

# Five Challenges Facing Modern Farmers

Agriculture is a building block of nations. The United States Department of Agriculture reports 22.1 million full-and part-time jobs were related to the agricultural and food sectors in 2022, representing 10.4 percent of total U.S. employment. Statistics Canada reports agriculture in Canada employed around 280,000 people as of 2023.

Today's farmers face a convergence of environmental, social and economic pressures. Each of these pressures has the potential to threaten the stability of the global food supply. The following are five notable challenges facing modern farmers.

1. Extreme weather: Climate changed has moved from a theory to a current reality for many farmers. Growing seasons have

become much less predictable as frost dates and heat waves have shifted when plants can be sowed and harvested. Farmers also are increasingly dealing with too much or too little water, each of which can destroy crops.

2. Financial squeeze: Farmers are increasingly facing economic pressures. The price of fuel, seeds and fertilizers has become highly volatile. The American Farm Bureau Foundation says fertilizer prices in 2025 climbed high again as global trade shifted, energy costs rose and geopolitical risks reshaped supply. Farming requires massive capital investments tied to machinery and land. High interest rates can make it difficult for farmers to pay the debt required to stay operational. In addition, farmers typically have little control over the market price



of their products, leaving them vulnerable to global trade wars.

3. Labor shortages: Finding and retaining agricultural labor is a big crisis. The average age of farmers globally is rising, says the

International Labour Organisation and the American Farm Bureau Foundation. In the U.S. and the European Union, the average farmer is nearly 60 years old. The AFBF reports that, despite increased wages, nearly 50 percent of farmers struggle to find enough workers to harvest seasonal crops.

4. Sustainability transitions: Compliance costs are high for the farmers who have opted to transition to more sustainable farming practices. Transitioning to Net Zero

agriculture requires significant capital, according to the World Economic Forum. The WEF estimates there is a multi-trillion dollar investment gap to move global agriculture toward sustainable practices. And while regenerative farming improves soil health, the initial transition period can produce yield variations that threaten the livelihoods of small farmers.

5. Digital divide: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has raised concerns that

small-scale farmers lack the infrastructure like high-speed internet necessary to use tools designed to increase efficiency. Plus, groups like the National Farmers Union have testified that software locks on farming equipment create dependency on manufacturers that can strip farmers of their independence.

Modern farmers face various challenges that have persisted for ages and also newer problems tied to the modern, increasingly technology-based world.

## Useful Information For Use When Pruning Your Trees

By Vicki Shadrick  
Extension Agent  
for Agriculture  
and Natural Resources

Pruning can generally be good for a tree, but make sure you have a reason, use the right cut, and don't get careless, as a bad pruning job can impact a tree's appearance and performance for years.

First, the "why." Pruning is usually about fixing problems or preventing future ones. That can mean removing dead, broken or diseased branches, removing limbs that are rubbing together or trimming overhanging branches. It can also be about shaping a young tree so it grows stronger and to increase visual appeal.

Landscape or ornamental trees are managed differently than forest trees. For advice and tips on managing Kentucky timber stands, consult your local county Extension agent or Kentucky Master Logger.

You can prune most landscape species any time, but late winter is usually a sweet spot for deciduous trees. Trees are dormant, branches are easier to see without leaves, and you're less likely to tear bark when spring growth starts. Evergreen pruning is more seasonal, depending on the reason for trimming. It's smarter to cut branches when they're small. Smaller wounds close faster and give decay fewer chances to move in. Smaller branches are also more easily managed. City residents should check with local waste management companies about guidelines for limb disposal.

One no-no is topping trees. That's when someone chops off the tops or the ends of big branches to "make it shorter" or "make it round." Topping

leads to weak, messy regrowth, more breakage and often tree decline or death.

Cutting correctly matters more than people may think. For small branches, hand pruners or loppers that are clean and sharp work fine. Make cuts at the branch collar—the little swollen area where the branch meets the trunk. Don't cut flush against the trunk, and don't leave a stub. Both mistakes slow healing and raise the risk of rot. Let the tree heal naturally. There is no need to paint the cut—tree "wound dressing" isn't recommended.

