East Side Public Workshop, Pittsford Community Center, 03/27/24

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Climate, fewer hazardous natural events • Proximity to markets, good infrastructure (roads, etc.) • Local population, close to customers • High quality soils • Advocacy and Education, Cornell cooperative extension • Growing appreciation of local farmers post-covid • Networking, supportive farming community • Lake Ontario, Finger Lakes • Tourism • Interest in small scale processing • Enough Rain • Recognition – value of ag (the public, decision-makers, government	• Lack of local/state support • Development – traffic, housing, increasing cost of land, conflict (spraying, equipment), residents lack awareness of realities of working farms (noise, smell) • Residents lack knowledge on importance of local farming, lack of education • Farmers aging out, land owners aging out – farms not being passed down generations, inherited farmland sold to the highest bidder (not to farmers) • Barriers of first generation farmers, lack of access, compete with development, not east to transfer land, no transition planning • Incentives for solar ($$), pressure to sell land to solar development • Price per acre is very high • Disconnection between residents and farmers, farms located on fringes, lack of interaction • Ag more appreciated in surrounding counties • Ag is a lower priority for decision-makers, lack of funding/education, don't recognize ag as a boost to the economy, as a job creator • Pushing processing out of the state, competition out-of-state • Drainage • Wildlife • Farmers are a minority in the community • Cost of farming, cost of inputs • Zoning, water districts • Food security of region • Lack of diversity (gender, race)
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• Local farmer-organized events, fairs, festivals – engage younger people, education on the importance/difficulties/hard work of farming • BOCES program, education, fields trips • Space for new processers/different models • Community-supported agriculture great local models • Agri-tourism, recreation • Shift in education towards the working sector, there is space in agriculture • Larger impact, economy, network • Increased interest in organize food, could be a niche for this areas (farms closer together, fewer pesticides • Engage with famers (local, county, state levels) • Have a voice in government, farmers running to be representatives, open farm days • Proximity to populated areas • Local labor (if trained), apprenticeships • American Farmland Trust (funding)	• State mandates. • Climate/weather • Solar + wind • Restrictions on pesticides • Competition from less regulated countries (south America, etc.) • Selling land to foreign purchasers • Short-term thinking • Decrease in local production • State initiative and policies in conflict with agriculture • Lack of diversification • Residential encroaching on ag, out of state purchase of land • Zoning • Turnover of local decision-makers

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Ogden – country feel/rural character, attracts residents • Local Ag plans • Prime fertile soil • Eastern seaboard markets – product to market, proximity and access • Crops – large variety (apples, etc.) • People, Ag community, knowledge, experience, legacy	• Zoning – allows for incompatible businesses/uses • Taxes, assessments/reassessments • Certain agencies (NRCS) – conflicts, discourage certain practices, lack of cooperation, unfriendly • State overreach, requirements • Labor union threats – sell/rent farm may be difficult, stays with land, lack of labor • Out of state competition – loss of industries/processors, move out of NYS
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• COMIDA $ into Ag, assistance for young farmer • Low-interest loans • Planning initiatives (sooner rather than later) • Supportive neighbors, interested in Ag • Promotion, put ag in a good light, farmers markets, fresh food close by, benefits of farming • Return of processing plants to NYS • State → work to simplify processes, hiring processes and programs (employment), immigration policy, reduce duplication of services • People, community, farm markets • Education of decision-makers, storytelling • CSAs, agri-tourism • Monroe County taking action on ag protection plan update	• Solar development – productivity of panels, take up land, leaching, water threats, decommissioning issues, lack of local community authority • NY energy policy – move to electric, incompatible with farm equipment. • Transmission infrastructure, pipelines • State push for residential development, encroach on ag land • Urban sprawl • Drainage – dead ash trees in streams, regulations limit clean up • Negative sentiments regarding natural gas, anti-natural gas policies • Increase in taxes • Increased cost of farming (cost of inputs increasing, but prices/incomes don't match) • Farmers aging out • Outside purchases of land (out of state, out of country)

Virtual Public Workshop, 03/27/24

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<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
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Prime Soils
Favorable climate and clean water in the County
A growing interest in farming / new farmers

Some are buying smaller sized farms and keeping rural land in production

Local colleges have educational programs for agriculture and many include specifications/specialties

BOCES Monroe has an agricultural program
Genesee Community College
Monroe Community College
FLCC

Grant/agency resources - NYS Grant programs to support farmers in high development pressure area

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Fragmented land use authority in the County
Different communities have different zoning laws, some of which do not sufficiently protect farming and agricultural land
There's a very high cost of entry into the agricultural industry right now especially to purchase land
Much of the farming population is aging and their children are less interested in taking over the business
The CCE of Monroe County is less farmer-oriented than CCEs in other counties
While there are educational and technical resources available in the county, there is a lack of awareness of them/how to access them
Lack of awareness among public about realities of living in a farming community
Municipalities challenged with how to regulate small-scale agriculture such as chicken coops, bees

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Encouraging and supporting development where infrastructure already exists and keeping development off of farmland
Opportunities to support younger and newer farmers through education, programming, and technical tools
Leveraging agency resources like the Cornell Cooperative Extension Tool Kit to better support farmers
Provide transition planning for younger generations to access land and resources
Opportunity to allow small-scale farming for residents in more developed area and educate other residents on the benefits of it
Educate the public/increase awareness of the realities of living around farm operations and the existing protections that exist of that land
Conservation easements/purchase of development rights

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Farmland being purchased and converted into housing/development/non-agricultural uses instead of kept as agricultural land
County will plan to connect with local governments to provide guidance on how to slow or manage development on farmland
Farmers are starting to age and leave the industry
Climate change will result in places like Monroe County becoming climate destinations, which will mean more people coming to/living in the County. Municipalities will have to balance this with managing development on farmland.
Portions of the public are often against small scale urban agriculture
Farmland has a high value right now, and for many farmers they plan to sell their land as funds for retirement, this results in development pressure
Farmers may make more money selling their land to developers than to others planning to keep it as agricultural land

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Virtual Public Workshop, 03/27/24

Strengths

- Ogden – country feel/rural character, attracts residents
- Local Ag plans
- Prime fertile soil
- Eastern seaboard markets – product to market, proximity and access
- Crops – large variety (apples, etc.)
- People, Ag community, knowledge, experience, legacy

Weaknesses

- Zoning – allows for incompatible businesses/uses
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- Soil and water – conflicts, discourage certain practices, lack of cooperation, unfriendly
- State overreach, requirements
- Labor union threats – sell/rent farm may be difficult, stays with land, lack of labor
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Threats

- Solar development – productivity of panels, take up land, leaching, water threats, decommissioning issues, lack of local community authority
- NY energy policy – move to electric, incompatible with farm equipment.
- Transmission infrastructure, pipelines
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- Urban sprawl
- Drainage – dead ash trees in streams, regulations limit clean up
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- Increase in taxes
- Increased cost of farming (cost of inputs increasing, but prices/incomes don't match)
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- Outside purchases of land (out of state, out of country)

Opportunities

- COMIDA $ into Ag, assistance for young farmer
- Low-interest loans
- Planning initiatives (sooner rather than later)
- Supportive neighbors, interested in Ag
- Promotion, put ag in a good light, farmers markets, fresh food close by, benefits of ag
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Virtual Public Workshop, 03/27/24

- State → work to simplify processes, hiring processes and programs (employment), immigration policy, reduce duplication of services
- People, community, farm markets
- Education of decision-makers, storytelling
- CSAs, agri-tourism
- Monroe County taking action on ag protection plan update

Monroe County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

FARMER AND FARMLAND OWNER SURVEY REPORT

Contents

Overview

Introduction

To maximize farmer and farmland owner participation in the Monroe County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan, Monroe County staff and its planning consultant, assisted by the Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan Steering Committee, designed and distributed a survey to farmers and farmland owners throughout Monroe County. The survey results helped to identify the most pressing issues and priorities for Monroe County farmers and agricultural landowners and aided with identifying implementation actions recommended in the Plan. This survey campaign yielded a total of **33** survey responses. This report is an attempt to synthesize the diverse range of perspectives of those involved with agriculture in Monroe County and identify the most pressing issues in the region that the County can help address.

Survey Methodology

Between April 2024 and November 2024, surveys were distributed and collected from farmers and agricultural landowners throughout Monroe County. To encourage farmer and farmland owner participation in the Monroe County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, a survey was made available to farmers and farmland owners throughout Monroe County. To increase participation, steering committee members publicized the survey through newsletters and email lists. The survey was also available through the project website.

The input gathered provides an overview of conditions and trends as well as insight into farmer support for potential initiatives to be included in the plan. Responses from full-time and part-time farmers are compared as well as those from non-farming farmland owners.

