



State of Organic Seed Report 2010: Organic Seed Questionnaire for Organic Growers

Introduction

Organic Seed Alliance is a nonprofit organization that works via education, research, and advocacy issues to build ethical, farmer-centric, and organic seed systems. We are in the process of working with organic farmers, processors, seed companies, advocacy groups and others to create a "State of Organic Seed Report" that captures a snapshot of the successes, obstacles, opportunities, and risks in organic seed systems to date. This report will then be used as a discussion document at the State of Organic Seed Symposium in La Crosse, Wisconsin on February 24, 2010, and give guidance in creating an organic seed action plan.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to better assess certified organic growers' attitudes and perceptions regarding organic seed and categorize obstacles that restrict their usage of organic seed. Questionnaires are also being developed and targeted at certifiers, seed industry, and organic food companies to learn from their perspectives.

Obtaining feedback from organic growers is vital to the assessment process. Let your voice be heard. If you are a certified organic grower we would appreciate your taking the time to complete the questionnaire. It should take about twenty minutes of your time. **Your responses are voluntary and will be held confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual or farm;** all responses will be compiled and analyzed as a group. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Matthew Dillon by email at matthew@seedalliance.org or by phone at 360.385.7192. Please also contact Matthew if you are interested in attending the February symposium.

Questions:

1. In which state do you farm? *(Please fill in.)*

2. How many years have you been certified organic? *(Please fill in.)*

3. a. How many organic acres in a given season do you have in annual vegetables and fruits?
(Please select one.)
 0
 Up to 3
 4-10 acres
 11-50 acres
 51-80 acres
 81-160 acres
 161-480 acres
 480+ acres

3b. What approximate percentage of total acreage of the above crops is planted with certified organic seed? *(Please select one.)*

- 0
- 1-25%
- 25-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%

3c. What are your top 3 annual vegetable/fruit crops by acreage? *(Please fill in.)*

4. a How many organic acres in a given season do you have in field crops (field corn, soy, cotton, canola, small grains, pulses such as beans, peas, lentils, etc.)? *(Please select one.)*

- 0
- Up to 3
- 4-10 acres
- 11-50 acres
- 51-80 acres
- 81-160 acres
- 161-480 acres
- 480+ acres

4b. What approximate percentage of total acreage of the above crops is planted with certified organic seed?. *(Please select one.)*

- 0
- 1-25%
- 25-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%

4c. What are your top 3 field crops by acreage? *(Please fill in.)*

5. a How many organic acres in a given season do you have in forage crops? *(Please select one.)*

- 0
- Up to 3
- 4-10 acres
- 1-10 acres
- 11-50 acres
- 51-80 acres
- 81-160 acres
- 161-480 acres
- 480+ acres

5b. What approximate percentage of total acreage of the above crops is planted with certified organic seed? *(Please select one.)*

- 0
- 1-25%
- 25-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%

6. What approximate percentage of total acreage of green manure and cover crops are planted with certified organic seed? *(Please select one.)*

- 0
- 1-25%
- 25-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%

7. This year, what percent of your seed did you get from the following sources? Fill in your best general estimate below based on percentage of seed used on farm. Total should equal 100%. *(Fill in percentages.)*

- % Produce your own
 - % Seed Broker
 - % Printed or internet catalogs
 - % Garden Centers
 - % Other Farmers
 - % Other (please list) _____
 - % Other (please list) _____
- = 100%

8. Over the last 3 years have you increased the percentage of organic seed that you use? *(Please select one.)*

- Yes
- No
- Have been using 100% organic seed for at least 3 years

9. a Over the last three years has your certifier requested that you take greater steps to source organic seed? *(Please select one.)*

Yes

No (Go to Q 10)

If YES

9b. Which additional steps has your certifier has requested. *(Select all that apply)*

Trialing of available organic varieties

Searching OMRI Database

Researching more than 3 seed sources

Other (please note in detail) _____

Other (please note in detail) _____

10. Using a scale of 1= “not a factor” to 5 “significant factor” please share the reasons you have not purchased organic seed in the past. Please circle one response per reason below:

1 = not a factor; 2= slight factor; 3= moderate factor; 4 = more than moderate; 5= significant factor

1 2 3 4 5 Lack of seed treatments such as pelleting or priming

1 2 3 4 5 Processor demands specific varieties in contract that are not available organically

1 2 3 4 5 Lack of sufficient quantity

1 2 3 4 5 Save my own seed

1 2 3 4 5 Distrust of organic seed quality

1 2 3 4 5 Price

1 2 3 4 5 Specific variety not available

1 2 3 4 5 Lack of desirable genetic traits

1 2 3 4 5 Seed sizing

1 2 3 4 5 Other – please share additional reasons: _____

1 2 3 4 5 Other – please share additional reasons: _____

1 2 3 4 5 Other – please share additional reasons: _____

11. a What organic seed quality issues have you experienced? Using a scale of 1= “not a problem” to 5= “severe problem”. *(Please circle one response per reason below.)*

1 = not a problem; 2= slight problem; 3= moderate problem; 4 = more than moderate problem; 5= severe problem

1 2 3 4 5 Germination/emergence

1 2 3 4 5 Varietal integrity (not true to type)

1 2 3 4 5 Presence of weed seed in seed lots

1 2 3 4 5 Contamination with genetically engineered traits

1 2 3 4 5 Physical appearance of seed looks suboptimal

1 2 3 4 5 Other _____

11b. Do you have more problems with the above mentioned quality issues with untreated conventional seed or organic seed? *(Please select one response.)*

I have more problems with untreated conventional seed

I have more problems with organic seed

Problems are about the same for both untreated conventional and organic seed

12. Do you grow any of the following crops which are at-risk for contamination from genetic engineering (crops from these species have commercially release varieties with genetically engineered traits) *(Please select all that apply.)*

Beta vulgaris (table beets, sugarbeets, Swiss chard)

Brassica campestris (canola), Brassica napus (rutabaga, kales) and Brassica rapa (canola, kales, turnip, collards, Chinese cabbages, etc)

Soy

Cotton

Corn (all types including sweet corn)

Cucurbit (zucchini, yellow summer squash, acorn, delicate, patty pan, pumpkin and spaghetti squash)

No, I am not producing any crops that are at risk

13. Do the seed companies you purchase organic seed from conduct testing for the presence of genetically engineered traits? *(Please select one response.)*

Don't know

Yes

No

Some do and some don't

14. Do you want seed companies to conduct testing and report rates of GE (GMO) contamination in organic seed? *(Please select one response.)*

Yes

No

Uncertain

15. What do you believe is the risk and exposure of your organic farm products from seed contaminated by GE (GMO) traits? *(Please select the one that best applies to your farm.)*

Very high

High

Moderate

Very low

Don't know

16. Do you feel that a regulatory framework is in place to adequately protect your organic farm product(s) from damages due to possible contamination by GE (GMO) crops? *(Please select the one response that best applies to you.)*

No

Yes

Don't know

Comments:

17. In your opinion, to what degree is using organic seed in organic systems important to the integrity of organic food production? (*Select one response.*)

- Very important/high priority
- Important/medium priority
- Not very important/low priority
- Not at all important/not a priority
- Uncertain

Comments:

18. In your opinion, are varieties bred for organic system management important to the overall success of organic agriculture? (*Select one response.*)

- Very important/high priority
- Important/medium priority
- Not very important/low priority
- Not at all important/not a priority
- Uncertain

Comments:

19. Please list the two highest priority crops you feel are in need of organic breeding (crop improvement), and the two most important traits to breed for in those crops. (*Please fill in crops and desired traits.*)

- a) Crop _____ : trait 1 _____ ; trait 2 _____
b) Crop _____ : trait 1 _____ ; trait 2 _____

20. Do you produce organic seed? (*Check all that apply.*)

- No, I do not produce organic seed either for on-farm or commercial use
- I produce organic seed for on-farm use only
- I produce organic seed commercially
- I have produced organic seed commercially in the past but not currently

21. Are you interested in producing organic seed for commercial use? (*Select one response.*)

- Yes, definitely
- No
- I am interested if economic opportunity and training were available

22. Are you interested in conducting crop improvement/breeding on your farm? (*Select one response*)

- Yes, definitely
- No
- I am interested if economic opportunity and training were available

Q #1: In which state do you farm? 1027 responses from 45 states and territories.

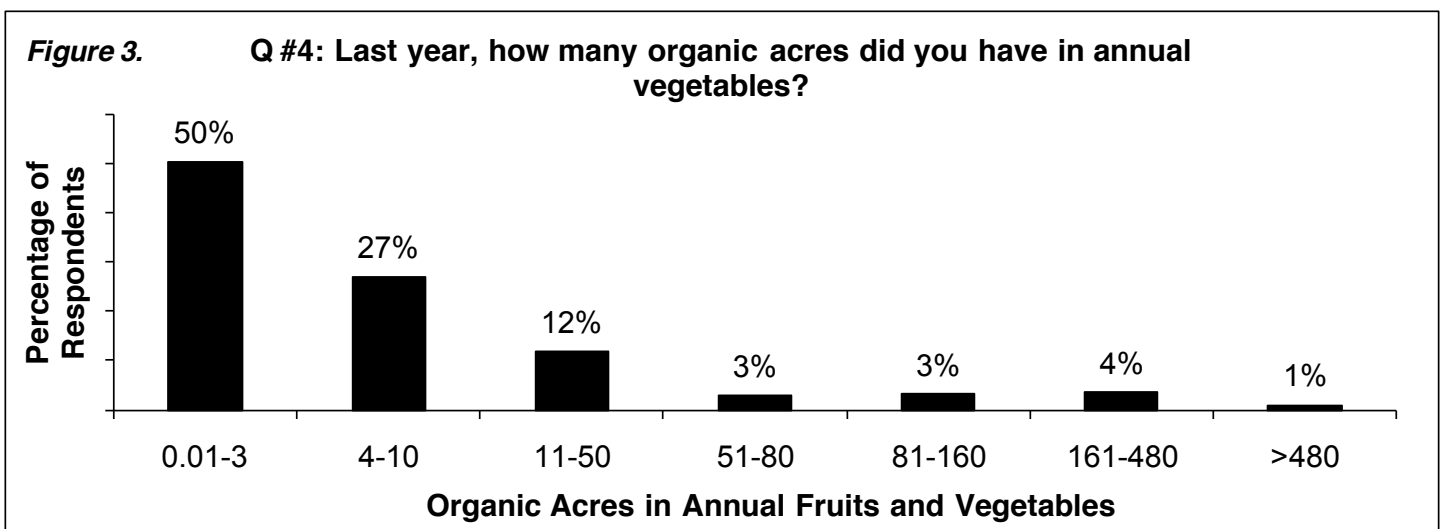
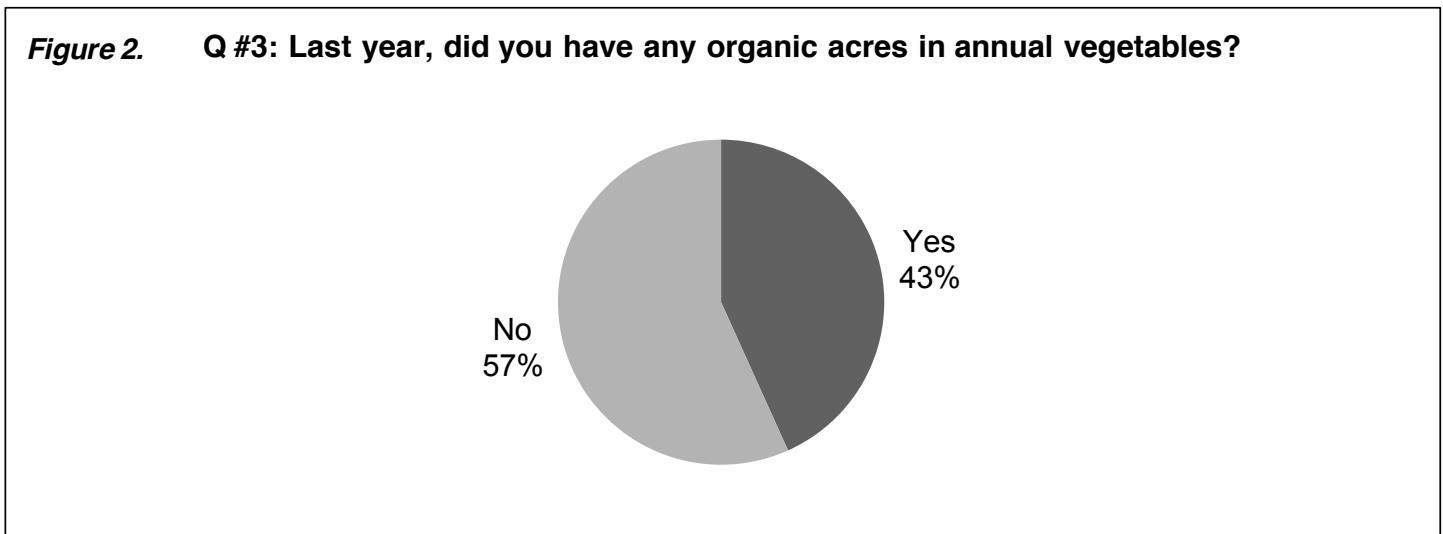
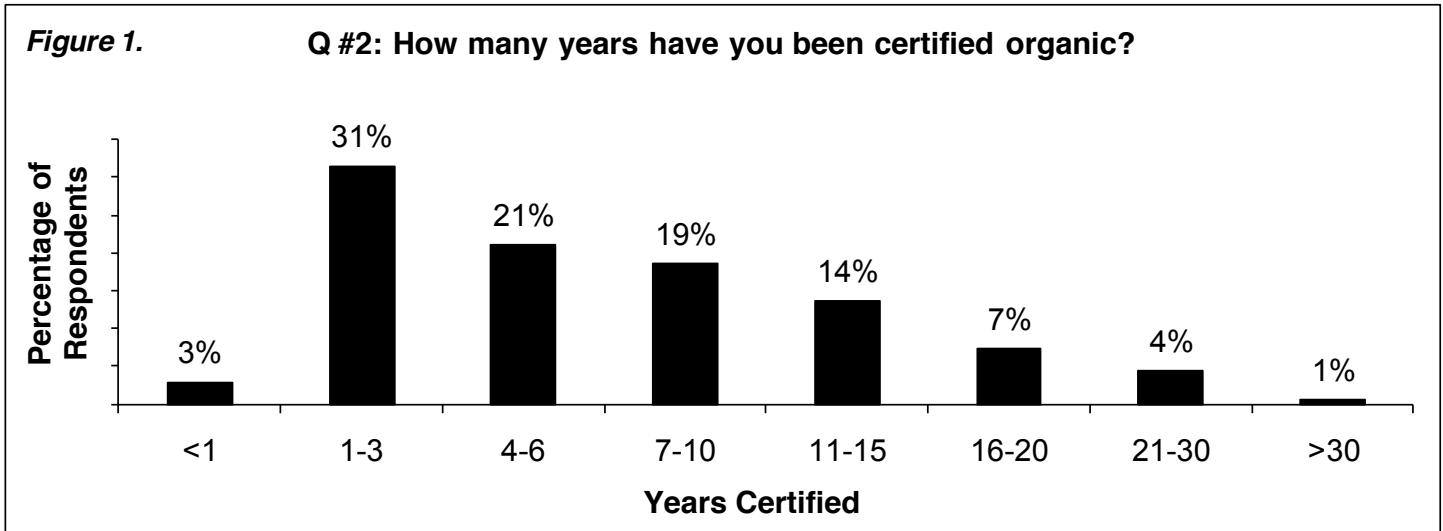
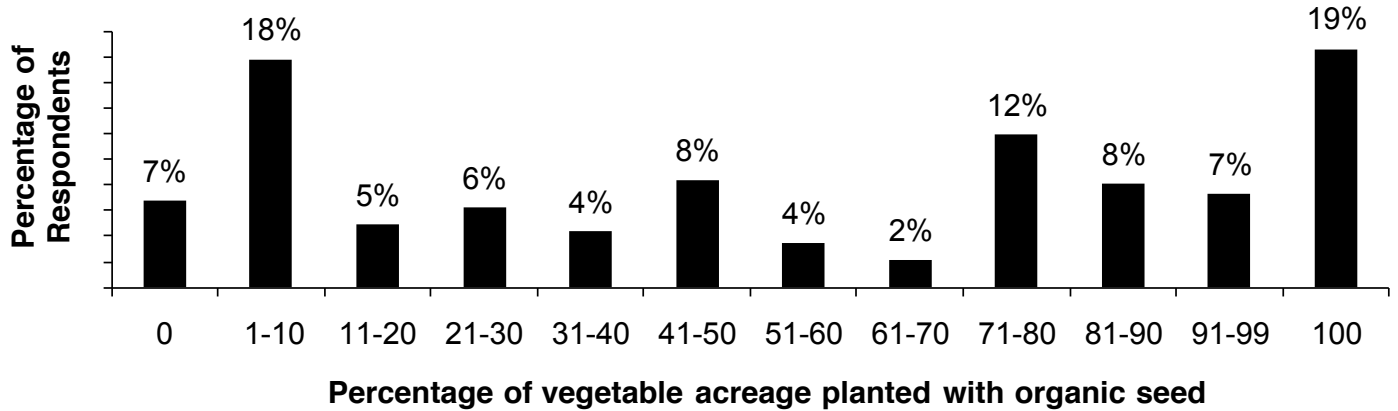


Figure 4. Q #5: Last year, what approximate percentage of total acreage of annual vegetables was planted with certified organic seed?



