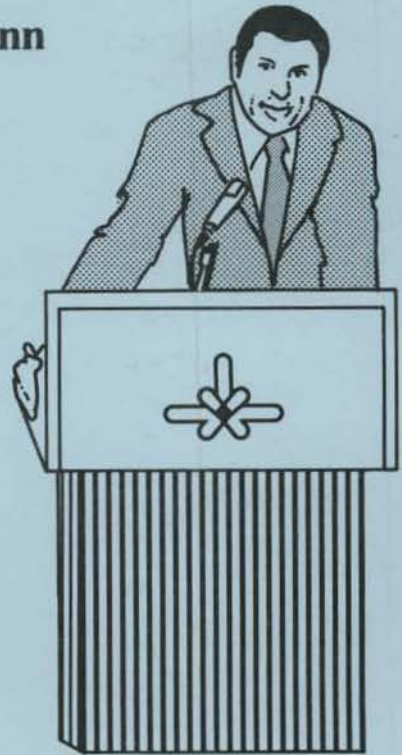


Agricultural and Food Policy Issues: Idaho Producer's Views

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Neil Meyer and Nancy Konn



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Neil Meyer and Nancy Konn

Introduction

Many farm operators are expressing increasing concern over the possible future direction of agriculture. Though governmental policies and programs have always been an influence on the organization of agricultural production, farm owners are subject to more public regulation now than at any other time in the nation's history. All indications suggest an increasing public role in the future.

"Farming is a risky business" is a statement often made and generally accepted. Today's soaring costs, corporate competition and government policies make this even more so. Many farmers feel that federal agencies have assumed too much power and are not set up to serve the public good as originally intended. Though most would suggest we need at least some government involvement in our lives, the question is where do we draw the line between too much and too little government?

Methodology

The data in this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie et al. 1975). Demographic information (specifically income and type of farming operation) was asked of each respondent. This allowed us to group respondents by income levels and types of farming operations and to analyze the data from that viewpoint as well as from the state as a whole. Income levels were divided into three categories which we considered low, middle and upper income farmers for the particular state of Idaho. These categories were:

1. Smaller farmers with gross annual sales of \$40,000 or less;
2. Medium-sized farmers with gross sales of \$40,000 to \$199,999;
3. Larger farming operations grossing \$200,000 or more annually.

The dependent and independent variables (income and type of farm) were cross-tabulated to assess any relationships. Frequency distributions were included to assess the overall importance placed on each of the agricultural issues by Idaho respondents.

The Survey

During May and June of 1984, a sample of 1,500 Idaho farmers/ranchers were mailed a questionnaire to find out their views on key agricultural and food policy issues that will be discussed and debated when Congress writes a new Agricultural and Food Act in 1985.¹ Usable responses were received from 558 farmers, giving us a 35.1 percent response rate. Fifteen hundred names were selected in a random manner from the Idaho Statistical Reporting Service's producer list. An initial explanatory letter was sent with the first questionnaire to all 1,500 persons. One week later, a reminder card was sent to all 1,500 persons. Three weeks after the initial mailing, a reminder letter and an additional survey form were sent to all who had not completed and returned the initial survey form. This publication summarizes all the responses and divides them among farmers with different types of farming operations.

For a national perspective, Idaho and 16 other states cooperated using the same questions. The response for all the states are included in the publication *U.S. Farmers' Views on Agricultural and Food Policy*, North Central Regional Extension Publication 227, December 1984, which is available from the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Communication Center (Guither et al. 1984).

Profile of Farmers Responding to the Survey

Efforts were made to draw a sample of representative Idaho farmers. The responses to the questions suggest that the sample was reasonably representative.

Farm Program Participation — Among all respondents, 29 percent participated in the wheat acreage reduction program and 25 percent in the wheat Payment-In-Kind (PIK) program in 1983. Nineteen percent participated in the feed grains

¹Survey was conducted using the Dillman Total Design Method for mail surveys (see chapter 5) using an initial letter, reminder post card and letter. The third reminder letter which is part of the Total Design Method was not used (Dillman 1977).

acreage reduction program and another 6 percent in the PIK program. A higher proportion of the farmers with more than \$200,000 gross sales participated in the wheat acreage reduction, feed grains acreage reduction and the feed grain PIK program than those in the lower sales groups. As we might expect, a higher proportion of grain and mixed grain and livestock farmers participated in the acreage reduction programs than livestock and dairy farmers. Table 1 shows the details.

Ages of Respondents — All ages of farmers participated in the survey. The greatest percentage, 40 percent, were of the 50 to 64 year old group; 34 percent were 35 to 49; 11 percent were under 35; and 15 percent were 65 years or older (Table 2).

Size of Farms — All sizes of farms were represented. Among all respondents, 50 percent farmed less than 339 acres, 18 percent farmed 340 to 649 acres, 14 percent farmed 650 to 1,199 acres, and another 18 percent farmed 1,200 or more acres (Table 3).

Tenure of Operator — All types of tenure were reported. The reports show that 17 percent owned less than 25 percent of the land they farm, 13 percent

owned from 26 to 50 percent, 10 percent owned 51 to 75 percent, and half owned 76 to 100 percent of their farm land (Table 4).

Gross Sales — Among all respondents, 37 percent reported gross sales of \$40,000 or less, 44 percent fell into the \$40,000 to \$199,999 category, and 15 percent approximated their annual gross sales at \$200,000 and up. There was a 4 percent non-response to this question (Table 5).

Most Important Source of 1983 Farm Income — Field crop farmers dominated the sample at 44 percent. Next were mixed crop and livestock farmers at 25 percent; 13 percent were strictly livestock farmers, 10 percent were dairymen, and 6 percent farmed something else. Two percent did not respond (Table 6).

Amount of Formal Education — Respondents represented a wide range of schooling. In general, Idaho farmers are well educated; 22 percent graduated from college, 32 percent had some college or technical school, and 30 percent were high school graduates. Only 9 percent of the producers reported "some high school," and 6 percent reported grade school (Table 7).

Table 1. Participation in 1983 farm programs.

	All farmers ¹	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 ²	\$40,000 to \$199,999 ²	under \$40,000 ²	Grain ²	Hogs, beef cattle ²	Mixed grain and livestock ²	Dairy ²	Other ²
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Wheat acreage reduction	29	70	63	41	67	39	49	38	41
Wheat Payment-In-Kind	25	59	57	33	61	34	43	24	38
Feed grains acreage reduction	19	55	43	33	46	23	44	39	41
Feed grain Payment-In-Kind	6	25	10	14	14	4	21	18	12

¹Total responses have non-responses figured as part of total.

²Cross tabulations omit the non-responses in the percentage calculations.

