



# Producers of Texas Alternative Agriculture: A Brief Study of Beliefs

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## Introduction

In recent years, consumers have become increasingly concerned about how food is produced that parallels the increase of smaller farms with particular production methods, which here is termed alternative production (Williams & Hammitt, 2000). A survey presented producers with questions about aspects of alternative and conventional agricultural production in an attempt to better understand the Texas producer.

## Objective

The objectives of this research were:

- o Determine what beliefs are held by producers
- o Determine how beliefs affect production and marketing choices

## Materials and Methods

A Google Form based survey directed toward Texas agricultural producers was emailed directly to approximately 250 individuals who have elected to receive such emails and through an email newsletter managed by the Texas Department of Agriculture which is sent to approximately 20,000 residents. Google Forms present the data in aggregate form in a spread sheet without personal identification information. The survey was open from 5 Nov. 2015 through 8 Feb. 2016.

“Small Businesses”

“Sustainable”

“Food Safety”

“Edible Insects”  
 “Alpaca Meat”      “Raw Milk”  
 “Food Hubs”

## Results

The majority of the producers who participated in this survey were those who either currently employed alternative production methods, or those who were interested in switching to alternative in the future. Participants were concentrated in central Texas but spread into north, south, east, and panhandle Texas. There were no participants from west Texas. Participants tended to be older, well-educated men and women with smaller agricultural operations which bring in \$20,000 in income or less. Beliefs regarding perceived health, safety, environmental health, and sustainability were split approximately 40% local, 40% organic, and 20% other production labels. Operations were 29.8% crop only production, 28.1% livestock only production, and 42% diversified production. Most were interested in eventually adopting labels indicating production method or who produced it.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Results suggest that participants of this survey largely consisted of a vocal subgroup of individuals who were unsatisfied with products of current agricultural production methods available to them as consumers.

## Discussion and Conclusion Continued

This prompted the creation of their own alternative methods with corresponding labels to attract consumers and allow them to vote with their food dollar (Costanigro, Kroll, Thilmany, & Bunning, 2014). Some of these beliefs and decisions seem to be based on misinformation held as true by the producer (Claeys et al., 2013). No matter the truth behind the information, smaller and more diverse niches are being identified and filled by these entrepreneurs which indicates a need for increased informational resources on production methods, equipment, and marketing routes for producers. This is in addition to the resources needed to answer questions about health and safety of these alternative food products and production processes such as raw milk and edible insects.

“Consumer Education”

“Informational Webinars”

## Literature Cited

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