours you spend watching television, and abstain from sugar and caffeine
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