

Key messages

Who is FCN?

- The Farming Community Network (FCN) is a voluntary organisation and charity that supports farmers and families within the farming community through difficult times.
- FCN is a network of over 400 volunteers, many of whom are involved in farming, or have close links with agriculture and therefore have a great understanding of the issues farmers and farming families regularly face.

Who does FCN help?

- FCN exists to support all those in need in the farming community, with a particular focus on farmers and farming families.
- FCN strives to help anyone who seeks its support, regardless of their background, occupation or beliefs.

When was FCN founded?

- The 1980s and 1990s saw a steep decline in the fortunes of farmers, brought on by low commodity prices. This also resulted in a sharp rise in the number of suicides amongst farmers. FCN was founded as a result of this, in 1995, as a joint venture between the Agricultural Christian Fellowship (ACF) and Germinate (formerly known as The Arthur Rank Centre). It was founded under the name The Farm Crisis Network, but changed its name to The Farming Community Network in 2013.

What does FCN do?

- FCN runs a confidential national helpline and e-helpline which is open every day of the year from 7am-11pm.
- FCN's volunteers provide free, confidential, pastoral and practical support to anyone who seeks help.
- Whether the issue is personal or business-related, volunteers are there to help.

When is this service available?

- The FCN helpline is open every day of the year from 7am-11pm.
- Once a case is referred to a local FCN volunteer, the individual can choose when and if they wish to meet to discuss their case further.

Why do farmers need support?

- Farming is an inherently risky and volatile industry to work in.
- Farmers are regularly forced to deal with issues on the farm that are beyond their control, such as animal disease, fluctuating market prices and the weather.
- As well providing the country with high-quality food and drink, British farmers are also responsible for preserving the countryside, protecting the environment and looking after local wildlife.
- On top of their responsibilities on the farm, farmers also deal with issues in their personal life, such as relationship breakdowns, physical health problems and bereavement.
- British farming employs approximately 475,000 people.
- Farming contributes around £10 billion to the UK economy every year. For every £1 invested in farming, farming delivers £7.40 back to the economy.
- Farming can be a very isolating and lonely occupation. Farmers often spend long hours out in the field with little or no form of social interaction.
- Farmers are constantly required to adapt their farming practices in order to meet the needs of an ever-expanding global population. In the next hour, the world will have another 10,000 mouths to feed.
- Many farm businesses rely heavily on support payments from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in order to continue farming. With Britain preparing to leave the EU, this could have a significant impact on the income of thousands of farming families across the UK.
- Due to commitments on the farm, farmers rarely have time to seek the help they need. Finding the right help locally can also be difficult in remote parts of the UK.
- Because of the stigma surrounding mental health, many within the farming community have difficulty coming forward and admitting they need help.
- Approximately a quarter of farmers in the UK live below the poverty line, with many forced to rely on foodbanks in order to survive.
- Animal disease can be debilitating for farming families. Around 40,000 cattle in England and Wales are slaughtered each year because of bovine TB, affecting the livelihood and welfare of almost 4,500 farming families.
- Farming remains one of our country's most hazardous industries, accounting for 1.5% of workers but 15-20% of all worker fatalities. This can have a devastating impact on both the farming family and farm business.
- Suicide rates in farming are among the highest of any occupational group. In the UK, more than one farmer a week takes their own life.

How does FCN support the farming community?

- FCN volunteers provide support in a number of ways. These can include support with paperwork, building relationships with bank managers, acting as family mediators and even supporting farmers through legal issues.
- Farmers are not immune from the financial difficulties which affect the whole country. FCN volunteers will spend time with farmers, helping them sort out

Helpline: 03000 111 999 e-Helpline: help@fcn.org.uk Website: fcn.org.uk Social: [@FCNcharity](https://twitter.com/FCNcharity) [f TheFarmingCommunityNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/TheFarmingCommunityNetwork)

Helpline is open 7am-11pm every day of the year

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales President: Christopher Jones MBE Chief Executive: Charles W Smith
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where the problems lie and support them while they put everything back on an even keel.

