

# The National Strawberry Sustainability Initiative: National Strawberry Production System Needs Assessment Survey

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## Introduction

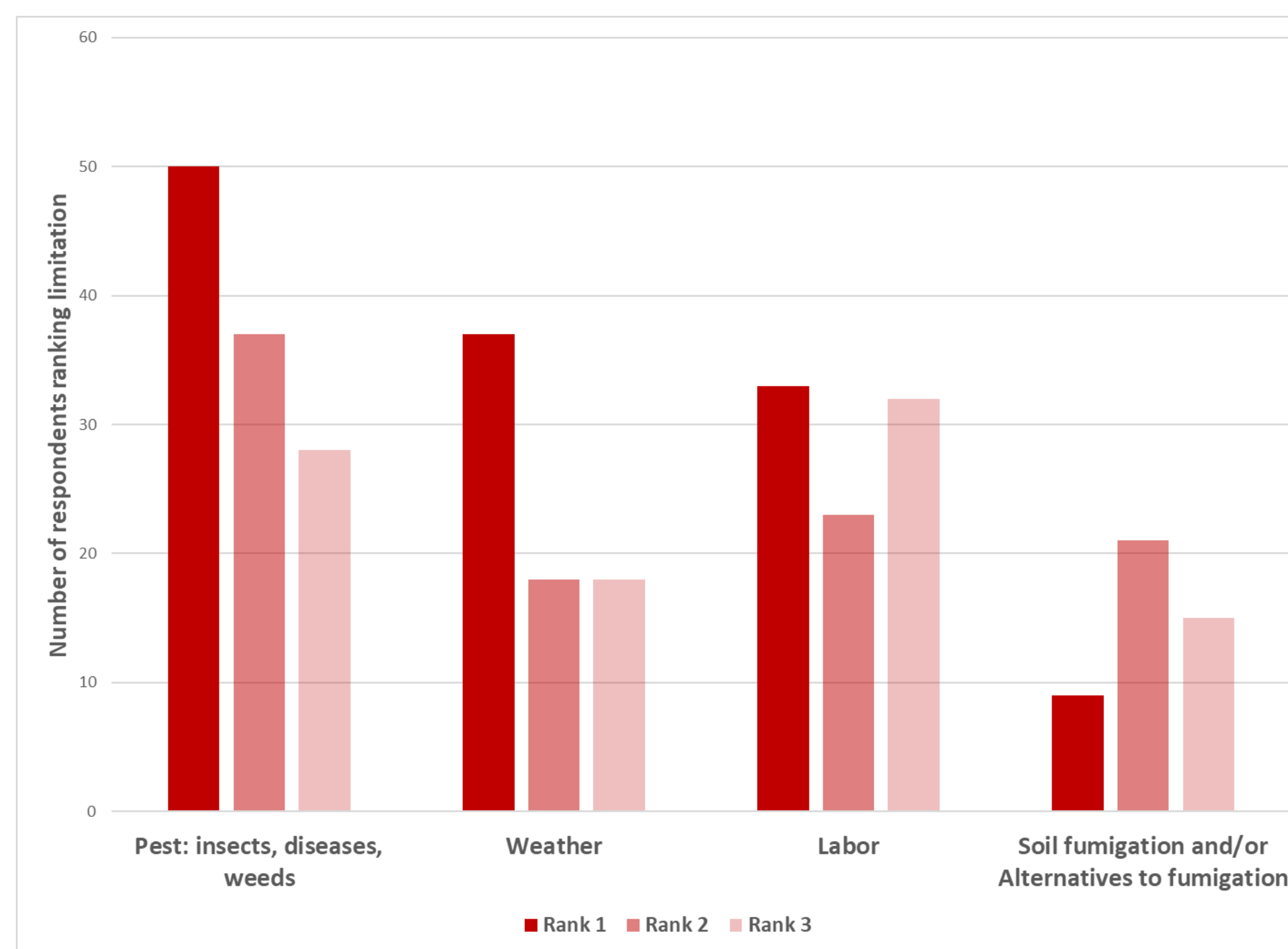
A national strawberry needs assessment was launched as part of a USDA Specialty Crop planning grant to collaborators in the multi-institutional National Strawberry Sustainability Initiative, based at the University of Arkansas. A survey of strawberry growers, managers, nurserymen, extension educators and consultants, and others in the production system was conducted to identify barriers to sustainability of the U.S. strawberry production systems. Surveys were delivered online and in paper, and promoted across the country at strawberry grower association meetings, professional conferences, newsletters and through email lists and social media. The objective of the survey was to identify actionable research and outreach/educational needs of producers to enhance sustainable strawberry production. A series of questions were asked focusing on limitations or barriers to sustainable production, specific information needs, and preferred information/knowledge delivery modes. The survey was available from 1 Dec. 2016 to 28 Feb. 2017. The survey had 181 completed responses with 365 attempts and incomplete responses. A comparison of the demographics of respondents completing the surveys and those with incomplete attempts did not reveal substantive differences.

