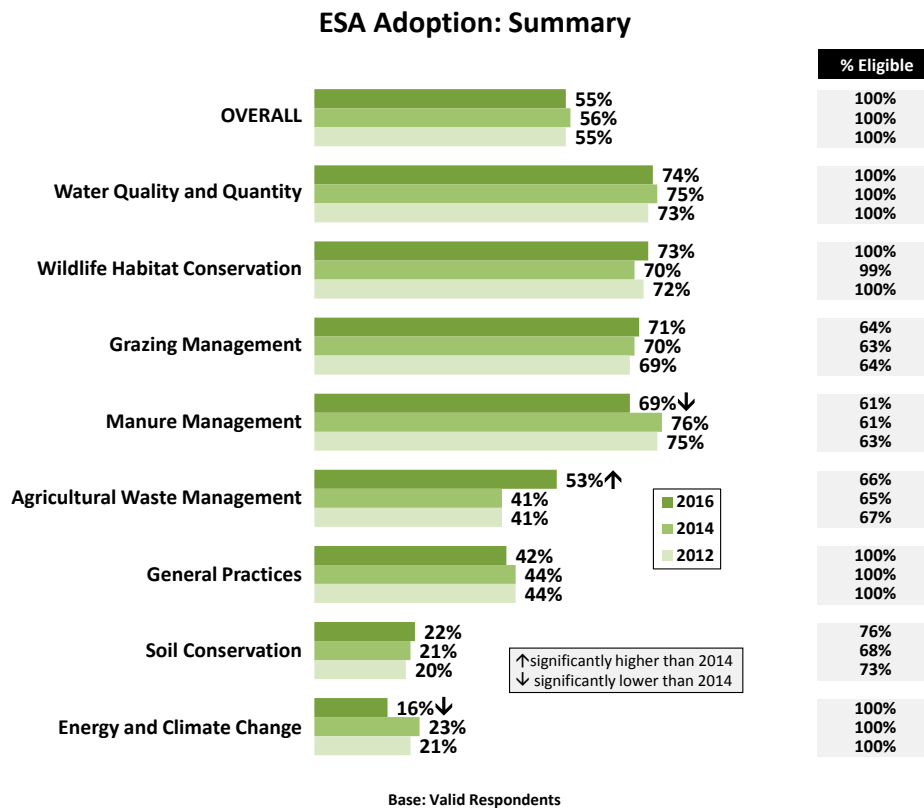


2016 Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Tracking Survey

Submitted by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

The Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Tracking Survey (ESATS)¹, completed by Ipsos Reid for Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF), measures 500 Alberta producers' awareness and adoption of environmentally sustainable agriculture (ESA) practices. This particular survey has been part of the Ministry reporting system since 2012 and three survey waves have been conducted during this timeframe. The following graph highlights the key environmental issue areas examined and a comparison of the aggregate results from 2012, 2014, and 2016:



In the 2012 and 2014 survey, there were 41 ESA practices; however, in 2016 this changed to 40. This change, due to a programming adjustment, resulting in a high performing practice with high eligibility (extending the grazing season) being removed and caused the significant decrease that we see in the Manure Management area. However, when removing this question from the 2012 and 2014 surveys there is no significant decrease between 2014 and 2016. The eligibility of a practice depends upon the

¹ Ipsos Reid conducted a telephone survey with a random and representative sample of 500 Alberta agricultural producers between January 11th and 22th, 2016. The final data were weighted to ensure the overall sample's regional and gross farm sales composition reflects that of the actual distribution of farms in Alberta based on the 2011 Census of Agriculture. With a sample of 500, results are considered accurate to within ±4.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of Alberta farms been surveyed.

producer's operation. Therefore, producers are not asked questions that would not apply to their farm, if a producer does not have livestock then they will not be asked livestock related questions.

There are no significant differences in the overall adoption score over the 6 years which indicates that producers are committed to maintaining the ESA practices that they are using on their farms.

