

**Harvesting Well-being: Examination of
Consideration for Community by Agricultural
Producers**

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I am presenting some of the findings that I already have for my SARE research project. Today, my presentation is entitled: **Harvesting Well-being: Examination of Consideration for Community by Agricultural Producers.**

Me in Brief

- Jean R. Francois
- Education
 - Ph.D. Candidate – Geography, Kansas State University
 - MSc in Community Sciences
 - BSc in Agricultural Economics
- Research interest: Rural sustainability & human-environment interactions
- Dissertation focus: Exploring considerations of community in farming decisions



My name is Jean, and I am a graduate student in Geography at Kansas State University. I got my bachelor's in ag economics and my master's in community sciences. My research focuses on understanding how human-environment interactions shape rural landscapes and communities. My dissertation research focuses on exploring considerations of community well-being in farming decisions.

The SARE Model

Successful SARE grantees are engaged in projects that simultaneously address the “3Ps” of sustainability:

- People** – who depend on agriculture
- Profit** – over the long term
- Protection** – of the nation’s land and water

www.sare.org/nrcsare

Photo by Ted Coonfield

I’ve got this picture from SARE presentation materials, which present their model of sustainability. The model focuses on the three pillars of sustainability such as social, environmental, and economic. It includes people who depend on agriculture. And by people, I would say every single human being because each one of us needs food to live. We need to protect our land and water, ie, the resource base of our food production systems. And the agriculture profession should allow those who are engaged in it to live happily. So, in general, we can’t talk about community well-being without referring to the growing discussions on sustainability and sustainable development. Because considerations of community in agricultural decision-making is a sustainability action.

Background



Well-being is important for sustainability



But managing for well-being is complex.

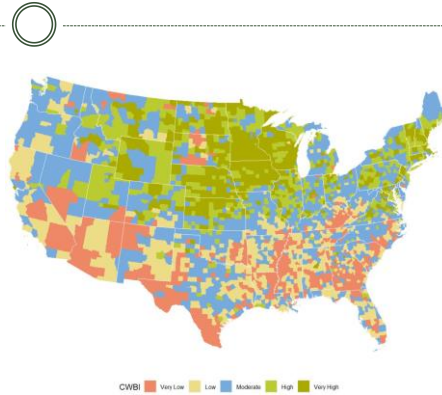


Most of the discussions on sustainability and sustainable development, whether in the academic space or organizations, feature well-being, and I mean here, both individual and community well-being among the critical outcomes for sustainability. There are various discussions and propositions on how to integrate sustainability thinking into our everyday actions. Agriculture, for example, is one of the sectors that is at the center of the debates where change should happen because farming is deeply interconnected with well-being.

However, managing for well-being is not an easy task. That would involve navigating complex interactions between environmental, social, and economic factors. But the complexity here should not be something that scares us for not even start thinking about possible ways to include sustainable considerations in our practices.

Background

- Variations in community well-being across U.S. counties
 - Basic material needs
 - Health
 - Education
 - Opportunity
 - Social community
 - Security



- **How and to what extent the broader community is considered in farming decisions?**



As I am studying community well-being integration in farming decision-making, I decided to construct a measure of community well-being to have a baseline understanding of what is happening on the ground. I use secondary data, mostly from the Census Bureau, to build this index measure of well-being. I include data on material well-being like food, water, and shelter. I also include data on education, health, and opportunities like getting a job, being safe, and having property. I include data on social community and security.

Findings show considerable variations across counties. Unfortunately, some counties do not show a good figure of community well-being. Most importantly, my biggest concerns are related to the data presented by some agricultural communities. So, that has prompted my interest in exploring the considerations of community in farming decision-making.

The project

- My SARE Grant

- Does Community Well-Being Matter in Landscape Management of U.S. Farming Systems?
 - ✦ **Economic:** Association between considerations of community in farming decisions and farm profitability
 - ✦ **Environmental:** Considerations of environmental concerns in farming decisions and community and farmer well-being
 - ✦ **Social:** Identify strategies for increasing community considerations into agricultural decision-making



For my SARE project, I ask whether community well-being matters in agricultural management. This project is intended to address the three pillars of sustainability. On the economic side, the project examines if the integration of community well-being into decision-making has the potential to lead to indirect impacts on farmer well-being, including farm profitability and economic security.