Table 2. Age of respondents.

Categories (years)	All farmers (%)
Under 35	11
35 to 49	34
50 to 64	40
65 and over	15
N = 558	

Table 4. Percent of land owned.

Percentage	All farmers (%)
Under 25	17
26 to 50	13
51 to 75	10
76 to 100	50
No response	10
N = 506	

Table 3. Number of acres farmed.

Size of farm (acres)	All farmers (%)
Under 339	50
340 to 649	18
650 to 1,199	14
1,200 and over	18
N = 558	

Table 5. Annual gross sales in recent years.

Gross sales	All farmers (%)
\$40,000 or less	37
\$40,000 to \$199,999	44
\$200,000 and over	15
No response	4
N = 556	

Income from Off-farm Sources — A majority of the respondents received a major portion of the family income from farming. While 58 percent reported that 24 percent or less of the farm family income was from off-farm sources 11 percent received 25 to 49 percent, 7 percent received 50 to 74 percent, and 10 percent received 75 to 100 percent of the family income from off-farm employment or investments. Fourteen percent did not answer the question (Table 8).

Farm and Commodity Organization Memberships — More farmers belonged to the Farm Bureau than any other organization; they were 30 percent of respondents. Another 26 percent belonged to Wheat Producers, and 21 percent were affiliated with the Cattlemen's Association. Eleven percent of the farmers were milk producers. All other general farm organizations had 10 percent or fewer of the sample as members (Table 9).

Price Support and Commodity Programs

Idaho farmers differ on what they would like to see as the future direction of production and price support policy after 1985. The most predominant feeling from 34 percent of those responding was to eliminate set-aside, price support and government storage programs. The next most frequent response by 25 percent was to keep present voluntary programs with minor revisions. Only 13 percent wanted to have a mandatory set-aside and price support program in years of excess supply with all producers required to participate if approved in a farmer referendum. The concept of re-establishing acreage allotments and marketing quotas for each farm as a basis for price support appealed to even fewer farm-

Table 6. Most important source of 1983 farm income.

Commodity	All farmers (%)
Grain	44
Hogs, beef cattle	13
Mixed grain and livestock	25
Dairy	10
Other	6
No response	2
N = 558	

Table 7. Last year in school completed.

School	All farmers (%)
Grade school	6
Some high school	9
High school graduate	30
Some college or technical school	32
Graduated from college	22
N = 549	

ers (only 9 percent). The remaining 19 percent were undecided, had other responses or did not answer the question (Table 10).

The strongest support to eliminate set-aside programs came from lower income farmers with gross annual sales under \$40,000 per year. Strong support was also evident among those farmers whose major source of farm income is from livestock.

Although the idea of keeping present voluntary programs with minor revisions was less popular than eliminating set-aside programs altogether, strongest support seemed to come from larger farmers with gross annual sales of more than \$200,000. Those whose major income source is grain crops were also more inclined to favor voluntary programs than livestock farmers.

Slightly more support for mandatory set-aside programs came from middle income farmers with gross annual sales between \$40,000 and \$199,999. Also it came from grain producers, though there were no major differences among any of the groups.

Target Prices and Deficiency Payments

Idaho farmers are almost equally divided as to how they feel about target prices and deficiency payments. Although they add to government program costs and the current Administration tried to eliminate them in 1981, 45 percent of those responding would like to see them continued in new agricultural legislation. An almost equal 40 percent, however, oppose their continuation.

Table 8. Percent of farm family income from off-farm employment or investments.

Percentage	All farmers (%)
0 to 24	58
25 to 49	11
50 to 74	7
75 to 100	10
No response	14
N = 476	

Table 9. Membership in Farm and Commodity Organizations.

Organization	Reporting ¹ (%)
Farm Bureau	30
Farmer's Union	3
Grange	8
National Farmers Organization	4
American Agricultural Movement	1
Cattlemen's Association	21
Pork Producers	1
Milk Producers	11
Wheat Producers	26
Labor Union	2
N = 378	

¹Sums to more than 100 percent because of membership in more than 1 organization.

The farming group most favoring continuing target prices was grain/livestock producers. Also favoring continuation of target prices were those with annual gross sales of more than over \$200,000 (Table 11).

If target prices were continued, farmers were asked where they should be set compared with 1984. Forty-nine percent of Idaho farmers had no response to this question. About 25 percent would like to see them higher, and another 20 percent would like to see them stay the same. Only 2 percent would like to see them lower. The remaining 4 percent had no opinion (Table 12).

Strongest support for higher target prices was centered among grain/livestock producers. Very few of any income level or type of farming operation were in favor of lower target prices.

Of those who favored keeping target prices the same as in 1984, the predominant income group was the \$40,000 to \$199,999 range. Grain crop and dairy farmers were the two groups most in favor of keeping them the same.

Acreage Diversion Payments

Acreage diversion payments were authorized in the 1981 Agricultural and Food Act. Once again farmers were almost equally divided on whether these payments should be continued in future programs with 44 percent thinking not and another 43 percent favoring the continuation of diversion payments. Fourteen percent of the producers were not sure or did not respond to the question.

Farmers with gross sales of more than \$200,000 tended to show the most support for diversion payments. Half of the lowest income farmers were opposed to the continuation of these payments. Grain crop and mixed crop and livestock farmers responded most favorably to continued acreage diversion payments. The most opposition was definitely among livestock and dairy farmers (Table 13).

The Farmer-owned Grain Reserve

The farmer-owned grain reserve concept with storage payments was established in the Agricultural and Food Act of 1977. Modifications were made in the Agricultural and Food Act of 1981.

Table 10. Preferred policy toward production and price supports after 1985.¹

	All farmers ²	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 ³	\$40,000 to \$199,999 ³	under \$40,000 ³	Grain ³	Hogs, beef cattle ³	Mixed grain and livestock ³	Dairy ³	Other ³
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Keep present voluntary programs	25	33	27	21	32	11	20	27	30
Require all producers to participate in set-aside program in years of excess supply	13	14	16	12	16	7	14	11	18
Re-establish acreage allotments and marketing quotas	9	15	7	10	11	7	10	9	6
Eliminate set-aside, price support and governmental storage programs	34	24	37	38	28	57	36	38	27
Undecided	8	8	8	10	8	10	9	9	12
Other	7	8	6	9	6	6	11	7	6
No response	4								
Number of subjects	535	80	240	194	237	70	132	56	33

¹Columns may not add up to 100 because of rounding to nearest percentage point.

²Total responses have non-responses figures as part of total.

³Cross tabulations omit the non-responses in the percentage calculations.

Table 11. Continue target prices and deficiency payments in the 1985 farm bill?