The results obtained in the survey have guided a larger research grant proposal and fed into stakeholder teams focused on future research and outreach efforts.

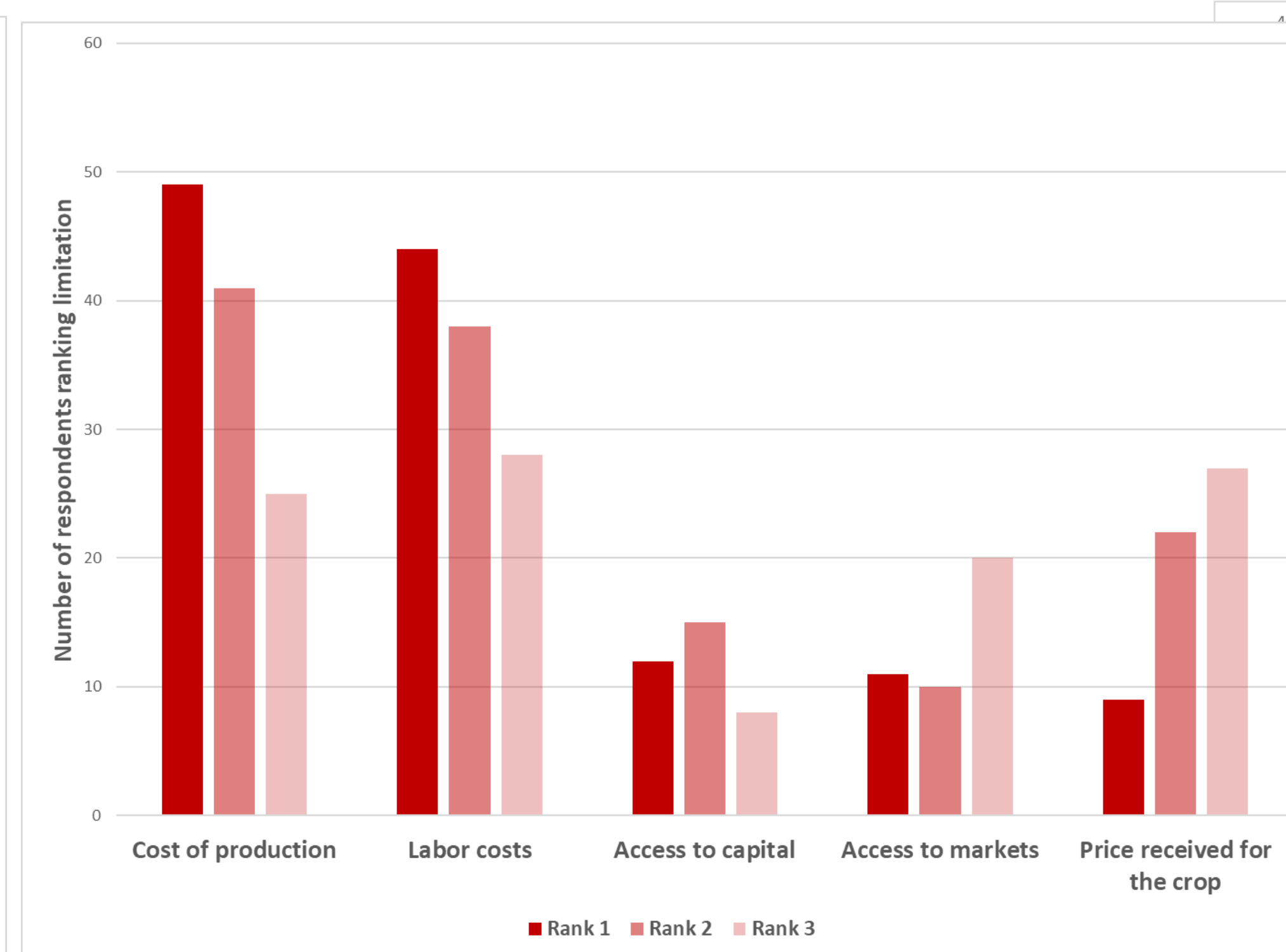
## Characteristics of overall sample

- Survey was developed through a Delphi process and pre-tested
  - 365 surveys entered into Qualtrics
  - 181 completed 100% of questions (49.5%)
- Of the 181 that answered all the questions:
- Nearly half (66%) are owners and/or operators
    - 28% were extension
  - Over half (54%) 46-65 age range
    - Importantly, 31% are 45 or younger
  - Predominantly male (79%) and white (88%)
  - About three-quarters (78%) have bachelor's degree or more
  - 49% have been farming more than 15 years
    - 24% for 5 years or less
  - 34% have been growing strawberries for 5 years or less
    - 37% for 15 years or more
  - 68% belong to a local growers association; 32% to national growers association
- Three-quarters (76%) report as full-time farmers
  - More than half (56%) are farms less than 50 acres
  - More than half (54%) have less than 2 acres in strawberries
  - Nearly 2/3 (61%) report strawberries are a secondary crop
  - On average most (59%) sell direct to consumers
    - Market share average for farmers' markets is 34%
    - Market share average for U-Pick or PYO is 25%
  - Nearly half (46%) are primarily conventional production systems
  - Slightly more than a quarter (28%) follow IPM
  - 62% plasticulture production
  - 59% grow short day/June bearing and 37% day neutral/everbearing (could choose more than one type)
  - Other findings (not shown) include concern over cost of irrigation, learning more about cover cropping, identifying alternatives to soil fumigation, dealing with frost, and concerns over quality and disease resistance of plant cultivars

