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Agricultural Outlook Forum
U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Farming Diversity for a Sustainable Future

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Farming Diversity for a Sustainable Future

Dr. Shoshanah Inwood

**Rural Sociology Program
The Social Responsibility Initiative
The Ohio State University**

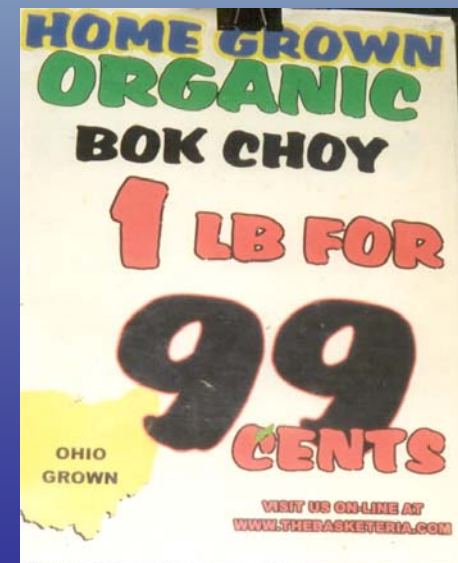


Dimensions of Sustainability: Defining the Social

- Environmental Sustainability
- Economic Sustainability
- Social Sustainability
 - Health, Well Being, and the Quality of Life of Individuals, Families and Communities

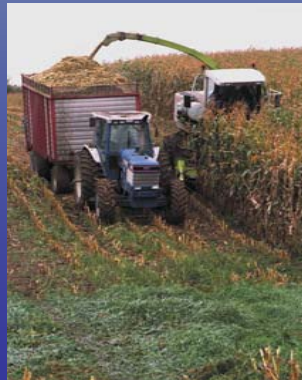


How Important are Social Issues in Markets & Economic Development?



SARE's Commitment to All Dimensions of Sustainability

*“SARE’s **mission** is to advance – to the whole of American agriculture – innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education”* (SARE 2009)



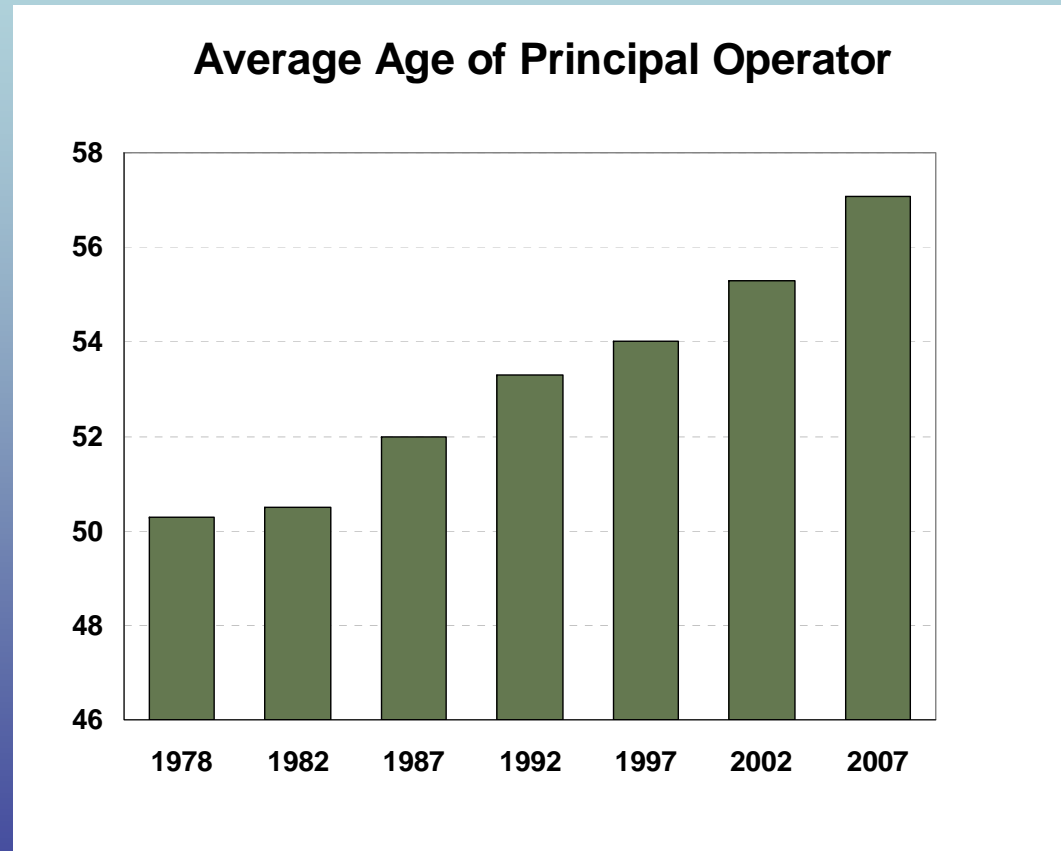
NC SARE Graduate Student Research Grant:

