

REACHING WOMEN DIRECT MARKET FARMERS AND WOMEN DAIRY FARMERS

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The Ag Census shows the number of women principal operators in WI increased 58% over 10 years.

Goals

- Learn about women farmers and their environmental management practices
- Gain information to improve Extension's outreach to women farmers

We studied 2 distinct groups of women farmers (*principal operators*) in Wisconsin

- Direct market farmers
- Dairy farmers

Women *principal operators* are those who farm solo or with a spouse or partner but who "make or help make the main decisions about how the farm is managed."

In 2007, there were 9,176 women farmers in WI.

Characteristics of Women in Study Group

Women Direct Market Farmers

- 72% farm less than 100 acres
- 40% raise vegetables, 35% poultry and eggs, 31% beef, 30% tree fruit, as well as flowers, nursery crops, and grains
- 37% conventional, 6% organic, 30% non-certified organic, 3% transitional, and 16% sustainable

Women Dairy Farmers

- Own 180 acres (avg.) range from 1-1,100 acres
- Herd size 87 cows (avg.) range from 1-3,450 cows
- 59% conventional, 14% CAFO, 17% rotational graziers, 3% organic, and 3% non-certified organic

Research Methods

Mailed 601 surveys to direct market farmers
62% response rate

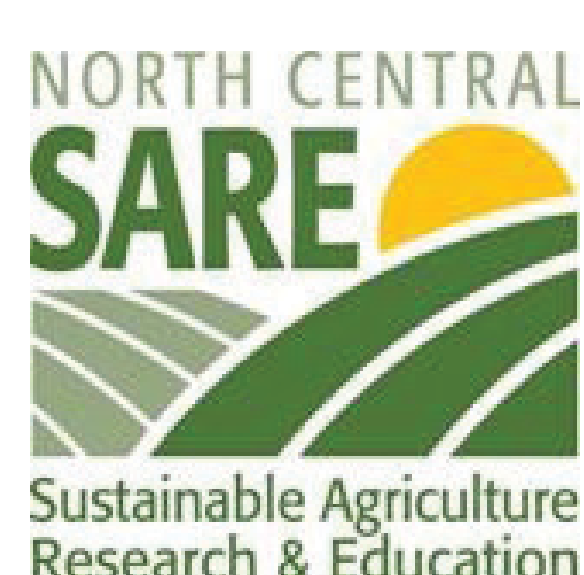
Mailed 755 surveys to dairy farmers
44% response rate

