

Tips on coping during a drought

There is no doubt about it – coping with droughts can be very stressful. As you would know, they not only take a toll on farmers' land, stock and bank balances, but also their families, communities and wellbeing.

Here are some strategies that may help you to cope more effectively during a drought:

- **Acknowledge** that you are going through a difficult time and that it is normal to feel upset or worried. Don't be annoyed with yourself if you experience these or other feelings
- Work out exactly **what is and what isn't within your control**, and plan steps to make progress on things you can change (e.g. tidying up a messy shed). It is important to have a sense of control over some aspects of your life, when you don't have control over other things (like when it will rain)
- **Speak to other (perhaps older) farmers** about other years like this one – it is not the first and unlikely to be the last. Ask them what they did to get through the drought
- Prioritise **staying connected** with family, friends and the community. It is more important than ever in times like this
- As much as possible, try to continue with your **normal routines** – maintain your commitment to sporting and other community activities you value
- Regular **exercise** is important. Don't under-estimate its ability to help you deal with stress
- **Avoid too much use of alcohol** or other substances (they only mask the problem in the short term and you are likely to feel even worse about things the next day)
- Don't be too proud to **reach out for help** – you don't have to deal with issues on your own
- Remember that you have paid your taxes in the good years – drought assistance packages can help to take the pressure off. Consider that accepting help may not be easy for you to do, but it may make things a lot easier for your family
- If you are concerned about meeting upcoming payments, ring your banker early. Most rural bankers understand and expect good and bad cash flow seasons. **An informed banker is a happy banker**
- Consider redeeming **Farm Management Deposits** if you have them and get advice from your accountant about other ways to effectively deal with a lower-than-average cash flow



Organisations that may be able to help include:

- Rural Financial Counselling Service: **1800 686 175**
- Farm Household Allowance via Department of Human Services: **13 23 16**
humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance
- Australian Government drought assistance programs: **1800 900 090**
agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance
- Farm Management Deposits through Australian Taxation Office: **13 28 66**
ato.gov.au/business/primary-producers/in-detail/farm-management-deposits-scheme/
- FarmHub: farmhub.org.au

Learning techniques in the ifarmwell modules will also help.