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Yes	45	60	49	37	59	18	46	30	46
No	40	29	43	45	31	61	44	54	46
Not sure	12	11	8	19	10	21	10	16	6
No response	3								
Number	542	83	238	200	241	71	134	56	33

Almost half of all Idaho farmers responding favored continuing the farmer-owned grain reserve. Those in the more than \$200,000 gross sales income group showed the strongest support for the reserve with 50 percent responding in favor. The larger farmers were most widely represented in the 35 percent not in favor of continuing the reserve. Farmers most in favor were dairy and mixed crop and livestock producers while those opposed were fairly equally divided between all types of farming operations (Table 14).

Closely related to the issue of continuing a farmer-owned reserve is the policy of determining how large the reserve should be and who should be responsible to make decisions about it. Among the three alternatives presented in our survey, 26 percent of the respondents wanted to set a limit based on the percent of the previous year's use, 8 percent wanted no limit set on the size of the reserve, and an equally small 8 percent wanted to let the Secretary of Agriculture set the limit on the amount. Almost half of the respondents did not answer the question, and

the remaining 8 percent were not sure how they felt about it. A majority or near majority of all income groups and major type of farm income groups supported the concept of setting reserve limits based on a percentage of the previous years actual use of that commodity (Table 15).

Setting Loan Rates

Over the years since the first price support legislation was passed, loan rates for storable commodities have been based on (1) a percentage of parity, (2) as a percentage of the average market price at designated times and places, (3) at an estimated cash cost of production and (4) by compromise among various interests in the legislative process.

In the questionnaire, farmers were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that "loan rates for price supported commodities should be based on a percent of the average market price for the past 3 to 5 years." Forty six percent of those who answered the question either agreed or strongly agreed, 29 percent disagreed to a greater or lesser degree, and

Table 12. Where should target prices be set compared with 1984?

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Higher	25	51	57	48	49	30	53	32	63
About the same	20	40	44	34	45	35	32	46	25
Lower	2	6	6	2	2	5	7	9	6
No opinion	4	4	4	16	5	30	8	14	4
No response	49								
Number	286	53	127	94	151	20	72	22	16

Table 13. Continue acreage diversion payments?

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Yes	43	57	45	39	56	17	46	27	44
No	44	35	46	50	37	63	46	61	47
Not sure	10	8	9	12	7	20	8	13	9
No response	4								
Number	538	83	235	200	238	71	134	56	32

Table 14. Continue farmer-owned grain reserve?

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Yes	47	54	50	44	45	34	57	56	49
No	31	35	34	31	36	37	27	25	36
Not sure	19	11	17	26	19	29	16	20	15
No response	3								
Number	539	81	239	199	242	70	131	56	33

20 percent were not sure enough to decide one way or the other. Only 5 percent did not answer. Dairy-men and mixed crop and livestock farmers were the majority in agreement (Table 16).

The Payment-in-Kind Program

In 1983, the most widespread use of the PIK program occurred. It also contributed to record high cost for farm programs. Respondents were asked if they thought the PIK program should be used again if large stocks reappeared. The majority (48 percent) thought this program should be discontinued. A little more than a third (37 percent) supported the program, and 15 percent were not sure or did not

answer the question. A plurality of all farmers as well as grain and mixed grain and livestock farmers favored use of the PIK program again if stocks were large. To the contrary, livestock producers were predominant among those not in favor of continuing the program (Table 17).

Benefits for Small Farms

Almost half of all farmers surveyed felt that future programs should be changed to give most price and income support benefit to small and medium-sized farms with gross annual sales less than \$40,000, 40 percent disagreed, and 12 percent were not sure or did not respond. Not surprisingly, those whose in-

Table 15. Preferred policy if grain reserve continued.

	All farmers (%)	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 (%)	\$40,000 to \$199,999 (%)	under \$40,000 (%)	Grain (%)	Hogs, beef cattle (%)	Mixed grain and livestock (%)	Dairy (%)	Other (%)
No limit on size of reserve	8	19	17	10	18	14	20	9	0
Let Secretary of Agriculture set limit on amount	8	23	11	21	14	11	18	18	27
Set limit based on percent of the previous year's use	26	43	57	49	52	57	43	61	60
Not sure	8	15	15	20	16	18	19	12	13
No response	49								
Number of subjects	285	47	127	100	120	28	84	33	15

Table 16. Set loan rates for price supported commodities on a percent of 3 to 5 year average market price.

	All farmers (%)	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 (%)	\$40,000 to \$199,999 (%)	under \$40,000 (%)	Grain (%)	Hogs, beef cattle (%)	Mixed grain and livestock (%)	Dairy (%)	Other (%)
Strongly agree	10	12	12	8	11	4	11	13	9
Agree	36	36	36	40	33	40	42	46	46
Not sure	20	20	21	23	23	27	15	26	12
Disagree	17	15	20	18	19	19	19	7	21
Strongly disagree	12	17	12	11	15	10	13	7	12
No response	5								
Number of subjects	532	81	235	196	241	68	128	54	33

Table 17. Use Payment-in-Kind program again if large stocks reappear.

	All farmers (%)	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 (%)	\$40,000 to \$199,999 (%)	under \$40,000 (%)	Grain (%)	Hogs, beef cattle (%)	Mixed grain and livestock (%)	Dairy (%)	Other (%)
Strongly agree	10	11	12	6	11	3	14	4	6
Agree	27	27	29	28	34	21	25	23	21
Not sure	13	14	12	16	14	14	11	18	15
Disagree	26	26	25	27	24	27	30	26	30
Strongly disagree	22	22	22	23	18	34	19	30	27
No response	2								
Number of subjects	545	81	241	201	243	70	134	57	33

come was \$40,000 or less were the greatest supporters of this idea, and those whose income was above \$40,000 were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree. Forty three percent of the farmers whose annual income was more than \$200,000 were strongly opposed to favoring the smaller farmer in future farm programs. Sixty four percent of the livestock producers and 58 percent of the mixed crop and livestock producers supported the concept of more benefits to the smaller farmer (Table 18).

Payment Limitations

The 1981 Agricultural and Food Act placed a limit of \$50,000 on direct payments to any individual. What about payment limitations as a means of providing more benefits to smaller farmers and limiting benefits to larger farm operations? The most frequent response was to make no change with 37 percent. An almost equal 35 percent would decrease the limit. Eleven percent would prefer eliminating the limit completely, and 10 percent would increase the limit. Seven percent did not answer the question. The middle income farmers with gross sales of \$40,000 up to \$199,999 most frequently favored making no change. Increasing the limit was favored by 26 percent of those with sales of more than \$200,000. Fifty one percent making less than \$40,000 gross annual sales wanted the limit decreased (Table 19).