Q #6: Last year, what were your top three annual vegetable crops by acreage, and what percentage of certified organic seed did you use for each?

Figure 5. Q #6: Percent organic seed used for TOMATOES - the #1 vegetable

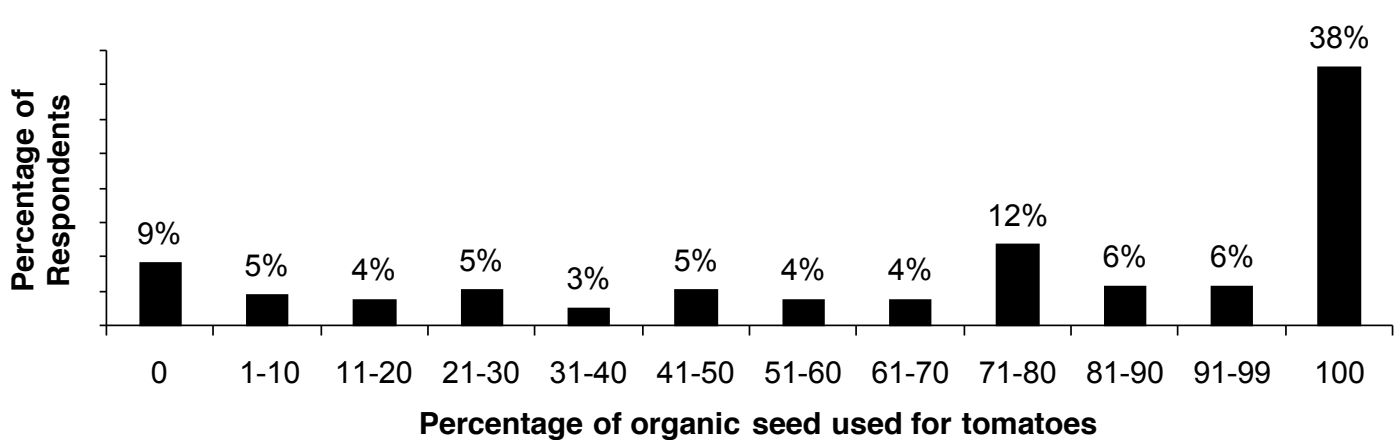


Figure 6. Q #6: Percent organic seed used for SUMMER / WINTER SQUASH - the #2 vegetable

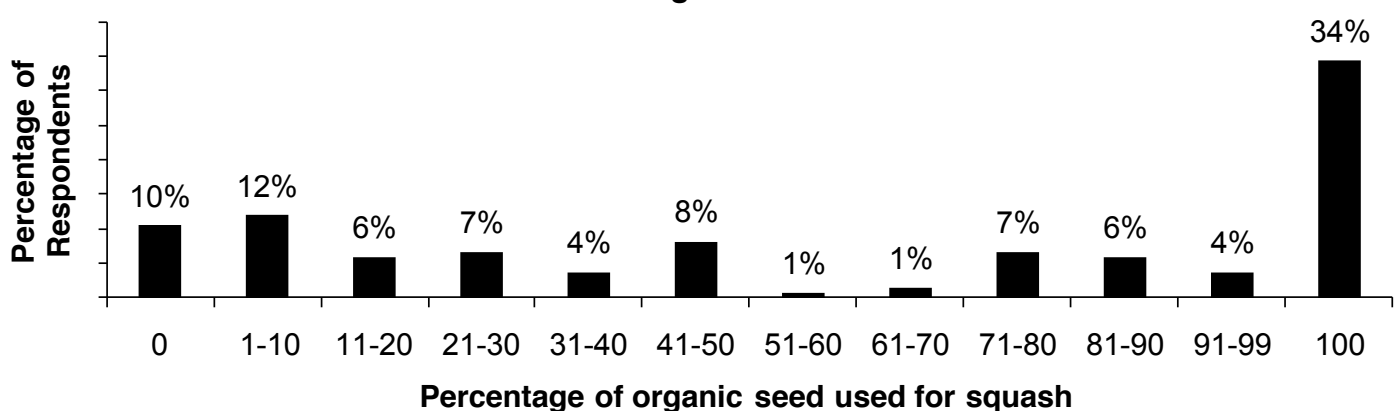


Figure 7. Q #6: Percent organic seed used for GREENS - the #3 vegetable

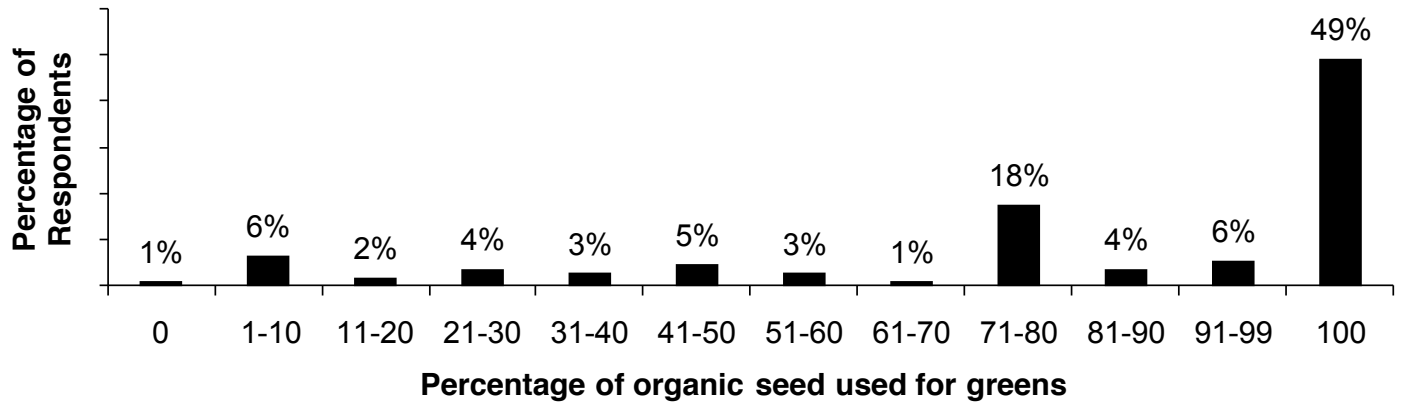


Figure 8. Q #7: Last year, did you have any organic acres in field crops?

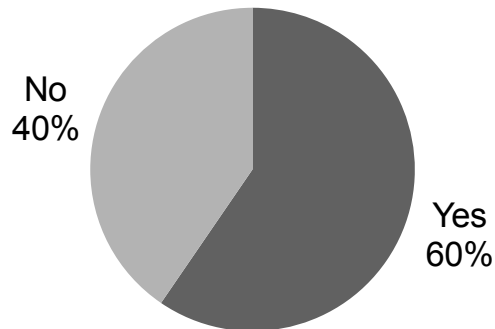


Figure 9. Q #8: Last year how many organic acres did you have in field crops?

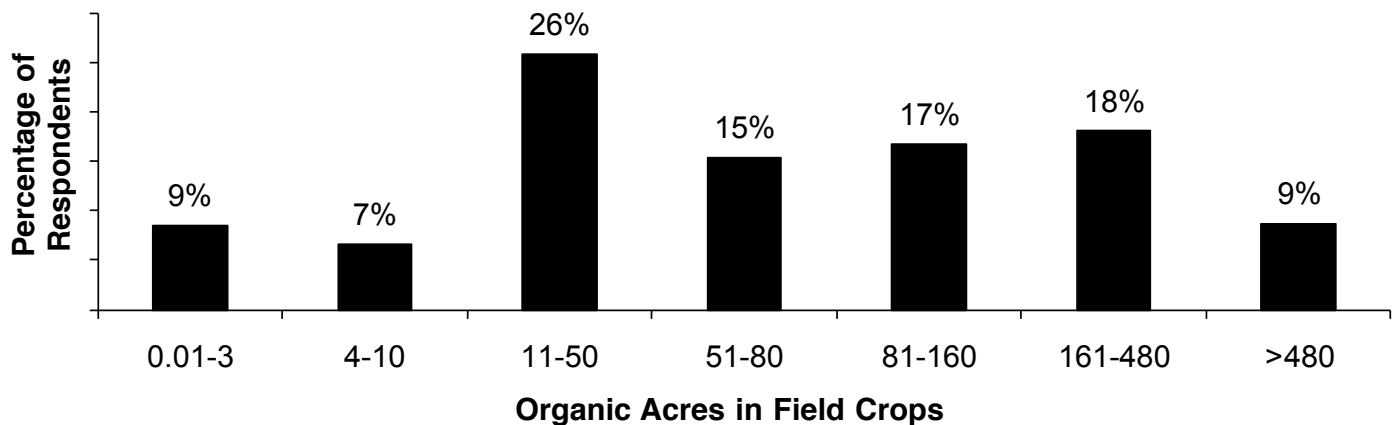
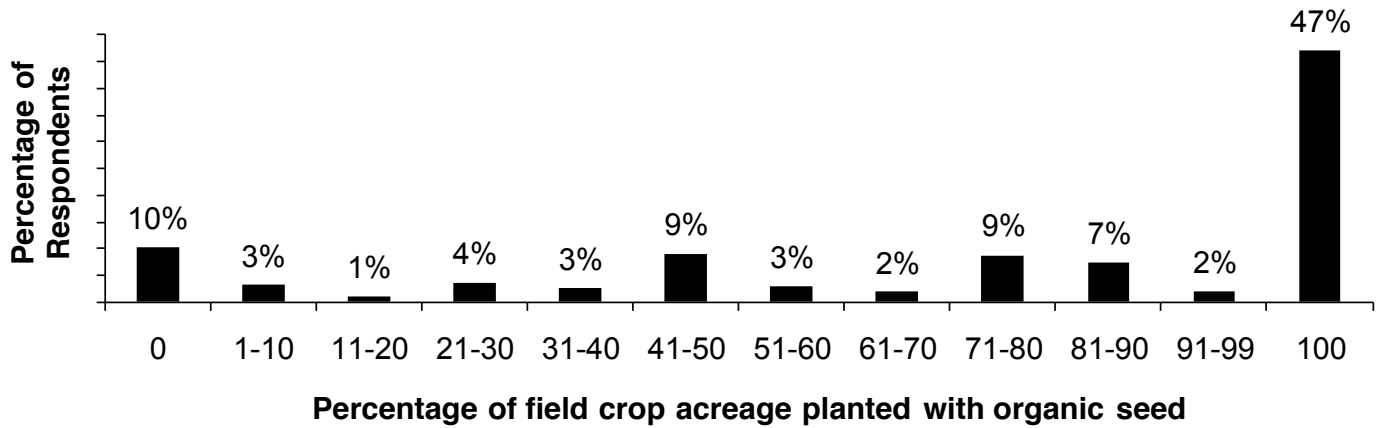


Figure 10. Q #9: Last year, what approximate percentage (%) of total acreage of field crops was planted with certified organic seed?



Q #10: Last year, what were your top 3 field crops by acreage? And what percentage of organic seed do you use for each?

Figure 11. Q #10: Percent organic seed used for CORN - the #1 field crop

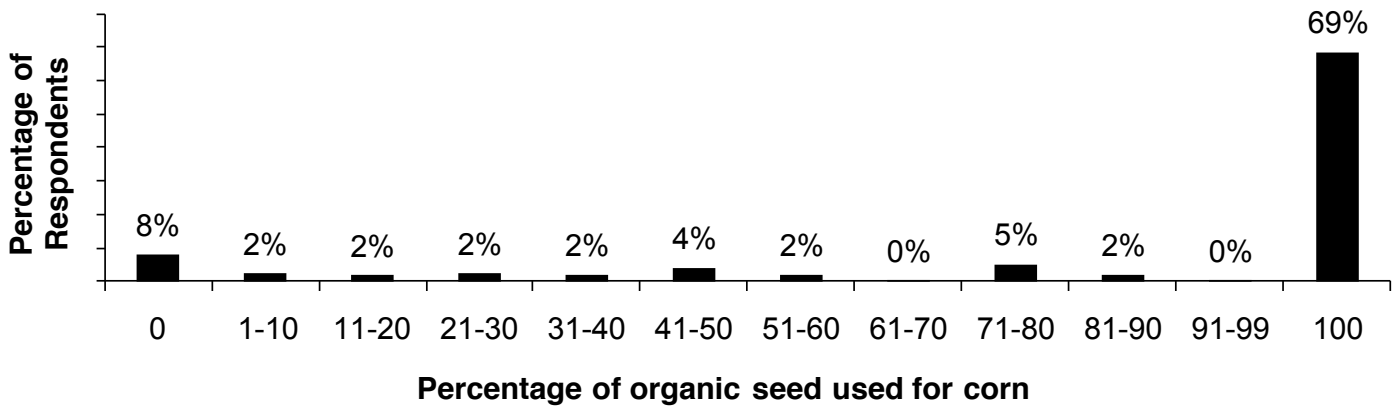


Figure 12. Q #10: Percent organic seed used for SOYBEANS - the #2 field crop

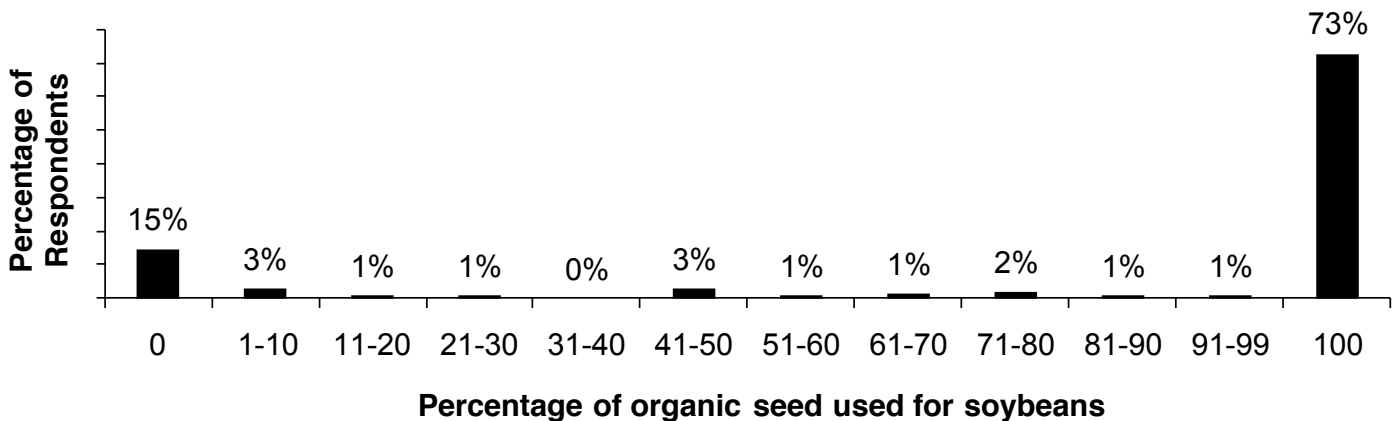


Figure 13. Q #10: Percent organic seed used for WHEAT - the #3 field crop

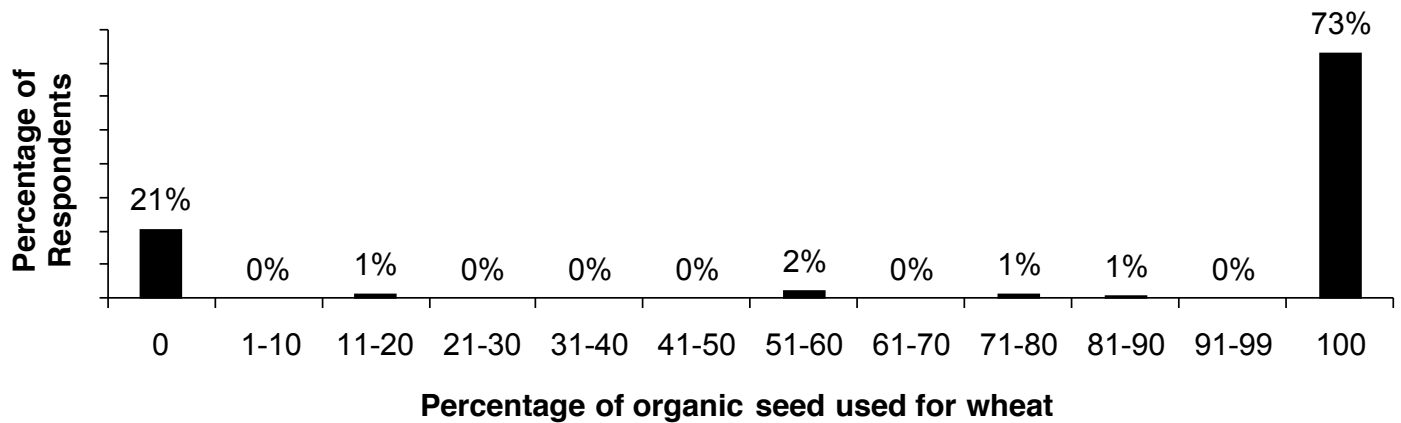


Figure 14. Q #11: Last year, did you have any organic acres in forage crops?