Sustaining the Family Farm at the Rural Urban Interface (RUI) – A Comparison of the Farm Reproduction Processes among Commodity & Alternative Food and Agriculture Enterprises (AFAE)



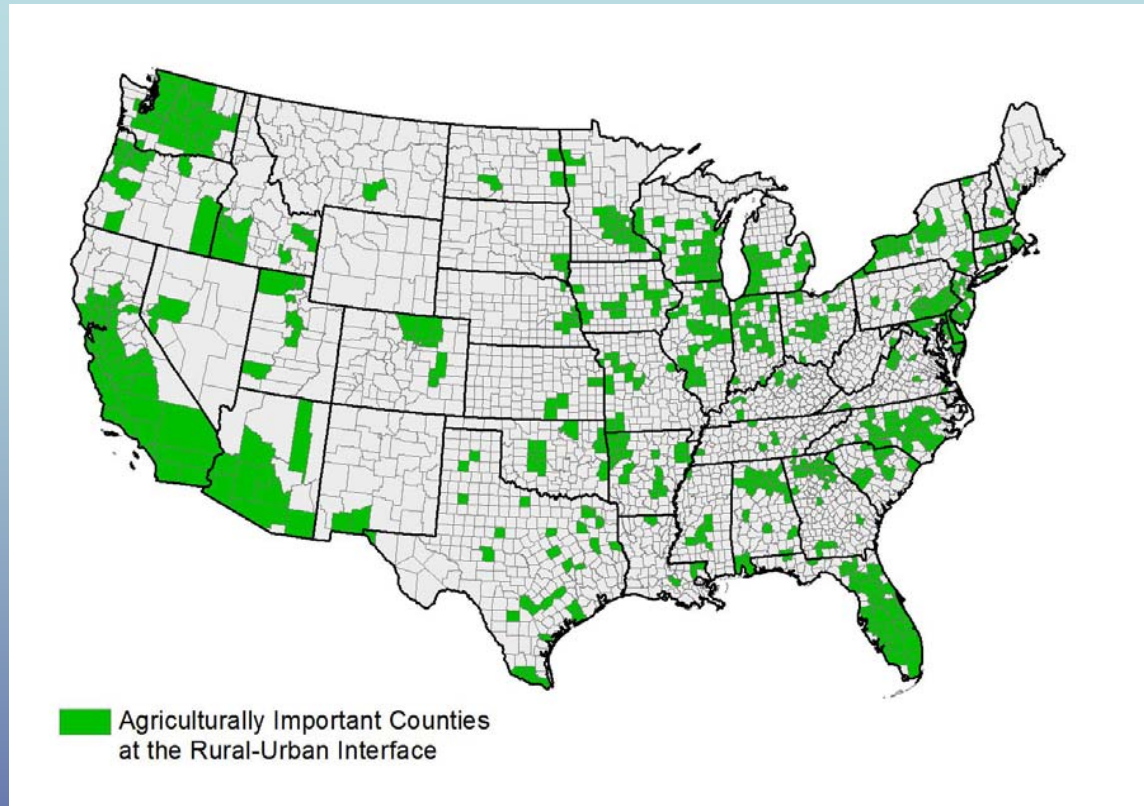
The Graying of America's Farm Sector

- America's farm population is aging
- Lack of succession planning
- Fewer heirs are choosing farming as an occupation





Ag. Important Counties at RUI



Typology of Agricultural Change at the RUI

Decline	Deintensify	Stable	Intensify	Growth
157	89	164	209	28

Social Sustainability: Succession

- Passing down the family farm
- Economic development through food and agricultural systems



Research Question

How do household, cultural values and land use motivations influence farm enterprise adaptation and persistence at the RUI?