Among the different types of farmers, more dairy producers wanted no change made on the present

limit. More livestock producers wanted to see the limit decreased.

Major Program Changes

What if major program changes were required? When given a choice of a low "safety net" loan and target price program, a farm income insurance plan or another plan they would suggest, 39 percent of the farmers would prefer a low "safety" net loan and target price program. Somewhat fewer (28 percent) would replace commodity programs with a farm income insurance plan with cost shared by farmers and government, and 33 percent had either other preferences for changes in government funding or did not respond to the question.

Dairy and livestock producers and those in the middle income group showed more preference for the target price program while those with annual gross sales of \$40,000 or less showed most preference for the farm income insurance idea (Table 20).

The Role of Soil Conservation

How did farmers feel about tying soil conservation to price support program benefits? When it was suggested that each farmer should follow approved soil conservation measures on his farm to qualify for price and income support programs, 57 percent of all farmers responding agreed. This strong agreement appeared in all income classes with slightly more support from the lowest income group and from dairy and livestock operators. Another 33 per-

Table 18. Change future farm programs to give most benefits to smaller farms under \$40,000.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	26	6	16	46	17	39	34	31	30
Agree	23	2	19	37	22	25	24	20	27
Not sure	10	8	11	9	9	11	6	16	6
Disagree	25	41	39	4	34	17	19	26	9
Strongly disagree	15	43	15	5	8	.9	4	.7	2
No response	2								
Number of subjects	546	84	240	200	245	71	134	55	33

Table 19. Preferred policy on payment limitations.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Increase the limit	10	26	11	2	17	4	4	3	12
Make no change	37	32	44	33	40	24	37	43	39
Decrease the limit	35	14	30	51	28	57	35	47	33
Eliminate the limit completely	11	22	8	9	11	10	15	2	12
No response	7	6	7	5	6	6	5	9	3
Number of subjects	520	84	244	205	248	72	137	58	33

cent disagreed with the idea that farmers should follow soil conservation measures to qualify for support (Table 21).

Idaho farmers are generally in consensus on a policy for distributing funds for soil conservation programs. While 20 percent would give funds to all states in proportion to the number of farms, 57 percent think that more funds should be given to those states with the most severe erosion problems. No major differences in responses were noted among the different income classes or type of farming (Table 22).

Dairy Price Support Programs

The special incentive program to encourage dairy farmers to reduce production passed by Congress in

late 1983 and went into effect early in 1984. All farmers should be continued if milk production was still excessive in 1985. Among all farmers responding, 30 percent agreed that it should be continued, 48 percent did not favor continuing, and another 20 percent were not sure. There were not great differences in answers among income classes, but of the types of farmers, fewer livestock farmers were in favor of continuing the program than other types of farmers (Table 23).

What effect is the milk incentive program likely to have on the number of milk cows on farms by the end of 1985? Since 77 percent of all respondents reported no milk cows on their farm, the sample of dairy farmers was small (128). Among the dairy farmers, 16 percent expected to have more cows on

Table 20. Preferred policy if major program changes required.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
A low "safety net" loan and target price	39	35	42	37	39	43	38	47	27
Farm income insurance	28	29	25	33	25	25	30	31	43
Other	19	18	19	17	20	21	16	16	18
No response	14	19	14	13	16	12	16	7	12
Number of subjects	475	84	244	206	246	73	137	58	33

Table 21. Each farmer should follow soil conservation measures to qualify for price support.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	17	22	16	18	15	23	17	20	27
Agree	40	34	40	45	41	40	44	44	27
Not sure	8	6	7	12	11	9	5	4	9
Disagree	21	21	23	18	21	17	24	22	21
Strongly disagree	12	17	15	8	12	11	10	11	15
No response	2								
Number of subjects	545	82	241	200	245	70	134	55	33

Table 22. How federal Soil Conservation Service funds should be distributed.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Give funds to states in proportion to number of farms	20	16	20	23	22	16	21	19	13
Give more funds to states with most severe erosion problems	57	53	61	58	58	64	55	58	72
Not sure	11	17	9	11	11	13	13	14	3
Other	10	15	10	9	10	7	12	9	13
No response	2								
Number of subjects	541	83	239	198	241	69	134	57	32

hand, 65 percent expected to have about the same as now, and 14 percent expected to have less. Table 24 gives the details.

Natural Disasters and Federal Crop Insurance

Which policy preferences for dealing with farm production risks from natural disasters would farmers prefer? Among all respondents, 44 percent preferred continuing present all-risk crop insurance where producers pay about 70 percent and government pays about 30 percent of the cost. Sixteen percent favored returning to disaster payments where government pays all the costs; 17 percent of

the respondents would eliminate all disaster payments and Federal Crop Insurance programs. Twenty four percent were not sure, had other suggestions or did not answer the question. Differences in responses among farmers in different sales classes were not large. Dairy farmers responded most favorably to continuing present risk insurance (Table 25).

How do farmers view federal all-risk crop insurance? The most predominant response suggested that many farmers are not well informed about it since 45 percent had no opinion at all. Only 14 percent thought it was a good buy, with another 32 percent thinking it too expensive, and 9 percent did not respond (Table 26).

Table 23. Pay dairy farmers to cut production if milk production still excessive in 1985?

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	8	9	8	9	8	8	7	14	0
Agree	22	22	25	19	26	13	19	28	15
Not sure	20	22	18	22	25	15	17	12	27
Disagree	27	26	27	29	27	35	32	16	24
Strongly disagree	21	22	21	23	14	29	25	30	33
No response	3								
Number of subjects	540	82	238	201	240	72	131	57	33

Table 24. Expected number of milk cows on farm by end of 1985.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Do not have any cows on farm	77	86	77	82	93	90	81	5	91
More	4	6	3	5	3	3	4	16	3
Less	3	3	3	2	1	0	2	14	3
About the same	12	5	17	11	3	7	14	65	3
No response	5								
Number of subjects	533	80	236	198	233	69	133	57	33

Table 25. Preferred policy to deal with risks from natural disasters.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Continue present crop insurance	44	39	45	48	37	54	49	62	49
Disaster payments — government pays all costs	16	15	15	18	19	6	15	16	21
Eliminate all disaster payments and federal crop insurance	17	20	19	16	20	14	16	11	18
Not sure	16	20	15	16	16	23	15	11	9
Other	5	7	6	4	8	3	5	0	3
No response	3								
Number of subjects	541	82	238	200	244	70	131	55	33

In terms of coverage available, 43 percent had no opinion, 10 percent did not respond, 29 percent thought it inadequate, and 18 percent said the coverage was adequate (Table 27). In terms of understanding, once again 47 percent had no opinion, and 11 percent did not respond to the question at all. Twenty eight percent thought the Federal Crop Insurance program was complicated, and only 14 percent thought it easy to understand (Table 28).

Farmers of the middle income group had more favorable feelings on the value of the insurance, adequacy of coverage and were more likely to think that crop insurance was easy to understand. More farmers with gross sales of more than \$200,000 thought crop insurance was too expensive. All categories were quite negative about the program.

Credit Policy

The Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) was established to provide credit to farmers who could not get credit from other sources. Farmers were asked which credit policy they preferred for present Farmers Home Administration borrowers. Among all farmers responding, 48 percent favored continuing

the present policy of not foreclosing unless all repayment efforts have failed. Although moratoriums have been discussed among various farm groups, only 15 percent said that a moratorium should be provided on all foreclosures to keep distressed borrowers operating until the economy improves. The second most frequent response (22 percent) was to set a stricter policy on delinquent loans and increase the number of foreclosures. Another 6 percent favored a moratorium on foreclosures only for selected farmers.

Not surprisingly, the lowest income group most strongly favored the continuation of present policy and providing a moratorium on foreclosures. The \$200,000 and over income group would like a stricter policy and an increase in foreclosures. Among farmers with various sources of income, more of those with mixed crops and livestock favored the present policy than other types of farmers (Table 29).

Program Administration

For more than 50 years, farm commodity policy decisions have been made by Congress and administered by the Secretary of Agriculture. In recent

Table 26. Value in federal crop insurance.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
A good buy	14	5	20	15	10	26	19	17	22
Expensive	32	46	39	25	44	13	33	32	33
No opinion	45	49	41	60	47	61	48	52	44
No response	9								
Number of subjects	505	76	226	180	230	62	126	54	27

Table 27. Coverage of federal crop insurance.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Adequate coverage	18	12	23	19	15	32	21	26	26
Inadequate coverage	29	39	40	21	43	10	34	13	26
No opinion	43	49	37	60	42	58	45	60	48
No response	10								
Number of subjects	551	74	222	186	230	60	53	125	27

Table 28. Understanding federal crop insurance.

	All farmers	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Easy to understand	14	13	19	13	13	20	17	15	15
Complicated	28	32	37	25	35	15	36	26	30
No opinion	47	55	44	62	52	65	46	59	56
No response	11								
Number of subjects	497	75	220	183	229	60	121	54	27

years, Congress has tried to restrict the discretionary authority of the Secretary of Agriculture in administering the farm price support programs. At times, the Secretary of Agriculture has been restricted in his policymaking options by Congressional actions.

In the survey, farmers were asked who should make the major farm commodity program decisions. The responses show that farmers are divided on the various administrative choices.

Among all respondents, 21 percent favor continuing the present system with the Congress and the Secretary of Agriculture sharing the decision making. Nineteen percent, however, would have the President appoint an independent board or commission operating under Congressional guidelines with farmers, agribusiness and consumers represented.

The most frequent response came from 46 percent of all respondents who would let producers organize, control and finance their own supply management

program without governmental involvement. The recent operation of the producer-financed tobacco marketing and support program may be an example of this approach.

Among the various income classes, there were not large differences in regards to keeping the present system. A greater percentage in the highest income group favored the independent board or commission than the medium and lower income groups. The idea of producer-organized and controlled programs received the most favorable response from the lowest income farmers. Grain farmers are a little more supportive of the present system than other types of farmers, and livestock farmers are most supportive of producer-organized, controlled and financed program administration (Table 30).

Food Stamp Expenditures

In recent years, expenditures on food stamps have been around \$12 billion per year. Some observers

Table 29. Recommended credit policy for present FmHA borrowers.

	All farmers (%)	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 (%)	\$40,000 to \$199,999 (%)	under \$40,000 (%)	Grain (%)	Hogs, beef cattle (%)	Mixed grain and livestock (%)	Dairy (%)	Other (%)
Continue present policy: don't foreclose until all repayment efforts have failed	48	41	48	55	50	44	54	50	38
Provide moratorium on all foreclosures until economy improves	15	15	12	19	14	19	17	13	16
Provide moratorium on foreclosures only for selected young farmers	6	6	6	7	6	3	5	9	13
Set a stricter policy on delinquent loans	22	31	28	14	25	30	19	18	25
Other	6	7	7	6	6	4	5	11	9
No response	3								
Number of subjects	539	83	237	198	242	69	133	56	32

Table 30. Who should make major farm commodity policy decisions?

	All farmers (%)	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 (%)	\$40,000 to \$199,999 (%)	under \$40,000 (%)	Grain (%)	Hogs, beef cattle (%)	Mixed grain and livestock (%)	Dairy (%)	Other (%)
Continue present system: Congress and Secretary of Agriculture	21	20	22	22	26	14	22	16	19
Independent board or commission	19	28	25	11	22	11	20	25	16
Let producers organize, control and finance their own program	46	43	45	55	44	55	50	49	56
No opinion	7	4	5	10	5	16	7	5	6
Other	3	6	3	3	4	4	2	5	3
No response	4								
Number of subjects	538	82	233	202	240	71	132	57	32

believe that the support for food stamp programs by members of Congress working for price support and income programs provides the trade-off necessary to get votes for farm price commodity programs from urban members of Congress.

Farmers are divided on their recommendations for expenditures on food stamps. Among all respondents, 33 percent would decrease expenditures, 23 percent would keep them about the same, 28 percent would eliminate them completely, and only

Table 31. Recommended expenditures on food stamps.

	Gross sales				Major source of farm income				
	All farmers	over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Increase	3	7	3	3	4	3	4	2	3
Decrease	33	34	38	35	37	37	33	39	19
Keep about the same	23	23	25	24	25	25	30	18	10
Eliminate completely	28	33	28	29	27	30	27	36	52
No opinion	7	4	7	10	8	6	7	5	16
No response	5								
Number of subjects	533	83	234	196	240	71	128	56	31

Table 32. Recommended U.S. policy to increase export sales.