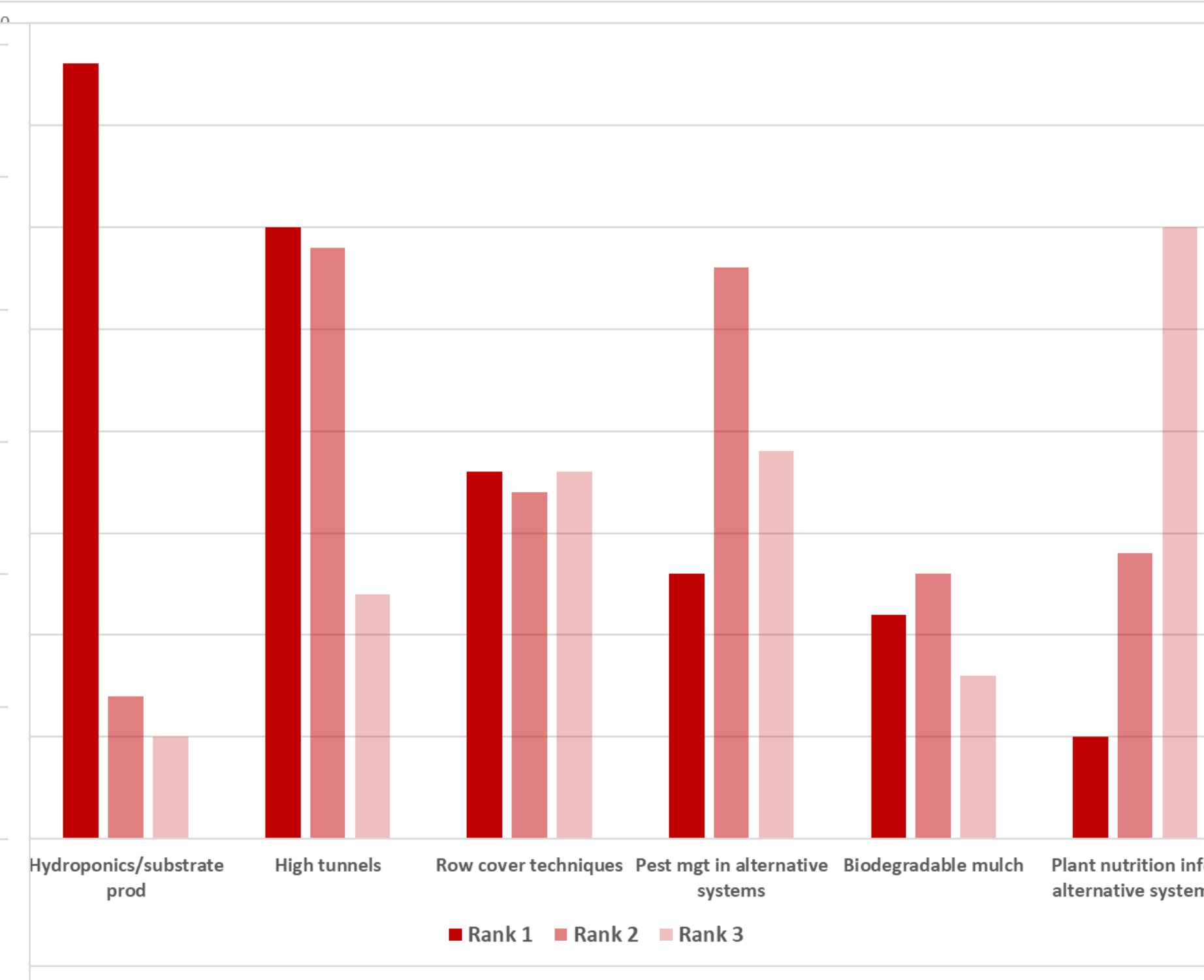
## Management Limitations\*



