



# **Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Survey Report, 2013**

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Staff and students working for the Survey Research Center at UW-River Falls were instrumental in the completion of this study. We would like to thank Denise Parks, Erin Ingli, and Caleb Riedeman. We gratefully acknowledge their hard work and dedication. The SRC would also like to thank Eric Anderson of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission for his valuable assistance throughout the project. Finally, we would like to thank the Eau Claire County agricultural stakeholders and rural residents who took the time to complete their questionnaires.

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions with respect to farmland preservation and agricultural issues in Eau Claire County. Eau Claire County officials identified two populations to include in the survey: agricultural stakeholders (farm operators and persons involved in businesses related to agriculture) and rural residents (households outside of the cities of Eau Claire and Altoona). The questionnaires for these two populations were very similar. The primary difference was the addition of several questions on the agriculture stakeholder version.

In January 2013, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to a random sample of 1,130 Eau Claire County rural residents and to 375 agricultural stakeholders on a list provided by Eau Claire County officials. The response rate from agricultural stakeholders was 53 percent (199 completed returns). The response rate from rural residents was 36 percent (410 completed returns). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus/minus 4.7 percent with 95 percent confidence for the agricultural stakeholders and plus/minus 3.9 percent with 95 percent confidence for the rural residents.

The report identifies questions in which notable differences exist between the responses of the agricultural stakeholders and rural residents. Unless otherwise noted in this summary, the responses of rural residents and agricultural stakeholders align with each other.

Majorities of respondents said the conversion of blocks of agricultural to other uses is a problem or a major problem. Likewise, majorities of respondents believed that it is important for the County to maintain/modernize the farmland preservation program and its associated tax credits.

The most highly valued aspects of the farmland preservation program are the per acre tax credits, the discussion of the future of agriculture in Eau Claire County as part of the official planning process, and the protection of large, contiguous blocks of productive farmland and forested land. At least three-fourths of respondents said these were valuable or very valuable.

A majority of respondents favored the Agricultural Enterprise Area program. A quarter of respondents said that they do not know if they favor the program, which suggests that they need more information prior to forming an opinion.

Respondents prefer the cluster design for rural subdivisions by a two-to-one margin, and many suggested reducing the current density standard.

Tax credits for agricultural land and exclusive agricultural zoning were viewed as effective ways to protect farmland in Eau Claire County by over two-thirds of respondents. A majority believed that direct marketing is effective as a farmland protection tool. About half of respondents said use-value assessment and comprehensive planning are effective. A high percentage of respondents said they don't know about the effectiveness of purchase of development rights programs and transfer of development rights programs, which suggests that additional information is needed.

About three-fourths of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they need more opportunities to purchase local food. Nearly as many agreed or strongly agreed that development should be concentrated in or near existing cities/villages. Half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the

cost of farmland is having a negative impact on the economic viability of agriculture in the County. Half of respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that Eau Claire County should purchase conservation easements, but a third were neutral or had no opinion. There were split opinions with respect to whether there is enough farmland to support the long-term viability of agriculture in the County.

The most frequently cited barrier to purchasing locally produced food is lack of availability in the respondent's grocery store, which was identified by slightly over half of respondents. About a third of respondents said that inconvenient sales locations are a barrier. About a third also said that being required to buy local meat in large quantities is a barrier in terms of cost and storage concerns.

When asked to rank policy priorities for the County, the top priority was to protect groundwater and surface water quality. Keeping productive land in agriculture ranked second, followed by preservation of rural and small town character, reducing land use conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses, and limiting non-agricultural development to areas adjacent to existing cities/villages.

Majorities of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements about agricultural resources in Eau Claire County: groundwater quality is good, groundwater supply is adequate, and surface water quality is good. Half of respondents believe that land fragmentation is a problem for agriculture, and half said that finding land for manure spreading is not hard. There was no majority view with respect to the availability of farmland to buy/rent and whether productive farmland would be available in 20 years.

Majorities of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that global markets will become more important in the next 20 years, that mergers of input suppliers have seriously reduced competition and have caused increases in prices, that the income and benefits from an off-farm job are needed for their operation, and that mergers of processors have reduced competition and lowered prices paid to farmers. Half believed that environmental regulations are reasonable and that direct marketing to consumers will become increasingly important.

When asked about the importance of potential programs and regulations, at least 80 percent of respondents said the following are important or very important: keeping land in agriculture, promoting farming to the next generation, keeping/attracting family farms, and providing financial assistance to aid farm asset transition to the next generation.

Majorities also said programs to ensure a supply of qualified agricultural labor and to recruit input suppliers for small farms are important or very important.

## Survey Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions from agriculture stakeholders and rural residents with respect to farmland preservation and agricultural issues in Eau Claire 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

Eau Claire County officials identified two populations to survey. The first group was agricultural stakeholders, which included farm operators and persons involved in businesses related to agriculture. County officials provided a mailing list of 375 agricultural stakeholders.

The second population consisted of rural residents in Eau Claire County. The rural area was defined as all areas of the County outside of the cities of Eau Claire and Altoona. The SRC drew a random sample of households from this area.

The survey instruments for two populations were very similar. The primary difference was the addition of several questions on the agriculture stakeholder version. These questions addressed topics and issues specific to farm operations and businesses.

In January 2013 the SRC mailed surveys to 1130 randomly selected rural residents and to all 375 names on the agricultural stakeholder list provided by Eau Claire County officials. The surveys were followed at roughly 10 day intervals with reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents. The response rate from agricultural stakeholders was 53 percent (199 completed returns). The response rate from rural residents was 36 percent (410 completed returns). The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus/minus 4.7 percent with 95 percent confidence for the agricultural stakeholders and plus/minus 3.9 percent with 95 percent confidence for the rural residents.

The responses from the two populations are compiled as one set of data throughout the report. The SRC used analytical tests to compare the responses of the agricultural stakeholders and the rural residents on questions common to both versions. The report will identify instances when there were notable differences between the responses of the agricultural stakeholders and rural residents. Unless otherwise noted in this report, the responses of rural residents and agricultural stakeholders align with each other.

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 study.**

In short, the data gathered in this survey is expected to accurately reflect the opinions of Eau Claire County agricultural stakeholders and Eau Claire County rural residents.

A small number of questions contained an optional “other” option in which the respondent could provide an answer. **These written responses are contained in Appendix B.**

**Appendix C, Appendix D, and Appendix E contain copies of the survey questionnaire with a quantitative summary of responses by question. Appendix C contains the percentage of all respondents. Appendix D contains the percentages of agriculture stakeholder responses, and Appendix E is the percentage of rural resident responses.**

## **Profile of Respondents**

Table 1 (next page) summarizes the demographic profile of the rural resident sample and the agricultural stakeholder sample. The SRC computed demographic data for the rural area of Eau Claire County from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate (2007-2011). The demographic data from the rural resident respondents are compared to the available ACS data.

The rural resident sample matches the rural resident population employment status and educational attainment quite well. The rural resident sample contains slightly more self-employed people than estimated in the ACS. The resident sample also contains slightly more people with a technical college degree.

However, there were substantially more men in the rural resident sample (74%) than in the overall rural population (52%). An initial analysis indicated that there were statistically significant differences between men and women on 24 of the 62 variables in the questionnaire, and the SRC was modestly concerned about the representativeness of the sample. Additional analysis indicated that most of the gender differences on the 24 variables were attributable to a single factor: a higher percentage of women said they don't know or have a neutral/no opinion to these 24 questions. The SRC recalculated the data by including only the respondents who gave an opinion to these questions. The gender differences largely disappeared among those with an opinion. The SRC found only three questions with notable differences between the responses of men and women. These will be noted in the text of the report. These results also suggest that any educational/outreach efforts mounted by the County regarding farmland preservation policies should make particular efforts to reach women.

With respect to the age distribution, there are fewer people 18 to 44 years of age in this sample (16%) than the ACS estimate indicates should have been included (42%). Our experience is that younger residents in most jurisdictions are less likely to participate in surveys. The report will describe instances where there is a noteworthy difference in the response pattern between older and younger respondents. The SRC notes that a large majority of rural resident respondents and agricultural stakeholders are long-term residents of Eau Claire County. Comparable ACS estimates are not available.

Overall, the SRC is comfortable with the overall representativeness of the rural resident sample.

The SRC did not have demographic information on the 375 agricultural stakeholders in the mailing list provided by Eau Claire County officials and was unable to compare the demographic profile of the agricultural stakeholder respondents to the overall list. The following is a summary of the demographics provided by the agricultural stakeholder respondents.

- 54 percent have farm operations between 150 acres and 500 acres in size
- 42 percent both own and rent crop land
- 59 percent receive 50 percent or less of their total household income from farming
- 83 percent have no children under age 18 living in the household

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

<b>Gender (Age 18+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>				
Rural resident sample	391	74%	26%				
Rural population (ACS)	21,096	52%	48%				
Ag Stakeholder sample	185	85%	15%				
<b>Age 18+</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>18 – 24</b>	<b>25 – 34</b>	<b>35 – 44</b>	<b>45 – 54</b>	<b>55 – 64</b>	<b>65+</b>
Rural resident sample	403	1%	5%	10%	25%	26%	32%
Rural population (ACS)	21,096	12%	12%	18%	23%	18%	18%
Ag Stakeholder sample	189	0%	1%	10%	26%	26%	37%
<b>Employment Status (16+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Unemp.</b>	<b>Retired</b>	
Rural resident sample	397	43%	7%	13%	2%	34%	
Rural population (ACS)	22,000	60% <sup>1</sup>		6%	4%	31% <sup>2</sup>	
Ag Stakeholder sample	178	25%	3%	42%	1%	28%	
<b>Highest Level of Education (Age 25+)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Less than High Sch.</b>	<b>High Sch. Diploma</b>	<b>Some College/ Tech</b>	<b>Tech/ College Grad.</b>	<b>Bachelor Degree</b>	<b>Graduate/ Profess. Degree</b>
Rural resident sample	401	6%	30%	20%	19%	14%	10%
Rural population (ACS)	18,668	10%	32%	19%	12%	17%	9%
Ag Stakeholder sample	183	7%	34%	27%	15%	10%	6%
<b>Length of Residency</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>0 -5 years</b>	<b>5.1 – 10 years</b>	<b>11 to 20 years</b>	<b>Over 20 years</b>		
Rural resident sample	409	4%	5%	12%	78%		
Rural population (ACS) <sup>3</sup>	NA	--	--	--	--		
Ag Stakeholder sample	191	1%	1%	6%	92%		
<b>Households with Children</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5+</b>
Ag Stakeholder sample	190	83%	6%	5%	4%	1%	1%
<b>Acres Operated</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40-150</b>	<b>150-500</b>	<b>500-1000</b>	<b>1000+</b>	
Ag Stakeholder sample	189	4%	27%	54%	10%	5%	
<b>Crop Land Status</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Own</b>	<b>Rent</b>	<b>Both</b>			
Ag Stakeholder sample	188	54%	4%	42%			
<b>Percentage Rented</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1% – 25%</b>	<b>26% - 50%</b>	<b>51% - 75%</b>	<b>76% - 100%</b>	
Ag Stakeholder sample	187	45%	25%	13%	10%	7%	
<b>Household Income from Farming</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1% – 25%</b>	<b>26% - 50%</b>	<b>51% - 75%</b>	<b>76% - 100%</b>	
Ag Stakeholder sample	188	8%	33%	18%	15%	26%	

<sup>1</sup> ACS does not differentiate between full-time and part-time employment

<sup>2</sup> Includes all persons age 16 years and older who are not in the workforce

<sup>3</sup> Not included in the American Community Survey

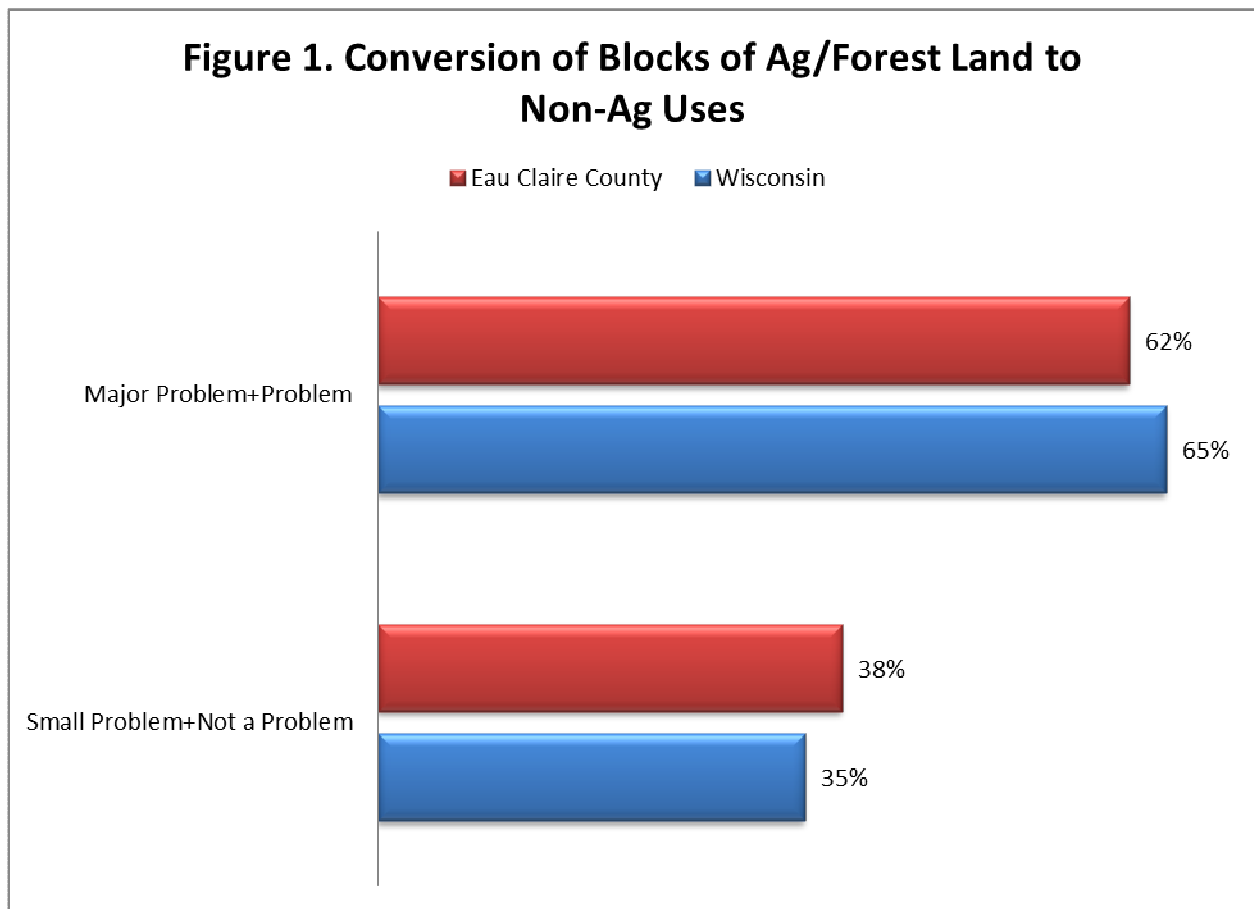


## Opinions about the Farmland Preservation Program

The initial question in the survey asked the degree to which respondents believe the conversion of blocks of agricultural and forest lands in Eau Claire County and in the State of Wisconsin as a whole are problems. Answer choices were “major problem,” “problem,” “small problem,” and “not a problem.” The results are shown in Figure 1. The top two bars are the combined percentage of respondents who chose major problem or problem. The bottom two bars are the sum of those who chose the small problem or not a problem answers.