Alternative Food and Agricultural Enterprises

NAFDMA



Today's farming strategies. . . .
to preserve tomorrow's Family Farms.



**Pennsylvania Farm Specializes
in Adding Value**

Fruit and Vegetable Grower News



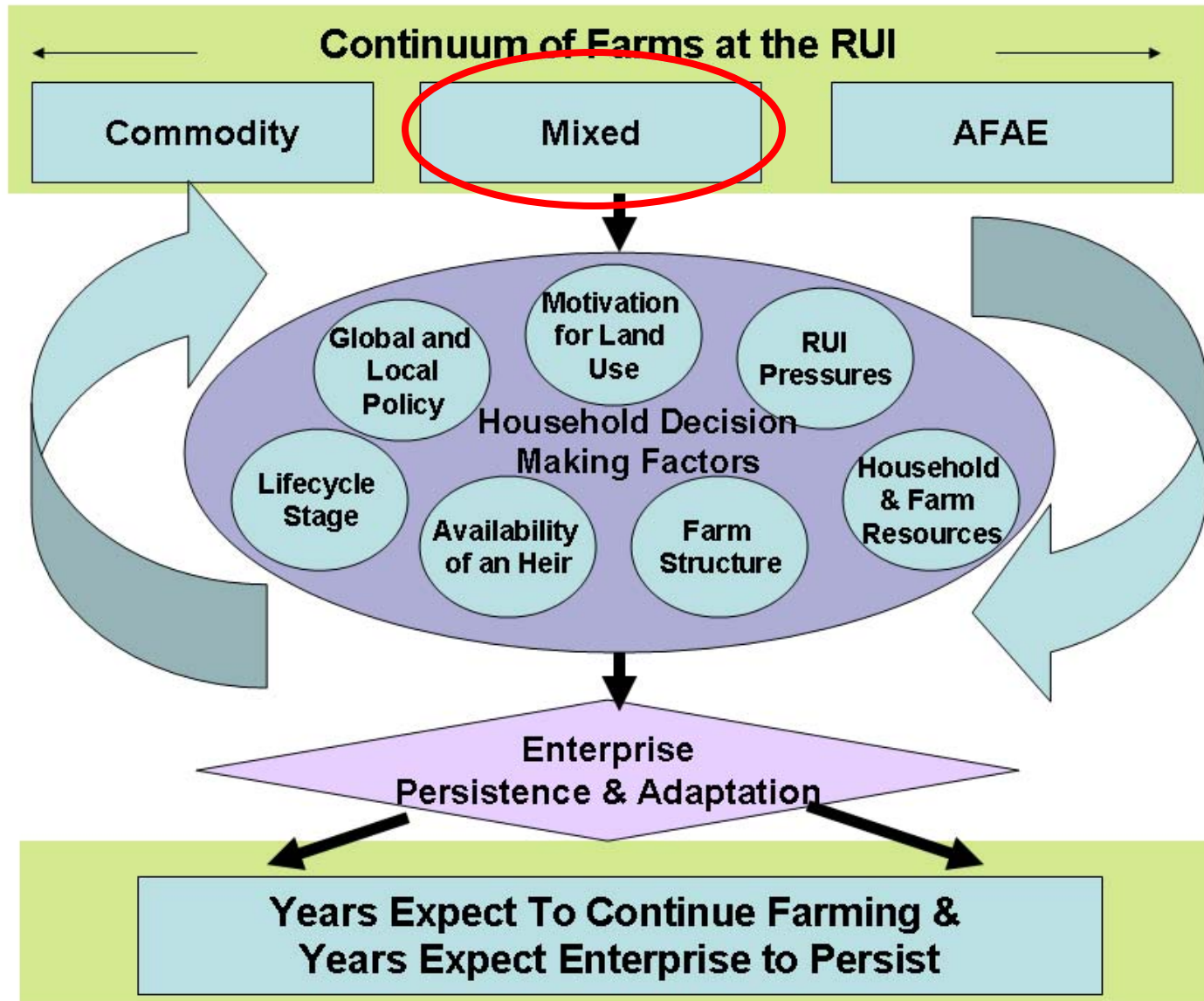
**Michigan Farm Replaces
Squash With Flowers**

"Market Strives To Focus on Local Food"



**Tanners Orchard Serves Up Fun for
Illinois Visitors**

Model of Household Factors Influencing Farm Adaptation and Persistence at the RUI



Methods

I. Quantitative Data- Landowner Survey

- 8 Case Study Counties
- Analysis of Commercial farmers and Rural Residential farmers

	Frequency	Percent
Commercial Farmer	293	68.80%
Rural Residential	133	31.20%
Total	426	100%



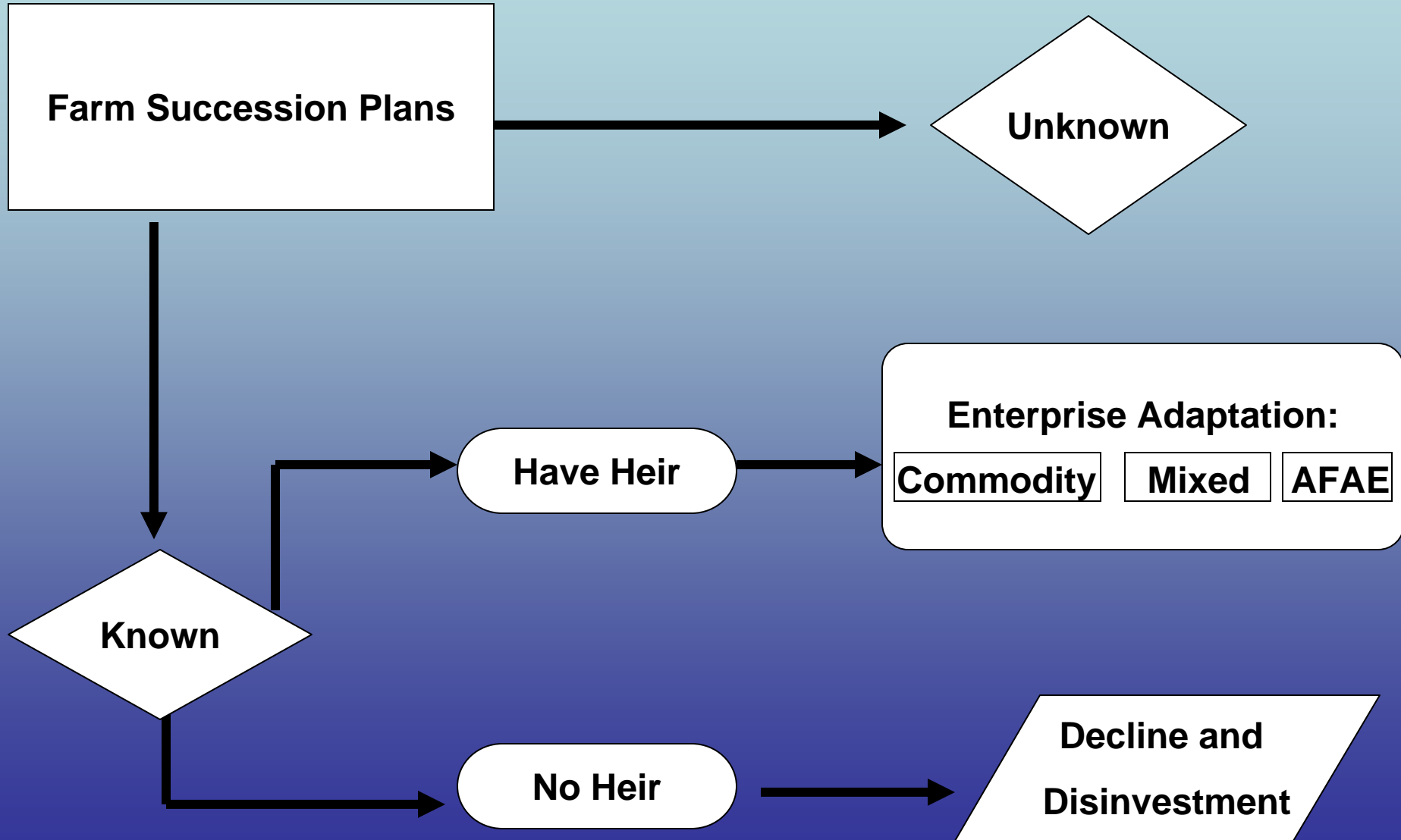
- Bivariate and Multivariate SPSS Analysis

