



Tracking Public Perceptions of Payments Across Commodities

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In the last year, the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) campaign has brought a new interest in food and agricultural policy, including increased discussion about what commodities should be supported. For example, the initial MAHA Commission Report highlighted concern for insufficient support for specialty crops as “compounding the issue” of poor diets (2025). Additionally, some MAHA leaders have been vocal about their support for animal products, including meat and dairy, while being critical of sugar and some field crop products (e.g., soybean oil) (Prater, 2025; Todd, 2025; Held, 2025). The responses reviewed here can also provide perspective on allocations of the increased assistance to farmers that Congress enacted in the Reconciliation Farm Bill (see e.g., *farmdoc daily*, July 15, 2025; August 21, 2025).

In this post, we discuss how public support for six different commodity categories has changed over the last three years, reviewing results from the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey (GFAPS) conducted in May 2022 (*farmdoc daily*, June 24, 2022) and August 2025, and discuss preferences across MAHA perspectives. Despite shifts in the food policy discussion in the last three years, we find minimal changes in consumers’ support across commodities. We also generally find agreement on commodity support across consumers who view MAHA as positive, negative, or who were unaware of MAHA. Finally, we compare public priorities with estimates of actual support across commodities.

Methods

To understand how public perceptions have changed, we review results from the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey. Each wave, approximately 1,000 U.S. consumers are recruited via Qualtrics. In this post, we use results from wave 1, which was conducted in May 2022 and wave 14, which was conducted in August 2025.

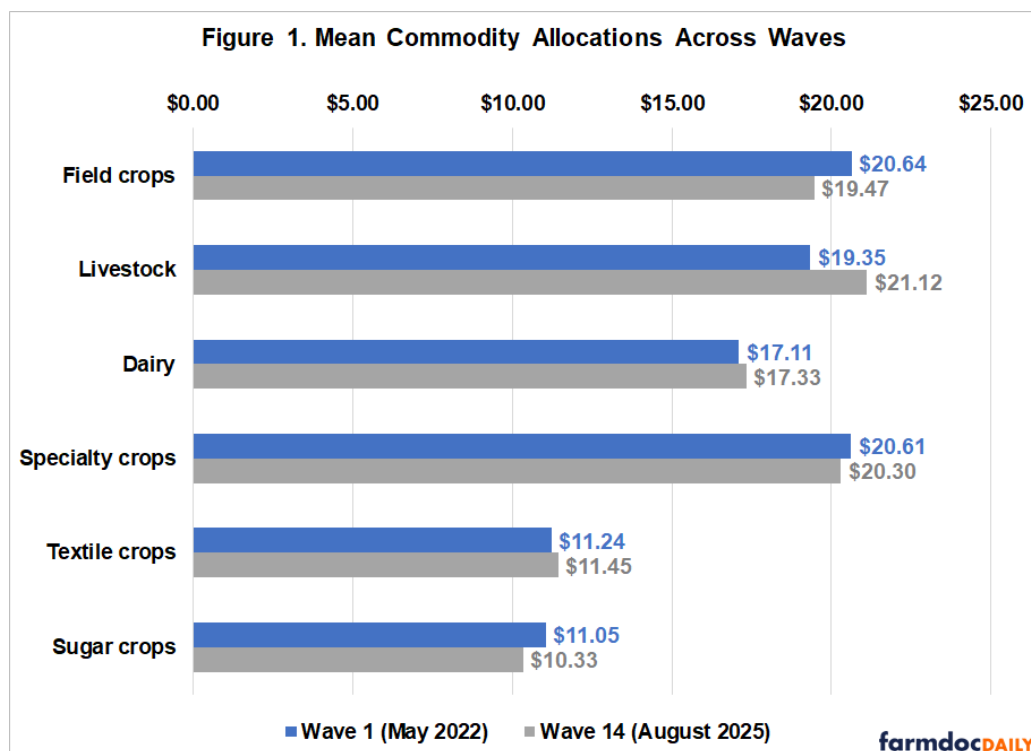
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In both waves, participants were told, “One way to determine which types of farms could be eligible for financial support from the government is based on the types of commodities produced on the farm. Some of the most common commodities produced are: Field crops (corn, wheat, soybeans, rice), Livestock (cattle, hogs, poultry), Dairy (milk), Specialty crops (fruits, vegetables, nuts), Textile crops (cotton, wool), Sugar crops (sugar beets, sugarcane). You have been given \$100 to provide support to farms that grow these different types of commodities.”¹ They were then asked how much they would give to each commodity group. The order of the commodities was randomized to prevent ordering effects. Respondents were reminded that if they would not give money to a particular group, they should type 0 in the response box.

In wave 14, to compare how respondents’ allocations differed across perspectives on Make America Healthy Again (MAHA), we also utilize results from a MAHA awareness measure and, for those who were aware of MAHA, a MAHA perception measure. For the awareness measure, respondents were asked “Prior to this survey, had you heard of the “Make America Healthy Again” campaign?” and could respond yes or no. Those who responded yes were then asked their perception of MAHA (“How would you describe your view on the “Make America Healthy Again” campaign?”) and could respond very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative. Combined, we categorize these into three categories: MAHA positive (either somewhat or very), MAHA negative (either somewhat or very), or MAHA unaware.

