GREY COUNTY CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

Contents

Overview

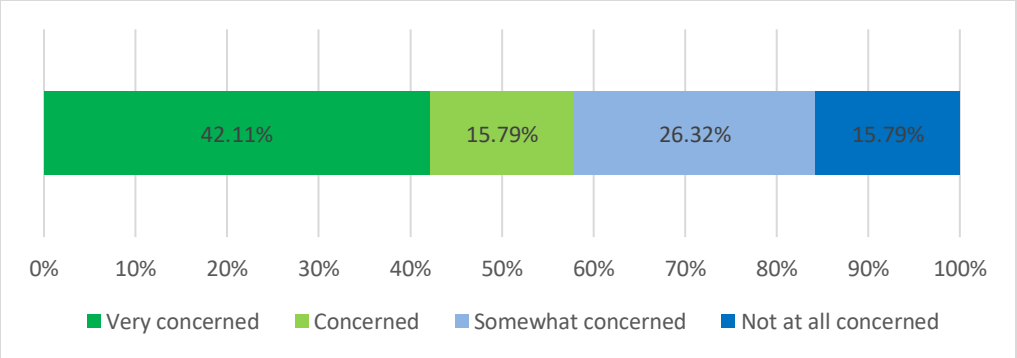
The survey was made available to the agricultural community on Survey Monkey through Grey County's website between 2020. A total of 38 people responded to the survey. This document summarizes and showcases the general sentiments found in the survey on a question by question basis using graphics to summarize the results. Where respondents were given space to provide written responses a short summary of the emergent themes is given, highlighting supporting and opposing views. Open-ended responses reflected a wide variety of ideas and therefore not all responses are captured in this document. Please see survey results for full answers.

1. Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture Awareness

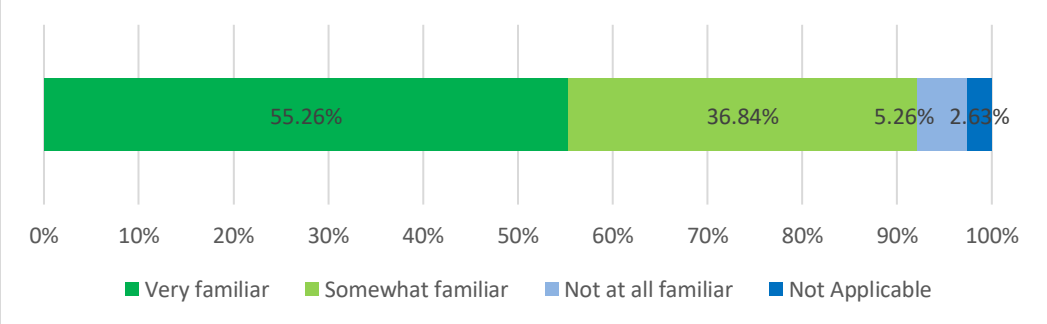
Q1) Overall, how concerned are you about the impacts of climate change on your farm?

Overall the majority of respondents were 'very concerned' or 'concerned' about the impacts of climate change on their farm (58%, n=38), however a large amount were also 'somewhat concerned' or 'not at all concerned' (42%.)

A large majority of respondents were familiar with farm sustainability and resilience practices (92%, n=38).



