



Project Snapshot: Connections with Agriculture Study



Date: January 14, 2010

Background

According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, agriculture generates about 22 million jobs in the United States. Most of those are off the farm and it is estimated that fewer than 2 million Americans are actively engaged in farming. With a current U.S. population estimated at more than 300 million that works out to less than 1 percent of the population.

Objective

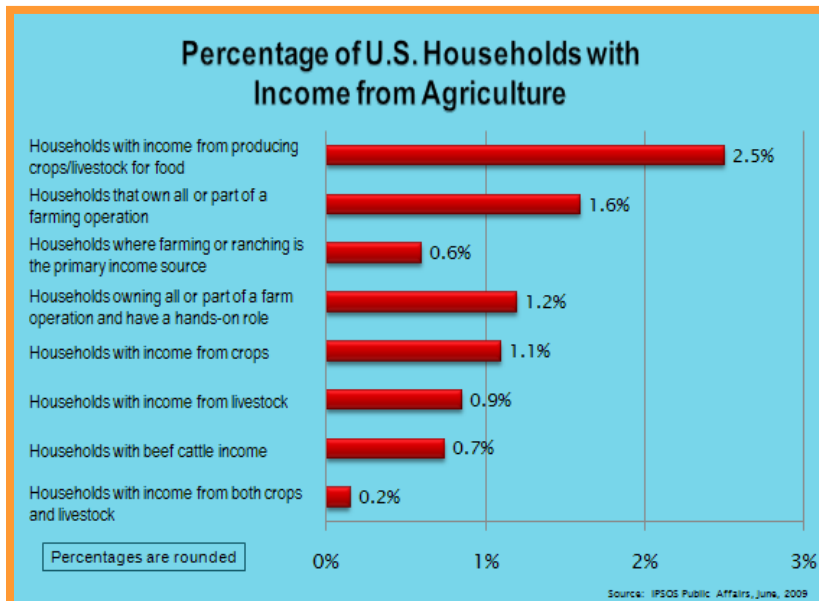
The study was conducted to quantify the number of U.S. households with any connection to agriculture. The findings are being used to illuminate the degree of consumer disconnect with American agriculture and the dimensions of the need for effective consumer communications about beef production.

Methodology

A checkoff-funded national, random sample telephone survey of 1,000 adults was conducted in June 2009 by IPSOS Public Affairs. Respondents were asked if anyone in the household derived any income from producing crops or livestock for food. If the answer was yes, respondents were asked a series of questions about their connection with agriculture.

Findings

Agriculture is a large and important industry in the United States but, according to the survey, only a tiny percentage of Americans are involved in producing or receive income from producing crops or livestock for food.



The survey found only 2.5 percent of American households derives any farming and ranching income from production of crops or livestock for food and less than 1 percent (0.6%) of Americans say farming or ranching is their primary source of household income.

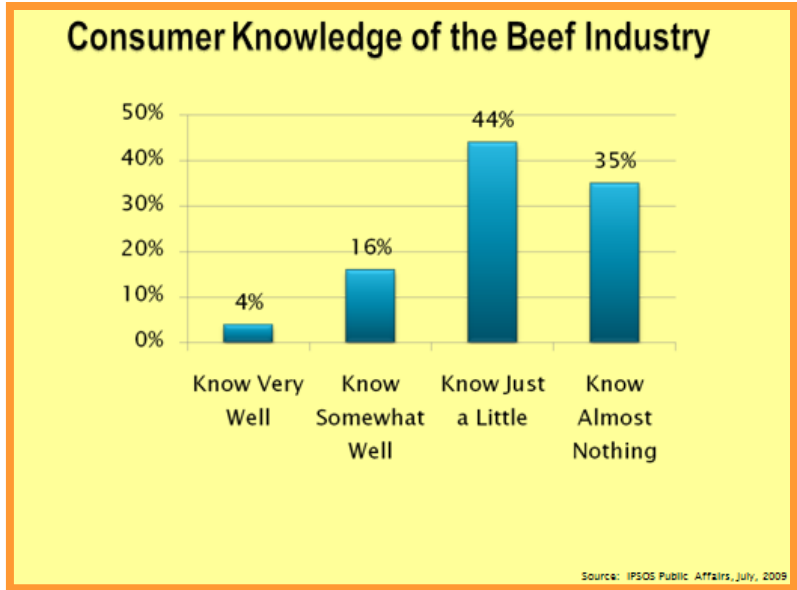
Only 1.6 percent of households say their agricultural income comes from owning part or all of a farming or ranching operation and only 1.2 percent say the person in the household who receives agricultural income has a hands-on role in producing crops or livestock.



Funded by The Beef Checkoff

Regarding types of agricultural operations, 1.1 percent of American households is involved in crop operations, slightly less than 1 percent (.85%) is involved in livestock and only .15 percent derive income from both types of operations. Of those involved in livestock farming, the largest proportion (87% or .74% of U.S. households) derives income from beef cattle.

Is it any wonder that consumers are disconnected from agriculture? And that disconnect causes problems for the beef industry. The consumer issues research program conducted a beef industry reputation study for the issue and reputation management team in July 2009. That study found that only 4 percent of consumers say they know the beef industry very well with another 16 percent saying they were somewhat familiar. A whopping 44 percent said they know very little about beef and more than a third (35%) said they know next to nothing. Another finding was that, not surprisingly, the more consumers know about the beef industry the more favorable they are. A very important finding of this study was that, despite being disconnected from agriculture, consumers are interested to learn more about the industry. Almost three-quarters (74%) of consumers said they were very or somewhat interested in learning more about where beef comes from.



Next Steps

The objective is to reconnect American consumers with agriculture and the beef industry. The data clearly show that, while consumers know little about the beef industry, they are interested in learning more. The issue and reputation management team's task is to build on this data and find ways to connect the small number of cattle farmers and ranchers with American consumers and create some shared values regarding beef and the way of life through which it is produced. The issue and reputation management team works proactively to connect cattle farmers and ranchers with consumers using both traditional and social media, Web sites such as www.ExploreBeef.org and a wide range of information and materials designed to put a face on the industry.