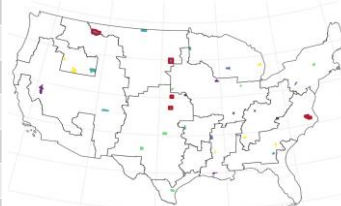
The project examines the extent to which farmers integrate concerns about the natural landscape and environmental conditions of their local community into decision-making and the extent to which these decisions are associated with perceptions of community and farmer wellbeing.

This project is intended to identify strategies for increasing the contribution of US agriculture to improved CWB (of rural agricultural communities) and farmer well-being.

Data collection

Participant Profile

		Interview	Survey
Total		50	154
Gender	Male	82%	93%
	Female	18%	7%
Race	White	94%	91%
	Other	6%	9%
Age	18 to 34	20%	0%
	35 to 54	34%	10%
	55 to 64	22%	28%
	65 or older	24%	62%
# counties		4	57



■ LD-HP ■ Average ■ HD-LP ■ LD-LP ■ HD-HP
 Spatial distribution of the study sample.
 Interview counties are buffered in red.



This project makes use of interview and survey data. This data was collected through a larger project that my major professor co-leads, which investigates barriers and bridges to the diversification of agricultural systems in the U.S. We interviewed 50 agricultural stakeholders, with 26 farmers and 24 agricultural experts. These interviews were conducted in 4 counties that show diverging trends in cropping system diversification. The interview guide emphasizes farmer responses to questions about drivers of land management and the considerations of the broader landscape and community in decision-making. Data is collected on whether community outcomes, along with other mainstream drivers, are also in the thinking of crop producers when making farming decisions. For example, one question asks farmers to provide examples of decisions they made on their farm operations because they thought these decisions would have positive impacts on the community. Or the reverse of that like decisions they avoid on their farm operations because they thought these decisions would have negative impacts on the community. For the interview data, my research project uses only farmers' insights.

We use data from the interview to design the survey of agricultural stakeholders across the nation. We cover more than 50 counties with the survey across 27 States.

We solicit farmers' responses on operations productions and attributes; political-economic incentives and sources of information used in decision-making; operation livelihoods and markets; management practices used and the motivations behind them; perceived benefits of land management on community outcomes; values, beliefs, norms related to the management of agricultural landscapes; well-being; and respondents' demographics.

Findings

Prioritizing Community Health

“I've tried to avoid using dicamba as much as possible because just watching what that stuff did to other plants, it really made open my eyes to how long that stuff stays in the air. And if you live out here, I mean, people are breathing it in, and they don't even know.”



I got several insights from the interviews acknowledging the considerations of community in agricultural decision-making. One significant consideration expressed by farmers was the avoidance of using certain types of chemicals that may negatively impact the surrounding community. This quote effectively illustrates the importance of prioritizing community health in agricultural practices. Farmers are making informed decisions that not only benefit the farm but also maintain and improve the well-being of the broader community.

Findings

Sustainable Resource Management

“Sometimes, I don't like watering because we have [some] pivots here, and they all come out of the River, and our local community actually pumps out the river for the water in the community. So, sometimes it's hard to pump water when it's dry like this, knowing that the community is going to have to use the same water, you know. We haven't ever had to stop. But sometimes, yeah.”



Another consideration highlighted by participants was the reduction of resource usage, particularly water. This quote exemplifies the significance of sustainable resource management in agriculture. It highlights the farmer's consideration of the local community's water needs, emphasizing the shared responsibility for preserving and efficiently using natural resources. The discussions here also convey the connections between individual farm operations and the well-being of the local community.

Findings

Supporting the Local Economy

“I like to patronize the small towns and the businesses in the small towns. And I'll be honest with you; it irritates me a little bit when other people come in and gobble up all the farm ground and don't use the local facilities.”



Supporting the local economy and fostering community relationships emerged as another aspect of community considerations in farming decisions. Some farmers preferred buying agricultural inputs locally, such as seeds and fertilizers, instead of seeking external sources. Similarly, they tended to sell their products within the local market whenever possible. This farmer's perspective emphasizes the importance of supporting the local economy and businesses within their communities. This insight highlights the connections between farming practices and the overall economic well-being of the communities in which they operate.