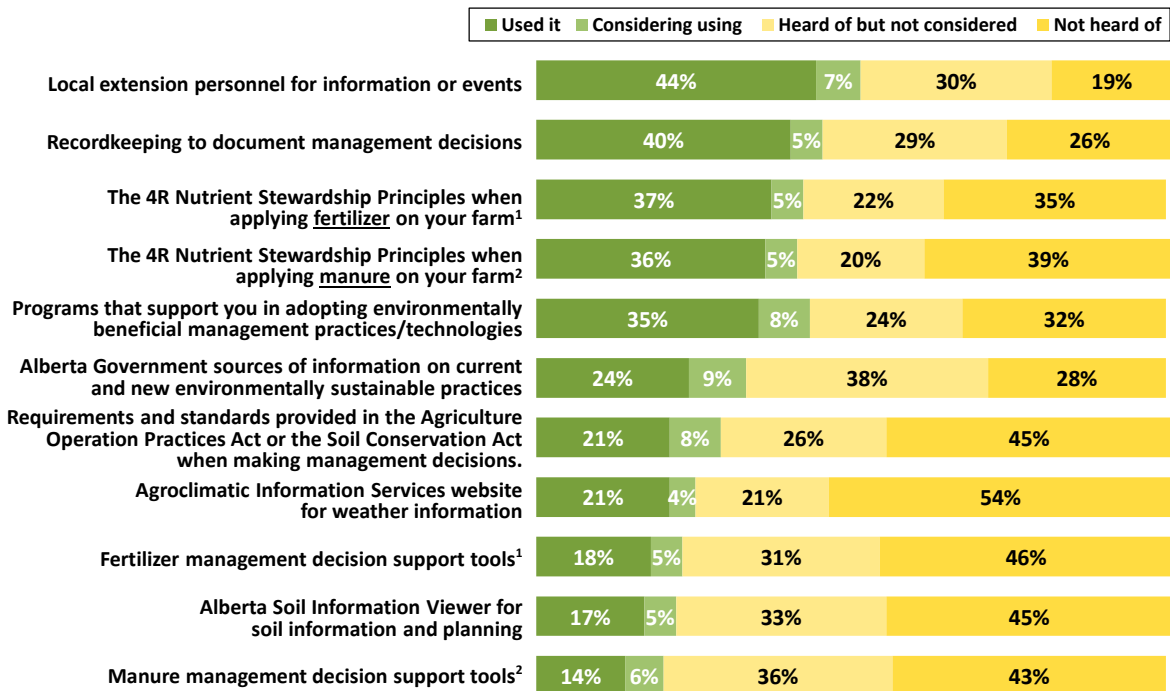
KEY POINT: In general, adoption tends to be higher on larger operations (i.e. with gross farms sales of \$250,000 or more) at 60% overall adoption of eligible practices. It is worth noting that, while operations in the \$250,000+ gross farm sales category account for only 20% of total farms in Alberta, these operations manage the vast majority of livestock and land in the province. In the lower performing areas, adoption of practices is higher in this demographic: soil conservation (33%), and energy and climate change (23%). This is positive moving forward, as this could indicate that there is momentum to see an increase in adoption within these areas.

The ESA Tracking Survey also explores two key extension areas:

1. Awareness and use of various decision making support resources and tools,
2. Preferred channels for accessing information on environmental farm stewardship.

These areas are not part of the Ministry's annual reporting system; however, they are of particular interest because they are useful in providing direct feedback to some of the programs and services that AF staff deliver; as well as, how producers like to hear about new information. This provides AF with an idea of what tools and resources producers are using and how they would like to receive more information about them.

