

Public Has High Opinion of U.S. Farmers, NCGA-Funded Survey Says (3-29-04)

The U.S. public generally has a high opinion of farmers and ranchers, according to the results of a recent survey partially funded by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA).

Conclusions and recommendations from the survey were presented last week at the Animal Agriculture Alliance's "Stakeholder Summit on Animal Welfare" in Arlington, Va. NCGA Corn Board member Bob Dickey, Research and Business Development Action Team member Ron Obermoller and Manager of Livestock Information and Programs Tracy Snider attended the three-day conference.

Along with farmers and ranchers, the groups viewed most favorably by the public are school teachers, veterinarians and physicians. According to the survey, the public strongly believes farmers and ranchers are concerned about food safety and the well-being of their animals. The least favorably viewed groups are trial lawyers, groups active in opposing the use of animals for food, media and large corporate farms.

The survey polled more than 1,000 U.S. adults, on consumer opinions about numerous issues related to agriculture, including attitudes regarding food safety, animal welfare practices and genetically engineered feed products. The survey results will be used by the alliance to identify strategies for educating the media and public on animal welfare and other agriculture issues.

Other key survey findings were:

- It is believed that farmers impact and have a strong role in healthy and cost-effective food production.
- Respondents believe obesity is a societal and personal concern driven by poor diets and lack of exercise.
- Respondents are generally open to genetically enhanced food. Nearly half of the respondents agree that scientists should be free to use science and genetics to breed farm animals to be resistant to harmful bacteria.
- A significant number of respondents are willing to pay premium prices for food certified and labeled as "humanely raised."
- The influence of animal rights activist groups on respondents' decisions about buying certain products is minimal. Only 7 percent of those surveyed said animal rights groups are "extremely" or "very" influential in these decisions.

The conference also included numerous panel discussions on food safety, animal welfare, legislative initiatives targeting animal agriculture, tracking and tracing programs and communicating with consumers and the media. Snider addressed attendees on the importance of animal welfare to corn growers.

"Animal initiatives are important to corn growers because livestock is our primary customer," Snider said. "To sustain that market, we must be active in the full food system. Problems within one area of the food system don't only affect that specific area – they affect the entire production chain."

Conference-goers also heard panelists discuss the importance of animal welfare to food quality and food safety. Dr. Jeff Armstrong, of Michigan State University, presented the U.S. perspective on the issue, while the European Commission's Dr. Andrea Gavinelli gave the European Union perspective.

The Animal Agriculture Alliance is a coalition of individual agriculture producers, producer organizations, suppliers, packer-processors, private industry and retailers. The group's mission is to support and promote animal agriculture practices that provide for farm animal well-being through sound science and public information.

For more information on the survey, [click here](#).

[Consumers Attitudes About Animal Welfare: 2004 National Public Opinion Survey - PDF](#)

Last reviewed March 29, 2004

**ST. LOUIS
OFFICE**

632 Cepi Drive
Chesterfield, MO
63005
Phone: (636)
733-9004
FAX: (636) 733-
9005

WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE