



Research Needs Survey of Organic Farmers in Ontario

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Survey Overview

- Part of the national survey project
- Key areas:
 - Animals, Plants, Soils, Ecological Systems, Health and Food Quality, Marketing, Policy and Sustainable Agriculture
 - http://www.organicagcentre.ca/ResearchDatabase/res_strategies.asp
- 832 surveys distributed in Ontario
- Response rate of 17.7% (n=147)



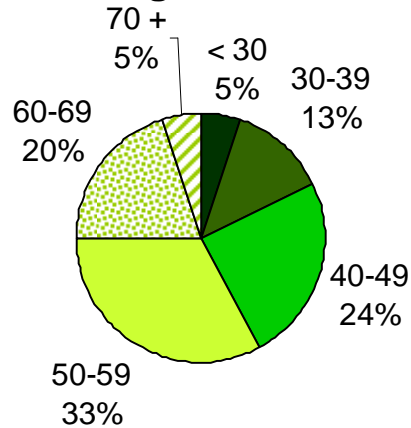
Current and Future Producers (Ont.)

	Field Crops	Livestock	Dairy	Vegetable (incl. greenhouse)	Fruit/ berry	Herbs/ spices
	---number or percentage of producers---					
Current and Future producers	91 62%	73 50%	22 15%	88 60%	62 42%	49 33%
Current producers	78	61	20	74	40	42
Future producers	13	12	2	14	22	7

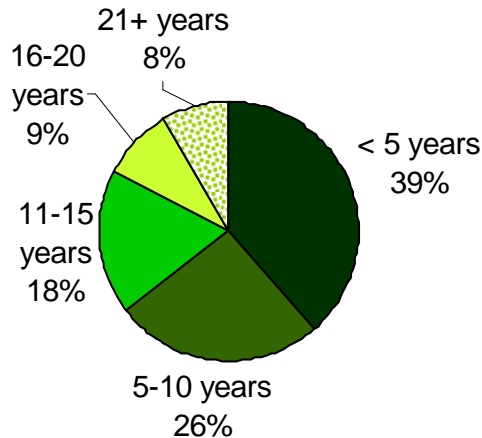


Respondent Demographics

Age of Farmer



Years in Farming

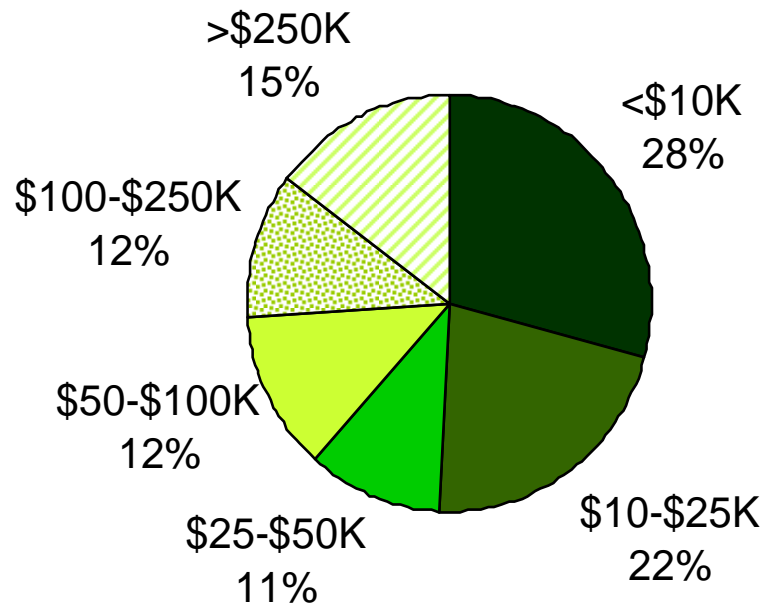


- Majority of organic producers run mixed farms with animals
- **39%** were new entrants
 - < 5yrs experience
- **53%** were between the ages of 50-69
 - transitioned from conventional farming or entered as a second career?



