

Figure 1. Education level of change agents, 2004

Around 95 percent of the respondents were change agents from the 13 southern states, and additional 5 percent were change agents from states in other regions of the country. The following graph makes shows the number of respondents by state.

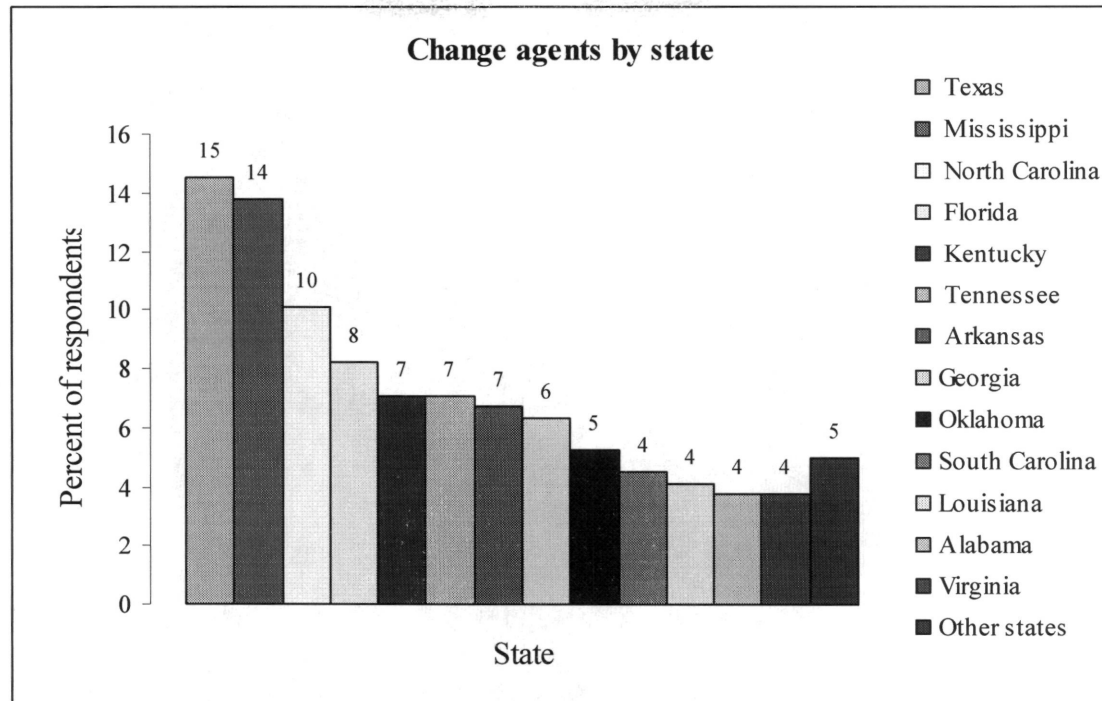


Figure 2. Number of internet survey participants by state, 2004

Results

Sustainable Practice Availability and Adoption

Four questions measure change agents involvement in sustainable agriculture and perceived availability of sustainable practice information. Change agents were asked to respond to each item using the response framework: not at all, slightly, somewhat, great extent, and don't know. Results are summarized in Table 2 in terms of the percentage responding to each question.

Table 2. Perceived adoption rate of sustainable practices, regional change agents, 2004.

Questions	Percent (N=267)			
	Great extent	Somewhat	Slightly	Not
Rate the extent of your involvement in supporting the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices?	41	40	12	7
To what extent are clearly understandable and useable sustainable agricultural practices available to farmers to adopt in your state?	24	54	19	3
To what extent are farmers in your state adopting	10	58	27	5

sustainable practices?

To what extent are farmers you work with adopting sustainable practices?	18	54	24	4
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The table shows that almost half of the participants or (41 percent) of the survey have a great extent of involvement in supporting the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices in the Southern states and other 40 percent are only somewhat involved in this effort. A considerable percent thinks that understandable and usable sustainable agriculture practices are available for farmers in their state. However, the majority of them consider that clearly understandable and usable sustainable practices are available to only a certain extent or slightly for farmers in their state.

Despite that a good percent of them consider to be involved in a great extent in supporting adoption of sustainable practices only 10 percent of them think that there is a great extent of adoption of these practices in their state. The majority (58 percent) think that the extent of adoption in their state is in a middle stage; while almost 30 percent think that there is only a slightly extent of adoption in their state.

About the extent of adoption from those farmers that work with change agents the distribution among the three categories are similar than adoption at the state level; with the difference that a higher percent (18 percent) of change agents consider that the farmers working with them present a great extent of adoption of sustainable practices.

