



St. Croix County Farmland Preservation Survey Report, 2010

**David Trechter
James Janke
Shelly Hadley**

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions from farmers, farmland owners, and agri-business owners/managers about farmland preservation and agricultural issues in St. Croix County.

In August, 2010, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to 832 farmers, farmland owners, and agri-business owners/managers. The initial mailing was followed by reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 42 percent (348 completed questionnaires). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 4.0 percent with 95 percent confidence. Statistical tests do not indicate that “non-response bias” is a problem in this sample

Questions in the survey were based on information gathered from the public during four Farmland Preservation Workshops in May 2010. The questionnaire was divided into two broad categories of questions. The first section asked respondents for their level of agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree) with statements about various farmland and agricultural issues. The second set of questions dealt with policy options and asked respondents to rate the importance of each option on a scale of very high priority to very low priority.

Section 1: Farmland and Agricultural Issues. Majorities of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed that groundwater quality is good, that groundwater supply is adequate, and that surface water quality is good. At the same time, a majority said that fragmentation of land is making farming more difficult, and fewer than half believed they could find productive farmland to buy or rent in the County. Respondents had evenly split opinions regarding the future availability of productive land in the County. Only a quarter said it is difficult to find land to spread manure at this time.

When asked about the impact of agricultural trends, majorities of respondents said mergers among input suppliers and processors have hurt competition. A majority of respondents also said off-farm employment is necessary to support their farm operations. Half of respondents felt that global markets benefit them. More than four in ten of respondents thought direct farm marketing to consumers will become more important. Forty percent agreed that government regulations are reasonable, while 28 percent had a neutral opinion, and 29 percent disagreed.

With respect to agricultural infrastructure, between 65 percent and 70 percent of respondents agreed that they have adequate access to financial services and that the road network in the County is adequate for agricultural uses. Six in ten respondents said the County needs more local machinery repair and parts businesses. About half of respondents agreed that more direct farm marketing facilities and locations, as well as more agricultural processing facilities, are needed in the County. Only about a third of respondents see a coming shortage of grain storage facilities in the County.

Transitioning farm ownership was a major concern for three-fourths of respondents. Looking to the future, over 70 percent of respondents agreed that the demands of population growth and development in St. Croix County will significantly reduce farmland in St. Croix County. Respondents had mixed opinions about selling the development rights on their farmland. Half of respondents said they do not intend to sell their land for development at retirement age, while 28 percent were neutral, and 12 percent said they intend to sell their farmland for development at retirement.

Section 2: Policy Options. Respondents were asked to rate the priority of policy options meant to address infrastructure and agricultural resource issues. There were substantial percentages of respondents who gave a “medium” priority rating to many of these policy options. There were few policies for which a

majority said the item was either a high priority or a low priority. Given some of the concerns about infrastructure and resource issues noted in the previous paragraphs, the large proportion of “medium” priority ratings for policy options to address them is somewhat surprising. These results suggest that County policy makers need to ask the farm population about their concerns with the policy options considered in this survey, what aspects of these policies are unclear to them, or both.

About half of respondents said programs to educate the non-farm public about farming and cost-share programs for soil conservation are high priorities. Between 36 percent and 45 percent gave a high priority rating to the following: financial incentives for farmland preservation, planning for residential development in specific areas, policies to limit non-agricultural development in agricultural areas, and policies to manage nutrient application.

About half of respondents said programs to keep land in agriculture are high priority. Between 24 percent and 31 percent said the following are high priority programs: ensuring a supply of labor qualified to run large equipment, recruiting machinery/equipment businesses, English language training for agricultural workers, and ensuring a supply of agricultural managers.

Concerning policies related to developing businesses related to agriculture, there was not a majority who gave a high priority rating to any of the listed topics. Between 32 percent and 41 percent said the following were high priority items: programs to encourage local suppliers for small businesses, policies to attract processing businesses, policies to attract input suppliers.

In conclusion, respondents identified concerns and threats to agriculture in St. Croix County on the horizon but are not sure about the policy options about which they were asked in this survey.

Survey Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions from farmers, farmland owners, and agri-business owners/managers about farmland preservation and agricultural issues in St. Croix County. The County chose to work with the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls to collect these data and analyze the results.

Survey Methods

In August, 2010 the SRC mailed surveys to 832 farmers, farmland owners, and agri-business owners/managers in St. Croix County. Questions in the survey were based on information gathered from the public during four Farmland Preservation Workshops in May 2010. The mailing list was provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Office. The surveys were followed with reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 42 percent (348 completed questionnaires). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 4.0 percent with 95 percent confidence.

Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias.” Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who do not return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. **Based upon a standard statistical analysis that is described in Appendix A, the SRC concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.**

In short, the data gathered in this survey is expected to accurately reflect the opinions of St. Croix County farmers, farmland owners, and agri-business owner/managers included in the mailing list.

In addition to the numeric responses, respondents provided written comments to open-ended questions, which the SRC compiled. **Appendix B to this report contains these comments.**

Appendix C contains a copy of the survey questionnaire with a quantitative summary of responses by question.

Profile of Respondents

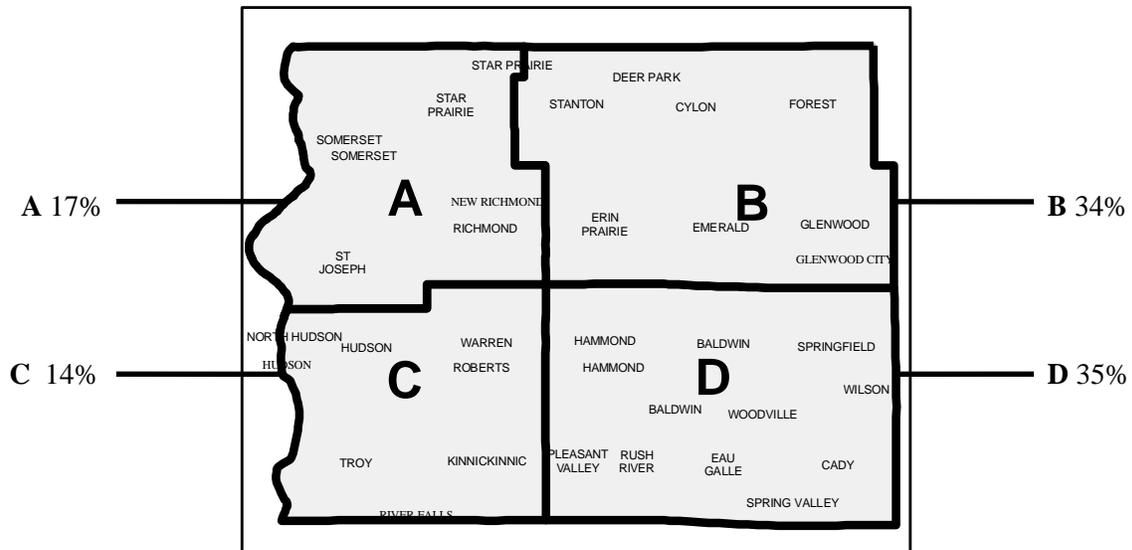
Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents to the St. Croix County Farmland Preservation Planning Survey.

- Nearly nine in ten respondents were men and long-term residents of St. Croix County (more than 20 years).
- Two-thirds of the respondents were age 45 and above, and 22 percent were retirees.
- Two-thirds had some formal post-secondary education, and 38 percent had completed a post-secondary educational program (technical college through graduate degree).
- Most respondents did not have dependent children living at home (82%).
- Most respondents (90%) earned at least some of their household incomes from farming, and 38 percent earned more than half of their household incomes from farming.
- Half of the respondents had annual household incomes above \$50,000. Only 7 percent had incomes below \$15,000, while 12 percent had incomes above \$100,000.

