Farming Diversity for a Sustainable Future

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Farming Diversity for a Sustainable Future

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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

NASS, Census of Agriculture 2007
Ag. Important Counties at RUI

Typology of Agricultural Change at the RUI

Decline 157  Deintensify 89  Stable 164  Intensify 209  Growth 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

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

Fruit and Vegetable Grower News

Michigan Farm Replaces Squash With Flowers

Pennsylvania Farm Specializes in Adding Value

“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

Continuum of Farms at the RUI

Commodity  Mixed  AFAE

Household Decision Making Factors

Global and Local Policy  Motivation for Land Use  RUI Pressures
Lifecycle Stage  Availability of an Heir  Household & Farm Resources
Farm Structure

Enterprise Persistence & Adaptation

Years Expect To Continue Farming &
Years Expect Enterprise to Persist
Methods

I. Quantitative Data- Landowner Survey

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Farmer</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residential</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>426</td>
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- Bivariate and Multivariate SPSS Analysis

II. Qualitative Data- In Person Semi-Structured Interviews

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commodity</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-generation AFAE's</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-generation AFAE's</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-farming Heir</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Farm Families</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Participants</td>
<td>53</td>
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</table>
Influence of Succession on Enterprise Adaptation at the RUI

Farm Succession Plans

Known

Unknown

Have Heir

Commodity
Mixed
AFAE

No Heir

Decline and Disinvestment
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

Number of Family Members

Expand & Intensify Production

Land Base

Current Production

Business A

Business B

Business C
Direct Sales, 2007 Census of Agriculture

Direct Sales (Sales)

- 1997: $758,000,000
- 2002: $812,000,000
- 2007: $1,200,000,000

Direct Sales (Farms)

- 1997: 110,630
- 2002: 116,733
- 2007: 136,817
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

- American Indian
- Asian
- Black
- More than one race
- Hispanic
- Women

NASS, Census of Agriculture 2007
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  • **Foster Diversity**
    – Biological
    – Social
    – Markets
Thank You

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