

THE PIPA/KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS POLL

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

PIPA-Knowledge Networks Poll: Americans on Farm Subsidies

Questionnaire

Dates of Survey: Dec 19 – Jan 5, 2004
 Total Sample Size: 1,896
 Farm States Sample: 736

Margin of Error: +/- 2.3% [full sample]
 +/-2.8% [2/3 sample]
 +/-3.2% [1/2 sample]
 +/-4.0% [1/3 sample]

Note: The farm states sample includes an oversample of 312, plus 424 from the general population sample who qualified in the states oversampled. The states chosen were the 17 states that receive the highest dollar amount of farm subsidies: Iowa, Texas, Illinois, Nebraska, Minnesota, Kansas, Arkansas, North Dakota, Indiana, Missouri, California South Dakota, Mississippi, Ohio, Montana, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma. For Texas, California, and Illinois the major designated metropolitan areas were excluded.

[FULL SAMPLE]

STATEMENT: The next questions are about farm subsidies. These are various forms of financial aid the US government gives to small farms and large farming businesses that produce a variety of crops.

[FOR QUESTIONS 38-52 SAMPLE WAS DIVIDED INTO THIRDS: SAMPLE 1, 2 AND 3]

[SAMPLE 1]

Q38: Do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to small farmers, who work farms less than 500 acres?

	National	Farm
Favor	77%	81
Oppose	19	16
(No answer).....	4	3

[THOSE WHO SAY FAVOR OR DK IN ABOVE]

Q39: Do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to small farmers:

	National	Farm
Only in bad years	44%*	46
On a regular annual basis	34	35
(No answer).....	3	3

* All numbers are a percentage of full sample

Q40: Do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to large farming businesses?

	National	Farm
Favor	31%	31
Oppose	65	64
(No answer).....	4	6

[THOSE WHO SAY FAVOR OR DK IN ABOVE]

Q41: Do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to large farming businesses:

	National	Farm
Only in bad years	24%*	25
On a regular annual basis	9	9
(No answer).....	3	3

[SAMPLE 2]

Statement: There is a debate about whether the US government should subsidize small farmers by giving them various forms of financial support. ‘Small farmers’ means those who work farms that are less than 500 acres. What follows are some pairs of statements expressing some positions on this issue. Please indicate which position is closer to yours.

Q42

A. Family farming is an American way of life that should be maintained. Subsidies are the only way that small family farms can compete with large agribusiness and imports from low wage countries.

B. There are many ways of making a living that are part of the American way of life. It is unfair to subsidize farmers and not subsidize other equally American ways of making a living.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	70%	67
Position B.....	25	26
(No answer).....	4	7

Q43

A. People should have food available to them that was locally grown. Locally grown foods taste better and lead people to have a larger share of fresh foods in their diet. Without subsidies most of our food would be grown far away, even in foreign countries.

* All numbers are a percentage of full sample

B. Having locally grown food is nice, but the people who want it should be willing to pay the extra cost of producing it rather than expecting the government to subsidize their preferences for certain kinds of food.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	70%	67
Position B.....	26	28
(No answer).....	4	5

[SAMPLE 3]

Statement: There is a debate about whether the US government should subsidize large farming businesses by giving them various forms of financial support. What follows are some pairs of statements expressing some positions on this issue. Please indicate which position is closer to yours.

[OUT OF THE FOLLOWING EIGHT QUESTIONS, Q44-51, SAMPLE 1 RESPONDENTS GET ONE, RANDOMLY SELECTED. SAMPLE 2 RESPONDENTS GET ANY THREE, RANDOMLY SELECTED. SAMPLE 3 RESPONDENTS GET ANY FOUR, RANDOMLY SELECTED.]

Q44

A. It is unfair for US farmers to get government subsidies so that they can sell their products below the price of production, making it impossible for poor farmers to compete. We don't like it when other countries do the same kind of thing to us.

B. It is not our responsibility to take care of farmers in other countries. We need to do what is best for America and let other countries take care of themselves.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	37%	34
Position B.....	56	57
(No answer).....	6	9

Q45

A. Farming is a risky business. Depending on the weather, farmers have good years and bad years. The government needs to help farmers have a minimum income so that they can be sure they will get through the bad years.

B. Farmers should not be given preferential treatment. Just like any business, they should have capital reserves and insurance protection so they can take care of themselves if they have a bad year. They should not expect the government to bail them out.

National	Farm
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Position A.....	62%	64
Position B.....	34	33
(No answer).....	4	4

Q46 [ARO POSITIONS A AND B]

A. It is good for the US to subsidize its farmers because then they are able to provide food to people around the world at very low prices, enabling poor countries to feed their populations and reducing hunger.

B. It is not good for the US to flood the world market with subsidized food. This has been shown to undercut farmers in poor countries that rely on agriculture. In many cases this has wiped out their agriculture, made these countries dependent on the US and increased hunger.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	54%	48
Position B.....	37	41
(No answer).....	9	11

Q47 [ARO POSITIONS A AND B]

A. Rather than giving poor countries foreign aid, it is better to let them export what they can produce. For many poor countries agricultural products are one of the few things they can export. We should not undercut them by flooding the world market with cheap subsidized farm products.

