



2014 Farm Bill Commodity Program Survey

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The 2014 Farm Bill provided commodity program choices for farmers and land owners. Farmers could elect to participate in either Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or Agriculture Risk Coverage, County (ARC-CO) for each program crop, or farmers could enroll all of their program crops on a farm in Agriculture Risk Coverage, Individual (ARC-IC). Additionally, landowners could also elect to reallocate the base acres and to update program payment yields on their farms.

According to FSA, over 1.76 million farms elected either PLC or ARC compared with 1.7 million farms that had been enrolled in the Direct Payment program. Nationwide, 76 percent of all program crop base acres elected ARC-CO and 23 percent elected PLC. Program elections differed significantly by crop and there were notable regional trends in the decisions as well (see *farmdoc daily* [June 16, 2015](#), [June 18, 2015](#) and [August 14, 2015](#) on program elections,).

The 2014 Farm Bill also provided funding for educational and outreach efforts to help farmers and landowners with these decisions. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) entered into two **cooperative agreements** for that educational and outreach effort: (1) with the [University of Illinois](#); and (2) with [Texas A&M University](#) and the University of Missouri's Food and Agriculture Policy Research Institute (FAPRI).

Initial analysis of web traffic statistics indicate strong use of these online resources. For example, *farmdocDaily* experienced large volumes of web traffic during the election process, while usage of the [Farm Bill Toolbox](#) and the Agriculture Policy Analysis System (APAS) online payment calculator peaked in January and February. These statistics provide an indication of the use of the available resources, but more information about that usage and how it helped with the decision process is needed.

Given the strong participation in the decision process and the strong usage of the available information, the University of Illinois is looking to follow up on this effort by conducting a study to learn more about farmers' and land owners' experiences during the election process, including what tools/resources were used to help make program choices. The survey has been designed to be fast, very simple and easy-to-use. In fact, participants can take the survey on their smart phones, tablets, laptops or home computers (see figure 1).

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Farmer and landowner participation in this study is encouraged as it will provide valuable insight on which aspects of the decisions went well and which areas need improvement. Survey responses will help provide better information on how farmers are getting their information and what they use to make operational decisions on the farm. This will help improve education and outreach to better tailor efforts to meet the changing needs of farmers and landowners. Finally, survey results will provide valuable feedback on satisfaction with the programs, the opportunity to elect among different program choices, and the process used for making those elections. Such information can be valuable to policymakers in future farm bill debates.

Farmer and landowner participation in this study is completely voluntary and completely confidential; any data collected will be averaged and reported in aggregate only. Individual information and responses will not be made public. To participate in the study, please click [here](#) or copy and paste <http://go.illinois.edu/2014farmbillsurvey> into your internet browser.

Figure 1. Survey Example

The image shows a mobile survey interface. At the top, there is a status bar with signal strength, Wi-Fi, and 100% battery. Below that, a progress indicator shows 'Survey Completion' at 100%. The main question is 'Are you a farmer or a land owner?'. There are four radio button options: 'I am a farmer.', 'I am a land owner.', 'I am a farmer and a land owner.', and 'I am neither a farmer nor a land owner.'. Below the options are two red buttons: 'Back' and 'Next'. At the bottom, it says 'Powered by Qualtrics'.

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