REACCH producers make the Internet a functional tool

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A 41-question survey was distributed to producers in northern ID, eastern WA, and northeastern OR in 2012 with the purpose of studying how cultural, social, economic, and climatic factors affect decisions made on farms in the region. Our analysis of the results describes how farmers in the REACCH project use the Internet to support farming operations.

IMPACT

Beneficial use of the Internet has continued to expand among producers and could facilitate techniques for adapting to and mitigating climate change.

Most farmers in eastern WA, northern ID, and northeastern OR are using the Internet for at least some activities (Figure 1). Over 88% of the producers surveyed routinely visit websites on the Internet, while almost 82% commonly use the Internet to send e-mail for business. These numbers are similar to those observed for urban residents of the western United States. A majority of REACCH producers surveyed also use the Internet to help manage their finances (57%) and to share photographs (50%). Over one-third use the Internet to obtain, use, or share agriculture-related software.

Most REACCH producers use the Internet to find farm-related information (Figure 2). In fact, 64% of surveyed producers use the Internet for farm-related information on an everyday basis. Another 17%, 5%, and 3% of producers use the Internet once or twice a week, a few times a month, or a few times a year, respectively. In other words, we can estimate that 89% of producers use the Internet to search for and identify information that can be used to improve their farming operations.

The high percentage of the region's producers who are using the Internet indicates that the Internet can serve as a valuable tool for educating the agricultural community on improving the sustainability of agricultural systems. The land-grant universities in the region should take advantage of this outlet to disseminate timely agricultural information and research results.

Over one-quarter (26%) of surveyed producers in the REACCH study area currently use Internet-based mobile applications (apps) to support their farming enterprise (Figure 3). Another 12% have a mobile device but do not currently use apps to support farming operations. Over half of the producers surveyed do not currently use mobile apps.

Sixty eight percent of longitudinal survey respondents have access to the internet with their cell phone. Photo by Hilary Davis.
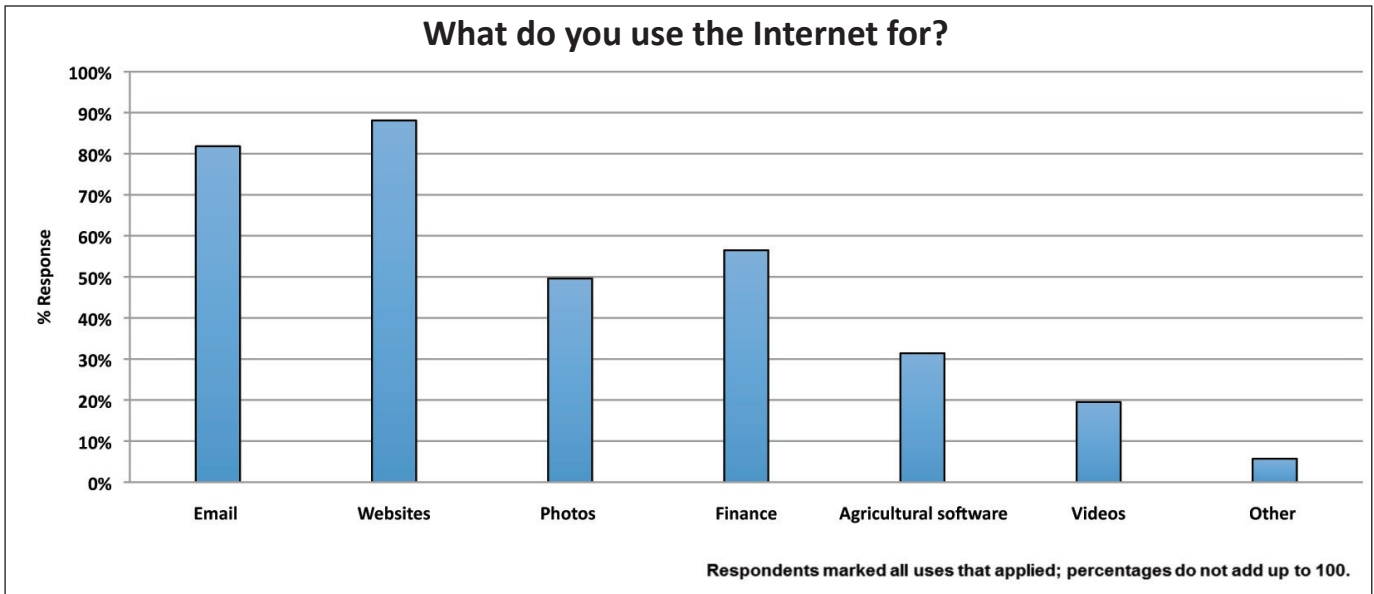
What do you use the Internet for?