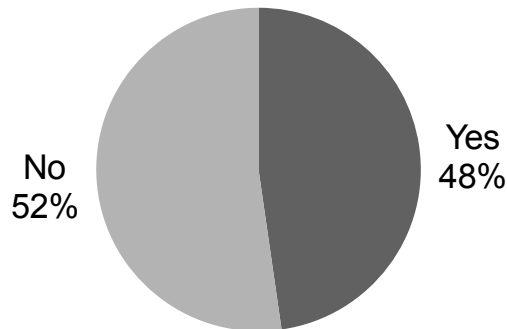


Figure 15. Q #12: Last year, how many organic acres in a given season do you have in forage crops?

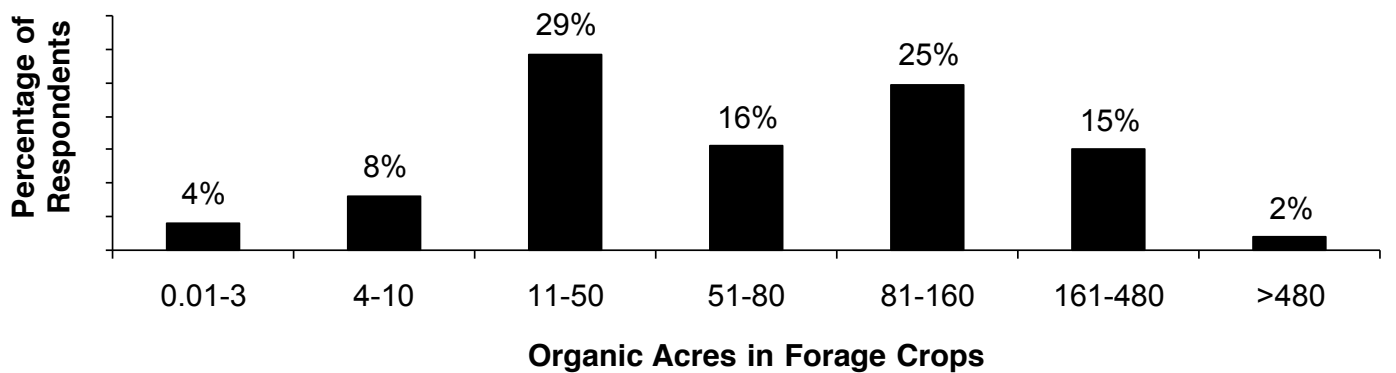


Figure 16. Q #13: Last year, what approximate percentage (%) of total acreage of forage crops is planted with certified organic seed?

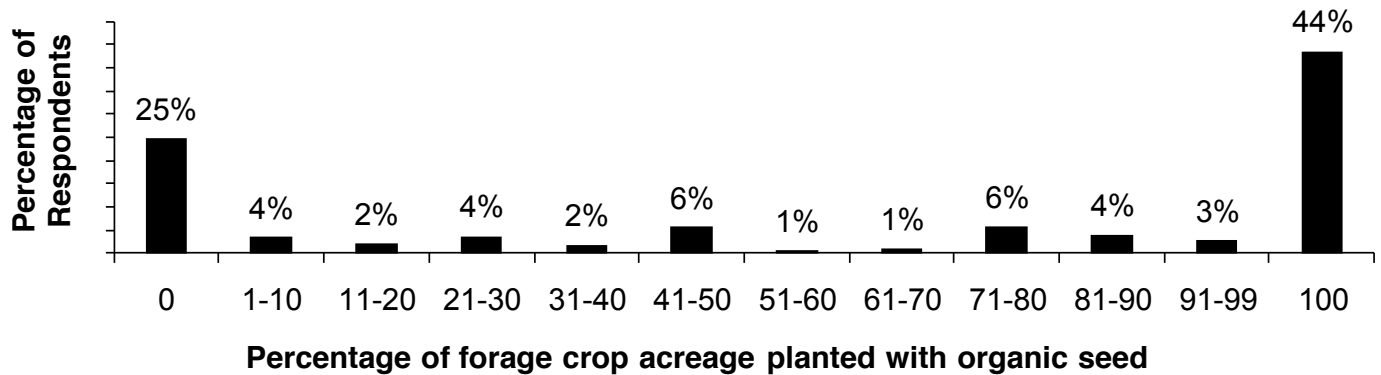


Figure 17. Q #14: Last year, what approximate percentage (%) of total acreage of green manure and cover crops is planted with certified organic seed?

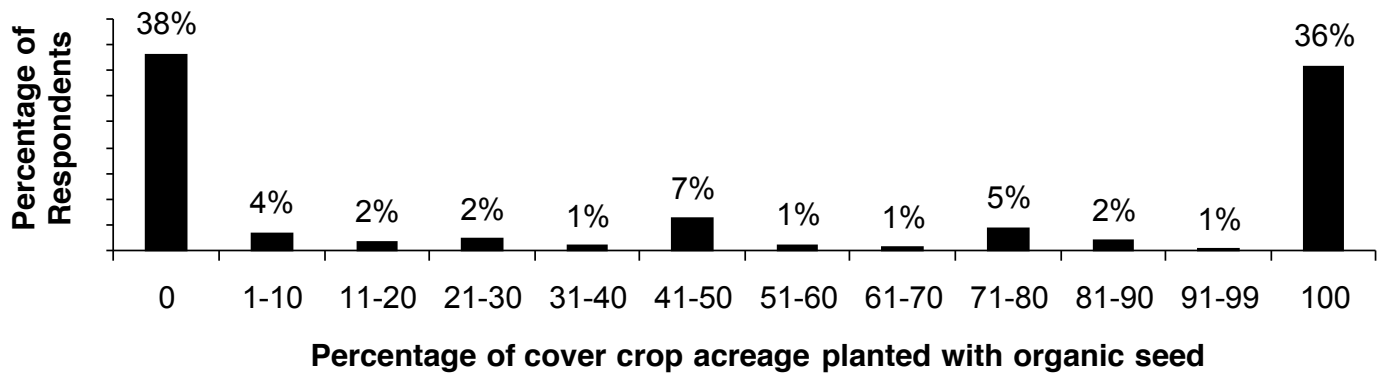


Figure 18. Q #15: In the last year, what percent of your seed did you get from the following sources?

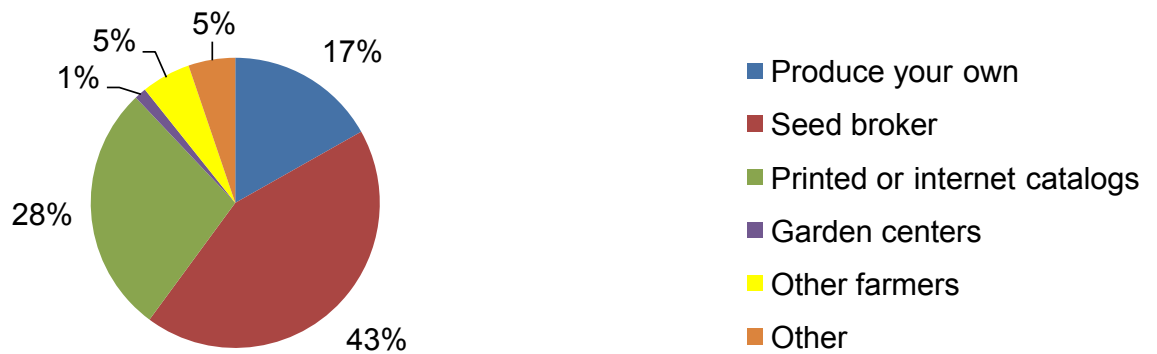


Figure 19. Q #16: Over the last 3 years have you increased the percentage of organic seed that you use?

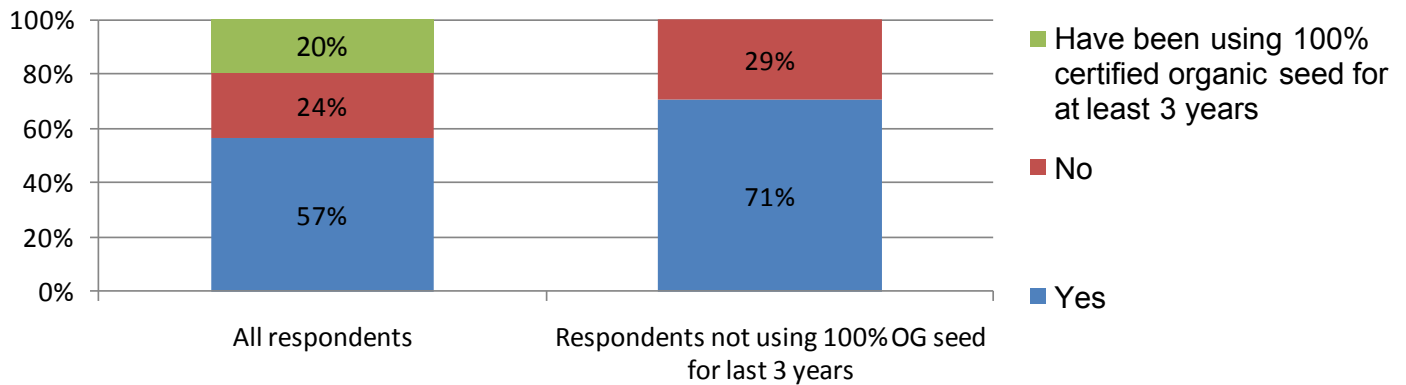


Figure 20. Q #17: Over the last three years has your certifier requested that you take greater steps to source organic seed?

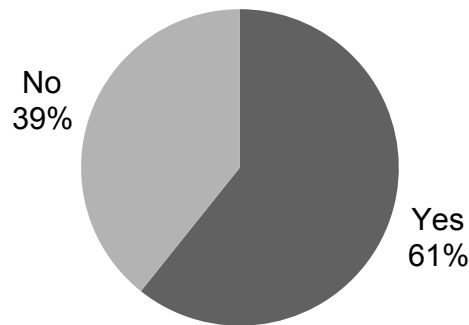


Figure 21. Q #18: Check which additional steps your certifier has requested.

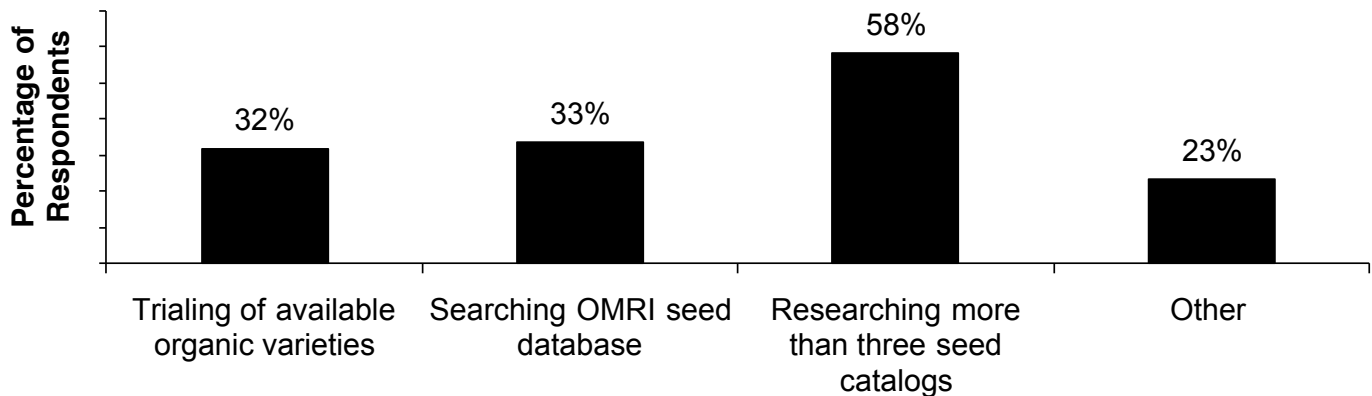


Figure 22. Q #19: The reasons you have not purchased organic seed in the past.

	Not a factor	Slight factor	Moderate factor	More than moderate factor	Significant factor
Lack of seed treatments such as pelleting or priming	82%	7%	5%	3%	3%
Buyer demands varieties not available organically	68%	5%	7%	4%	16%
Insufficient quantity of seed	40%	10%	15%	12%	23%
Save my own seed	52%	11%	10%	6%	21%
Distrust of organic seed quality	71%	8%	10%	5%	6%
Price	46%	13%	16%	9%	16%
Specific variety not available	17%	3%	9%	12%	58%
Lack of desirable genetic traits	43%	9%	12%	11%	24%
Seed sizing	80%	10%	6%	2%	2%
Other	72%	1%	3%	4%	19%

Figure 23. Q #19: Factors rated moderate to significant for not purchasing organic seed

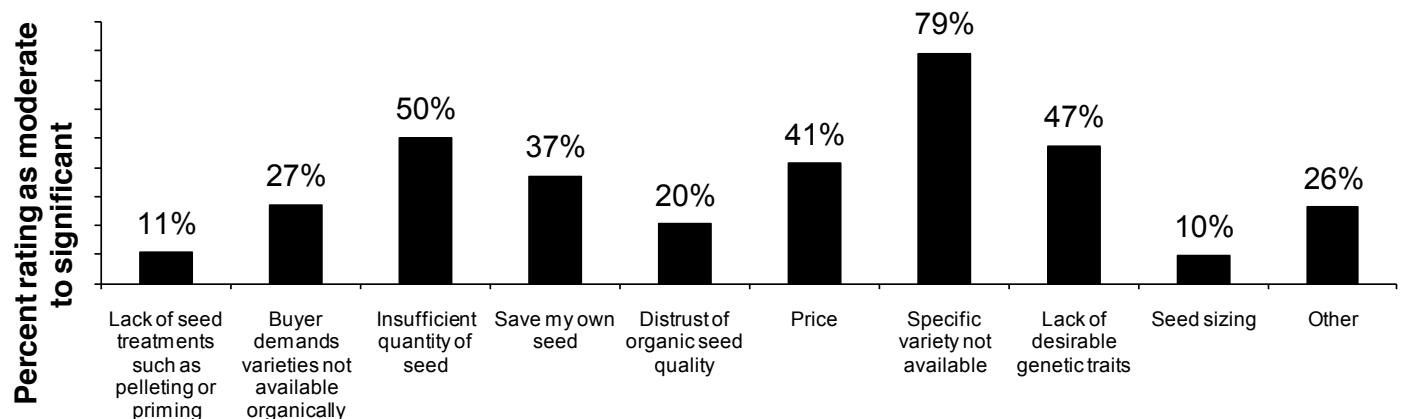


Figure 24.

Q #20: What organic seed quality issues you have experienced?

	Not a problem	Slight problem	Moderate problem	More than moderate	Severe problem
Germination / emergence	52%	17%	17%	11%	4%
Varietal integrity (i.e. not true to type)	63%	16%	10%	7%	4%
Contamination by weed seed in seed lots	70%	15%	9%	3%	3%
Physical appearance looks suboptimal	71%	15%	9%	3%	2%
Excessive chaff and foreign matter	81%	14%	4%	1%	1%
Seedborne diseases	80%	11%	6%	2%	1%
Uneven size for seeding equipment	82%	11%	4%	3%	1%
Other	81%	3%	3%	6%	7%

Figure 25.

Q #20: Problems producers have had with organic seed quality

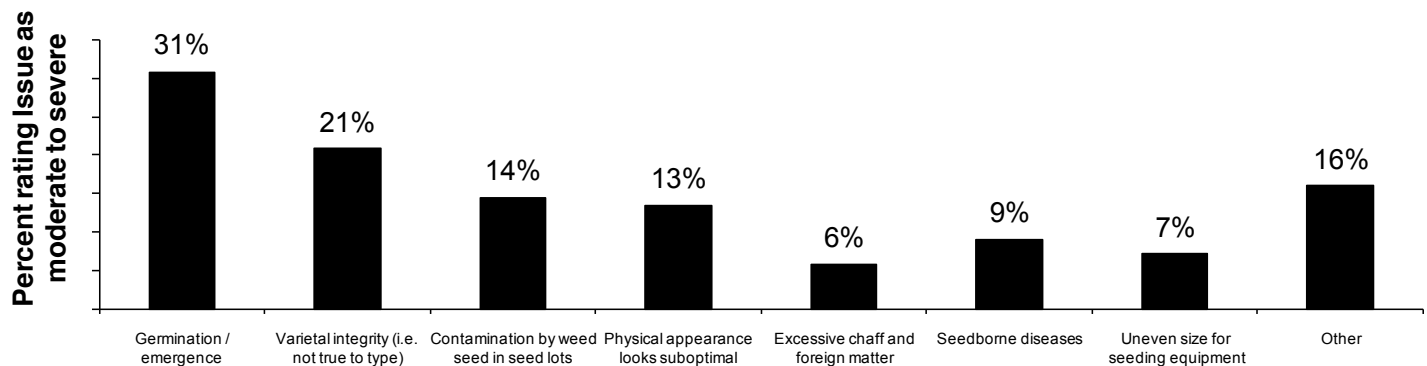
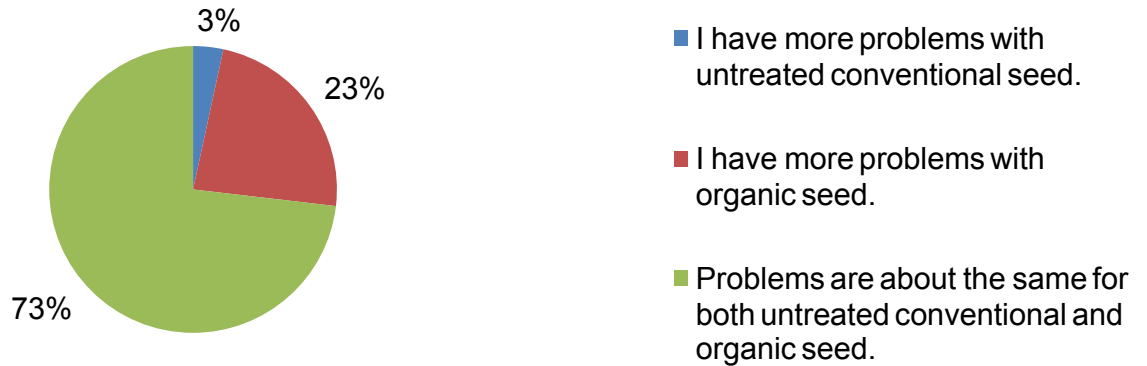


Figure 26.