As we analyze the data, we will identify when various demographic groups have significantly different views.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents							
Gender	Count	Male	Female				
Sample	333	89%	11%				
Age 18+	Count	18 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 54	55 – 64	65+
Sample	329	1%	13%	19%	28%	23%	16%
Households with Children	Count	0	1	2	3	4	5+
Sample	291	82%	7%	5%	4%	1%	2%
Residential Status	Count	Own	Rent				
Sample	298	98%	2%				
Length of Residency	Count	0 to 5 years	5.1 – 10 years	11 to 20 years	Over 20 years		
Sample	343	3%	2%	6%	89%		
Employment Status	Count	Full-Time	Part-Time	Self	Unemp.	Retired	Other
Sample	335	27%	44%	5%	1%	22%	1%
Highest Level of Education	Count	Less than High Sch.	High Sch. Dipl.	Some College/ Tech	Tech/ College Grad.	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate/ Professional Degree
Sample	336	5%	30%	26%	13%	18%	7%
Annual Household Income Range	Count	<\$15,000	\$15-\$24,999	\$25-\$49,999	\$50-\$74,999	\$75-\$99,999	\$100,000+
Sample	276	7%	14%	28%	25%	14%	12%
Household Income from Farming	Count	0%	1% – 25%	26% - 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%	
Sample	288	10%	37%	15%	14%	24%	

Respondents were shown a County map and asked to indicate the quadrant of the County in which they live. As shown on the map below, over two-thirds of respondents are from either quadrant B (34%) or quadrant D (35%). In general, there was consistency among the responses from the different quadrants. Only two questions contained noteworthy differences based on the quadrant of the respondents. These will be noted in the text. This is an interesting outcome in that we expected to see more differences of opinion between the more suburban quadrants (A and C) and the more rural/agricultural quadrants (B and D).

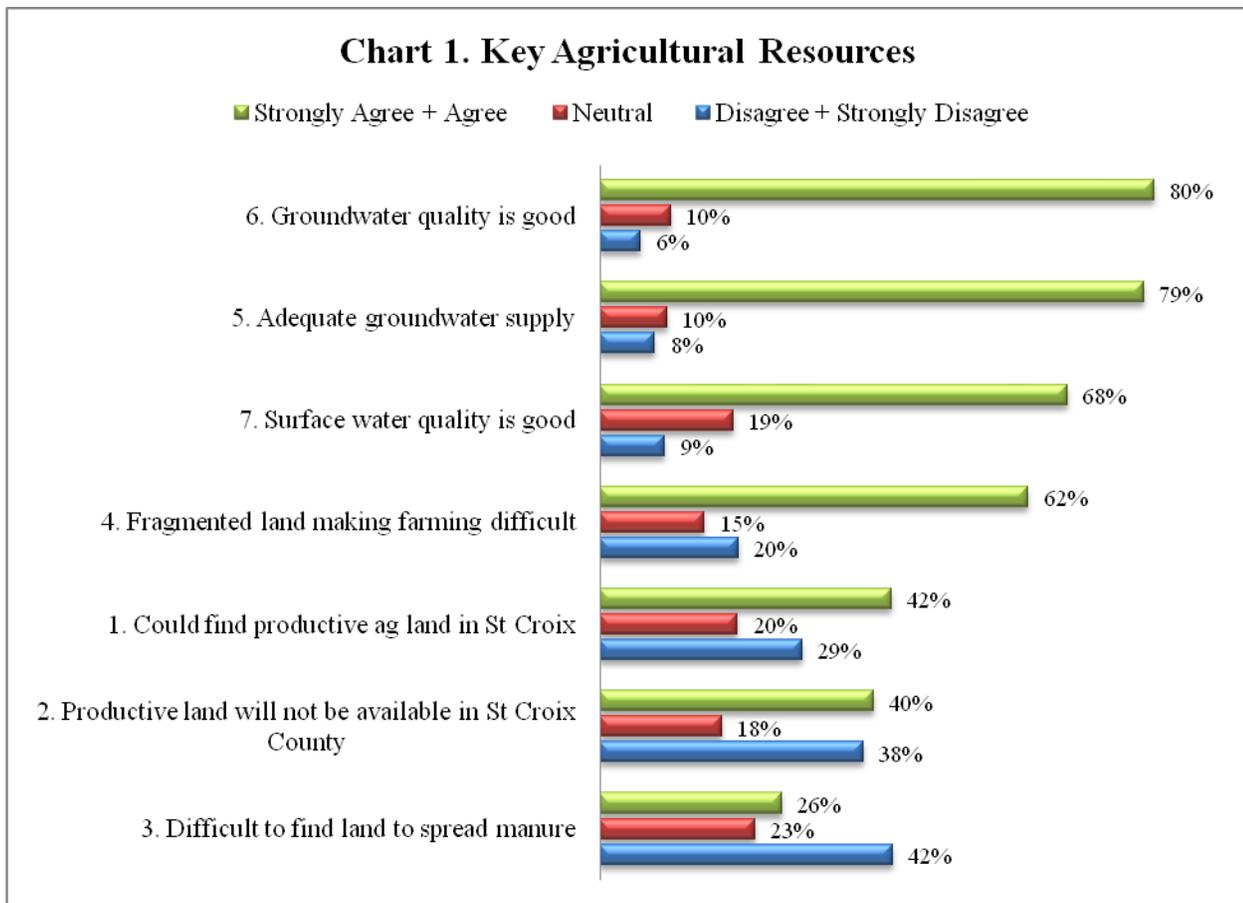


Key Agricultural Issues

The initial section of the survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with seven statements using the following scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, or no opinion. Chart 1 summarizes the results. The top bar shows the sum of the percentage of the “strongly agree” plus the “agree” responses. The middle bar is the percentage of the “neutral” responses. The combined percentages of the “disagree” plus “strongly disagree” responses are shown in the bottom bar. The “no opinion” responses are not shown but are included in the calculation of the percentages. (Chart 1 to Chart 4 use the same display format.)¹

Chart 1 shows that eight of ten respondents said groundwater quality in St. Croix County is good and that there is an adequate supply of groundwater. A smaller majority (two-thirds) rated surface water quality as good.

A majority said that increasing fragmentation of farm parcels is making it more difficult to farm.



¹ A “neutral” response suggests that the respondent has considered the issue and concluded that he/she neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement. In contrast, a “no opinion” response suggests the respondent has not reached a conclusion and likely would want additional information before forming an opinion.

There was no majority within the remaining three questions in this section of the survey. Although the largest percentage of respondents (plurality) said they could find productive agricultural land to buy or rent in St. Croix County, the total was less than half of the respondents (42%). Only 29 percent disagreed, but 20 percent were neutral. When asked their opinion about the availability of productive farmland in St. Croix County twenty years into the future, respondents had split opinions. Nearly equal proportions believed it would be difficult (40%) as believed it would not be difficult (38%), and one in five respondents were neutral.

The largest portion of respondents (42%) reported that finding suitable land for spreading of manure is not difficult, 26 percent said it is difficult and 23 percent were neutral.

Demographic Comparisons. Women were more likely to have chosen “no opinion” regarding whether productive farmland is available to rent/buy in St. Croix County and whether the groundwater supply in the County is adequate.

Retired respondents were more likely to disagree that finding suitable land on which to spread manure is difficult.

Respondents who have lived in the County for 20 years or less were more likely to agree that they could currently find productive/quality farmland to rent or buy in St. Croix County.

Respondents from households with less than \$50,000 annual income were more likely to agree that productive farmland will generally not be available in 20 years in St. Croix County.