II. Qualitative Data- In Person Semi-Structured Interviews

- Grand Rapids Metro
- Columbus Metro
- Analyzed with NVivo QSR 7

	Farms
Commodity	11
First-generation AFAE's	8
Multi-generation AFAE's	6
Mixed	8
Non-farming Heir	2
Total Farm Families	35
Total Number of Participants	53

Influence of Succession on Enterprise Adaptation at the RUI



Heir Identified: 4 Types of Growth & Intensification

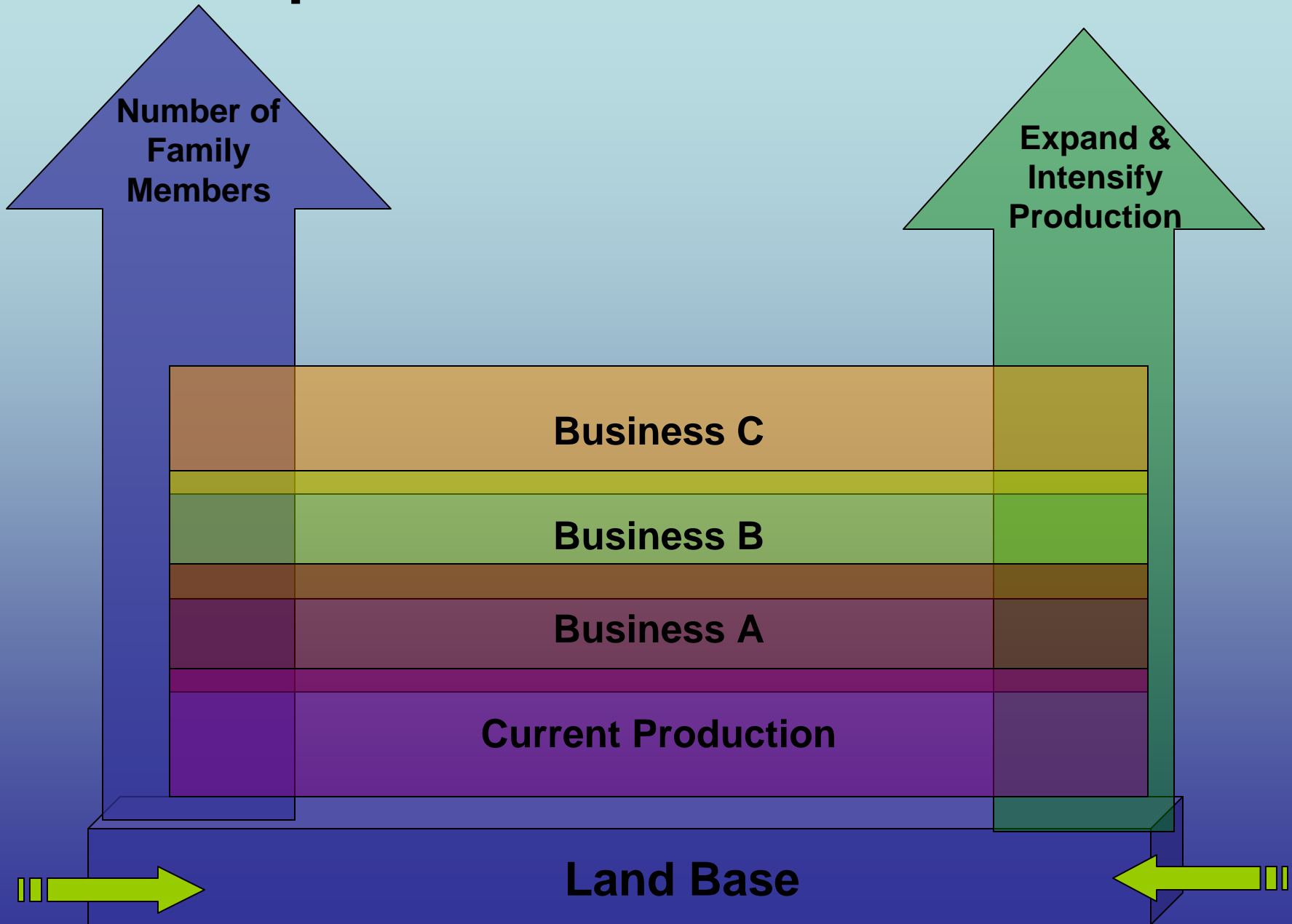
- **Commodity Farms**

- **The Expanders** - Growth via expansion of land
- **The Intensifiers** - Value added to existing commodity mix