Key Findings

The cost of land, production, and commodities are currently the biggest challenges for farmers. Finding cost effective and suitable land to farm was identified as a major challenge for both full-time and part-time farmers (86% full-time & 60% part-time). Additionally, the cost of commodities and production (i.e. equipment, fuel, labor) (86% full-time) continues to be an ever-growing challenge as costs continue to climb due to inflation.

Rented farmland is more important to full-time farmers than it is for part-time farmers. 72% of full-time farmers said that losing the land they rent/lease would have a serious to moderate impact on their operations while 40% of part-time farmers said so. Solutions should be geared towards finding pathways for farmers to own their land or develop protections for conserving leased farmland.

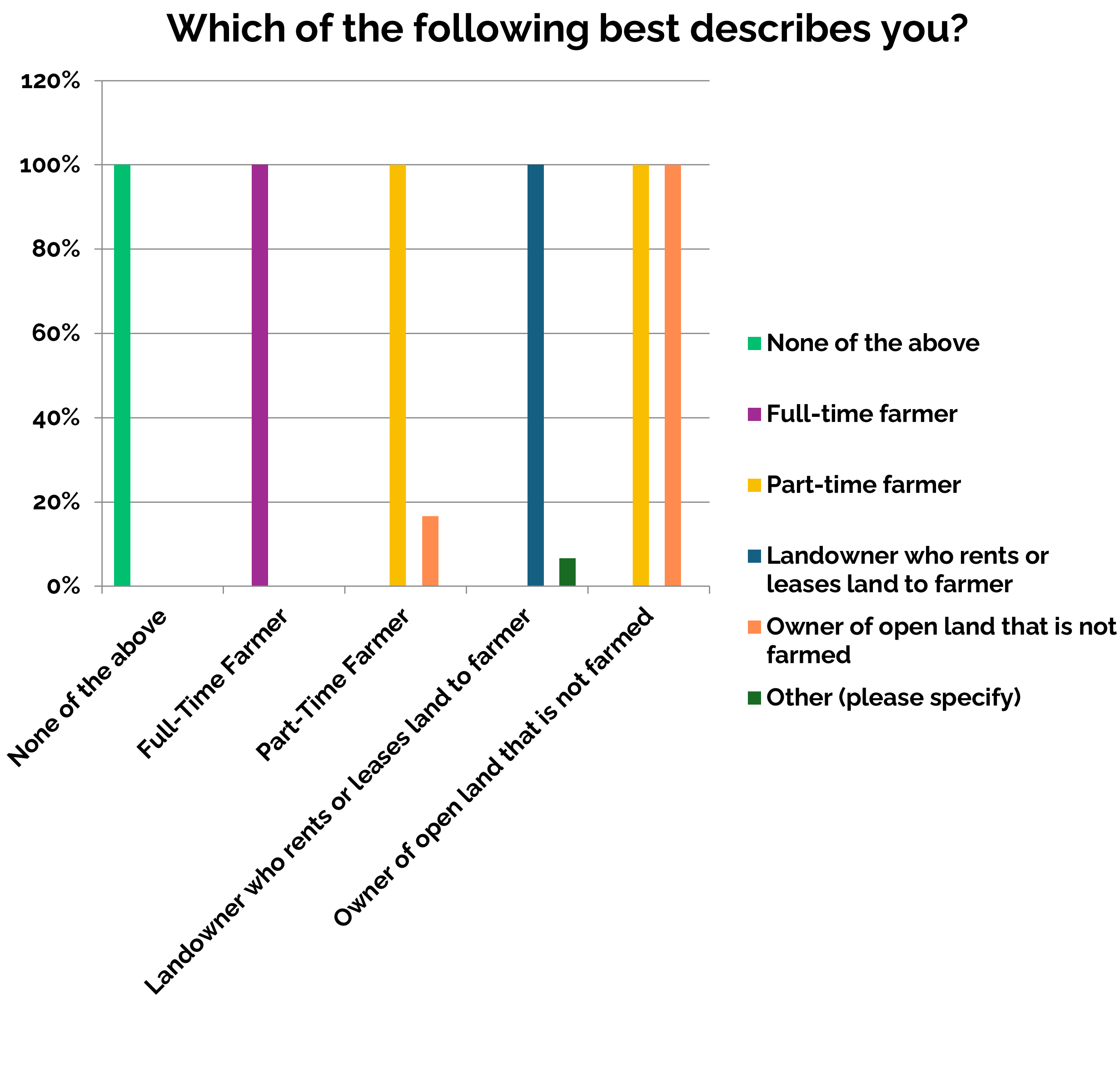
The loss of farmland, high land costs, and limited suitable land options are perceived as the biggest challenges for farmers in 10 years. 86% of full-time farmers indicated large scale development is one of the biggest challenges they see in the future of farming in Monroe County. Similarly, 86% of full-time farmers and 60% of part-time farmers see high land costs and lack of suitable land for sale as one of the biggest issues. These responses demonstrate respondents desire solutions to the loss of productive farmland and to ensure farming is done by people who are from Monroe County and who still view it as an economically viable way of life.

Farmers see opportunities in diversifying their business. 75% of part-time farmer respondents see agritourism as a key opportunity in the next 10 years, 100% of part-time farmers and 50% of full-time farmers see direct-to-consumer sales as a key opportunity, and 75% of part-time farmers see product diversification as a key opportunity. Similarly, the most effective ways farmers see for retaining agriculture in Monroe County is providing marketing support for agritourism, allowing farmers to operate non-agricultural businesses on their farm, and encouraging more farm stands and farmers markets. Collectively all these opportunities will allow farmers to expand the products and services they offer, thus improving the economic viability of their business.

Farmer Survey Results

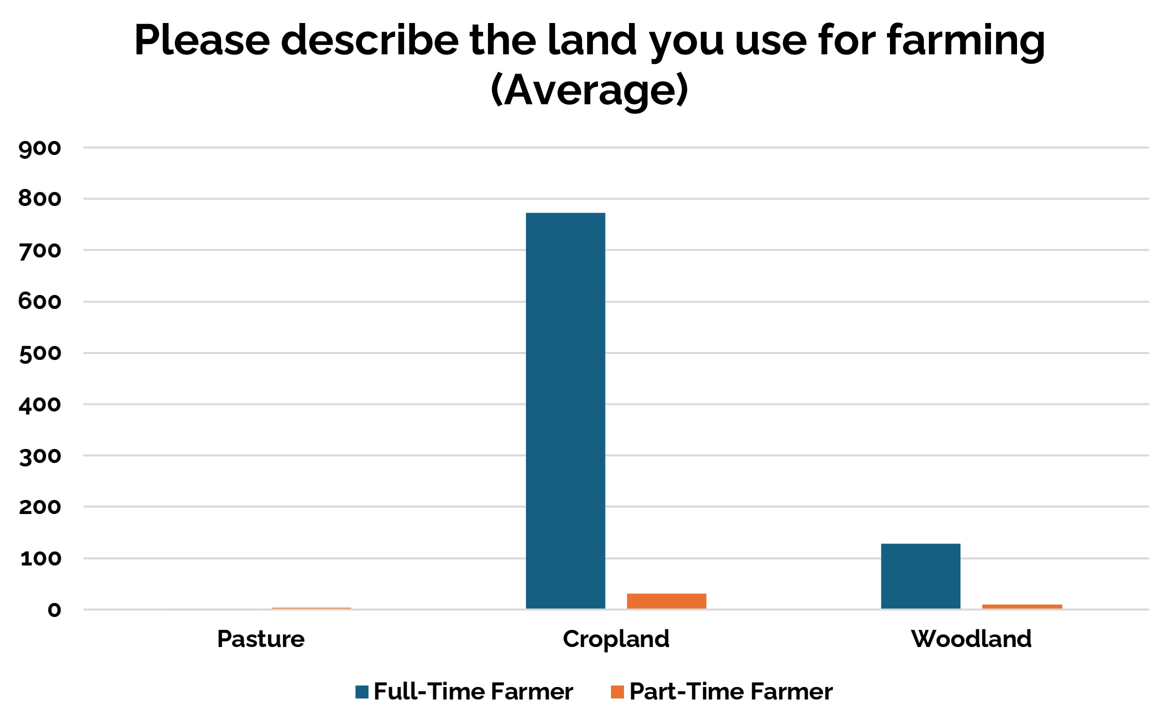
Respondent Characteristics

1. **Which of the following best describes you?**
   Of the 33 survey respondents, 17 indicated they are either a full-time or part-time farmer. 33% (11) stated they farm full-time while 18% (6) indicated they only work part-time at their farm. One other response indicates that a landowner owns a woodlot of 50 acres.



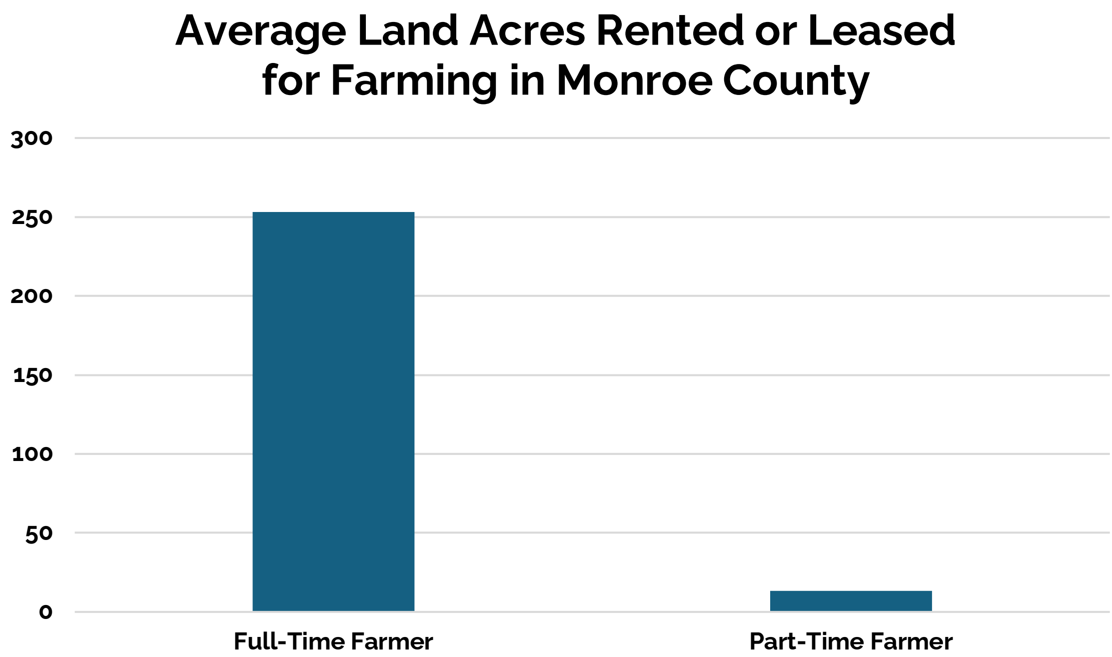
2. **How many acres of farmland do you own that is currently used for agricultural production (cropland, pasture or woodland)?**
   Among survey respondents, 100% of land used by full-time farmers is used for cropland or woodland purposes, while 71% of land used by full-time farmers is used for pasture purposes. Comparatively, 100% of land used by part-time farmers is used for cropland purposes, while 80% of land used by part-time farmers is used for pasture and woodland purposes.

3. **Please describe the land you use for farming.**
   Among survey respondents, full-time farms use on average more land than part-time farmers. Full-time farmers who responded to this survey use on average 772.3 acres of cropland, 0.7 acres of pastureland, and 91.2 acres of woodland. Conversely, part-time farmers use on average 31.3 acres of cropland, 4 acres of pastureland, and 9.2 acres of woodland.

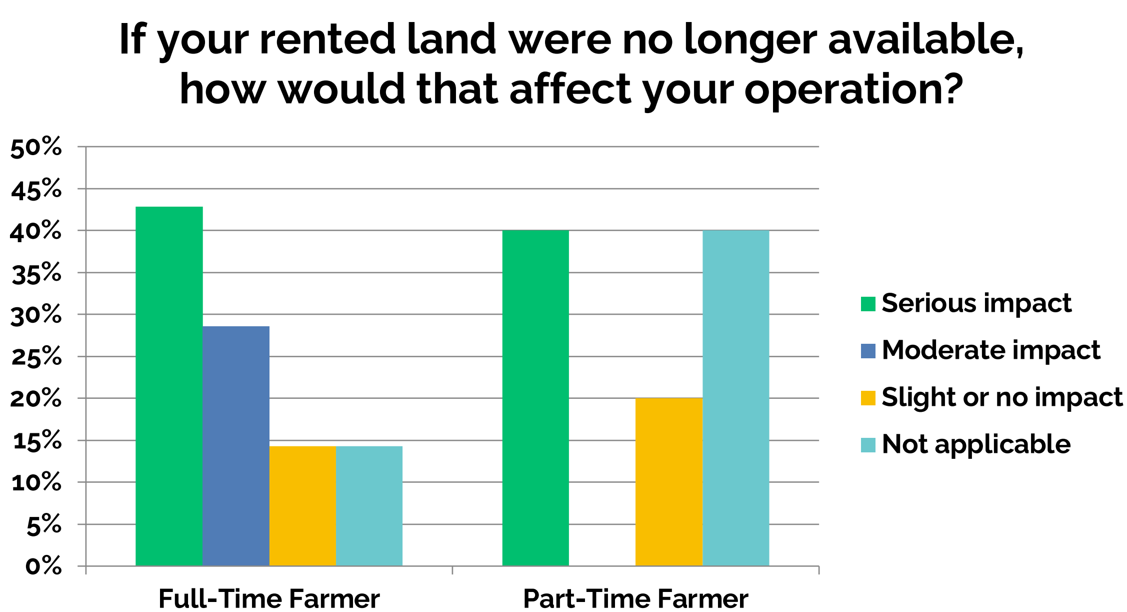


4. **Is all the farmland you work in Monroe County?**
   Among survey respondents, 71% of all the land worked by full-time farmers is within Monroe County. Similarly, 60% of all the land that part-time farmers work is in Monroe County. Responses as to where else these farmers work, responses included Genesee, Livingston, and Steuben Counties.

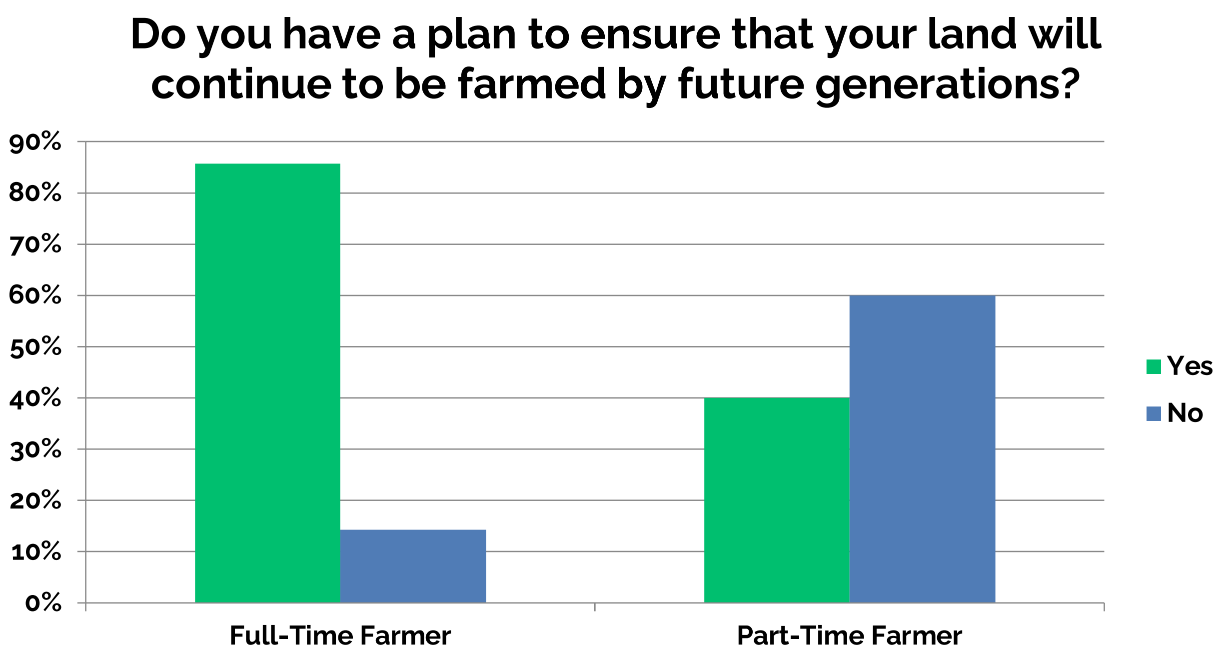
5. **How many acres do you rent or lease for farming?**
Among survey respondents, seven full-time farmers and five part-time farms indicated they rent or lease land for their agricultural operations. Full-time farmers rent or lease on average 253.1 acres of land while part-time farmers rent or lease on average 13.5 acres of land.



6. **If your rented land were no longer available, how would that affect your operation?**
When asked how impactful the loss of their rented land would be on their operations. 72% of full-time farmers who lease land said it would have a serious (43%) to moderate (29%) impact, while 40% of part-time farmers who lease land said it would have a serious impact.



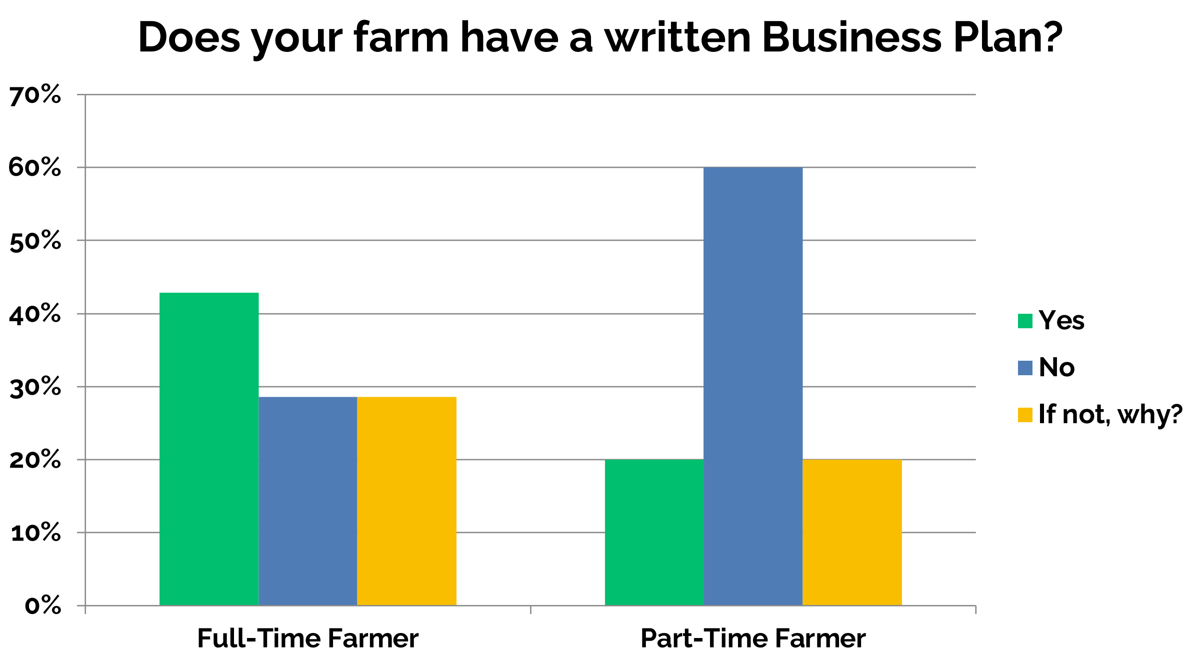
7. **Do you have a plan to ensure that your land will continue to be farmed by future generations?** When asked if they have a plan to ensure their land is continued to be used for farming, 86% of full-time farmers said yes and have indicated that a family member would continue to farm. Another respondent indicated having an agricultural easement placed on the farm through the Genesee Land Trust. 60% of part-time farmers said they do not have a plan for the future of their farm.



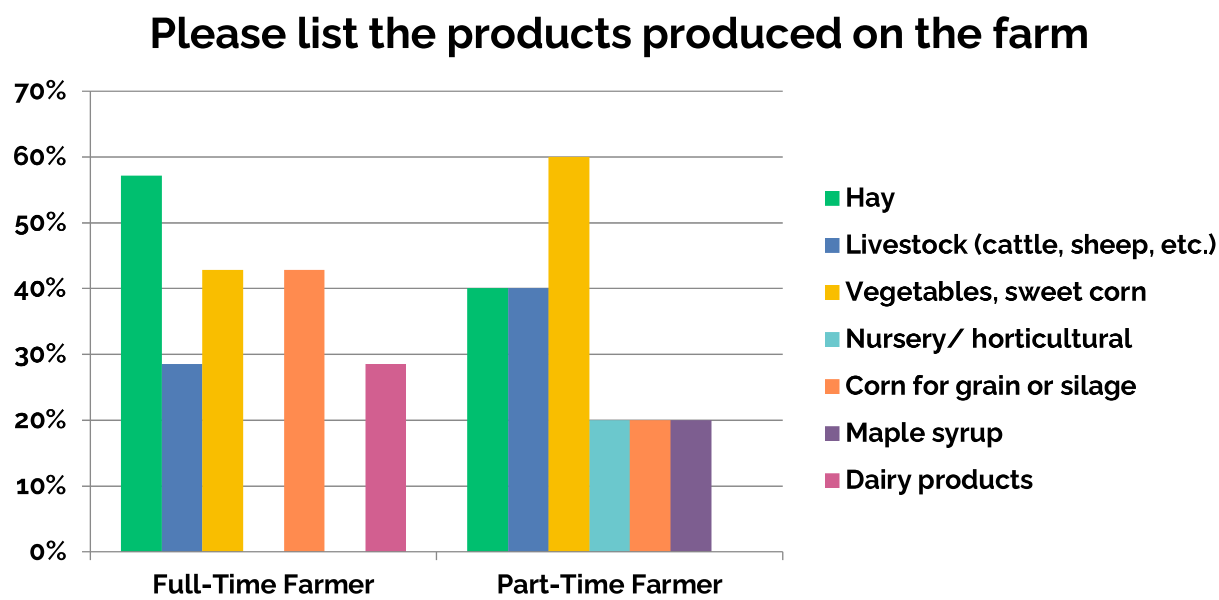
Farming Operations

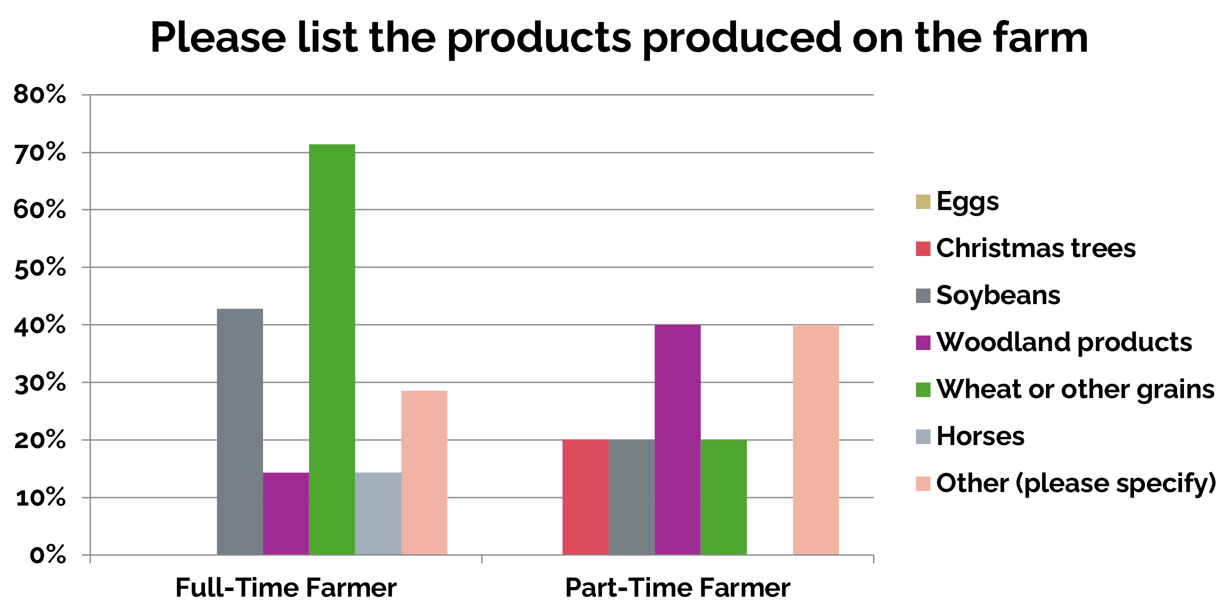
8. Does your farm have a written business plan?

Few farmers who responded to this survey indicated they have a written business plan for their operations Common responses for those who do not have a written business plan include the small size of their operations, as well as the long lifespan of their business thus far. A total of four farmers (two full-time and 2 part-time) did indicate they would be interested in receiving technical assistance to prepare a business plan.



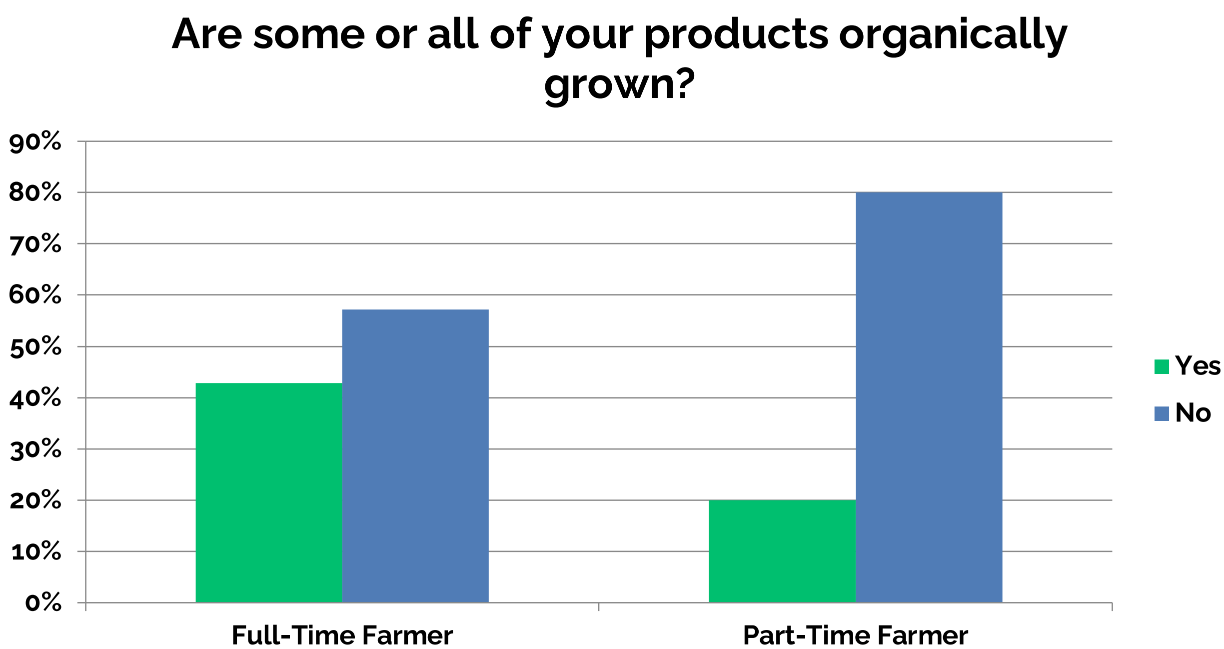
9. **Please list the products produced on your farm.**
Among survey respondents, the most commonly produced products include wheat or other grains (71% full-time), vegetables and sweet corn (60% part-time & 43% full-time), hay (57% full-time), and corn and for grain and silage (43% full-time). Other responses include dairy farming for their personal cows and heifers without public retail operations, as well as fruits.





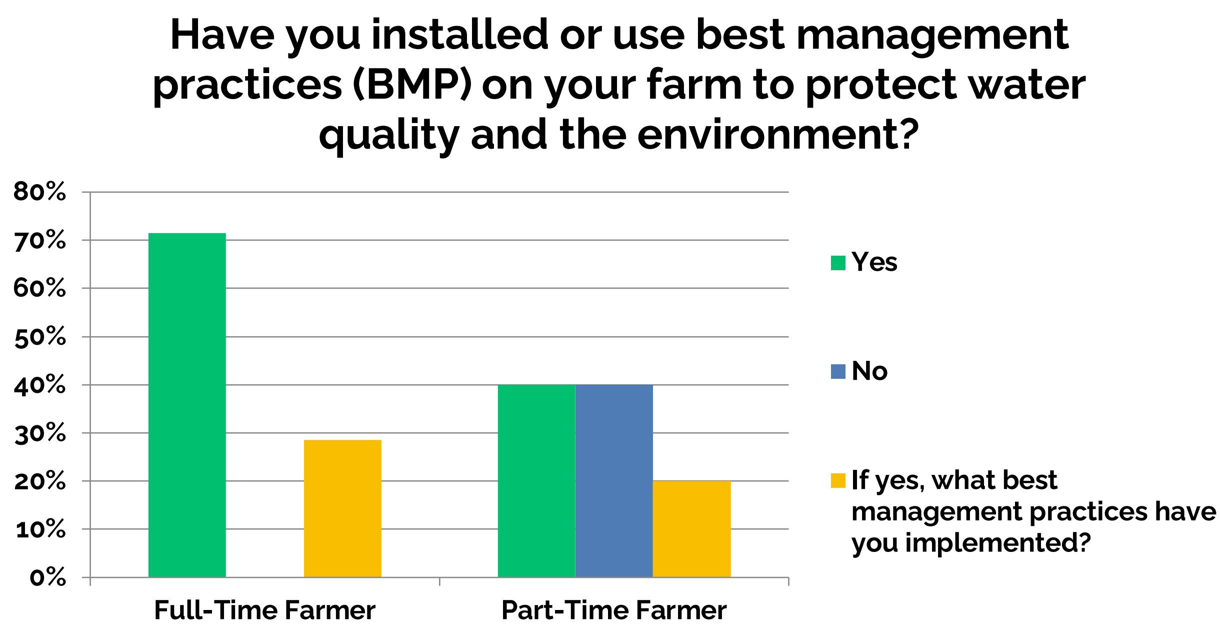
10. Are some or all of your products organic?

The majority of both full-time and part-time farmers do not produce organic products; the percentages of farmers who do not produce organic produce includes 80% of part-time farmers and 57% of full-time farmers. Conversely, a total of 43% of full-time surveyed farmers do produce organic products. Certified organic though the US Department of Agriculture or a farmed pledge that their products are organic were the two most common responses to what type of organic regulations they follow.



11. Have you installed best management practices (BMPs) on your farm to protect water quality and the environment?

The majority of farmers responding to the survey have installed best management practices (BMPs). Among full-time farmers, 71% have installed while 40% of part-time farmers have. Common BMPs utilized include strip till, crops, the Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation Plan, specific crop rotation, reduced tillage, contour strip field layout, water diversion ditches, grassed waterways and field buffers, underground drainage, and cover crops. Farmers have also indicated that they work with Cornell Integrated Pest Management, as well as the Department of Environmental Conservation in Steuben County.



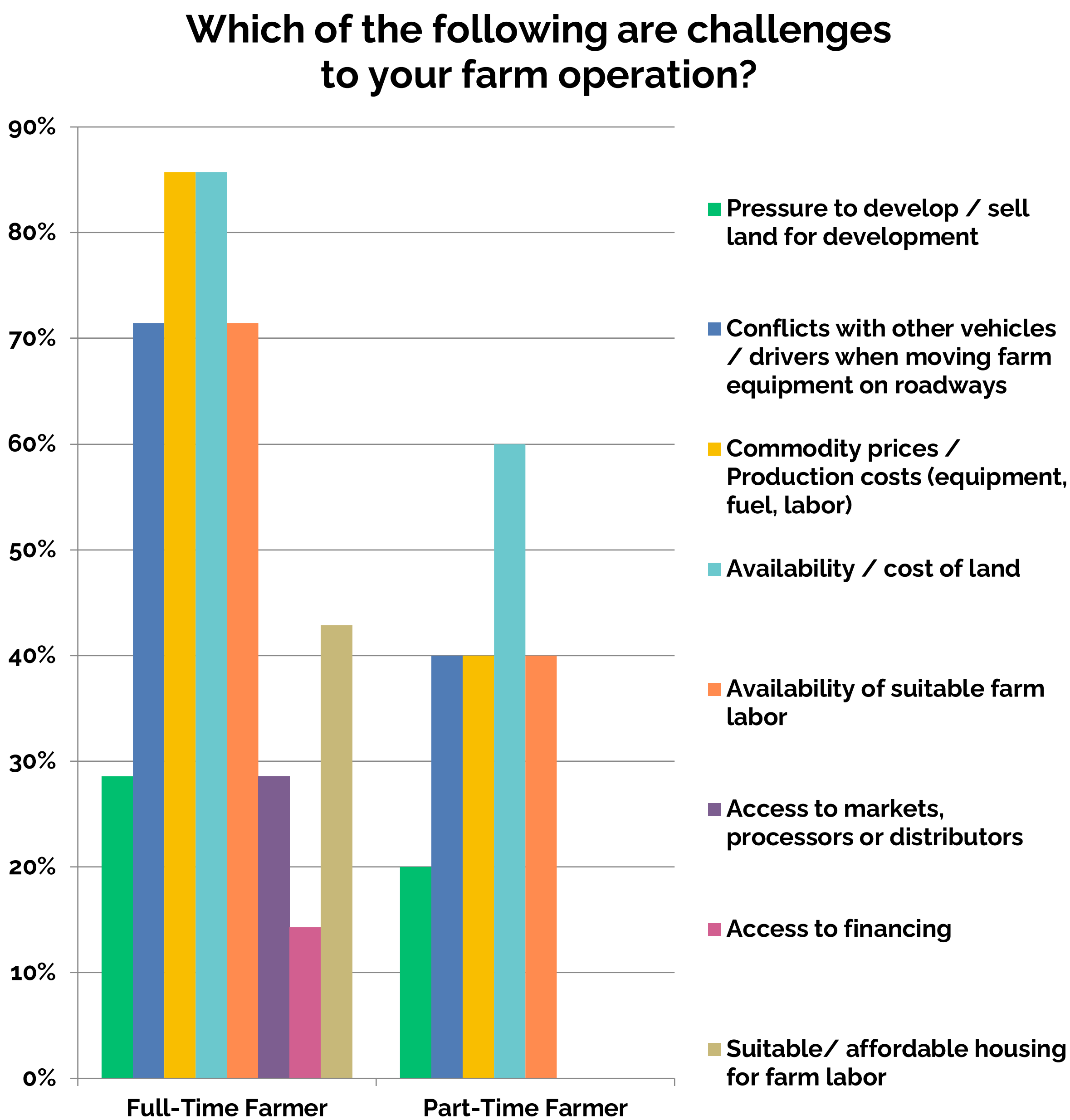
12. Do your farm have woodlands and how do you use your woodlands?

