



Evaluation of Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

Through Surveying a Random Sample of Owners of Agricultural Land
Whose Development Rights Were Sold in Part Through the FRPP

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Background

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) is protecting active farmland and helping farmers to reinvest in their agricultural enterprises consistent with the program's design and purpose. This poster paper presents some of the significant findings from a 2005 survey of recipients of FRPP funds. The study was sponsored by the American Farmland Trust and conducted by Dick Esseks of the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL).

First established in the 1996 Farm Bill and then re-authorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, FRPP is a voluntary federal conservation program that provides matching funds to eligible state and local agencies to help buy permanent conservation easements on farm and ranch lands. Through Fiscal Year 2005, Congress and the President allocated almost \$292 million for FRPP contributions to these purchases, protecting over 300,000 acres of agricultural land in 42 states through September 2003.

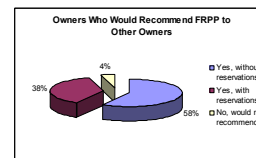
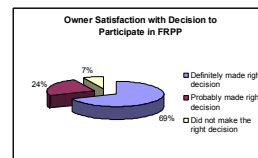
Survey Methodology

Between June and December 2005, UNL's survey research arm, the Bureau of Sociological Research, interviewed a total of 422 owners of land whose development rights had been sold in part through the FRPP. These respondents came from a random sample of 613 that was drawn from as complete a census as was possible of owners of FRPP-protected land. The successful interviews averaged 28.3 minutes and represented a response rate of 73%, after adjusting for members of the original sample who proved to be ineligible for the survey.

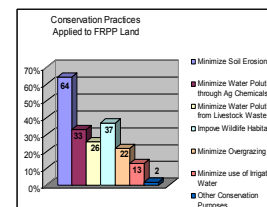
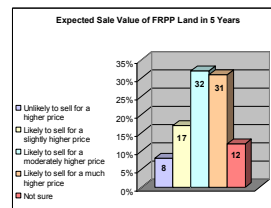
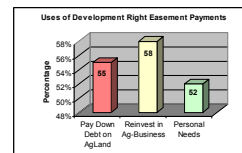
Results of the Census of Current Owners, Sample Drawn from the Full List, and Response Rate

1. Total owners identified in the census	945 (32 states)
2. Sample drawn (with equal proportions per state)	613
3. Total owners interviewed (from June 23 to Dec. 19, 2005, averaging 28.3 minutes in length)	422
4. Ineligibles (had sold land, were deceased, or unreachable by either phone or mail)	33
5. Refusals	41
6. Non-contacts (answering machine only or introductory letter delivered)	117
7. Response rate=Row 3 divided by the sum of rows 3 + 5 + 6)	72.8%

97% of the total owners surveyed have at least part of their FRPP land in agricultural production.



Production Inputs and Marketing Opportunities	Perceived to be very adequate or adequate	Perceived to be inadequate or very inadequate	Respondent was not sure
Fertilizer dealers	91%	6%	3%
Ag chemical dealers	89%	6%	5%
Farm implement dealers	86%	12%	2%
Farm animal veterinarians	83%	9%	8%
Agricultural laborers	51%	39%	10%
Marketing opportunities	85%	10%	5%



1. Received offer to purchase or option to buy the land within one year of closing on the easement.	34%
2. At time of closing, at least some of the land was within one-half mile of a public sewer or water line.	36%
3. Either condition # 1 or #2	56%
4. Surveyed owners had bought or inherited the land after the development rights had been sold.	8%
5. Total number of surveyed owners	422

82% of the FRPP surveyed owners gave the program the highest rating on at least one of three measures of participant satisfaction.

Summary of Findings

- 56% of the owners reported one of two conditions indicating their PDR land had been vulnerable to development within a year of closing on the easement.
- 59% reported their land being contiguous to other protected parcels (that they did not own).
- 74% of the current owners farmed or ranched at least part of their land.
- 97% reported at least part of their land being in agricultural production.
- Almost 7 in 10 (69%) of the owners who sold DRs said that some aspect of their agricultural business received the largest share of their development rights payments or tied for first place in the allocation.
- 83% to 91% said that the supply of four kinds of agricultural support businesses was adequate; 85% were positive also about marketing opportunities; but only 51% found agricultural labor to be adequate.
- 48% were providing recreational opportunities on their protected land to non-family members.
- 83% were applying practices to achieve at least one conservation objective; 58%, at least two.
- 74% of the surveyed owners either believed that had "definitely" made the right decision to sell their agland's development rights or they at least would recommend "without reservations" such sales to other owners of farm or ranch lands.
- 80% believe that in 5 years their land would sell for a higher price than currently, even with its development rights removed.
- 27% reported no monitoring of their land by the easement holder.
- 21% of the surveyed operator-owners were marketing food from their land directly to local consumers, compared to 5% among all operators nationwide.