B. Farmers in poor countries work for much lower returns than American farmers. Without government subsidies, American farmers won't be able to compete and a lot of people working on farms will end up unemployed.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	38%	38
Position B.....	53	52
(No answer).....	9	9

Q48

A. If we do not give subsidies to US farmers, other developed countries will keep giving subsidies to their farmers and the US will not be able to compete in the global market.

B. If we give subsidies it is just as likely that other developed countries will just match them, creating an endless cycle. We should do what makes sense—reduce our subsidies—and press others to do the same.

National	Farm
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Position A.....	54%	51
Position B.....	38	38
(No answer).....	8	11

Q49

A. Subsidies have prompted US agribusiness to produce far more food than the US people can eat, driving down the cost of food. This has led retailers to serve larger portions of food and played a major role in the epidemic of obesity, which is threatening the health of many Americans and driving up health care costs.

B. It is up to individuals to decide how much food they eat. Removing subsidies and driving up the cost of food is not the way to address the problem of obesity and would be hard on the pocketbooks of low-income Americans.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	16%	14
Position B.....	79	80
(No answer).....	5	6

Q50 [ARO POSITIONS A AND B]

A. It is not consistent with the American way to have a whole sector of the economy dependent on government handouts at taxpayers' expense. We should trust the market, not the government, to find the right balance between supply and demand.

B. There is nothing more important than food. The government needs to subsidize farming to make sure there will always be a good supply of food and that the price does not go up and down according to the whims of the market.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	37%	40
Position B.....	58	55
(No answer).....	5	5

Q51

A. Subsidizing farmers gives America an important export product. If subsidies were ended it would lead the US to import more food, worsening the already-bad trade balance we have with other countries.

B. If the US uses taxpayers' money to prop up exports, it only creates an illusory gain, because ultimately these subsidies have to be paid for by raising taxes or increasing deficits.

National	Farm
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Position A.....	50%	45
Position B.....	40	40
(No answer).....	10	15

[ONLY SAMPLE 3 GETS Q52]

Q52

A. When food is grown in the USA we can be more confident that it meets the proper food safety standards. Subsidies ensure that American farmers can keep producing safe food for the American people.

B. The US government monitors the safety of all food sold in the US, so there is no reason to believe that imported food is less safe. Subsidizing American agribusiness based on such unfounded fears is a waste of taxpayers' money.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	61%	63
Position B.....	36	32
(No answer).....	3	5

[SAMPLE 2]

Q38-1: So now, having heard these arguments, do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to small farmers, who work farms less than 500 acres?

[Note: This question is essentially the same as Q38 above. However, this sample was asked after hearing the arguments for and against subsidies.]

	National	Farm
Favor	74%	70
Oppose	20	22
(No answer).....	5	8

[THOSE WHO SAY FAVOR OR DK IN Q38-1 ABOVE]

Q38-1a: Another debate is whether small farmers should get subsidies only in bad years or on a regular annual basis, whether or not it is a bad year. Here are two positions on this issue. Which one do you find more convincing:

A. Because farmers in other countries work at low wages, the only way that small American farmers can compete is to give them regular annual subsidies.

B. It is fine to help small American farmers when they are having a bad year, but we should not put them on permanent welfare.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	24%*	23

* All numbers are a percentage of full sample

Position B.....	51	50
(No answer).....	5	5

[PRESENT ONLY TO RESPONDENTS WHO GET Q38-1a]

Q39-1: So now, having considered these arguments, do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to small farmers:

[Note: This question is essentially the same as Q39 above. However, this sample was asked after hearing the arguments for and against subsidies.]

	National	Farm
Only in bad years	53%*	55
On a regular annual basis.....	22	19
(No answer).....	4	5

[SAMPLE 3]

Q40-1: So now, having heard these arguments, do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to large farming businesses? [See note below]¹

[Note: This question is essentially the same as Q40 above. However, this sample was asked after hearing the arguments for and against subsidies.]

	National	Farm
Favor	47%	37
Oppose	47	53
(No answer).....	6	10

[THOSE WHO SAY FAVOR OR DK IN Q40-1 ABOVE]

Q40-1a: Another debate is whether large farming businesses should get subsidies only in bad years or on a regular annual basis, whether or not it is a bad year. Here are two positions on this issue. Which one do you find more convincing:

- a. Because farmers in other countries work at low wages, the only way that American farming businesses can compete is to give them regular annual subsidies.
- b. It is fine to help American agricultural businesses when they are having a bad year, but we should not put these large corporations on permanent welfare.

