

# SUMMARY REPORT: 2002 OHIO SURVEY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

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## Study Background

The Ohio Survey of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Issues Project was conducted by a team of faculty associated with the Rural Sociology Program within the Department of Human and Community Resource Development (HCRD) and OSU Extension. The primary objective of the study was to measure Ohioans attitudes on a variety of topics related to food, agriculture, and the environment.

## Sample Characteristics

A mail survey of nearly 8,000 randomly selected Ohioans was conducted between June and September, 2002. To ensure sufficient responses from both rural and urban citizens of the state and enable regional comparisons, the sample was stratified by region of the state and metropolitan versus nonmetropolitan character of the county. The response rate to the survey was over 56 percent.

The demographic characteristics of survey respondents compare favorably to 2000 census statistics for the adult population of Ohioans in terms of age, gender, proportion of households with children, employment status, and household income. The sample was slightly more educated, reported slightly higher home values, and included a smaller proportion of African

American respondents compared to the state

wide population. The most substantial difference between the sample and the state population is that a larger proportion of sample respondents reported residing in owner-occupied housing units compared to the general state population.

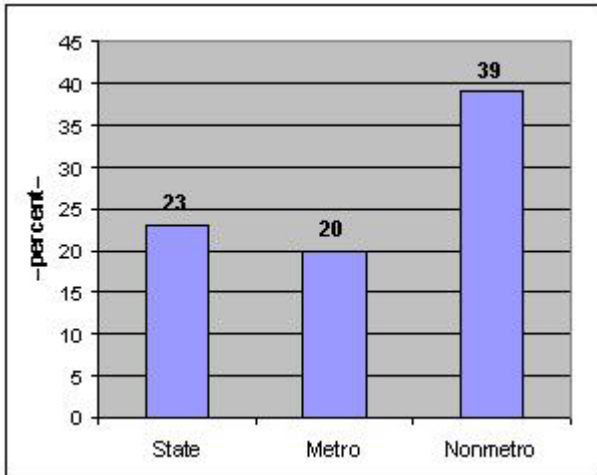
## Study Findings and Highlights

Residential Preferences: A large proportion of city and suburban respondents (28 percent) reported they would prefer to live in the country. On the other hand, very few (less than three percent) of country residents indicated a preference for living in the city or suburbs.

Parents and Grandparents in Farming: Over 23 percent of all respondents reported their parents had/have a farm, with 39 percent of respondents in nonmetropolitan counties reporting this and 20 percent of those residing in metropolitan counties. Over 49 percent of all respondents reported their grandparents had/have a farm, with 63 percent of nonmetropolitan respondents indicating this to be true and 46 percent of metro respondents reporting this to be the case. There are generational differences, though, with younger respondents much less likely to

report a parent or grandparent had/has a farm compared to respondents older than 65.

Figure 1: Respondents whose parents farmed



Nearly 41 percent of all respondents report they do not know any farmers, while more than 20 percent indicate they know more than five farmers. Over 20 percent of respondents report visiting with a member of a farm family more than five or more times a month while 51 percent report they generally have no conversations with members of farm families in the average month.

**Agriculture and Quality of Life:** Ninety-two percent of respondent respondents agreed or strongly agreed that agriculture positively contributes to the quality of life in Ohio. Eighty percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the state’s economy will suffer if Ohio continues to lose farmers.

**Farmland Preservation:** Most respondent (92 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that Ohio’s most productive farmland should be preserved for agriculture. Twenty percent of respondents agree or strongly agreed that the loss of farmland is acceptable if it creates economic growth and new jobs in the state.

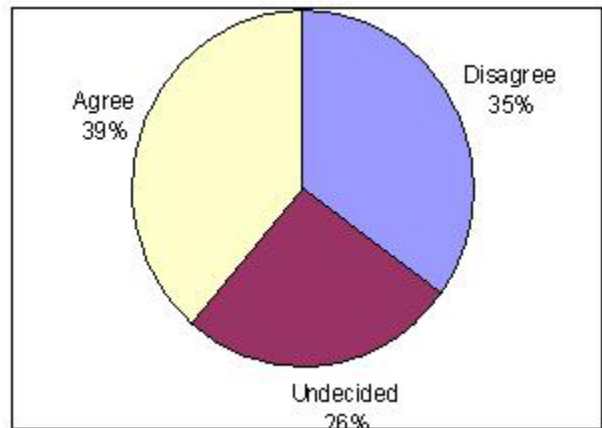
**Trust of Farmers:** A large proportion (59 percent) of respondents indicated they trust Ohio farmers to protect the environment. And agriculture was rated as having a lower level of risk to the state’s environmental quality and natural resources compared to industrial activities,

urban sprawl, disposal of waste in landfills, residential use of chemicals on lawns, and logging or mining.