Q #21: Do you have more problems with the above mentioned quality issues with untreated conventional seed or organic seed?



Questions 22 – 26: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements:

Figure 27.

Q #22: Seed companies should conduct testing and report rates of GE (GMO) contamination in organic seed

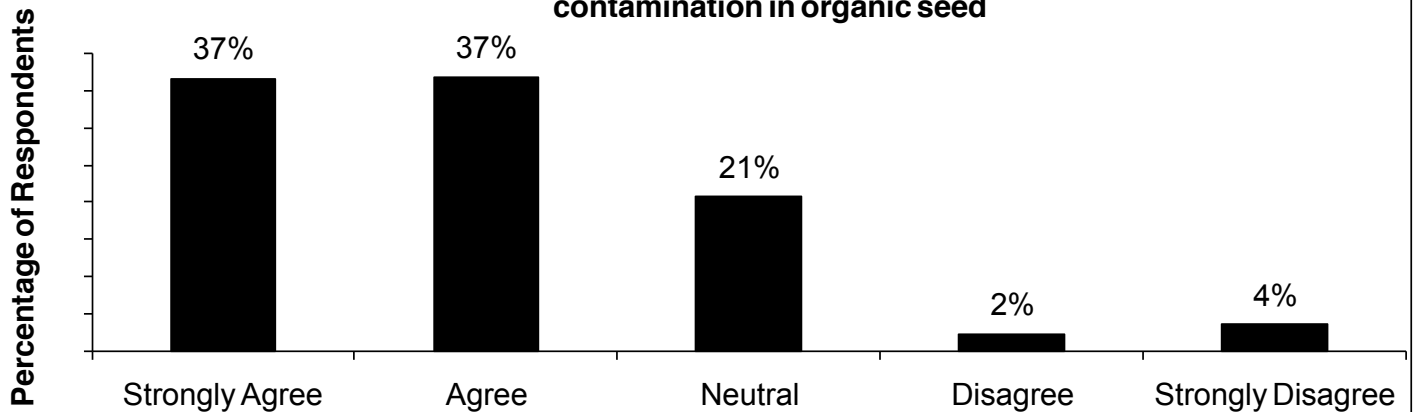
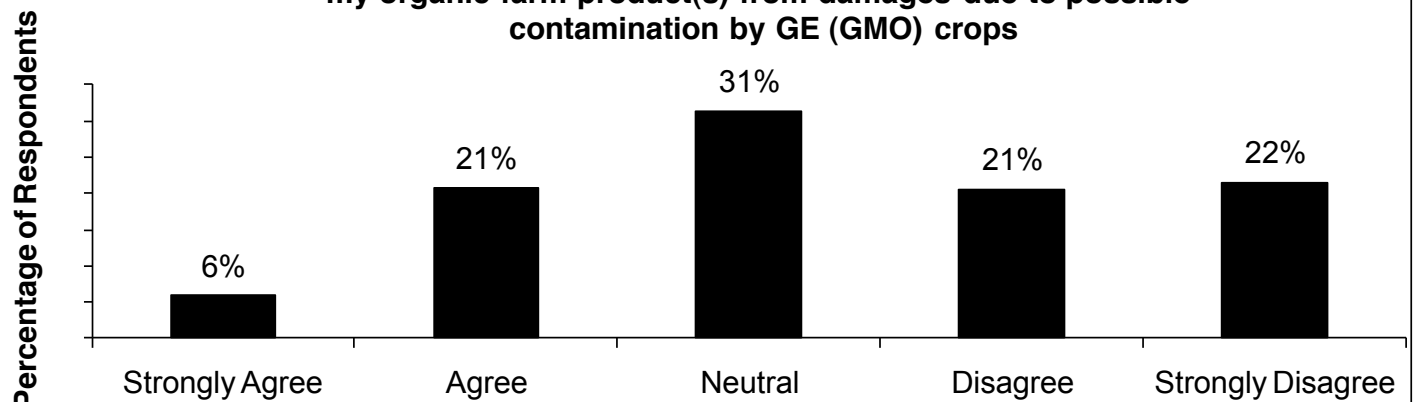


Figure 28.

Q #23: The regulatory framework in place is adequate to protect my organic farm product(s) from damages due to possible contamination by GE (GMO) crops



How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements (cont.):

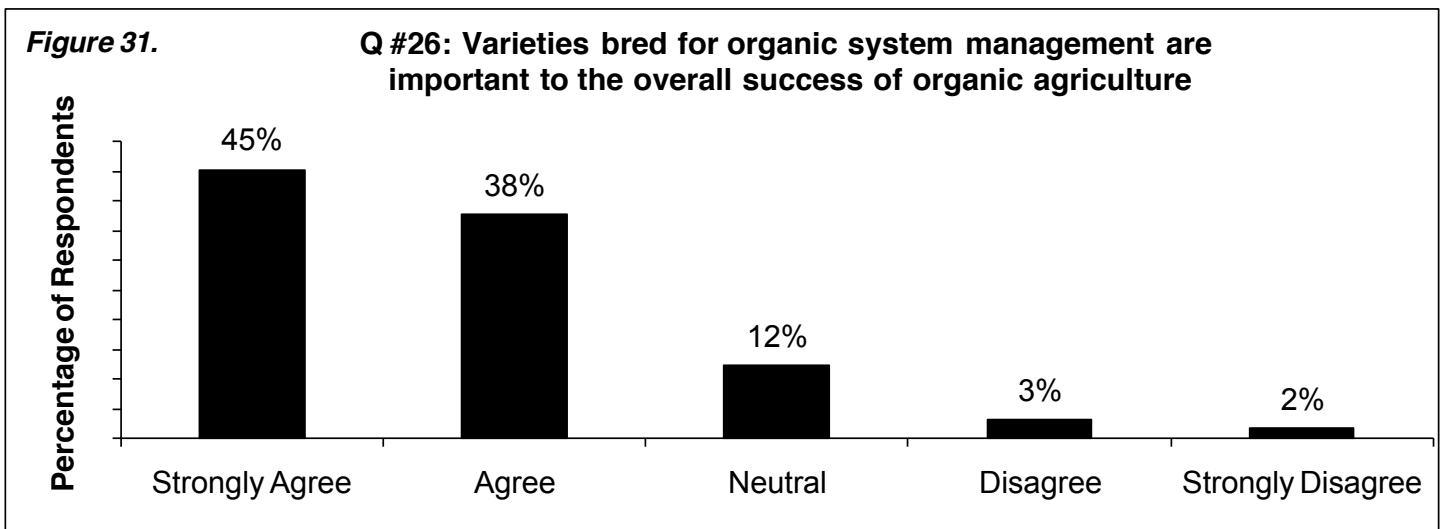
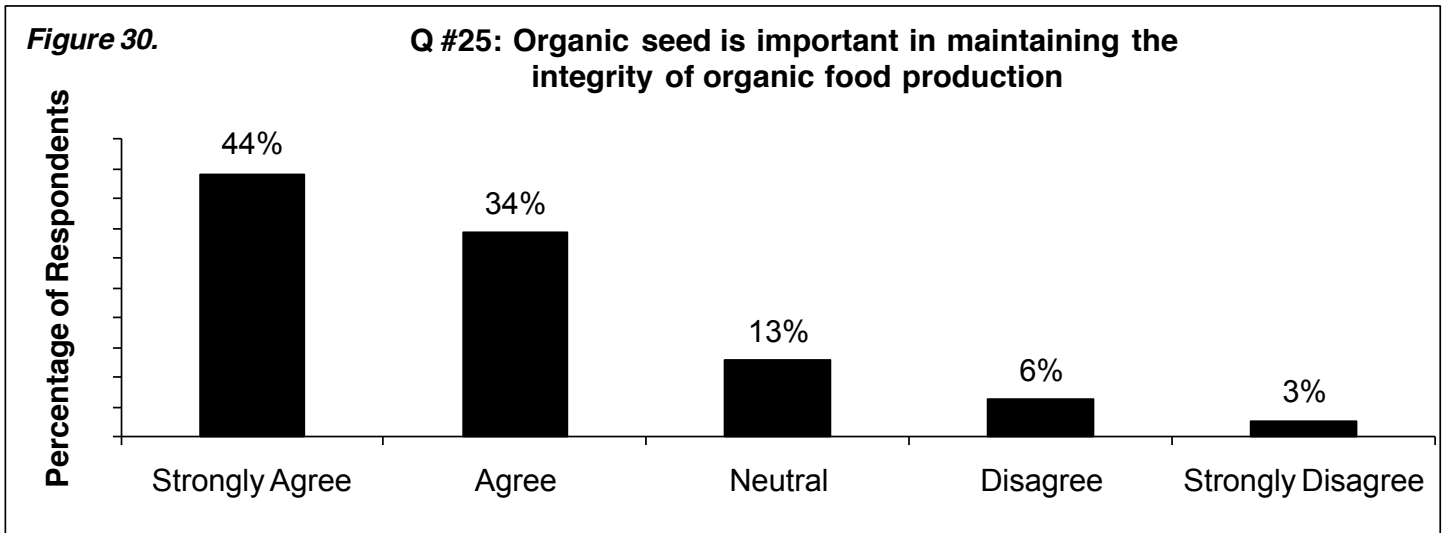
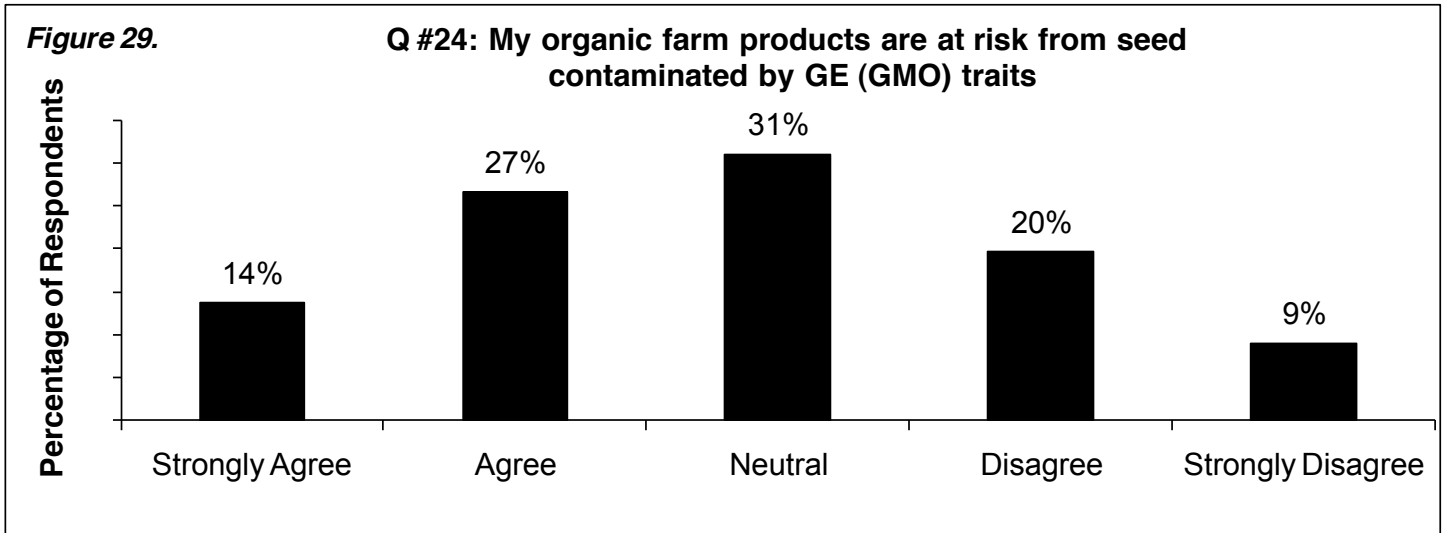
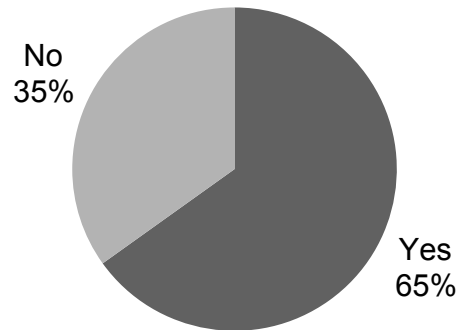


Figure 32.

Q #27: Do you think that there are crops in need of organic breeding?



Q #28: The highest priority crops you feel are in need of organic breeding (crop improvement) and the most important traits to breed for in those crops.

Top three crops and top three traits listed. Please see Summary for descriptions and examples of traits.

Figure 33.

Q #28: Three most important traits to breed for in CORN - the #1 field crop in need of breeding

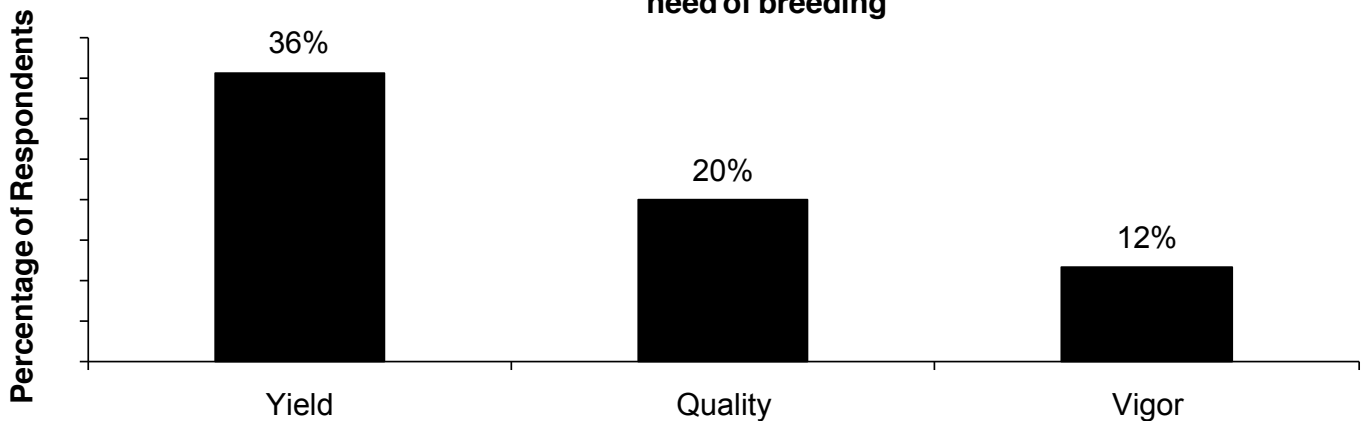
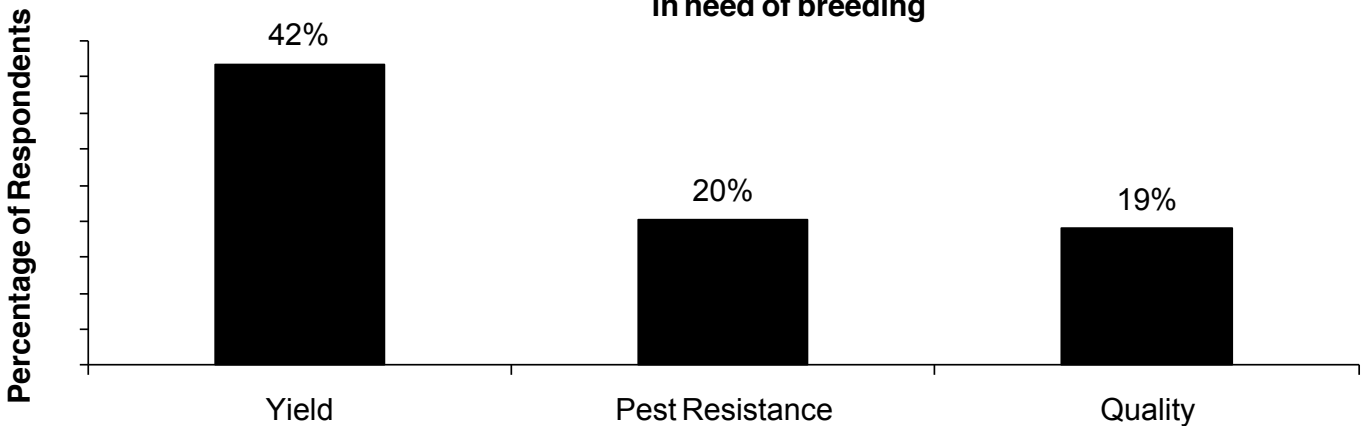


Figure 34.

