



# 2011 Summary Report

## Introduction

The Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll is an annual survey that collects and disseminates information on issues of importance to rural communities across Iowa and the Midwest. Conducted every year since its establishment in 1982, the Farm Poll is the longest-running survey of its kind in the nation. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and the Iowa Agricultural Statistics Service are all partners in the Farm Poll effort. The information gathered through the Farm Poll informs the development and improvement of research and extension programs and is used by local, state, and national leaders in their decision-making processes. We thank the many farm families who responded to this year's survey and appreciate their continued participation in the Farm Poll.

## Who Participates?

The Farm Poll questionnaires were mailed in January and February 2011 to a statewide panel of 2,030 farm operators. Usable surveys were received from 1,276 farmers, resulting

in a response rate of 63 percent. On average, Farm Poll participants were 65 years old. Most Farm Poll participants draw a significant proportion of their overall household income from farming. Fifty-one percent of participants reported that farm income made up more than half of their 2010 household income, and an additional 19 percent earned between 26 and 50 percent of their household income from the farm operation.

The 2011 Farm Poll survey focused on a range of issues that are important not only to agriculture but to all Iowans. Several questions focused on climate change and what, if anything, should be done about it. Conservation of Iowa's soil and water is critically important to the long-term health of Iowa's economy and environment, and a number of questions examined conservation issues. Other topics included in the survey were use of the Internet and budget priorities.

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# Highlights from the 2011 Farm Poll

## Climate Change

In the past several years, extreme weather events in Iowa and across the region have led to discussions about climate change and its potential impacts on agriculture. The Farm Poll posed three sets of questions on climate change. The first question set measured beliefs about whether climate change is occurring, and if so, what is causing it. The second set of questions examined beliefs and concerns about the potential impacts of climate change and opinions regarding what key public and private sector actors should do in response. The third question set asked farmers to rate their level of trust or distrust toward specific agencies, organizations, or groups as sources of information on climate change.

### Beliefs about climate change

Farmers were asked to select one of five statements that best reflected their beliefs about climate change and its potential causes. Overall, 68 percent of farmers indicated that they believe climate change is occurring (table 1). Of those, 35 percent believed that climate change is caused by both natural variations in the environment and human activities. About a quarter of farmers attributed climate change to natural changes in the environment, and ten percent believed that it is caused mostly by human activities.

A number of farmers expressed uncertainty or skepticism about climate change. Twenty-eight percent indicated that there is insufficient evidence to determine with certainty whether climate change is occurring or not. Five percent did not believe that climate change is occurring.

### Concerns about climate change

A second set of questions focused on beliefs and concerns about the potential impacts of climate change on Iowa agriculture. Forty-six percent of farmers agreed that extreme weather events will happen more frequently in the future (table 2). Forty-three percent were concerned about potential impacts of climate change on Iowa’s agriculture in general, and 35 percent indicated that they were concerned about impacts on their own farm operation.

Forty-six percent of farmers agreed that crop insurance and other programs would protect their farm operations regardless of whether climate change is happening or not (table 2). Thirty-three percent of farmers agreed with the statement, “Climate change is not a big issue because human ingenuity will enable us to adapt to changes,” and 30 percent disagreed. Twenty-three percent agreed that “climate change will have positive impacts on Iowa agriculture,” while 20 percent disagreed. However, uncertainty was high on these items, ranging from 34 percent for the crop insurance item to a majority—56 percent—uncertain about climate change’s potential to result in positive impacts for Iowa agriculture.

**Table 1. Beliefs about climate change**

	<b>Percent</b>
Climate change is occurring, and it is caused equally by natural changes in the environment and human activities .....	35
There is not sufficient evidence to know with certainty whether climate change is occurring or not .....	28
Climate change is occurring, and it is caused mostly by natural changes in the environment.....	23
Climate change is occurring, and it is caused mostly by human activities .....	10
Climate change is not occurring.....	5

## Potential responses to climate change

Several survey items focused on what public and private entities should do in response to the threat of climate change. In general, farmers indicated support for adaptive action, though individual and private sector action appears to be favored over public sector response. Sixty-two percent of farmers agreed or strongly agreed that seed companies should develop crop varieties adapted to changes in weather

patterns (table 3). Substantial numbers also agreed that farmers should take steps to protect their land from increases in precipitation (61 percent) and increase investment in agricultural drainage systems (46 percent).