Figure 1 indicates that a majority of respondents view conversion of blocks of agricultural or forest land to other uses as problem or a major problem. Compared to the percentage who said it is a small problem or not a problem, the margin is not quite two to one. Respondents indicated that they did not see a difference between Eau Claire County and the State of Wisconsin as whole. This question was asked both on the agricultural stakeholder version and the rural resident version of the questionnaire. Unless otherwise noted, all questions were asked of both rural residents and agricultural stakeholders.

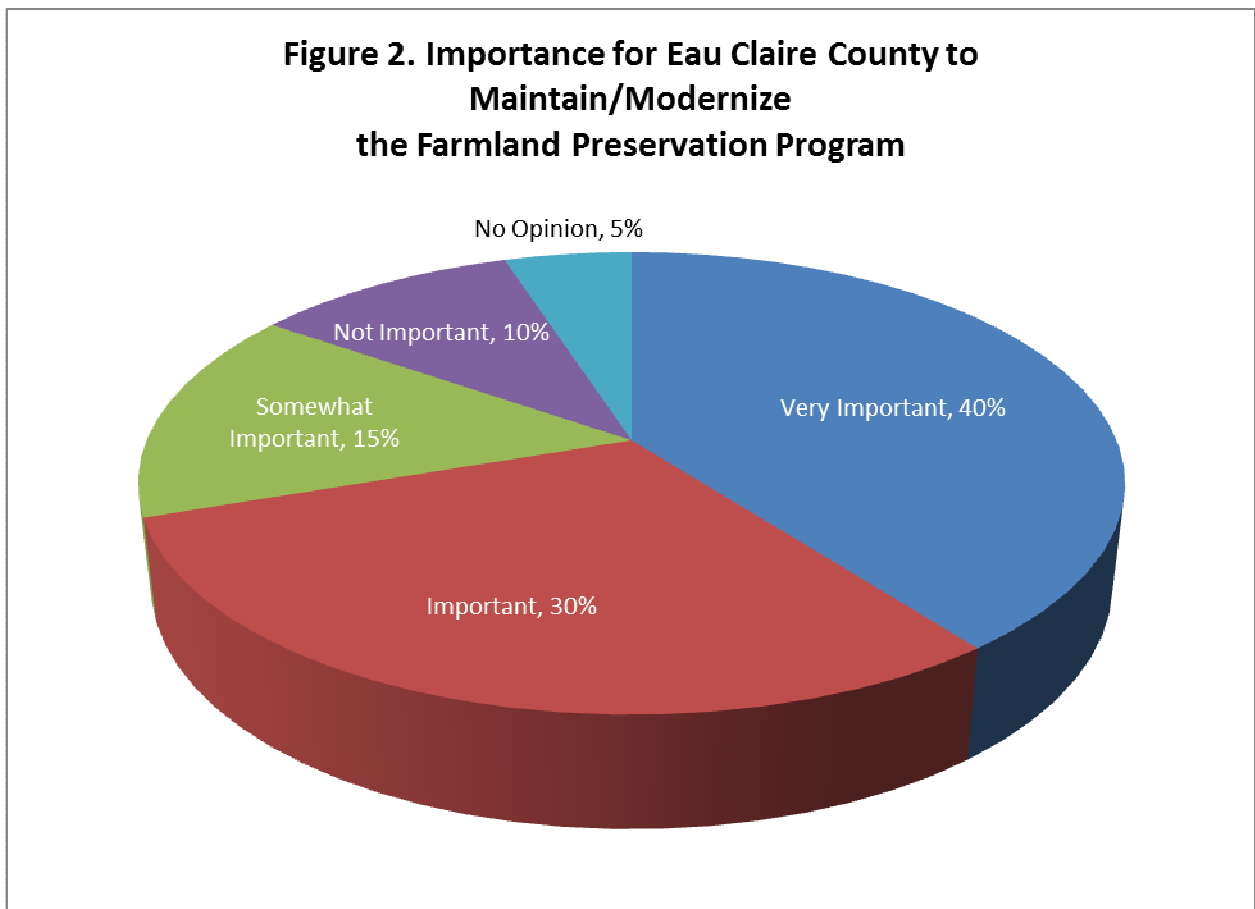
There were no statistically significant differences between the responses of agricultural stakeholder group and the rural resident group.



Demographic Comparisons. There were no notable differences among the demographic groups.

Consistent with their level of concern shown in Figure 1, 70 percent of all respondents said it is very important (40%) or important (30%) for Eau Claire County to maintain/modernize the farmland preservation program and the tax credits that are associated with the program (see Figure 2). Only 5 percent said they had no opinion. This question was asked both on the agricultural stakeholder version and the public version of the questionnaire.

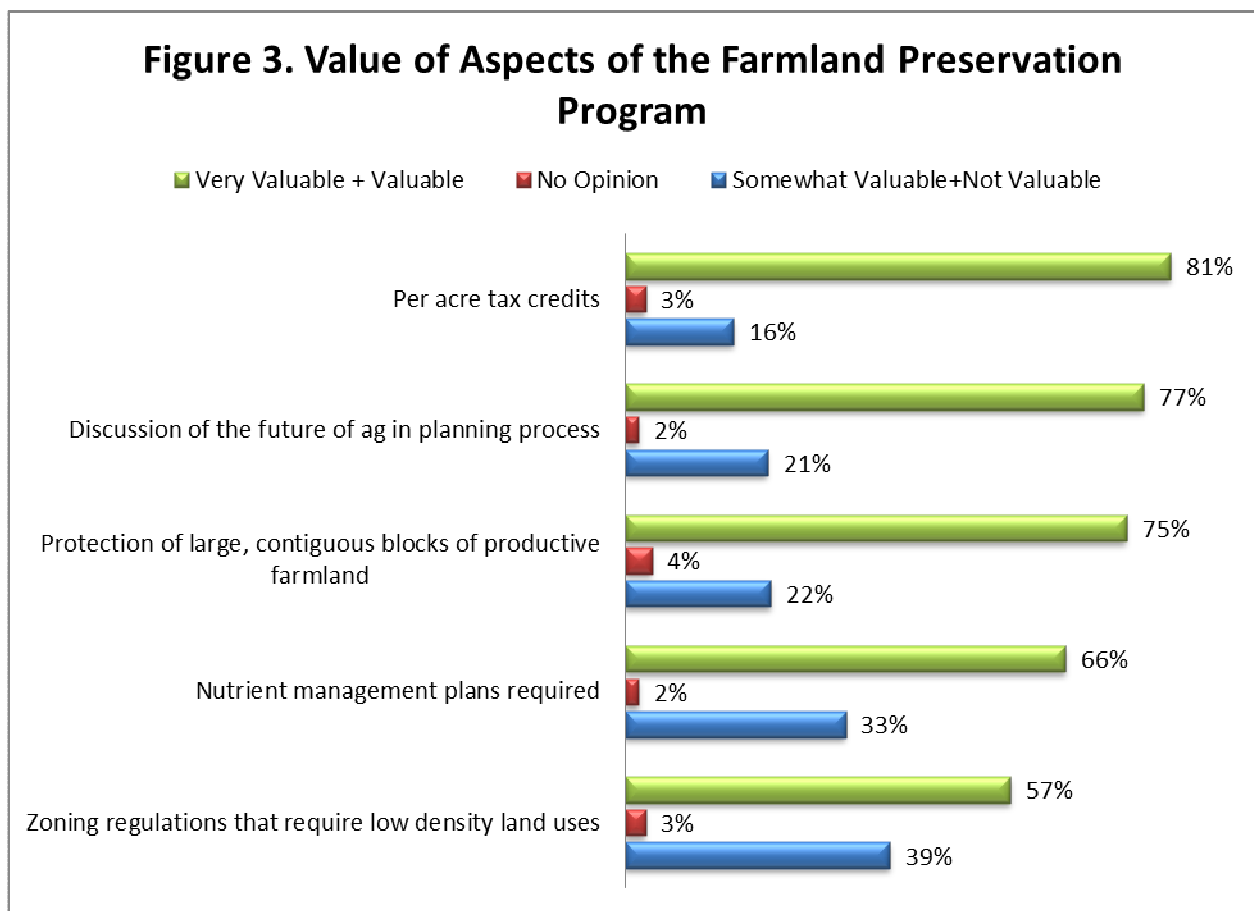
Although majorities of agricultural stakeholders and rural residents said maintenance and modernization is very important or important, a larger percentage of the agricultural stakeholder group chose the very important option (50%) compared to the rural resident group (34%). Rural residents were more likely to have said it is important (34%) compared to 23 percent of agricultural stakeholders.



Demographic Comparisons. There were no notable differences among the demographic groups.

Only agricultural stakeholders were asked about the value of five aspects of the farmland preservation program. The answer choices were “very valuable,” “valuable,” “somewhat valuable,” “not valuable,” and “no opinion.” The results are shown in Figure 3. The top bar is the combined percentage of very valuable and valuable responses, and those with no opinion are shown in the middle bar. The bottom bar represents the sum of the somewhat valuable and not valuable responses.

Although majorities of agricultural stakeholder respondents rated all five aspects as valuable or very valuable, respondents gave the highest ratings to per acre tax credits, discussion of the future of agriculture in Eau Claire County’s planning process, and protection of large contiguous blocks of productive farmland. No less than three-fourths of agricultural stakeholder respondents said these aspects are valuable or very valuable. In addition, two-thirds of respondents said the requirement for nutrient management plans tied to the farmland preservation plans are valuable or very valuable. A majority (57%) also said that zoning regulations to require low density residential development (1 house per 35 acres) are valuable or very valuable.

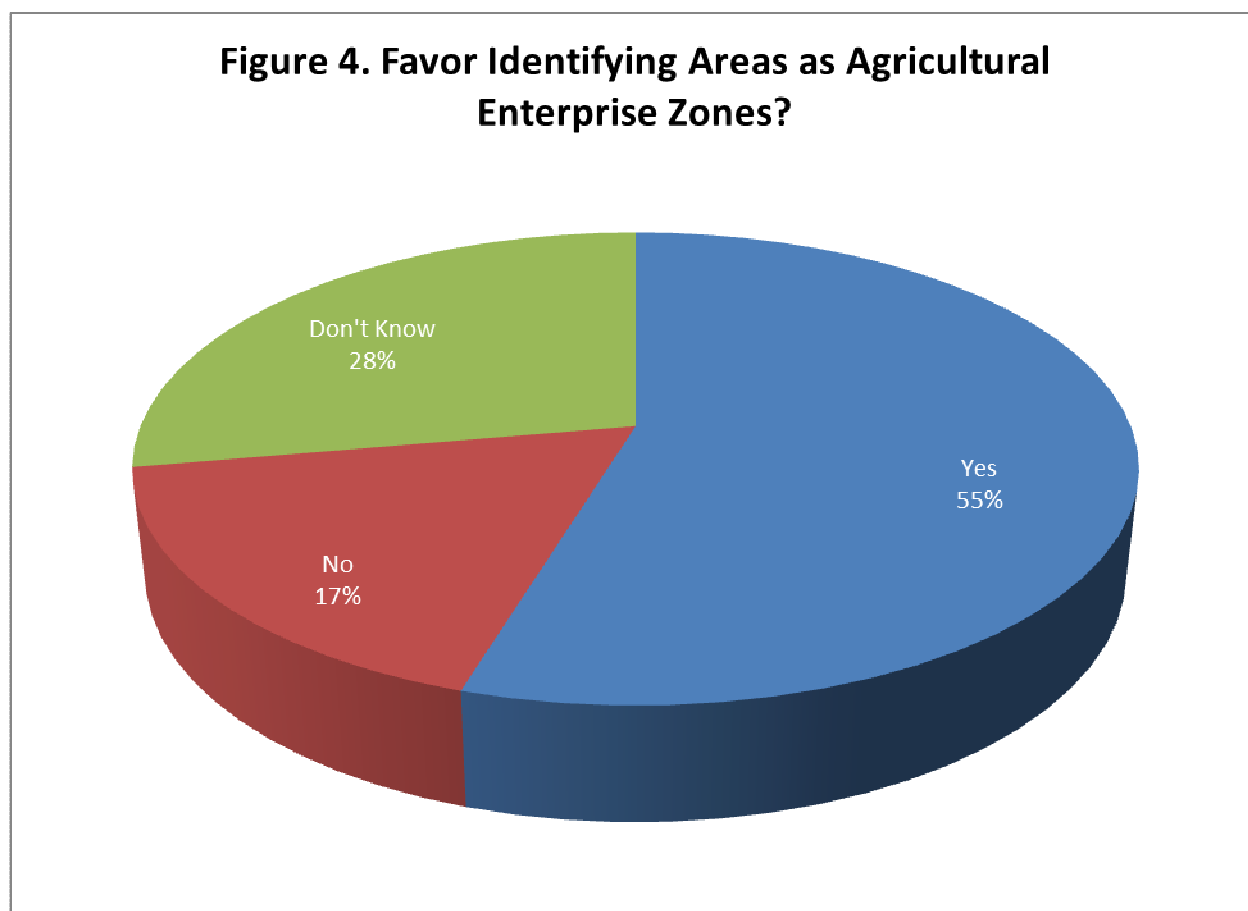


**Demographic Comparisons.** Agricultural stakeholders under age 45 were more likely to say that zoning regulations are valuable or very valuable (80%) compared to respondents age 45 or more (56%). At least 90 percent of the agricultural respondents under age 45 rated discussion about the future of agriculture in the County’s planning process and protection of large blocks of productive contiguous farmland as valuable or very valuable compared to three-fourths of the older age groups. Although

large majorities of retired agricultural stakeholders and those still in the workforce said that the discussion of the future of agriculture as part of the planning process was a valuable or very valuable aspect of farmland preservation programs, those in the workforce were more likely to say it is “very valuable” (48%) compared to retired stakeholders, who were more likely to rate it as “valuable” (45%).