Decision Making Support Resources and Tools



Base: All respondents (n=500) / ¹Applied commercial fertilizer (n=400) / ²Applied manure (n=250)

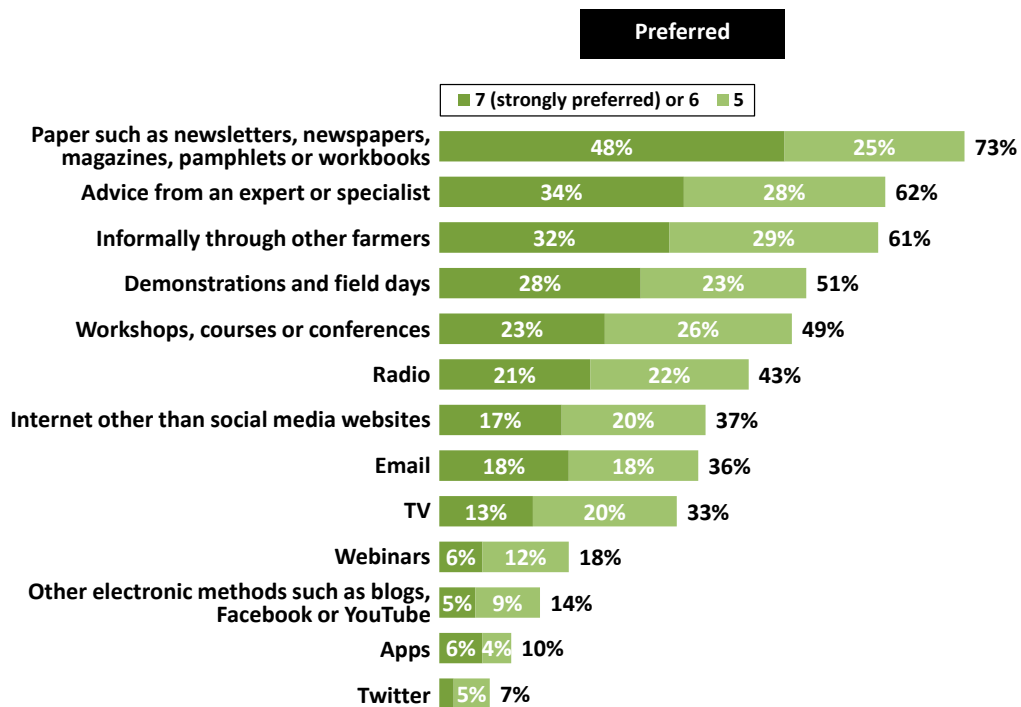
Q12. NEW. For each of the following, please tell me which statement best describes how familiar you are with it or if you've used it to help you make management decisions. Would you say, you have not heard of it, you have heard of it but haven't considered using it, you are considering using it, or you have used it?

Agriculture is a complex business and it is important to continue providing resources and tools that can help producers make decisions on their farms. This table provides AF with a good view of success and challenges or opportunities moving forward. Those areas with higher “not heard of” results could benefit from an extension effort that will increase awareness of the resource or tool. Areas that have a higher “heard of but not considered” would benefit from providing more in-depth messaging and extension on how the tool could support producer’s decision making processes.

KEY POINT: The ESATS shows that there is a strong relationship between producer respondent participation in extension and training activities, and higher adoption of eligible ESA practices (62%). Additionally, there is also a relationship between producer respondent use of AF programs and higher adoption of eligible ESA practice (60%).

The following table provides ideas on how to get these messages to producers:

Preferred Channels for Getting Information on Environmental Stewardship



Base: All respondents (n=500)

Q68. On a scale of 1 to 7, where '1' means not at all preferred and '7' means strongly preferred, please indicate your preference for each of the following methods for getting information on environmental farm stewardship.

It is notable, however, that larger operations (\$250K+ gross farm sales) – the ones that manage the vast majority of land and livestock – show a much stronger preference for Internet other than social media sites (55%) and email (52%).

The full report is now available on Ropin the Web for download:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/aesa15117](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/aesa15117).

If you have any questions or would like to further discuss the report, please contact Laura Ung at (toll-free 310-0000) 780-980-4200 or by email laura.ung@gov.ab.ca.