- For many farm businesses, the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is a crucial element of farm income. FCN volunteers are knowledgeable and experienced in dealing with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and are able to offer support where it is needed.
- Animal disease is not only a threat to the farm business, but can also be difficult to address from a personal point of view. Dealing with these problems can be easier with support from someone who understands the difficulties that arise.
- Registering and recording the movement of livestock can be very complicated and involve a significant amount of regulation and paperwork. Having someone by your side to help you through the process can make all the difference.
- A common factor in most FCN cases is poor mental health, particularly stress, anxiety and depression. Volunteers will listen to people, provide support and point them in the right direction to aid their recovery.
- Topics such as succession, retirement and divorce can put a real strain on farming families. FCN volunteers can offer support and mediation to all family members involved, while remaining impartial and objective.
- More often than not, many within the farming community just need someone who will listen to them. FCN volunteers are on hand to provide a sympathetic ear.
- Cases that come through the FCN helpline are usually referred to a local FCN volunteer, who will try and organise a face-to-face meeting with the individual. It is entirely up to them how much support they need or want from FCN.
- FCN works with a variety of stakeholders critical to the successful outcome of cases. These include government bodies, agricultural organisations and healthcare services.
- FCN volunteers provide support, facilitation and direct links to sympathetic professionals.
- FCN is part of “Farming Help” – a group of charities that work together to provide complimentary support to farmers and their families.
- Volunteers support people for as long as it is needed, “walking with” them and helping them find a positive way through their problems.
- Approximately 40 volunteers help with the running of the FCN helpline.

How many people turn to FCN for help?

- Around 6,000 people a year benefit from FCN’s service.
- FCN volunteers deal with approximately 2,500 cases per year.
- Every year, FCN takes on approximately 1,000 new cases.
- FCN receives approximately 100-150 calls to its helpline every month.
- As well as the helpline, volunteers also receive 150-200 direct enquiries from local stakeholders every month.

Why do people turn to FCN for help?

- Most people turn to FCN because of financial troubles, in particular, issues surrounding BPS (Basic Payment Scheme) payments and low market prices.
- FCN can help people deal with a variety of issues, such as poor mental health, animal welfare, tenancy issues, relationship breakdowns and bereavements.
- Farmers are often more comfortable discussing their problems with a third party, as they don't wish to be a burden to their friends or relatives - this is where FCN can help.
- FCN is non-judgmental in its work and all cases are treated with complete confidentiality.

Why does FCN provide this support?

- FCN was founded on Christian values and its work in the farming community is underpinned by a strong Christian ethos.
- Many FCN volunteers are motivated by their faith when helping to serve the farming community, and can offer pastoral support for anyone that requests it, whatever their faith.
- FCN volunteers do not evangelise while serving the farming community and support those of all faiths or none.

Why should I support FCN?

- FCN relies solely on donations and grants in order to continue supporting the farming community.
- With British farming facing deep uncertainty in the coming years, the workload of FCN volunteers is expected to increase significantly.

How much does it cost to run FCN?

- It costs approximately £1,500 a day to run FCN.
- Most of FCN's income is spent on running the national helpline and covering volunteers' travel expenses.
- It costs approximately £330 a day to run the FCN helpline alone – that's around £20 an hour.
- In total, volunteers travel over 130,000 miles every year supporting the farming community. This alone costs around £5,000 a month.

How do I seek help for me or someone I know?

- FCN is here for you, no matter what your concern is. Call the FCN helpline on 03000 111999, or email help@fcn.org.uk.

How can I support the work of FCN?

- FCN welcomes anyone passionate about helping the farming community to join as a volunteer. There are numerous volunteering roles available, including taking helpline calls, handling casework, fundraising and publicity.
- There are many ways that you can raise money for FCN, including organising an event, running, corporate sponsorship, leaving a legacy in your will, or simply donating through our website.
- FCN treats all cases confidentially, but we are grateful to anyone who is willing to talk publicly about the support they have received from FCN.
- More information about FCN, and how you can support FCN, is available at www.fcn.org.uk.
- The FCN Head Office, based in West Haddon, Northamptonshire is open Monday to Friday 9-5 for any further information or general enquiries. Call 01788 510866 or email help@fcn.org.uk.