Interviewed 8-9 farmers in each group

Held 3 focus groups of 6-8 dairy farmers

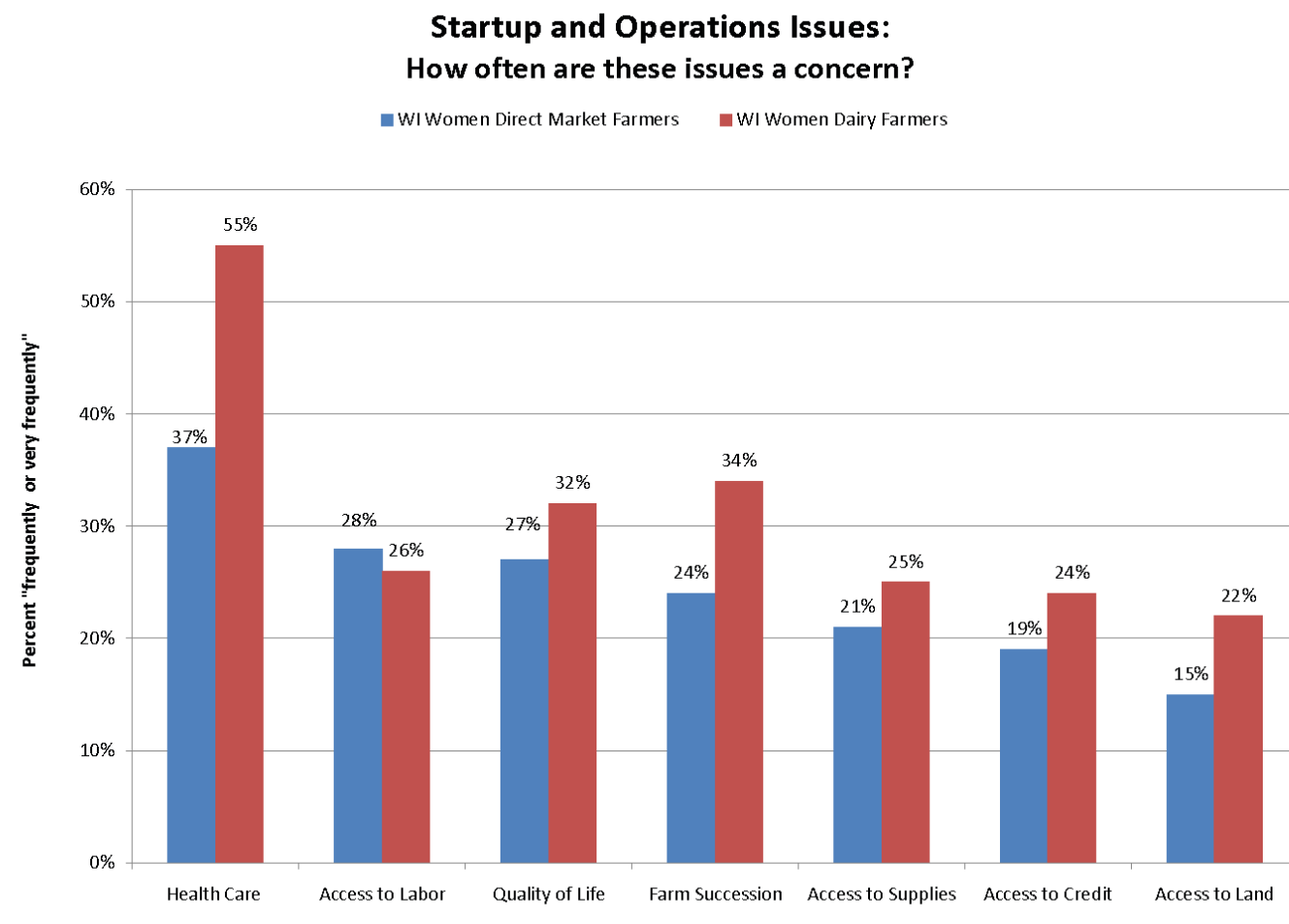
Held a discussion with
40+ direct market farmers and dairy farmers

A RESEARCH
PROJECT FUNDED
BY NCR SARE



Health care, and work and life balance – including taking care of family members – are issues for women farmers.

