

# Farm families' childcare challenges impacting farm businesses, research suggests <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpt

Childcare challenges might not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about farm business viability, yet according to a new study led by a Penn State researcher, childcare challenges can negatively impact farm businesses and the farm family.

The research—a collaboration between Florence Becot, Nationwide Insurance Early Career Professor in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, and Shoshanah Inwood, associate professor of community, food, and economic development at Ohio State University—focused on understanding how children and their needs shape the farm enterprise.

To assess the extent to which childcare arrangements, farm individuals and households, and farm enterprise characteristics interact, the researchers compiled and administered a comprehensive survey and analyzed responses from 729 U.S. farm families. They recently reported their findings in *Agriculture and Human Values*.

"Over three quarters of farm families with children under 18 had experienced childcare challenges, largely due to cost and availability, which means that they often must cobble together multiple paid and unpaid childcare options," Becot said.

"When childcare has been discussed in agriculture before, it has most often been done from a farm-safety standpoint, because children on the farm are exposed to higher rates of injuries and fatalities compared to children in the general population. But this new study suggests that childcare challenges also frequently impact farm business decisions."

In the study, 78% of respondents made changes to balance the needs of children with farm business responsibility, significantly impacting farm productivity by reducing hours worked on the farm and shifting work schedules. Respondents indicated childcare decisions also affected the structure of labor on—and off—the farm, including stopping or reducing hours worked in an off-farm job, and hiring help on the farm or in the house. Arranging and paying for childcare also influenced the farm enterprise structure, by necessitating changes in production systems and marketing channels, and influencing farm investment decisions.

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Children needs and childcare: an illustration of how underappreciated social and economic needs shape the farm enterprise <sup>[3]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/08/farm-families-childcare-challenges-impacting-farm-businesses> <sup>[2]</sup>

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