Agricultural stakeholders and rural residents were asked whether they favor identifying specific areas in Eau Claire County as “Agricultural Enterprise Areas.” Options included a “don’t know” option. Figure 4 shows the results. Although a majority of respondents said they favor the Agricultural Enterprise Areas, 28 percent of respondents said they don’t know.

Rural residents were slightly more likely to have said they don’t know (30%) compared to the agricultural stakeholders (23%).



Demographic Comparisons. There were no notable differences among the demographic groups.

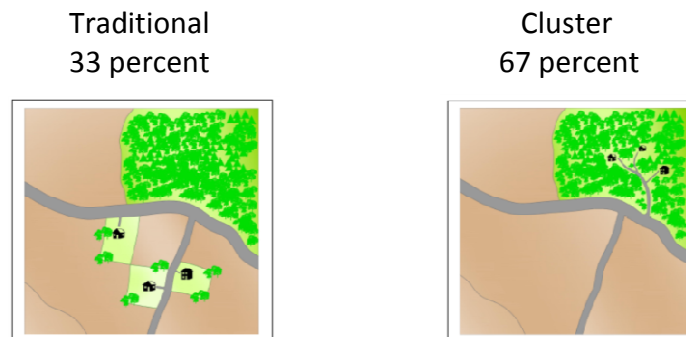
## Rural Clustered Housing

Agricultural stakeholders and rural residents were asked to indicate their preference for traditional rural housing development on large individual lots (20 to 25 acres) or for cluster design with smaller individual lots (3 to 5 acres) in which the remaining area is held as shared open space.

Two-thirds of respondents said they prefer the cluster design compared to a third who preferred the traditional rural residential layout. The SRC has asked a similar question in nearly 100 other surveys, with comparable results.

Agricultural stakeholders more strongly preferred the cluster design (80%) than do rural residents (62%).

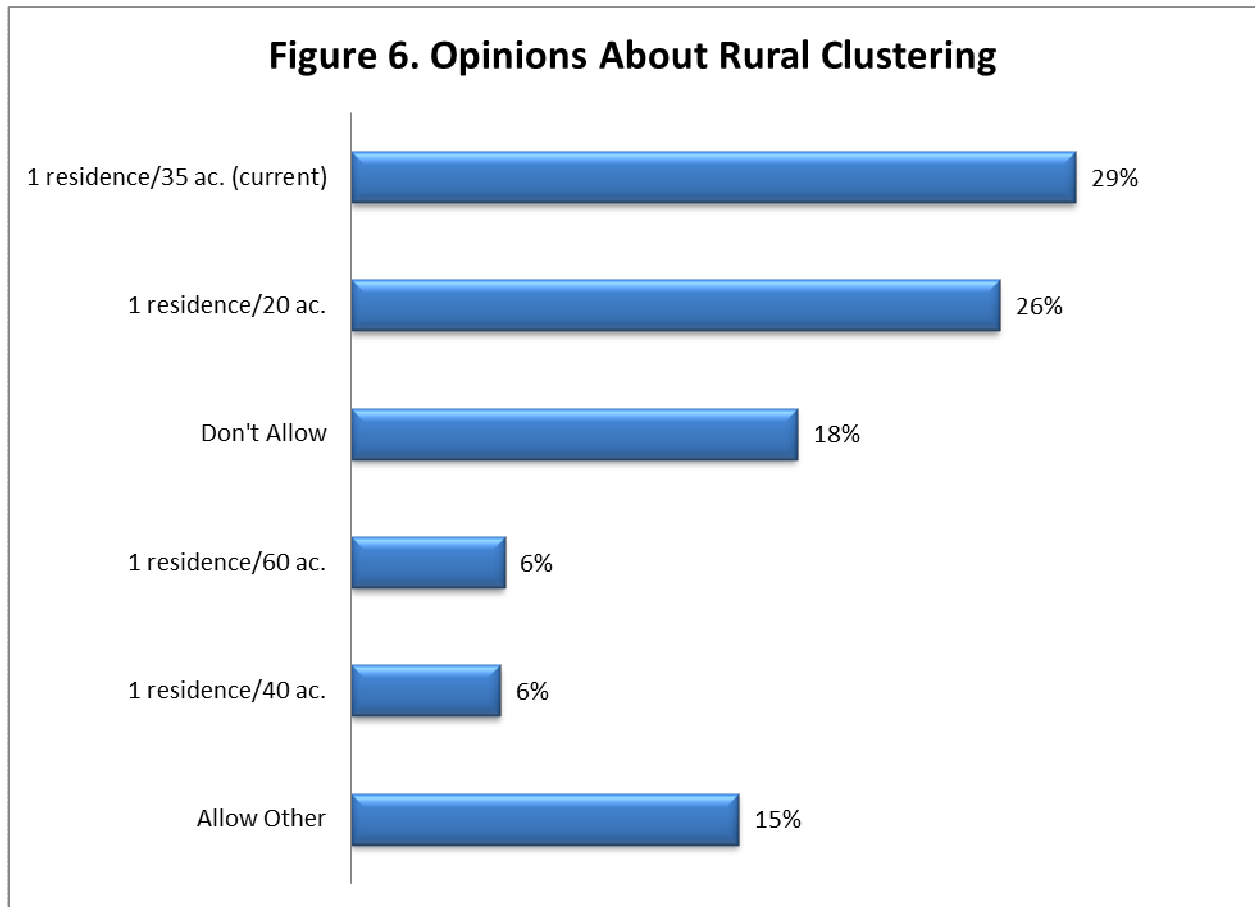
**Figure 5.**



Demographic comparisons. There were no notable differences among the demographic groups.

When asked their overall view with respect to rural clustering, Figure 6 shows the largest portion of respondents preferred to keep the density at 1 house per 35 acres (29%) or increasing the density to 1 house per 20 acres (26%). About one in five respondents did not want to allow rural clustering. This question was included in both the agricultural stakeholder and the rural resident versions of the survey.

Agricultural stakeholders more frequently preferred increasing the density to and entered a lower number in the “other” category. Most of these respondents said the minimum lot size in a cluster development should be between 1 and 5 acres.

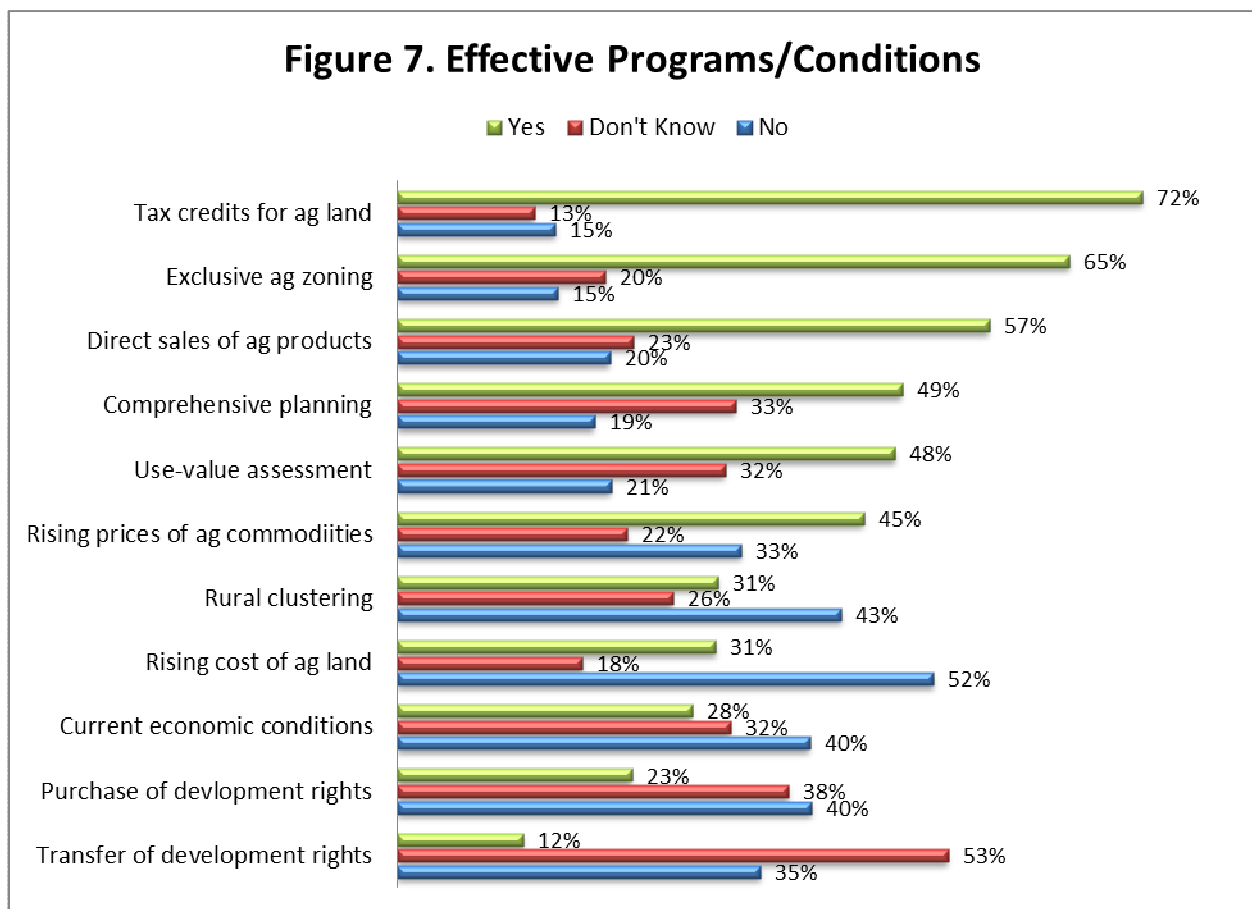


Demographic Comparisons. There were no notable differences among the demographic groups.

## Effective Tools to Protect Farmland

Respondents were given a list of 11 programs/conditions and asked whether each effectively protects farmland in Eau Claire County. Answer choices included a “don’t know” option. This question was included both in the agricultural stakeholder and rural resident versions of the survey. The top bar is the percentage of yes answers, the middle bar is the percentage who said they don’t know, and the bottom bar is the percentage who said no.

As shown in Figure 7, respondents identified two items that stood out at the top of the list: tax credits for agricultural land (72%) and exclusive agricultural zoning (65%). Over half (57%) of respondents believe that direct marketing of agricultural products is an effective way to protect farmland. About half of respondents said that comprehensive planning and use-value assessment are effective. Many respondents, but less than half, said rising agricultural commodity prices effectively protect farmland. No more than a third of respondents believed that rural clustering, rising cost of farmland, current economic condition, purchase of development rights, and transfer of development rights were effective for farmland preservation.



Of note in the answer pattern in Figure 7 is the high percentage of respondents who said they don’t know. These responses ranged from 13 percent to as high as 53 percent. The responses in the “don’t know” category exceeded 25 percent on 6 of the 11 listed. This pattern may suggest an opportunity for Eau Claire County officials to increase their public information and education outreach with respect to programs such as transfer of development rights and purchase of development rights.

There were several differences in the responses of agricultural stakeholders and rural residents. These differences are shown in Table 2. Compared to rural residents, a higher proportion of agricultural stakeholders said the following programs/conditions effectively protect farmland: purchase of development rights, rural clustering, current economic conditions, rising cost of agricultural land, rising prices of agricultural commodities, and use value assessment. Rural residents were more likely to have said that direct marketing of agricultural products is an effective program to protect farmland.

