

Research objectives

To survey a variety of farmers from different areas of the Wensum catchment to create a baseline database of current agricultural practices.

To gather information regarding farmers' attitudes towards various mitigation methods to reduce diffuse water pollution.

Key messages

- Farmers requested the need for bio-beds for sprayer wash down filtration as a main priority
- Easier access to Higher Level Stewardship
- Generally a wish to see improved water quality
- Sewage treatment works, road verge runoff and farm activities are viewed as main polluters

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Description of research/methods

A baseline survey was carried out with 31 farmers from the Wensum catchment area during farm visits. Farmers were selected to represent the consensus of the catchment and were asked about their current practices, views on sources of pollution, optimism for the future and perceived threats to their business.

A portfolio of agricultural practices from 2011 has been created. The data include different aspects of farming such as the average fertiliser application rates, yields, stocking densities, manure management and cultivation techniques. It is hoped to build upon this survey over the years to gain a greater understanding of farming activities in the Wensum Catchment.

- Very optimistic
- Optimistic
- Neutral
- Pessimistic
- Very Pessimistic

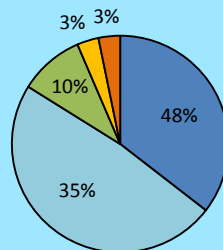


Fig.1 Farmers' optimism for the future

The majority of farmers visited expressed optimism for the future of their business (Fig.1). Reasons given included: the public's concern for food security and the current prices for commodities. Negative responses came from pig farmers due to competition with large businesses.

The survey also enquired as to whether or not farmers currently use certain mitigation measures and whether they would consider them in the future. Opinions on 80 different measures were gathered. The measures were categorised into land use changes, infrastructure, soil, fertiliser, manure and livestock management. The measures which were most likely to be adopted by farmers in the future were:

- Farm track management
- Re-site gateways from high risk areas
- Establish new hedges
- Use plants with improved nitrogen use efficiency
- Adopt reduced cultivation systems
- Manage over-winter tramlines
- Use variable rate technologies

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