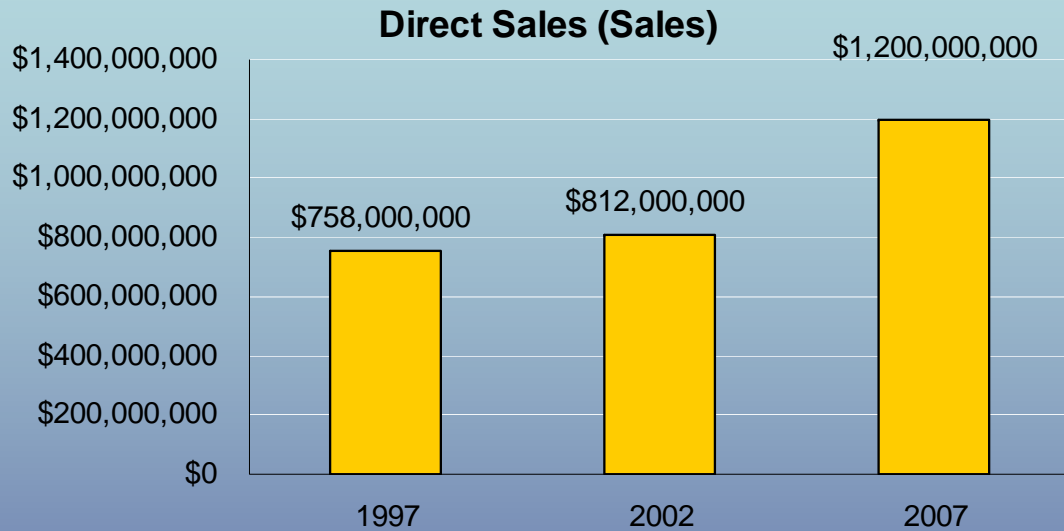
- **AFAE & Mixed Farms**

- **The Stackers** - Individuals stack skills within same business
- **The Entrepreneurial Stackers** – Stack complimentary but independent farm enterprises off each others production systems

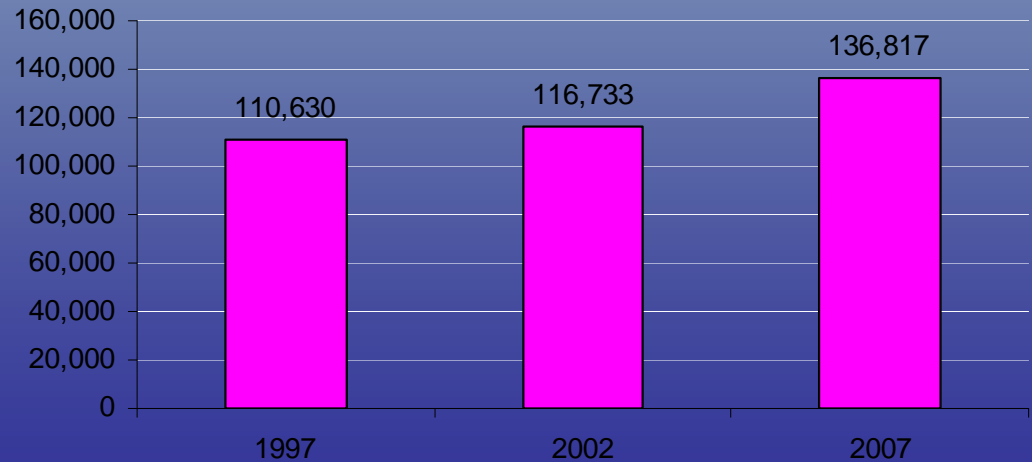
Enterprise Intensification and Growth



Direct Sales, 2007 Census of Agriculture



Direct Sales (Farms)



Household Dynamics & the Structure of Agriculture at the RUI

- Evidence of similar AFAE adaptations on the landscape rooted in different motivations
 - Multi-Generation AFAE's
 - First Generation AFAE's
 - Mixed Type Farms
 - Purposefully creating opportunities for the next generation
 - Entrepreneurship is seen as a form of agency