Impact of Agricultural Trends

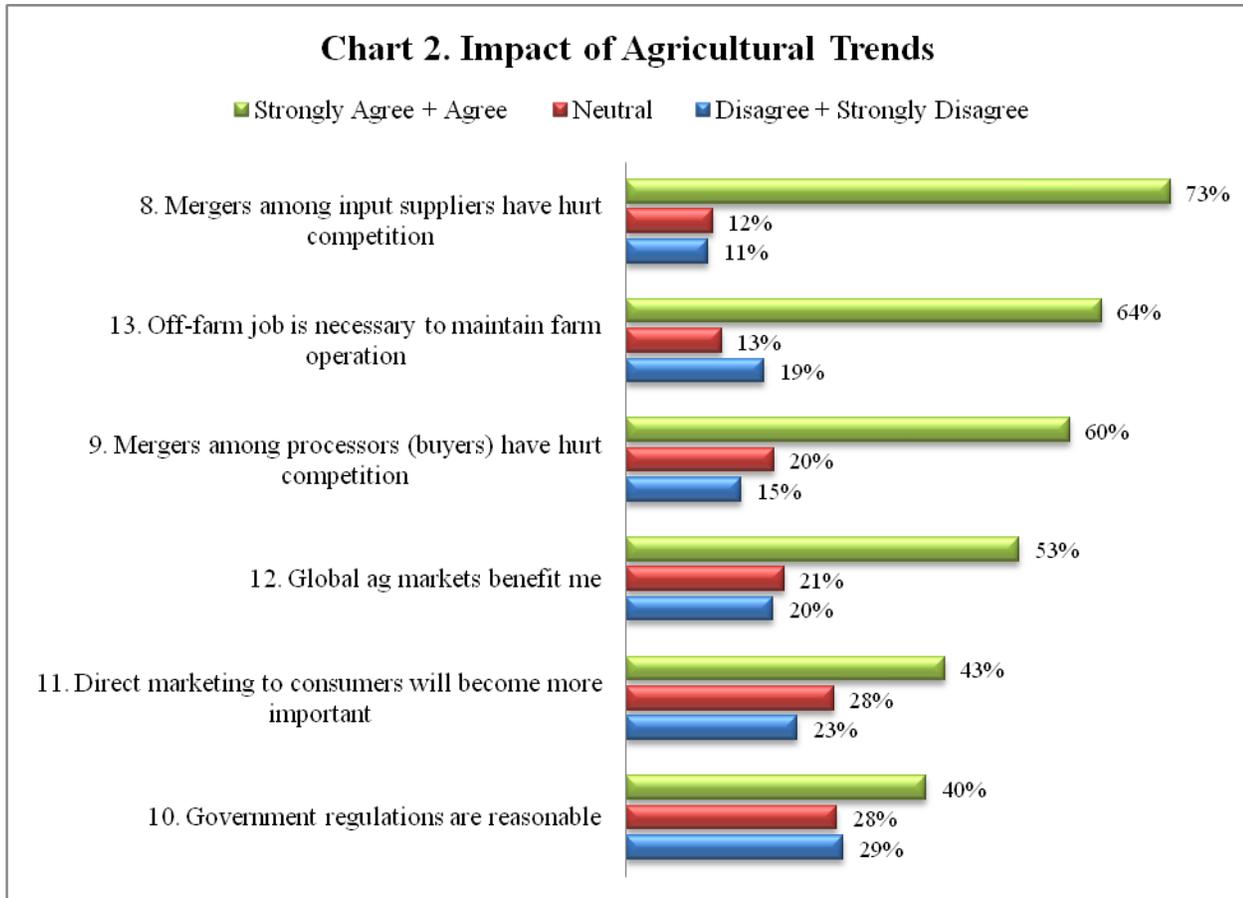
Majorities of respondents said that mergers among input suppliers and processors have hurt competition, raised input costs for farmers and reduced prices received from processors. As shown in Chart 2, 73 percent of respondents said that mergers among suppliers have hurt competition, and 60 percent of respondents believed that mergers among processors have had a negative impact. A slight majority (53%) said that global agricultural markets benefit their farms.

A majority of respondents (64%) agreed that off-farm employment is necessary to maintain their farm operations.

Although relatively few respondents disagreed that direct marketing to consumers will become more important in the future (23%), slightly more (28%) had a neutral opinion. As a result, the largest percentage, but not a majority, of respondents agreed that direct marketing will increase in importance (43%).

When asked if government regulations are reasonable, neither a majority agreed nor a majority disagreed. The largest percentage of respondents agreed that regulations are reasonable (40%), but 29 percent disagreed, and 28 percent were neutral.

Demographic Comparisons. Women were more likely to have chosen “no opinion” regarding the impact of mergers among processors on competition and whether global agricultural markets are a personal benefit to them.



Respondents with higher levels of formal education were more likely to agree that an off-farm job is necessary to maintain their farm operations.

A majority of respondents who grow fruits and vegetables and respondents from households with dependent children agreed that direct marketing to consumers will become more important to their farms in the next 20 years.

Respondents from the following groups were more likely to agree that off-farm jobs are necessary to maintain their farm operations: households for which farm income is 50 percent or less of total annual household income, respondents with dependent children, and beef operators.

Agricultural Infrastructure

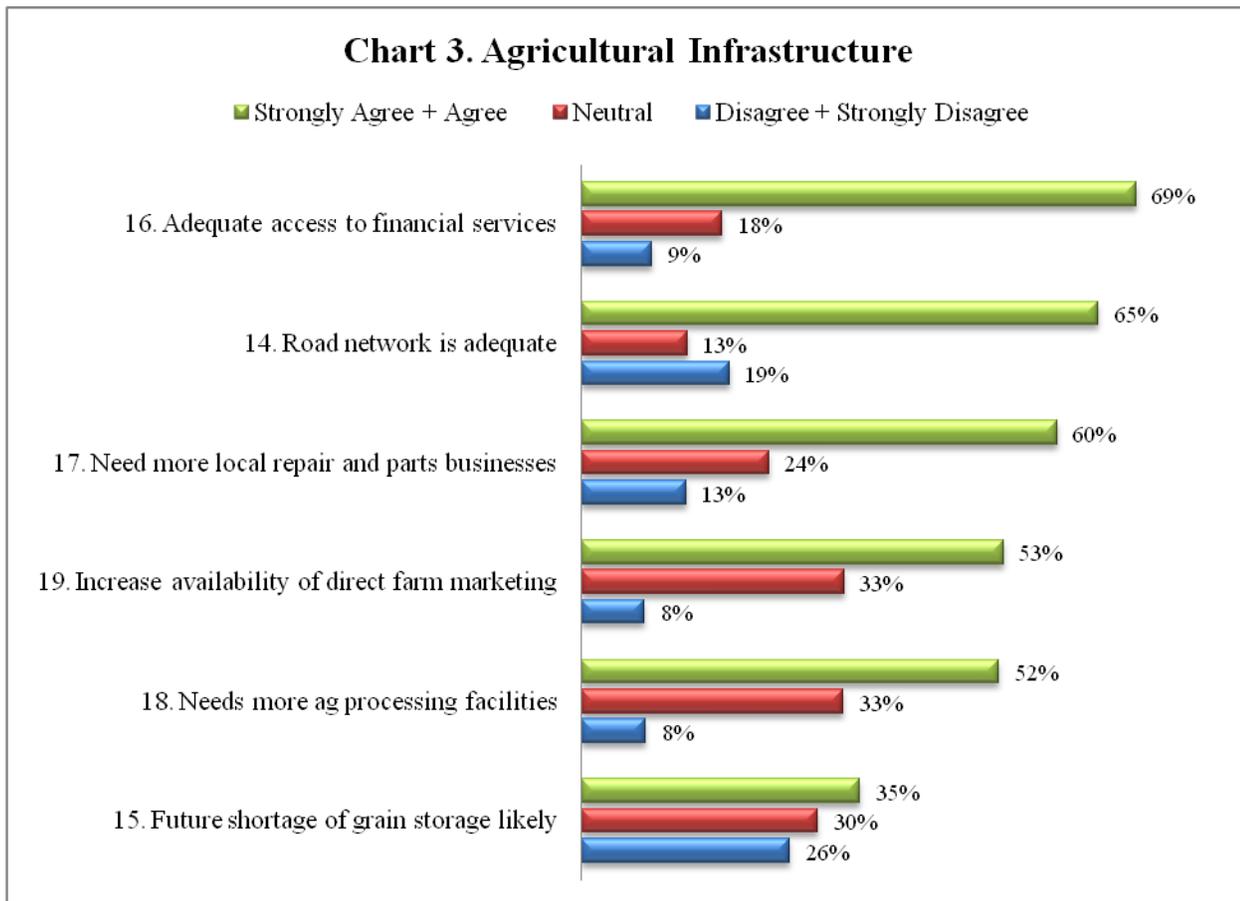
As shown in Chart 3, nearly 70 percent of respondents said they have adequate access to financial services, and 65 percent agreed that the road network in the County is adequate for agricultural needs for the next 20 years.

At the same time, a majority of respondents said there is a need for additional infrastructure in three categories.

Six in ten felt more local machinery repair, supply and parts businesses are needed. Slightly more than half (53%) also said there is a need to increase the availability of direct farm marketing infrastructure (sites and associated facilities) and that there is a need for more agricultural processing facilities (52%). These responses are consistent with the answers in Q11 regarding the growing importance of direct farm marketing and the answers in Q9 regarding the mergers of agricultural processing businesses.

There was no majority sentiment among respondents regarding the future adequacy of grain storage facilities in St. Croix County. While the largest proportion (35%) said there is likely to be a future shortage of grain storage, nearly as many (30%) were neutral, and 26 percent disagreed.

Demographic Comparisons. Women respondents were more likely to have no opinion regarding the adequacy of the County road network and whether St. Croix County needs to increase the direct farm marketing facilities and locations.



The following groups were more likely to agree that the County needs to increase agricultural processing facilities: respondents less than age 45, respondents who have lived in the County for 20 years or less, and respondents who have dependent children in their households. Respondents who live in Quadrant A (Northwest) were more likely to have no opinion about the need for more agricultural processing facilities.

Respondents from households with dependent children were also more likely to agree that the County needs to increase direct farm marketing facilities and locations.

Retirees were more likely to have no opinion about the likelihood of a future shortage of grain storage facilities in St. Croix County.

