



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

PRESS RELEASE

For release the week of March 18th

Survey Examines Ag Advisors' Use of Climate Information

Summary available now in *Weather, Climate, and Society*

West Lafayette, IN - A recent survey administered by the USDA-NIFA funded Useful2Usable (U2U) initiative, examines how agricultural advisors use weather and climate data when offering advice to the corn growers they work with. The survey was conducted during the spring of 2012 across a four state region of the Midwest including Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan, and Illinois. A diverse group of over 2080 professionals with government, non-profit, for-profit, and Extension affiliations responded. The data will be used to guide the development of climate-based decision support tools.

"Prior to our survey, some research had already been done to help us understand how farmers use climate information, but the advisor side was largely unknown. We knew that farmers receive advice from a variety of sources, but now we know how these sources use climate data during the planning process," said Dr. Linda Stalker Prokopy, U2U Project Director.

Survey participants were asked to rank the types of weather information they currently use to inform their advice, ranging from short-term weather forecasts (1-7 days) to long-term climate outlooks (annual or longer). Results show that current weather conditions and short-term forecasts are almost always used over long-term climate outlooks, and that the information is much more likely to influence operational (lead time of days to a few weeks) farm decisions than longer-term tactical (lead time of months) and strategic (lead time of a year or more) decisions. The most common uses of weather and climate data, as suggested by the 1596 advisors who agree the information is useful, are planting, harvesting and tillage planning (82%, 69%, 69%), reducing risk of economic loss (70%), and tailoring hybrid selection (69%).

While it is clear that some advisors are not currently incorporating weather and climate data in their advice, many respondents (13-19% across a range of 16 specific planning decisions) suggested they might if they had access to better information. Additionally, 64% of all respondents agree that changing practices to cope with increasing *climate variability* is important, while 28% are uncertain and 8% disagree. When it comes to their ability to

incorporate weather and climate information in their advice, the advisors are less confident. Only 36% of respondents believe they can accurately apply weather and climate forecasts to their advice, while 41% are neutral and 23% lack confidence. Prokopy suggests, “We realize “better information” and “climate variability” need additional clarification, but we view these responses as evidence of the need for additional resources. When it comes to confidence, I think there is a real opportunity to educate advisors and give them the tools they need to fill in their current knowledge gaps and help their clients and customers adapt to a variable climate. It won’t happen overnight, but at least we know where to start.”

A full summary of the survey data and its implications is available now in an early online release of [Weather, Climate, and Society](#). Learn more about U2U at agclimate4u.org.

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This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2011-68002-30220. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.