On the other hand, farmers were largely uncertain or somewhat split on whether public entities should take steps to address climate change. In response to the statement, “Government should do more to reduce the nation’s

**Table 2. Concerns about climate change and agriculture**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
— Percentage —					
I believe that extreme weather events will happen more frequently in the future .....	6	14	35	37	9
Whether climate change is occurring or not, I believe that crop insurance and other programs will protect my farm operation’s revenue.....	5	16	34	40	6
I am concerned about the potential impacts of climate change on Iowa’s agriculture.....	10	16	31	35	8
I am concerned about the potential impacts of climate change on my farm operation.....	9	21	36	30	5
Climate change is not a big issue because human ingenuity will enable us to adapt to changes.....	9	21	37	28	5
Climate change will likely have positive impacts on Iowa agriculture.....	5	15	56	21	3

**Table 3. Opinions regarding potential responses to climate change**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
— Percentage —					
Seed companies should be developing crop varieties adapted to coming changes in weather patterns.	3	7	27	56	7
Iowa farmers should take additional steps to protect their land from increased precipitation .....	4	11	24	52	10
Iowa farmers should increase investment in agricultural drainage systems (tile, ditches) to prepare for increased precipitation.....	5	14	36	39	7
Government should do more to reduce the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions and other potential causes of climate change .....	14	22	31	25	8
Iowa State University Extension should do more to help farmers and landlords to prepare for increased precipitation .....	6	18	43	29	4
State agencies should do more to help farmers and landlords to prepare for increased precipitation .....	7	24	39	26	4

greenhouse gas emissions and other potential causes of climate change,” 33 percent agreed, 31 percent expressed uncertainty, and 36 percent disagreed (table 3). Thirty-three percent of farmers agreed that Iowa State University Extension should do more to help farmers and landlords prepare for increased precipitation. However, 43 percent were uncertain and 24 percent disagreed. Thirty percent agreed that state agencies should do more to help farmers and landlords prepare for increased precipitation, while 39 percent were uncertain, and 31 percent disagreed.

### Trust in sources of climate information

A third set of questions focused on who farmers trust as sources of information about climate change. Following an introductory question—“Thinking about the following agencies, organizations, and groups, how much do you trust or distrust them as sources of information about climate change and its potential impacts?”—farmers were provided with a list of agencies, organizations, and individuals and asked to rate them on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly distrust” to “strongly trust.”

Of the groups listed, only one was trusted by a majority of farmers: University Extension. At 54 percent, Extension was a more trusted source of climate change information than any other individual or entity (table 4). Two groups were trusted by a plurality of farmers: farm groups and scientists. About 40 percent of farmers indicated that they trusted farm groups and scientists as sources of information about climate change.

For all other groups and individuals, farmers were more likely to indicate that they were either neutral (neither trust nor distrust) or distrustful regarding climate change information. More farmers trust family and friends (39 percent), the farm press (34 percent), and television weather reporters (34 percent) as information sources than distrust them (table 4). However, higher percentages—52, 43, and 44 percent, respectively—indicated that they neither trust nor distrust these groups as sources of information about climate change.

For a number of groups, distrust outweighed trust or uncertainty. Federal and state agencies ranked low on the trust scale, with farmers

**Table 4. Trust/distrust of agencies, organizations and groups as sources of climate information**

	Strongly Distrust	Some-what Distrust	Neither Trust nor Distrust	Some-what Trust	Strongly Trust
	— Percentage —				
University Extension .....	3	8	35	47	7
Scientists .....	5	18	36	34	7
Farm groups.....	4	16	40	37	4
Family and friends.....	3	7	52	31	7
The farm press.....	5	18	43	32	2
Television weather reporters .....	6	16	44	32	2
Conservation organizations .....	11	23	34	30	3
State agencies.....	10	28	35	25	2
Agribusiness companies.....	7	22	46	23	1
Federal agencies.....	18	30	29	21	2
Environmental organizations.....	29	29	23	16	2
The mainstream news media .....	31	31	28	9	1
Radio talk show hosts .....	26	33	32	8	1

who expressed distrust in them as sources of climate information outnumbering those who indicated trust by close to two-to-one (table 4). Environmental organizations fared even worse: only 18 percent of farmers indicated that they trust such groups as a source of information about climate change, compared to 58 percent who expressed distrust. Finally, the two groups that were least trusted of all were the main-stream news media and radio talk show hosts: less than 10 percent of farmers trust these entities regarding climate change, while about 60 percent distrust them.