<b>Table 2.</b>						
Do you believe the following programs/conditions will <u>effectively protect farmland</u> in Eau Claire County?	Yes		No		Don't Know	
	Ag	Res	Ag	Res	Ag	Res
Purchase of development rights	32%	18%	33%	43%	34%	39%
Rural clustering	43%	25%	32%	48%	25%	27%
Current economic conditions	40%	23%	29%	45%	31%	33%
Direct sales of agricultural products	47%	61%	26%	18%	27%	21%
Rising cost of agricultural land	45%	24%	37%	58%	17%	18%
Rising prices of agricultural commodities	60%	38%	23%	38%	17%	24%
Use-value assessment	55%	44%	16%	22%	28%	33%

Demographic Comparisons. With the exceptions of direct sales of agricultural products and comprehensive planning, a higher percentage of women chose the “don’t know” response offered in this group of questions. Agricultural stakeholders who operate 500 or more acres were more likely to say that rural clustering an effective program for farmland protection (65%) compared to stakeholders with less than 500 acres (39%).

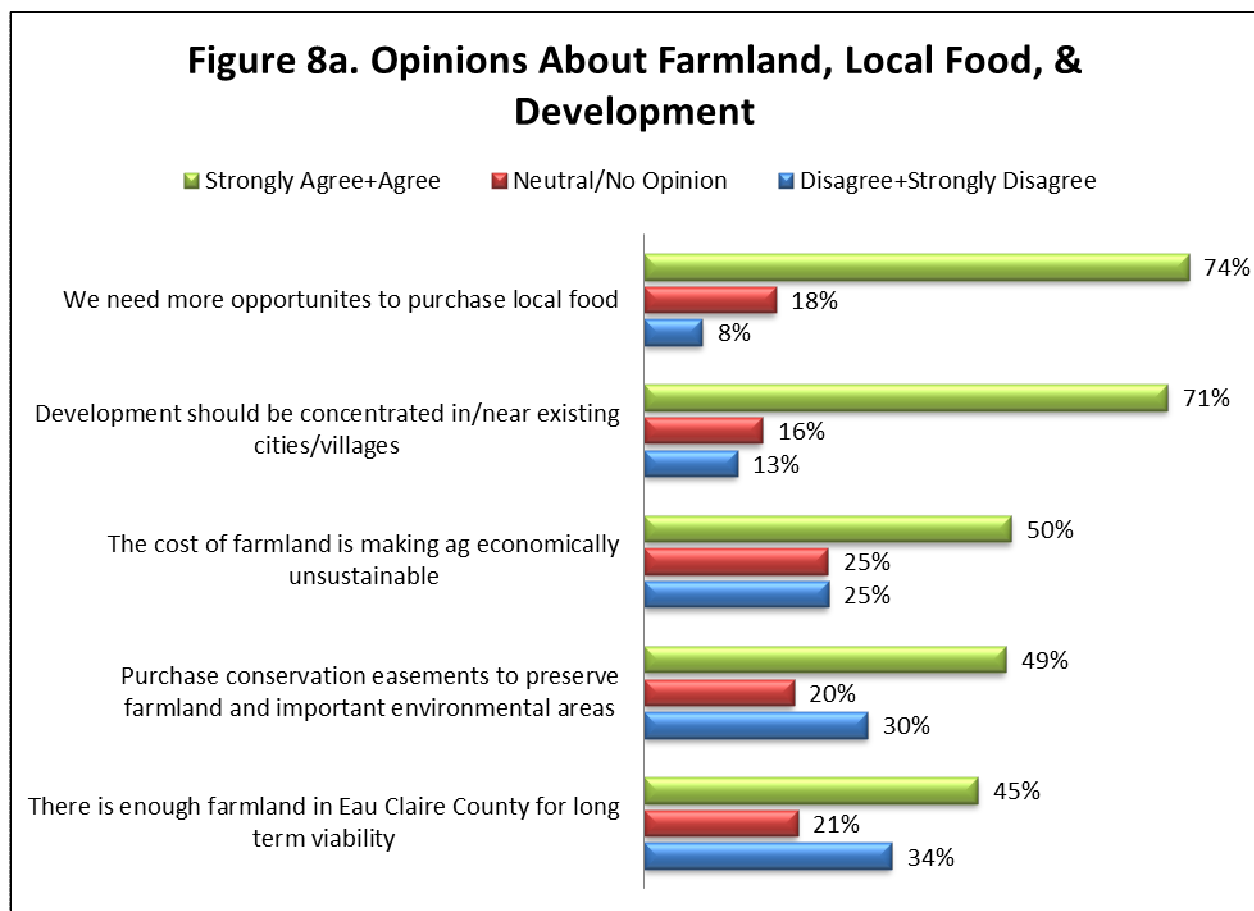


## Farmland, Local Food, and Development

Respondents were asked their level of agreement with five statements. The answer choices were “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral/no opinion,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” The results are shown in Figure 8a. The top bar is the combined percentage of strongly agree and agree responses, the middle bar represents the neutral/no opinion responses, and the bottom bar is the sum of the strongly disagree and disagree responses. This group of questions was included in the agricultural stakeholder version and the rural resident version.

Among this group of questions, respondents showed high levels of agreement with two statements. Three-fourths of respondents said they agree or strongly agree that they need more opportunities to purchase local food. Nearly as many, 71 percent, agreed or strongly agreed that development should be concentrated in or near existing villages or cities.

With respect to the impact of rising farmland prices on the financial sustainability of agriculture and whether Eau Claire County should purchase conservation easements, about half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and a significant percentage (20% to 25%) were neutral or had no opinion.



When asked if there is enough farmland in Eau Claire County to support the long-term economic vitality in the county, the respondents gave no clear answer. The largest percentage of respondents agreed or

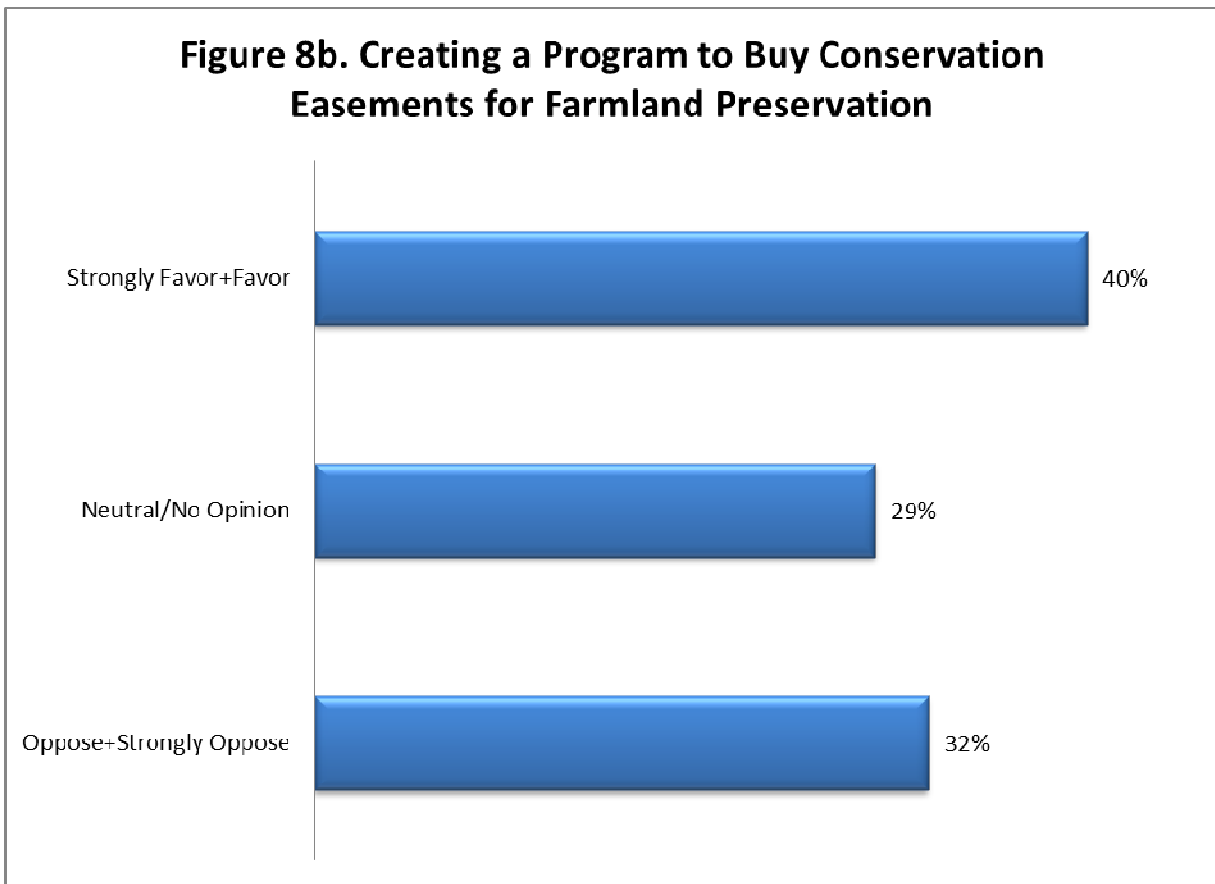
strongly agreed, but they represent less than half of the total (45%). A third of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and one in five respondents were neutral or had no opinion.

The percentage of respondents who were neutral or had no opinion was relatively high in this group of questions. This suggests that respondents may need additional information before they are able to form an opinion.

Rural residents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they need more opportunities to purchase local food (80%) than agricultural stakeholders (61%).

Demographic Comparisons. Among respondents with an opinion, women were more likely to agree or strongly agree that Eau Claire County should purchase conservation easements (70%) compared to men (49%). Agricultural stakeholders who operate 500 acres or less were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they need more opportunities to purchase local food (65%) compared to those who operate over 500 acres (48%).

A second question about a program to purchase conservation easements was included in the rural resident version. The wording was similar to that shown in Figure 8a; however the question referred only to farmland (see Figure 8b). The pattern of answers was similar to the question in Figure 8a, but the percentage of neutral/no opinion responses increased slightly, while the positive responses (agree or favor) decreased slightly.



Respondents were asked to review a list of potential barriers to purchasing locally produced food and to indicate those that apply to them. This question was included in the agriculture stakeholder and the rural resident versions. The results are shown in Figure 9.

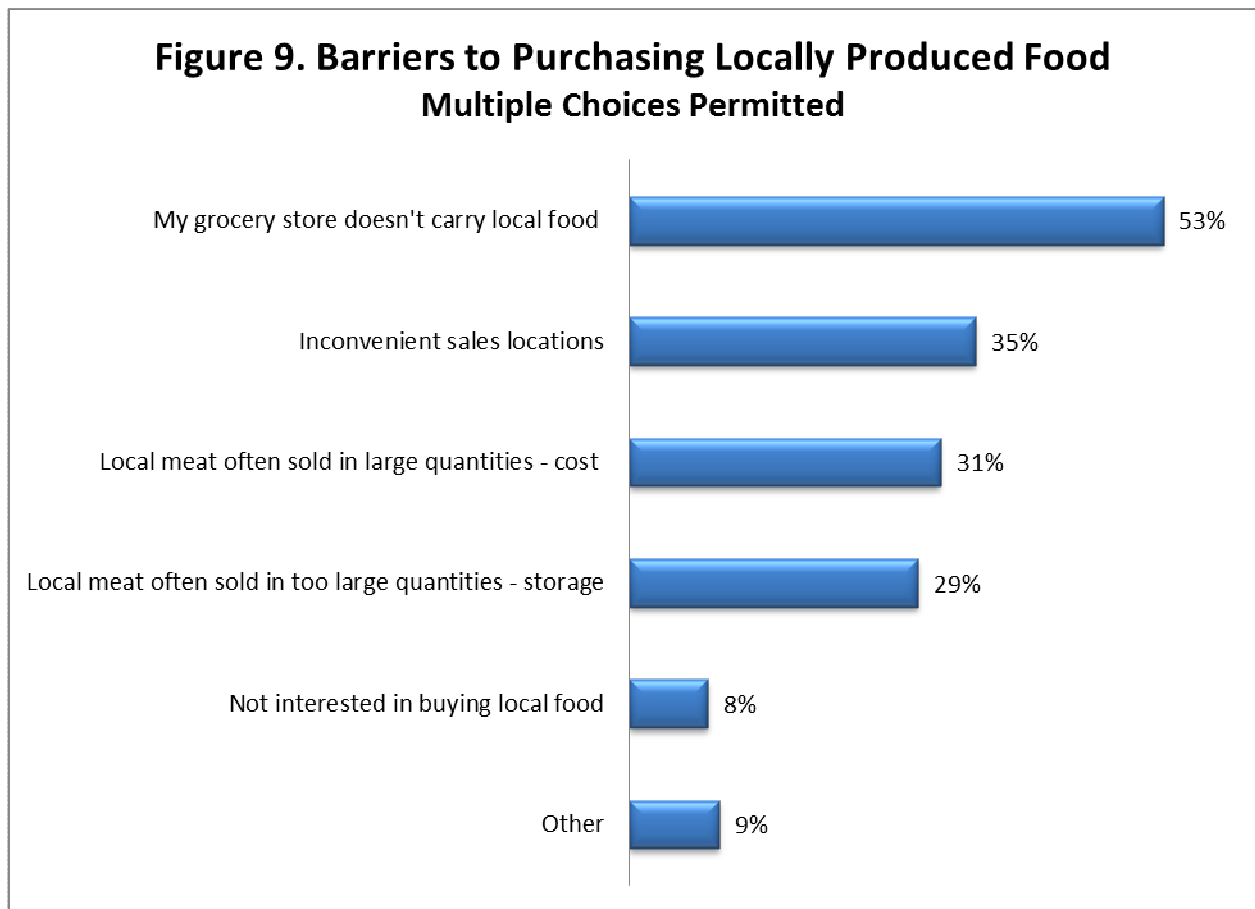
The most commonly chosen barrier among respondents was that their grocery store does not carry local food (53%).

Thirty-five percent of respondents cited inconvenient sales locations (farmer’s markets, roadside stands, orchards) as a barrier.

