




Key Messages

Probable farmer suicide* in Ireland (IPSDS 2015-2018 cohort)


Cox, G., Stapleton, A., Russell, T., McHugh, A., & K. Kavalidou (2025) Probable Suicide Among Men in Farming and Agricultural-Related Occupations in the Republic of Ireland: Exploring Coronial Data. *Journal of Agromedicine*, 30(4), 801–811.



1

Elevated Probable Suicide Risk Among Farmers


Male farmers in Ireland have a higher probable suicide rate than non-farmers, particularly those aged 65 and older. This mirrors findings from other countries, suggesting a global trend in elevated suicide risk among farming populations.



2

Occupational Stressors Are Significant

Farming involves unique and chronic stressors, financial instability, climate impacts, isolation, and succession issues, which may contribute to mental health struggles and suicide risk.




3

Methods Differ

Farmers are more likely to use highly lethal methods (e.g., firearms, drowning), which may explain lower rates of recorded self-harm and suicide notes, suggesting more impulsive behaviour.

4



Mental Health and Help-Seeking

Farmers are not more likely to have mental health conditions or substance dependencies than other men. They are just as likely to have contact with a GP, indicating opportunities for intervention.

5



Protective Factors Exist

Many farmers live with family, providing social support that can be leveraged in suicide prevention efforts.

6



Need for Targeted Prevention

Suicide prevention strategies should be tailored to farmers, considering age, occupational stress, and access to lethal means.



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HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention

* This study used four years of data from the Irish Probable Suicide Death Study (IPSDS), derived from an annual census of closed coronial files for the corresponding years. The IPSDS applies the civil standard of proof—suicide on the balance of probabilities—and includes both coroner determined and research determined suicides.

Key Findings

Farmer Suicide in Ireland (IPSDS 2015–2018 cohort)

This is a summary of the findings presented in Cox, G., Stapleton, A., Russell, T., McHugh, A., & K. Kavalidou (2025) Probable Suicide Among Men in Farming and Agricultural-Related Occupations in the Republic of Ireland: Exploring Coronial Data. *Journal of Agromedicine*, 30(4), 801–811.

Summary

There is little information on farmer suicide in Ireland to guide the development of suicide prevention interventions. To address this gap, this paper analysed 4 years of the Irish Probable Suicide Deaths Study (IPSDS 2015–2018) male suicide data (n=1,776). Analysis shows that male farmers and agricultural workers (collectively referred to hereafter as 'farmers'), especially those over 65 years, had significantly higher suicide rates than their non-farming peers. While farmers shared many similarities with other men who died by suicide, they were more likely to use highly lethal methods and less likely to have a history of self-harm, alcohol dependency or mental illness. Farming-related stressors, such as financial pressure and isolation, may contribute to suicide risk, even without prior mental health diagnoses. Despite these risks, many farmers had contact with GPs and lived with family, suggesting potential avenues for targeted prevention through limiting access to lethal means and strengthening social support.

1. Suicide rates

- Male farmers accounted for **8%** of all male suicides (2015–2018) in Ireland.
- The average annual suicide rate for male farmers was **31.5 deaths per 100,000** vs. 23.6 deaths per 100,000 for non-farmers. The difference was not statistically significant.
- **Farmers aged 65 years+** however had a **significantly higher suicide rate** than their non-farming peers (**29.2 deaths per 100,000** compared to 14.3 deaths per 100,000).



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2. Sociodemographic characteristics

- Compared to their non-farming peers, farmers were generally older, more likely to live with family, and more likely to be employed. More specifically:
 - **Age:** Farmers were significantly older than their non-farming peers (mean age: 55.8 vs. 43.3 years).
 - **Marital status:** No significant difference: ~50% farmers and non-farmers were single.
 - **Living arrangements:** More farmers lived with family (62%) or alone (29%).
 - **Employment:** Farmers were significantly more likely to be in paid employment 71% compared with 33% of their non-farmers peers.
 - Employment is generally a protective factor but farming involves **unique stressors:** financial uncertainty, climate change, livestock loss, and succession issues.

3. Clinical characteristics and life events

- **Mental health history:** Similar for farmers (63%) and non-farmers (61%).
- **Medication use:** Similar proportions in receipt of prescribed mental health medication (35% farmers vs. 33% non-farmers).
- **GP contact:** Similar proportions in contact with a GP (49% farmers vs. 48% non-farmers).
- **Prior self-harm:** Farmers were significantly less likely to have a history of prior self-harm (12%) when compared to their non-farming peers (20%).
- **Alcohol dependency:** Lower in farmers (8% farmers vs. 14% non-farmers).
- **Drug dependency:** Farmers were significantly less likely than their non-farming peers to have a history of drug dependency (6% farmers vs. 28% non-farmers).
- **Adverse life events** were recorded in the majority of deaths for farmers (74%) and non-farmers (78%).

4. Death details

- **Method of death.**
 - **Hanging:** Most common (67% farmers, 65% non-farmers).
 - **Drowning:** Higher in farmers (16% vs. 10%).
 - **Shooting:** Higher in farmers (8% vs. 4%).
 - **Poisoning:** Lower in farmers (5% vs. 10%).
- **Suicide verdict and suicide related communication:** Similar proportions received a suicide verdict (73% farmers and 71% of their non-farming peers).
 - The presence of suicide related communication (e.g., note) was less common among farmers (17%) than their non-farming peers (30%).
- **Location of death:** Farmer deaths were significantly less likely to occur in a public place (23% vs. 32% of their non-farming peers).