

Cyclosporiasis outbreaks spike, farmers suffer mental health effects

Since May 1, 2026 there have been [1,645](#) confirmed cases of Cyclosporiasis, a parasite found in lettuce, various berries, and any other fresh, raw produce. This parasite, if consumed, causes symptoms like diarrhea, cramping and bloating for an extended period of time. The U.S Center for Disease Control is still currently investigating 5,100 additional cases.

This [outbreak has been found](#) mainly in Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky, but a total of 34 also identified cases. This parasites activity tends to increase during the warmer months, but the number of cases this year is six times higher than it was last year, according to the [CDC](#).

Parasite outbreaks on crops, such as a microscopic protozoa lily cyclospora, can [threaten](#) a farmers livelihood, by causing severe damage to crops, drastic revenue loss, regulatory shutdowns and long term contamination of soil.

These outbreaks can also ruin harvests, or cause recalls, costing farmers possibly millions in costs of operation and crop yield loss. This threat of possible bankruptcy or possibly losing a farm, is a [main instigator](#) of chronic anxiety and depression for farmers.

Parasite outbreaks often arise due to environmental factors, or contaminated water sources, factors that are entirely out of a farmers control. This can then lead to further feelings of [stress and helplessness](#), adding onto the overall fear farmers feel about the possibility of outbreaks occurring.

Additionally, when crops carry foodborne illnesses such as Cyclospora, farmers are [shown](#) to experience severe emotional strain and distress from fear for their livelihood harming consumers.

Another [factor](#) that is often linked to stress, and heightened depression for farmers is the practice that many farmers adopt to prevent future outbreaks, using agrichemicals. The exposure to these harsh chemicals heightens these mental health symptoms and the combination of pesticide exposure and mental illness can worsen the adverse effects on farmer health.

It has been [shown](#) that a loss of livelihood for farmers during mass outbreaks like these, and public health anxieties can drive up rates of clinical depression and anxiety for those in the agricultural community.

For farmers, their mental health is already at risk, as their suicide rate is [3.5 times higher](#) compared to the general population, so adding on extra stress with this outbreak, is cause for concern. These outbreaks on their own have negative economic effects for farmers, causing them not only to have more added stress during an outbreak, but in the times surrounding them as well, for fear of another one, further putting farmers at risk for severe mental health related crises and symptoms.

Work Cited

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