Findings

Community Engagement and Participation

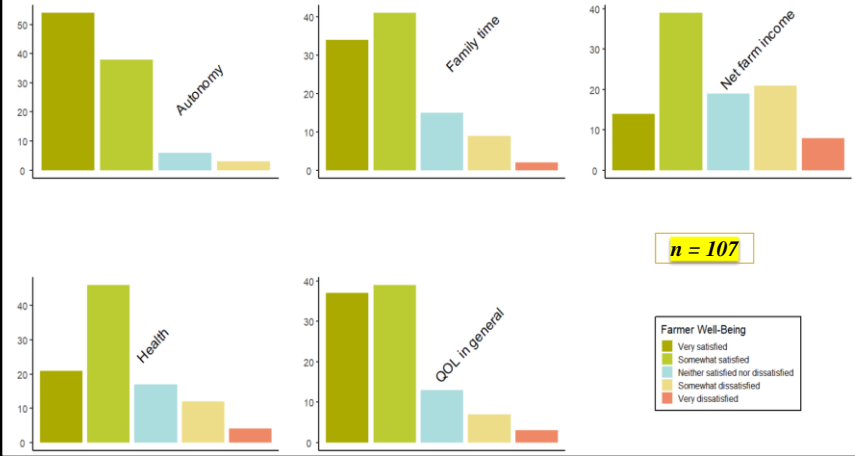
“And the thing there is, getting young people involved in that [farming] is difficult. So, what we are trying to do on the farm here is get my nieces and nephews, young people, involved in this. I would like for this farm to be a demonstration farm, you know, and I think it can become, as a matter of fact we built this, this was supposed to be a classroom and teach young people about agriculture.”



Some farmers also cited engagement in community activities and organizations as a consideration. They recognized the importance of actively participating in local groups and initiatives to keep their communities strong. This farmer's perspective emphasizes the importance of engaging and educating young people in farming practices and agricultural knowledge. They highlights the commitment to fostering community engagement and education within the agricultural sector. This insight demonstrates that farmers are proactive when it comes to supporting their communities.

Findings

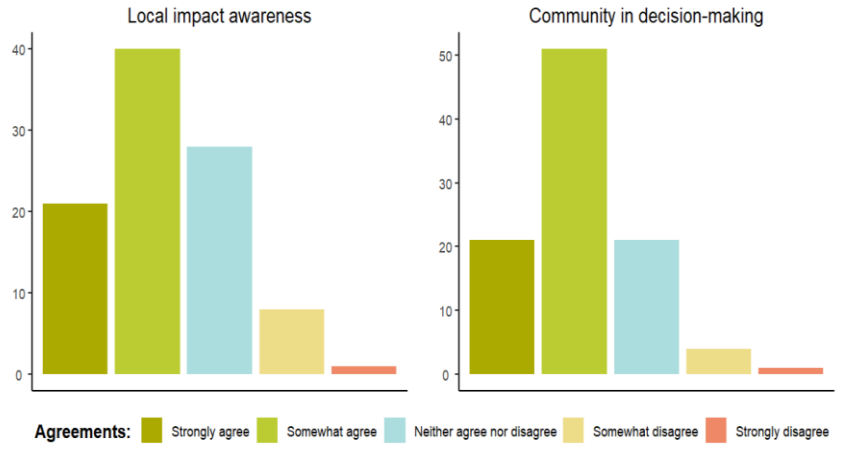
Farmer well-being



Some results from the survey. And these are just preliminary. We asked farmers about their satisfaction with the level of autonomy, i.e., being their own boss. Most of them are quite satisfied with that. We got the same figure when we asked them about time spent with family and their overall QOL. However, the results show a good number of farmers that are not satisfied with their net farm income.