Gross Farm Income

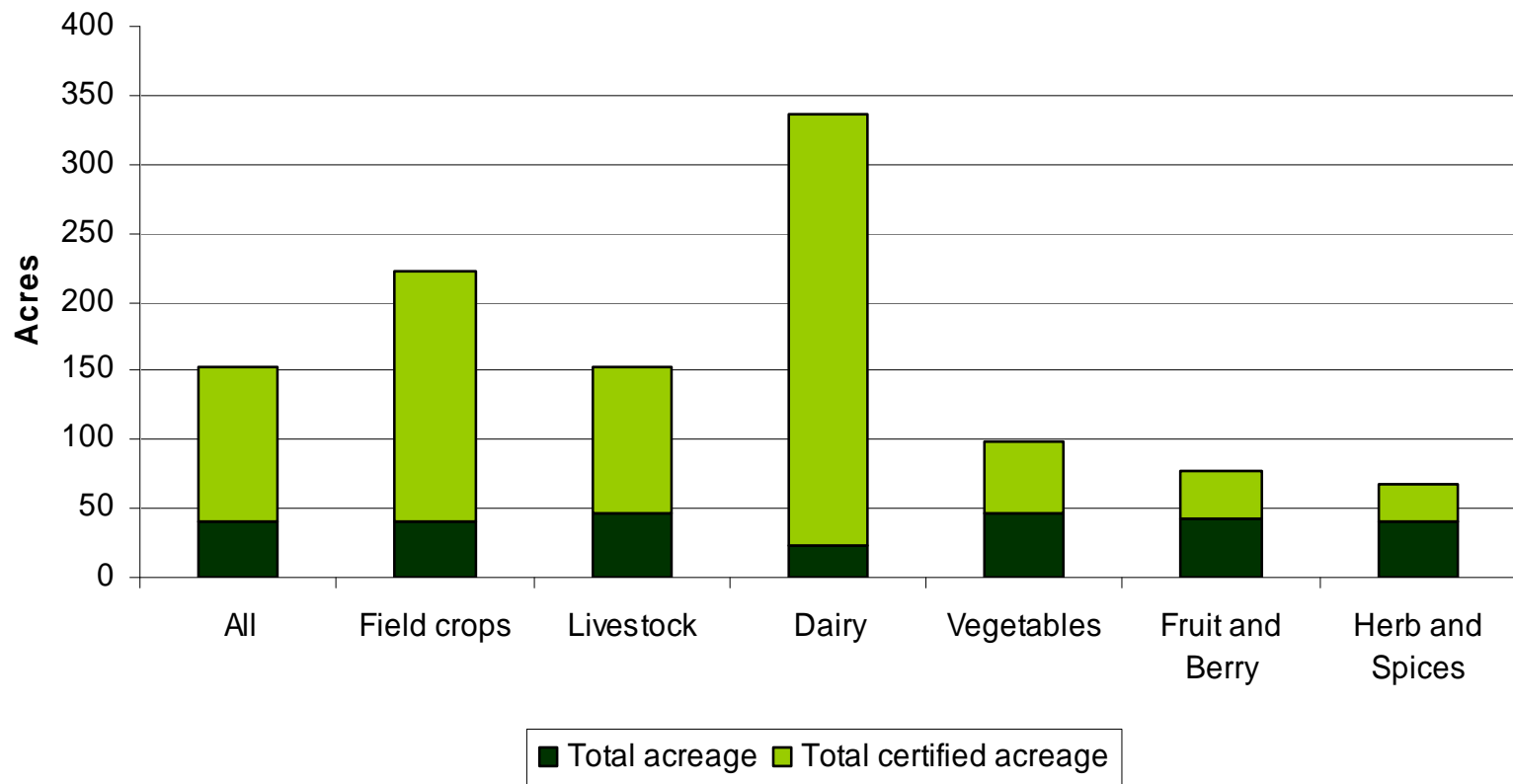
Gross Farm Income



- 49% of **dairy** farmers reported annual income >\$250,000
- Majority of **horticultural producers** indicated income below <\$25,000