Quantity issues were a problem for about 30 percent of respondents. These respondents said that meat being sold in large quantities presents both a cost issue and a storage issue.

The good news among the results of this group of questions is that lack of interest in buying local food is not an issue, with only eight percent citing that as a barrier.

About a third of rural residents cited cost and storage issues as a barrier compared to about 20 percent of agricultural stakeholders.



Demographic Comparisons. The expense of buying local meat in large quantities is a bigger barrier among women respondents; 50 percent cite it as a barrier compared to 26 percent of men.

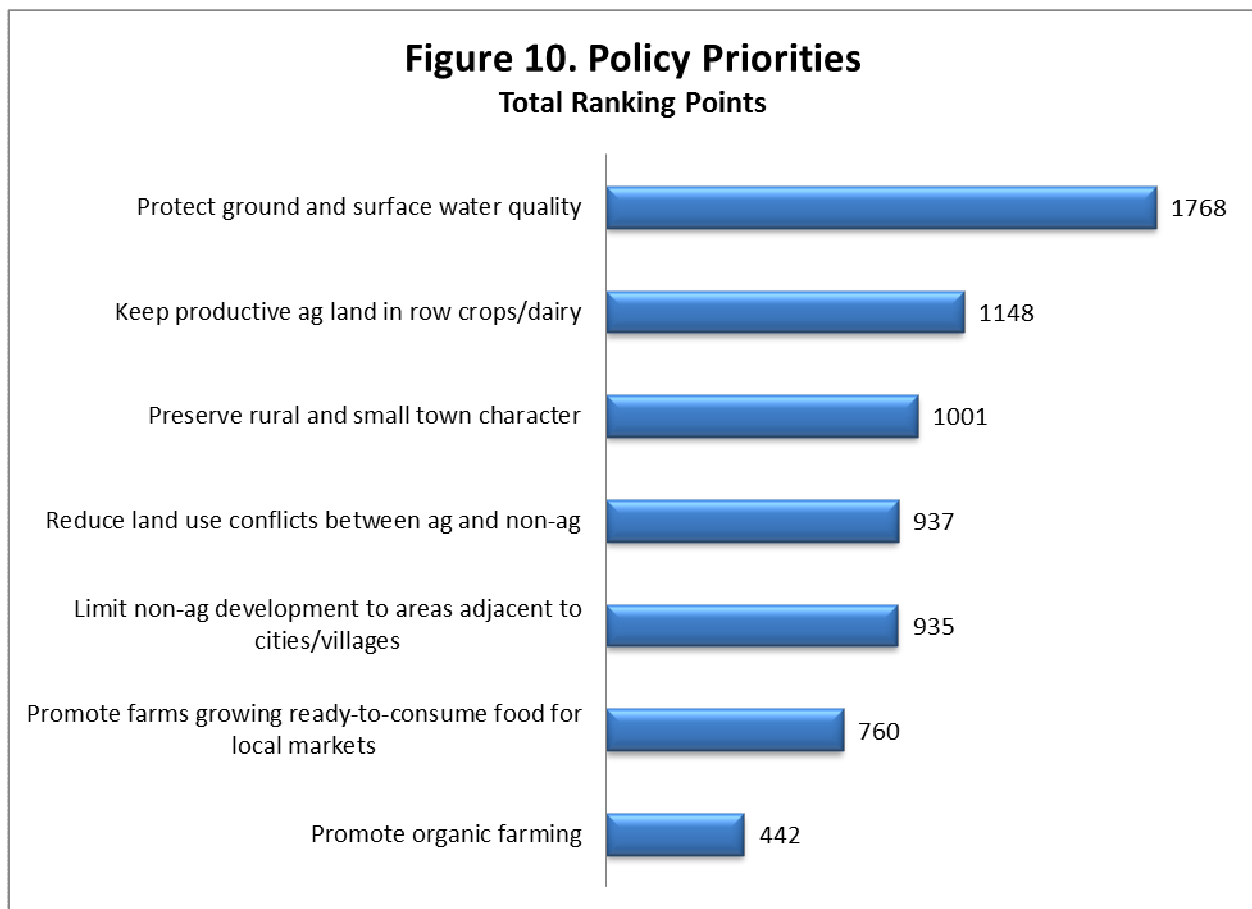
## Policy Priorities

Agricultural stakeholders and rural residents were asked to rank their top four policy priorities from a list of seven policies related to agriculture and planning. The SRC assigned four points to each respondent's top priority, three points to the second priority, two points to the third priority, and one point to the fourth priority. The results are shown in Figure 10 and indicate that the protection of groundwater and surface water quality is the most important policy from this list (1,768 points). Keeping productive agricultural land in row crops and dairy use ranked second with 1,148 points.

Three policies were ranked close together: preservation of rural and small town character, reducing land use conflicts between agriculture and non-agriculture land uses, and limiting non-agriculture development to locations adjacent to existing villages or cities, receiving between 1,001 and 935 points.

Promoting farms that grow ready-to-consume food for local markets and promoting organic farming were at the low end of the policy priorities, receiving 760 and 442 points respectively.

Protection of groundwater and surface water was the top priority both of rural residents and agricultural stakeholders, but more so among rural residents, being the top priority of 66 percent compared to half of agricultural stakeholders. Rural residents gave a higher priority to promoting ready-to-consume local food than did agricultural stakeholders.



Demographic Comparisons. Respondents age 45 and older and retirees said promoting ready-to-eat food for the local market and preserving small town and rural character were higher priorities than younger respondents and those currently in the workforce.

Respondents who have completed a post-secondary education program gave more priority to reducing land use conflicts between agriculture and non-agriculture land uses.

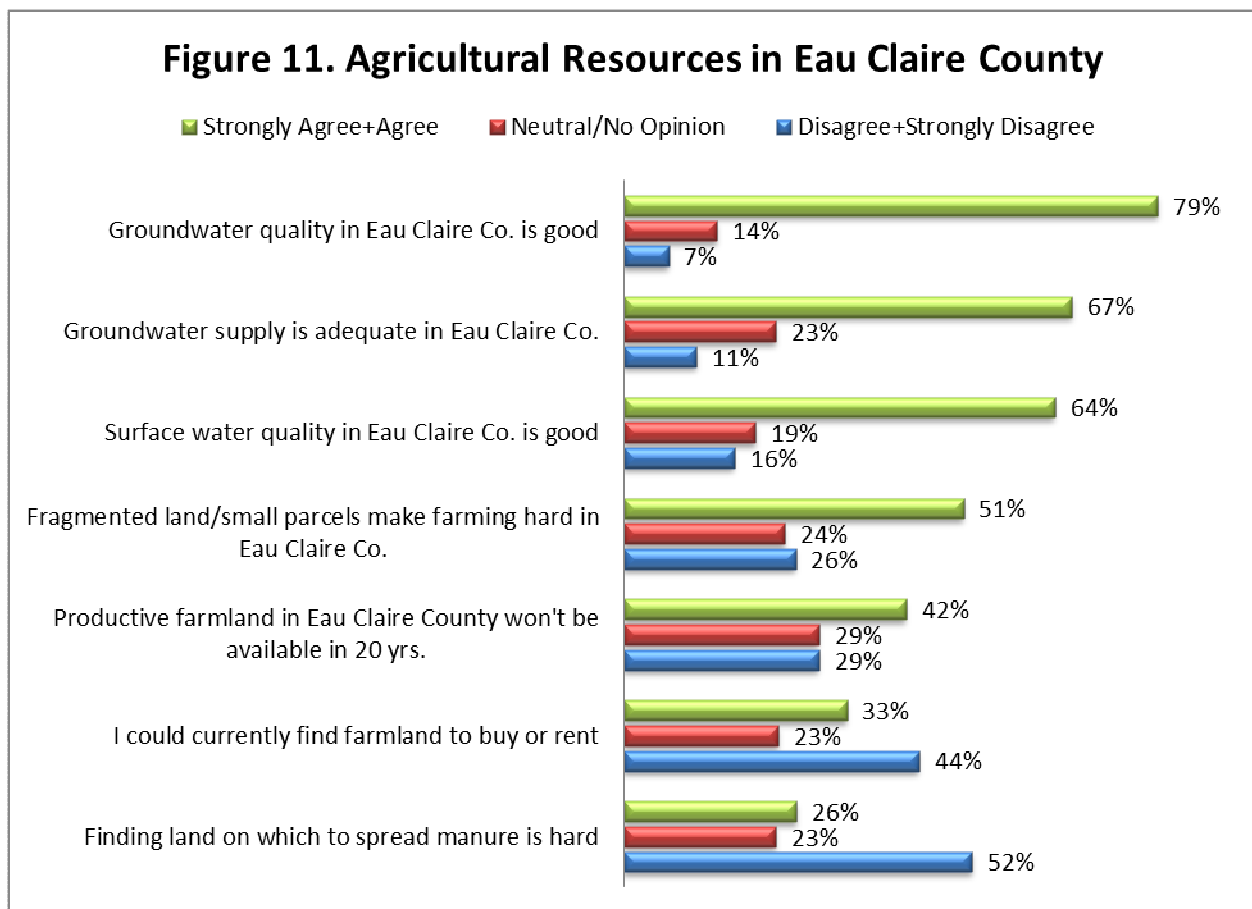
Even though promotion of organic farming ranked low in the overall results, none of respondents who farm over 500 acres included it among their top four priorities.

Respondents who receive less than half of their total household income from farming were more likely to include promotion of organic farming and limiting non-agricultural development to areas adjacent to existing villages or cities among their top four priorities.

## Agricultural Resources

Agricultural stakeholders were asked their level of agreement with seven statements. The answer choices were “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral/no opinion,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” The results are shown in Figure 11. The top bar is the combined percentage of strongly agree and agree responses, the middle bar represents the neutral/no opinion responses, and the bottom bar is the sum of the strongly disagree and disagree responses. This group of questions was only asked on the agriculture stakeholder version.

Respondents have a positive opinion about the quality of water resources in Eau Claire County. Nearly eight in ten agreed or strongly agreed that groundwater quality is good. Two-thirds agreed or strongly agreed that groundwater supply is good, while nearly as many (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that surface water quality is good. Half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that small parcels and fragmentation is making farming hard in Eau Claire County. At the same time, half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that finding land to spread manure is hard.



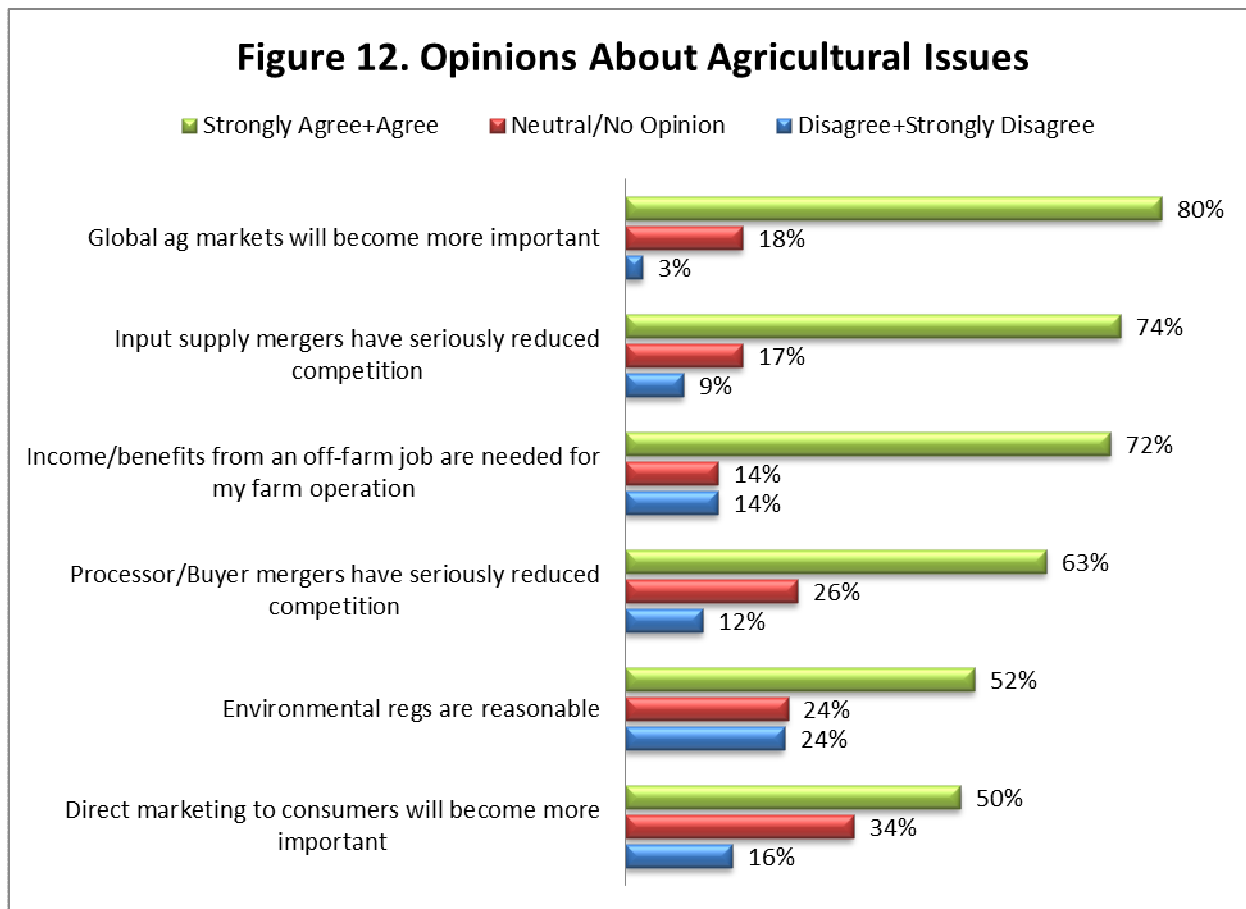
With respect to the current availability of farmland to buy or rent, there was no majority answer. The largest percentage, 44 percent, disagreed or strongly disagreed. A third of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and 23 percent were neutral or had no opinion. These data are consistent with the results of a similar question asked earlier in the survey (See Figure 8a).