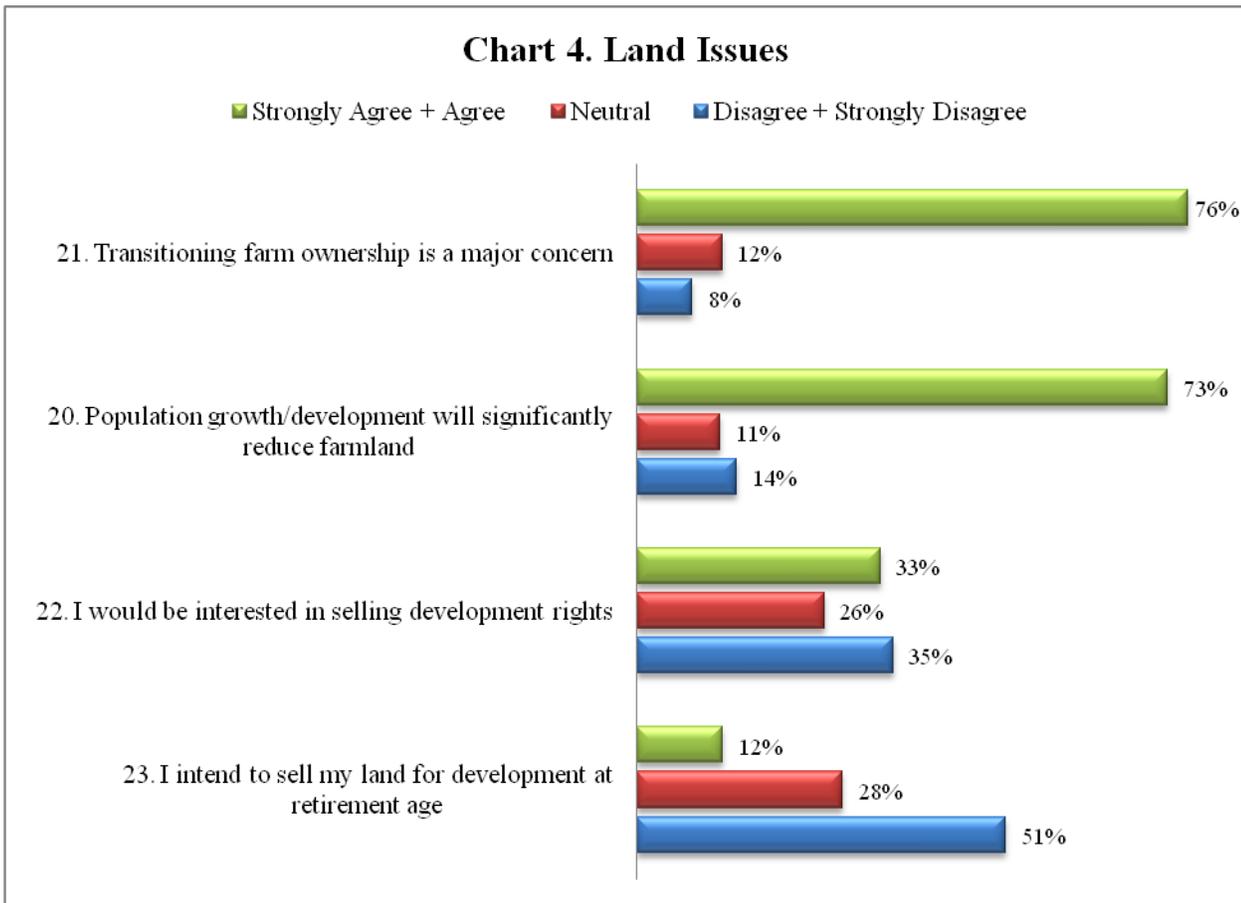
A larger majority of dairy operators and respondents who grow row crops, compared to other types of farmers, agreed that the County road network will be adequate for agricultural needs for the next 20 years.

Land Issues

Farm succession emerged as a significant issue. Chart 4 indicates that more than three-fourths of respondents agreed that the farm succession to the next generation is a major concern.

A substantial majority of respondents also agreed that population growth in St. Croix County will limit available farmland in the next 20 years (73%).

When they retire, half of respondents said they do not intend to sell their farmland for development, while 28 percent had a neutral opinion about their future intent. Only 12 percent planned to sell their land for development at retirement. St. Croix farmland owners also expressed split opinions about their interest in selling the development rights of their land. About equal percentages said they are not interested (35%) as said they were interested in this option (33%). More than a quarter of respondents expressed a neutral opinion.



Demographic Comparisons. Women were more likely to agree that population growth will limit available farmland in the County and to have no opinion about selling the development rights of their land or selling their land for development at retirement. Respondents who are in the workforce were more likely to have a neutral opinion regarding their intent to sell their land for development at retirement age. A greater proportion of long-term residents (greater than 20 years) said they are interested in selling the development rights on their farmland.

A smaller majority of respondents whose land is enrolled in conservation programs agreed that population growth and development in the County will reduce available farmland in the next 20 years. Those with land in conservation programs also said they are more likely to sell their land for development at retirement age.

Policy Options: Agricultural Goals for St. Croix County

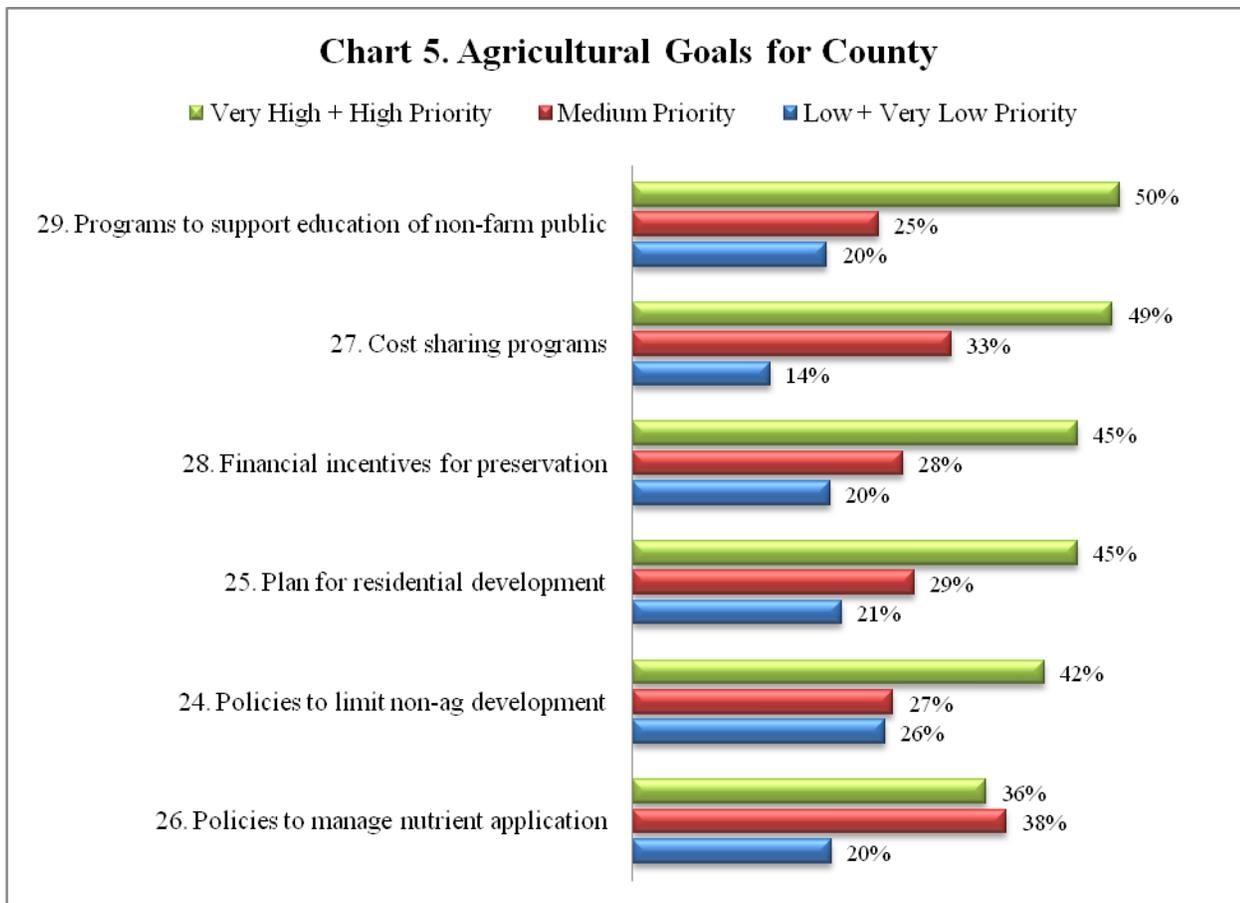
The next section of the questionnaire asked respondents to rate the relative importance of policy options on a scale of “very high” to “very low,” plus “no opinion.” The results are shown in Charts 5, 6, and 7. The top bar in each chart shows the sum of the percentages of “very high” plus “high” priority responses. The middle bar is the percentage of the “medium” priority responses. The combined percentages of the “low” plus “very low” priority responses are shown in the bottom bar. The “no opinion” responses are not shown but are included in the percentages on the charts.

