

Farmer Interview Guide

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. This interview will take about 1 hour to complete. Your personal information and responses to these questions will be kept confidential, and any reports or publications resulting from this research will keep your responses totally anonymous. If you agree to participate in the interview for research purposes, then you are consenting to participate. If you have any concerns about the research, please contact Rachel Schattman at UVM Dept of Plant and Soil Sciences, rschattm@uvm.edu, 802-373-1875.

I'm going to ask you questions in 3 broad categories. First, I'd like to know about your farm and how you started farming. Second, I'll be asking some questions about your farm, your household, and how you manage risk and uncertainty. Lastly, I'm interested in your thoughts about climate change, and how climate change does or doesn't affect the way you farm.

Section 1 – about the farm and the farmer

1. Tell us about your farm. What kind of farming are you doing, what are your main crops and markets?
2. How many people work with you on your farm, and what are their roles? (This will help us get to capacity within the business.)

Section 2 – risk management

3. What does "risk management" mean to you?
4. What risk management strategies do you use on your farm (diversified markets? Insurance? Diversified growing areas, etc.)
5. Who is in your "household"? What do they do? Are they involved in the farm? (May bleed in from Q4.) What percentage of your household income comes from the farm? Any off farm income?
6. Do you have employees? Is keeping them employed year round, or throughout the season a challenge? Are there components of your business that are only there to fill out your employee's time?
7. Considering the balance of farming and other activities, are you or your other household members "where you want to be"? Or do you see changes to your farm and lifestyle on the horizon? (Retirement, shifting markets, selling or buying land, etc.)
8. Do you have insurance on your farm, farm buildings, crop insurance, etc? Have you used your insurance?

Section 3 – Perceptions of climate change

9. Have you noticed changes in the climate? (The interviewer should define the difference between weather and climate.) If so, how have these changes affected your farm? (Probe: Any extreme weather events coming to mind? How did it impact your farm?)

10. Do you think climate change is effecting/will effect Vermont agriculture in general (beyond your personal farm)? (How?)
11. When you plan out your year, are there things that you are changing or considering changing because of the changing climate? (Irrigation, crop timing, drainage tiles, etc.) Does this represent a change in your management style? New investments in capital infrastructure or equipment needed?
12. Do you think that you would be more likely to adopt a new practice if (a) there were penalties, fines, or taxes in place for *not* using the practice, or (b) there were incentives in place to adopt the practice? (Which motivates you more, carrots or sticks?)
13. Where do you get your information about climate change? (Personal observation, news, conferences, TA, conversations?) What kind of information has the biggest impact on you?
14. How much does the information you get about climate change influence your management decisions?
15. What are the other factors that influence your choice of farm practices? (Economic constraints, social pressure, etc?)
16. Are there any new types of technology that help you manage the risk of climate change?
17. What are your thoughts on mitigating greenhouse gas emissions? How should we go about this, and at what scale (individual, community, state or national?)

We would like your help, as someone with experience with production, in evaluating some key best management practices. This list of BMPs has been assembled by a review of the literature, and we are trying to understand which of these BMPs have the most potential for reducing the risk faced by farmers because of climate change. (Go through the CCBMP evaluation tool with the farmer.)

18. Of the BMPs that you have used on your farm, what were the effects of these practices? (Both directly where the management was applied or on other parts of the farm?) (Effects on water management, biodiversity, financial effects?)

Section 4 – closing

19. We are always seeking new partners for effective outreach in the ag community. Who do you receive the most valuable technical assistance from? (Certified Crop Consultants, Extension, Trade publications, etc?) What type of outreach is the most useful to you? (Production information, financial counseling, etc?)