



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Statewide Poll of North Carolina Farmland Owners

Prepared
By
The Kitchens Group
for
Land for Tomorrow Coalition

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Methodology

The Nature Conservancy, on behalf of the North Carolina *Land for Tomorrow Coalition*, commissioned a public opinion survey of four hundred farmland owners in statewide North Carolina. These farm owners were interviewed in a random sample on November 19-22, 2003. Respondents were screened for owning farm land in North Carolina. The sample was balanced according to all known demographic factors. All interviews were conducted by telephone. The margin of error for this survey is +/-4.9%, with a 95% confidence level. The poll was conducted by The Kitchens Group of Maitland, Florida.

Conclusions

- **Farm owner profile.** A majority of those we polled farm between 40 and 250 acres. Eighty-one percent live on the land that they farm. Sixty-one percent receive half or less of their income from farming. Eighty-four percent were 50 or older, and the sample was evenly split between men and women.
- **Thirty-seven percent of farm owners rent their land to someone else to farm.** Fifty-three percent lease out at least some of their land to someone else.
- **Farm owners express serious doubts about the future of farming in the state.** Nearly half (48%) say their children will not farm the land they own in the future. Seventy-one percent expressed the opinion that no one is buying land for farming, and 56% say the only people who will buy the land are developers.
- **Conservation techniques are generally acceptable.** Seventy-five percent support buffer zones along rivers and streams, and 61% support programs to restore wetlands.
- **Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs are little known but viewed positively when explained to farmland owners.** Only 39% were familiar with the state's Farmland Preservation Trust Fund and only 24% with the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. However, when given a brief explanation of PDR, 64% thought that it sounded like a good idea.
- **Farmers are open to a range of land protection options.** Of those whose counties had Voluntary Agricultural District programs, 49% were enrolled in this 10-year protection agreement. Fifty-four percent would be willing to restrict development longer for additional benefits. Sixty-five percent think that business planning assistance and grants in exchange for short-term land protection would be helpful for North Carolina agriculture.