As shown in Chart 5, half the respondents rated programs to educate the non-farm public about agricultural practices as a very high or high priority. One in four respondents said agricultural education programs are of medium importance, and 20 percent said they are low or very low in priority.

Half the respondents also rated the priority of cost share programs for soil conservation as high or very high. Cost share programs received a higher percentage of responses in the medium category than agricultural education programs and received the lowest percentage of low priority or very low priority ratings among the six items in this group (14%).

Between 42 percent and 45 percent of respondents rated financial incentive for farmland preservation, developing a plan for residential development in specific areas, and developing policies to limit non-agricultural development in agricultural areas as high or very high priorities.

Policies to manage nutrient application on farmland were rated lower in priority than other policy options in this group. Statistically equal percentages said this is a medium priority (38%) or a high/very high priority (36%).



The relatively high proportion of respondents who rated the goals in Chart 5 as medium priorities may indicate a need for additional research to find out why between about one-quarter and one-third of respondents fall into this category. Are there aspects of these goals about which they need additional details in order to form a clearer opinion about how high a priority they are or are there alternative goals that they feel might be more important?

Demographic Comparisons. A greater proportion of women had no opinion about policies to limit non-agricultural development in agricultural areas and about cost sharing programs for soil conservation practices.

Respondents who are currently in the workforce and those who reside in Quadrant A (Northwest) were more likely to say that planning for residential development in specific areas is a high priority.

Respondents who earn more than half their total household income from farming were more likely to say that programs to educate the non-farm public about farming are a high priority.

A majority of fruit and vegetable growers said financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation is a high priority.

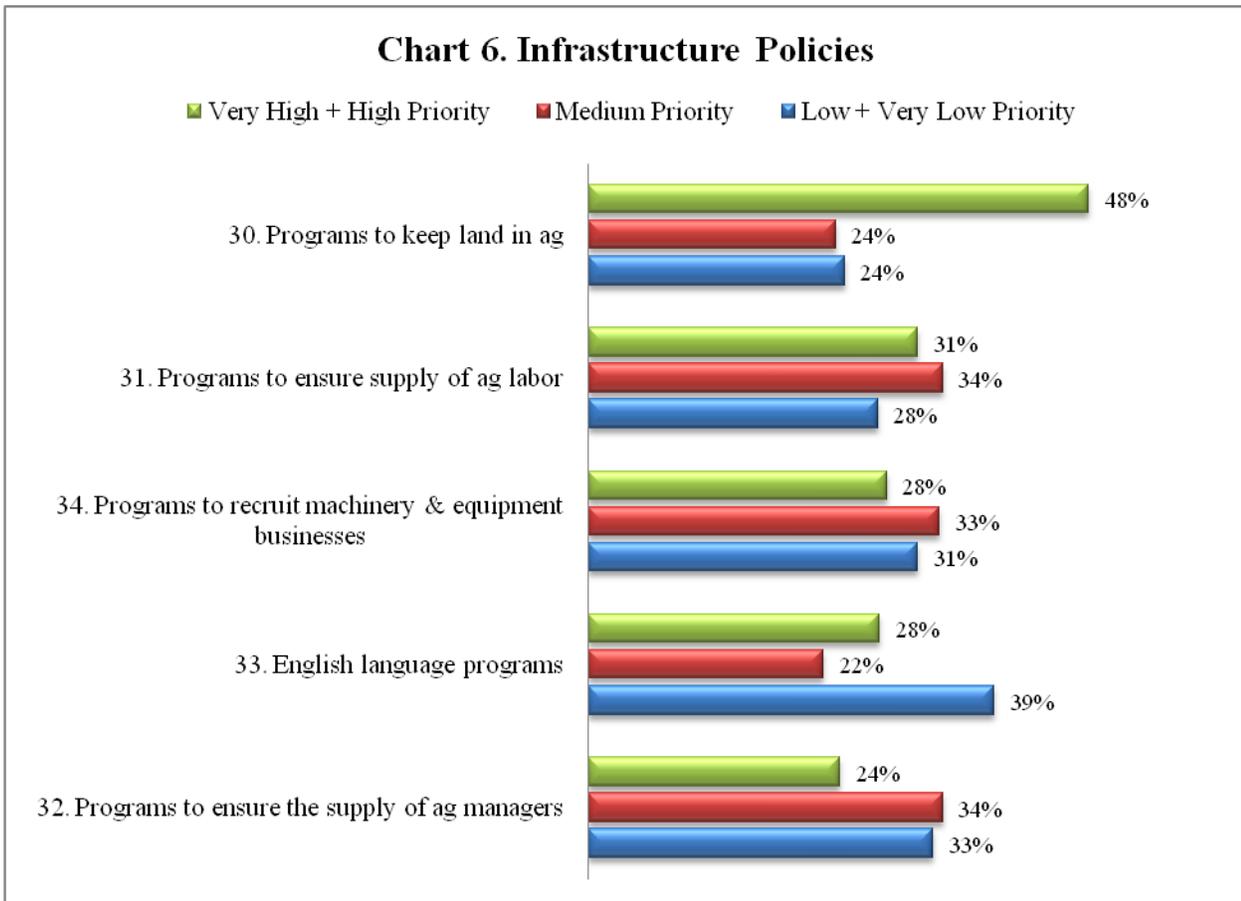
Dairy operators and respondents with horse operations were more likely to believe that programs to support education of the non-farm public about agricultural practices are a high priority.

Policy Options: Infrastructure Issues

As described earlier, a large majority (73%) of respondents said that population growth in St. Croix County would limit available farmland over the next 20 years (see Chart 4). However, when asked to rate the priority of programs and regulations to keep land in agriculture, respondents were cautious in their ratings. Chart 6 indicates half of respondents, representing a plurality, rated such programs and regulations as a very high or high priority. At the same time, the other half of respondents did not necessarily believe farmland preservation programs and regulations are low or very low priority. A quarter of respondents chose the “medium” priority category, leaving only 24 percent of respondents who believe such programs and regulations are a low or very low priority.

A similar pattern was seen on the responses to Q24, Q25, and Q28 in the previous section (see Chart 5). Fewer than half of respondents, representing a plurality of 42 percent to 45 percent, placed a high or very high priority on policies to limit non-agricultural development in agricultural areas, developing plans for residential development in specific areas, and financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation. Again, respondents were not necessarily opposed, with 27 percent to 29 percent saying these three items are a medium priority.

As suggested above, the percentage of respondents who chose the medium priority rating may indicate a need for additional information about specifics of the programs and regulations or consideration of other, higher priority policies to address the concern about continued availability of farmland. This may represent an opportunity for policy-makers to educate as well as listen to these stakeholders.



Relatively few respondents gave high or very high priority ratings for programs to ensure a supply of labor qualified to run large equipment (31%), to recruit machinery and equipment suppliers (28%), to develop English language programs for agricultural workers (28%), and programs to ensure a supply of agricultural managers (24%).