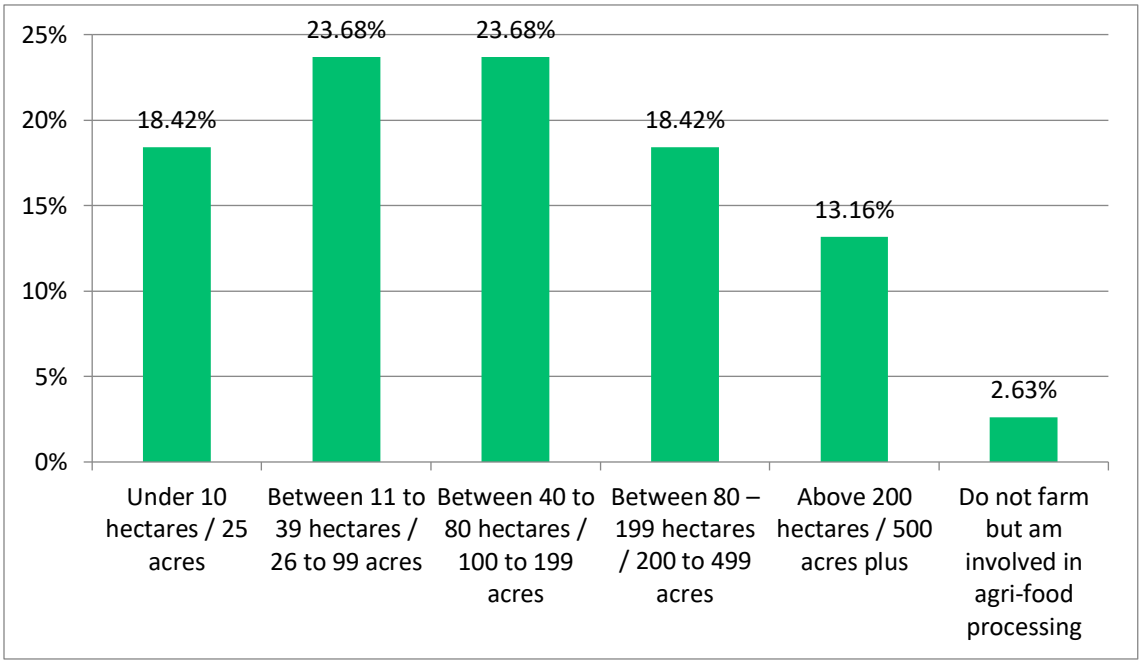
Q2) If you manage agricultural lands and/or livestock, how familiar are you with management practices designed to increase sustainability and resilience of the farm? (i.e. livestock and manure management, soil conservation, and carbon sequestration)



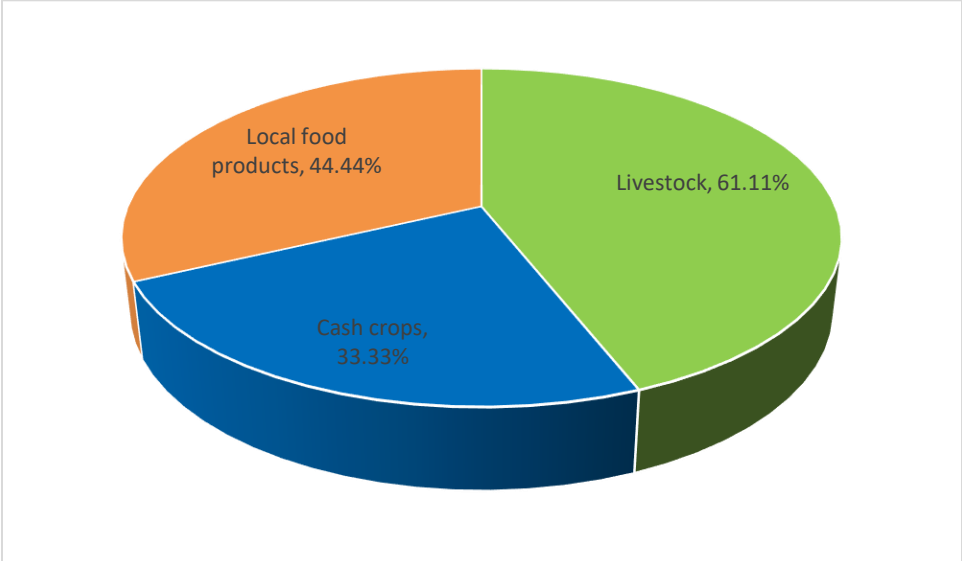
2. General Farm Information

Q3) How much land do you currently farm (either through ownership or lease arrangements)?