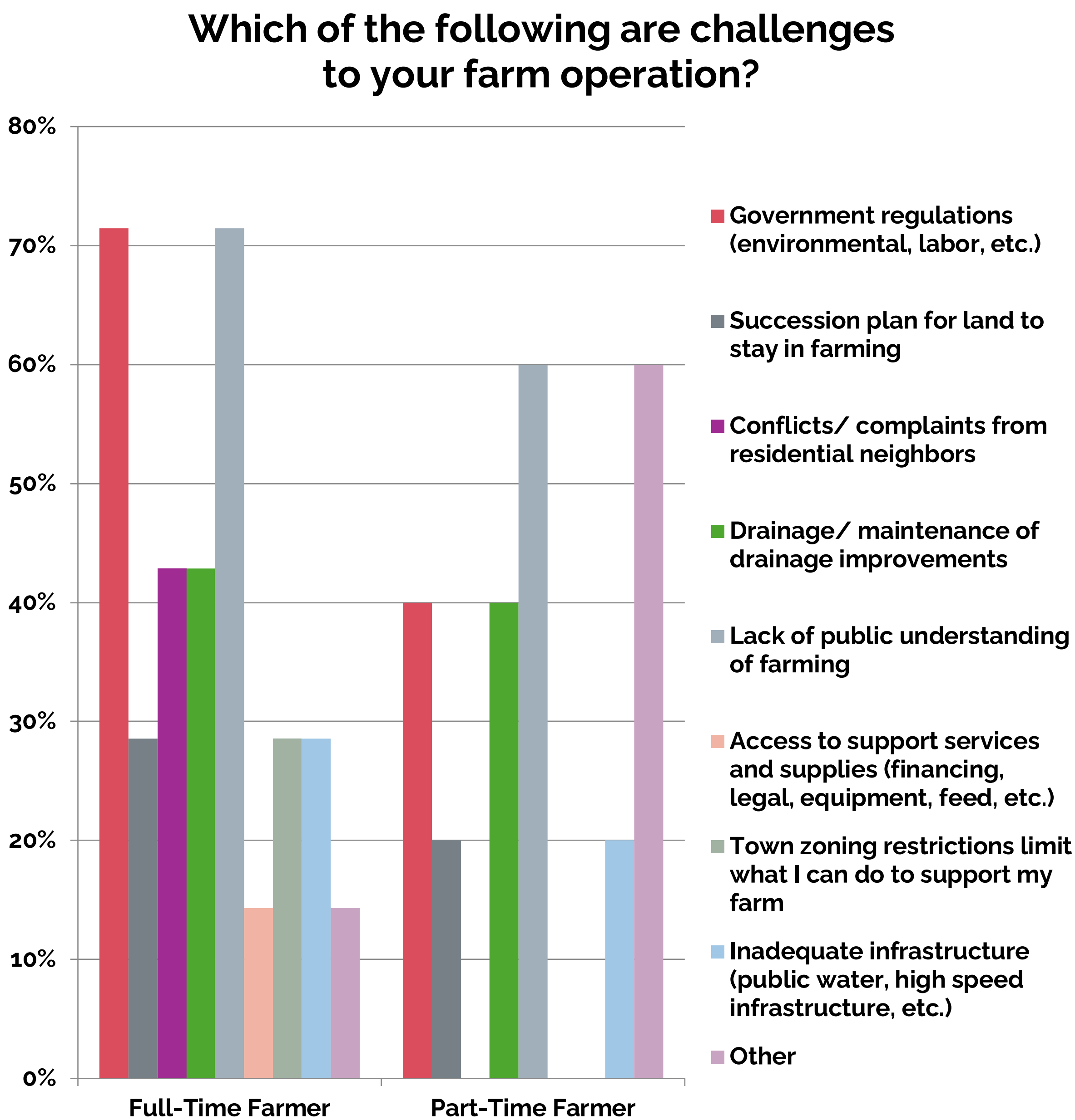
Among survey respondents, most full-time and part-time farmers have woodlands as part of their farms. Overall, 100% of full-time farmers and 80% of part-time farmers reported woodlands on their farms. Woodlands on farms are most used for timber harvesting (75% full-time & 67% part-time), hunting/recreation (50% full-time), pasturing livestock (33% part-time), and maple syrup production (33% part-time).

Challenges and Opportunities

13. Which of the following are challenges to your farm operation?

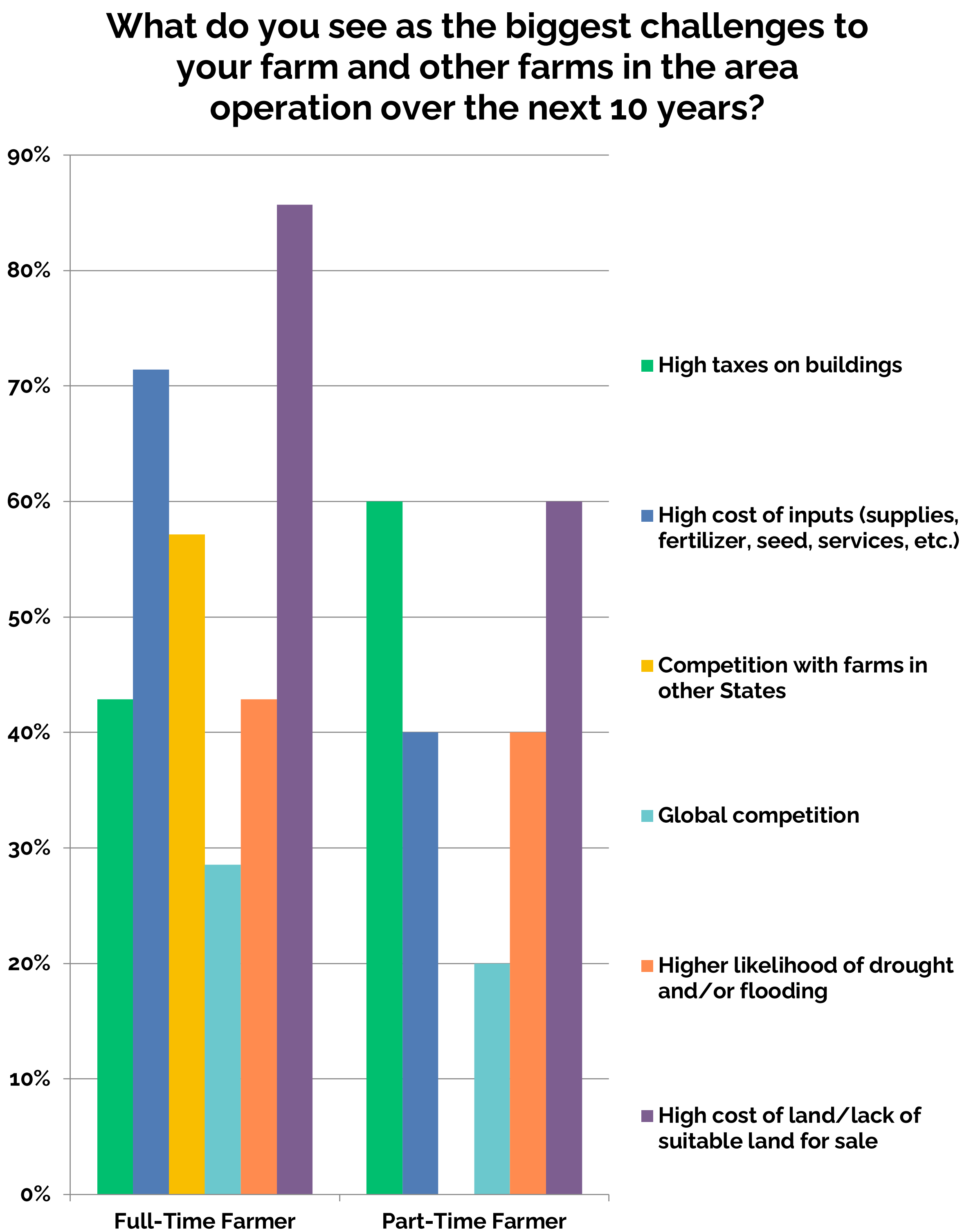
Survey respondents reported a multitude of challenges to their farm operations. The most shared challenges for full-time and part-time farmers include commodity prices and production costs (86% full-time & 40% part-time), availability/cost of land (86% full-time & 60% part-time), Government regulations (71% full-time), conflicts with other vehicles/drivers when moving farm equipment on roadways (71% full-time), availability of suitable farm labor (71% full-time), and a lack of public understanding of farming (71% full-time).