### Conservation

The Farm Poll routinely asks farmers about conservation issues. This year's conservation questions focused on (1) familiarity with and participation in state and federal conservation programs, (2) satisfaction with availability of conservation assistance, (3) frequency of farmers' visits to local USDA Service Centers for conservation assistance, and (4) investment in conservation over the previous 10 years.

### Familiarity with and participation in conservation programs

The State of Iowa and the federal government have numerous programs to help farmers and landowners establish conservation practices on their land. The Farm Poll posed questions to farmers to gain insight into their levels of familiarity with and participation in those conservation programs. Farmers were provided with a list of major programs and asked to indicate whether they (1) were currently participating in those programs, (2) were familiar with them but had not participated, (3) had participated in the past but were no longer participating, or (4) were not familiar with the program.

Of the federal conservation programs, 96 percent of farmers were familiar with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and 46 percent indicated that they were participating currently (table 5). The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, a program that targets high priority environmental concerns, was familiar to 80 percent of Farm Poll participants, and 20 percent reported that they were currently enrolled. The Conservation Reserve

**Table 5. Familiarity with state and federal conservation programs**

	Not at All Familiar	Familiar but have not participated	Participated in the past but not now	I currently participate
— Percentage —				
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) .....	4	39	11	46
Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (anytime sign-up for high-priority areas) .....	20	53	6	20
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).....	35	49	6	10
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Financial Incentives Cost-Share .....	30	45	17	9
Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) .....	36	47	9	8
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).....	22	67	3	8
Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) .....	31	61	4	5
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).....	39	54	3	4
Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP).....	37	55	5	3
Low-interest or no-interest loans for Agricultural Best Practices .....	42	52	4	2



Enhancement Program (CREP) was known to 61 percent of farmers, although just four percent reported current participation. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) was known to 78 percent of farmers, and eight percent were currently participating. The Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) was familiar to 69 percent of farmers, and five percent reported current participation in that program.

Both the state of Iowa and the federal government have programs that help farmers and landowners to undertake conservation on land that is actively farmed. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation's financial incentives cost share program is Iowa's major working lands program. Seventy percent of farmers reported familiarity with the program, and 26 percent had either participated in the past or were currently participating (table 5). The Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are the USDA's largest working lands conservation programs. About two-thirds of farmers were familiar with each program, and 8 and 10 percent of farmers, respectively, reported current participation.

The number of farmers who were unfamiliar with major programs is striking. While nearly all Farm Poll participants were familiar with the long-running and widely used CRP, they were less familiar with other programs. Somewhat surprising was the lack of knowledge of working lands programs. The Division of Soil

Conservation Cost-share, CSP, and EQIP have all been in existence for many years, yet 30, 35, and 36 percent of farmers, respectively, reported that they had no knowledge of these conservation programs (table 5).

### Availability of conservation assistance

The amount of conservation funding and technical assistance available to farmers is limited. This year's Farm Poll examined whether or not Iowa farmers believe that the conservation resources available to them are meeting their conservation needs. Most farmers (56 percent) reported that availability of technical assistance is adequate (table 6). A minority (30 percent) of farmers; however, agreed that funding for conservation is sufficient. Twenty-nine percent indicated that if more funds were available, they would implement more conservation practices. Of note is the level of uncertainty regarding these statements: a plurality of farmers responded that they were uncertain about (1) the adequacy of conservation funding and (2) whether or not they would implement more conservation if more funding were available.