Respondents marked all uses that applied; percentages do not add up to 100.

Figure 1. *Use of the Internet by producers for different activities in the REACCH project area.*

How frequently do you consult the Internet for farm-related information?

"Don't know," missing, and refused responses (3.6%) were included in the univariate calculation but are omitted from this graph. Therefore, percentages do not add up to 100.
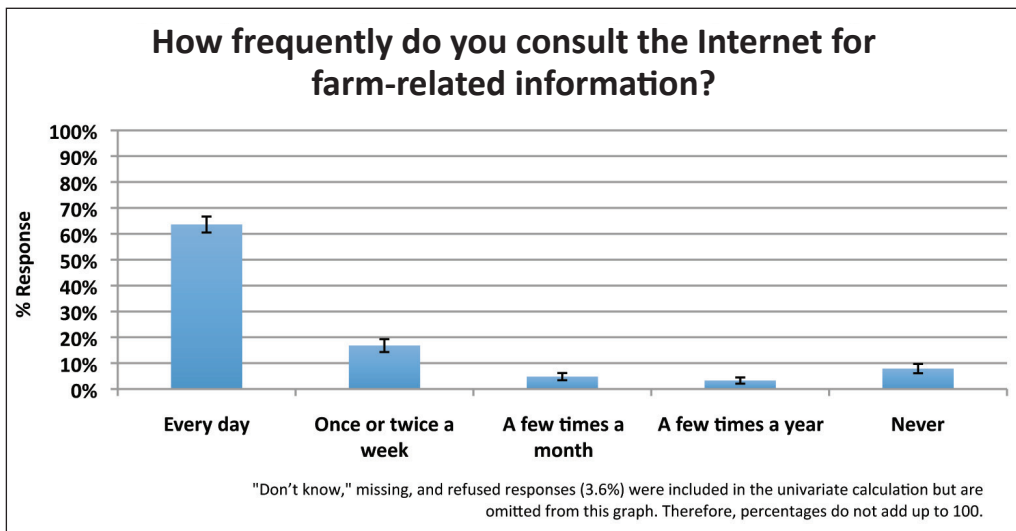
Figure 2. *Frequency with which producers in the REACCH project area consult the Internet for farm-related information.*

Do you use any "apps" to support your farming enterprise?

- Yes — 27%
- I have a mobile device, but I do not use it for farming enterprises — 13%
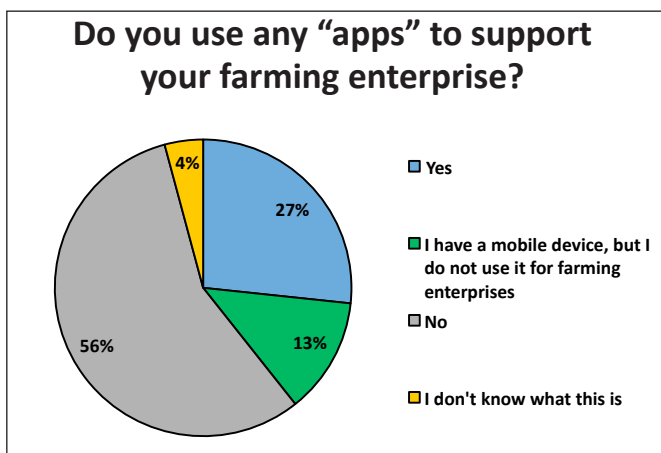- No — 56%
- I don't know what this is — 4%

Figure 3. *Use of mobile apps to support farming enterprise by producers in the REACCH project area.*