Policy Recommendations

- Development Pressure at the RUI does not have the biggest impact on enterprise persistence and adaptation
 - Life Cycle and Succession Effects
 - Heterogeneous household and enterprise organization lends resiliency to agriculture at the RUI
- New Generation Policy Recommendations
 - Flexible and targeted policy to address specific lifecycle and business cycle needs
 - Role for local, state and federal governments
 - Expand land use policy to include succession, ability to afford retirement, health insurance, labor, access to capital
 - Increasing profitability for farmers
 - Regulatory laws (food safety, building codes, zoning, market competition) at national, state, and local levels
 - Foster and encourage diversity

Future Directions for American Agriculture

- **Challenges**

- Climate change
- Energy uncertainty
- Build ecologically based agricultural systems that promote healthy water and soil systems on our farms and thriving rural, urban and peri-urban communities

- **Future Directions**

- *Multiple Problems Require Multiple Solutions*
- Move beyond notions of “good” and “bad” farmers—and work in the grey

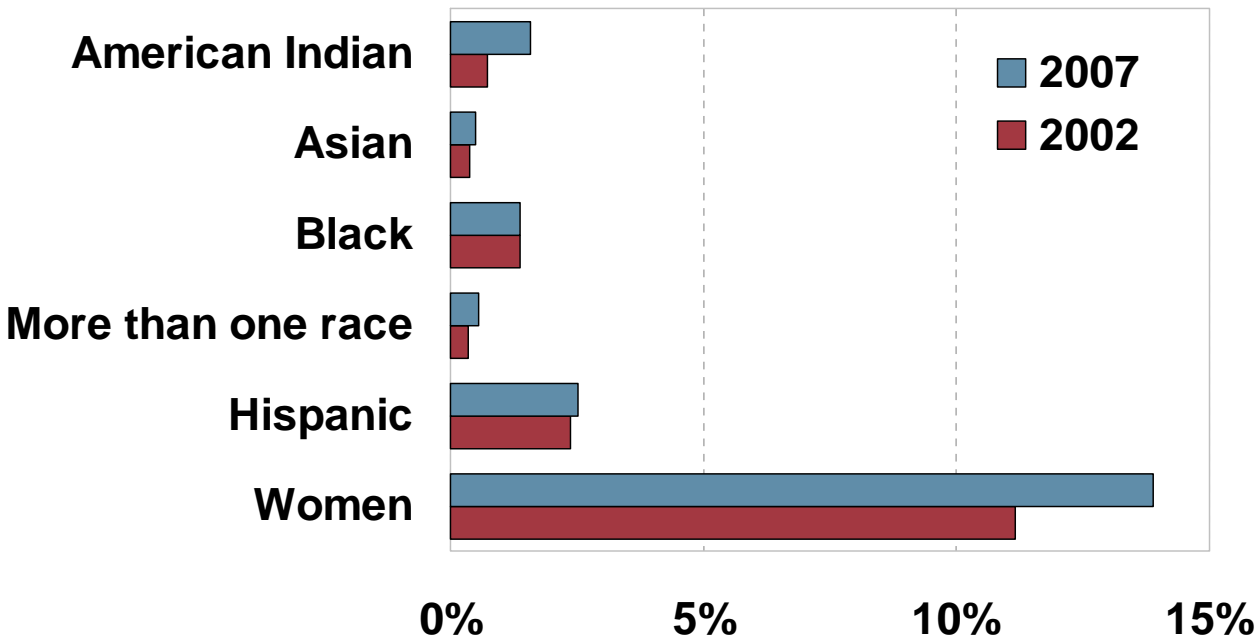
Opportunities and New Directions for a Sustainable Future

- Technical and *Social* Solutions
 - Off-set the risk of transition
 - Farmer support teams
 - Develop systems appropriate for individual farm scale, local agro-ecology and family goals.
- Use food as a platform for expanding farm policy debates.
- Tap into the diversity of farmers and consumers



“The New American Farmer”

Percent of Operators by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender



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- Use food as a platform for expanding farm policy debates.
- Tap into the diversity of farmers and consumers
- **Foster Diversity**
 - Biological
 - Social
 - Markets



Thank You

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