

One respondent called the attention to the problem that agencies promote practices that are not adequately supported by research data, from his viewpoint. He commented about agencies contributions, *“Depends on your definition of sustainable Ag. They will not promote practices that are backed up by sound research data. They have been promoting using green and animal manures, cultural control, and soil conservation long before anyone decided to call it sustainable agriculture.”*

Some respondents explained that public agencies have motivated adoption of sustainable practices **through regulations**. They explained that these regulations are imposed to producers through the Farm Bill or environmental laws. They stated, *“Farm Bill requirements have forced many to do reduced tillage.”* *“The 1985 farm bill that required highly erodible land to be left in cover.”* They also mentioned *“the treat of regulation under environmental laws and regulations,”* as other strategy that may be moving farmers to adoption of sustainable practices

Encouraging Farmers Involvement and Organization

Change agents think that public agencies are being helpful in the efforts to put in place sustainable practices by allowing local involvement and helping farmers to get organized. One change agent stated that, public agencies allow farmers in policymaking, selection of practices and, *“local involvement in policy making and determining practices.”*

They also mentioned specifically the SARE efforts to get farmers involve in the effort though special programs as helpful but limited in their funding capacity. *“The SARE programs have been quite valuable in supporting research, outreach and community development projects related to sustainable agriculture, and directly involving farmers (the producer grant programs). The greatest limitation on SARE effectiveness has been limited funding. It has been authorized at \$40 million a year, but actual funding remains at about \$5-20 million.”* In addition, two change agents pointed to these organizations efforts to organize farmers specifically in *“Conservation Tillage... alliances,”* as one respondent directly stated, *“NRCS has worked with farmers etc to develop the farmer-led Conservation Tillage Alliances.”*

How Public Agencies Hinder the Adoption of Sustainable Practices

Changes agents were asked: In what ways have public agencies been most disappointing to you in their efforts to support the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices? The responses to this question are summarized in seven categories presented in the following table. It is important to note that this question presents low response rate; only 65 percent of the respondents that answered the survey decided to answer this specific question. Percents from the total survey response and from responses to this question are provided in the following table

Table 9. Main categories of perceived ways public agencies hinder the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices, regional change agents, 2004.

Category	Number	Percent of responses to question (N=176)
The Role of Extension	49	28
Extension Orientation to S.A.	39	22
Public Agency Funding	30	17
Research and Sustainable Practices	34	19
Public Administration and Management	23	13
Programs and Regulations	17	10
Knowledge or Expertise	16	9

The Role of Extension

In to this category fall eleven different types of answers. In descending order, according to their frequency these issues are summarized as follows: not getting the existent information to farmers, lack of field personnel for sustainable agriculture, lack of one-on-one assistance, lack of contact with growers, lack of emphasis on farmers' education, lack of available information, lack of promotion about available programs, promoting not profitable practices, misleading information, deliver only profitable practices with no regard to resources, lost farmers' trust and lack of promotion of conservation to other contamination sources.

The majority of the respondents, whose answers fall in the extension category, pointed that public agencies disappointed them because they are **not getting the existent information to farmers**. They stated that the "*information that is garneted isn't getting to farmers,*" "*they don't get the word out to enough people in the general farm public about their test plots or meetings,*" "*NRCS has good programs and some resources to implement but, the delivery of both is questionable at best,*" "*I am not sure that all that was available have been offered in this area,*" "*The advertising of these programs or practices is not very good.*"

Two respondents specified, "*most university speak only to the choir, and not very good in communicating these ideas easily to growers.*" Others suggested, "*There should be more emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices in BMP manuals written by state and land-grant university employees.*"

In this category, the second frequently mentioned problem felt by change agents in public agencies is that there is a **lack of field personnel for sustainable agriculture** from these agencies. As one change agent stated, "*Lack of field personnel to provide more One-on-one field assistance (Initial and follow up assistance.*" Change agents also stated to be disappointed not only with the quantity but with the quality of personnel. They indicated disappointment with the "*availability of qualified personnel,*" or "*too many people are not fully trained and dedicated to the support of these practices.*"

This lack of personnel or the lack of preparation of change agents to help farmers with sustainable agriculture leave change agent in a work situation where they can not contribute as they could to the advancement of sustainable agriculture. One respondent explained, "*most of the agency people I know are disappointed with their jobs and think*