	Gross sales				Major source of farm income				
	All farmers	over \$200,000	\$40,000 to \$199,999	under \$40,000	Grain	Hogs, beef cattle	Mixed grain and livestock	Dairy	Other
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Match export subsidies of our competitors:									
Strongly agree	17	29	20	13	21	6	20	15	20
Agree	30	32	33	35	39	26	34	26	27
Not sure	25	25	26	29	25	37	25	30	23
Disagree	12	7	14	16	10	22	13	22	13
Strongly disagree	7	8	8	6	5	9	8	7	17
No response	10								
Number of subjects	501	76	225	178	227	65	118	54	30
Encourage lower trade barriers by major importers									
Strongly agree	19	24	24	16	23	15	24	16	23
Agree	33	35	39	37	39	44	33	33	20
Not sure	20	20	21	25	23	23	20	27	23
Disagree	12	13	12	13	11	11	14	13	30
Strongly disagree	6	8	4	10	4	8	9	11	3
No response	10								
Number of subjects	501	79	225	175	227	66	117	55	30
Lower U.S. support prices									
Strongly agree	7	8	8	9	6	11	10	7	17
Agree	17	15	21	20	17	29	22	20	10
Not sure	27	24	26	38	29	46	25	31	23
Disagree	28	42	34	26	36	12	32	35	33
Strongly disagree	9	12	12	7	12	2	11	7	17
No response	12								
Number of subjects	491	76	221	172	220	65	114	55	30
Establish a marketing board									
Strongly agree	12	14	14	15	13	6	16	18	19
Agree	36	36	36	46	42	45	35	36	41
Not sure	26	33	29	26	26	29	32	39	22
Disagree	10	10	13	10	12	17	7	10	13
Strongly disagree	5	7	8	3	8	3	6	0	6
No response	11								
Number of subjects	498	77	226	173	222	65	116	56	32
Promote bilateral trade agreements									
Strongly agree	15	21	18	13	18	8	21	9	20
Agree	43	41	50	51	49	55	46	54	43
Not sure	25	31	24	30	27	33	32	27	27
Disagree	5	4	6	6	5	5	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	1	4	1	0	2	0	1	0	3
No response	11								
Number of subjects	499	78	224	175	226	64	118	54	30

3 percent would increase expenditures. The remaining 12 percent had no opinion or did not respond.

Differences among farmers in different sales groups are not large, but the largest operators are more inclined to eliminate food stamps than other sales groups. In terms of types of farms, more dairy-men would decrease the amount spent or eliminate food stamps completely (Table 31).

Agricultural Trade Policy

Agricultural exports have added an important new dimension to agricultural marketing and policy in recent years. Farmers were asked to respond to a list of proposals for increasing agricultural exports.

Match the export subsidies of our competitors? More farmers favored this approach than opposed it. Slightly more of the largest farmers favored this

idea than the smaller farmers. A majority of the farmers with all different sources of farm income also seem to favor this policy, though a good percentage of all income and income source groups were not sure how they felt about it. Table 32 gives more details of this question and other trade issues.

Encourage lower trade barriers by major importers? Again a majority of all farmers, in all income classes and all types of farming operations, favored this farming policy. Twenty percent said they were not sure.

Lower U.S. support prices? This proposed policy brought more opposition than any other proposal to increase agricultural exports. Less than 30 percent of all farmers in all sales groups agreed with this proposed policy to increase exports.

Table 32. (continued).

	All farmers (%)	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 (%)	\$40,000 to \$199,999 (%)	under \$40,000 (%)	Grain (%)	Hogs, beef cattle (%)	Mixed grain and livestock (%)	Dairy (%)	Other (%)
Join an export cartel									
Strongly agree	6	10	6	5	7	3	5	6	17
Agree	21	19	22	26	23	25	27	20	17
Not sure	33	32	37	38	36	37	35	47	30
Disagree	26	27	29	27	28	32	26	26	27
Strongly disagree	6	13	5	5	6	3	7	2	10
No response	11								
Number of subjects	499	79	226	173	225	65	117	55	30
Provide more funds for food aid									
Strongly agree	10	15	10	11	14	3	11	9	13
Agree	35	41	40	37	43	30	41	31	39
Not sure	16	23	14	19	16	24	16	22	16
Disagree	19	13	24	23	20	23	22	26	19
Strongly disagree	10	8	12	11	8	20	10	13	13
No response	10								
Number of subjects	504	78	226	178	226	66	119	55	31
Strengthen general agreement on tariffs and trade									
Strongly agree	14	16	18	13	18	8	19	7	26
Agree	51	58	59	57	58	73	54	53	42
Not sure	20	20	18	27	22	19	20	35	23
Disagree	2	0	4	3	2	0	6	4	0
Strongly disagree	2	7	1	0	1	0	2	2	10
No response	12								
Number of subjects	493	77	223	172	221	63	117	55	31
Expand farmer-financed market development programs									
Strongly agree	16	30	18	14	20	11	17	16	26
Agree	45	46	54	50	53	54	53	44	39
Not sure	18	13	18	26	18	22	16	29	29
Disagree	3	8	10	8	8	13	11	9	3
Strongly disagree	2	4	0	3	2	0	3	2	3
No response	2								
Number of subjects	494	78	223	171	222	63	116	55	31
Set up a two-price plan									
Strongly agree	9	9	12	8	9	3	17	3	10
Agree	24	26	28	29	28	28	25	22	37
Not sure	32	37	34	34	37	41	29	38	30
Disagree	19	18	21	22	19	22	22	27	13
Strongly disagree	7	10	4	8	7	6	8	6	10
No response	10								
Number of subjects	501	78	226	176	224	64	121	55	30

Establish a marketing board? Forty eight percent of all farmers agreed with this approach, 15 percent opposed it, 11 percent did not respond, and another 26 percent were not sure how they felt about the idea. The upper two income levels favored a marketing board almost equally with the lowest income level being the most in favor. The majority of farmers with all incomes favored this approach.

Promote bilateral trade agreements? A substantial proportion of all farmers agreed with this approach to raise exports, and only 6 percent disagreed. Thirty six percent were either not sure or did not respond to the question. All income levels and income sources were in favor.

Join an export cartel? Although 27 percent of all farmers agreed with this approach to raise exports, another 31 percent disagreed, and a large 44 percent were not sure or did not respond to this question. Differences were not great among income levels, but in terms of type of farming operation, dairy farmers responded with the highest percentage of uncertainty. They are less involved in exports.

Provide more funds for food aid? Among all farmers responding, 45 percent agreed with this approach, 29 percent disagreed, and 26 percent either were not sure or did not answer. Grain and mixed crops and livestock farmers were most in agreement. With income levels, the higher the income, the stronger the agreement.

Strengthen the general agreement on tariffs and trade (GATT)? How much the farmers surveyed really knew about General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was not explored. Among all farmers, however, 65 percent agreed that strengthening GATT as a means of expanding agricultural exports was a good idea. Farmers in all sales groups and types of farming favored this approach.

Expand farmer-financed market development programs? Joint market development efforts between the Foreign Agricultural Service and private commodity and industry groups have been carried on for several years. Sixty one percent of the respondents favored this idea. Likewise, all sales groups and types of farming supported such efforts.