Respondents had mixed opinions about the future availability of productive farmland in Eau Claire County. Again, there was no majority among the responses. About four in ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that productive farmland will not be available in Eau Claire County 20 years from now. The other 60 percent of respondents were equally split between those who disagreed or strongly disagreed (29%) and those who had no opinion or were neutral (29%).

There were a relatively high percentage of respondents who had no opinion/neutral responses.

Demographic Comparisons. Overall, a larger percentage of women said they were neutral or had no opinion with respect to the future availability of farmland in 20 years, finding land for manure spreading, and the adequacy of the County's groundwater supply. However, among respondents with an opinion, a larger percentage of women agreed or strongly agreed that finding land for manure spreading is hard (53%) compared to men (28%). Respondents under age 45 were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that they could find productive farmland to rent or buy (70%) compared to respondents age 45 year or more (42%). Younger respondents were also more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that finding land for manure spreading is hard (75%) compared to respondents age 45 years and above (51%). Retirees were more likely to have no opinion with respect to the current availability of farmland and the ability to find land on which to spread manure. A majority of respondents who have lived in Eau Claire 20 years or less disagreed or strongly disagreed that they could find productive farmland to rent or buy compared to only one in four long term respondents.

Respondents were next asked their level of agreement with six additional statements about agriculture. This question was included only on the agriculture stakeholder version, and the results are shown in Figure 12, which has the same layout as Figure 11.



Mergers among processors and buyers have reduced competition and impacted prices paid to farmers according to a majority of respondents (63%).

Half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that environmental regulations are reasonable and that direct marketing to consumers will become more important in the next 20 years.

Demographic Comparisons. There were no notable differences among the demographic groups.



## Potential Programs and Regulations

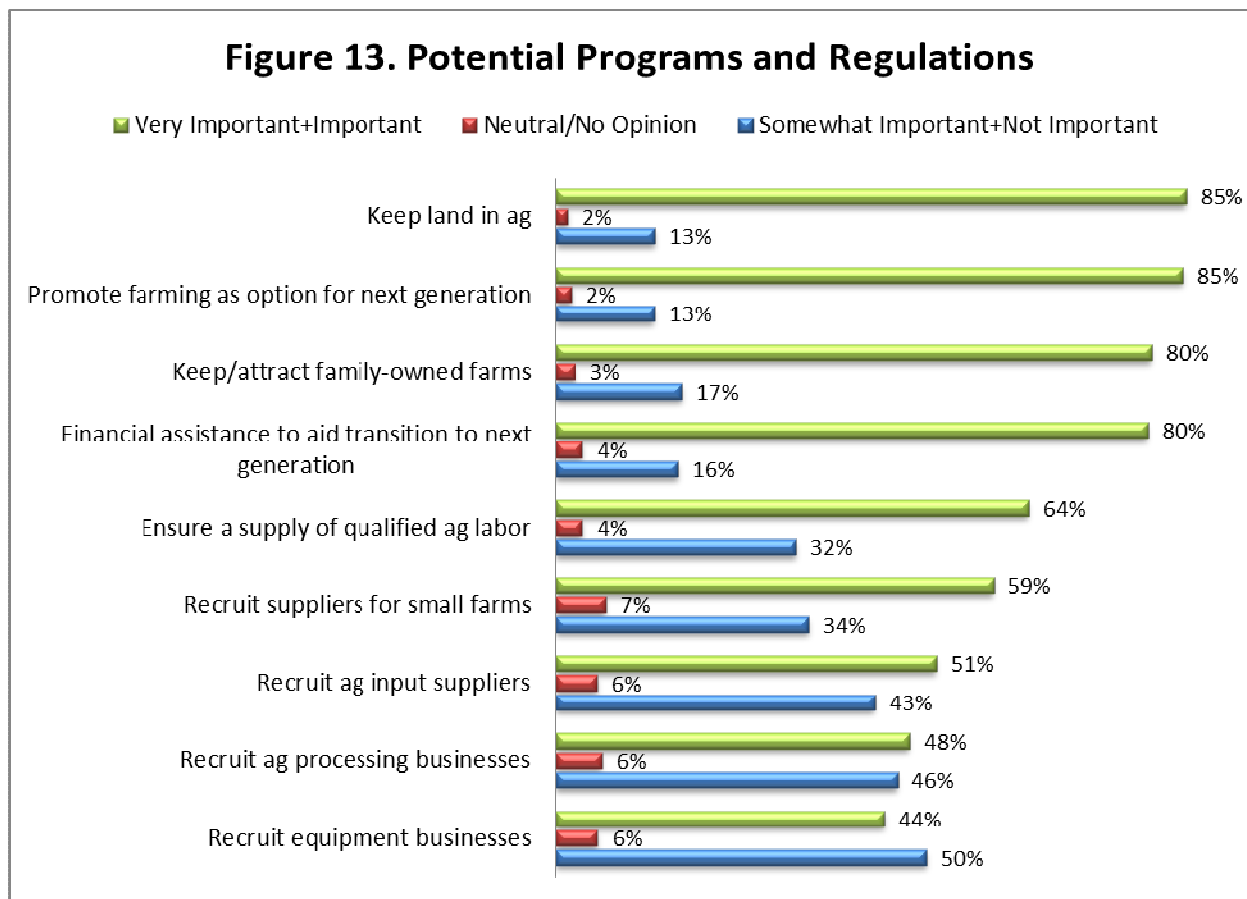
The final group of questions asked agricultural stakeholders for their opinions about the importance of nine potential programs and regulations. The answer choices were “very important,” “important,” “somewhat important,” “not important,” and “neutral/no opinion.” The results are shown in Figure 13. The top bar is the combined percentage of very important and important responses. The middle bar is the neutral/no opinion responses, and the bottom bar represents the sum of the somewhat important and not important responses.

Strong majorities ranging between 80 percent and 85 percent agreed or strongly agreed with four of the options: policies to keep land in agriculture, to promote farming as an option for the next generation, to keep/attract family owned farms, and to provide financial assistance to aid farm asset transition from retiring farm operators to the next generation of farmers.

Majorities of respondents said programs to ensure a supply of qualified farm labor (64%) and programs to recruit suppliers for small farms (59%) are important or very important.

Half of respondents supported programs to recruit agriculture input suppliers, while support for suppliers specifically for small farms increased to 59 percent. Half of respondents said recruiting equipment businesses was somewhat important or not important.

Respondents were evenly split with respect to recruiting processors: 48 percent said it is important or very important, while nearly as many (46%) said it is somewhat important or not important.



Demographic Comparisons. Overall, a higher percentage of women chose the neutral/no opinion response with respect to recruiting equipment businesses, recruiting input suppliers, recruiting processors, recruiting suppliers for small farms, and providing financial assistance for farm asset transition to the next generation.

Although very large majorities of all ages of respondents said that programs to keep land in agriculture are important or very important, larger percentages of respondents age 45 years or older said they were very important than important when compared to younger respondents. Ninety percent of those 45 years of age or more said they are very important, and five percent said they are important. Fifty-four percent of younger respondents said they are very important, and 30 percent said they are important.

A higher percentage of retirees had no opinion about the recruiting of processors (15%) than did respondents in the workforce (2%).

Respondents who earn more than half their household income from farming were more likely to say that recruiting machinery/equipment businesses, recruiting input suppliers, and recruiting processors is very important or important.

## Conclusions

Respondents to this survey identified conversion of farmland and forest land as a problem in Eau Claire County and supported various programs and policies to address their concern.

- 85 percent of respondents said programs to keep land in agriculture are important or very important (with the largest percentage saying it is very important)
- 72 percent believed that a tax credit program is an effective tool for farmland preservation, and 65 percent believed that exclusive agricultural zoning is an effective farmland preservation tool.
- 71 percent agree or strongly agree that development should be focused near existing cities/villages.

For the most part, agricultural stakeholders and rural residents hold similar opinions with respect to the questions asked on this survey. Where there were differences, they tended to be differences of degree that did not impact the overall interpretation of the data. For example, majorities of both groups said that it is important or very important to maintain/modernize the County's farmland preservation program, but a larger portion of agricultural stakeholders said it is very important. Rural residents tended to say it is important rather than very important.

There were numerous questions in which significant minorities of respondents did not express an opinion about particular programs and issues. Rather, they said they did not know, were neutral, or had no opinion. This suggests that they may not have enough information to answer the question and may present opportunities for educational outreach by Eau Claire County officials.

## 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 11f), 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 rural residents and agricultural stakeholders regarding the quality of groundwater Eau Claire 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, 173 agricultural stakeholders and 322 rural residents replied to the first mailing. Responses from the second mailing included 26 agricultural stakeholders and 88 rural residents.

We found eight variables with statistically significant differences between the mean responses of these two groups of respondents (Table A1) out of 62 tested. Table A1 indicates that even when statistical differences exist, the magnitude of this difference is very small.

In questions 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7h, and 7i, (same numbering on both versions) a higher percentage of non-respondents selected the don’t know choice. However, these smaller differences did not impact the overall pattern of answers and the interpretation of the results.

In question 8d (Q6d on the rural resident version), a slightly larger percentage of non-respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement about local food opportunities. Again, this small difference did not impact the overall pattern of answers and the interpretation of the results.

**The Survey Research Center (SRC) concludes that there is little evidence that non-response bias is a concern for this sample.**

<b>Table A1 – Statistically Significant Differences Between Responses of First and Second Mailings</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Statistical Significance</b>	<b>Mean First Mailing</b>	<b>Mean Second Mailing</b>
7a. Exclusive agricultural zoning	.007	1.51	1.74
7b. Purchase of development rights	.000	2.11	2.35
7c. Rural clustering	.000	1.90	2.18
7d. Transfer of development rights	.049	2.38	2.53
7e. Current economic conditions	.029	2.00	2.18
7h. Rising prices of agricultural commodities	.031	1.74	1.92
7i. Comprehensive planning	.002	1.79	2.07
8d. Need more opportunities to purchase local foods	.045	2.06	1.85

## Appendix B –Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Planning Survey “Other” Responses

### Which of the following best describes your views about rural clustering? Other

#### Rural Residents

- 1 Residence/5 Acres **(10x)**
- 3-5 Acres **(7x)**
- 5 Acres **(7x)**
- 1 Residence/1 Acre **(2x)**
- 10 Acres **(2x)**
- See Option B **(2x)**
- 1 Acre
- 1 Residence per 3 Acres
- 1 Residence per 3-5 Acres
- 2 Residence per 35 Acres
- 5 to 10 Acres
- 50 Acres
- In wooded areas
- Stay out of it

#### Agricultural Stakeholders

- 5 Acres **(6x)**
- 3 to 5 Acres **(5x)**
- 1 Residence per 3 Acres **(2x)**
- 1 Residence per 5 Acres **(2x)**
- 1 Acre
- 1 House/ 1 Acre
- 1 Residence per 200 acres
- 1/1
- 1/10
- 1/100
- 1/4 acre or less
- 10 Acres per House
- 4 Residence per 1 Acre
- 4 Residence per 20 Acre
- 80 acres
- Allow more houses in a group to waste less land. People build a house in the middle of a 40 acre field around here, and then the whole field is shot.
- Allow residence 40 acres unless it is family member who is part of a family farm
- Cluster

- Cluster 10 residences per 5 acres. Plots on non-farmland plots
- Clusters on smaller acreage
- Is in question 5
- No limit
- Opinion B Above
- Poor ground

**What do you see as the major barriers to purchasing locally produced food? Other**

**Rural Residents**

- Government Regulations/Involvement **(8x)**
- No barriers exist **(3x)**
- Raise our own meats **(2x)**
- Allowing farmers to sell from home
- Cost
- Cost vs. Convenience
- Don't know
- Don't know where to buy them
- Don't know who is selling what- ads needed
- Each town/village should have location to exhibit/sell local produced foods/produce general ag related products i.e.: food, wool, crafts, produce
- Economics of scale. I.e. Wal-Mart is more cost effective. Sanitary?
- Expense
- Food safety
- How about raw milk, too many laws
- I/we buy local and have no problems getting it
- If I want local food I have no problem finding it. There is no reason county government needs to get into this.
- In Fall Creek there is nothing
- Inspected meat
- It is easy to buy
- Keep big brother (The State People) from looking over the producer's shoulder to justify there so called job!!
- Large chains or Big Crop. Have forced local produce out
- Local cut-up meat from 1/4 or 1/2 poor quality cuts
- Loss of local store
- Need more "pick your own" vegetable farms
- Political contract by using laws to prevent sales
- Price
- Quality of local meat-not finished properly

- Raise price because it is local
- Raw milk out let needed
- Restrictions on selling local meat
- Wal-Mart
- We butcher our own
- We buy quite a bit local
- We need to create a buyers co-op
- You get what you pay for at the local meat and don't see any major barriers!

