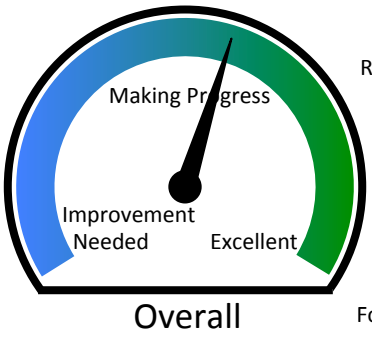
Elements of Sustainability in Wisconsin Animal Agriculture

A producer self-assessment

From late 2011 to early 2013, the Wisconsin Animal Agriculture Sustainability Initiative (WAASI) surveyed nearly 300 producers in the state about how they perceive their farms' performance in a variety of economic, social, and environmental elements of sustainability. Respondents included dairy, beef, pork, and poultry producers, as well as growers of corn, soybeans, small grains, and forages. Operation sizes ranged from less than 100 to greater than 1,000 animal units and acres planted. Results of the survey show where we are strongest in sustainability and also highlight areas to target for continued improvement.

Economic Sustainability



Overall


Return on Investment

Annual cost of production analysis leads the ROI sustainability category, while marketing plans and return on sustainability-related investments are lower.


Minimizing Risk

While rates of farm insurance are high, rates of crop insurance are moderate and economic diversification of operations lags.

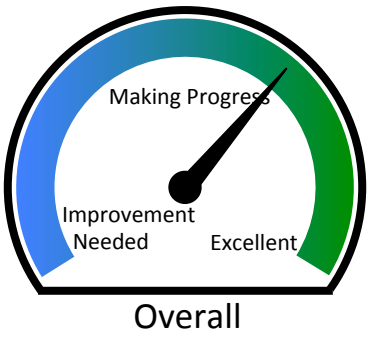

Long-term Planning

There is room for improvement in operational succession and disaster management planning, as well as creation of sustainability mission statements.


Food Safety & Security

We're on the right track for product traceability, building and worker safety, and participation in quality assurance programs

Social Sustainability



Overall


Employees

Producers are making progress in finding and hiring the right people, encouraging employee feedback, and instituting employee training programs, but there is still room for improvement.


Community

Leadership and communication in the community as well as trade organizations is good, with some room for improvement.

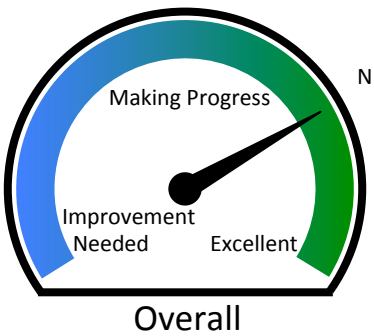

Stewardship

Judicious use of agrochemicals and antibiotics was scored highest in the stewardship category, while recycling was moderate and use of renewable energy was scored lower.


Animal Wellbeing

Animal health, animal comfort, and minimization of animal stress were the survey's highest-rated elements.

Environmental Sustainability



Overall


Nutrient Management

Nutrient management planning and efficient manure handling were scored higher than manure storage methods to reduce environmental impacts.