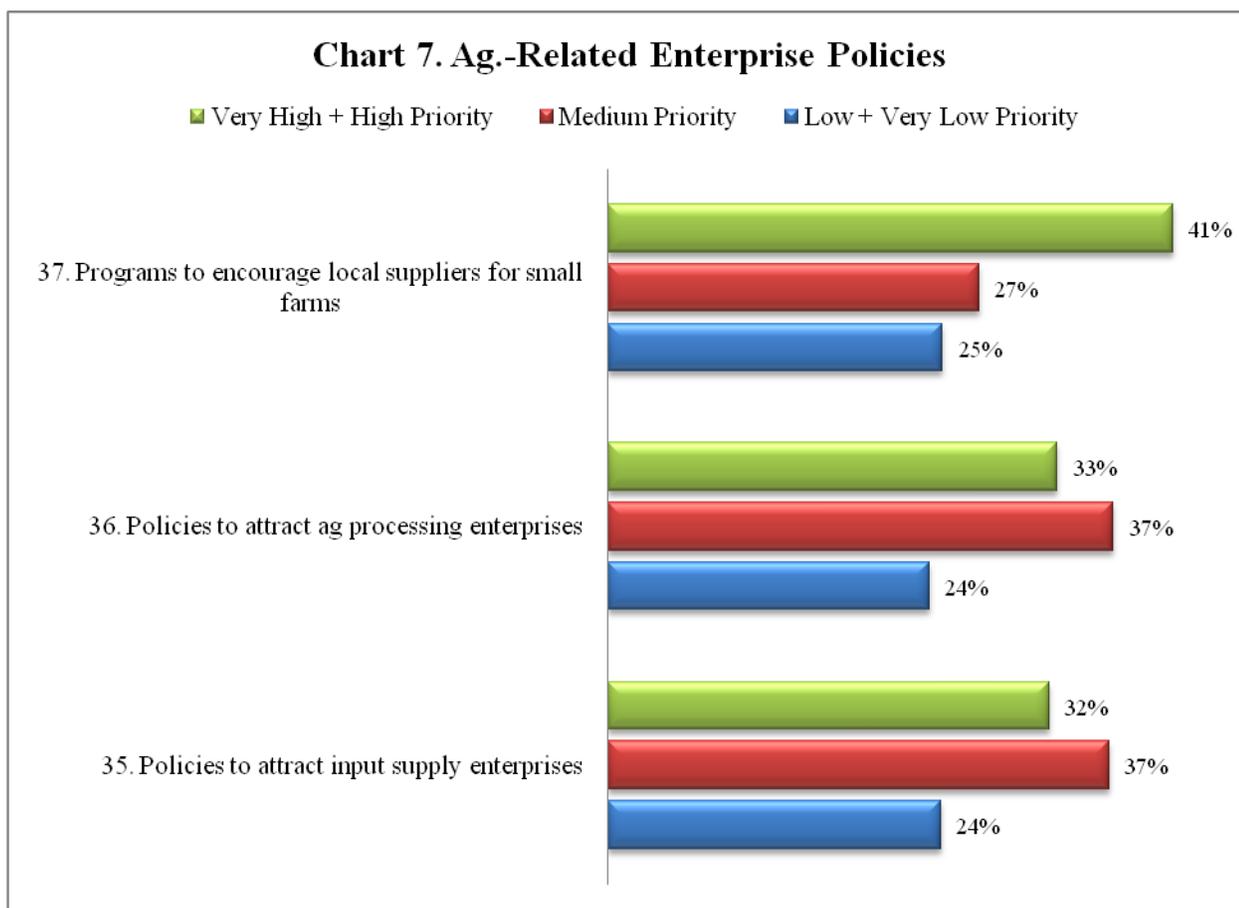
The relatively modest support for programs to recruit machinery and equipment businesses contrasts with the responses to Q17 (Chart 3), in which six in ten said the County needs more of these types of businesses.

Demographic Comparisons. Programs to keep land in agriculture were given a higher priority by women. Women were more likely to have no opinion about programs to recruit machinery and equipment businesses.

Policy Options: Ag –Related Enterprise Issues

As shown in Chart 7, fewer than half of respondents (40%) said that programs to encourage local suppliers for small farms are a high or very high priority.

Although the responses to earlier questions (Chart 3 - Q17 and Q18) indicated that a majority of respondents agree there is a need for more local machinery repair and parts businesses and more agricultural processing facilities in the County, respondents gave lukewarm priority ratings when asked about developing programs to encourage or attract these types of agricultural-related businesses to the County. The largest percentage of respondents (37%) gave a medium priority rating to developing policies to attract processing businesses and input suppliers. A third of respondents said that policies to attract agricultural processors and input supply businesses are a high or very high priority.



Demographic Comparisons. Women were more likely to have no opinion about policies to attract input suppliers and agricultural processors.

Respondents under age 45 gave a higher priority to programs that would encourage local suppliers for small farmers.

Respondents with dependent children in their households and younger respondents (under age 45) were more likely to say that policies to attract agricultural processors is a high priority.

Additional Comments

About one in five of the respondents to this survey completed an open-ended question that asked if the respondent had any additional comments with respect to farmland issues in St. Croix County. The SRC placed those comments into 10 categories plus a miscellaneous group. Some responses addressed more than one topic and were split among the appropriate classes.

The largest number of comments (25%) were concerns about the role of government programs and regulations on agriculture.

Examples of these types of comments include:

“Keep the government out of the farmer’s lives.”

“The best thing that government can do to promote success in farming and agribusiness is to deregulate and allow farmers and business to operate more freely and to keep more of what they earn.”

The second largest number of comments (15%) contained suggestions for additional regulations to address specific concerns. Examples from this topic include:

“Need to regulate irrigation. Do not irrigate when you have had enough rain! Do not irrigate on sunny, windy days! We need to share the water table, not one person taking all the water.”

“People should be prohibited to build homes in the middle of a 40 or 80-acre parcel ruining the whole tract. They should be required to build in a corner of a field near the road.”

Comments supporting small, family farms made up 10 percent of the comments. The remaining comments were split among seven smaller categories and the miscellaneous group.

The complete list of responses is included in Appendix B.

Topic	Count	%
Too much government/regulations	18	25%
More regulations/enforcement needed	11	15%
Farm size and family farms	7	10%
Farm labor	5	7%
Resources and energy	4	6%
Taxation	4	6%
Entry to farming	3	4%
Farm prices and income	3	4%
Rural residential lot size	3	4%
Focus on agriculture	2	3%
Miscellaneous	12	17%
Total	72	101%

Conclusions

Respondents identified concerns and threats to agriculture in St. Croix County on the horizon but are not sure about the policy options about which they were asked in this survey.

The following examples illustrate this pattern of responses:

- Nearly three-fourths of respondents agree that population growth and development in the County will significantly reduce farmland, and 62 percent agree that fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult in St. Croix County. At the same time, only about half of respondents said that programs to keep land in agriculture are a high priority and fewer than half gave a high priority rating to financial incentives for farmland preservation, planning for residential development in specific areas, and policies to limit non-agricultural development in agricultural areas. Between 24 and 29 percent gave these farmland preservation policies a medium priority rating, suggesting a need for more specifics, alternative policies, and/or the need for additional research and outreach efforts.
- More than 70 percent of respondents said mergers among input suppliers have hurt competition and have raised the prices paid by farmers, 60 percent said that mergers among processors have hurt competition and reduced prices paid to farmers, and 52 percent agree that the County needs more agricultural processing facilities. Yet only a third of respondents said that programs to attract input supply businesses and processing businesses are a high priority.

Appendix A – Non-Response Bias Test

Any survey has to be concerned with “non-response bias.” Non-response bias refers to a situation in which people who do not return a questionnaire have opinions that are systematically different from the opinions of those who return their surveys. For example, suppose most non-respondents do not agree that groundwater quality in the County is good (Question 6), whereas most of those who returned their questionnaire believe groundwater quality is good. In this case, non-response bias would exist, and the raw results would overstate the opinion of the population of individuals on the mailing list regarding the quality of groundwater St. Croix County.

The standard way to test for non-response bias is to compare the responses of those who return the first mailing of a questionnaire to those who return the second mailing. Those who return the second questionnaire are, in effect, a sample of non-respondents (to the first mailing), and we assume that they are representative of that group. In this survey, 236 people responded to the first mailing, and 112 responded to the second mailing.

We found five variables with statistically significant differences between the mean responses of these two groups of respondents (Table A1) out of 37 tested. Table A1 indicates that even when statistical differences exist, the magnitude of this difference is very small. **The Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.**

Table A1 – Statistically Significant Differences Between Responses of First and Second Mailings			
Variable	Statistical Significance	Mean First Mailing	Mean Second Mailing
4. Fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult in St. Croix County	.009	2.45	2.81
13. The income and benefits from an off-farm job are necessary to maintain my farm operation	.023	2.38	2.74
14. The road network in St. Croix County is adequate for agricultural needs for the next 20 years	.003	2.48	2.86
16. I have adequate access to financial services	.026	2.39	2.67
22. I would be interested in selling the development rights on my farm land	.003	3.09	3.59

Appendix B –St. Croix County Farmland Preservation Planning Survey Comments

Question 38. Please add any comments that you would like about farmland issues in St. Croix County.