### **Agricultural Stakeholders**

- No barriers exist **(3x)**
- Cost-Too expensive **(2x)**
- Government Regulations **(2x)**
- By time we're done work stands are closed on weekends, inconvenient :(
- Do not take food stamps
- Need more organic products at a reasonable price. Need a Trader Joe's store.
- No opinion
- Not enough organic
- Price is not low enough compared to grocery store
- Processing, cost/waste, to high
- Produce at Farmers Market is old and stale
- Variety lacking
- Zoning

### **Employment Status Other**

- Disabled **(3x)**
- Beef farm
- Full time student
- Homemaker/mom
- Moonlight part time
- Self-employed
- Stay at home mom
- Two Jobs

### **Rural Residents**

### **Agricultural Stakeholders**

- Hang in there
- Helps son farm

## Appendix C - Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question – All respondents

### Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Survey – 2013

1. Do you think the conversion of blocks of ag/forest land to non ag/forest uses is a growing problem in: (Q1 on resident version)	Major Problem	Problem	Small Problem	Not a Problem
a. Eau Claire County	27%	35%	18%	21%
b. State of Wisconsin	27%	37%	18%	17%

2. How <u>important to you</u> is it that Eau Claire County maintain/modernize the farmland preservation program and its associated tax credits? (Q2 on resident version)	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	No Opinion
	40%	30%	15%	10%	5%

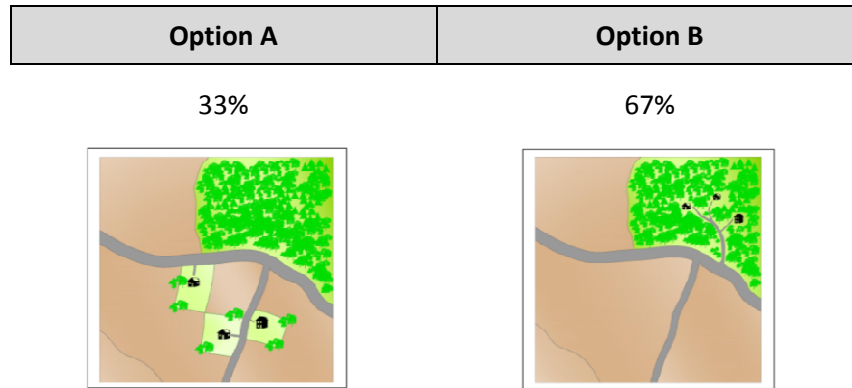
3. How <u>valuable to you</u> are the following aspects of the farmland preservation program? (Not asked on Resident version)	Very Valuable	Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Valuable	No Opinion
a. Zoning regulations that require consistent, low density land uses (1 house per 35 acres)	33%	24%	14%	26%	3%
b. Per acre tax credits for land covered by a farmland preservation agreement or is zoned A-1 (Exclusive Ag)	44%	37%	8%	8%	3%
c. Nutrient management plans tied to farmland preservation plans to protect natural resources and water	29%	37%	19%	14%	2%
d. Discussion of the future of agriculture in Eau Claire County as part of the official planning process	42%	35%	13%	9%	2%
e. Protection of large, contiguous blocks of productive ag land to ensure future ag and forest product production in Wisconsin	46%	28%	11%	11%	4%

4. Do you favor identifying specific areas in Eau Claire County as Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA's), which would provide increased tax credits and other financial incentives to operating farms within the AEA? (Q3 on resident version)	Yes	No	Don't Know
	55%	18%	28%



The current Farmland Preservation Program zoning regulation is a minimum of 35 acres to build a residential structure. Current law allows counties to use a density-based approach that would allow for the creation of smaller non-agricultural residential lots with a conservation easement protecting the balance of the land (this is called rural clustering).

5. In non-urban areas, would you prefer housing built in a design with larger individual lots (20-35 acres) and no shared open space (Option A) or a cluster design with smaller individual lots (3-5 acres) and shared open space and/or preserving agricultural land (Option B)? Assume lots cost the same in Options A and B. Please fill the circle for either Option A or Option B below to indicate your preference. (Q4 on resident version)



6. Which of the following best describes your views about rural clustering? (Q5 on resident version)

Don't Allow Rural Clustering	Allow with 1 Residence/20 Acres	Allow with 1 Residence/35 Acres (current law)	Allow with 1 Residence/40 Acres	Allow with 1 Residence/60 Acres	Allow with Other
18%	26%	29%	6%	6%	15%
					<u>See Appendix B</u>

7. Do you believe the following programs/conditions will <u>effectively protect farmland</u> in Eau Claire County? (Q7 on resident version)	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Exclusive agricultural zoning	65%	15%	20%
b. Purchase of development rights	23%	40%	38%
c. Rural clustering	31%	43%	26%
d. Transfer of development rights	12%	35%	53%
e. Current economic conditions	28%	40%	32%
f. Direct sales of agricultural products	57%	20%	23%
g. Rising cost of agricultural land	31%	52%	18%
h. Rising prices of agricultural commodities	45%	33%	22%
i. Comprehensive planning	49%	19%	33%
j. Use-value assessment	48%	21%	32%
k. Tax credits for agricultural land	72%	15%	13%

8. To what extent do you agree/disagree that: (Q6 on resident version)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Development should be concentrated in, or adjacent to, existing cities & villages	35%	37%	16%	9%	4%
b. There is enough farmland in Eau Claire County to support the long-term economic viability of agriculture in the County	7%	38%	21%	26%	8%
c. The cost of farmland is making agriculture economically unsustainable in Eau Claire County	15%	35%	25%	21%	4%
d. We need more opportunities to purchase from and support farmers who are producing local food (vegetables, meat, honey, etc.)	34%	41%	18%	6%	2%
e. Eau Claire County should purchase conservation easements to preserve farmland, maintain open space, or protect important environmental areas	21%	28%	20%	19%	11%

8-1. Do you favor/oppose creating an Eau Claire County program to buy conservations easements from farmers to preserve ag land? (Q8 on resident version. Not included in the Agriculture stakeholder version)	Strongly Favor	Favor	Neutral/No Opinion	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
	11%	28%	29%	18%	14%

9. What do you see as the major barriers to purchasing locally produced food (*mark all that apply*) (Q9 on resident version)

35%	Inconvenient sales locations (farmers markets, roadside stands, orchards, etc.)	31%	Local meat often sold in large quantities (e.g. a quarter of a steer) – too expensive
53%	My grocery store doesn't carry many local products	9%	Other <b>Appendix B</b>
29%	Local meat often sold in large quantities (e.g. a quarter of a steer) causing storage problems	8%	Not interested in buying local foods

10. From the following list, please mark the FOUR most important policies you think the County should pursue. (please select no more than 4 items – no more than one in each response column) (Q10 on resident version)

Policy Option:	Most Important	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Important	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most Important	4 <sup>th</sup> Most Important
a. Protect ground & surface water quality (rivers, aquifers, etc.)	61%	19%	11%	9%
b. Keep productive ag land in row crops and dairy	37%	28%	19%	15%
c. Promote farms growing ready-to-consume food for the local market (community supported ag, roadside stands, etc.)	23%	24%	29%	24%
d. Reduce land use conflicts between agriculture and non-agriculture development	29%	27%	22%	22%
e. Preserve rural and small town character	33%	18%	24%	24%
f. Promote organic farming operations	23%	19%	24%	33%
g. Limit non-ag development to areas adjacent to cities/villages	30%	24%	22%	23%

11. What is your opinion about the following agricultural resource statements?

(Not included on resident version)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I could currently find productive farmland to rent or buy in Eau Claire County	6%	27%	23%	33%	11%
b. Productive farmland in Eau Claire County generally won't be available in 20 years	9%	33%	29%	24%	5%
c. Finding land on which to spread manure is hard	8%	18%	23%	45%	7%
d. Fragmented land/small parcels makes farming hard in Eau Claire County	11%	40%	24%	21%	4%
e. Groundwater supply is adequate in Eau Claire county	9%	57%	23%	10%	1%
f. Groundwater quality in Eau Claire County is good	10%	69%	14%	7%	0%
g. Surface water quality in Eau Claire County is good	6%	58%	19%	15%	1%

12. What is your opinion about the following agricultural statements?

(Not included on resident version)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Input supply mergers (feed, seed, chemicals) have seriously reduced competition/raised prices	32%	42%	17%	8%	1%
b. Processor/Buyer mergers have seriously reduced competition/raised prices	26%	37%	26%	10%	1%
c. Environmental regs for air, soil, and water are reasonable	4%	48%	24%	19%	5%
d. Direct marketing to consumers will be more important to the ag sector over the next 20 years	7%	43%	34%	14%	2%
e. Global ag markets will be more important to the ag sector over the next 20 years	19%	61%	18%	3%	0%
f. Income/Benefits from an off-farm job are needed to maintain my farm operation	28%	45%	14%	9%	5%

13. How important to you are the following potential programs/regulations?

(Not included on resident version)	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Neutral/No Opinion
a. To keep land in agriculture	57%	28%	7%	6%	2%
b. To ensure a supply of qualified ag labor (e.g. able to operate farm equipment)	15%	48%	21%	12%	4%
c. To recruit equipment/machinery businesses	9%	35%	35%	15%	6%
d. To recruit ag input supply businesses	8%	43%	32%	11%	6%
e. To recruit ag processing businesses	10%	37%	36%	10%	6%
f. To recruit suppliers for small farms	18%	41%	26%	8%	7%
g. To keep/attract family-owned farms	48%	32%	12%	5%	3%
h. To promote farming as option for next generation	49%	36%	10%	4%	2%
i. Financial assistance to aid farm asset transition from those retiring to next generation of farmers	44%	36%	11%	5%	4%

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

14. Gender	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	15. Age	<b>18-24</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-44</b>	<b>45-54</b>	<b>55-64</b>	<b>65+</b>
	78%	22%		1%	4%	10%	26%	26%	33%
16. Employment Status	<b>Employed full-time</b>	<b>Self – employed</b>	<b>Employed part-time</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Retired</b>	<b>Other: Appendix B</b>			
	37%	22%	6%	2%	32%	2%			
17. Highest level of Education	<b>Less than high school</b>	<b>High school diploma</b>	<b>Some college/tech</b>	<b>Tech college graduate</b>	<b>Bachelor’s degree</b>	<b>Grad or professional deg</b>			
	6%	32%	23%	18%	13%	9%			
18. How many years have you lived in Eau Claire County?	<b>0 to 5 years</b>		<b>5.1 – 10 years</b>		<b>11 to 20 years</b>		<b>Over 20 years</b>		
	3%		4%		10%		83%		
19. Number of children (under 18) in household	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5+</b>			
	83%	6%	5%	4%	1%	1%			
20. How many acres do you operate?	<b>40 acres</b>	<b>40-150 acres</b>	<b>150-500 acres</b>		<b>500-1000 acres</b>	<b>1000+ acres</b>			
	4%	27%	54%		10%	5%			
21. Crop Land Status	<b>Own</b>	<b>Rent</b>	<b>Both</b>						
	54%	4%	42%						
22. What percentage of acres farmed are rented?	<b>0%</b>	<b>1% – 25%</b>	<b>26% - 50%</b>		<b>51% - 75%</b>	<b>76% - 100%</b>			
	45%	25%	13%		10%	7%			
23. What percentage of last year’s annual household income came from farming?	<b>0%</b>	<b>1% – 25%</b>	<b>26% - 50%</b>		<b>51% - 75%</b>	<b>76% - 100%</b>			
	8%	33%	18%		15%	26%			

Eau Claire County thanks you for taking the time to provide your input regarding farmland issues. This information will be considered in our long range planning and budgeting.

**Please return your survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by February 21, 2013 to:**

**Survey Research Center,  
University of Wisconsin – River Falls  
124 Regional Development Institute  
410 S. Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022-5001**

## Appendix D - Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question – Agricultural Stakeholders

### Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Survey – 2013

1. Do you think the conversion of blocks of ag/forest land to non ag/forest uses is a growing problem in:	Major Problem	Problem	Small Problem	Not a Problem
a. Eau Claire County	23%	36%	21%	20%
b. State of Wisconsin	24%	38%	21%	17%

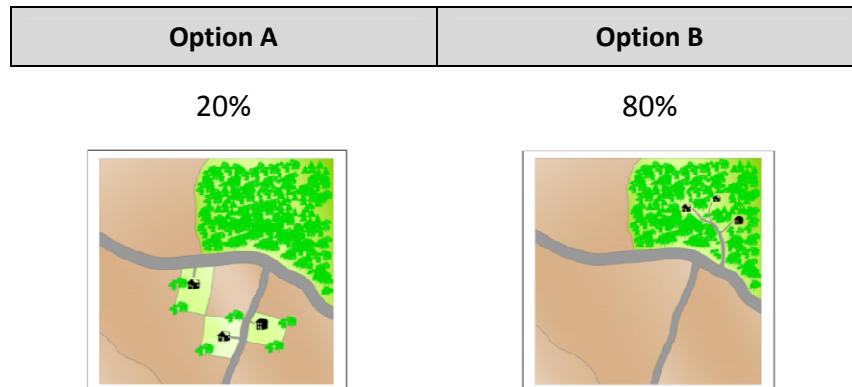
2. How <u>important to you</u> is it that Eau Claire County maintain/modernize the farmland preservation program and its associated tax credits?	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	No Opinion
	50%	23%	18%	7%	2%

3. How <u>valuable to you</u> are the following aspects of the farmland preservation program?	Very Valuable	Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Valuable	No Opinion
a. Zoning regulations that require consistent, low density land uses (1 house per 35 acres)	33%	24%	14%	26%	3%
b. Per acre tax credits for land covered by a farmland preservation agreement or is zoned A-1 (Exclusive Ag)	44%	37%	8%	8%	3%
c. Nutrient management plans tied to farmland preservation plans to protect natural resources and water	29%	37%	19%	14%	2%
d. Discussion of the future of agriculture in Eau Claire County as part of the official planning process	42%	35%	13%	9%	2%
e. Protection of large, contiguous blocks of productive ag land to ensure future ag and forest product production in Wisconsin	46%	28%	11%	11%	4%

4. Do you favor identifying specific areas in Eau Claire County as Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA's), which would provide increased tax credits and other financial incentives to operating farms within the AEA?	Yes	No	Don't Know
	62%	15%	23%

The current Farmland Preservation Program zoning regulation is a minimum of 35 acres to build a residential structure. Current law allows counties to use a density-based approach that would allow for the creation of smaller non-agricultural residential lots with a conservation easement protecting the balance of the land (this is called rural clustering).