### Frequency of visits to USDA service centers

Local USDA Service Centers, which generally house staff from the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, are the primary source of conservation assistance in Iowa. Two questions measured how frequently farmers use their local USDA Service

**Table 6. Assessments of adequacy of conservation assistance**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	— Percentage —				
Availability of technical assistance is adequate.....	2	9	34	51	5
Availability of funds for conservation is adequate.....	5	22	44	27	3
If more funding and technical assistance were available, I would implement more conservation practices on the land I farm .....	6	24	40	23	6

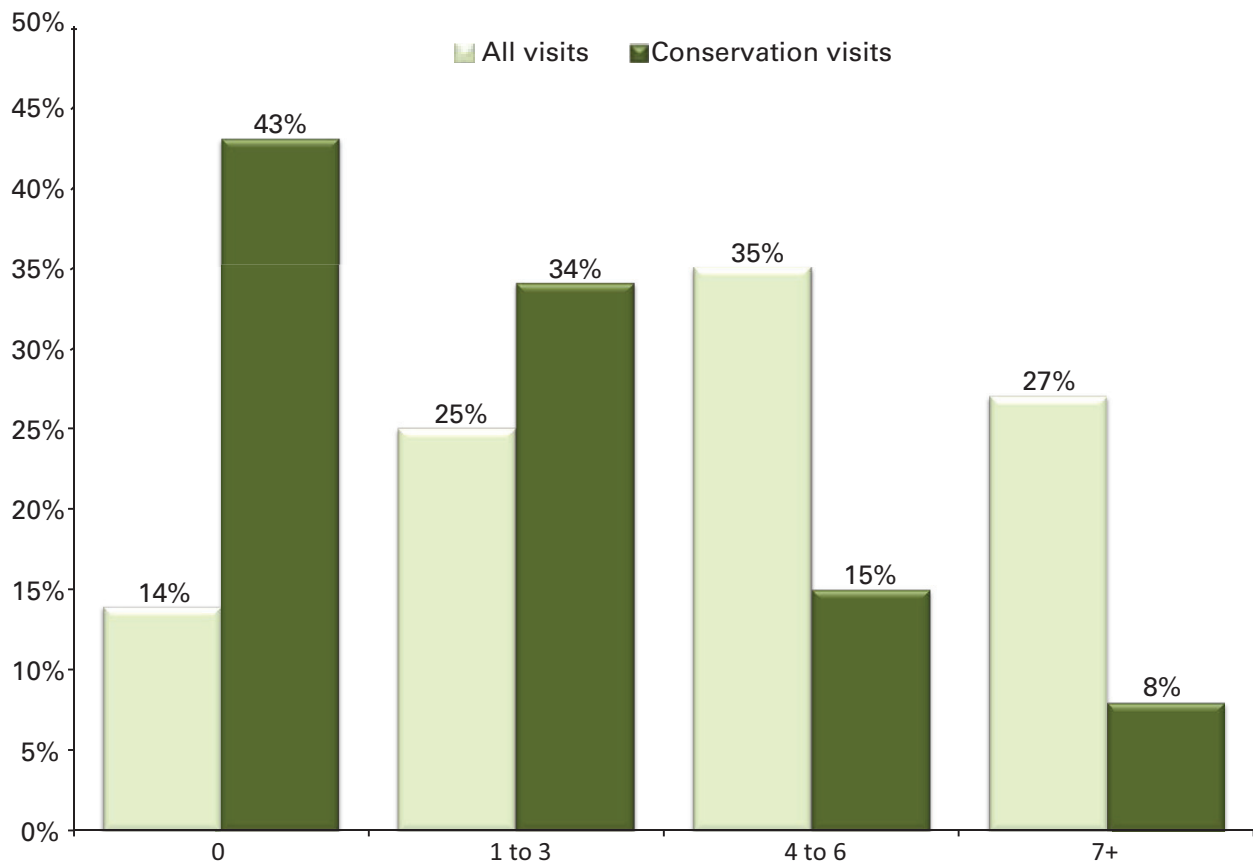
Centers. The first asked farmers to estimate the number of times that they had visited their local service center for any reason over the previous two years. The second question focused specifically on the number of times they went to their local service center for conservation assistance over that time period.

Farm Poll participants visited their USDA Service Center an average of six times in the previous two years. Figure 1 shows the distribution of visits to the USDA Service Centers. Twenty-five percent of farmers visited between one and three times, 35 percent between four and six times, and 27 percent more than seven times. Only 14 percent had not gone even once.

Visits for conservation assistance are an area of additional interest. On average, farmers had gone to their local service center specifically for conservation assistance 2.2 times. The most common response for this question was no visits (43 percent) (figure 1). Thirty-four percent

of farmers visited their USDA Service Center for conservation assistance between one and three times over the previous two years. Fifteen percent visited between four and six times. Eight percent of farmers visited seven or more times in the past two years.