**Buying Local:** Nearly 20 percent of respondents indicated they frequently purchase farm produce or other food items at a farmer’s market or roadside stand and over 49 percent indicated they occasionally do so. Nearly 81 percent of respondents indicated that when given a choice, they prefer to buy foods produced locally.

**Food Safety:** Over 39 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that food is not as safe as it was 10 years ago. Sixty-two percent of respondents did not think that imported foods are as safe as foods produced in the United States. Over 37 percent of respondents thought organic foods are safer than conventionally produced foods while 22 percent disagreed with that idea and 41 percent were undecided.

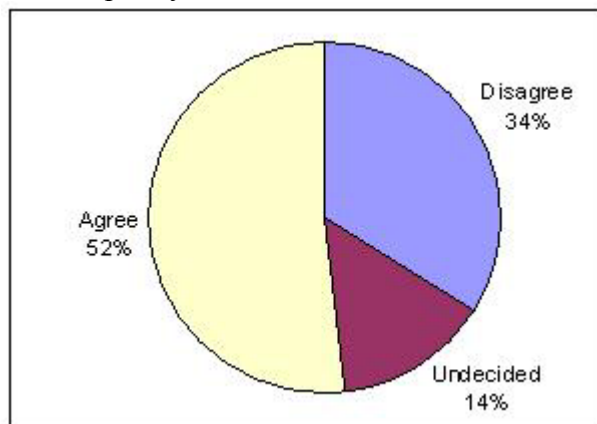
Figure 2: Food is not as safe as 10 years ago



**Animal Welfare:** Opinions of respondents were quite mixed in regards to animal welfare. Over 51 percent of respondents indicated they thought humans have too little respect for the quality of life of animals while 34 percent disagreed with this observation. Nearly 48 percent of respondents thought that increased regulation of the treatment of animals in farming is needed and nearly 23 percent disagreed with this

idea. Over 40 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that hunting is an acceptable form of recreation while nearly 43 percent strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

Figure 3: Do humans have too little respect for animal quality of life?

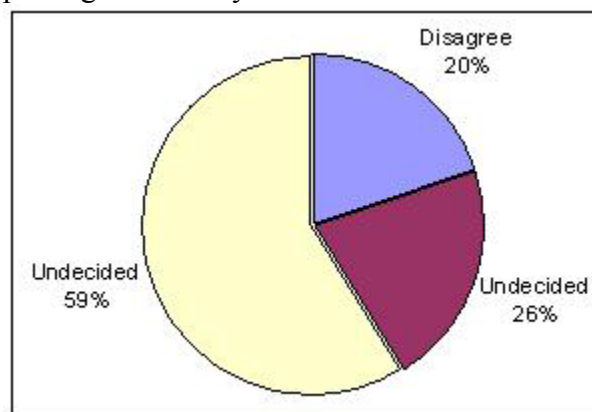


Concern about Large-scale Poultry and Livestock: Nearly 21 percent of all respondents indicated they are very concerned about the development of large-scale poultry and livestock facilities in Ohio. Although only a third of respondents indicated they were familiar with the issues surrounding large-scale livestock facilities. Among those familiar with the issues, over 34 percent indicated they were very concerned about this type of development in Ohio.

Large-scale Poultry and Livestock Issues: Nearly 59 percent of respondents familiar with the issues associated with large-scale poultry and livestock facilities indicated they thought this type of development was a threat to rural quality of life. A similar proportion (57 percent) indicated a belief that there should be increased regulation of livestock production in Ohio to protect the environment. Over 71 percent of respondents familiar with the issues agreed or strongly agreed that these facilities pose a serious threat to water and stream quality in the state.

Biotechnology: Nearly 62 percent of respondents indicated they were undecided as to whether biotechnology in agriculture is having a positive impact on the environment. Similarly, 59 percent of respondents reported being undecided as to whether biotechnology is having a negative impact on the safety of our food supply.

Figure 4: Is biotechnology negatively impacting food safety?



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The project research team included Jeff S. Sharp (project leader), Molly Bean Smith, Mark Tucker, Sherrie Whaley from the Department of Human and Community Resource Development and Greg Davis, Jerry Thomas, and Denny Hall. of OSU Extension.

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