5. In non-urban areas, would you prefer housing built in a design with larger individual lots (20-35 acres) and no shared open space (Option A) or a cluster design with smaller individual lots (3-5 acres) and shared open space and/or preserving agricultural land (Option B)? Assume lots cost the same in Options A and B. Please fill the circle for either Option A or Option B below to indicate your preference.



6. Which of the following best describes your views about rural clustering?

Don't Allow Rural Clustering	Allow with 1 Residence/20 Acres	Allow with 1 Residence/35 Acres (current law)	Allow with 1 Residence/40 Acres	Allow with 1 Residence/60 Acres	Allow with Other
14%	24%	24%	6%	9%	<a href="#">See Appendix B</a>
					23%

7. Do you believe the following programs/conditions will <u>effectively protect farmland</u> in Eau Claire County?	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Exclusive agricultural zoning	71%	12%	17%
b. Purchase of development rights	32%	33%	34%
c. Rural clustering	43%	32%	25%
d. Transfer of development rights	18%	30%	52%
e. Current economic conditions	40%	29%	31%
f. Direct sales of agricultural products	47%	26%	27%
g. Rising cost of agricultural land	45%	37%	17%
h. Rising prices of agricultural commodities	60%	23%	17%
i. Comprehensive planning	47%	20%	33%
j. Use-value assessment	55%	16%	28%
k. Tax credits for agricultural land	76%	14%	11%

8. To what extent do you agree/disagree that:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Development should be concentrated in, or adjacent to, existing cities & villages	36%	38%	14%	9%	4%
b. There is enough farmland in Eau Claire County to support the long-term economic viability of agriculture in the County	8%	44%	18%	25%	5%
c. The cost of farmland is making agriculture economically unsustainable in Eau Claire County	12%	32%	26%	28%	3%
d. We need more opportunities to purchase from and support farmers who are producing local food (vegetables, meat, honey, etc.)	23%	38%	29%	7%	3%
e. Eau Claire County should purchase conservation easements to preserve farmland, maintain open space, or protect important environmental areas	19%	23%	25%	22%	12%

9. What do you see as the major barriers to purchasing locally produced food (**mark all that apply**)

30%	Inconvenient sales locations (farmers markets, roadside stands, orchards, etc.)	21%	Local meat often sold in large quantities (e.g. a quarter of a steer) – too expensive
48%	My grocery store doesn't carry many local products	8%	Other <b>Appendix B</b>
20%	Local meat often sold in large quantities (e.g. a quarter of a steer) causing storage problems	11%	Not interested in buying local foods

10. From the following list, please mark the FOUR most important policies you think the County should pursue. (**please select no more than 4 items – no more than one in each response column**)

Policy Option:	Most Important	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Important	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most Important	4 <sup>th</sup> Most Important
a. Protect ground & surface water quality (rivers, aquifers, etc.)	51%	22%	16%	10%
b. Keep productive ag land in row crops and dairy	44%	25%	14%	17%
c. Promote farms growing ready-to-consume food for the local market (community supported ag, roadside stands, etc.)	13%	26%	36%	25%
d. Reduce land use conflicts between agriculture and non-agriculture development	31%	26%	20%	23%
e. Preserve rural and small town character	29%	16%	27%	28%
f. Promote organic farming operations	25%	21%	12%	42%
g. Limit non-ag development to areas adjacent to cities/villages	31%	21%	25%	23%

11. What is your opinion about the following agricultural resource statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I could currently find productive farmland to rent or buy in Eau Claire County	6%	27%	23%	33%	11%
b. Productive farmland in Eau Claire County generally won't be available in 20 years	9%	33%	29%	24%	5%
c. Finding land on which to spread manure is hard	8%	18%	23%	45%	7%
d. Fragmented land/small parcels makes farming hard in Eau Claire County	11%	40%	24%	21%	4%
e. Groundwater supply is adequate in Eau Claire county	9%	57%	23%	10%	1%
f. Groundwater quality in Eau Claire County is good	10%	69%	14%	7%	0%
g. Surface water quality in Eau Claire County is good	6%	58%	19%	15%	1%

12. What is your opinion about the following agricultural statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Input supply mergers (feed, seed, chemicals) have seriously reduced competition/raised prices	32%	42%	17%	8%	1%
b. Processor/Buyer mergers have seriously reduced competition/raised prices	26%	37%	26%	10%	1%
c. Environmental regs for air, soil, and water are reasonable	4%	48%	24%	19%	5%
d. Direct marketing to consumers will be more important to the ag sector over the next 20 years	7%	43%	34%	14%	2%
e. Global ag markets will be more important to the ag sector over the next 20 years	19%	61%	18%	3%	0%
f. Income/Benefits from an off-farm job are needed to maintain my farm operation	28%	45%	14%	9%	5%

13. How important to you are the following potential programs/regulations?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Neutral/No Opinion
a. To keep land in agriculture	57%	28%	7%	6%	2%
b. To ensure a supply of qualified ag labor (e.g. able to operate farm equipment)	15%	48%	21%	12%	4%
c. To recruit equipment/machinery businesses	9%	35%	35%	15%	6%
d. To recruit ag input supply businesses	8%	43%	32%	11%	6%
e. To recruit ag processing businesses	10%	37%	36%	10%	6%
f. To recruit suppliers for small farms	18%	41%	26%	8%	7%
g. To keep/attract family-owned farms	48%	32%	12%	5%	3%
h. To promote farming as option for next generation	49%	36%	10%	4%	2%
i. Financial assistance to aid farm asset transition from those retiring to next generation of farmers	44%	36%	11%	5%	4%



**DEMOGRAPHICS**

14. Gender	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	15. Age		<b>18–24</b>	<b>25–34</b>	<b>35–44</b>	<b>45–54</b>	<b>55–64</b>	<b>65+</b>	
	85%	15%	0%	1%	10%	26%	26%	37%			
16. Employment Status	<b>Employed full-time</b>	<b>Self – employed</b>	<b>Employed part-time</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Retired</b>	<b>Other: Appendix B</b>					
	25%	42%	3%	1%	28%	2%					
17. Highest level of Education	<b>Less than high school</b>	<b>High school diploma</b>	<b>Some college/tech</b>	<b>Tech college graduate</b>	<b>Bachelor’s degree</b>	<b>Grad or professional deg</b>					
	7%	34%	27%	15%	10%	6%					
18. How many years have you lived in Eau Claire County?	<b>0 to 5 years</b>		<b>5.1 – 10 years</b>		<b>11 to 20 years</b>			<b>Over 20 years</b>			
	1%		1%		6%			92%			
19. Number of children (under 18) in household	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5+</b>					
	83%	6%	5%	4%	1%	1%					
20. How many acres do you operate?	<b>40 acres</b>	<b>40-150 acres</b>	<b>150-500 acres</b>			<b>500-1000 acres</b>	<b>1000+ acres</b>				
	4%	27%	54%			10%	5%				
21. Crop Land Status	<b>Own</b>	<b>Rent</b>	<b>Both</b>								
	54%	4%	42%								
22. What percentage of acres farmed are rented?	<b>0%</b>	<b>1– 25%</b>	<b>26% - 50%</b>		<b>51% - 75%</b>		<b>76% - 100%</b>				
	45%	25%	13%		10%		7%				
23. What percentage of last year’s annual household income came from farming?	<b>0%</b>	<b>1– 25%</b>	<b>26% - 50%</b>		<b>51% - 75%</b>		<b>76% - 100%</b>				
	8%	33%	18%		15%		26%				

Eau Claire County thanks you for taking the time to provide your input regarding farmland issues. This information will be considered in our long range planning and budgeting.

**Please return your survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by February 21, 2013 to:**

**Survey Research Center,  
University of Wisconsin – River Falls  
124 Regional Development Institute  
410 S. Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022-5001**

## Appendix E - Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question – Rural Residents

### Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Survey – 2013

1. Do you think the conversion of blocks of ag/forest land to non ag/forest uses is a growing problem in:	<b>Major Problem</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Small Problem</b>	<b>Not a Problem</b>
a. Eau Claire County	29%	34%	16%	21%
b. State of Wisconsin	29%	37%	16%	18%

2. How <u>important to you</u> is it that Eau Claire County maintain/modernize the farmland preservation program and its associated tax credits?	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
	34%	34%	13%	12%	6%

3. Do you favor identifying specific areas in Eau Claire County as Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA's), which would provide increased tax credits and other financial incentives to operating farms within the AEA?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
	51%	19%	30%

The current Farmland Preservation Program zoning regulation is a minimum of 35 acres to build a residential structure. Current law allows counties to use a density-based approach that would allow for the creation of smaller non-agricultural residential lots with a conservation easement protecting the balance of land (this is called rural clustering).

4. In non-urban areas, would you prefer housing built in a design with larger individual lots (20-35 acres) and no shared open space (Option A) or a cluster design with smaller individual lots (3-5 acres) and shared open space and/or preserving agricultural land (Option B)? Assume lots cost the same in Options A and B. Please fill the circle for either Option A or Option B below to indicate your preference.

<b>Option A</b>	<b>Option B</b>
-----------------	-----------------

38%

62%



5. Which of the following best describes your views about rural clustering?

<b>Don't Allow Rural Clustering</b>	<b>Allow with 1 Residence/20 Acres</b>	<b>Allow with 1 Residence/35 Acres (current law)</b>	<b>Allow with 1 Residence/40 Acres</b>	<b>Allow with 1 Residence/60 Acres</b>	<b>Allow with Other</b>
19%	27%	31%	6%	5%	<b>Appendix B</b>
					12%

<b>6. To what extent do you agree/disagree that:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral/ No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
a. Development should be concentrated in, or adjacent to, existing cities & villages	34%	36%	17%	9%	4%
b. There is enough farmland in Eau Claire County to support the long-term economic viability of agriculture in the County	7%	36%	22%	26%	9%
c. The cost of farmland is making agriculture economically unsustainable in Eau Claire County	16%	37%	25%	18%	5%
d. We need more opportunities to purchase from and support farmers who are producing local food (vegetables, meat, honey, etc.)	38%	42%	13%	5%	2%
e. Eau Claire County should purchase conservation easements to preserve farmland, maintain open space, or protect important environmental areas	22%	30%	18%	18%	11%

<b>7. Do you believe the following programs/conditions will <u>effectively protect farmland</u> in Eau Claire County?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
a. Exclusive agricultural zoning	62%	17%	22%
b. Purchase of development rights	18%	43%	39%
c. Rural clustering	25%	48%	27%
d. Transfer of development rights	9%	37%	53%
e. Current economic conditions	23%	45%	33%
f. Direct sales of agricultural products	61%	18%	21%
g. Rising cost of agricultural land	24%	58%	18%
h. Rising prices of agricultural commodities	38%	38%	24%
i. Comprehensive planning	49%	18%	32%
j. Use-value assessment	44%	22%	33%
k. Tax credits for agricultural land	70%	16%	14%

<b>8. Do you favor/oppose creating an Eau Claire County program to buy conservations easements from farmers to preserve ag land?</b>	<b>Strongly Favor</b>	<b>Favor</b>	<b>Neutral/ No Opinion</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>Strongly Oppose</b>
	11%	28%	29%	18%	14%

9. What do you see as the major barriers to purchasing locally produced food **(mark all that apply)**

- |     |  |     |   |
|-----|--|-----|---|
| 37% | Inconvenient sales locations (farmers markets, roadside stands, orchards, etc.)                | 36% | Local meat often sold in large quantities (e.g. a quarter of a steer) – too expensive |
| 56% | My grocery store doesn't carry many local products   | 9%  | Other <u>Appendix B</u>   |
| 33% | Local meat often sold in large quantities (e.g. a quarter of a steer) causing storage problems | 6%  | Not interested in buying local foods  |

10. From the following list, please mark the FOUR most important policies you think the County should pursue. **(please select no more than 4 items – no more than one in each response column)**

Policy Option:	Most Important	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Important	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most Important	4 <sup>th</sup> Most Important
a. Protect ground & surface water quality (rivers, aquifers, etc.)	66%	18%	8%	8%
b. Keep productive ag land in row crops and dairy	34%	30%	22%	15%
c. Promote farms growing ready-to-consume food for the local market (community supported ag, roadside stands, etc.)	27%	24%	26%	23%
d. Reduce land use conflicts between agriculture and non-agriculture development	27%	27%	24%	22%
e. Preserve rural and small town character	35%	19%	23%	23%
f. Promote organic farming operations	22%	19%	29%	30%
g. Limit non-ag development to areas adjacent to cities/villages	30%	26%	21%	23%

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

11. Gender	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	12. Age	<b>18–24</b>	<b>25–34</b>	<b>35–44</b>	<b>45–54</b>	<b>55–64</b>	<b>65+</b>
	74%	26%		1%	5%	10%	25%	26%	32%
13. Employment Status	<b>Employed full-time</b>	<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>Employed part-time</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Retired</b>	<b>Other: Appendix B</b>			
	43%	13%	7%	2%	34%	2%			
14. Highest level of Education	<b>Less than high school</b>	<b>High school diploma</b>	<b>Some college/tech</b>	<b>Tech college graduate</b>	<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	<b>Grad or professional deg</b>			
	6%	30%	20%	19%	14%	10%			
15. How many years have you lived in Eau Claire County?	<b>0 to 5 years</b>		<b>5.1 – 10 years</b>		<b>11 to 20 years</b>		<b>Over 20 years</b>		
	4%		5%		12%		78%		

Eau Claire County thanks you for taking the time to provide your input regarding farmland issues. This information will be considered in our long range planning and budgeting.

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