

## Americans Oppose Most Farm Subsidies

April 22, 2009

[Questionnaire/Methodology \(PDF\)](#)



As the Obama administration has sought to cut farm subsidies for next year's budget they have encountered strong resistance, especially in farm states. However a new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll finds that the American public, including in farm states, would favor eliminating most farm subsidies.

(Photo: [Eric Allix Rogers](#))

Eighty percent of US subsidies go to large farming businesses, however only 36 percent of Americans favor such subsidies while 61 percent oppose them. Opposition to subsidies for large farms was not substantively or statistically different among Republicans (62%), Democrats (60%), and independents (59%).

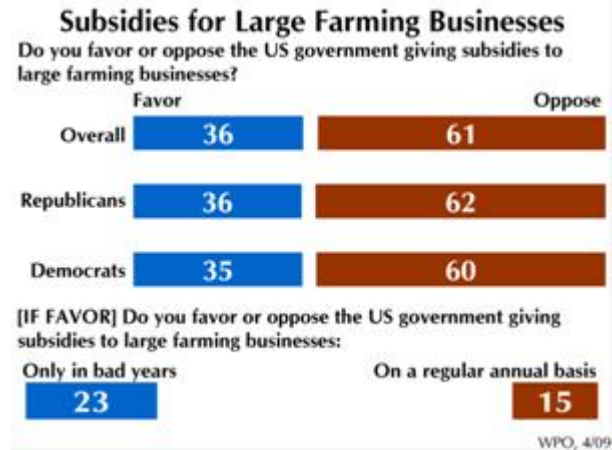
Seventy-seven percent of Americans do, however, favor providing subsidies to small farms (i.e. farms under 500 acres). Support is highest among Democrats (82%), followed by Republicans (73%) and then Independents (69%). Most small farms do not receive subsidies.

The public in farm states has views of farm subsidies that are little different than residents of non-farm states. In the 17 states that receive the largest amount of farm subsidies, just 35 percent of the public favors subsidies to large farming businesses, compared to 37 percent in non-farm states. There is support for subsidies for small farms in both farm states (79%) and non-farm states (75%).

Americans are also at odds with the way that farm subsidies are provided. Most subsidies are provided on a regular annual basis, independent of whether it was a good year or a bad year for the farmer. However only minorities of Americans think that subsidies should be provided on a regular annual basis, whether for small farms (37%) or large farms (15%).

Here again views in farm states are not significantly different from the rest of the country. Only minorities approve of providing subsidies on a regular annual basis to small farms (39%) or large farms (13%).

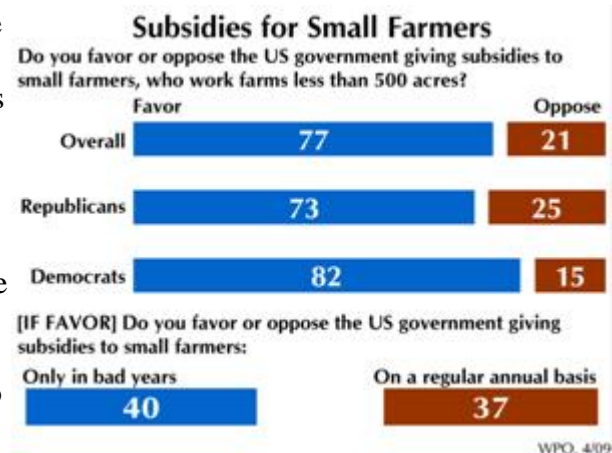
Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org comments, "Clearly, US policy on farm subsidies is far out of step with the preferences of the American public. The vast majority of US subsidies go to large farming businesses on a regular annual basis. However only one in three Americans approve of subsidies to large farming businesses and less than one in six approve doing so on a regular annual basis."



US farm subsidies have been a major stumbling block in trade negotiations, with developing countries refusing to open their markets any further as long as the US and other developed countries continue to give their farmers the advantage of subsidies. Steven Kull comments, "While the public would oppose eliminating all farm subsidies, the scope of subsidies the public supports is so much narrower than is currently provided that, if the public's preferences were followed, this would largely remove the current obstacle in trade negotiations."

The poll was conducted with a nationwide sample of 765 from March 25 to April 6, 2009. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.7 percent.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided Internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp).



WorldPublicOpinion.org is a project managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland. Funding for this research was provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Calvert Foundation.