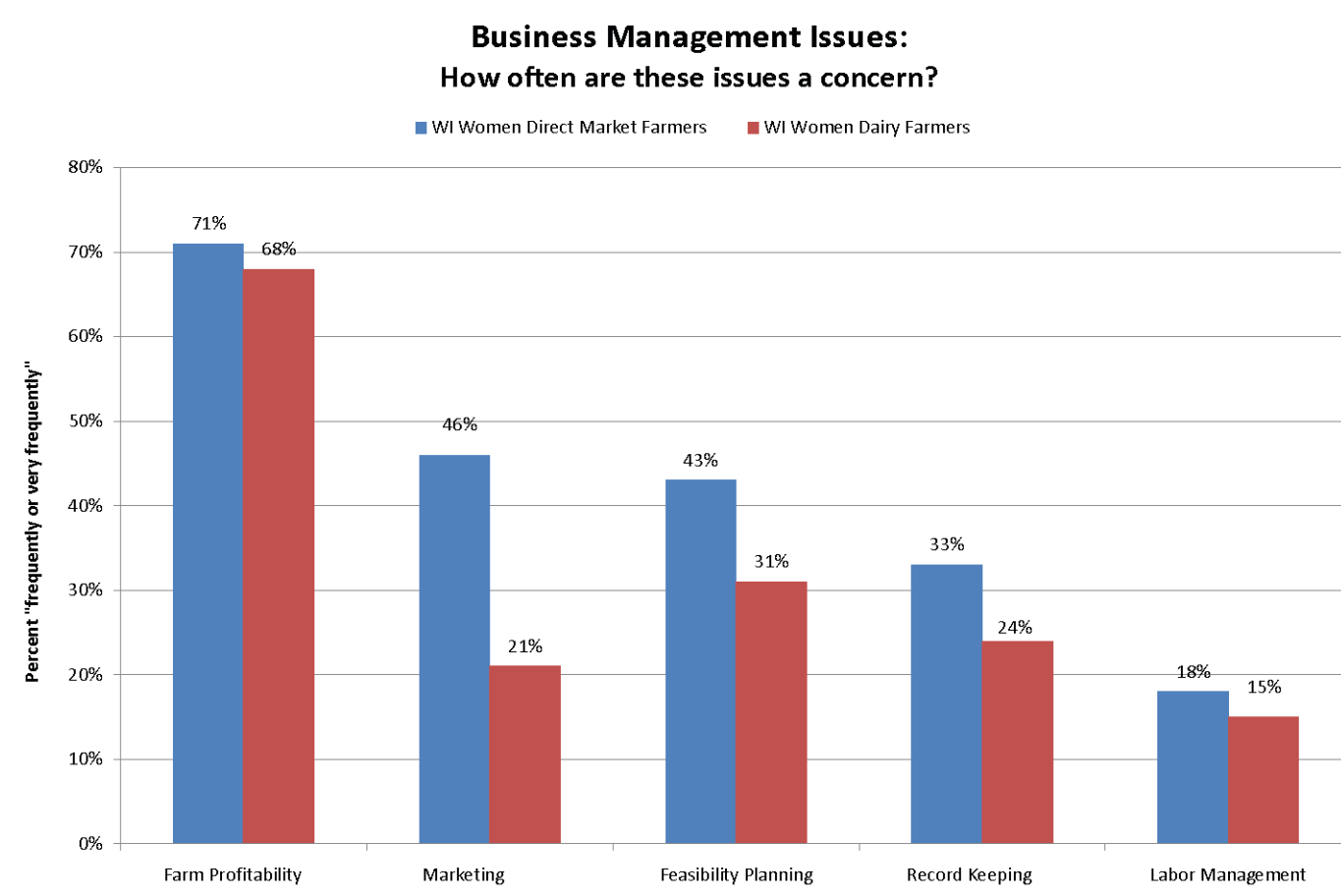
STARTUP



WHAT CONCERNS WOMEN FARMERS?

