

Agricultural Best Management Practices and Climate Change: Implementation and Financial Implications

To ensure the resiliency of our food systems, farmers need to implement management practices that will help them adapt to the impacts of climate change. Many Vermont farmers have already experienced more frequent extreme weather events, longer growing seasons, and changes in the pests and diseases on their farms. There are many different best management practices that can help farmers mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change yet the practices farmers choose to implement need to both fit into their farm systems and be financially viable. Few studies examine the implementation costs of best management practices on farms in the Northeast; most focus on large scale farms and findings may not be generalizable to the smaller scale agricultural operations in this region. Our study will attempt to fill this gap in two different ways. The first approach involves a survey of farmers in two watersheds in Vermont and measures which best management practices are currently implemented on those farms as well as farmers' preferences for incentivized conservation practices. The scope of the second component of the study narrows and focuses on diversified vegetable farms in Vermont. Interviews will be conducted with these growers who will track their costs and benefits of implementing selected best management practices on their farms. Preliminary survey data, research design, and intended applications of results will be discussed.