Change agents were asked about their familiarity with a set of 25 sustainable agricultural practices to find which are better supported by them. The following table shows the first eleven practices significantly known by change agents and emphasizes the eight practices with which more than half of participants are very familiar.

Table 3. Familiarity with selected sustainable agricultural practices, regional change agents, 2004

Sustainable practice	Percent (N=287)		
	<i>Not familiar</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Very</i>
Soil testing	0.4	14	84
Crop rotation	0.4	22	76
Conservation tillage	3	21	75
Keep soil covered all year	0.4	24	74
IPM-pesticides management	4	33	62
Cover crops and green manures	1	40	57
Diversification	4	43	52
IPM-cultural management	5	43	51
IPM-biological control	7	47	44
Fresh plant as green manure	10	47	42
Weed control (rotation, minimum weed seed)	11	45	42

It can be viewed on the previous table that most change agents are more prepare to help farmer with practices such as soil testing, crop rotation, conservation tillage, keeping soil covered all year, IPM-pesticides managements and cultural management, cover crops and green manures and diversification. Practices such as IPM (biological control), fresh

plants as green manure and weed control (rotation, minimum weed seed) are to some extent known by change agents.

In addition to the 25 list of sustainable practices presented to change agents in the web-based survey they had the opportunity to mention other sustainable agricultural practices that are being used by farmers in the South. Agents listed 118 sustainable practices that are being used. These practices were summarized in 12 grouping categories according to the type of agricultural practice. The following table presents each category and the frequency of practices under them. Details about the practices included in each category are included as in Appendix C of this document.

Table 4. Main categories of the other sustainable practices used by farmers in the South, regional change agents, 2004.

Other sustainable practices	Number	Percent of responses to question (N=118)
Soil conservation	37	31
Nutrients management	13	11
Soil structure	11	9
Erosion control	7	6
Other soil conservation	6	5
Water conservation and management	18	15
Livestock	16	14
Pest control	15	13
Marketing	8	7
Economic	7	6
Crop production	6	5
Animal production	5	4
Waste management	4	3
Weed control	5	4
Organic production	2	2
Other	13	

Change agents are aware of a variety of practices that are being used by farmers in the South. The majority of practices seem to be related to soil conservation. Water conservation, livestock, and pest control are also issues that farmers are trying to include in their sustainable management. It is important to note that marketing and economic practices are also being included in sustainable management of farms in the South.

Characteristics of Farmers Using Sustainable Practices

Change agents were asked: what characteristics of producers do you see as being helpful for implementing sustainable agricultural practices? The responses to this question are summarized in the following table, classified in six categories of farmers' characteristics identified by change agents as helpful for adoption of sustainable practices.

From the total number of respondents to the survey, 72 percent of participants answered this question. In the table, Percent of responses to question and from the total responses to survey are presented to make evident the significance of each category

Table 5. Main categories of characteristics of producers perceived as helpful for the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, change agents survey, 2004

Category	Number	Percent of responses to question (N=194)
Personal Attributes and Characteristics	158	81
Adopters Knowledge and Skills	76	39
Economics Situation	70	36
Adopters Environmental or social Attitudes	30	15
Characteristics of the Farm	11	6

Personal Attributes and characteristics

Change agents identified many personal characteristics of farmers that help them to adopt sustainable practices. In descending order the personal characteristics are: aggressive, open minded, willing to change, willing to experiment or try, steward, inquisitive, cheap, independent thinker, long term minded, committed to sustainable agriculture, family farm oriented, justice minded, landscape oriented (See Appendix C2).

The most frequently mention personal characteristic of farmer that are adopting sustainable practices is **aggressive**, “*progressive*,” “*innovative*,” “*risk taker*,” “*the front runners*,” “*self motivated*,” or “*looking for new things*.” Some agents even consider this as the most important characteristic, “*the innovative nature of a small percentage of farmers is the most helpful characteristic*,” they are seen as “*Proactive farmers and ranchers who are willing to take a chance and be the first to attempt a different approach to managing their resource*.” Some even relate this characteristics to competition with other producers, “*Progressive... Competition (the neighbor thin)*.”

Others described as a personal motivation of success, “*motivated to succeed in agri-business*,” perhaps due to their “*desire to stay in business over the long haul*” or “*their concern for long term economical survival*,” even if this means that they will need to adopt drastic changes in their farm, they can be found to be “*eager to replace failing enterprises*.”

Farmers that are able to handle risk but also willing to take it, “*Spirit of adventure, willingness ...to take risks associated with new practices (often trying it first on a small area to minimize risk and make it possible to make several attempts or try several different things until they find one that works.)*” or simply those that are “*not afraid of trying new things*.” As one respondent clearly stated “*the ones with initiative and the desire to be the best are the ones adopting, and as we get more of these guys, the followers will have someone to emulate*”