RESPONSES TO FARM MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER SURVEY: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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Abstract

Authors obtained permission for one-time access to IFMA membership email addresses for the purpose of announcing and requesting response to a 13 question electronic survey. The survey addressed the status, structure, and funding of technology transfer to farmers including government extension, private consulting, and others and the status of feedback of needs to researchers. Respondents represented university faculty, government employees, self-employed consultants/advisers, and NGO personnel. The survey was sent to 374 unique IFMA member email addresses, 106 responses were returned with 63 of those responses being complete. Responses were received from 24 countries. 23.8% of the respondents were teachers/professors, 19 % were Extension agents/specialists, 22% of the respondents were consultants/advisers, and 11% each were farmers or agribusiness staff. Respondents indicated funding for these services delivered came 19% almost entirely from government sources, 40% self-funded, and nearly 34% a mixture of user, government, and NGO funding. Access to farm management services varied from nearly every farm family having face-to-face availability to less than one third of farm families having access. 35% of respondents indicated the most important need for improved technology transfer was closer collaboration between research institutions and all types of farm management professionals. Another 20% each identified that more trained personnel and better training for personnel are the greatest needs. Another product of this survey was a list of URLs of agricultural technology webpages from each participant's country. The authors discovered a wealth of information in the written responses which provide color to the survey results. One such response, from New Zealand, indicated that the real solutions to farm management issues are derived at the farm level not coming from "governmental or university research elites". Further analysis of the survey responses is ongoing. Hypotheses being tested include: 1) countries characterized by large, high income farms are more likely to rely on privately funded technology transfer systems; 2) countries with lower GDP per capita are more likely to exhibit inadequate or nonexistent technology transfer programs; and 3) countries with inadequate technology transfer programs exhibit the lowest agricultural productivity. Among potential conclusions is that farmers in low GDP countries are in need of the technology transfer skills of IFMA members. Future research inquiries will address additional aspects of farm management technology and its transfer. For example, more information is needed about the extent and effectiveness of electronic media use to transfer farm management technology in each country. The authors invite suggestions for improving and creating lines of inquiry concerning the structure, funding, delivery, and efficiency of farm management technology transfer within countries. An ultimate goal is to enhance farm management and agricultural productivity across national borders.

Keywords: extension, technology transfer, farm management