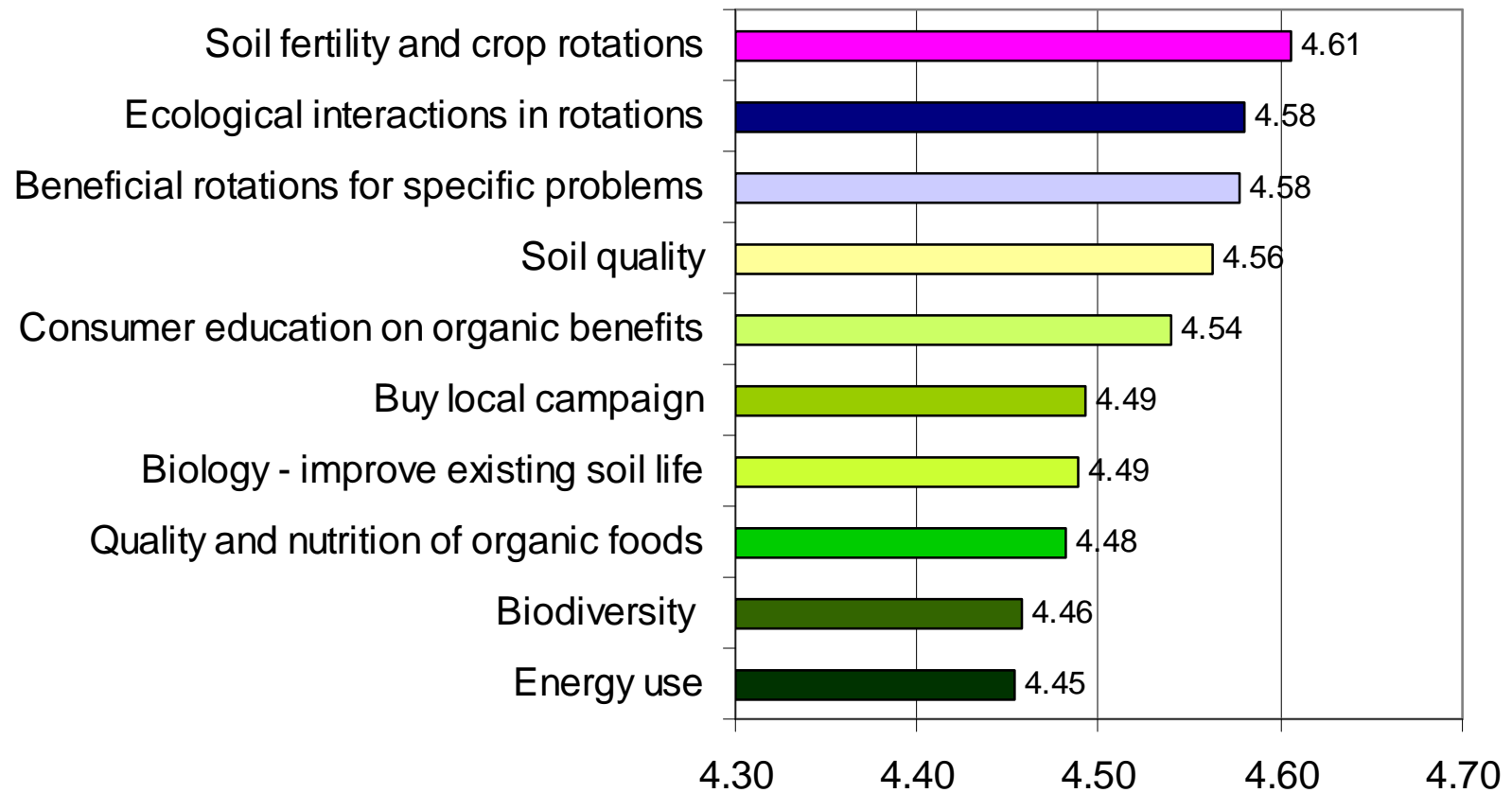


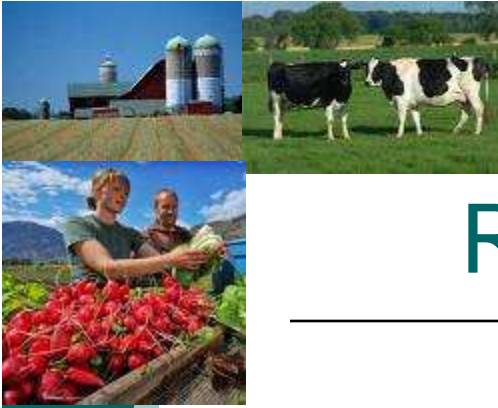
Ontario Farm Sizes by Producer Type





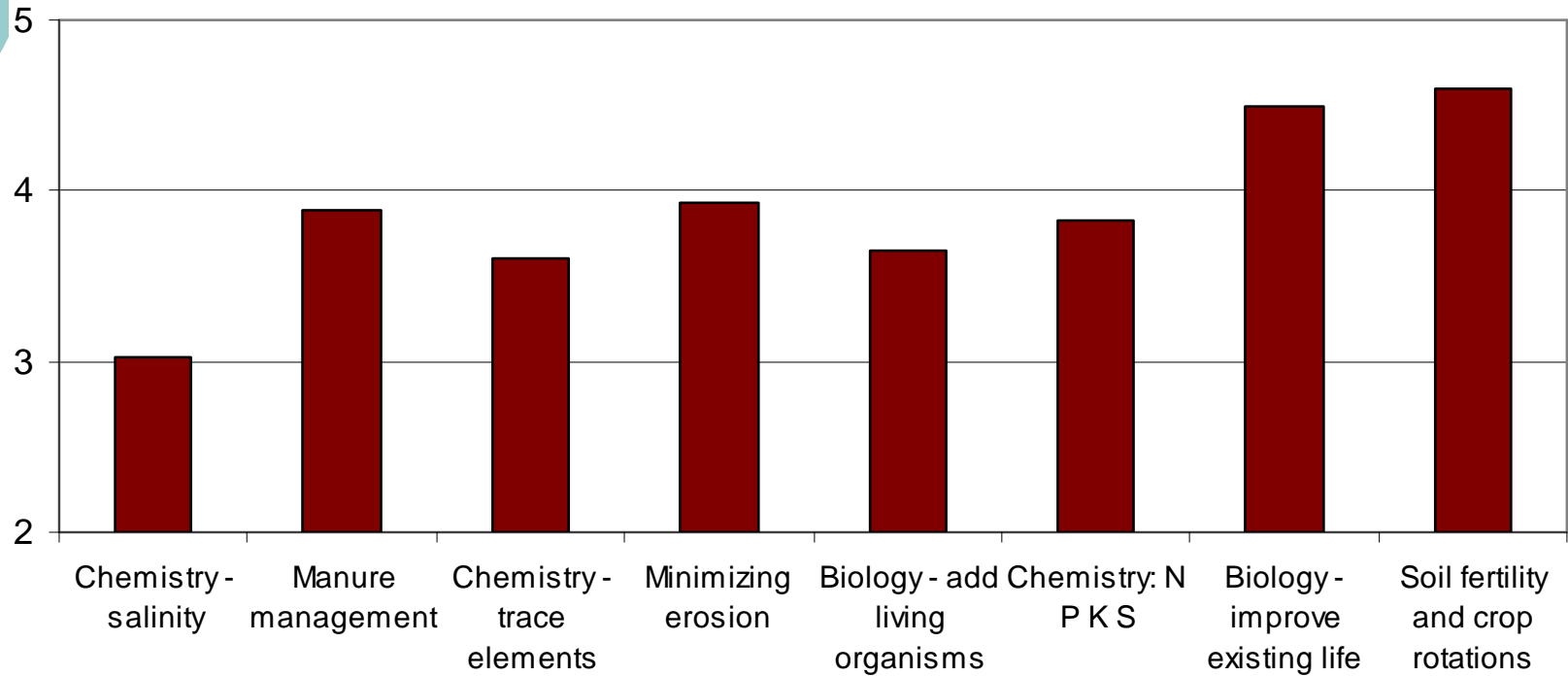
Ontario Top Research Needs

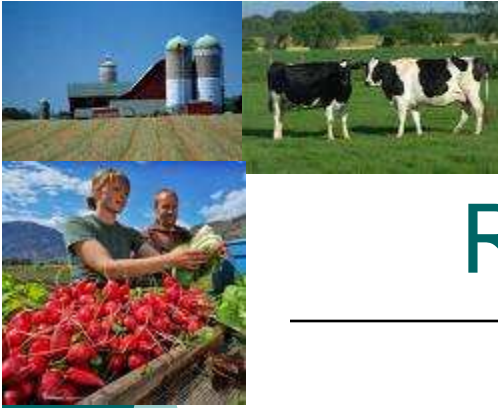




Research Needs for Ontario