A single question measured farmer investment in conservation over the previous decade. The question was prefaced by the text, “Over the past 10 years, what was the approximate total cost of all of the conservation practices (not including tile or similar drainage systems) that you have implemented on the farmland you own to address soil erosion, water quality, wildlife habitat or similar conservation issues? Please consider all expenses, including labor and materials provided in-kind and those covered by cost-share or other sources.” Farmers were then asked to select from ten categories ranging from “no conservation expenditure” to \$200,000 or more.



**Figure 1. Visits to local USDA Service Center, last two years**

A majority of farmers (51 percent) reported that they had incurred no conservation expenditures at all in the ten years prior to the 2011 survey (table 7). Twenty-one percent of farmers reported spending less than \$5,000, 11 percent spent between \$5,000 and \$9,999, and seven percent invested between \$10,000 and \$19,999. Four percent of farmers spent between \$20,000 and \$29,999, three percent between \$30,000 and \$49,999, and the remaining three percent expended more than \$50,000.

**Table 7. Expenditures on conservation practices**

	Percent
No conservation expenditure .....	51
Less than \$5,000 .....	21
\$5,000 to \$9,999 .....	11
\$10,000 to \$19,999 .....	7
\$20,000 to \$29,999 .....	4
\$30,000 to \$49,999 .....	3
\$50,000 to \$74,999 .....	2
\$75,000 to \$99,999 .....	1
\$100,000 or more .....	0

**Summary note on conservation**

Examined as a whole, the conservation data from the 2011 Farm Poll indicate that there is substantial room for improvement. Many farmers were unfamiliar with major agricultural conservation programs. Many expressed uncertainty about whether or not conservation funding and other assistance is adequate or not. Nearly half of farmers had not consulted with their local USDA Service Center office regarding conservation in the previous two years. Perhaps most significantly, more than half of farmers reported that they had not invested any money in conservation over the previous 10 years, and an additional 21 percent reported spending less than \$5,000 (table 7). These findings are cause for concern given that soil erosion and water quality impairment continue to be major problems across Iowa.

**Agricultural Drainage**

Much of Iowa’s land requires artificial drainage to allow crop production and/or improve yield potential. Rolls of black plastic drainage pipe, or “tile,” are a common post-harvest sight in rural Iowa as farmers renovate or install new drainage systems, and these systems can represent a significant investment. This year’s Farm Poll asked farmers to estimate their “approximate total expenditure on agricultural drainage systems, including installation and maintenance of tile, ditches, or other drainage practices” over the ten-year period prior to the 2011 survey. Because drainage systems are primarily used to drain fields that are planted to row crops such as corn and soybeans, only farmers who reported row crop acreage are included in this analysis.

**Table 8. Expenditures on agricultural drainage, row crop farmers only**

	Percent
No drainage expenditure .....	43
Less than \$5,000 .....	17
\$5,000 to \$9,999 .....	13
\$10,000 to \$19,999 .....	8
\$20,000 to \$29,999 .....	9
\$30,000 to \$49,999 .....	5
\$50,000 to \$74,999 .....	2
\$75,000 to \$99,999 .....	2
\$100,000 or more .....	1

A majority of farmers reported at least some expenditure on drainage systems in the 10 years prior to the survey. Seventeen percent had spent less than \$5,000, 13 percent between \$5,000 and \$9,999, eight percent between \$10,000 and \$19,999, and nine percent between \$20,000 and \$29,999 (table 8). Ten percent reported having invested more than \$30,000. Forty-three percent reported no expenditure on agricultural drainage systems.



## Internet Use by Farmers

Recent years have seen substantial efforts to expand coverage and access to high-speed or “broadband” Internet in rural areas. The Farm Poll posed several questions to gain a better understanding of how Iowa farmers access and use the Internet. Questions focused on whether or not farmers have access to and use high-speed Internet service, types of information accessed, and information sources used.

### Internet availability and access

Sixty percent of Farm Poll participants reported that they use high-speed Internet service (table 9). Farmers were provided with a list of options and asked to indicate whether or not they have access to high-speed Internet. Respondents were also instructed to select all the ways that they access the Internet, so in numerous cases farmers reported more than one source of access. The most common means of access, at 27 percent, was through a digital subscriber line (DSL) service. Fourteen percent of farmers access broadband through a satellite service, 13 percent through a wireless/cell phone service, and 12 percent through cable. Twelve percent reported that they access the Internet over a standard telephone line. When multiple forms of access are accounted for, 70 percent of farmers reported that they use the Internet.