Q #28: Three most important traits to breed for in SOYBEANS - the #2 field crop in need of breeding



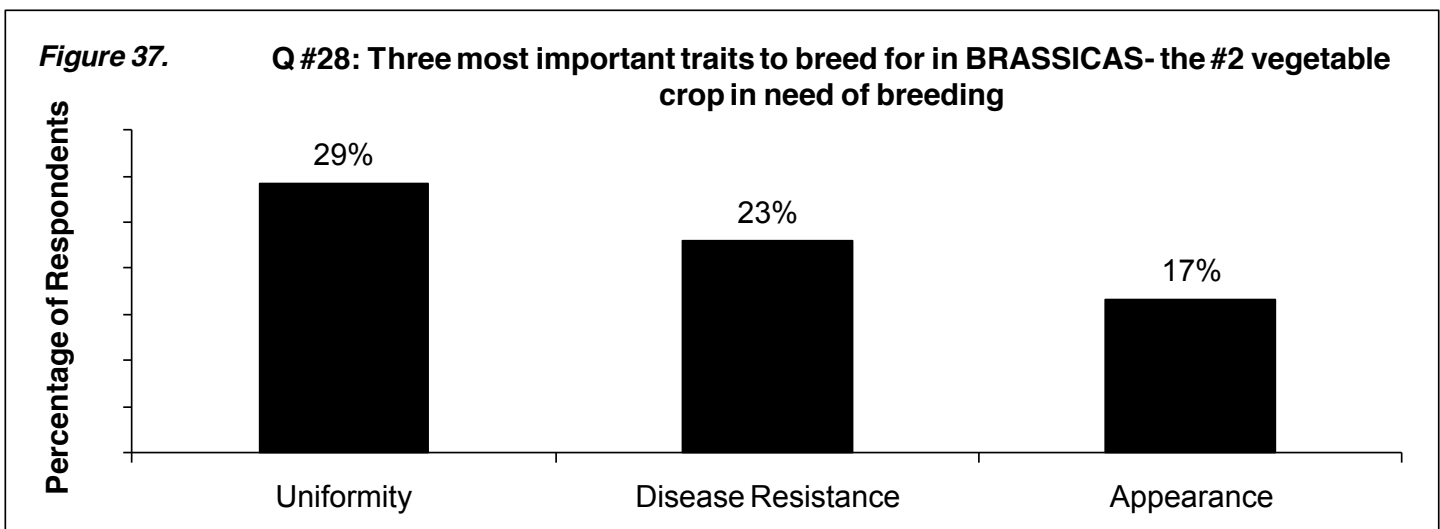
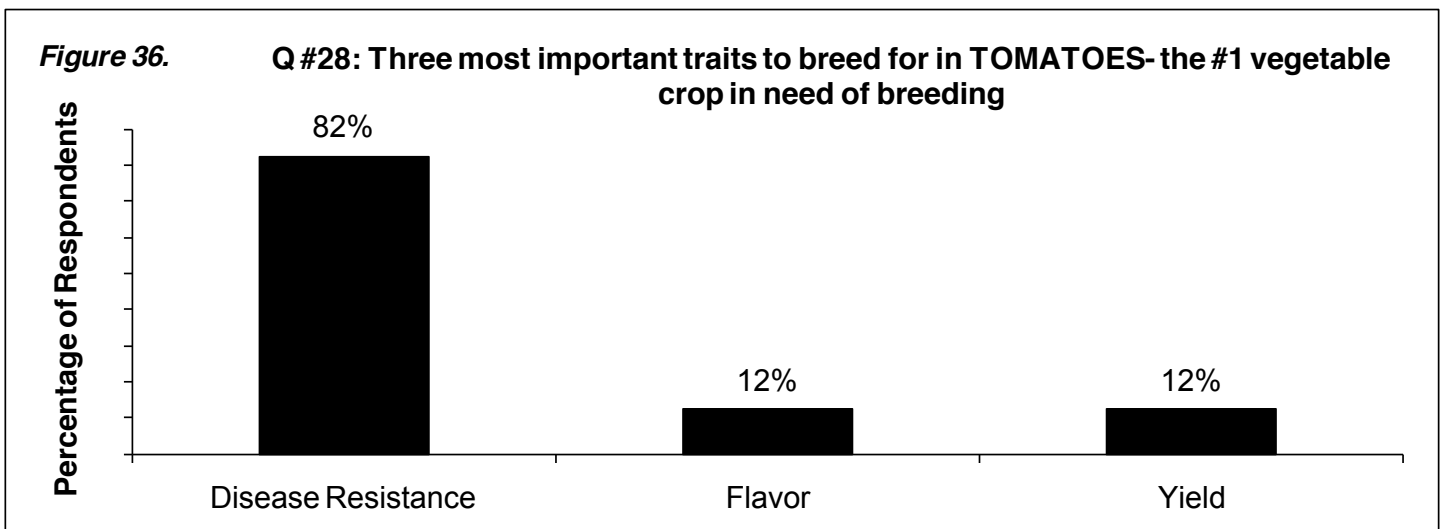
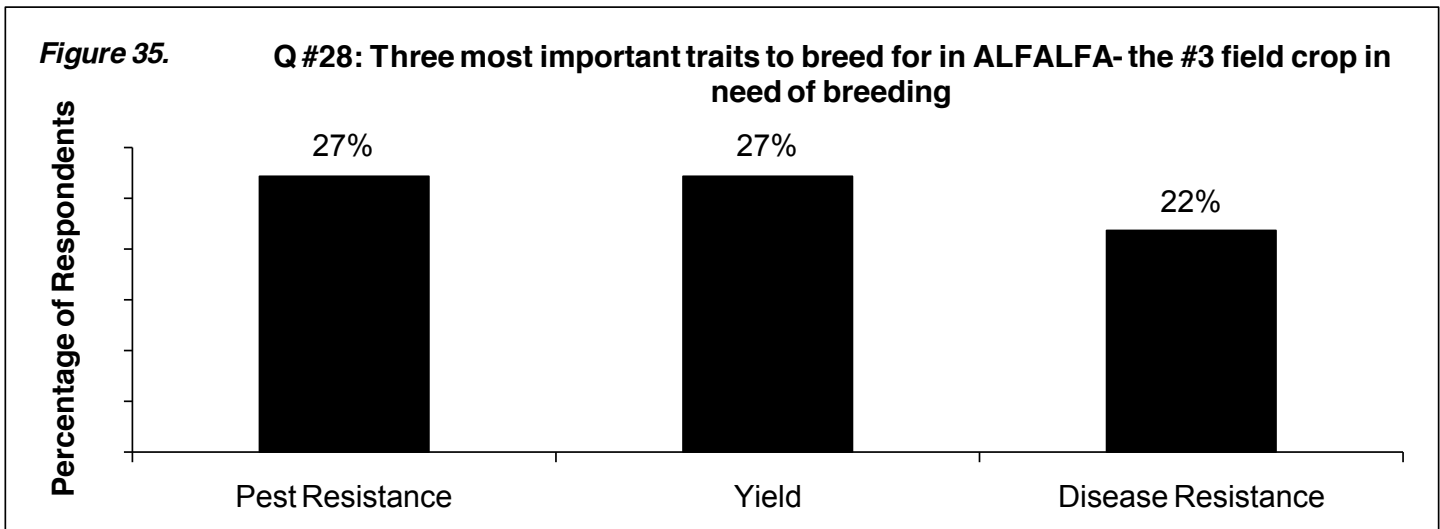


Figure 38.

Q #28: Three most important traits to breed for in WINTER / SUMMER SQUASH
- the #3 vegetable crop in need of breeding

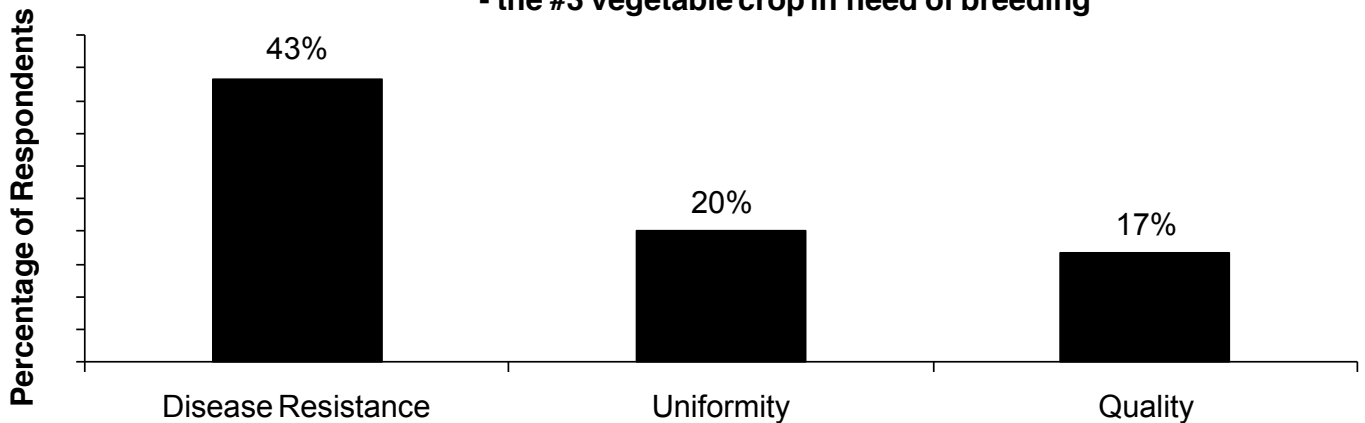
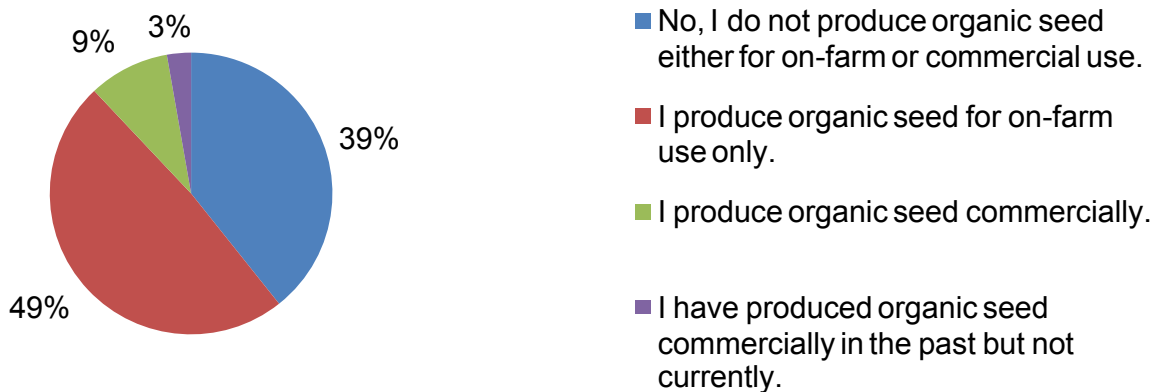


Figure 39.

Q #29: Do you produce organic seed?*



*Total greater than 100% because more than one response may apply

Figure 40.

Q #30: Are you interested in producing organic seed for commercial use?

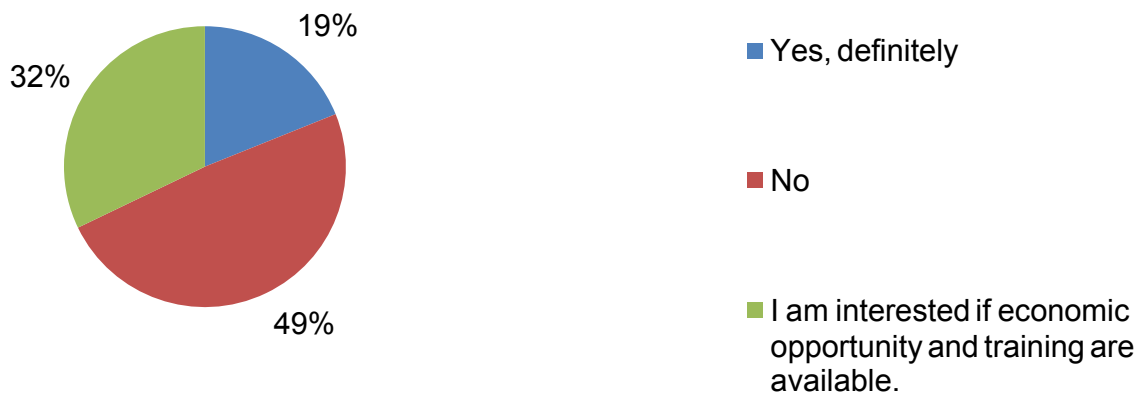
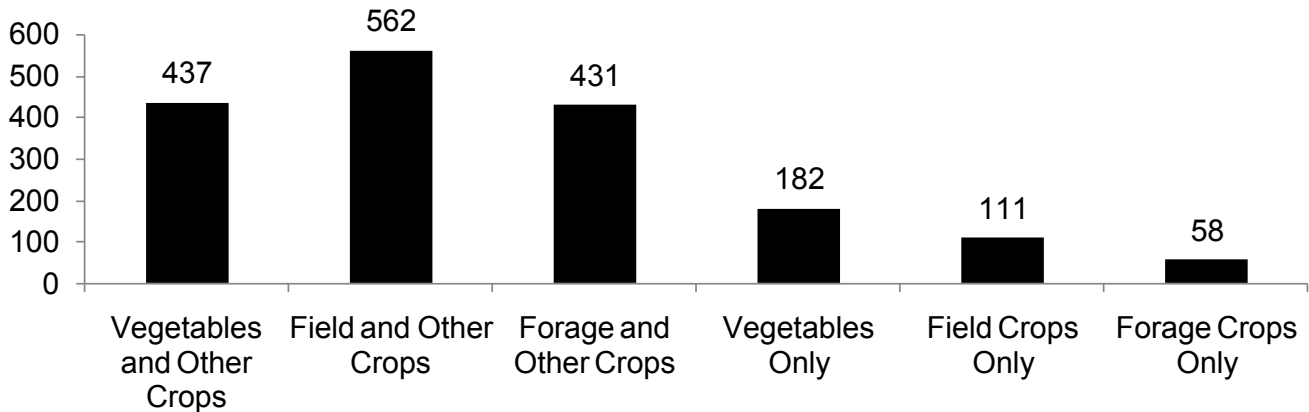


Figure 41. Q #31: Are you interested in conducting crop improvement/breeding on your farm?



