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Chesapeake Bay Watershed Residents' and Farmers' Views on Urban and Suburban Growth

Edem Avemegah and Jessica D. Ulrich-Schad

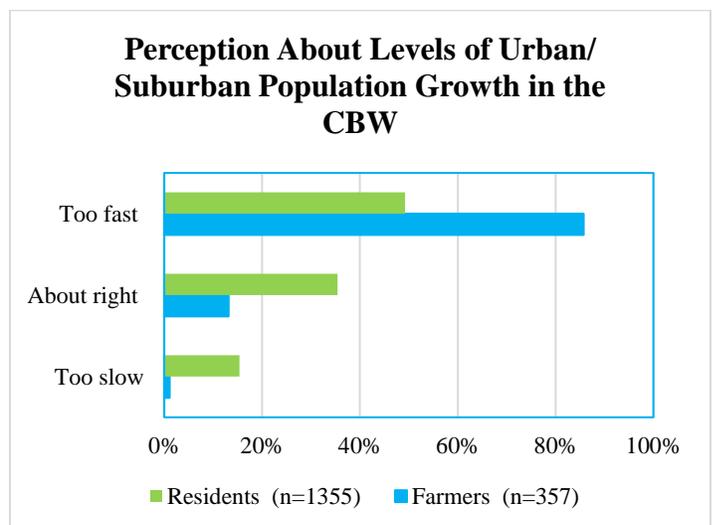
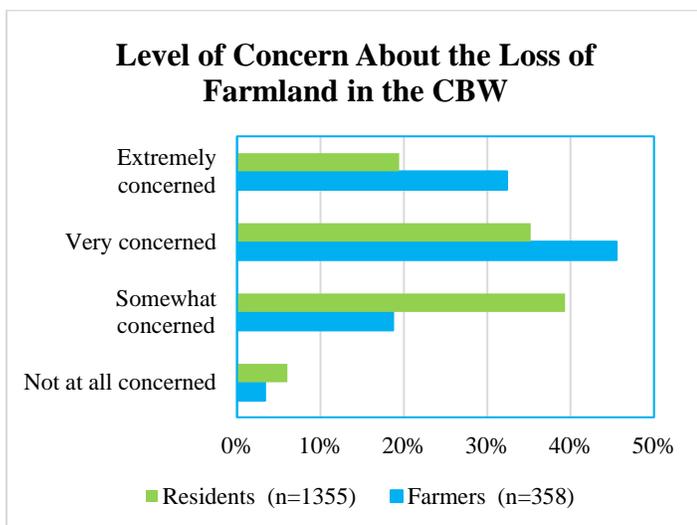
What the future of agriculture in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (CBW) will look like is uncertain due to issues such as the loss of farmland to sprawling suburban development. In this rapidly urbanizing landscape, tension can also arise between farmers and their non-farm neighbors due to their proximity to each other. Understanding the concerns of these stakeholders regarding the urban and suburban growth and the potential problems that are likely to occur with farmers being in close contact with their non-farm neighbors is a good step in ensuring an economically thriving and environmentally beneficial agricultural system that all residents depend upon.

To understand stakeholders' views on urban and suburban development, researchers from Utah State University and the Pennsylvania State University surveyed residents of the CBW and agricultural producers of the southern part of the CBW (Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia) in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

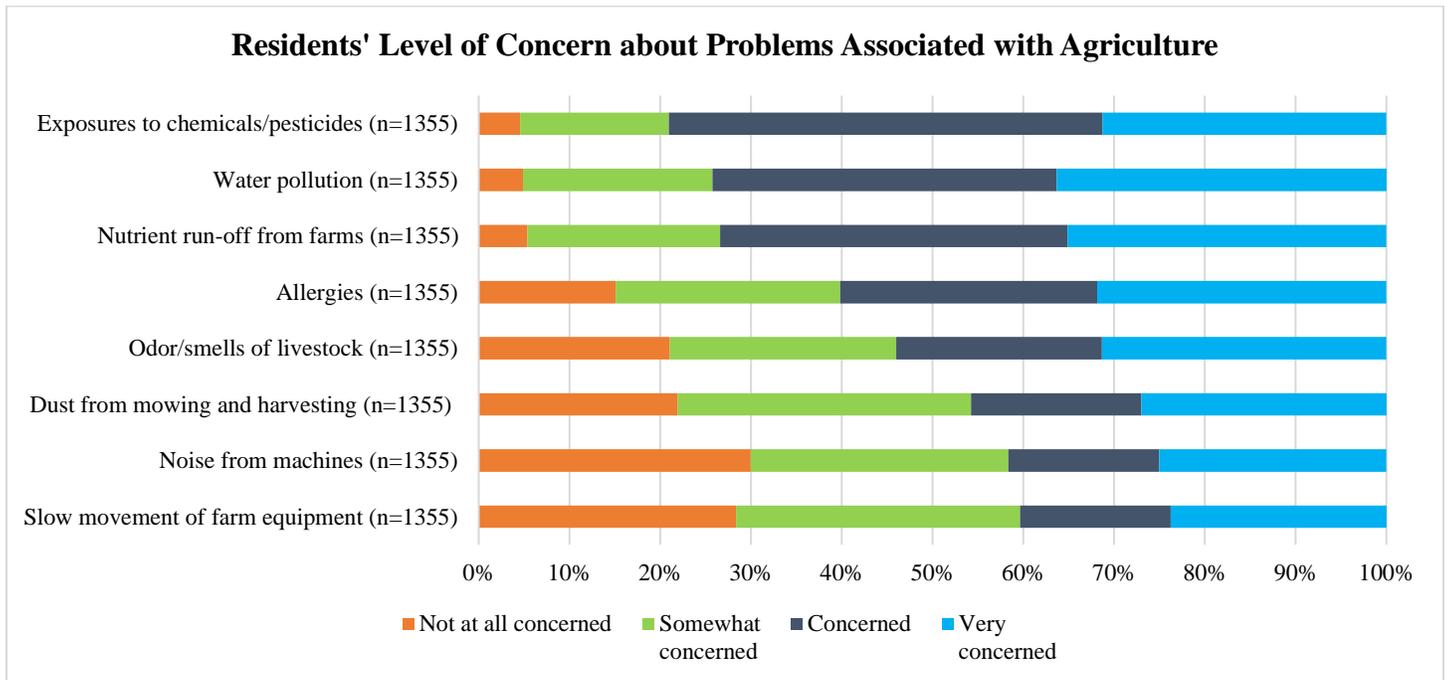
While the survey asked about many topics, in this brief we share results related to respondents' concerns about the loss of farmland and the level of urban and suburban population growth in the CBW. Questions were also asked about farmers' and residents' concerns about some of the problems that are likely to occur with them being in closer proximity to one another.

For the resident survey, respondents were recruited by Qualtrics through an online panel. Respondents from metro counties accounted for 84.6% (n=1,146) of responses and 15.4% (n=209) were from non-metro counties. A sample was purchased from DTN, a private contact vendor for the farmer survey. A random sample of 2,382 producers with 50+ acres were sent a survey that could be taken online or by mail. The survey focused on crop and livestock producers, but not hobby farmers. Of those sent the survey, 117 were not eligible and 365 responded to the survey for a response rate of 16.1%.

Farmers are more concerned about farmland loss than general CBW residents and also believe urban and suburban growth is too fast compared to residents in the CBW.



Residents indicated they were the most concerned about exposure to chemicals/pesticides and water pollution and less concerned about noise from machines and the slow movement of farm equipment blocking traffic in the CBW.



Farmers indicated they were the most concerned about legal actions by new residents and restrictions regarding their farming activities. Farmers were less concerned about trespassing and litter in the CBW.