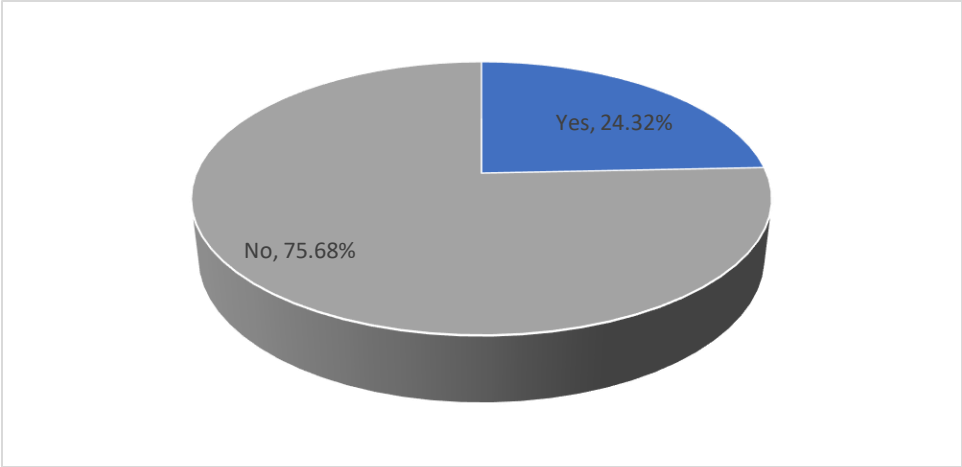
Most farmers fell within the 11 to 39 hectare and 40 to 80 hectare farm size range (n=38). The majority of farmers have livestock as their main product followed by local food, and cash crops (n=36), but only 24% (n=37) had onsite processing beyond primary production.



Q4) What are the main products produced on your farm? Please select all that apply.



Q5) Does your farm also have on-site processing facilities or any facilities beyond primary production?