Set up a two-price plan? Respondents were asked if they favored setting up a two-price plan with a higher price for commodities used in the domestic market and let exports sell at world market price. Slightly more (33 percent) agreed than disagreed (26 percent) with this approach, and a larger 42 percent were either not sure or did not respond. Among farmers in the different income classes, slightly more disagreed than agreed with this idea, and a substantial percentage among all income levels and types of farmers were not sure how they felt about the two-price plan.

Fiscal Policy

Idaho farmers are very adamant about fiscal matters and budget deficits. When given a statement that we should keep things as they are and not worry about balancing the budget, 58 percent of the farmers disagreed. Respondents in all sales classes and types of farming groups responded about the same. The question also had one of the lowest percentages of not sure answers of any question in the survey (Table 33).

Farmers also believe strongly (83 percent) that we should reduce the deficit in order to reduce interest rates for borrowers. This question only elicited 4 percent disagreement, 4 percent not sure responses and 8 percent non-response. All sales groups and different types of farming operations responded in strong agreement.

Should the government freeze federal expenditures and raise taxes? Among all respondents, 48 percent disagreed with this idea, 29 percent agreed, and another 24 percent were not sure or did not answer the question. Among all income levels, more farmers opposed this approach than favored it. Of those types of farmers that were in any agreement at all to freezing federal expenditures, the livestock and mixed grain and livestock groups were most in favor.

Is reducing the deficit to reduce the debt burden on future generations a good idea? Eighty three percent think so. All sales classes and types of farms responded about the same to this question.

Should the federal budget be balanced even if it means a substantial cut in all governmental programs including farm price and income supports? A majority at 73 percent agreed that the federal budget should be reduced even if it meant farm price support programs had to be reduced. All sales groups and all types of farmers showed a strong majority for balancing the budget and cutting all government programs.

Future Price Levels

In the last half of our survey of Idaho farmers, we asked some questions relating to their knowledge of price levels and their thoughts about their own farming operation. When asked how farmers expect the future general price level in this country to compare to the general price level for the past 10 years, 54 percent of the respondents thought it would be higher. Over the next 30 years as compared to the past 10 years, 67 percent expected it to go even higher (Table 34).

Then we asked how they expected the future price level for certain specific items to compare to the general price level for all goods. Forty percent expected the future price level for certain specific items

to compare to the general price level for all goods. Forty percent expected land prices to get higher; the highest income level producers particularly had these expectations. Seventy four percent of the farmers expected fertilizer and herbicide prices to increase. Seventy three percent expected diesel fuel prices to increase. Sixty eight percent expected the

cost of hired labor to increase. Seventy nine percent expected machinery prices to increase. A majority of the farmers expected wheat, barley, potato, peas, sugarbeet, lentil, hay and bean prices to stay about the same. Producers from different income levels and types of farming operations showed no great differences in expectations (Table 35).

Table 33. Views on fiscal policy.

	All farmers (%)	Gross sales			Major source of farm income				
		over \$200,000 (%)	\$40,000 to \$199,999 (%)	under \$40,000 (%)	Grain (%)	Hogs, beef cattle (%)	Mixed grain and livestock (%)	Dairy (%)	Other (%)
Keep things as they are; don't worry about balancing the budget									
Strongly agree	1	3	0	2	2	0	2	0	0
Agree	3	5	1	3	4	3	3	0	0
Not sure	2	0	2	3	3	3	3	4	0
Disagree	34	28	38	40	39	34	35	40	33
Strongly disagree	51	65	58	51	53	59	58	56	67
No response	9								
Number of subjects	506	79	228	179	223	64	117	55	30
Reduce deficit to reduce interest rates									
Strongly agree	39	47	49	35	42	43	43	44	42
Agree	44	44	45	54	50	46	48	47	48
Not sure	4	1	2	8	4	6	3	6	7
Disagree	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	4	0
Strongly disagree	2	5	2	2	3	2	3	0	3
No answer	8								
Number of subjects	514	79	229	185	234	67	121	55	31
Freeze federal expenditures and raise taxes									
Strongly agree	8	10	9	6	8	5	11	4	10
Agree	21	25	25	20	20	29	26	19	27
Not sure	15	14	16	19	18	17	15	15	7
Disagree	31	31	32	36	36	23	30	45	37
Strongly disagree	17	20	19	19	18	26	17	17	20
No response	9								
Number of subjects	509	80	226	182	232	65	123	53	30
Reduce deficit to reduce future debt burden									
Strongly agree	33	33	43	32	33	40	40	40	29
Agree	50	57	49	57	58	52	48	53	61
Not sure	5	5	4	7	6	8	6	9	3
Disagree	2	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	3
Strongly disagree	2	4	1	2	2	2	3	2	3
No response	8								
Number of subjects	513	79	229	184	230	66	124	55	31
Balance budget — cut all governmental programs including farm price supports									
Strongly agree	40	44	45	38	39	42	41	44	58
Agree	33	27	36	38	36	44	34	33	23
Not sure	10	5	10	12	11	7	12	9	10
Disagree	9	21	7	8	12	4	9	12	3
Strongly disagree	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	2	7
No response	5								
Number of subjects	530	82	236	192	238	69	128	57	31

Table 34. Future price levels compared to past 10 years.

	Considerably lower	Slightly lower	About same	Slightly higher	Considerably higher	No response
... over next 10 years as compared to the past 10 years (N = 531) (%)	6	10	25	40	14	5
... over next 30 years as compared to the past 10 years (N = 513) (%)	4	8	13	40	27	8

Sources of New Information

How good of a guide do you think each of the following would be as to whether to incorporate a new farming technique? Extension specialists, friends and neighbors, soil conservation district personnel, agricultural experiment station research and if most of other farmers are using it were all thought to be a good guide for trying a new technique. Farmers in general are not sure about trying a new technique if farm magazines suggest it or if they heard about it on radio or TV. If a company fieldman or literature salesman promoted a new technique, they stated they are not likely to pay much heed at all. Income levels or types of farmers did not show a significant difference in this attitude (Table 36).

Thoughts about Soil Erosion

Most respondents, when asked about soil erosion and sediment loss on their own farm, felt that it was either not a problem or only a slight problem. Only 5 percent said it was a severe problem.

When asked their opinions, most felt they were doing just about everything they could possibly do to control erosion on their own farm. There was 84 percent disagreement with the suggestion that there is no need to worry about soil erosion because it doesn't have any effect on yields. Most disagreed with the statement, "If I were to do more than I now do to control soil erosion, my yields would go down

quite a bit." Forty two percent disagreed that the amount of soil lost through erosion is about the same now as it was 20 years ago.