Findings

Community considerations in farming decisions

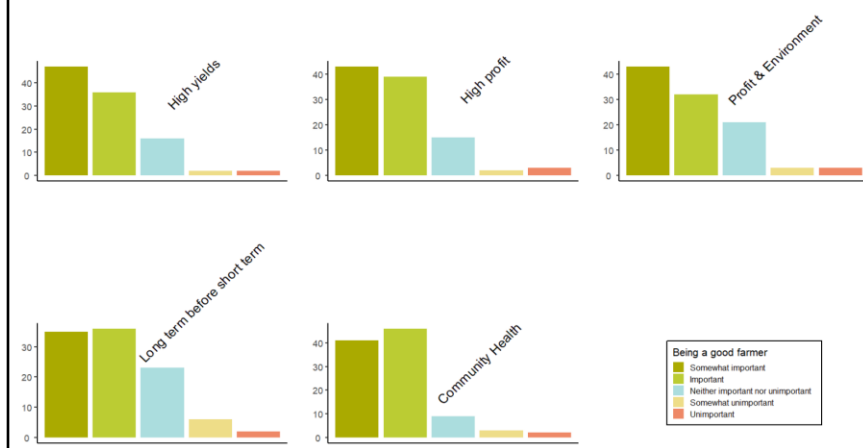


These are two statements that sought the level of agreement among farmers. The first statement is about their level of awareness regarding the potential community consequences of their farming practices. As the results show here, there is quite a strong agreement with this statement, suggesting that farmers are conscious of the impact their decisions may have on the local community. Which is really great!

The second statement reflects the degree to which farmers prioritize the well-being of the community in their farming practices. The results show strong agreement among farmers, suggesting that farmers consider not only their farm operations but also the broader community when making farming decisions. This is great to inform initiatives that aim to promote agricultural sustainability and enhance community well-being.

Findings

What matters for being a good farmer



This group of questions asks about What matters for being a good farmer. "High yields" and "High profit" reflect an emphasis on maximizing output and financial gain, which are crucial aspects of traditional farming practices.

The third figure on the top right underscores the significance of balancing economic gains with environmental considerations. This response suggests an understanding of the connections between agricultural practices and the environment.

The first plot in the bottom left is about long-term vision, which emphasizes the importance of sustainability and the preservation of resources for future generations, reflecting a forward-thinking approach that prioritizes environmental stewardship over immediate financial gains.

The last figure signifies the recognition of the connections between farming practices and the well-being of the local community, which shows a farmer's commitment to contributing positively to the community's health and prosperity.

Findings

- **Potential Benefits for Farmers and Communities**
 - Enhanced Reputation and Public Relations
 - Market Demand and Consumer Preference
 - Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing
 - Enhanced Farmer Well-Being



There are advantages associated with integrating community well-being into farm-based decision-making processes. These benefits offer considerable support for both farmers and the broader community, fostering mutual growth and sustainability. Enhanced reputation and public relations not only amplify farmers' positive image within their communities but also cultivate stronger connections with consumers and policymakers, potentially leading to new market opportunities and collaborations. Additionally, responding to market demand and consumer preferences enables farmers to establish loyal customer relationships and that may contribute to improved market competitiveness. Collaboration and knowledge sharing among farmers and stakeholders facilitate resource and expertise exchange, reducing costs and enhancing overall efficiency. Also, strong ties within the communities can improve farmers' well-being and reduce feelings of isolation.

Findings

- Potential Benefits for Farmers and Communities

- Farmer 1: “...the more you can stay involved with people in your type of industry, the better off you are.”
- Farmer 2: “... when I go places, I mean, I get people to come up, and we picked up some sales just because of that. You know, just talking to people.”



The benefits for farmers and communities are clearly exemplified through the farmers' own experiences and perspectives. Farmer 1 here emphasizes the importance of staying involved within their industry, highlighting the significant role that networking and community engagement can play in fostering a thriving agricultural operation. Building strong connections within the industry can lead to valuable opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and the exchange of best practices. Farmer 2 underscores the impact of community engagement on business success. By fostering positive relationships and interactions within the community, farmers can enhance their market presence and potentially increase sales through effective communication and rapport building. These insights reinforce the value of active participation in community activities and the potential positive outcomes it can bring for both farmers and their communities.

Concluding remarks

- There are some considerations of community in farming decisions.
 - Social considerations
 - Economic considerations
 - Environmental considerations
- Commitment to creating pathways for sustainable agricultural systems and communities
- However!
 - The broader societal, economic, and political contexts influence farming decisions
 - ✦ & Community considerations in decision-making.



In conclusion. There are some considerations of various dimensions of community in farming decisions. The findings underscore the presence of social, economic, and environmental considerations in farming decisions. The findings that I got from the study show hope because farmers are committed to balance decision-making that benefits both farmers and society.

However, the study acknowledges the importance of the broader societal, economic, and political contexts that can significantly shape and influence farming decisions and the integration of community concerns.

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My research team

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Questions?



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SYSTEMS?”**