Reduce Government/Regulations (18 comments)

- According to the proposed payments for putting land into the program and the penalties for taking land out are too one-sided. If you think you might sell a lot or two in the future, it does not pay to go into the program.
- Do not restrict sale of farmland to highest bidder i.e. development. The farm is the "retirement" plan for many farmers; allow them to receive as much as possible. Plenty of farmland east, north, and south of St. Croix County.
- Face the facts; St. Croix County is a future growth community of the Twin Cities. The long-term future of agriculture in St. Croix Co is low, especially western Co. Do not try to overprotect that part for Ag use.
- Farms do best if they can operate free and independent with a fair price for their products.
- Get government out of agriculture! All programs have long strings attached, are not fair to big and small operations, poor control, excessive regulation, cost too much to taxpayers, give jobs to more government employees, than the number of farms in the county to make rules/laws controlling private property. Just stop!
- I feel everybody has the right to do what they want with their land as long as it does not affect the people around them such as smell and contamination.
- Keep government out.
- Keep the government out of the farmer's lives.
- Less government.
- Limit DNR oversight on water rights and water shorelines.
- Most of the things asked about in this survey are already in place, to add any more just means more government, which means higher taxes. I have farmed at a loss for the last three years, the first thing that has to happen is farmers have to make money, the rest will take care of itself.
- St. Croix Co. does not need a comprehensive planner in place for development in 2010. A complete waste of taxpayer's money! We already have local township boards that are in place.
- The best thing that government can do to promote success in farming and agribusiness is to deregulate and allow farmers and business to operate more freely and to keep more of what they earn. High taxes, excessive regulations and environmental controls are killing small agribusiness and farms.
- The farmers own the land. We do not need government policies as to what they want to do related to the sale of the land.
- The farmland preservation plan has outlived its purpose. St. Croix County is one of the fastest growing in the state. Retiring farmers need to sell land for retirement. If farmers received, better prices for their products more would be interested in that vocation.
- Throw out the zoning committee. It cost me \$1200+ to give my son 5 acres of land.
- We need less government, not more. This is America, not Russia.
- Working lands sounded good until the DNR got into the act and pushed a nutrient management plan on us. We receive funding in one hand then two other organizations have their hands in our pockets.

More Regulations/Enforcement Needed (11 comments)

- Follow up on soil samples on land in manure management.
- Implement a Countywide prohibition in the growing of corn immediately.
- Loose township zoning ordinances in some townships like Richmond and Hammond have allowed subdivisions of housing that serve no purpose for either county planning or Township long-term plans. Growth needs to come from the Cities to decrease sewage and private well exploitation.
- Need national and local programs to keep people and wildlife on the land not big Ag pesticide, herbicides, and carcinogens.
- Need policies to control irrigation systems. Regulations of when they can use.
- Need to regulate irrigation. Do not irrigate when you have had enough rain! Do not irrigate on sunny, windy days! We need to share the water table, not one person taking all the water.
- Outlaw the growing of corn in St. Croix County. Limit dairy farms to no more than 30 cows per farm. Require that all manure produced on a particular farm be retained on the farm and not distributed elsewhere. Outlaw feedlots.
- People should be prohibited to build homes in the middle of a 40 or 80-acre parcel ruining the whole tract. They should be required to build in a corner of a field near the road.
- Some areas are more suited for development - poor soil topography, etc. The best Ag land should be preserved in most cases.
- There are far less small dairies than 20 years ago. Therefore, there is hardly any winter spreading of manure. The large dairies are the ones ruining it for the rest of us. They need the tighter regulations.
- We should control the stockpiling of manure for further spreading. We should not have to put up with smell only when spread.

Farm Size and Family Farms (7 comments)

- Because of the "factory" dairy farms-, which have pushed out our small family farms, we have sold our dairy heard. This all personally disgusts us.
- I do not like big dairy operations.
- Keep family farms a priority! Cut back on 200+ cow dairies that have to over apply manure on the same fields. Small farms were the backbone of farming! Getting bigger is not better! It takes away from employment and hometown business.
- Keep small family farms in the country.
- Small farms are not able to compete with the large corporation farms when dealing with disaster crop and animal loss. "FSA" most cannot afford insurance to cover such losses and often times cannot recover.
- Too many large farms are taking over St. Croix Co! There are no "real family farms" left.
- What happened to support the family farm?

Farm Labor (5 comments)

- Crack down on the legal fiction that is all the illegal Mexicans employed in our country with false documentation and the "wink and a nudge" acceptance by the factory farms.

- Get rid of all the cheap labor (mainly Hispanics) and milk prices will go way up. Family farms will come back. We lost \$30,000 last year. We lived on borrowed money.
- I believe it is not our responsibility to train workers for farming. I also think that the agriculture minimum wage should be the same as non-ag. Large farms are businesses and they should be treated as such.
- Strictly and ruthlessly, enforce immigration laws on St. Croix County farms.
- Workers should be required to speak English when hired to enable them to understand customs as well as safety issues involved with cattle and machinery. Otherwise, programs should be at "those" farmers cost, not everyone in the community.

Resources and Energy (4 comments)

- Do not let wind farms in St. Croix County!
- Ground water availability for wells is becoming a greater concern with the ever-increasing number of agricultural irrigation systems being installed around the county.
- I have farmed my whole life. The rain in summer and fall of 2010 has moisture levels good. No idea on quality of groundwater. If they turn all irrigation, wells on it will be gone soon. Limit them, the coops had to go together to stay in business.
- The wind turbine proposals should be looked at and an across the board ruling made. In my opinion, keep them out of St. Croix County!

Taxation (4 comments)

- Quit giving farmers tax breaks and special exceptions to most laws. Federal Farm Programs heavily subsidize them and that results in distortions of land uses etc. in the county. For instance planning and zoning wastes too much resources protecting their land wealth, most land owners/farmers have enormous wealth compared to non-farming landowners.
- Use value tax is imperative to farmers. Farm supplies will come/remain as people buy from them!
- We need to keep taxes on farmland and forestland under control.
- I think that government is looking only at the way in which they can get more tax dollars per acre. They are not concerned about how they get it.

Entry to Farming (3 comments)

- Concerns about the aging of our farm population and few young new farmers joining the Ag farming community!
- Damn hard for a young family to get land to start farming.
- Getting into farming for younger generations should be of concern-it is very difficult to generate the capital needed to get into farming or buy a farm or land, many times it seems as though some are in too far to fail, that is a bad situation-big can fall just like the small guy.

Farm Prices/Income (3 comments)

- Farmers need all the help they can get. Prices farmers receive do not keep up with expenses. The squeeze keeps getting tighter. We need to help keep small farmers before it is too late.

- Government policy has to change about prices farmers receive. With costs to prices received who is stupid enough to want to farm.
- The farmer is always the first one to take cut in income when business goes sour. The middleman always comes out ahead. It sad to say but the farmer has to somehow organize with other farmers to get his fair share. I am for this but what else is there to do? Farmer works all his life and what does he have? His land. So he has to sell to pay bills.

Rural Residential Lot Size (3 comments)

- Do not let any more 40-acre parcels for houses. They do not make very good crops.
- The 40-acre minimum is ridiculous.
- Large parcels (20 acres or more) for homes are ridiculous and usually takes that land from some production anyway.

Focus on Agriculture (2 comments)

- Keep farming in St. Croix County.
- More attention should be focused on agriculture in general in St. Croix County. Hudson board members should be limited on this project. The East side has no say on power.

Miscellaneous (12 comments)

- I am concerned about developments next to farms that raise livestock. The development comes and soon the residents complain because farms smell. Eventually the farm is forced to quit.
- I am not sure about many of these questions, in part because my farming operation has changed and become smaller to make room for my wife's occupation. (Over the past 5 years)
- I only own 4 acres. Two my kids live on, the other two are unlivable.
- I own and maintain a 30-acre improved woodland in Warren. It is enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) with the Wisconsin DNR and is already in the West Wisconsin Land Trust. However, I could use help with water and manure runoff from adjoining properties.
- I rent all my land.
- In 20 years, St. Croix County will be primarily residential. The west half of the county, where I live, is more valuable to residential than to agriculture.
- My farm was purchased in 1912 - We want it to remain in conservation practices and not farmed because it is small - woodlands, forestry - a necessity with all the building going on in this area
- Programs to educate the public about agriculture are an absolute must, as less percent of the population understands where and how their food supply is produced.
- Progress is going to happen.
- The longer it takes to get farmland in this program, the more costly it will be!
- Trying to get machinery on the road on weekdays and especially weekends is a major job. The big farmers will continue to buy up all land. I see the big farmers fighting for turkey manure so must be a place for it.
- We have been here for 33 years. Sustainable Ag units have been declining since our arrival, and I see no improvements in the future.