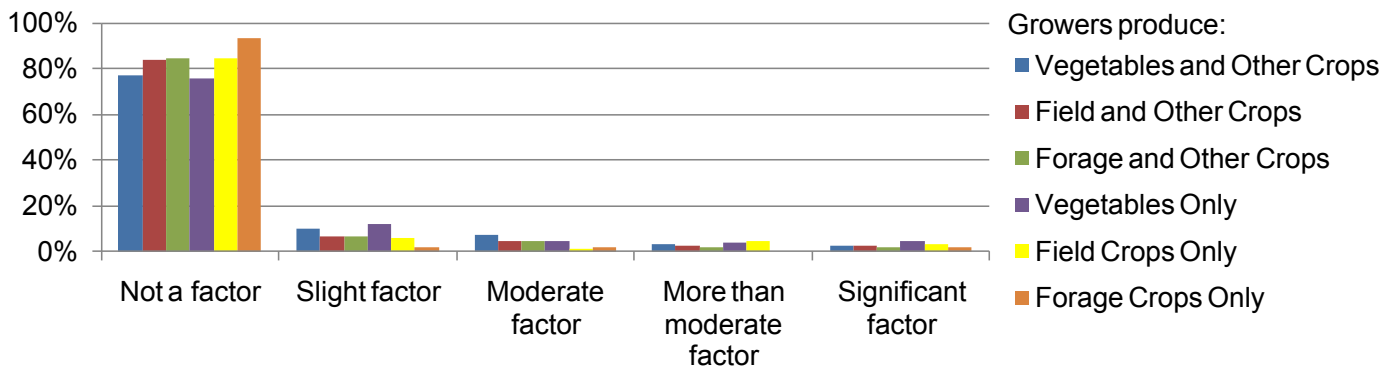
Appendix A - Breakdown of specific questions by crop type (vegetable, field, forage)

Figure 42. Number of respondents who produce specific crop types



Figures 43 – 52: The reasons you have not purchased organic seed in the past:

Figure 43. Lack of seed treatments such as pelleting or priming



The reasons you have not purchased organic seed in the past (cont.):

Figure 44. Processor (buyer) demands varieties in contract that are not available organically

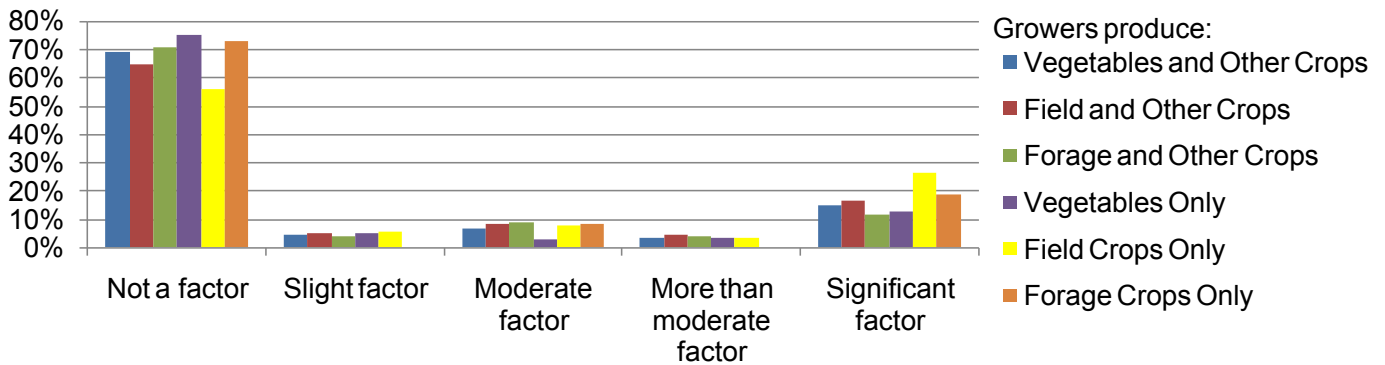


Figure 45. Insufficient quantity of seed

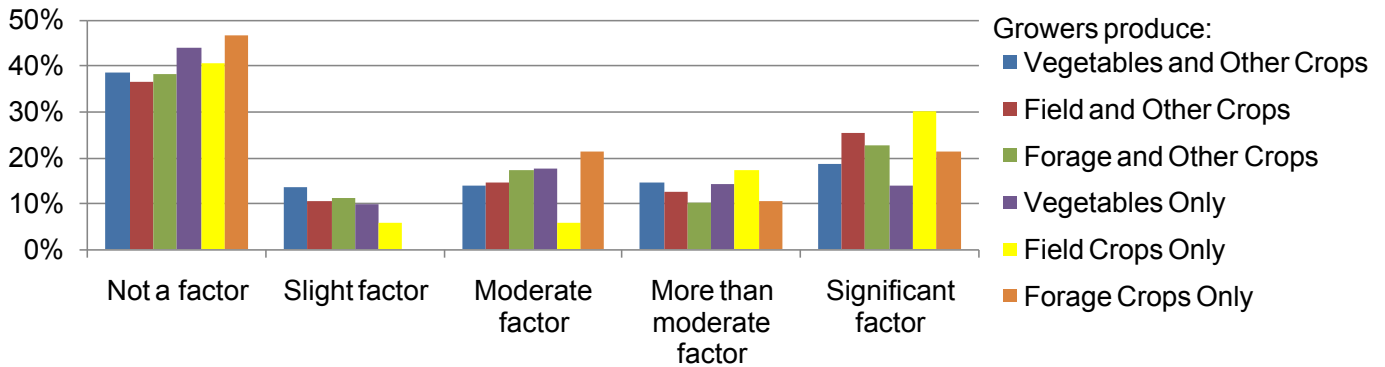
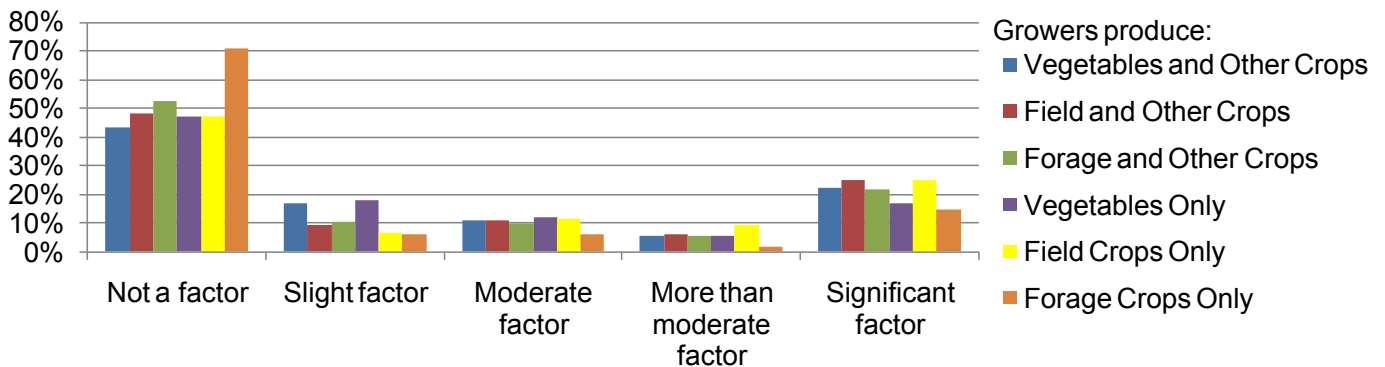
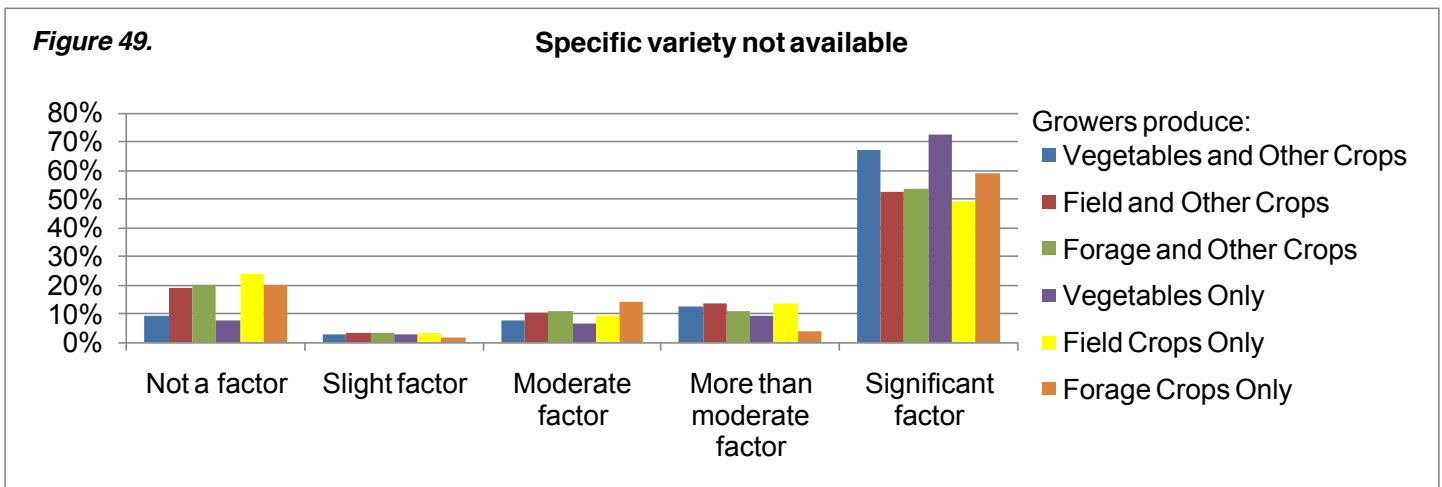
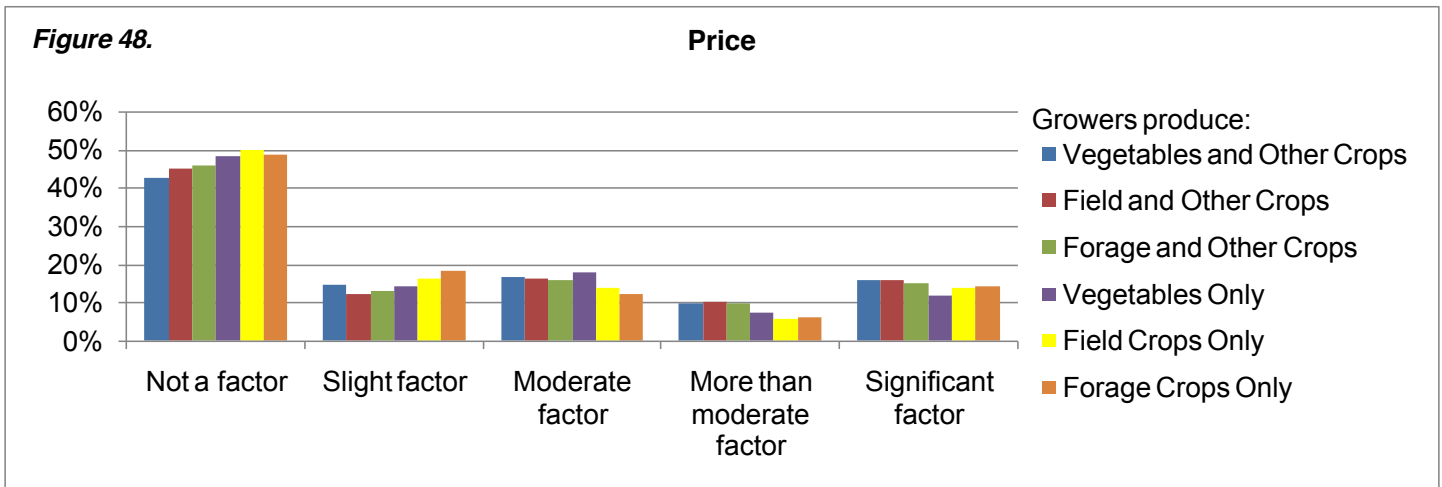
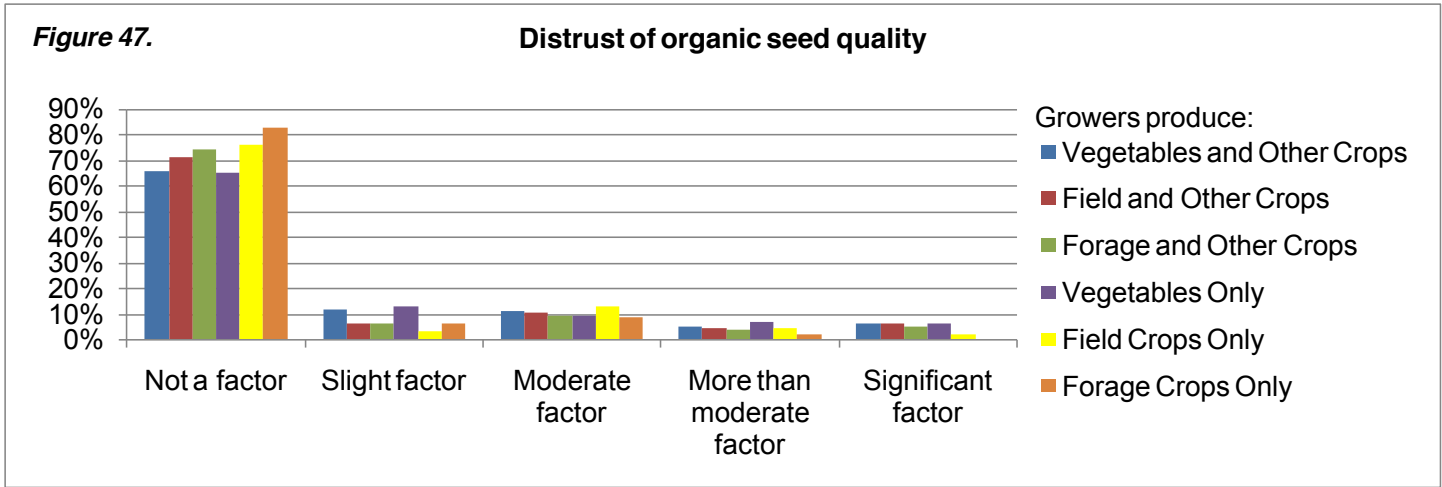


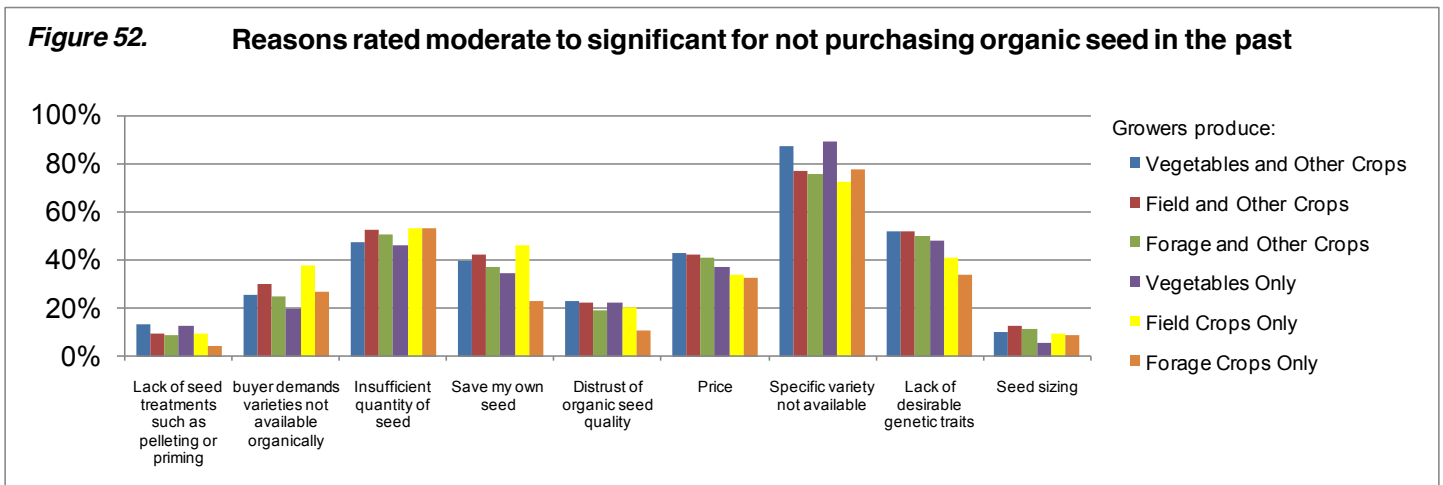
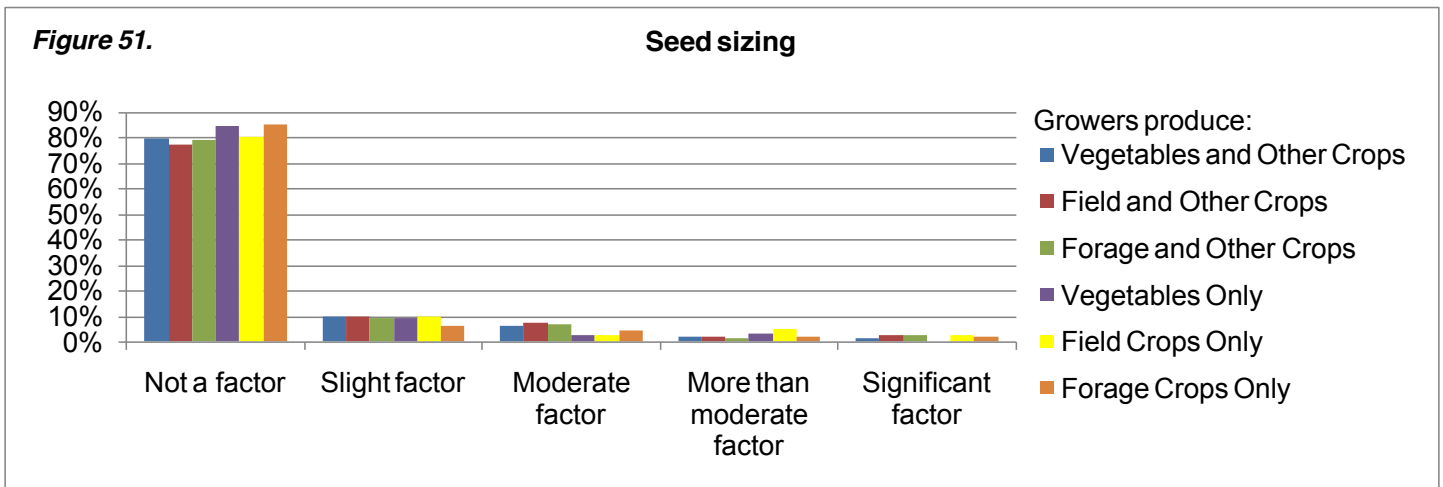
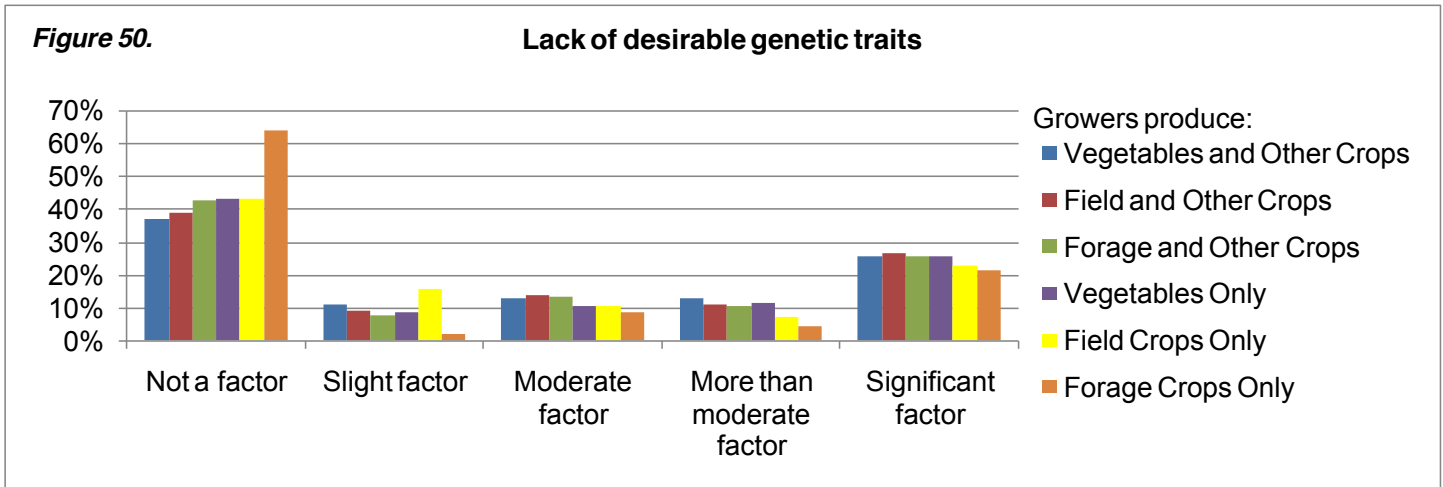
Figure 46. Save my own seed