Results

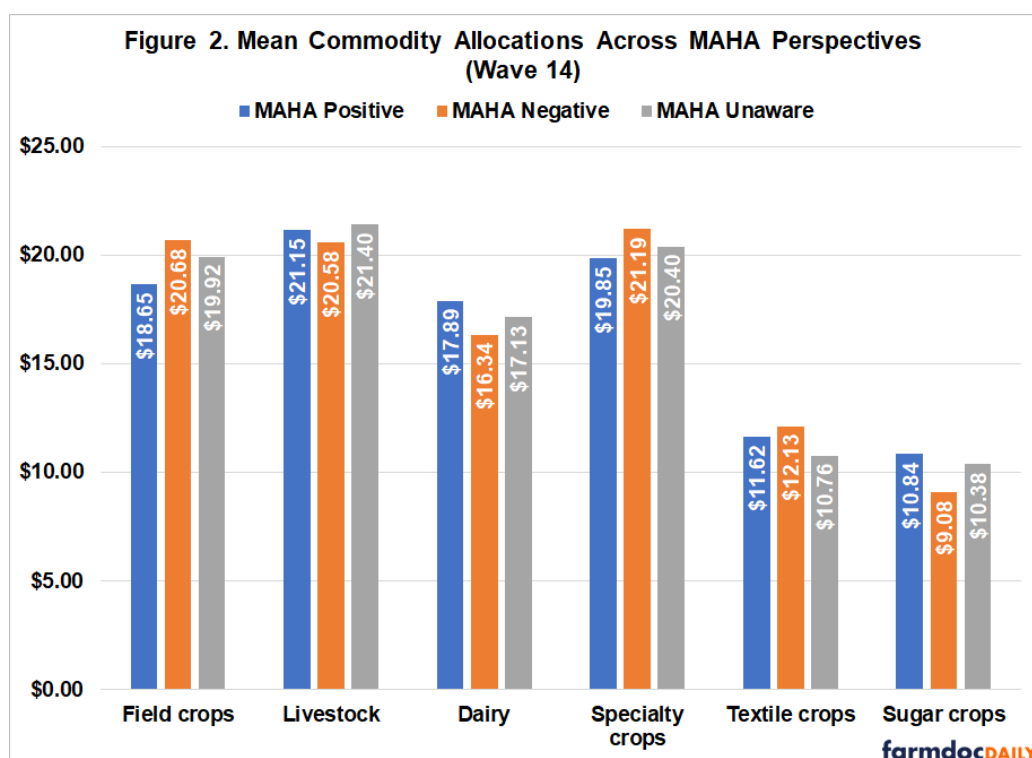
Comparing responses from wave 1 (May 2022) and wave 14 (August 2025), we can see how mean commodity allocations have changed across the last three years (see Figure 1). In both waves, we find strongest support for field crops, livestock, and specialty crops, moderate support for dairy, and the lowest support for sugar crops and textile crops. Across the three years, we find only modest changes, with the most noticeable shift in support for livestock, increasing from \$19.35 in May 2022 to \$21.12 in August 2025 (about a 9% increase).



¹ In the survey question, common commodities were listed in a bullet point list for ease of viewing. Additionally, respondents were told answers should add to \$100 and were prompted if the sum was not correct.

Across politics, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents/Others increased their allocation for livestock. Republican participants had an average allocation of \$20.93 in wave 1 and \$23.04 in wave 14 (about a 10% increase), Democratic participants had an average allocation of \$18.03 in wave 1 and \$19.58 in wave 14 (about a 9% increase), and Independent/Other participants had an average allocation of \$19.17 in wave 1 and \$20.94 in wave 14 (about a 9% increase).

Figure 2 shows respondents' average commodity allocations across MAHA perspectives (positive, negative, or unaware) from wave 14. All three groups had highest support for field crops, livestock, and specialty crops. Differences across the groups were minimal, and interestingly, MAHA positive respondents did not allocate lower amounts to sugar or higher amounts to specialty crops than either MAHA negative or MAHA unaware respondents.



Finally, the public's allocations described above differ substantially from the allocations among these commodities by federal policies. The ten-year budget projections by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) known as the baseline provide one perspective on how funding is allocated by policy (CBO, [January 2025](#)). Combining projections for the commodities subsidy payment programs and crop insurance, adjusted to reflect historic shares of crop insurance benefits, an estimate of the allocation of \$100 by policy would be: \$53 for field crops; \$14 for livestock; \$17 for specialty crops; \$1 for dairy; and \$15 for cotton and textile crops (CBO projects no costs for the sugar program). Note that these projections do not include ad hoc or supplemental disaster assistance payments for which allocations can vary significantly and are not permanent authorizations projected by CBO in the baseline. For another perspective, Congress' allocation in additional funding for farm assistance in the Reconciliation Farm Bill in \$100 would translate to \$77.46 for field crops, \$6.82 for livestock, \$0.76 for specialty crops, \$0.23 for dairy, and \$14.73 for cotton.

Conclusions

In the last year, the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) campaign has brought a new public interest and scrutiny of food and agricultural policy. Some MAHA leaders have been particularly vocal about the healthfulness of different commodities, including expressing support for meat, dairy, and specialty crops and criticism of sugar crops and some field crop products (e.g., oils). Here, we provide insights on how public perceptions of commodities have changed over time, comparing results from May 2022 and August 2025. We find only small changes in commodity support across the three years, in particular, slight increases in support for livestock. Additionally, we find little evidence that respondents who view MAHA

as positive, negative, or who were unaware of MAHA support commodity groups differently. This month, the MAHA Commission released their strategy for the president. While major changes to commodity allocations were not proposed in the recent MAHA Commission Strategy report, some suggestions (e.g., “MAHA Box” program, supplemental funding for head start nutrition programs, allowing full-fat milk in schools) may have impacts on some commodity groups (2025).

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