

7 CFFO 2002 Workshop Survey Results

7.1 CFFO's Workshops Series

In the winter and spring of 2002, the CFFO held a series of 17 workshops throughout the province¹. They have been held as part of a consultation process which has culminated in the organization's document *Closer to the Heart: a CFFO Vision for Farming*.

The aim of the 2002 series was to gauge family farmers' reactions to an earlier document, *An Emerging Vision: A Desirable Future for Farmers and Farming in Ontario*. The 247 participants at the 17 workshops were mainly recruited directly from the CFFO membership by the organization's manager of field services and events coordinator. Some members of the public or members of other farm organizations participated as well. The participants, then, may not be assumed to form a statistically representative sample of either farmers in general or the CFFO membership.

One part of the 2002 series concerned environmental payments. It included a structured and interactive presentation and discussion on the concept of environmental payments and a questionnaire survey of 11 questions. The purpose of the survey was to seek a response to the overarching question: "Is expanding environmental payments a viable alternative to production subsidies?" This survey is re-visited in this report because it is relevant to the present investigation even though not designed to be part of it.

A report on the environmental payments segment of the workshop series is included in this report as Appendix II. It includes both a reduction and summary of workshop commentary and a simple percentage breakdown of the questionnaire administered to all 247 participants. On the basis of both the qualitative and quantitative responses, this summary concluded that:

...although the concept was generally appealing and seen to belong to wider social concern and public policy, environmental payments were not seen as a viable alternative to production subsidies by the workshop participants.

(CFFO 2002, p. 28)

¹ Workshops were held between February 18 and April 4 in: Milverton, Simcoe, Watford, Vineland Station, Thunder Bay, Emo, Peterborough, Belleville, Salford, Ridgetown, Guelph, Kemptonville, Wingham, Keady, Alliston, Thessalon and North Bay.

Participants generally approved of and were interested in the concept of environmental payments but were clearly equivocal on many points. Many potential barriers to participation in voluntary programs making environmental payments could be discerned from the participants at the 2002 CFFO workshop series, both in the survey and in recorded commentary.

7.2 Workshop Data

Nine questions relevant to this study, of the original 11, were re-analyzed for this report. They were as follows:

- 1) I like the idea of receiving a payment for the wider environmental benefits on-farm activities make;
- 2) I see environmental payments as just another form of farm support;
- 3) I think tax payers would approve of environmental payments if they were better informed about on-farm projects;
- 4) I think that environmental payments should be part of a bigger countryside plan;
- 5) Environmental payments would have to go beyond replacing whatever is lost in production to really catch on;
- 6) Environmental payments could be a way to eventually replace production subsidies;
- 7) I wonder if there would be enough money available for these programs to really catch on;
- 8) I wonder if these programs would last long enough for them to really catch on;

All of the above questions offered a choice of: yes, no or maybe answers. One further question which offered only one choice was:

- 9) As long as production subsidies remain, enrolment in environmental payment programs should be: mandatory, voluntary.

The questions reflect the dual purpose of environmental payments as a form of subsidy and are a means of environmental stewardship. Respectively, the rationale for these questions was to:

- Discover if the respondents understand the essential concept;
- Discover if they approve of the concept;
- Discover where they situate the concept in terms of support payments in general;
- Gauge their perception of wider social implications of a switch in policy;
- Find a minimum payment level for acceptance (Q 4 and 5);
- Ask for a direct response to the overarching question;
- Discover the importance or not of the amount of funding;
- Discover the importance or not of permanence and predictability of programs and;
- Answer an important policy question concerning mandatory or voluntary instruments.

Although the survey was not designed to reveal potential differences between Primary and Secondary farmers or between different regions, for this report, we treated the data in the same way as the farm show survey data reported in Section 5. This was to remove all non-farmers from the data set of 247. This left 215 farmers for analysis.

These were divided into Primary and Secondary farmers based on their reported percentage of income derived from farming. This information was found in a separate questionnaire from the same workshop series. For our purposes, Primary farmers were considered to be those who received 50 percent or more of their income from farming and

Secondary farmers were those who received less than 50 percent. This was done to reveal any statistically significant differences in the responses of Primary and Secondary farmers using non-parametric chi square analysis.

The respondents were then sorted by their place of residence in one of the five regions used throughout this report. This was done to reveal any statistically significant differences in the responses between different regions using non-parametric chi square analysis.

7.3 Analysis

The workshop data are tabulated in Figure 7.1. The chi square test was applied to the contingency tables produced by each question to test for associations which would point to a statistically significant difference between the variables.