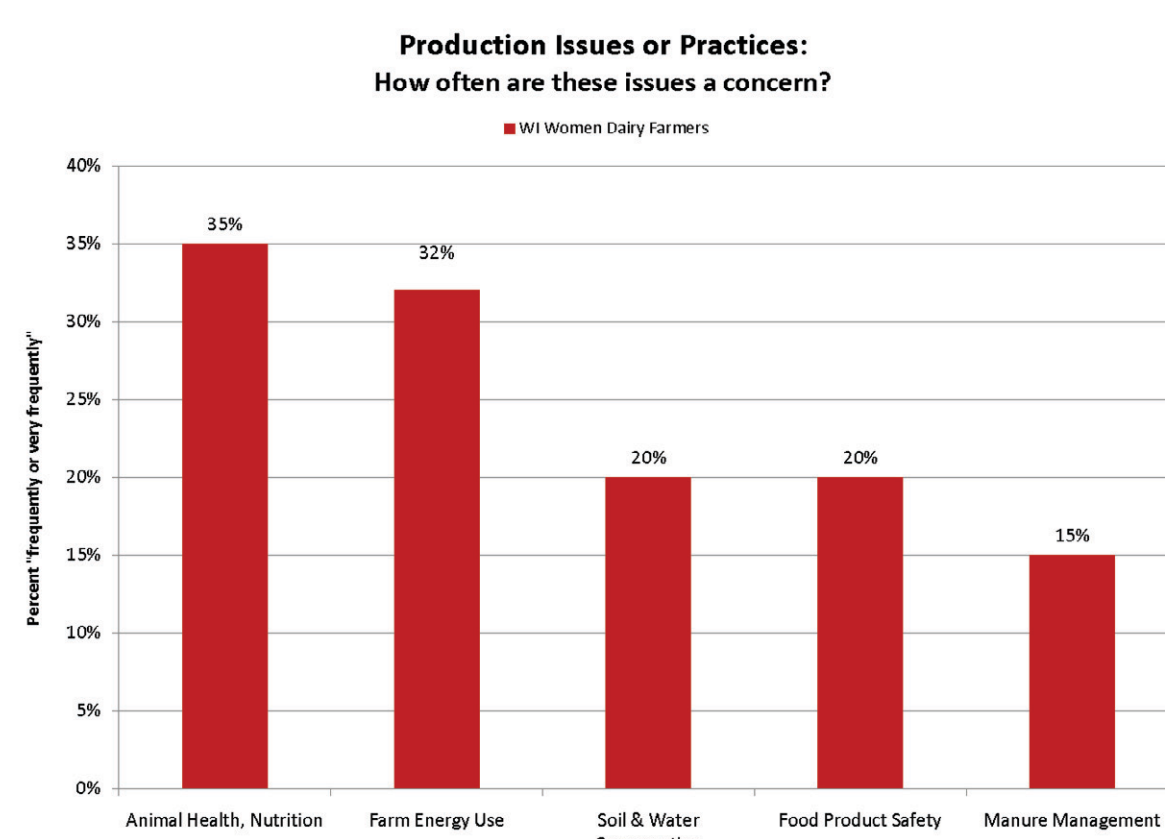
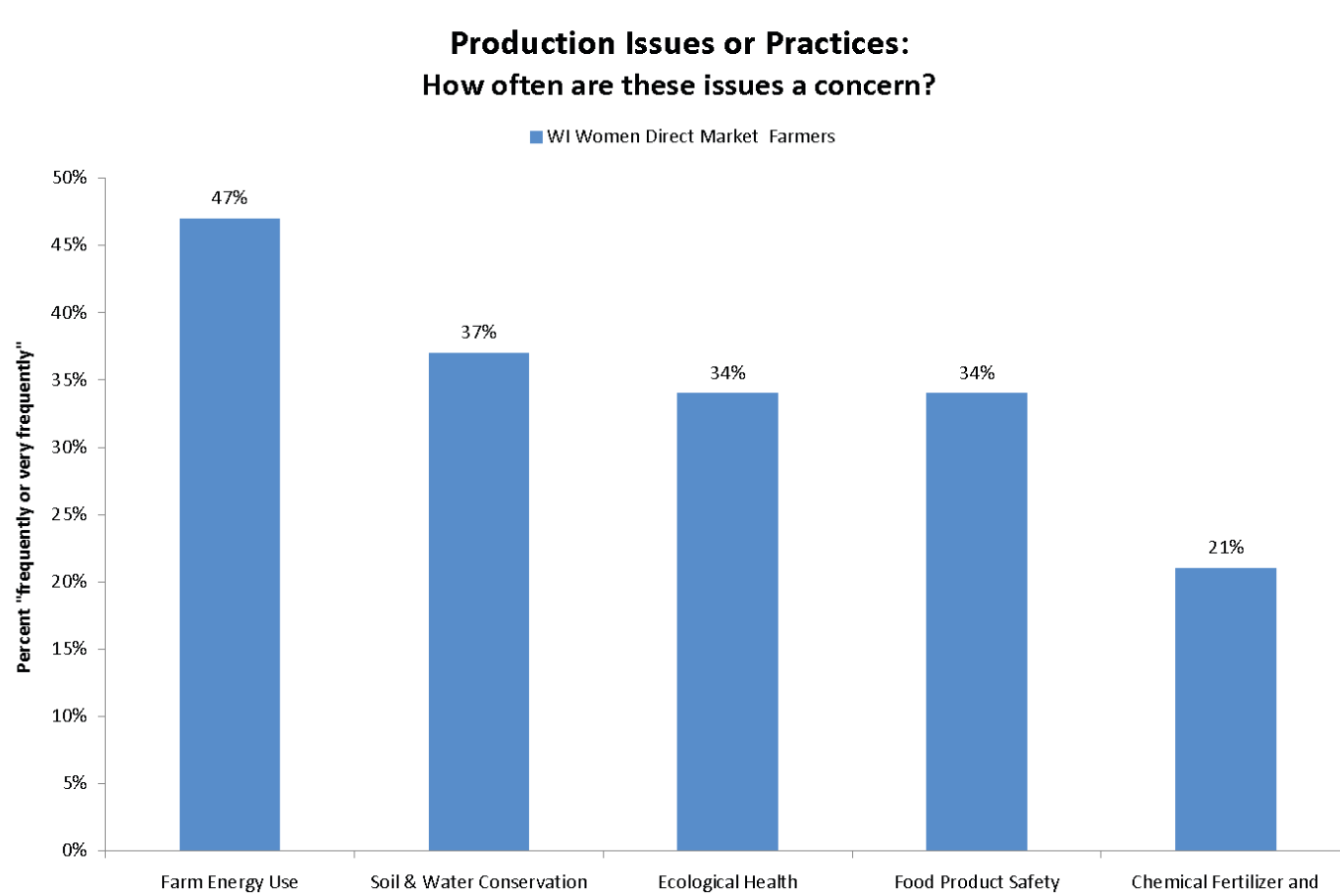
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Farm profitability is the #1 concern for Wisconsin women farmers, as well as herd health & energy use.



PRODUCTION

Women farmers are concerned about whole farm management for environmental sustainability, profitability, & lifestyle.



FARM EDUCATION & TRAINING

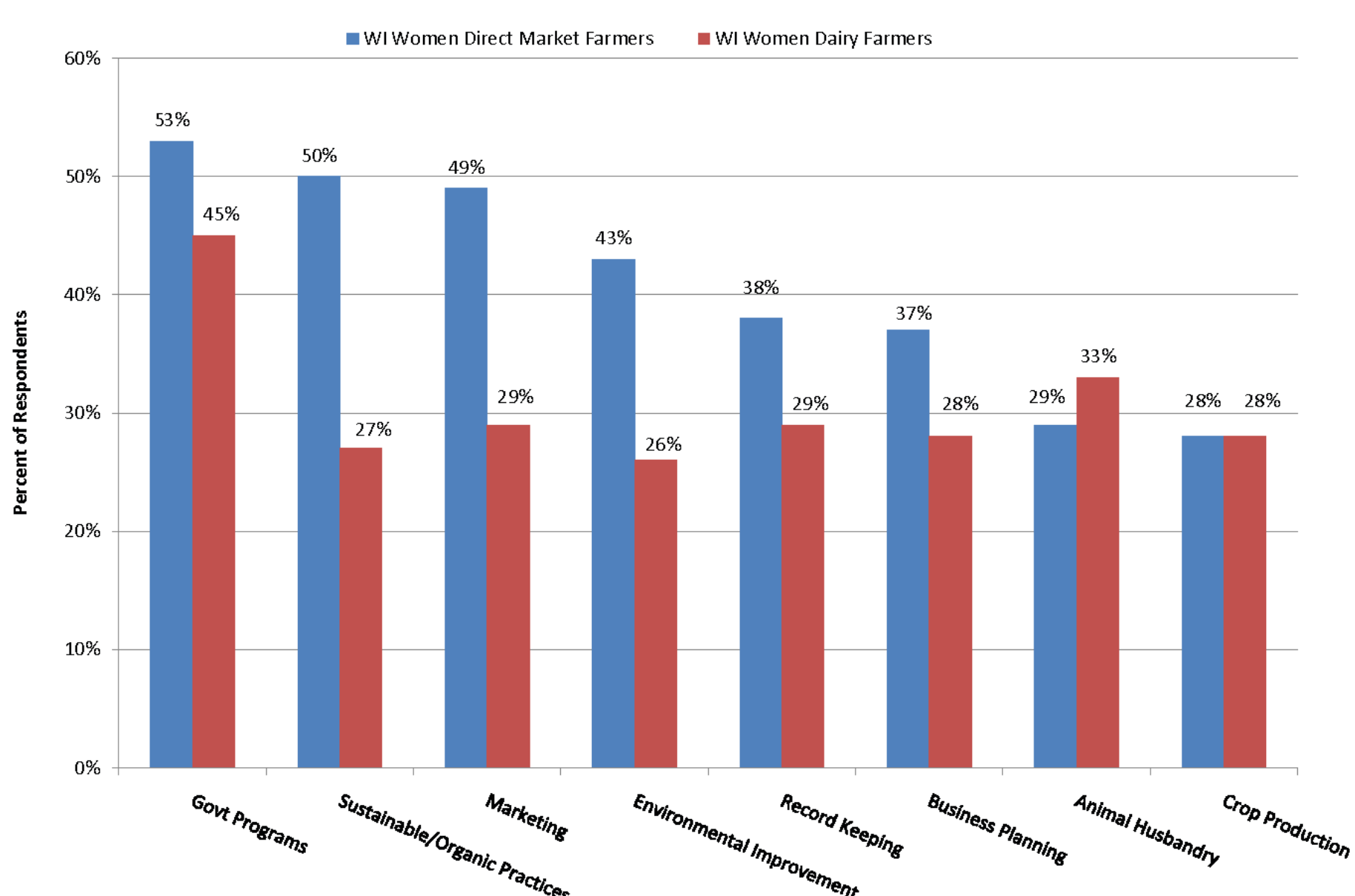
Where Do Women Direct Market Farmers Get Information About Farming?