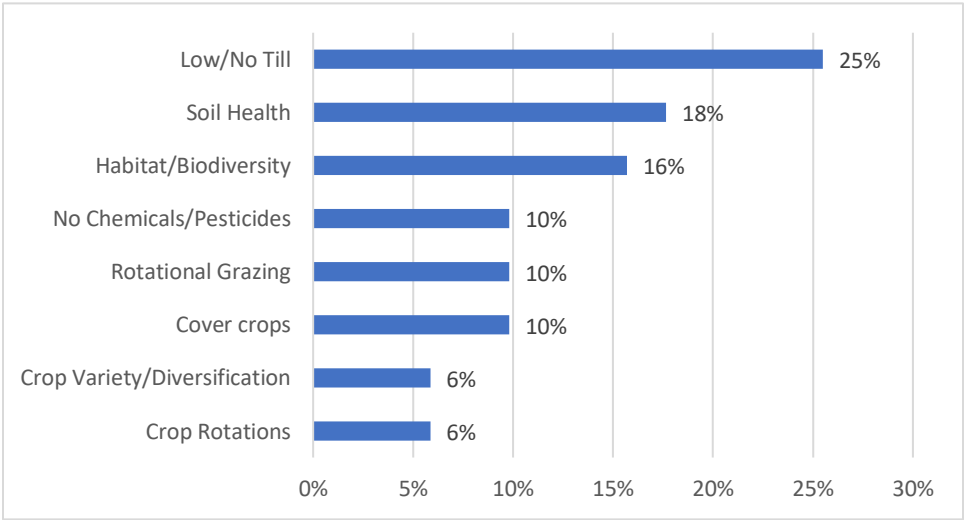


3. On-Farm Sustainability and Resilience Practices

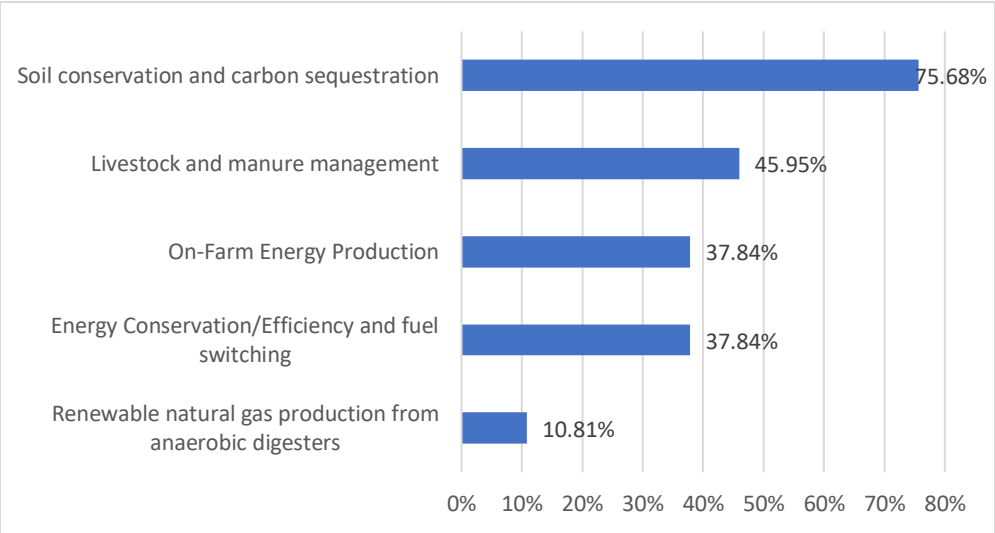
Respondents (n=26) listed a wide variety of sustainability and resiliency practices that they currently implement, with the most common practices being low/no till farming, soil health practices, and habitat and biodiversity conservation such as through native trees and buffer strips Common themes are displayed in the chart below.

Regarding practices that respondents to implement in the future soil conservation and carbon sequestration was the most popular by a large margin (75%, n=37), followed by livestock and manure management. The least amount of respondents (11%) were interested in renewable natural gas production.

Q6) Please list any sustainability and resilience practices that you have implemented on your farm.



Q7) Which of the following farm sustainability and GHG mitigation practices would you be most interested in implementing on your farm? Check all that apply:



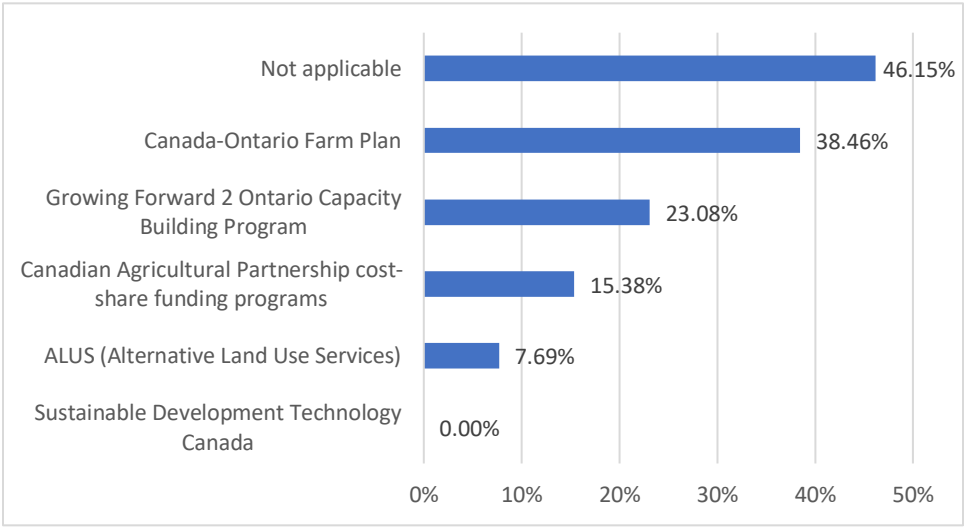
4. Program Participation

The majority of respondents have not participated in available farm sustainability programs (46%, n=26). The Canada-Ontario Farm Plan is the most common out of those that have participated in programs. Those that responded 'Other" (n=11) indicated a number of other programs or organizations including: General Livestock Biosecurity Workshop, Bruce Grey Centre for Agroecology, SARPAL. 1 respondent indicated they are not familiar with any of the above programs, while another indicated they attempted the Ontario Farm Plan but it took too much time away from farm work. 1 respondent pointed out that the above programs favour larger industrial scale operation and disadvantage smaller scale farmers that have already started to implement sustainability.

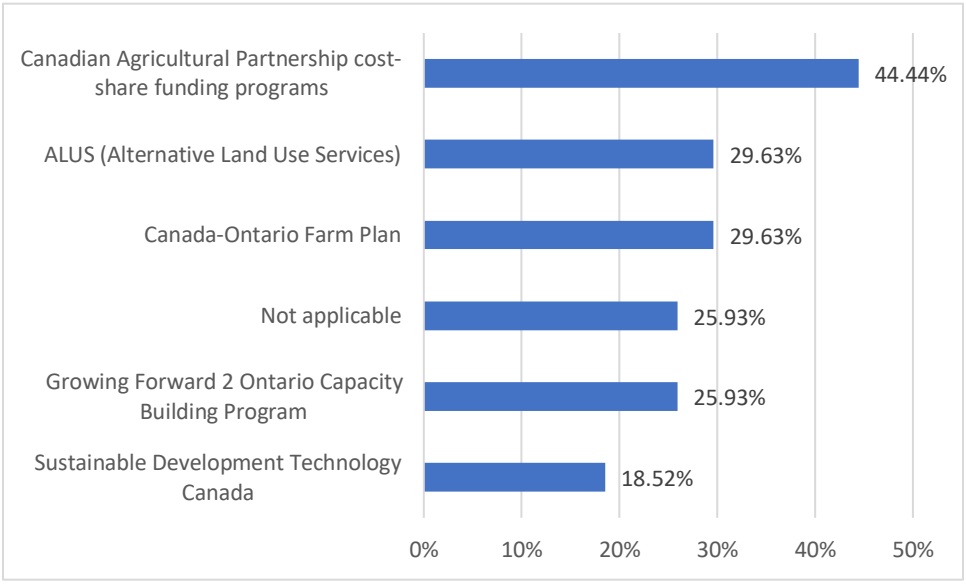
Regarding future participation in programs, respondents were most interested in the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Cost-Share funding Program (44%, n=27), followed by a relatively even split between the remaining options. Those that responded 'Other' (n=8) indicated that more information would be needed about the programs before committing, and if the process was kept simple. 2 respondents indicated they would not participate as they would be soon retiring.

68% of respondents (n=37) indicated interest in participating knowledge sharing network for sustainable agriculture.