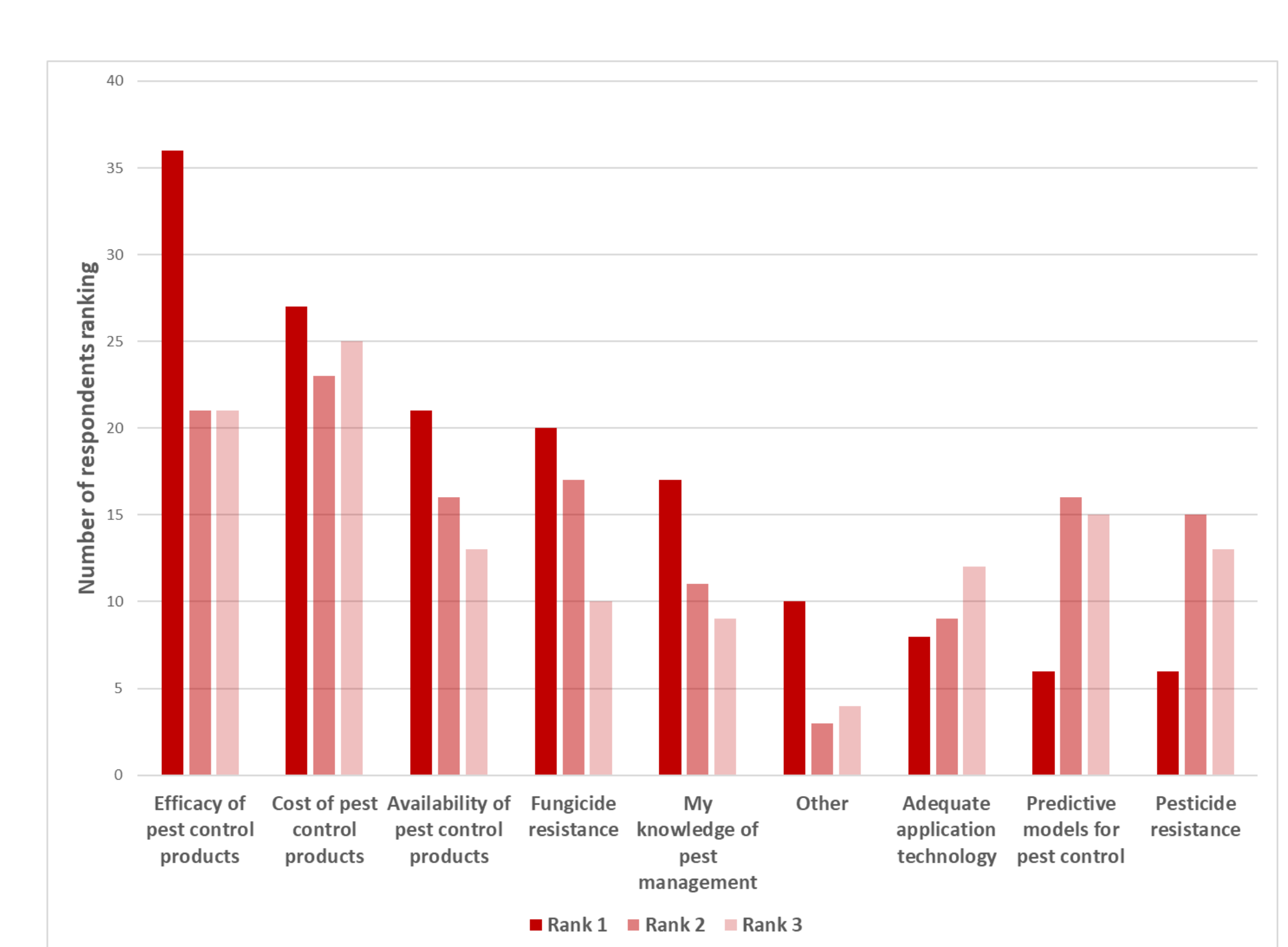
## Financial Limitations