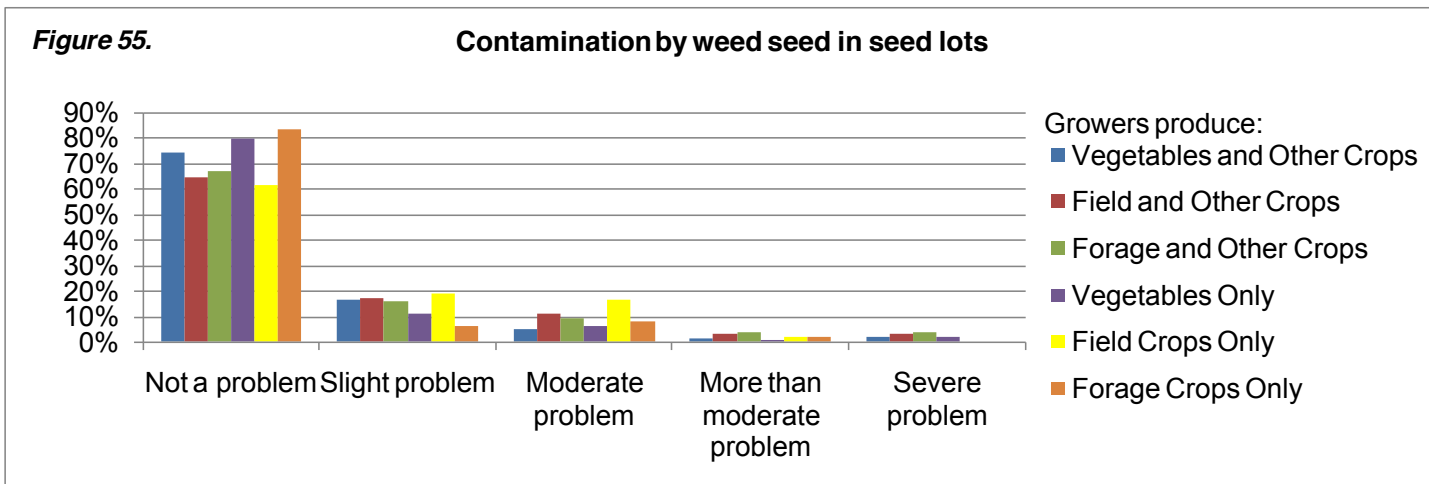
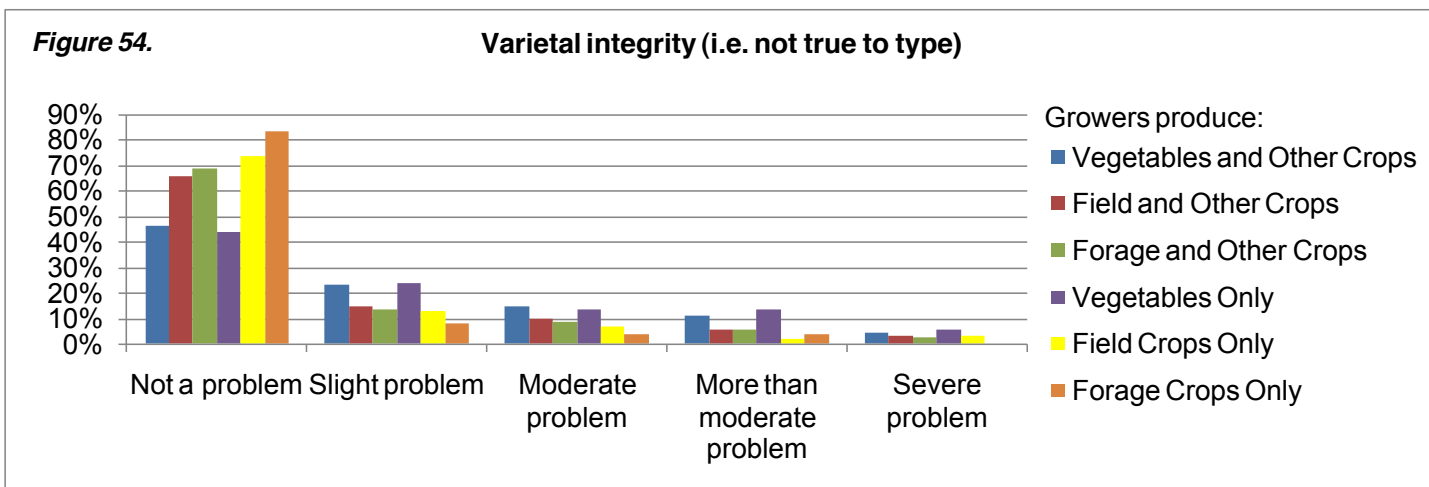
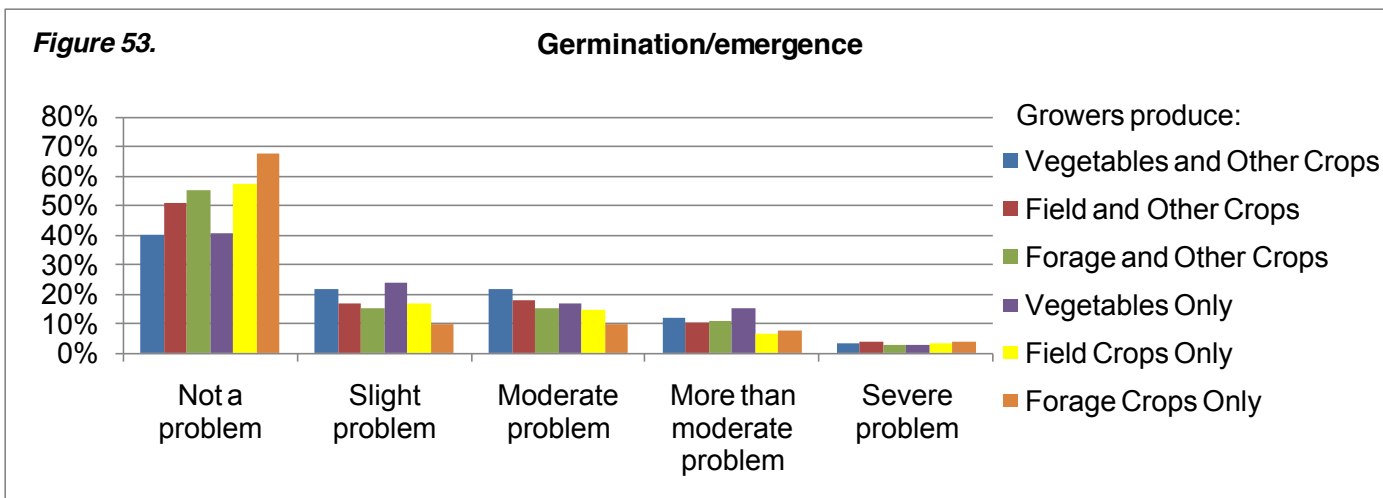
The reasons you have not purchased organic seed in the past (cont.):



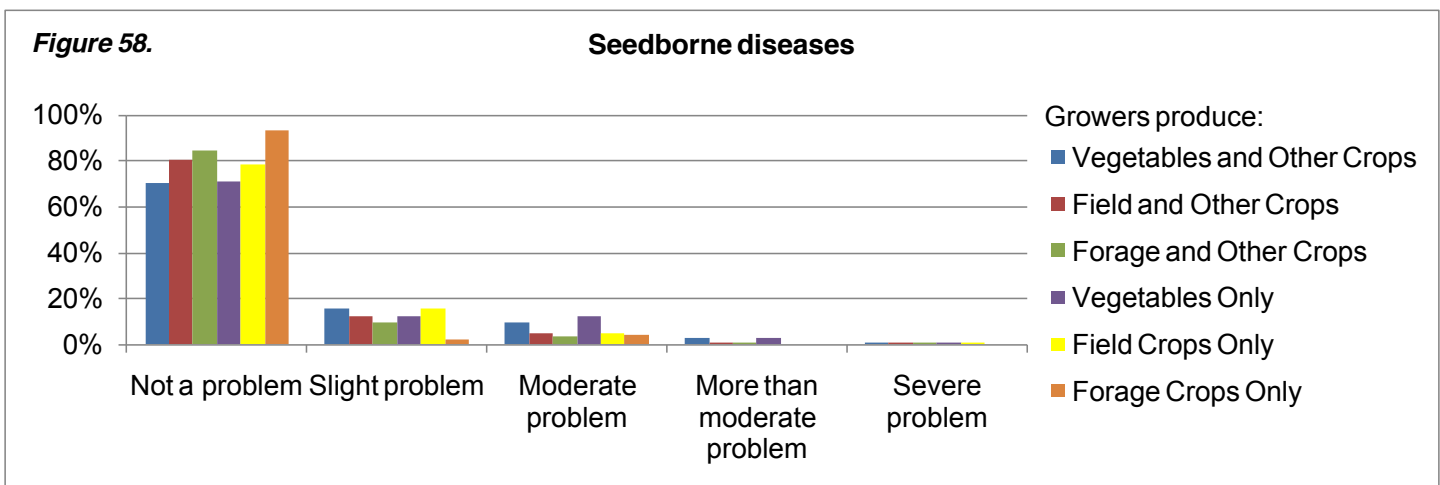
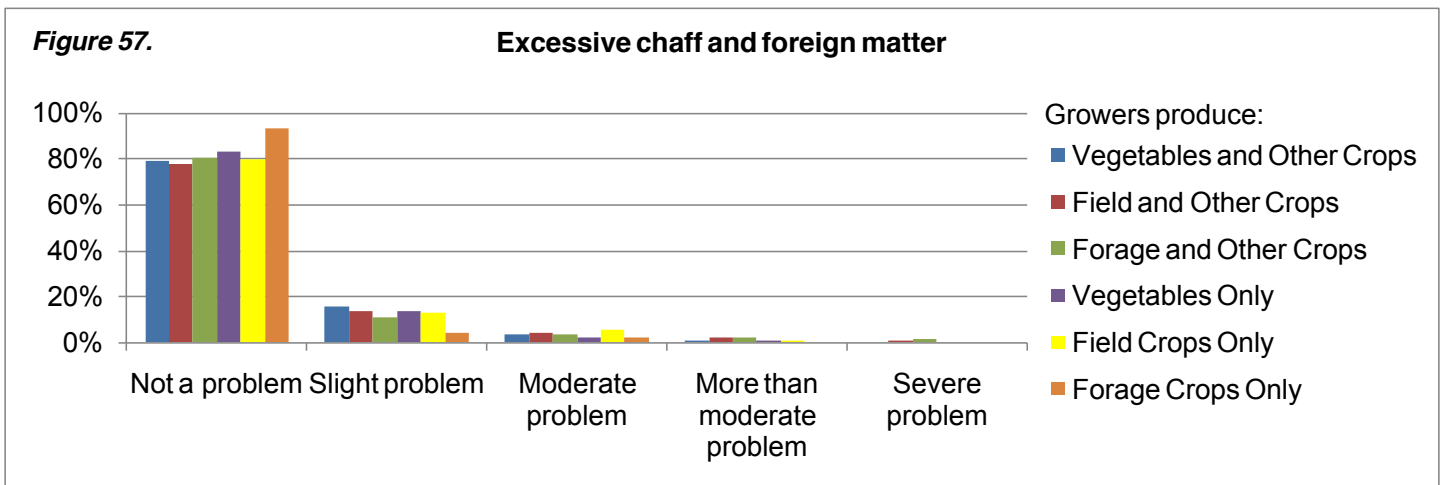
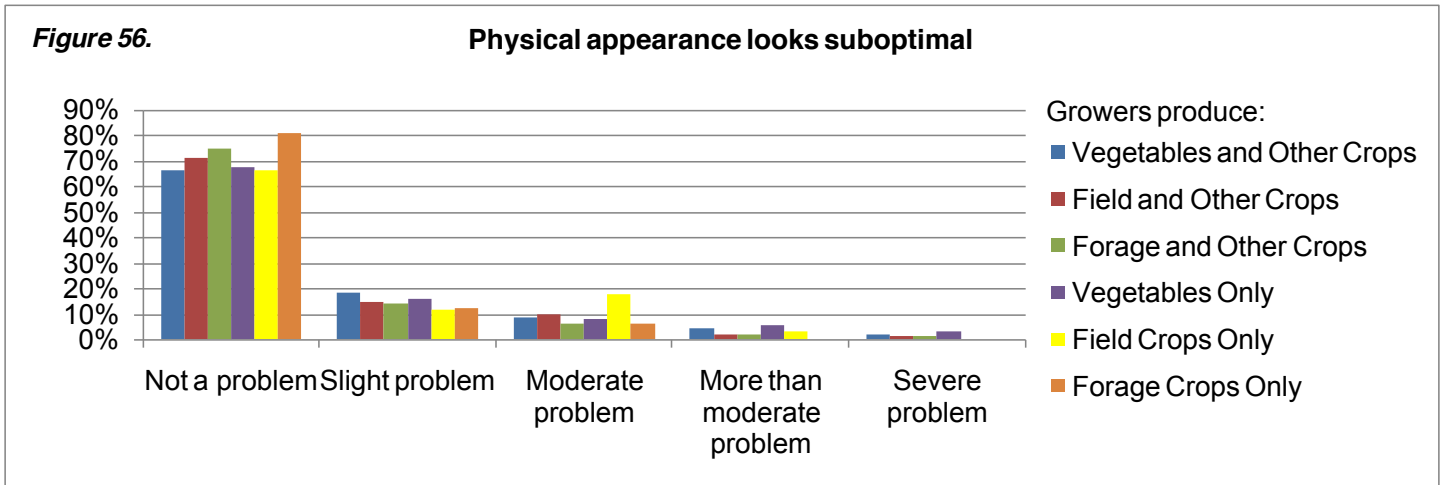
The reasons you have not purchased organic seed in the past (cont.):



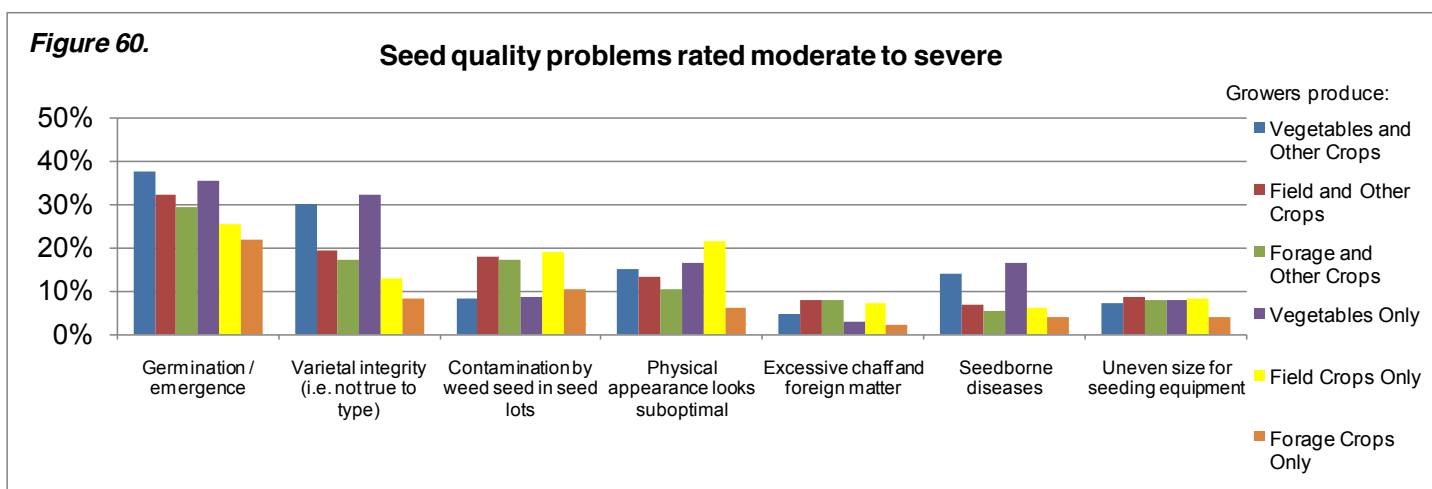
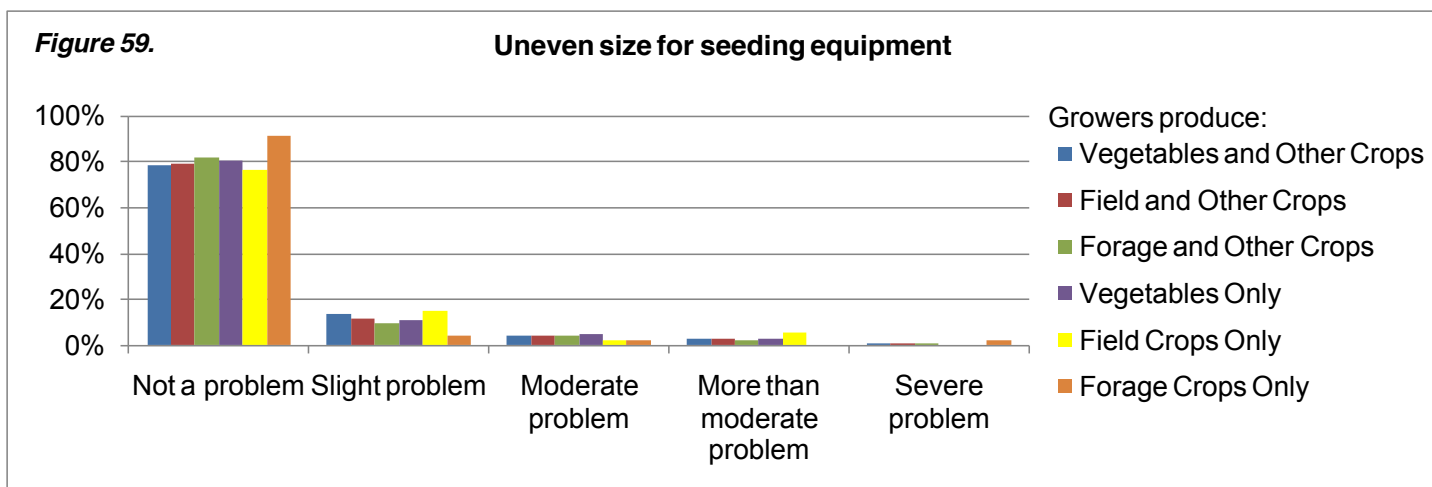
Figures 53 - 60. What organic seed quality issues you have experienced?