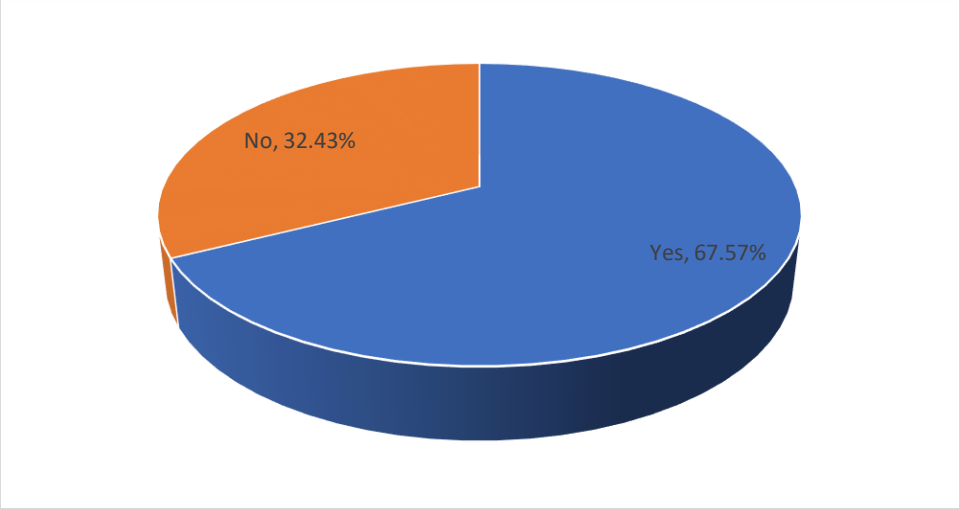
Q8) Have you previously participated in any of the below programs to improve farm sustainability and prosperity? Please select all that apply:



Q9) Would you be interested in participating in any of the below programs to improve farm sustainability and prosperity? Select all that apply:



Q10) Would you be interested in participating in a network of producers to share resources, tools and knowledge about sustainable, efficient and resilient agricultural practices?



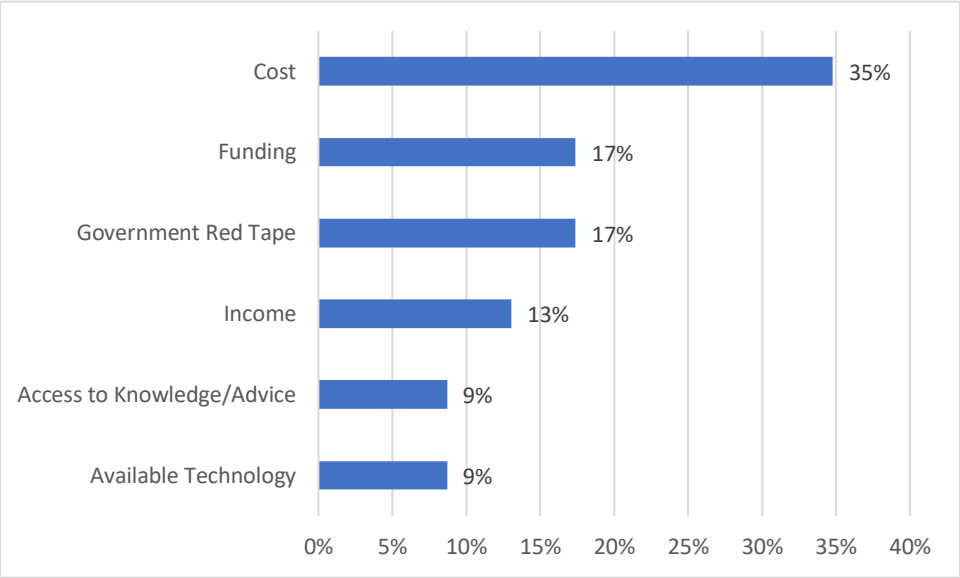
5. Challenges and Solutions

The most commonly cited challenges to implementing agricultural sustainability cost (35%), funding (17%), regulatory red tape (17%) and income related challenges (13%, n=23). Respondents indicated that shrinking profit margins, high technology and operating costs and difficulty accessing funding combine to hinder implementation of on-farm sustainability practices. Respondents specified that funding is often given to larger operations, promote incremental change and provide little support for more holistic and regenerative practices that reward. Some respondents indicated a need for more systemic change to enable sustainable agriculture, identifying the larger industrial food system as encouraging destructive practices. Furthermore, local food remains a niche market and many in local and rural economies don't have enough income to afford local produce. Respondents also indicated a need for access to appropriate machinery, technology, knowledge and expert advice as to how to implement farm sustainability.