The largest number of total participants at the CFFO workshops lived in the South Region (36%), followed by the Southwest (28%), North (17%), Shield (15%) and East (4%) Regions. The East and Shield are clearly under-represented for purposes of statistical comparison. The North is over-represented. This, and the small sample size in some of the regions renders the chi square test inappropriate except for question 9 described below. We may not assume that the reported percentage differences between regions are statistically significant. The total responses for all regions, however, are a valid representation of the ensemble of participants at the workshops and are presented next.

7.3.1 Aggregate Data

From Figure 7.1 we see that 63.7 percent of farmers liked the idea of environmental payments, leaving only 4.7 percent who did not, but with 25.1 percent who were in doubt. A considerable number, 16.2 percent, did not answer this question.

Some 28.8 percent saw them as something different from other farm supports, leaving a majority of 32.6 percent who did regard them that way and 30.7 percent who remained in doubt. This is almost an equal three-way split in opinion on these farmers' sense of the context of environmental payments. Some 7.9 percent did not answer this question.

A large majority of 57.6 percent felt that tax payers would approve of environmental payments if they were better informed about on-farm projects. This left only 2.8 percent who did not think so, but 33.2 percent who were unsure.

Figure 7.1: 2002 CFFO Workshop Participants on Environmental Payments (Farmers Only)

Figure 7.1: Continued

Figure 7.1: Continued

A large majority of 67.4 percent felt that environmental payments should be part of a bigger countryside plan. Only 2.3 percent were in disagreement, but 24.2 percent remained unsure and 6.0 percent did not answer.

A large majority of 63.7 percent felt that payments would have to go beyond simple compensation for lost production to really catch on. Only 7.9 percent felt that this level of support was not necessary, but 20.0 percent were unsure and 8.4 percent did not answer this question.

The totality of farmers was more evenly split on the question of whether environmental payments could eventually replace production subsidies while 34.9 percent thought yes. Some 21.9 percent did not think they could eventually replace production subsidies and 32.9 percent were unsure. Some 8.4 percent did not answer. This was one of the more important questions of the survey, since it pertains to replacement of existing subsidy structures with environmental payments.

As well, it appears that major doubts remained about governments' long-term financial commitment to the concept of environmental payments. Some 47.0 percent thought that funding might become unavailable. Some 12.6 percent thought not. Some 28.8 percent remained in doubt and 11.6% did not answer this question.

In a related question, almost the same proportion, 47.9 percent, thought programs would not last long enough to really catch on. Only 8.8 percent were confident about this, 28.7 percent remained in doubt and 27 percent did not answer.

Question 9 was important in this survey because it indicates which economic instrument was preferred by farmers in a scenario which retained conventional production subsidies along with programs making environmental payments. This would occur if Canada were to introduce cross-compliance between production subsidies and environmental programs. Preferences were almost evenly split between the 38.6 percent who felt that programs should be mandatory and used in cross compliance with production subsidies and the 37.7 percent who felt they should remain voluntary. No provision was made in this question for a "maybe" response and a full 23.7 percent did not respond to the question. The even split in opinion and high level of doubt reported in question nine suggests that careful consideration of agri-environmental policy will be necessary by all stakeholders on the choice between mandatory instruments, financial incentives or voluntary instruments.

7.3.2 Regional Breakdowns

While the aggregate responses reported above are unambiguous, we must interpret the regional breakdown very cautiously, since there was a very small sample from some Regions. The non-parametric chi square test was used to reveal statistically significant differences in the data. P-values of .05 or less indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between each region and all the rest, 95 percent of the time. This is the conventional confidence limit for this type of analysis. Conversely, a p-value of .95 or more indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the Region and all the rest, 95 percent of the time. Those falling between are essentially indeterminate. The table notes where the test was inappropriate for the number of expected frequencies due to the small sample size.

Chi square testing was found to be inappropriate to compare all responses in all regions shown in Table 7.1, except for question 9. Here the test statistic was 11.44 with 8 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .178. This means that there are no significant similarities or differences between the regions for this question. The pattern of responses between Regions for all other questions is essentially indeterminate.

To overcome this limitation, the data were reconfigured to probe for potential differences between regions, as for the farm show data reported in Section 5.3. This was done by comparing each region with all the rest, shown in Figure 7.2. The results are reported as frequencies of responses not percentages. As well, we combine the “maybe” and “no response” categories to reduce the degrees of freedom. This now allows the appropriate use of the chi square test. To interpret this table, reference must be made to the percentage figures shown in Figure 7.1.

