

POLICY – POSTER #6

Public Perceptions of Climate Change Risks to Pacific Northwest Agriculture

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As an isolated term, “climate change” provokes many emotions and responses—one of the greatest challenges for communication and policy. But climate change differentially affects sectors of business or aspects of daily life, figuratively through language and on the ground. Public perceptions of climate change risks and benefits, to agriculture in particular, affect climate change adaptation policy, research, and funding. We studied the relationships among climate change risk perception, agricultural risk perception, and public values for agriculture in order to understand how the public of Idaho, Oregon and Washington supports climate change adaptation.

In the fall of 2012, 1,300 urban and rural residents were surveyed by phone across the tri-state Pacific Northwest region. Most questions required specified answers, yielding quantitative results. We coded qualitative responses to fit quantitative structures. We conducted weighted cross-tabulation and multi-variate analyses in two primary categories: risks of climate change and responsibility for adaptation.

Among other findings, our research showed the general public overwhelmingly values farming as an asset to American culture (95%). However the degree to which people are concerned about changes in temperature parallels the perceived increased risk of food shortage in the next 30 years. We propose policy considerations based on public perception of risks of climate change and risks to agriculture.