Few farmers—14 percent—reported that they do not have access to high-speed Internet. In fact, the percentage of farmers who reported that they have access to high-speed Internet

where they live, but choose not to access it—21 percent—is significantly higher than the proportion who indicated that they lack access.

### Internet use for farm information

The last decade or so has seen an explosion of agriculture-related websites as farm magazines, agribusinesses, farm groups, conservation agencies and organizations, and other entities have increased their Internet presence and content. Two sets of questions examined farmer use of the Internet for agriculture-related purposes. The first set focused on types of farming-related information accessed. The second set asked farmers about how often they access information from a number of agriculture-related agencies and organizations. These two sections focus only on the 70 percent of farmers who indicated that they use the Internet.

Eighty-four percent of farmers who use the Internet have used it to get information on the weather, and 72 percent do so at least weekly (table 10). Most farmers who use the Internet also access market information (78 percent), general agricultural news (75 percent), and information about crop production (68 percent), and many do so on a fairly regular basis. Majorities of farmers reported that they use the Internet for information on farm financial management (55 percent), pest management (55 percent), and soil and water conservation (51 percent). Use of the Internet for these types of information was less frequent, with most farmers reporting that they access these types of information less than monthly. Livestock

**Table 9. Internet availability and access**

	<b>Percent Selected</b>
I access high-speed Internet through DSL service.....	27
I access high-speed Internet through satellite service .....	14
I access high-speed Internet through wireless/cell phone service .....	13
I access high-speed Internet through cable service.....	12
I access the Internet through a dial-up connection over a standard phone line .....	12
High speed Internet is not available where I live .....	14
High speed Internet is available where I live, but I choose not to access it.....	21

**Table 10. Use of the Internet for information about farming, Internet users only**

	Never	Less than	Monthly	Weekly	Several Times	Daily
		Monthly			Weekly	
— Percentage —						
Weather .....	16	7	6	13	21	39
Markets.....	22	6	7	10	13	42
General agricultural news.....	25	13	12	18	14	17
Crop production.....	32	22	13	16	9	9
Farm financial management.....	45	20	13	11	6	5
Pest management.....	45	34	14	6	2	0
Soil and water conservation .....	49	33	12	4	2	0
Livestock production .....	62	17	8	8	3	3

production information was accessed by only 39 percent of farmers. However, as one would expect, among farmers who raise livestock, 71 percent reported using the Internet for livestock-related information.

Farmers were provided with a short list of agencies and organizations that provide information and technical assistance on agricultural production and conservation and asked to indicate how often they access information from them. Iowa State University Extension was selected by more Internet users than any other option, with 59 percent of farmers indicating that they use Extension at least periodically (table 11). Farm magazines were second, at 55 percent, followed by farm groups (49 percent), the Iowa Department of Agriculture

(46 percent), and the Farm Service Agency (41 percent). Conservation organizations were the least accessed: less than 40 percent of farmers reported that they use the Internet to get information from the NRCS (38 percent), Iowa Department of Natural Resources (37 percent), and County Conservation Boards (26 percent).

### *Balancing Budgets*

In recent years there has been considerable political discussion about reducing deficits and balancing the budget. The Farm Poll sought feedback from farmers on this issue and asked them to provide their opinions regarding whether several key categories of spending and taxes should be increased, decreased, or left unchanged.

**Table 11. Use of the Internet to access information from agencies and organizations, Internet users only<sup>1</sup>**

	Never	Less than	Monthly	Weekly	Several Times	Daily
		Monthly			Weekly	
— Percentage —						
Iowa State University Extension .....	41	36	16	5	2	0
Farm magazines.....	45	22	13	10	6	4
Farm groups.....	51	23	13	7	3	2
Iowa Department of Agriculture .....	54	36	8	2	<1	0
USDA Farm Service Agency .....	59	31	8	2	<1	<1
Natural Resources Conservation Service .....	62	31	5	2	<1	0
Iowa Department of Natural Resources.....	63	29	6	2	<1	<1
County Conservation Boards.....	74	23	3	1	<1	0

Of five tax-related items, just one received a majority of support for increases: 37 percent of farmers indicated that they believe income taxes on the wealthiest should be increased somewhat, and 22 percent felt they should be greatly increased (table 12). Responses regarding sales taxes were more balanced, with 17 percent in favor of increases, about a quarter favoring decreases, and 57 percent favoring no change. Twelve percent indicated that income taxes should be increased, while 44 percent favored decreases, and 44 percent no change. As might be expected, nearly half of farmers supported decreases in property taxes, and almost 60 percent favored declines in the estate tax.