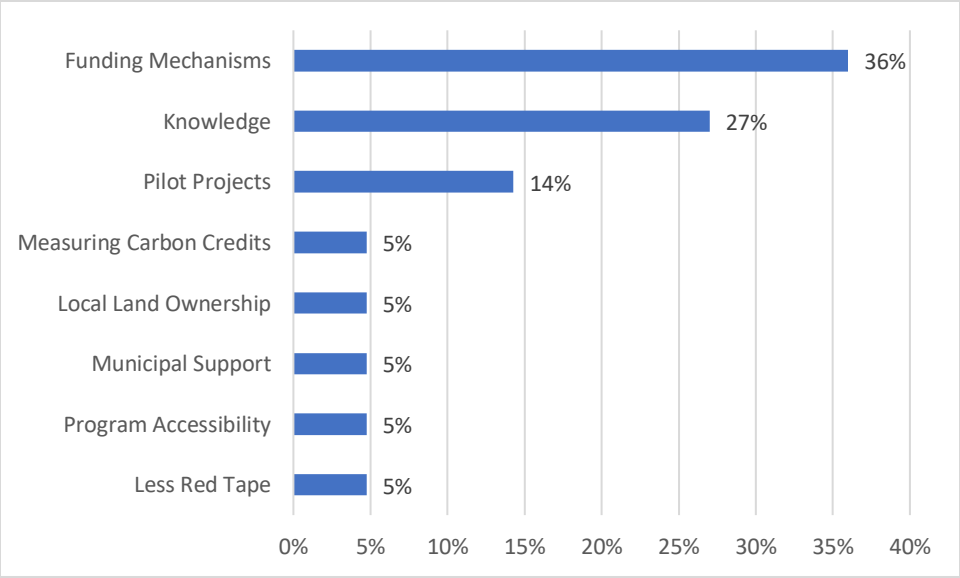
Additional needed resources and supports identified by respondents additional funding mechanisms (36%), better access to knowledge and expert advice (36%) and more pilot/demonstration projects (17%, n=20). Suggestions included: grants, subsidies, cost sharing, micro-loans, and swifter transfer of existing funding. The next highest priority was for knowledge generation and practical support such as through workshops, on-farm research, access to sustainable agriculture experts, advice and consultation, better information sharing, educational resources, as well as pilot projects, demonstration projects and promotion of best practices.

78% of respondents (n=37) indicated they would participate in a financial incentive program that supports on-farm sustainability if one were available.

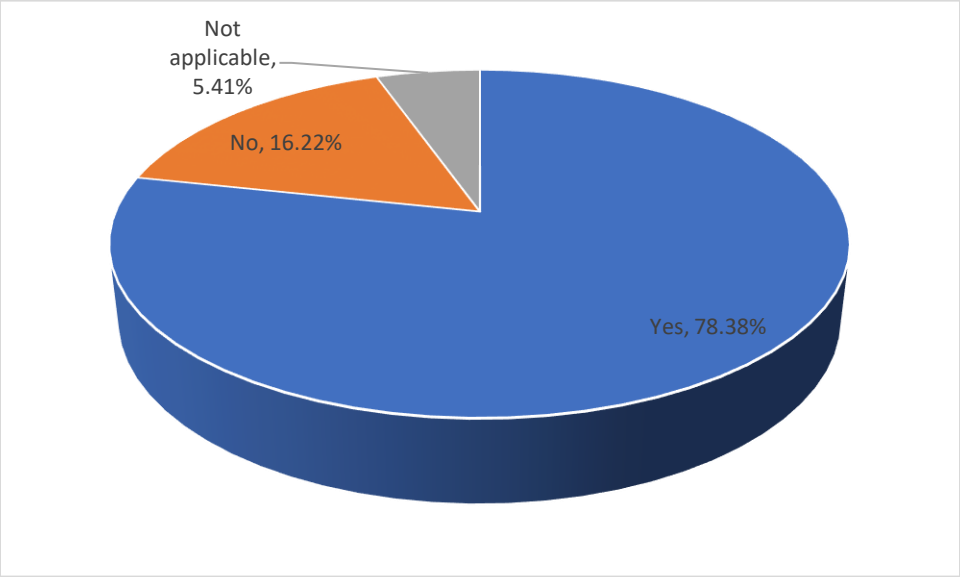
Q11) If you are familiar with agricultural sustainability practices, what are some of the key challenges to implementing these practices on your farm?