Input Efficiency

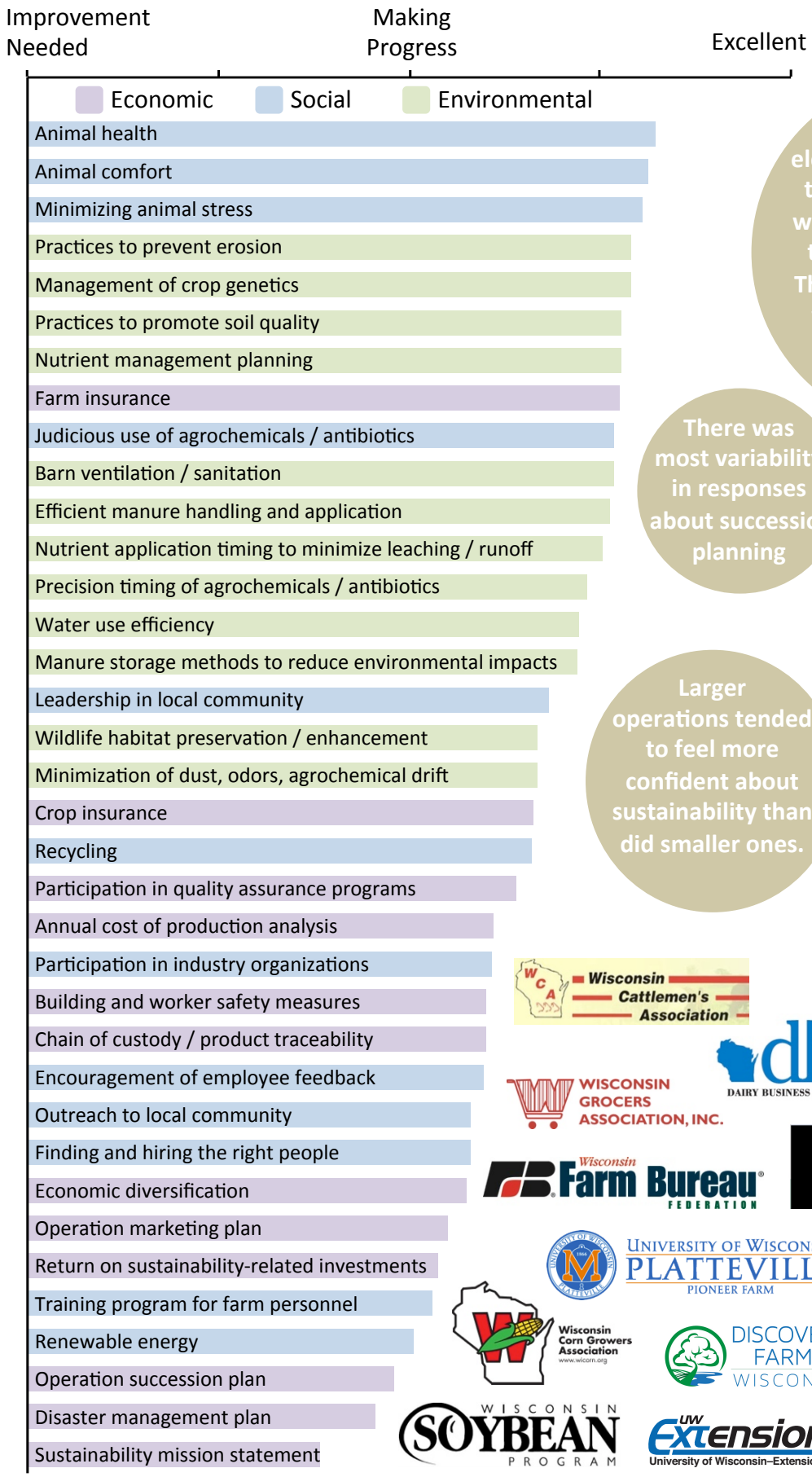
Management of crop genetics was rated highest in the input efficiency category, followed by barn ventilation/sanitation and precision timing of agrochemicals and antibiotics.


Air & Water

Careful timing of nutrient application leads the air and water category, followed by water use efficiency and finally minimization of dust and odors.


Soil & Biodiversity

Practices to promote soil quality and prevent erosion lead the soil and biodiversity category, while wildlife habitat preservation could stand most improvement.



Environmental elements of sustainability tended to rank highest, while economic elements tended to rank lowest. There was a great deal of variation across social elements of sustainability.

There was most variability in responses about succession planning

Respondents ranged from raising just one to as many as ten types of animals and/or crops, and averaged four to five.

Larger operations tended to feel more confident about sustainability than did smaller ones.

Questions about animal wellbeing received the most consistent responses

Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association

dba Dairy Business Association

Wisconsin Grocers Association, Inc.

PDPW

Wisconsin Poultry & Egg

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

University of Wisconsin Platteville Pioneer Farm

USDA

Wisconsin Pork Association

Wisconsin Corn Growers Association www.wicorn.org

Discovery Farms Wisconsin

Wisconsin Soybean Program

UW Extension University of Wisconsin–Extension

University of Wisconsin–Madison

NSF

Prepared with the Wisconsin Animal Agriculture Sustainability Initiative by Sarah Collier, Molly Jahn, and the Environmental Resource Center – University of Wisconsin–Madison
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