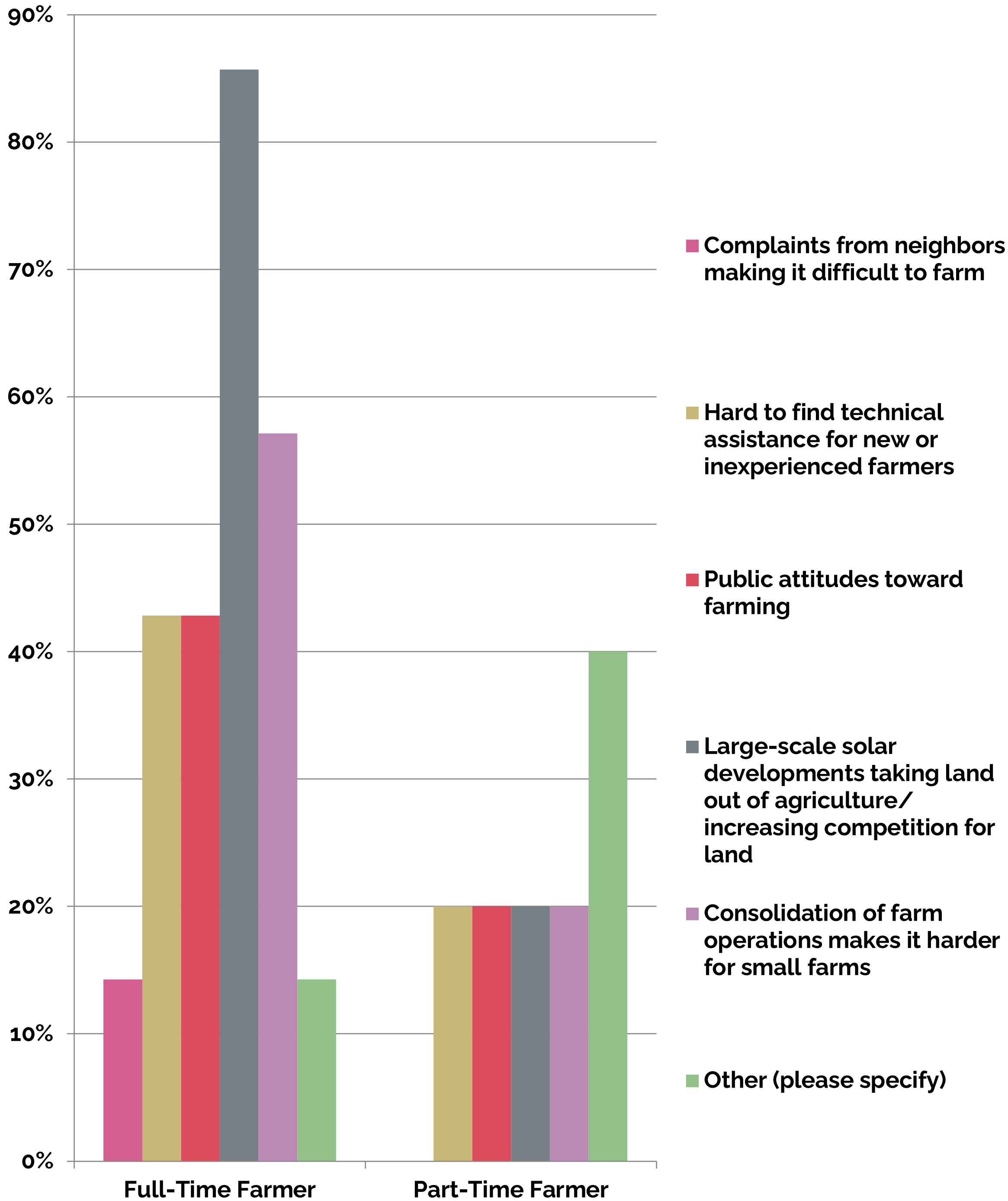


14. What are the biggest challenges to your farm over the next 10 years?

The most common challenges indicated for full-time and part-time farmers over the next 10 years include large-scale solar developments taking land out of agriculture (86% full-time), the cost of land (86% full-time & 60% part-time), high cost of inputs (71% full-time & 40% part-time), and high taxes on building (60% part-time). Other responses include developmental pressure, access to water, drainage, and deer.

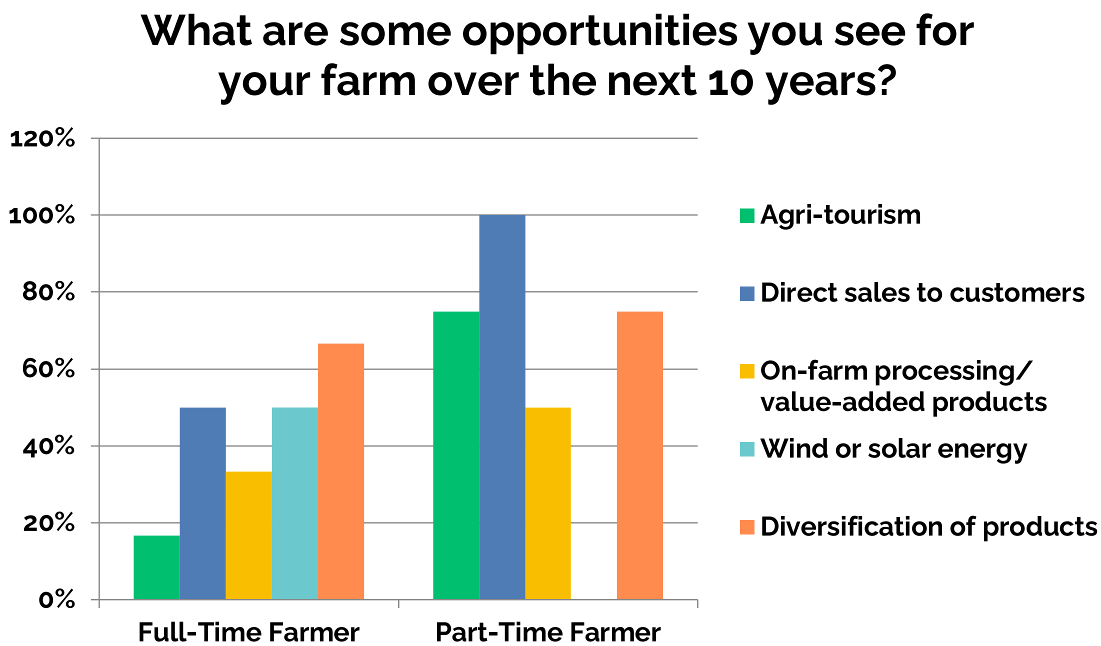

What do you see as the biggest challenges to your farm and other farms in the area operation over the next 10 years?
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Full-Time Farmer
Part-Time Farmer
High taxes on buildings
High cost of inputs (supplies, fertilizer, seed, services, etc.)
Competition with farms in other States
Global competition
Higher likelihood of drought and/or flooding
High cost of land/lack of suitable land for sale

What do you see as the biggest challenges to your farm and other farms in the area operation over the next 10 years?



