

TOOLS FOR TRANSITION ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS: 2013

This annual survey of participants for the *Tools for Transition Project* is designed to gather qualitative information about experiences during and after the first few years of organic transition. Number of respondents = 27. Survey results available on the project website: www.eorganic.info/toolsfortransition.

A. Challenges

1. How important were the following problems during the past year for the portion of your farm business that is currently in transition or recently certified? (Circle your replies)

Scale: **NP** – no problem **SP** – slight problem **MP** – medium problem **BP** – big problem **NA** – not applicable

Management Issues	NP	SP	MP	BP	NA
A. Overall time requirements	<u>32%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0%</u>
B. Access to capital, financing	<u>32%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>4%</u>
C. Risk management (i.e. crop insurance)	<u>25%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>7%</u>
D. Access to FSA programs or tech assistance ...	<u>46%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>29%</u>
E. Access to NRCS programs or tech assistance.	<u>57%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>25%</u>
F. Current profitability	<u>21%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>28%</u>	<u>0%</u>
G. Projected profitability	<u>36%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0%</u>
H. Cash flow challenges	<u>18%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>0%</u>
I. Creating/interpreting annual business analysis	<u>43%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>4%</u>
J. Other: (Please specify): _____					

Other management comments: **None.**

Regulatory Issues	NP	SP	MP	BP	NA
K. Recordkeeping requirements	<u>25%</u>	<u>54%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0%</u>
L. Certification costs	<u>39%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>4%</u>
M. Understanding standards	<u>46%</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0%</u>
N. Meeting regulatory requirements	<u>50%</u>	<u>43%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0%</u>
O. Completing Organic System Plan	<u>50%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>4%</u>
P. Other: (Please specify): _____					

Other regulatory comments: **None.**

Production Issues	NP	SP	MP	BP	NA
Q. Planning workable rotations	<u>54%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0%</u>
R. Cost of inputs	<u>14%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>0%</u>
S. Availability of inputs	<u>21%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>0%</u>
T. Yields	<u>7%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>0%</u>
U. Insect pest management	<u>46%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>0%</u>
V. Weed management	<u>11%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>0%</u>
W. Crop disease management	<u>54%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>4%</u>
X. Fertility	<u>29%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>0%</u>
Production Issues Continued	NP	SP	MP	BP	NA

Y. GMO Contamination	<u>54%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0%</u>
Z. Chemical drift	<u>54%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0%</u>
AA. Access to labor	<u>29%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>7%</u>
BB. Access to land	<u>46%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>0%</u>
CC. Access to equipment	<u>50%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0%</u>
DD. Current farm infrastructure (eg. storage)	<u>39%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>0%</u>
EE. Product quality (crops, milk)	<u>43%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>4%</u>
FF. Animal health	<u>25%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>32%</u>
GG. Animal productivity	<u>21%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>39%</u>
HH. Availability of breeding stock/replacements	<u>46%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>43%</u>
II. Other: (Please specify)_____					

Other production comments: *None.*

Marketing Issues	NP	SP	MP	BP	NA
JJ. Finding buyers	<u>54%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>7%</u>
KK. Finding markets for small grains	<u>32%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>36%</u>
LL. Finding markets for rotational crops (i.e. hay)	<u>25%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>32%</u>
MM. High prices for conventional crops	<u>50%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>11%</u>
NN. Organic price volatility	<u>29%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>4%</u>
OO. Price transparency	<u>36%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>14%</u>
PP. Proximity to markets	<u>36%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>7%</u>
QQ. Availability of processors	<u>39%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>29%</u>
RR. Other: (Please specify)_____					

Other marketing comments: *None.*

2. What challenges are you facing or did you face during the past year that have not already been addressed by questions in this survey? (Please describe)

- Weather (winter kill hay, drought, untimely rains)

B. Benefits

3. Have there been unexpected positive outcomes associated with your transition to organic production – e.g. things that went better than expected during the past year or benefits that you did not consider when you made the decision to transition? (Please describe)

- Connections, relationships with buyers

- Positive comments from community

- Fewer crop inputs

- Lower vet costs

- Learning more about soil health, crop development, weed pressure. "I feel like I am really farming!"

- Kids now interested in conservation and good health

C. Marketing and Business Management

4. Which **one** marketing channel do you prefer to use for organic commodities? (Choose only one for crops and one for milk if applicable)

Crops:

Dairy:

- A. **30%** Forward contracts with buyers
- B. **26%** Spot or cash sales direct to buyers
- C. **0%** Brokers
- D. **15%** Farmer-owned cooperative
- E. **7%** Other (specify): All crops are fed

- F. **37%** Contract with milk buyer
- G. **0%** On-farm processing and direct sale

5.A. Did you use consultants or advisors this past year? **81%** Yes **19%** No

—————> If YES, please check all that apply:

- | | |
|---|--|
| B. 52% Soil consultant | G. 44% Accountant/financial consultant (other than FBM) |
| C. 11% Marketing consultant | H. 37% Veterinarian |
| D. 22% Organic specialist (other than certifier) | I. 7% AI technician |
| E. 19% Extension educator | J. 26% DHIA |
| F. 33% NRCS and/or SWCD | K. 11% Other (please specify): _____ |

Other comments:

- **Nutritional consultant**
- **Seed specialist**
- **Dairy specialist**

6. Do you currently have a written plan for your farm (other than an Organic System Plan)?

<u>Business Plan:</u>	<u>Financial Plan:</u>	<u>Marketing Plan:</u>	<u>Conservation Plan:</u>
A. 30% Yes	C. 44% Yes	E. 37% Yes	G. 44% Yes
B. 70% No	D. 56% No	F. 63% No	H. 56% No

D. Future Outlook

7. Is it likely that you or a family member will be farming organically in 5, 10 or 20 years? (Check greatest)

- A. **19%** 5 years
- B. **30%** 10 years
- C. **52%** 20 years

8. Looking ahead, what are the most important opportunities and challenges for your farm operation?

- Opportunities:**
- **Creating farming opportunities for the next generation**

- *Stable milk prices*
- *Able to make improvements on the farm*
- *Renewable energy*
- *Growth*
- *Paying down debt*

Challenges:

- *Managing debt*
- *Access to affordable land*
- *Maintaining adequate pasture*
- *Cash flow during transition*
- *Energy costs*
- *Access to and cost of fertility*
- *Finding someone to take over the farm who will manage it organically*
- *Finding the right balance between feed costs with animal productivity*

E. Farm Business Management (FBM) Program

9. How have you used information from the FBM Program? (Check all that apply)

- A. **63%** To make production decisions
- B. **33%** To make marketing decisions
- C. **85%** To make financial decisions
- D. **59%** To make equipment purchase decisions
- E. **78%** To improve recordkeeping
- F. **81%** To prepare taxes
- G. **63%** When talking with lenders
- H. **7%** Other (please specify): *Mentoring people that are interested in farming or just getting started.*

10. Do you have other comments about the FBM Program or the *Tools for Transition Project*? (Please share below)

- *Very valuable information to get a picture of where you are at and where you have been financially.*
- *When working with FSA for loans, they don't use FBM cash flows and FSA has to make their own.*
- *I think it was a great decision to use the FBM program. It has helped be a smarter businessman.*
- *The FBM program has helped us make many important decisions for our farm, including to go organic and see that our future will be more profitable.*
- *The TFT project has been a great resource in meeting other organic farms and learning from their experiences – Thanks!*