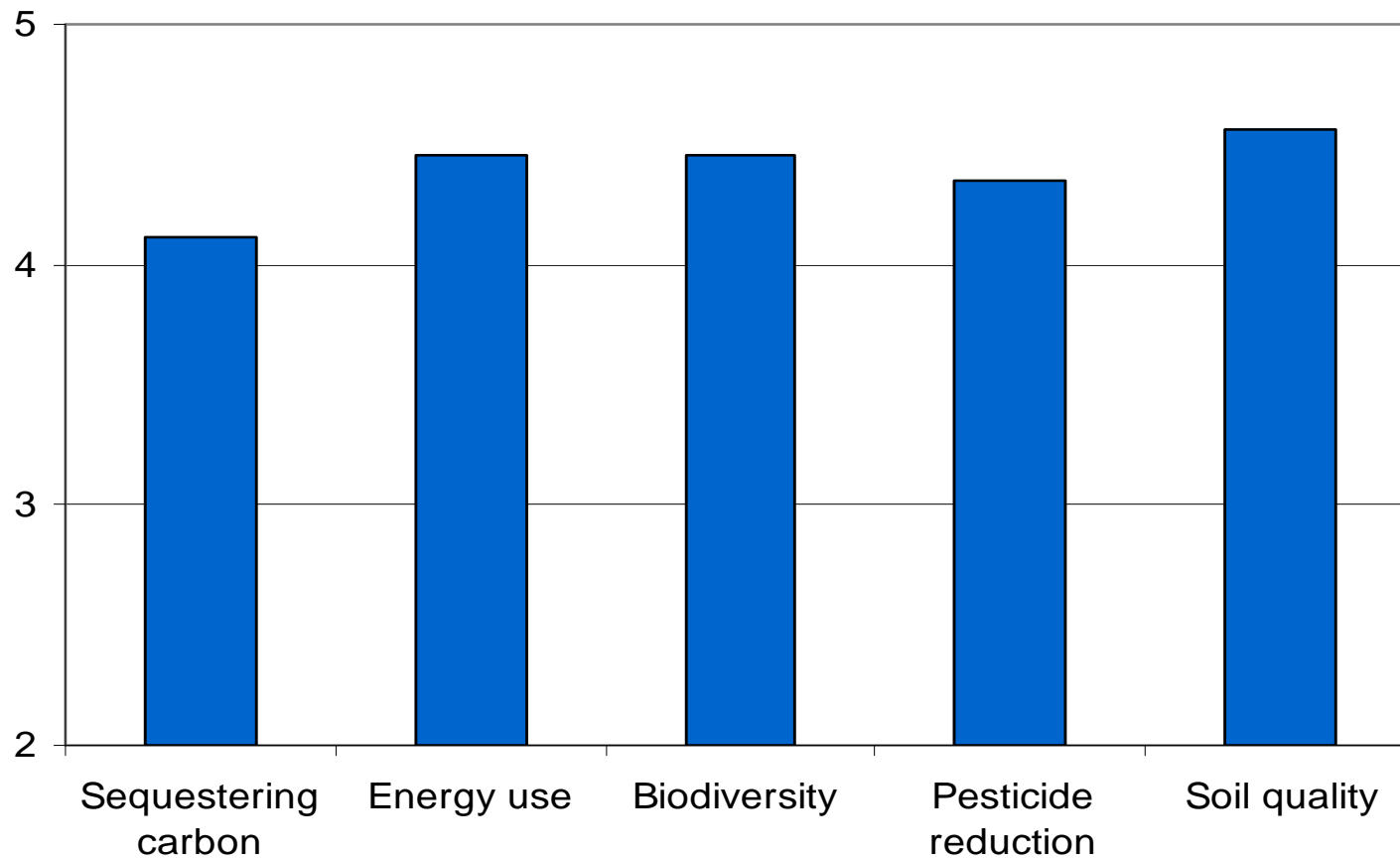
Soils





Research Needs for Ontario

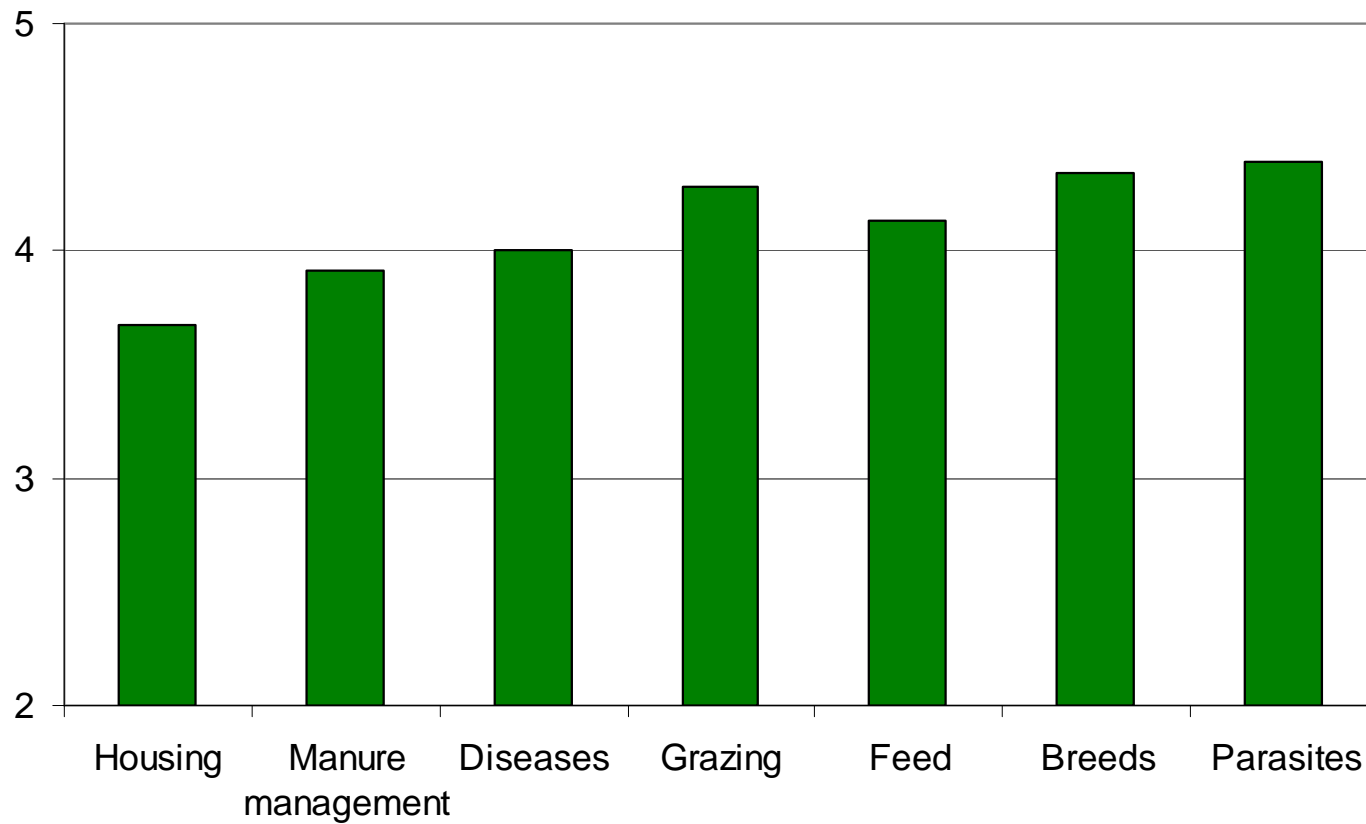
Environment

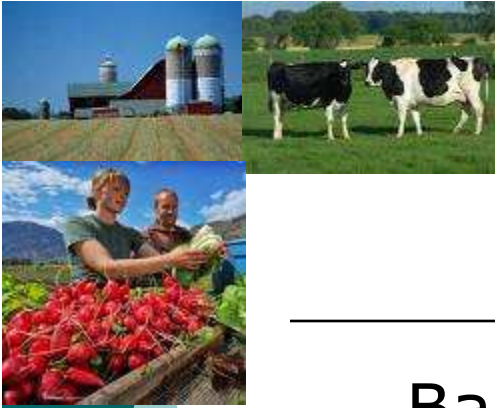




Research Needs for Ontario Farmers

Animals





Farmer comments on Growth of Organics

Barriers

- Government regulations and standards
 - Too lax for companies importing into Canada
- Costs of certifying bodies
- Consumer education
 - Greater consumer education on costs and standards
- Production costs and facilities
 - Labour, equipment, transportation
 - Processing facilities

Opportunities

- Renewed consumer interest
 - Buy local campaign, concern over additives
- Opportunities for new farmers
 - "viable way to make a living"
- Energy crisis
- Ontario Farmers are optimistic, but cautious!!