Question 39. Which of the following activities/enterprises do you have on your farm/business? (check all that apply)

“Other” (48 comments)

- Hay (14x)
- Agribusiness (4x)
- Alfalfa (3x)
- Oats (3x)
- Pasture (3x)
- Corn (2x)
- Cattle Hauler
- Chickens
- Contour crops and waterways
- Dairy equipment dealer
- Dairy replacement cows
- Direct sales at farmers market
- Farm supply, feed, and seed
- Gardens
- Grazing
- Minimum tillage waterways
- None
- Not farming anymore
- Rent out land and buildings
- Rented Cropland
- Rented out
- Retired
- Seed production
- Upland bird hunting, sporting dog training
- We are a veterinarian office

Question 43. Employment status.

“Other” (4 comments)

- Attending college
- Farm
- Retired but raises beef
- Widowed

Appendix C - Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question

St Croix County Farmland Preservation Survey – 2010

****Please return by October 1, 2010****

Using blue or black ink, please fill the circle that most closely matches your response on the following questions.

Like this: ● Not like this: (✓) (X) (/)

IN THIS SECTION WE WANT YOUR OPINION ABOUT A RANGE OF FARMLAND ISSUES

KEY AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

What is your opinion about the following agricultural resource issues/concerns?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1. I could currently find productive/quality farmland to rent or buy in St. Croix County	7%	35%	20%	23%	7%	9%
2. Productive farmland will generally NOT be available in 20 years in St. Croix County	11%	29%	18%	32%	6%	4%
3. Finding suitable land on which to spread manure is difficult	4%	22%	23%	35%	8%	9%
4. Fragmented land and smaller parcels are making farming more difficult in St. Croix County	13%	49%	15%	16%	4%	3%
5. Groundwater supply and availability in St. Croix County are generally adequate	10%	69%	10%	6%	2%	4%
6. Quality of <u>groundwater</u> in St. Croix County is good	12%	68%	10%	5%	1%	4%
7. Quality of <u>surface water</u> in St. Croix County is good	7%	60%	19%	9%	1%	4%

IMPACT OF AGRICULTURAL TRENDS

What is your opinion about the future agriculture issues/concerns in St. Croix County?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
8. Mergers among input suppliers (feed, seed, chemical, etc), have seriously reduced competition (raised prices paid)	28%	45%	12%	9%	2%	4%
9. Mergers among processors/buyers have seriously reduced competition (lowered prices received)	21%	39%	20%	13%	3%	5%
10. Government environmental regulations to protect air, soil and water resources are reasonable	1%	39%	28%	23%	6%	2%
11. Direct marketing to consumers will become more important to my farm/ag business over the next 20 years	9%	34%	28%	20%	3%	6%
12. Global agricultural markets benefit my farming operation/ag business	8%	45%	21%	15%	4%	6%
13. The income and benefits from an off-farm job are necessary to maintain my farm operation	24%	40%	13%	13%	5%	5%

AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

What is your opinion about the following infrastructure issues/concerns?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
14. The road network in St. Croix County is adequate for agricultural needs for the next 20 years	6%	58%	13%	16%	2%	4%
15. In the future there is likely to be a shortage of grain storage facilities in St. Croix County	5%	30%	30%	23%	3%	9%
16. I have adequate access to financial services	6%	63%	18%	6%	3%	4%
17. St. Croix Co. needs more local machinery repair, supply and parts businesses	12%	47%	24%	12%	1%	4%
18. St. Croix County needs more agricultural processing facilities	9%	43%	33%	7%	1%	7%
19. St. Croix County needs to increase availability of direct farm marketing locations/facilities	9%	44%	33%	8%	0%	6%

LAND ISSUES

What is your opinion about the following land issues/concerns	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
20. Population growth and related development will significantly reduce farmland in St. Croix County over the next 20 years	26%	47%	11%	13%	1%	2%
21. Transitioning farm ownership to the next generation is a major concern	32%	44%	12%	6%	1%	5%
22. I would be interested in selling the development rights on my farm land (would prohibit future non-agricultural development on your land)	10%	23%	26%	20%	16%	6%
23. When I reach retirement age I intend to sell my land for non-agriculture development	2%	10%	28%	30%	21%	9%

IN THIS SECTION WE WANT YOUR OPINION ABOUT THE PRIORITY OF FARMLAND POLICY OPTIONS

AGRICULTURAL GOALS FOR ST. CROIX COUNTY

In terms of a priority for St. Croix County, how would you rate the following policies/programs:	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	No Opinion
24. Policies to limit non-ag development in ag areas	18%	24%	27%	16%	9%	6%
25. Plan for residential development in specific areas	15%	31%	29%	11%	10%	4%
26. Policies to manage nutrient applications on ag land	9%	27%	38%	14%	6%	5%
27. Cost sharing programs for soil conservation practices	14%	35%	33%	8%	6%	4%
28. Financial incentives for permanent farmland preservation	17%	28%	28%	12%	8%	7%
29. Programs to support education of non-farm public about agricultural practices	22%	28%	25%	12%	8%	5%

INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

In terms of a priority for St. Croix County, how would you rate the following policies/programs:	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	No Opinion
30. Programs/Regulations to keep land in agriculture over the next 20 years	18%	30%	24%	13%	11%	4%
31. Programs to ensure supply of qualified agricultural labor over next 20 years (e.g. ability to run large equipment),	7%	24%	34%	18%	9%	7%
32. Programs to ensure supply of agricultural managers over next 20 years	7%	17%	34%	22%	10%	9%
33. English language programs for agricultural workers over the next 20 years	9%	18%	22%	21%	17%	11%
34. Programs to recruit equipment & machinery supply businesses	9%	20%	33%	21%	10%	7%

AG-RELATED ENTERPRISE ISSUES

In terms of a priority for St. Croix County, how would you rate the following:	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	No Opinion
35. Policies to attract/expand ag input supply enterprises (feed, seed, chemical, etc)	6%	26%	37%	17%	8%	6%
36. Policies to attract/expand ag processing enterprises	7%	26%	37%	16%	7%	6%
37. Programs to encourage local suppliers for small farms	14%	27%	27%	16%	9%	7%

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

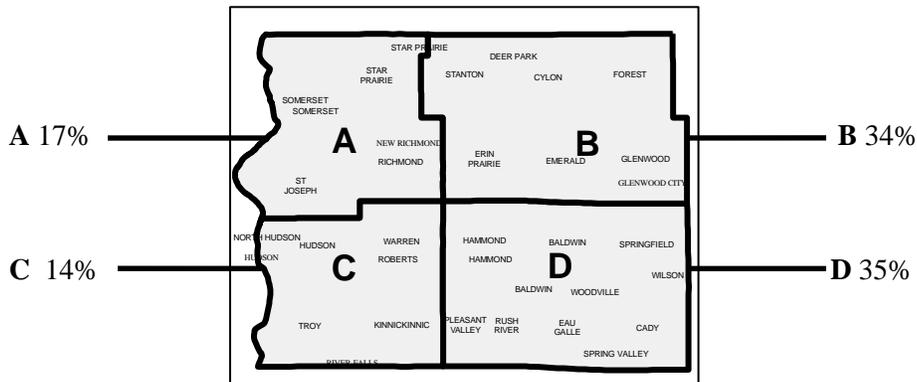
38. Please add any comments that you would like about farmland issues in St. Croix County.

See Appendix B

39. Which of the following activities/enterprises do you have on your farm/business? (check all that apply)

Dairy	43%	Row Crop	65%	Forestry	11%
Beef	47%	Tree Farm	5%	Other Crop	8%
Horses	14%	Nursery	5%	Conservation Programs	13%
Other Livestock	17%	Fruit/Vegetable	11%	Other _____	11%

40. Please use the following map to fill in the bubble matching the quadrant (A, B, C or D) of St. Croix County in which a majority of your farm/business is located.



DEMOGRAPHICS

41. Gender	Male	Female	42. Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
	89%	11%		0%	2%	8%	26%	29%	35%
43. Employment Status	Employed full-time	Self – employed	Employed part-time	Unemployed	Retired	Other: _____			
	27%	44%	5%	1%	22%	1%			
44. Highest level of Education	Less than high school	High school diploma	Some college/tech	Tech college graduate	Bachelor’s degree	Grad or professional deg			
	5%	30%	26%	13%	18%	7%			
45. How many years have you lived in St. Croix County?	0 to 5 years		5.1 – 10 years		11 to 20 years		Over 20 years		
	3%		2%		6%		89%		

If you manage an agribusiness, stop here. If you farm, please continue.

46. Number of children (under 18) in household	0	1	2	3	4	5+
	82%	7%	5%	4%	1%	2%
47. Residential Status	Own	Rent				
	98%	2%				
48. What was your annual household income last year?	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 or more
	7%	14%	28%	25%	14%	12%
49. What percentage of last year’s annual household income came from farming?	0 or less%	1% – 25%	26% - 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%	
	10%	37%	15%	14%	24%	