**Response to Editor and Reviewers re** Journal of Rural and Community Development 2019 Oct 3

Indicated after the >> for each point (or part thereof)

"Change as a double edged sword: Farmers’ health and wellbeing in the context of changing farming practice in Grey County, Ontario".>> note changed title in revised version

Interestingly, both comment that it reads like it might have been a thesis. If this is true >> it was the first, student co-author’s major masters project

…please make an effort to style more to how we publish at the JRCD.>> we have endeavoured to make it more scholarly, including by deepening our analysis.

Both reviewers raised concerns regarding the theoretical/conceptual frameworks>> we have articulated our theoretical/conceptual framework more clearly up front and “put the theory to work” more in the discussion.

>> We note how constructive the feedback was from both you as editor and the reviewers, particularly reviewer C, pushing us to focus, clarify, work with theory more and overall improve the article. Many thanks.

**Reviewer A**: accept with revisions

This paper reads like a nice summary of the results chapter of a graduate dissertation. However, there is significant room for improvement. The manuscript is at once too long,>> we have reduced the length of the main text from 6352 to 4203 words (34%), with reductions in the methods, findings and as suggested below.

and underdeveloped in the **context/literature review** and discussion sections. >>Have labelled the introductory material Context/Literature Review

We are not given any real synthesis of "stresses" in agriculture - the paper alludes to mental health, resilience, well-being literature. This scoping is likely too broad.>> The second section on stressors did include a summary, but agree not linked to a conceptual framework. We have now narrowed down to stressors, health impacts and resilience and dropped the health services material.

There is no review of well-being, either as a concept or empirically, >> Agreed. We used well-being initially for the study as a whole and the interview call, as we did not want to recruit only those with mental health challenges, and we feared stigma around labelling. But as a term it was not used by most farmers, and even then, infrequently, so we have now removed this construct from the paper.

and the section on resilience draws on ecology literature which is targeted at the system scale
- what is the system here? I can easily see an argument for an agroecosystem, but this paper is about farm operators, so thus an individual agent in a larger system. >> Agreed, though there is a literature around individual resilience, particularly in psychology. We found a link in our data, so conceptually wanted to link the two. We have now done so more explicitly in the third sub-section of the Context/Literature Review with the aid of a Rural Social Ecological Framework.

I would suggest framing this in public health literature (not limited to Canada) - what are the known public health/mental health challenges that have been documented elsewhere? how have these been
assessed?>> Fair enough questions, though we did include some of this in the second section of the paper. We have now explicitly labelled the sub-section and noted that they were primarily quantitative. A full methodological review is beyond the scope of this paper.

The **methods** is nicely detailed. The claims that younger farmers are overrepresented given demographic trends needs greater support (and from a more current source; see for instance the Census of Agriculture for 2016 -brief summary here: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/170510/dq170510a-eng.htm).

>>Appreciate the recent source, now included. Reworked the justification, also given Reviewer C’s comments

The Methods section could be condensed significantly for a journal paper.>>have condensed from 712 to 393 words

The **Findings** section is needlessly long - there are far too many (and too long) direct quotes. Given that this presents results without interpretation, this section could be reduced by at least 50% - quotes can
be moved to supplemental materials. >> we have neared your target (45%), removing many quotes to a supplementary file and reducing word count from 3938 to 2173.

Once we get to the **discussion**, however, there is little effort to return to the overarching research question – it needs to be directly answered.>> Now starts the discussion, and linked to the conceptual framework.

While there is a solid attempt at putting results in the context of the literature, the lack of a focused literature review makes this challenging.>> We have re-organized the discussion by the levels of Wilson and colleagues’ framework, and eliminated extraneous material on health care and dealing with stigma.

Given that snowball sampling was included, the overall small sample size and the possibility of response bias, the limitations section should be more direct on the notion that this cannot be seen as a representative sample.>> Agreed, now noted explicitly, particularly in light of our participants being ecological farmers (a strength, but also a limitation).
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**Reviewer C**: accept with revisions

Generally, a stronger theoretical framework for the data analysis would benefit the paper.  The authors made some effort to introduce political ecology theory (page 3) into this research, but a more structured conceptual framework would benefit the paper (as a guide to the finding and discussion). >> Agreed. We have now included papers more linked to social-ecological theories Kulig, Edge, & Joyce (2008) and Buikstra and colleagues (2010), as well as working with Wilson and colleagues (2015) rural social ecological framework.

The conclusions should also reflect on the research contribution to theory.>> We think our scholarship is more of application, rather than theoretical development, but note that it supports further application of social ecological frameworks.

Some specific items to consider:
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1) Under the Rationale, Research Question and Methods I found myself asking the following questions:
• Why southwestern Ontario? And • Why Grey County? Is this case representative?>>Primarily, as now noted, existing links of one of the co-authors (DCC).