For larger branches (greater than an inch in diameter), use a sharp, clean blade and the three-cut method so you don't rip bark down the trunk. First, make a small undercut past the branch collar about half-way through the limb, then cut the branch off about an inch farther out on the limb to drop the weight, then make the final cut at the branch collar. It's a little extra effort that can save you from a big ugly tear.

Last, but not least, is safety. Always wear proper safety gear when pruning trees. It's recommended not to prune within 10 feet of power lines, and do not use a ladder. Chainsaws in trees are also a "no" unless you're trained. If the branch is big, high or anywhere near utilities, the smartest move is calling a pro (like an ISA Certified Arborist). The Kentucky Arborists' Association maintains a list of certified arborists to make it easy to find one in your local area.

To learn more about tree pruning, contact the Webster County Extension office.

## Webster County Jailer's Report

Webster County Jailer Greg Sauls reports inmates worked 1856 hours between February 22 and February 26, 2026. Hours worked include 520 hours at the detention center; 280 hours at the RCC; 80 hours mowing; 360 hours for Union County; 40 hours for the city of Clay; 50 hours for the city of Dixon; 150 hours for the city of Providence; 40 hours for recycling; 40 hours for the road department shop; 40 hours for the dog warden and 16 hours for Landon's Hope.

The total jail population is 157 with 41 county inmates, 19 Union County inmates and 97 state prisoners.

Thirty-two inmates participated in the Mor-

al Recognition Therapy program; 25 attended Anger Management; 24 attended Thinking for Good; and 25 attended Untangling Relationships. Eleven inmates attended GED classes.

Incarcerated during the same period were Casey Austin  
Matthew Blankenship

Rikya Bradshaw  
Nicholas Brown  
Jimmy Clark  
Mario Evans  
Savannah Glasscock  
Matthew Gosslin  
Tammy Juan Diego  
Vikki Lukco  
Paul Madden  
Lucas Maxwell  
Dion O'Connor  
James Piercy  
Kellie Ramriez Lopez  
Derek Snyder

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Matthew Williams  
Patricia Williams  
Joseph Zirkelbach

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## Kentucky State Police To Conduct Traffic Safety Checkpoints

The Kentucky State Police (KSP) will be conducting traffic safety checkpoints throughout the Post 2 district, to check motorists for compliance with motor vehicle laws including driving under the influence statutes. KSP utilizes traffic safety checkpoints to promote safety for motorists using the public roadways and to provide a deterrent for those who violate laws contained in the Kentucky Revised Statutes.

The intent of a traffic safety checkpoint is to provide for a high visibility, public safety service, focusing on vehicular equipment deficiencies, confirming appropriate registration and insurance of vehicles, and the valid licensing of drivers. Violations of law or other public safety issues that arise shall also be addressed.

Traffic safety checkpoints will allow the Kentucky State Police the opportunity to periodically concentrate its efforts in checking for violations of Kentucky traffic and regulatory

laws that will ultimately increase the safety of the citizens within the Commonwealth. Drivers encountering a traffic safety checkpoint are requested to have their operator's license, vehicle registration receipt, and proof of insurance readily accessible. Drivers with this information in hand, those with no violations of law and minimal roadway con-

gestion can reasonably expect to be delayed for only a brief time period.

For a list of KSP Post 2 checkpoint locations, visit the KSP website at <https://www.kentuckystatepolice.ky.gov/post2checkpoints>

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INVITATION TO BID

Webster County Cooperative Extension District Board is seeking bids for the following:

- Mowing
- Landscaping
- Janitorial services
- Window cleaning
- Pest control
- Sanitation services
- Snow removal services
- Tile floors stripped and re-waxed and carpets shampooed

The Webster County Cooperative Extension District Board reserves the right to accept and/or reject any and all bids and to waive all formalities in awarding the bids. Sealed bids will be accepted at the Webster County Extension Office in Dixon until 12:00 P.M., prevailing time, Wednesday, March 11, 2026 and awarded the afternoon of March 12, 2026. For more information, call (270) 639-9011.

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