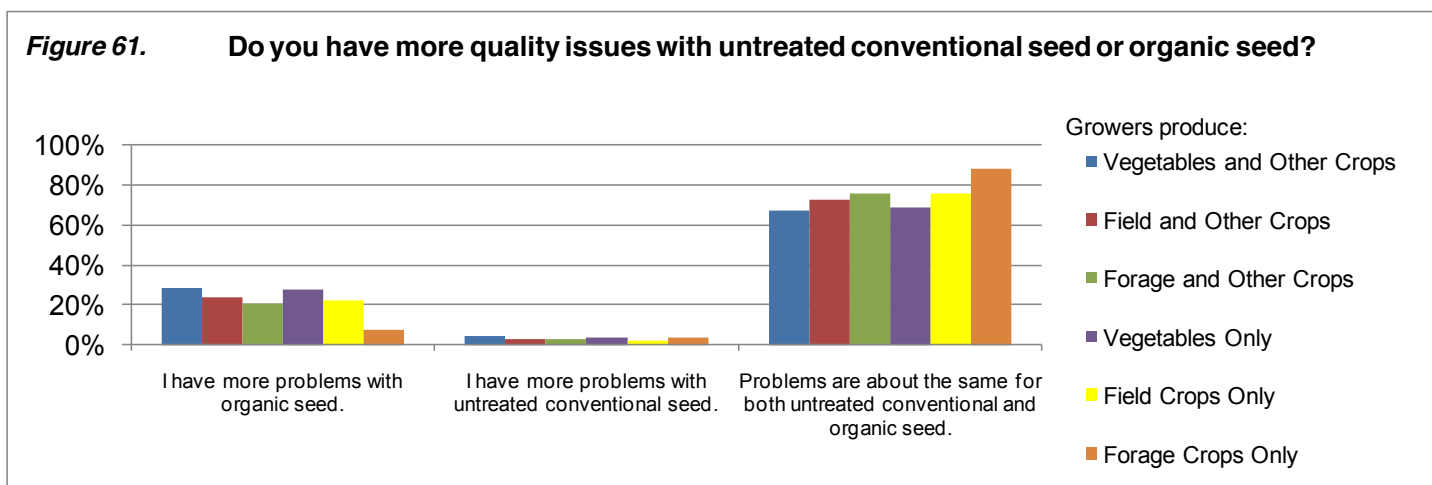
Organic seed quality issues (cont.):



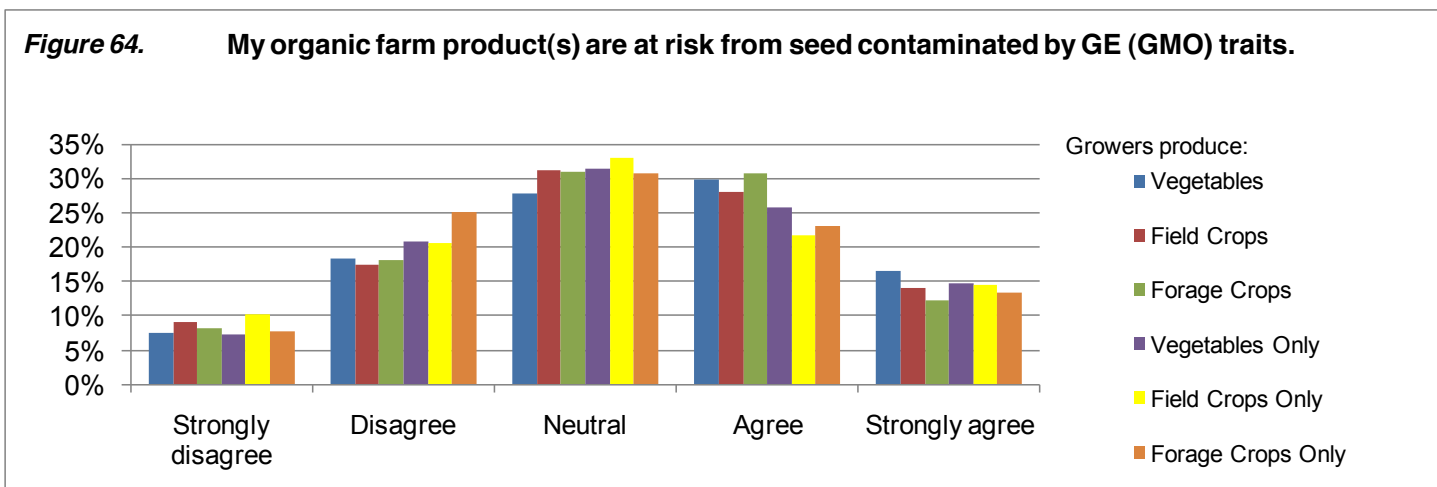
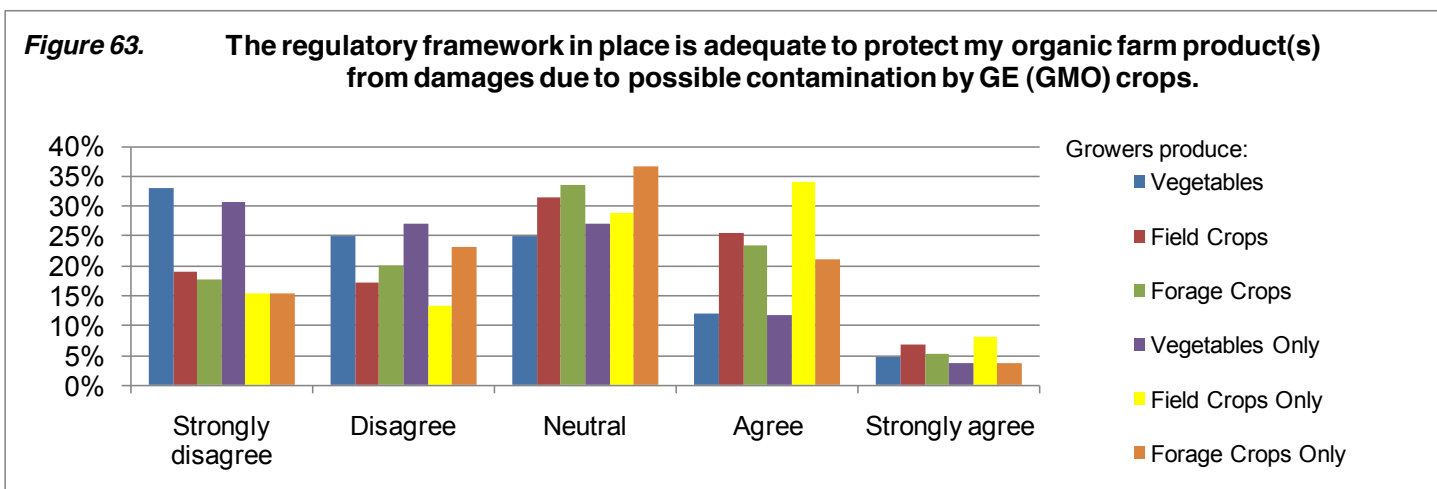
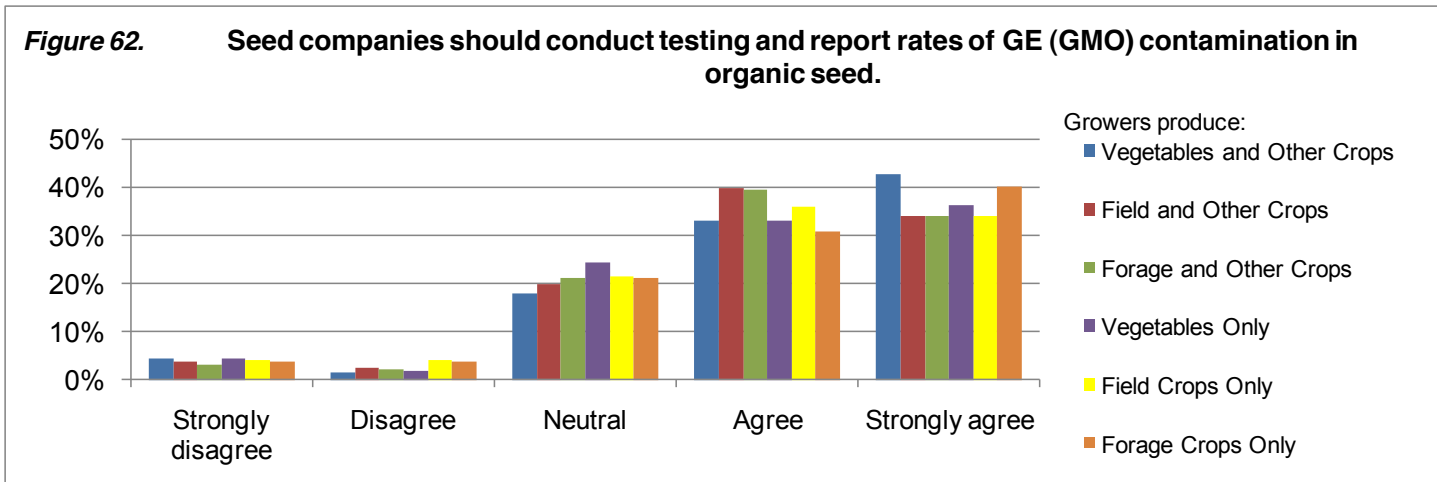
Organic seed quality issues (cont.):



Do you have more problems with the above mentioned quality issues with untreated conventional seed or organic seed?



Figures 62 - 64. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:



Appendix B – Additional Graphs

Figure 65. Comparison of increased organic seed use and certifier requesting more steps to source organic seed

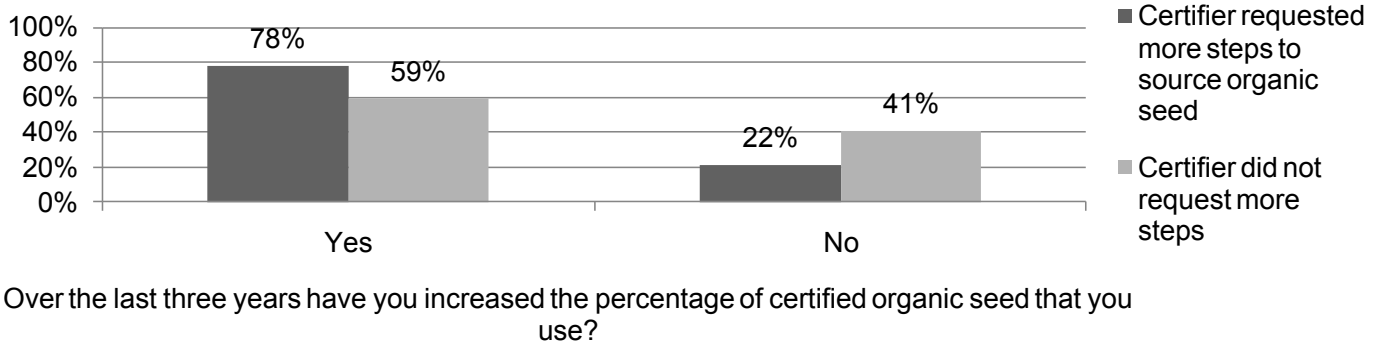


Figure 66. Organic seed use by crop type and acreage

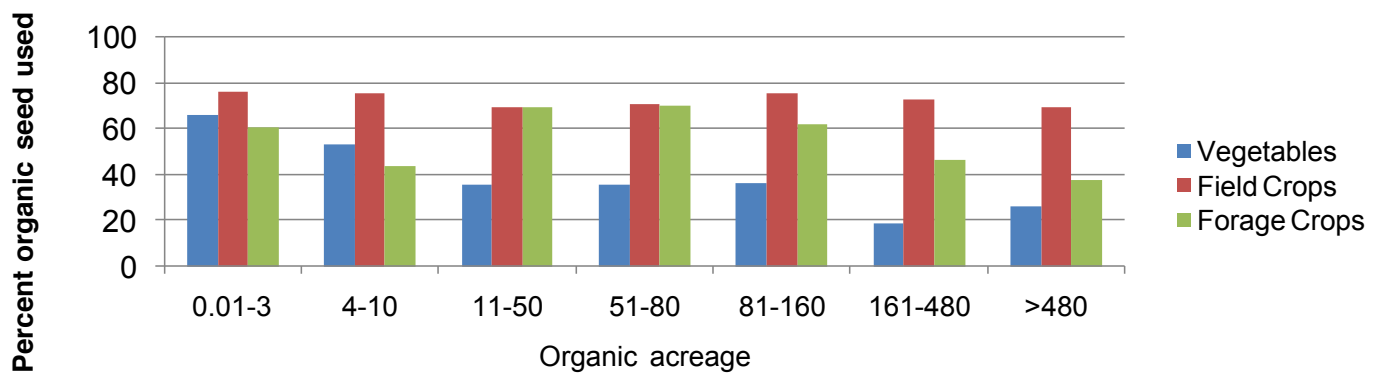


Figure 67. Percent of total acreage by crop planted with organic seed

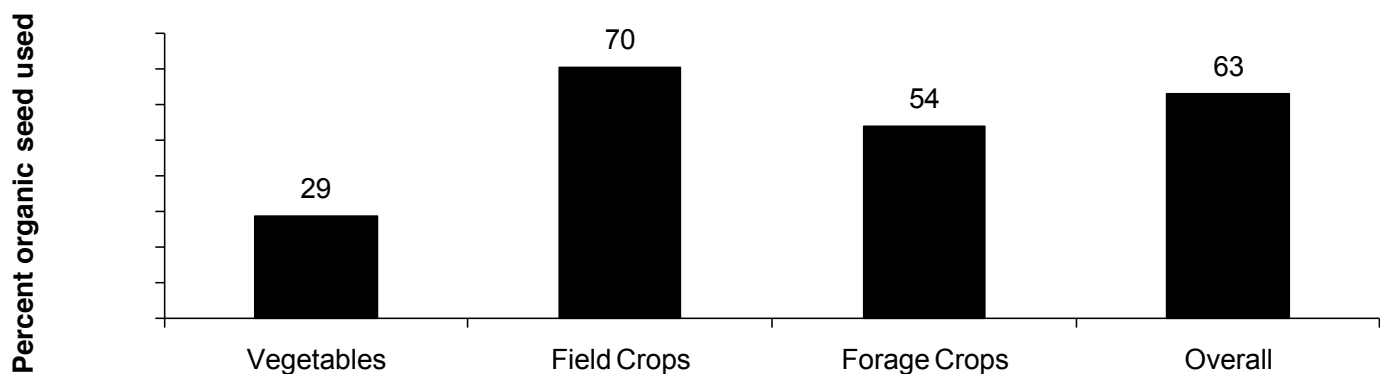


Figure 68. Reasons rated moderate to significant for not purchasing organic seed in the past

