

done with their land” and he “*may or may not allow*” such changes. Moreover, landlords may “*not allow new practices to be tried on their land.*”

Farmers may also be refrained by the only reason that he will “*worry about what the land owner will say.*” These issues give us the idea that only “*growers who own their own land, not lessors*” may be able to adopt sustainable practices. It was also remarked that there is an increase of farmers with “*limited amount of land to farm,*” and this problem of “*producers with dwindling acres*” was attributed to “*land utilization issues,*” such as *high land values and increases [in] land development.*

Personal characteristics

Age of the Operator

Because of the farming history of old generations some change agents think that definitely **age** is a barrier to adoption, so that older farmers “*for example: Father's or Grandfather's who are going to farm the way they always have farmed,*” are unlikely to consider adoption of sustainable practices; in contrary “*younger growers may be more interested than old*” probably because they are “*ready to retire*” and “*do not have the years to see some of the benefits.*” As mentioned before old generations may be stopping younger ones to adopt because often they “*still have control over the land.*”

Philosophies and Perceptions

Another identified barrier is farmers’ **apathy** to the negative effects of conventional farming. This was attributed to farmer’s lack of understanding of farming systems, as explained by a respondent, “*most growers have their eyes on the money, and that is the most important thing to them. They can't see that farming is a whole system, they can only see the bits and pieces.*” Other mentioned reason was that farmers are unable to perceive negative effects of conventional farming and “*they require proof that bad practices (pesticides) are harming them and their land, whereas they should be requiring proof from the Chemical Company that is just trying to make a profit off of them.*”

A change agent noted that farmers’ “*perceptions that changing practices may result in [yield] loss.*” This is also mentioned to be directly associated by some farmers to sustainable practices, as a respondent explained the “*perception of the cost or return of some recommended sustainable practices limits their use*” is an important barrier to adopt

Forces Motivating Farmers

Change agents were asked: What do you see as the major forces motivating farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices? Responses to this question are summarized in the following six categories ordered from higher to lower frequencies. It is important to note that from the total number of surveys submitted by respondents, around 80 percent of respondents decided to answer this question. Thus, we present the percent of responses in relation to total survey responses and in relation to responses to this specific question.

Table 7. Main categories of forces perceived as motivating farmers to adopt sustainable agriculture practices, regional change agents, 2004.

Category	Number	Percent of responses to question (N=214)
Economic Motivation and Incentives	223	104
Personal Motivations	69	32
Societal and Policy Influences	33	15
Family, friends and neighbors	12	6
Characteristics of sustainable technologies	11	5
Education & Information	9	4

Economic Motivations and Incentives

Economic factors are the most frequently mentioned motivators for adoption of sustainable practices. The responses were grouped as follows: government programs, profitability of sustainable practices, costs reduction, negative economic impacts of conventional farming, sustainability or survival, labor, market, yields, prices for sustainable products, land issues and farm size (See Appendix C4).

Among the economic motivators that farmers see to adopt sustainable practices, the most frequently mentioned by change agents was **government programs**, either state or federal. Among these programs, the most frequently mentioned were those that provide financial incentives to farmer for adoption of sustainable practices. One respondent even stated, *“The only way this will work is if the government agencies push this to the point of offering financial incentives.”*

The majority of the respondents who mentioned this motivator think that *“cost sharing of practices helps”* and some others mentioned the *“funding for adopting such practices”* targeted to farmers through *“governmental payments.”* One change agent suggested that in Florida, the *“funds designed to improve water quality to Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades”* helped some farmers to adopt sustainable agriculture.

One respondent mentioned, *“the Conservation Security Program, when implemented fully can be a GREAT motivating force for stimulating sustainable agriculture,”* while other respondent even thinks that this type of programs are already helping, *“farm programs that reward sustainable agriculture programs (Such as the Conservation Security Program) [are] Working Farmers in the area [toward] adopting sustainable agricultural technology.”*

In addition, government programs other than financial are found by change agents to be motivating farmers to adopt sustainable agriculture practices. Examples mentioned were conservation and educational programs *“equipment programs for landowner use (MS Soil and Water Conservation Commission) Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance (NRCS and Extension Service) Educational Programs (Extension Service and Soil and Water Conservation Districts)”* or *“voluntary Conservation programs.”*

Very closely following government programs, the second frequently mentioned important factor motivating farmers is the **profitability** associated to the practices. Many conventional farmers who have a *“concern about NET PROFITS rather than GROSS INCOME or TOTAL PRODUCTION”* find that their current practices are not *“cost effective,”* as was thoroughly explained earlier. Thus was mentioned, *“when cost*