Responses on spending categories were more mixed. Strong majorities of farmers indicated that education spending should be either maintained at current levels or increased. On primary and secondary education, 35 percent of farmers favored increases, 47 percent selected

no change, and 19 percent suggested a decrease in expenditures (table 13). Similarly, 29 percent supported increases in public spending on higher education, 45 percent believed that funding should be left unchanged, and 27 percent supported a decrease. Farmers also largely supported spending on so-called “entitlement programs”: about 85 percent favored maintaining or increasing spending on Social Security, and close to 80 percent felt that public health programs such as Medicare and Medicaid should be funded at current levels or higher. Sixteen and 21 percent, respectively, favored decreases. Sixty-one percent indicated that spending on national defense should be unchanged or increased, compared to 40 percent who suggested that those expenditures should be curtailed.

Several agriculture-related programs and categories were also included in this section. Opinions regarding spending on agricultural

**Table 12. Balancing Budgets: Taxes**

	Greatly Decrease	Somewhat Decrease	Leave Unchanged	Somewhat Increase	Greatly Increase
— Percentage —					
Income tax on the wealthiest.....	6	8	27	37	22
Sales tax .....	9	18	57	15	2
Income tax.....	12	32	44	11	1
Estate tax.....	29	28	35	6	3
Property tax.....	15	34	46	5	1

**Table 13. Balancing Budgets: Spending**

	Greatly Decrease	Somewhat Decrease	Leave Unchanged	Somewhat Increase	Greatly Increase
— Percentage —					
Primary and secondary education .....	3	16	47	30	5
Higher education .....	4	23	45	26	3
Social Security .....	2	14	54	25	6
Public health (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid).....	3	18	52	23	4
National defense.....	8	32	42	16	3
Agricultural conservation programs.....	4	21	49	22	3
Crop insurance subsidies.....	10	28	51	9	2
Farm Bill commodity programs (e.g., DCP, ACRE)	14	36	42	6	2

conservation programs were balanced, with a quarter of farmers favoring increases, a quarter supporting reductions, and half in favor of the status quo (table 13). Crop-related subsidy programs fared less well: 38 percent of farmers supported reductions in crop insurance subsidies, compared to only 11 percent who favored increases. One-half indicated that insurance subsidies should remain unchanged. One-half of farmers would support reductions in expenditures on commodity support programs such as the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP), while 42 percent favored maintenance of funding at current levels and only 8 percent suggested increases.

### *What's in a Name?*

Many terms are used to refer to people who farm. The agricultural press, agribusiness professionals, university scientists, extension professionals, and others commonly use descriptive words such as “grower,” “producer,” and “farmer” interchangeably. This year’s Farm Poll set out to determine what the people who produce food, fiber, and energy prefer to be

called. A short list of commonly used terms was prefaced by the introductory text: “A number of terms are used to refer to people who farm. We would like to know what term you prefer. Please circle the number next to the term that you think best describes you.”

“Farmer” was selected by a strong majority (60 percent) of participants (table 14). The proportion who prefer the term farmer was triple the number who selected two other commonly used labels: “producer” (18 percent), and “farm operator” (18 percent). “Grower” was selected by only three percent of participants, and “rancher” by just one percent.

**Table 14. What farmers like to be called**

	<b>Percent</b>
Farmer .....	60
Producer .....	18
Farm operator .....	18
Grower.....	3
Rancher.....	1

Prepared by J. Gordon Arbuckle, Jr., extension sociologist; Paul Lasley, extension sociologist; and John Ferrell, research assistant. Renea Miller provided valuable layout assistance to the questionnaire and this report. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Statistics, assisted in the data collection.

<sup>1</sup>This report was revised 9/5/2012. The figures in Table 11 and accompanying text originally presented Internet use data for all farmers. The revised table and text present Internet use data only for farmers who reported that they use the Internet.

## IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

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