Another major disagreement was with the suggestion that farmers in this area aren't very concerned about soil erosion on their farms. Respondents didn't think regulation was necessary to adequately control erosion, but they did believe that unless soil erosion is controlled to a greater extent than it presently is, yields will decrease quite a bit in the next 10 to 20 years. And lastly, they did not blame soil erosion on weather and topography (Table 37).

The majority of farmers of all income levels said they are using most of the available erosion control practices. A slightly smaller group said they are using at least some of the available practices. Only 6 percent admitted to not using any of the practices.

Are farmers willing to take a reasonable reduction in annual profits per acre to achieve an elimination of erosion? It appears debatable as to what is reasonable. Twenty seven percent felt no reduction per acre was the most reasonable, 16 percent were willing to accept \$1 to \$2 per acre, and another 24 percent said they would accept \$3 to \$5 per acre income reduction to alleviate erosion. Only 21 percent would accept a \$6 or more reduction in profit per acre. Interestingly, more of the \$200,000 gross income and above farmers were unwilling to accept an income reduction per acre than the lower income farmers (Table 38).

Table 35. Future price levels on specific items.

	Considerably lower	Slightly lower	About same	Slightly higher	Considerably higher	Number
Land prices in this area (%)	7	22	29	33	7	544
Fertilizer and herbicide prices (%)	2	4	17	51	23	542
Diesel fuel prices (%)	2	5	19	50	23	545
Hired workers prices (%)	1	3	26	55	13	541
Machinery prices (%)	3	5	10	38	41	543
Wheat prices (%)	7	20	46	20	4	542
Potato prices (%)	4	15	52	19	2	509
Barley prices (%)	5	20	49	21	3	540
Pea prices (%)	4	14	54	16	3	498
Sugarbeet prices (%)	4	17	47	19	2	487
Lentil prices (%)	3	11	53	16	2	478
Hay prices (%)	3	12	45	32	5	533
Bean prices (%)	4	11	47	22	3	488

Table 36. Sources of new farming information.

	Definitely not a good guide	Probably not a good guide	Not sure	Probably a good guide	Definitely a good guide	Number
Company fieldman, literature or salesman (%)	12	38	29	18	1	541
County agent or Extension specialist (%)	3	13	18	58	4	539
Friend or neighbor (%)	3	12	31	47	3	541
Soil Conservation District personnel (%)	4	15	27	48	3	542
Ag. experiment station research (%)	2	7	12	62	16	548
Other farmers (%)	1	3	9	60	24	543
Farm magazines (%)	4	20	46	28	1	541
Radio or TV (%)	11	35	43	7	1	539

Summary and Conclusions

Statements of Agreement

Idaho farmers are divided on some agricultural and economic policy issues, but on many they do agree. The issues on which a majority or more agree are:

1. States with the most severe soil erosion problems should be given more funds.
2. Policies should be encouraged that increase agricultural exports, encourage lower trade barriers by major importers, promote bilateral trade agreements with minimum purchases and export guarantees, strengthen the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to facilitate more free trade and expand farmer-financed foreign market development programs.
3. On fiscal policy, producers agreed the deficit should be reduced to reduce interest rates and reduce the debt burden on future generations.
4. Producers agreed the federal budget should be balanced even if it means a substantial cut in all governmental programs including farm price and income supports.

40 Percent in Support

Although not a majority response, the following issues seemed to draw a consensus favored by 40 percent or more of all respondents:

1. Target prices and deficiency payments should be continued in the 1985 farm bill.
2. Payments for acreage diversion should be continued.
3. A farmer-owned grain reserve should be continued.

4. Loan rates for all price-supported commodities should be based on a percent of the average market price for the past 3 to 5 years.

5. The present FmHA policy of not foreclosing unless all repayment efforts have failed should be continued.

6. The present all-risk crop insurance where producers pay about 70 percent and government pays about 30 percent of the cost should be continued.

7. Future farm programs should be changed to give most benefits to producers with gross annual sales less than \$40,000.

8. The Payment-In-Kind program should not be used again if large stocks reappear.

9. The milk incentive program with payments for dairy farmers should not be continued after 1985.

10. The government should try to increase export sales, match export subsidies of our competitors, establish a marketing board and provide more funds for food aid to hungry nations.

11. In terms of who should make future policy decisions, producers should be allowed to organize, control and finance their own supply management program without governmental involvement.

12. We should not freeze present federal expenditures and raise taxes as a way of balancing the budget.

Table 38. What is a reasonable reduction in annual profits per acre to eliminate erosion?

	Percent
No reduction per acre	27
\$1 to \$2 per acre	16
\$3 to \$5 per acre	24
\$6 to \$10 per acre	13
\$11 to \$20 per acre	4
\$21 or more per acre	4
No response	12
Number of respondents	494

Table 37. Thoughts on soil erosion.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response	Number
I am doing about everything I can reasonably do to control soil erosion on my farm . . . (%)	23	51	11	10	1	4	536
Soil erosion is something we don't need to worry about because it doesn't have much effect on our yields . . . (%)	3	6	4	42	42	4	535
If I were to do more than I now do to control soil erosion, my yields would go down quite a bit . . . (%)	2	10	19	49	15	6	527
The amount of soil lost through erosion is about the same now as it was 20 years ago . . . (%)	3	24	15	42	11	5	530
Most farmers in this area aren't very concerned about soil erosion on their farms . . . (%)	5	30	10	39	11	5	530
Some form of regulation is necessary to adequately control soil erosion . . . (%)	4	28	20	31	13	5	533
Unless soil erosion is controlled to a greater extent than it presently is, yields will decrease quite a bit in the next 10 to 20 years . . . (%)	7	39	19	25	5	5	531
Very little can be done about controlling soil erosion in this area because of weather and topography . . . (%)	2	10	11	55	17	5	531

Issues of Largest Division

The issues on which Idaho farmers are most divided are:

1. Whether future policy direction should continue voluntary programs, shift to mandatory set aside and price support programs or eliminate set aside, price support and government storage programs completely;
2. Where target prices should be set compared to 1984;
3. If a grain reserve is continued, whether there should be no policy on size of reserve, let the Secretary of Agriculture set the limit or have limit based on a percent of the previous year's use;
4. The value, adequacy of coverage and the ease of understanding federal crop insurance;
5. If major changes are required in funding governmental programs, whether there should be a low "safety net" loan and target price program, or whether commodity programs should be replaced with a farm income insurance plan with costs shared by farmers and government;
6. Whether the present limit on direct payments of \$50,000 to each farmer per year should be in-

creased, decreased, left as is or eliminated completely;

7. Whether support prices should be lowered to increase export sales;
8. Whether the U.S. should join an export cartel with other major exporters to increase export sales;
9. Whether a two-price plan should be set up with a higher price for commodities used in the domestic market and a lower price in the export market.

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