



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
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THE OHIO FARM POLL

Taking the Pulse of Ohio Farmers: The Critical Roles of Family Farm Households in Farm Viability

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Farm households mobilized to buffer the stresses of 2019

Record-setting rains, heavy flooding, and an international trade war made 2019 a stressful year for Ohio farmers. The Ohio Farm Poll documented how farm families across the state employed many different strategies as they responded to these conditions. Of particular importance was the ability to farm households to quickly adjust consumption levels and activities in response to shocks in the agricultural sector.

Farm survival is tied to farm households

- Ohio Farm Poll results highlight how farm survival in Ohio is tied to both household factors and farm business issues. The two depend on each other.
- To respond to the many stresses of 2019, Ohio farmers mobilized a range of strategies both on their farm business operations and within households (Fig 1).
- **The most common change was using household savings to meet expenses (39%). The second and third most common changes were spending less on farm inputs (33%) and postponing major farm purchases (29%).**
- Ohio also farmers cut back on entertainment expenses and postponed household purchases.

The farm economy is not isolated

Compared to larger farms that rely more on hired labor, **family farm businesses can better absorb the impacts of financial downturns by using household resources or reducing consumption.** The intermingling of farm businesses and households shows up in other ways:

- 70% of farmers say most of their household income is from off-farm jobs.
- **92% of farmers have some off-farm income.**
- Off-farm income helps family farms ride out difficult market downturns, like Ohio experienced in 2019.

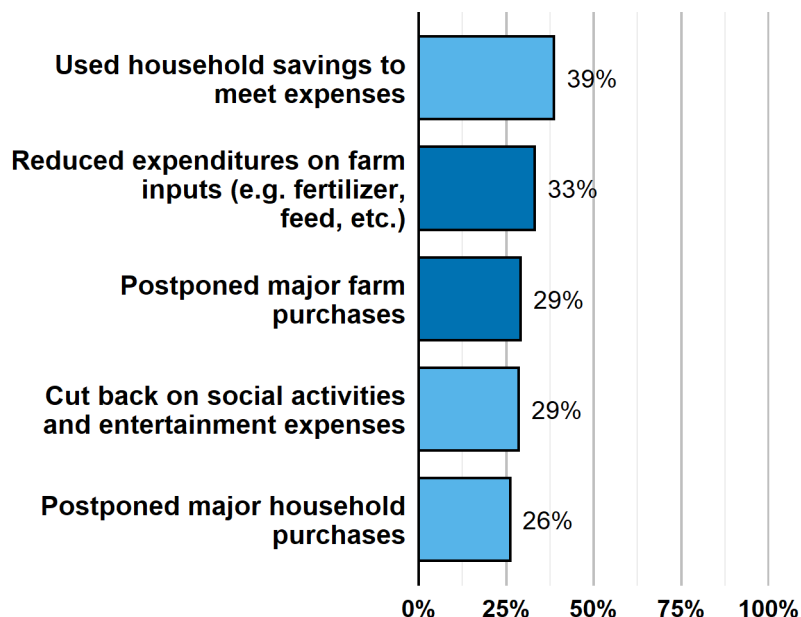


Fig.1: Most common changes made on Ohio farms in 2019.
Farm household strategies are presented in light blue.