¹ In the report, this question’s result is from Sample 1, who received the question before being exposed to arguments. Sample 3 was not offered a question about small farmers specifically at any point, and further analysis indicated that the 47%-47% response from Sample 3 on subsidies to large farmers was an effect of having no opportunity to express support for subsidies to small farmers. This is confirmed by the near-identical numbers in Sample 1 and Sample 3 in the next question, supporting subsidies to large farming businesses “on a regular annual basis”: 9% and 10%, respectively.

	National	Farm
Position A.....	11%*	12
Position B.....	40	31
(No answer).....	2	5

[PRESENT ONLY TO RESPONDENTS WHO GET Q40-1a] ...

Q41-1: So now, having considered these arguments, do you favor or oppose the US government giving subsidies to large farming businesses:

[Note: This question is essentially the same as Q40 above. However, this sample was asked after hearing the arguments for and against subsidies.]

	National	Farm
Only in bad years	40%*	33
On a regular annual basis	10	7
(No answer).....	3	7

[FULL SAMPLE]

STATEMENT: Next are a series of questions on farm subsidies that ask for your impression of some things that you may or may not know. Please just indicate your impression, whether or not you are very confident that it is correct.

Q72: Is it your impression that farmers receive subsidies:

	National	Farm
Only for bad years.....	46%	43
On a regular annual basis, whether or not it's a bad year.....	50	48
(No answer).....	4	4

Q73: What percentage of farm subsidies do you think go to small farmers working farms less than 500 acres--and how much do you think goes to large agricultural businesses, including farms over 500 acres and other large companies that provide equipment and services to farmers? [respondent gives two percentages that are required to add to 100%]

	National	Farm
Small farmers		
None	0%	0
1 to 9%	2	1
10 to 19%	8	9
20 to 29%	20	23
30 to 39%	16	13
40 to 49%	10	11

* All numbers are a percentage of full sample

50 to 59%	15	15
60 to 69%	6	6
70 to 79%	9	7
80 to 89%	4	3
90 to 99%	3	4
100%	2	2
(No answer).....	5	5
Mean	42.49	41.13
Median	40	40

Large agricultural businesses

None.....	1%	1
1 to 9%	1	1
10 to 19%	3	3
20 to 29%	9	7
30 to 39%	5	4
40 to 49%	6	6
50 to 59%	16	16
60 to 69%	13	11
70 to 79%	22	20
80 to 89%	12	17
90 to 99%	7	8
100%	1	1
(No answer).....	5	5
Mean	58.12	59.61
Median	60	64.98

Q74: What do you think the percentages should be? [respondent gives two percentages that are required to add to 100%]

	National	Farm
Small farmers		
None.....	1%	2
1 to 9%	0	1
10 to 19%	0	1
20 to 29%	3	3
30 to 39%	3	3
40 to 49%	6	5
50 to 59%	26	26
60 to 69%	14	12
70 to 79%	20	18
80 to 89%	11	11
90 to 99%	7	9

100%	6	6
(No answer).....	4	5
Mean	63.50	62.73
Median	60	60

Large agricultural businesses

None	5%	5
1 to 9%	2	3
10 to 19%	6	7
20 to 29%	21	21
30 to 39%	10	8
40 to 49%	13	11
50 to 59%	26	25
60 to 69%	6	5
70 to 79%	4	3
80 to 89%	1	2
90 to 99%	0	1
100%	0	1
(No answer).....	7	7
Mean	36.64	36.45
Median	40	40

[SAMPLE WAS DIVIDED INTO 12 SUBSAMPLES, LABELED A THROUGH L]

[1/3 SAMPLE D,F,G,J]

Q75: Do you think that small farmers get a higher percentage of their income from subsidies, that large farming businesses get a higher percentage, or that they get about the same percentage?

	National	Farm
Small farmers get a higher percentage	26%	21
Large farming businesses get a higher percentage	45	51
They get about the same percentage	22	21
(No answer).....	8	7

[1/3 SAMPLE B,C,H,K]

Q76: Is it your impression that the European Union provides farm subsidies that are:

	National	Farm
More than the US provides	24%	27
Less than the US provides.....	26	27
About the same	32	30
(No answer).....	17	17

[1/3 SAMPLE A,E,I,L]

Q77: Do you think that the US government

	National	Farm
Favors small farmers.....	6%	6
Favors large farming businesses	79	77
Treats them equally.....	12	12
(No answer).....	3	5

[1/3 SAMPLE C,E,F,H]

Q78: Is it your impression that farm subsidies in the US do or do not contribute to poverty in poor countries?

	National	Farm
Do.....	27%	23
Do not.....	63	66
(No answer).....	10	12

[1/3 SAMPLE B,D,I,L]

Q79: Do you favor or oppose the US government providing subsidies to help farmers grow tobacco?

	National	Farm
Favor	23%	27
Oppose	73	65
(No answer).....	4	8

[1/3 SAMPLE A,G,J,K]

Q80: As you may know, the US government also provides subsidies to agricultural businesses that do not farm, but provide farmers with equipment and services. Do you favor or oppose providing subsidies to these businesses?

	National	Farm
Favor	36%	31
Oppose	57	59
(No answer).....	7	10