• What’s the rationale of this criterion (small-scale owner)? What is the definition of small-scale?>>we were not seeking farm managers of large corporate operations, as few are ecological.

• Why ecological or organic?>> we were particularly interested in the ecological – resilience links in a time of climate change. Now articulated in the paper in both the Context/Literature Review and Research Question up front

• How does this snowball sampling process impact the data collection process and result?>>aided in terms of recruiting ecological farmers, because of trust linkage. Did reduce generalizability of understandings to other kinds of farmers, though in our knowledge exchange experience with farm groups in Grey County, many stressors are similar.

More justification (a sentence or 2 around each of the above criteria would be helpful)>> As we reduced methods as per Reviewer A’s request, and explained those remaining criteria.

2) On page 3 the paper indicates:
“All farms were diversified with an ecological or organic component, and most were small-scale (all under 400 acres, 11 were 80-100, and 3 <80 acres). “

Earlier the paper specified that “small-scale” was a criteria for selection (which seems to contradict “most”).>> Fair enough, removed from selection as per comment above.
3) Page 3:
Interviews lasted for? 45 minutes – the “?” should be deleted.>>have done so.

4) Page 3:
“An initial subset of transcripts was coded independently by two members of the research team (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and discussed in light of political ecology theories”

Comment: Additional justification would be helpful: Why is this theory appropriate for this research and within what conceptual frame work is it used to analyze the data?>>Good question. We have simplified the methods and moved theory up to the 3rd sub-section of the Context/Literature Review section. We have retained the social ecology part, but think the data do not warrant a full political ecology examination. However, we indicate the problematization that political ecologist colleagues have raised around adaptation and resilience in the Discussion.

5) Findings: The content of the findings is very interesting and strongly supported by interview materials. However, the relationship between the ‘raw content’ and the political ecology theory could be stronger.>>Agreed. As per the comment immediately above, returning to the data we find a rural social ecological framework more appropriate than political ecology.

6) Page 11- The interviews with younger female farmers is interesting. The authors may want to expand this part and make further discussions about the different attitude towards mental health and support channel between the younger female population and older male population, and the implication for policies (which is mentioned in the later discussion)>>Agree would be interesting, but given Reviewer A’s concern about length, we have not elaborated

7) Discussion
Again, this part is well structured and clearly summarized but the relation to the theoretical framework and the contribution of this research to theory could be stronger.>>Agreed. We have restructured the discussion in relation to our chosen framework. Not sure how much we have contributed to theory.

8) Page 12: “The Southwestern Ontario farmers with whom we spoke shared concerns about ongoing changes in agribusiness (Bryant & Garnham, 2014), climate (Ellis & Albrecht, 2017), government bureaucracy, health services and community support echoed in the previously cited literature.”

Comment: More justification needed: are they supposed to represent all Ontario/Canadian farmers, or farmers with all types of farming production ? If not, what is the representativeness?>>Not representative, given our focus on ecological farmers, but a number of similar challenges are voiced by other Canadian farmers, as now incorporated in the discussion in reference to a recent federal report.

9) Page 12:
“However, they also saw the personal growth opportunities to take on challenges, learn about new technology and different practices, adapt, and hence reap the rewards of farming for themselves and their farm. In this sense, change stimulates their interest, promotes their building problem solving capabilities and contributes to their joy in farming and ongoing commitment to it (Lobley & Potter, 2004). Our study highlights the importance of a love of farming and striving for resilience through a web of learning and connections as crucial to promoting positive farm and personal mental health (Darnhofer et al., 2016).”

Comment:
This part is interesting and key: the authors may want to expand this observation (within the political ecology framework) to offer more in-depth analysis on (1) the process that farmers use to react to a series of changing factors (environmental, economic, political) to reach for new balance of their well being.>> Glad you also see this as key. We have re-worked the paragraph and linked to Buikstra and colleagues finding on the importance of learning. However, I think the kind of analysis you are proposing would require more longitudinal work, with repeated interviews, and likely across a wider range of farmers, perhaps a new research project with the EFAO ☺

Further explanation needed: What is this ‘web of learning and connections’?>>as per above, have re-worked this paragraph

10) Page 13:
Given that not all farmers desire to use stress management or traditional medical services, farming organizations could consider inclusion of alternative health services in benefit programs, as well as advocating for greater integration into provincially funded healthcare services.

Comment: The authors may want to expand this part slightly to discuss the policy implication for support for newcomer farmer in terms of building diverse social network. Gender issue may also be mentioned here if the authors want to address this point as mentioned earlier.>> As per the advice of Reviewer A, we have decided that this was too much to take on in this paper, so have removed this suggestion.