15. What are some opportunities you see for your farm in 10 years?

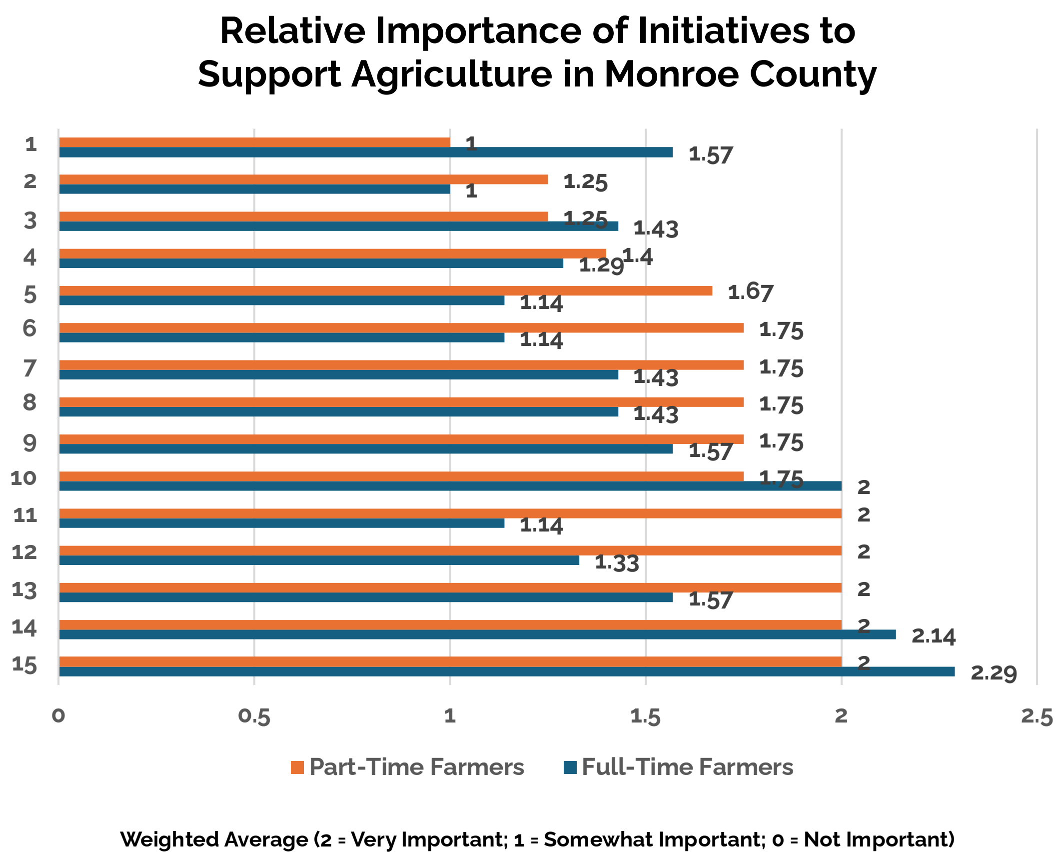
Farmer respondents identified several opportunities for their farms in the next 10 years. Responses with a large consensus among respondents include agritourism (42% & 35%), direct to consumer sales (100% part-time), diversification of agricultural products (75% full-time & 67% part-time), and agritourism (75% part-time).



16. What strategy would be the best for retaining high quality farmland and supporting agriculture in Monroe County?

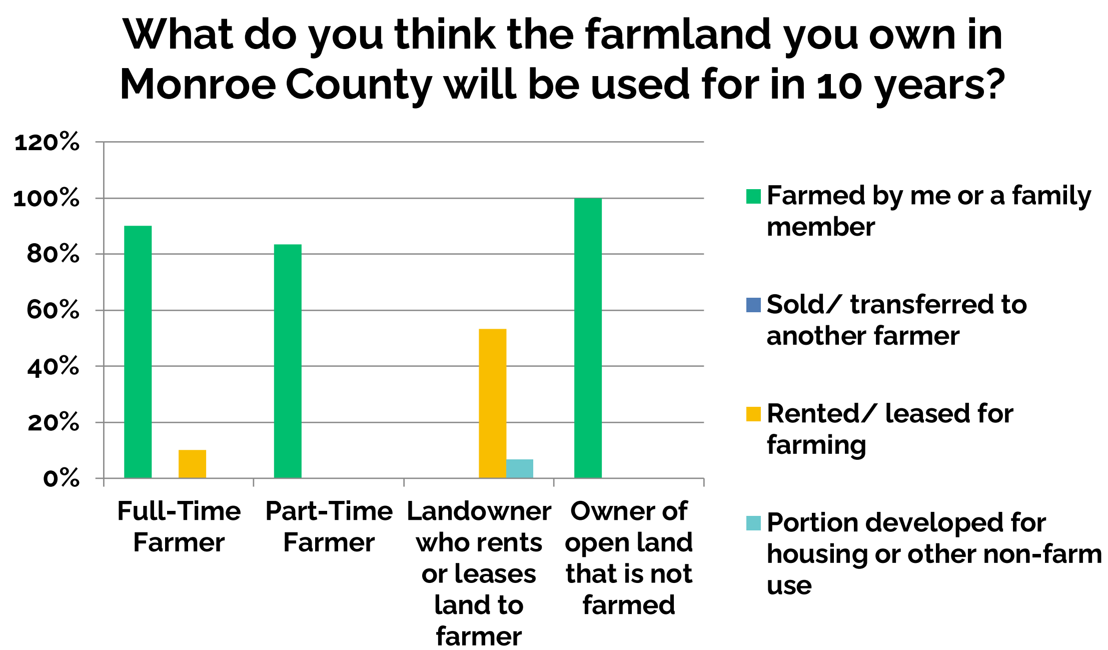
Respondents ranked various strategies on a scale of very important (2), somewhat important (1), or not important (0). Responses were weighted to determine which strategies are the most supported. The most well-supported strategies among full-time and part-time farmer respondents include marketing for agri-tourism (2.29 full-time & 2.0 part-time), events to celebrate architecture (2.14 full-time & 2.0 part-time), and allowing farmers to operate non-agricultural businesses to supplement their income (2.0 full-time & 1.75 part-time).

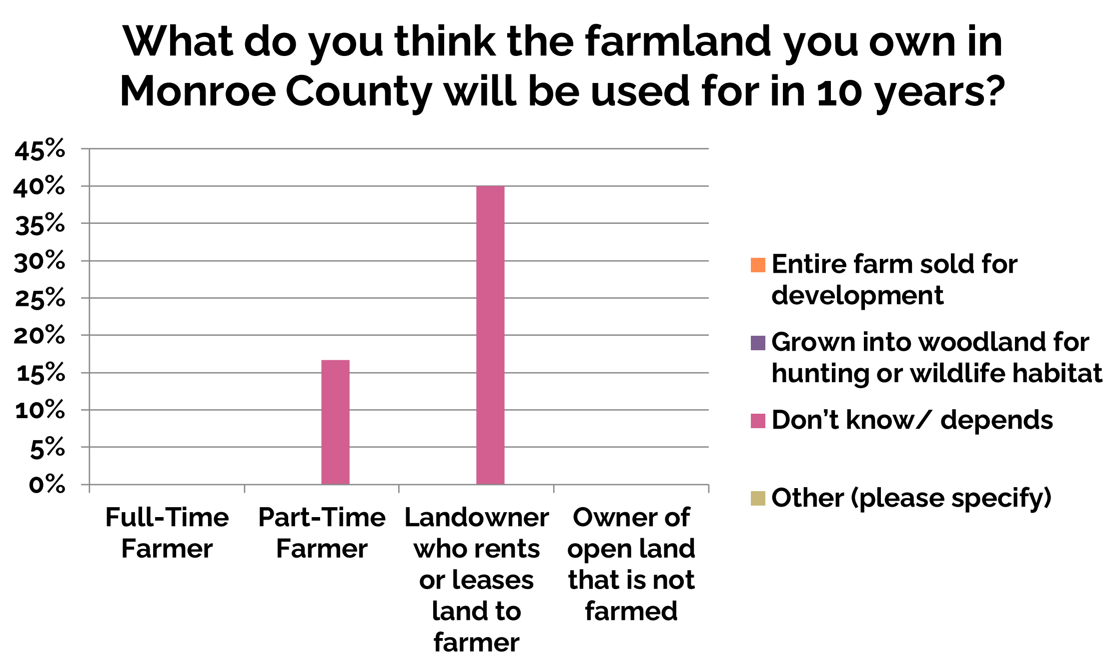
Initiatives to Support Agriculture in Monroe County
1 – Encourage farm stands, farm markets and on-farm sales
2 – Town zoning or enforcement to be more supportive of agriculture
3 – Discourage residential development near farms
4 – Require developers to include buffers between new residential development and farmland
5 – Highway/Traffic Management/Drainage Improvements
6 – Conservation easements or Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
7 – Agricultural economic development initiatives
8 – Inform landowners about available tax incentives
9 – Farm business training or technical assistance
10 – Allow farmers to operate non-agricultural businesses to supplement their income
11 – Incentives for farmers to manage runoff / protect water quality
12 – More ag-oriented education at local schools
13 – Extension of high-speed internet
14 – Events to celebrate architecture
15 – Marketing support for agri-tourism



The Future of Farming in Monroe County

17. What do you think your farmland will be used for in 10 years?
When asked how their farmland may be used in 10 years, farmers in Monroe County foresee their land to be continued to be used as productive agricultural land. No respondents indicated they would like to see their farmland used for new solar or residential development.





18. Do you think that farming will continue to be financially viable for you and your family 10 years from now?

When asked about future financial viability in farming, 86% of full-time farmers and 75% of part-time farmers indicated that they believe farming will continue to be financially viable in 10 years. Respondents indicated that there are several factors that their hope depends on, including politics and the economy.