- Only 36% consult UW Extension
- Get information from a wide variety of sources
- Farmer-to-farmer exchange is most important source of information
- Internet increasingly important
- But internet difficult to navigate
- And internet can be overwhelming

Where Do Women Dairy Farmers Get Information About Farming?

- Only 31% consult UW Extension
- Consult family members
- Farmer-to-farmer exchange is an important source of information
- Farm supply or equipment dealers
- Read farm magazines and newspapers
- Work with FSA, NRCS, & bankers

What Information or Training do Women Farmers want?



WHAT CHALLENGES FACE

WOMEN FARMERS?

- **Being treated with respect as a farmer, decision-maker, and knowledgeable person**
- Not understanding jargon of government programs and language of farming
- Problems dealing with machinery
- Difficulty getting credit or loans
- Work & family balance
- Woman in role of caretaker: kids, parents, disabled family members
- Safety of kids on farm

HOW CAN UW-EXTENSION WORK WITH WOMEN FARMERS BETTER?

- Reinforce a culture of respect for women farmers
- Advertise educational opportunities through 4-H, nutrition, and across other Extension programs
- Target smaller scale farms, also beginning farms
- Use clear language without jargon
- Work with farmers to give programs
- Learn from the farmers themselves
- Refer them to other experts
- Improve the ease of use of websites
- Encourage them to use programs already in place that reduce isolation among women farmers



REDUCE ISOLATION OF WOMEN FARMERS BY ENCOURAGING THEM TO USE THESE PROGRAMS

- Heart of the Farm, UW-Extension
- Annie's Project, UW-Extension
- Connecting Threads Conference, WIDATCP
- Gathering Circles, WI Rural Women's Initiative
- Rural Women's Project, MOSES
- WI Farmers Union Leadership Retreat
- Women, Food and Ag Network



HOW DO WOMEN FARMERS HAVE CONTACT WITH UW-EXTENSION?

"I wrote a business plan in a class"

"I became a 4-H leader"

"... to borrow a soil probe"

"... to attend a workshop"



Women farmers used Extension for very specific needs.