The Strategic Research Process

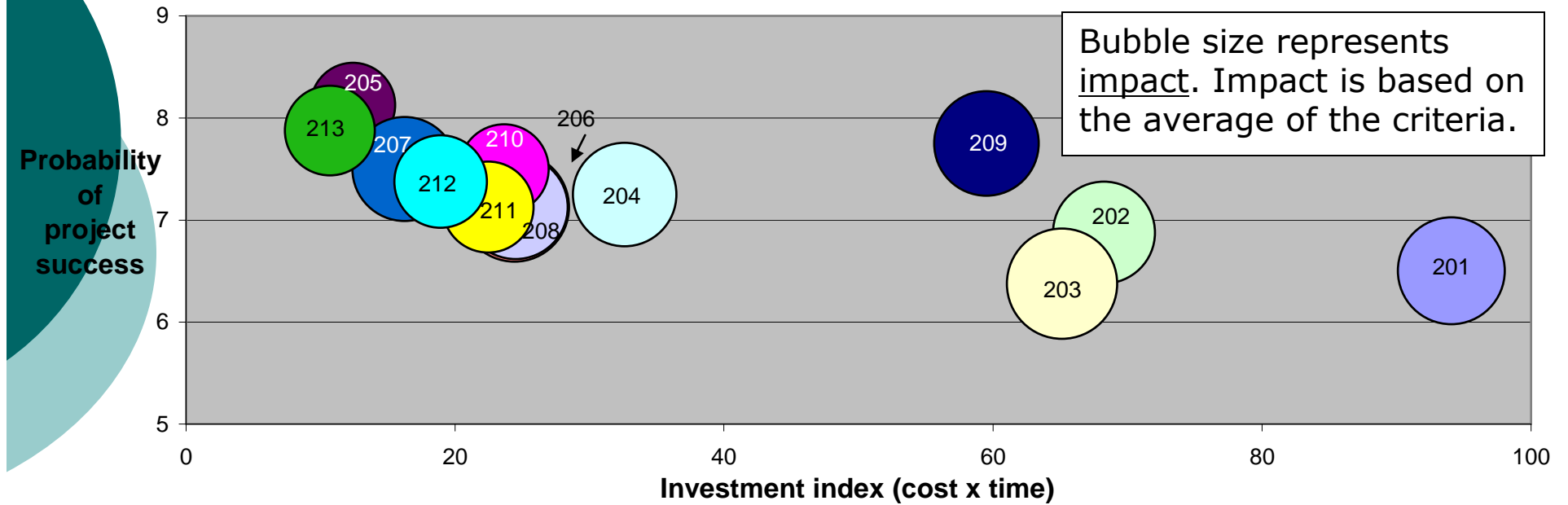
1. Trend analysis
2. Opportunities and Threats
3. Strengths and Weaknesses
4. Farmer survey
5. List of potential research questions
6. Establishing criteria for success
7. Rating the research questions against criteria
8. Inventory of organic research in Canada
9. Prioritizing based on impact, likelihood of success and cost/time



Criteria For Prioritization

Increase gross margin for the farm. Gross margin is a measure of profitability and economic sustainability	Inform policy makers and provide evidence for the policy development process
Increase capacity for sales of Canadian organic products (in terms of markets and/or processing)	Supports the development of a positive social climate for organic agriculture
Increase organic production in Canada	Supports the evolution of organic agriculture and the organic farming community by contributing to "forward thinking".
Reduce environmental risk	Number of years required to complete the research and extend results to stakeholders
Characterize and support environmental goods and services provided by the organic sector	Likelihood of success within ten years

Prioritization of organic sector projects- Soils Sector



- 201- Identify or develop crop rotations that sustain soil fertility and meet overall regional yield averages.
- 202- Explore specific cover crop sequences or mixtures interact with soil biota to stimulate plant resistance mechanisms and influence nutrient uptake.
- 203- Identify integrated management practices to optimize soil quality as a substrate for crop growth.
- 204- Identify or develop organic farming techniques that can maintain soil quality and build soil organic matter with routine mechanical weed control.
- 205- Conduct efficacy testing on products marketed as soil microbial stimulants or biological enhancers.
- 206- Develop nutrient budgeting tools that account for whole farm nutrient flows and/or nutrients contributed by different crops and amendments.
- 207- Develop fertilization strategies for crops with high nutritional requirements while minimizing the environmental risk of applying excess nutrients.
- 208- Identify integrated management practices for optimizing soil nitrogen in order to maximize economic crop yields.
- 209- Identify the risk of soil phosphorus depletion under regionally specific organic management systems and potential solutions for organic producers.
- 210- Determine the nature and extent of deficiencies of micronutrients and possible links to the nutritional quality of foods.
- 211- Determine the nature and extent of deficiencies of macronutrients as possible links to the nutritional quality of foods.
- 212- Determine the amount and timing of nutrient release from different soil amendments and their efficacy in terms of improving plant nutrition.
- 213- Identify viable growing mediums and nutrient sources that are suitable for organic greenhouse and transplant production.



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