Q12) What additional resources and supports would be most beneficial to successful implementation of on-farm sustainability practices?

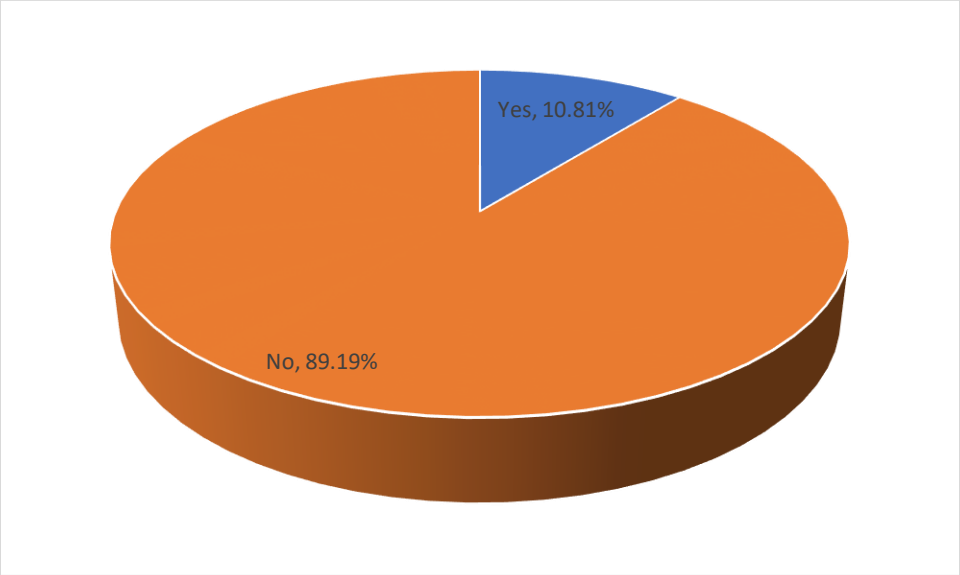


Q13) Would you participate in a program that supports on-farm sustainability practices through financial incentives or otherwise?



6. General Survey Participation

Q14) A general survey was also sent to the larger community in Grey County. Did you have an opportunity to participate in the general survey?



7. Action Suggestions Based On Survey Results

1. Develop a knowledge and resource sharing network of farmers, experts, universities/colleges and farming and environmental organizations, to support best practice implementation of on-farm sustainability practices including support for completion of program applications (i.e. Canada-Ontario Farm Plan), as well as on-farm demonstration, pilot and research projects.

2. Facilitate forums, training sessions, and capacity-building activities for local farms on best practices, and new/emerging practices and technologies, to increase soil carbon sequestration and storage including:
   - Improved cropland management, including crop selection and rotation, nutrient management, tillage/residue management, and water management (including irrigation, drainage), agroforestry, etc.; and
   - Restoration of degraded lands (using erosion control, organic and nutrient amendments), conversion of marginal farmland to perennial grasses or trees, and restoration of wetlands.
   - Continue to review current research and methodologies to quantify carbon sequestration through agriculture. Once determined, begin regularly quantifying agricultural sources of carbon sinks.

3. Facilitate forums, training sessions, and capacity-building activities for local farms to continue to implement manure management best practices, including: Improved manure collection and storage, manure application to reduce N2O emissions and consider anaerobic digestion to capture methane from manure, converting it to renewable natural gas, where economically feasible.