

Childcare is a national agricultural policy issue

Nationally, three quarters of farm families (74%) experienced childcare challenges within the last five years most often due to cost and availability followed by distance to childcare and quality of childcare.

Access to affordable childcare is tied to keeping children safe, farm viability, and economic development.

- Two out of three farm families (62%) report that access to affordable childcare is an important or very important strategy for keeping children safe.
- Almost one in two farm families (48%) report that access to affordable childcare is important or very important to the economic viability of the farm business.

Three quarters of farm families (76%) believe that farm organizations should represent their needs in national childcare policy discussions and 71% believe USDA should represent their needs.

“Health care and childcare for farm/ranch families should be a national priority if we want to keep farming as a professional industry in our country.”

-Farmer from Wisconsin

The reality of raising children on farms

“Raising kids on the farm is one of my greatest joys. But it has many challenges.”

-Farmer from Vermont

- Three in four farm families (78%) enjoy having children along while working on the farm.
- Two thirds of farm families (65%) have family and friends close enough to help with childcare. However, almost half (42%) reported that their family and friends are too busy to help, and one quarter (28%) reported that their family and friends cannot help due to health difficulties.
- Eight in ten farm families (86%) take care of children on the active farm worksite due to the lack of alternative childcare (paid or unpaid) options.

Safety and well-being in the agricultural sector

Farms and ranches can be dangerous workplaces.

- Nine in ten farm families (97%) are concerned that their children could get hurt on the farm.

Having and raising children can be a source of mental health challenges.

- Almost half of all farm families (47%) reported that someone in their household experienced pre and/or postpartum depression.
- Eight in ten farm families (88%) reported that someone in their household has felt more stress and anxiety since the arrival of the children.

“Financial stress, farm stress and parenting stress caused a great deal of conflict in the home and made it often a less than peaceful place to be.”

-Farmer from California

Farm business and household financials

Children impact how farm families allocate time and financial resources.

- Since the arrival of children, three quarters of farm families (77%) reported that they made changes to meet their personal and professional responsibilities.

Most frequent changes include:

- Decreasing the hours and/or stopped working at an off-farm job (36%),
 - Decreasing the hours and/or stopped working on the farm (28%),
 - Hiring additional farm employee(s) (20%).
- Three quarters of farm families (77%) report taking care of children affects their ability to get the farm work done at least sometimes.
 - Childcare costs limit farm investments for one quarter of farm families (29%).

“Lack of childcare has been the primary impediment to growing my farm.” -Farmer from Ohio