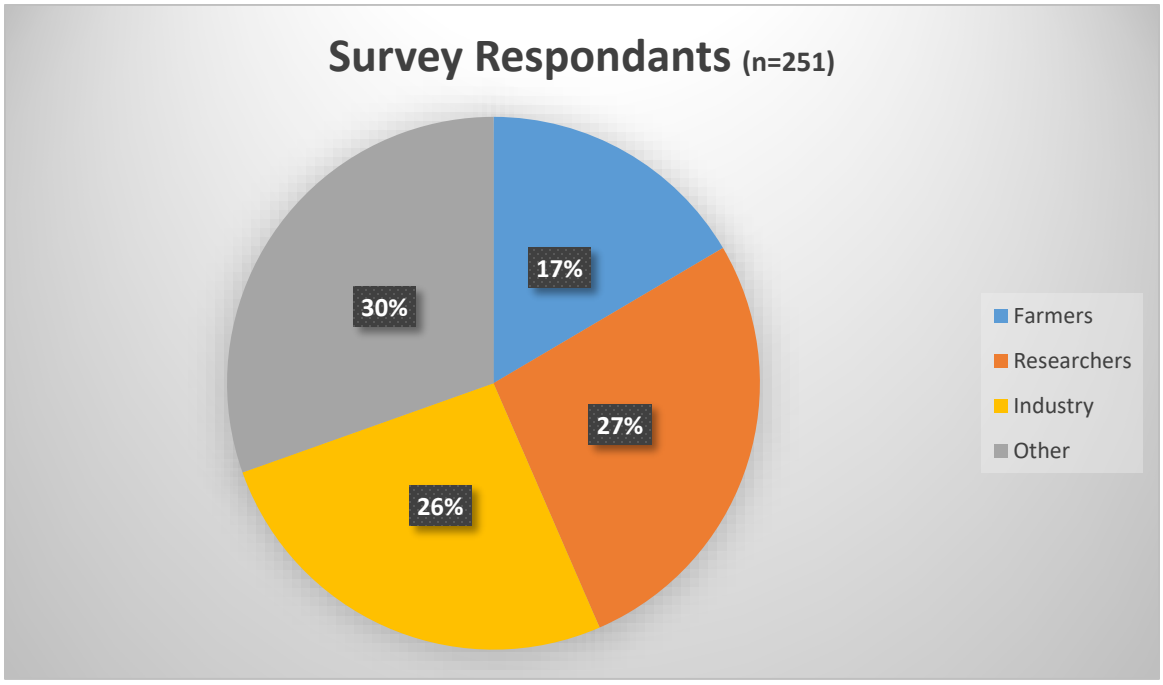
Further Engagement Addendum

To engage a broader segment of the organic sector, we complemented the convening with a free webinar that was open to the public, and a survey aimed at better understanding stakeholder interests and needs.

Engagement Demographics

The webinar had 252 registrants, who were able to view the webinar recording, and 198 attendees for the live portion of the webinar. The survey had 252 respondents, 17% of whom were farmers, 27% were researchers, 26% were industry members, and 30% categorized as "other" including policymakers, farmer group representatives, funding body employees, etc. Survey respondents were able to select multiple demographic groups.



Draft Priorities for Organic Private-Public Partnership Programs

1. Systems based investigation on connections between soil health, microbial communities, and/or plant productivity.
2. Organic techniques for improving resiliency to climate change & mitigating climate change.
3. Accounting for true costs/externalities of farming, incorporating a monetary value for health and ecosystem
4. Information transfer of organic research-based best practices to agricultural professionals and farmer trainers.

Overall Interest Levels

While all research priorities were flagged as important by some survey respondents, to narrow down the focus of our priority areas, we broke out priorities into High, Medium-High, Medium-Low, and Low interest level based on the percentage of respondents who rated the category as 4 or 5 out of 5, with 5 being "Very Important."

High Interest Level

- Systems-based investigations on the connections between soil health and microbial communities
- How soil health practices impact plant productivity
- Accounting for true costs and externalities of farming, incorporating a monetary value for ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, water quality and beneficial biodiversity.

Medium-High Interest Level

- Organic techniques for improving resiliency to climate change
- Links between farming and human health
- Methods for organic farming to increase climate change mitigation
- Connections between soil health and water quality.

Medium-Low Interest Level

- Assessing management practices for farm profitability
- Assessment of how climate change is and will continue to affect organic farmers
- The role of crop diversification in protecting against losses from extreme weather changes
- Soil Health impacts on food safety
- Assessment of true costs of technological developments and usage on organic systems
- Seed breeding for resilience in different regions
- Reducing water need/usage
- Organic practices' impact on animal health, human health and soil health
- Exploration of reasons farmers choose (or don't choose) to farm organically
- Breeding for flavor and nutrition.

Lower Interest Level

- Risk perceptions of farming organically
- Regional breeding of organic seeds to enhance crop performance
- Equipment to reduce the burden of laborious tasks such as weeding
- Precision technologies for water and nutrient usage efficiency
- Increased reliability of food safety monitoring
- Livestock integration into cropping systems
- Livestock forage management.

Cross-sector Interests

Further analysis matched interest levels between respondent groups to identify research areas that were of highest interest to farmers, researchers, industry members, and other groups alike. The research areas that had the most cohesion in being high-priority among sector groups include:

- Systems-based investigations on the connections between soil health and microbial communities
- How soil health practices impact plant productivity
- Links between farming and human health
- Accounting for true costs and externalities of farming, incorporating a monetary value for ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, improved water quality and beneficial biodiversity
- Organic techniques for improving resiliency to climate change
- Methods for organic farming to increase climate change mitigation.

Final Priority Development

Finally, we combined these priorities into the following suggestions for a scaffolding for using public-private partnerships to address some of the top needs of the organic community. We also included a priority that would enable extension-focused grants. While this was not incorporated into the priority list, stakeholders flagged it as a critical procedural step across the board. Specifically, stakeholders noted that programs that impacted the availability of resources to extension agents and other agricultural professionals could have a disproportionate impact on connecting farmers with the best practices identified by the research.

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