From Figure 7.2, there are no statistically significant differences between each region and all the rest for question 1 on approval of the concept of environmental payments.

Both Southwest and North Regions are significantly different from all the rest for question 2, where environmental payments are regarded as being just another form of farm support. Respondents from the Southwest were more inclined to agree with this than those from the North.

For question 3, regarding tax payers' approval of programs, those from the South and Shield Regions are both clearly different from all the rest, having a majority in agreement but also a large number in doubt. The other regions are indeterminate.

Figure 7.2: 2002 CFFO Workshops; Comparing each Region with the Rest, all Farmers

Figure 7.2: Continued

Figure 7.2: Continued

Figure 7.2: Continued

Figure 7.2: Continued

In question 4, about environmental payments being part of a countryside plan, the test was found inappropriate and no statement can be made comparing the regions.

For question 5, about an acceptable level of funding, the test did not indicate any statistically significant differences between regions.

Those from the Southwest and the North Regions (by relaxing the confidence limits slightly) were significantly different from all the rest in their strong agreement to question 6, that environmental payments could be a way to eventually replace production subsidies. No significance is apparent comparing the other regions with the rest of the province.

For question 7, those from the Southwest are significantly different from all the rest in their doubt about a sustained financial commitment to environmental payment programs. There is no significant difference between those from the Shield Region and all the rest, if we relax our confidence limits to 93 percent of the time rather than 95 percent.

For question 8, about longevity of programs, if we are similarly willing to relax our confident limits slightly, those from the South and Shield Regions were significantly different from all the rest. In this question, those from the Southwest are not significantly different from all the rest in their opinions about longevity of programs. Those from the Shield Region are statistically different from all the rest, in that they are more confident that programs would last long enough to catch on.

For question 9, there is no strong significance between regions using our confidence limits. We are tempted to interpret the Southwest's p-value of .874 as hinting that this region is statistically no different from all the rest in an even split between preference for mandatory and voluntary programs. The North's p-value of .073 is a stronger indication that it may be significantly different from the rest, mainly in its high non-response to the question, but also that they were more supportive of mandatory programs.

To summarize, there appear to be several significant regional differences in responses to some of the questions in this survey, but much is either indeterminate or shows no statistically significant regional differences.

7.3.3 Breakdown by Primary and Secondary Farmer

Figure 7.3 compares Primary and Secondary farmers for all regions and tests for significant differences between them for each of the 9 questions using the chi square test. To calculate the test statistic, frequencies for "maybe" and "no response" were combined to

Figure 7.3: 2002 CFFO Workshops; All Regions, by Primary and Secondary Farmer

Figure 7.3: Continued

Figure 7.3: Continued

reduce the degrees of freedom to allow an appropriate use of the test. Nevertheless its use in questions 3 and 4 remained inappropriate.

Only by relaxing our confidence limits may the p-value of .895 for question 1 allow us to say that there is no significant difference between Primary and Secondary farmers regarding their liking for the concept. The p-value of .065 for question 8, regarding longevity of programs, suggests that there is a significant difference between Primary and Secondary farmers, again with a slight relaxation of confidence limits.

In none of the other questions can we confidently reject the null hypothesis to say that there is a statistically significant difference or similarity between Primary and Secondary farmers.

Most of the questions had a large non-response, even though for most, the “maybe” option was provided. This creates a large non-response error which we interpret as reflecting considerable uncertainty among farmers about the potential choices being offered in this survey. There is, then, considerable doubt and ambiguity concerning both the concept and the feasibility of environmental payments as a form of farm support.

7.4 Conclusions on Workshop Survey

The conclusions reported in the CFFO workshop report (Appendix II) stand for this report as well. To summarize these conclusions: the twin aims of environmental payments programs as a form of farm subsidy and a means of environmental stewardship are not easily joined. Farmers at the 2002 CFFO workshop series saw their environmental responsibility as something separate from farm support policy. They did however, strongly support the concept of direct environmental payments and found the idea of receiving them for environmental projects appealing. There is also strong, though not a majority support for using the instrument of cross-compliance. Considerable ambiguity and doubt remain throughout, however.

There is good evidence of regional variations in some of the questions, notably between the South, Southwest and North regions in questions 2, 3,6,7,8 and 9. For the other questions, there is no significant pattern of difference between any one region and the rest of the province. Given the nebulous regional patterns, the major finding of this survey is that there are no statistically significant differences between Primary and Secondary farmers in

their expressed opinions to these questions relating to environmental payments and programming associated with them.