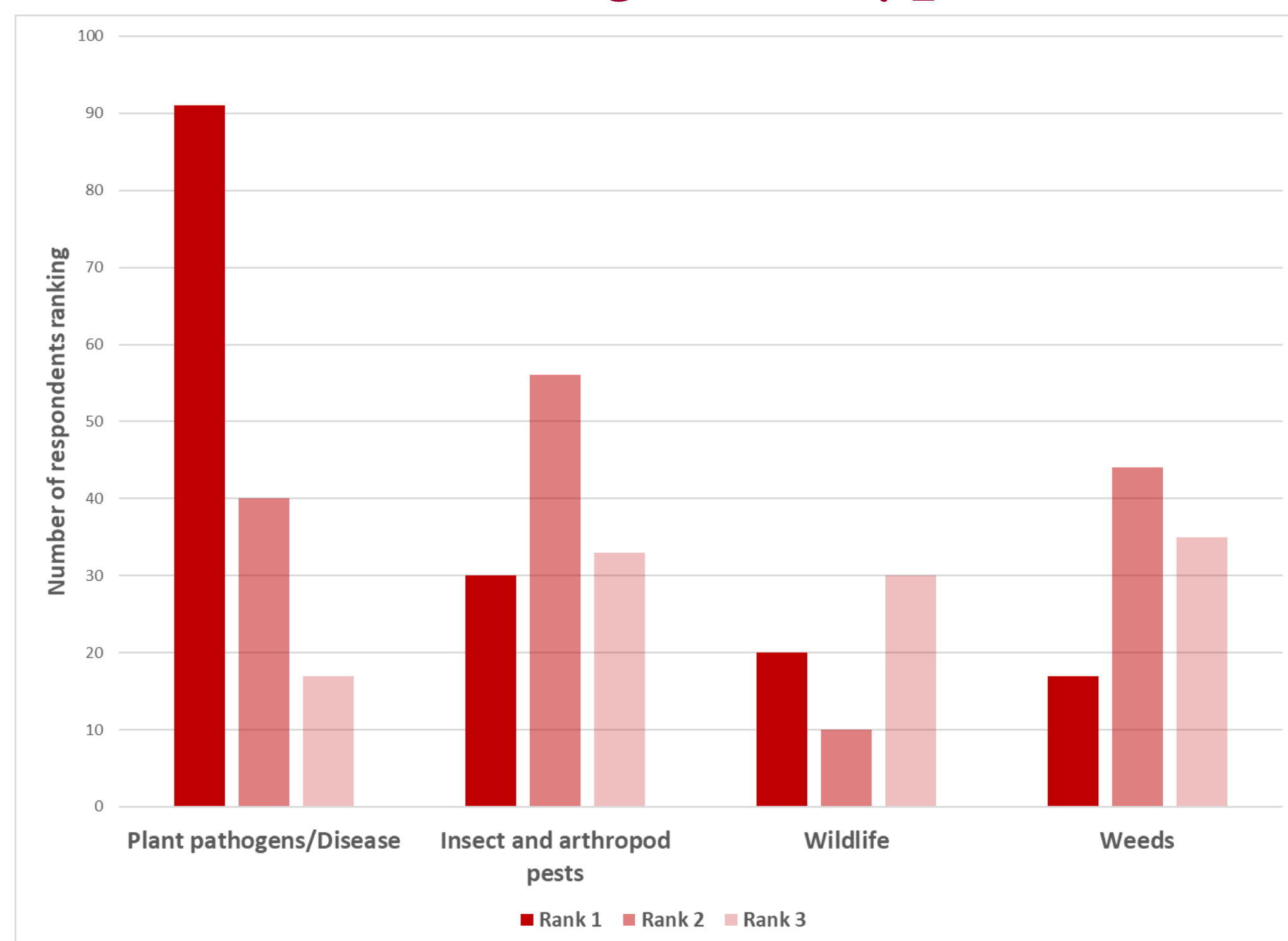
## Interested in Alternative Production



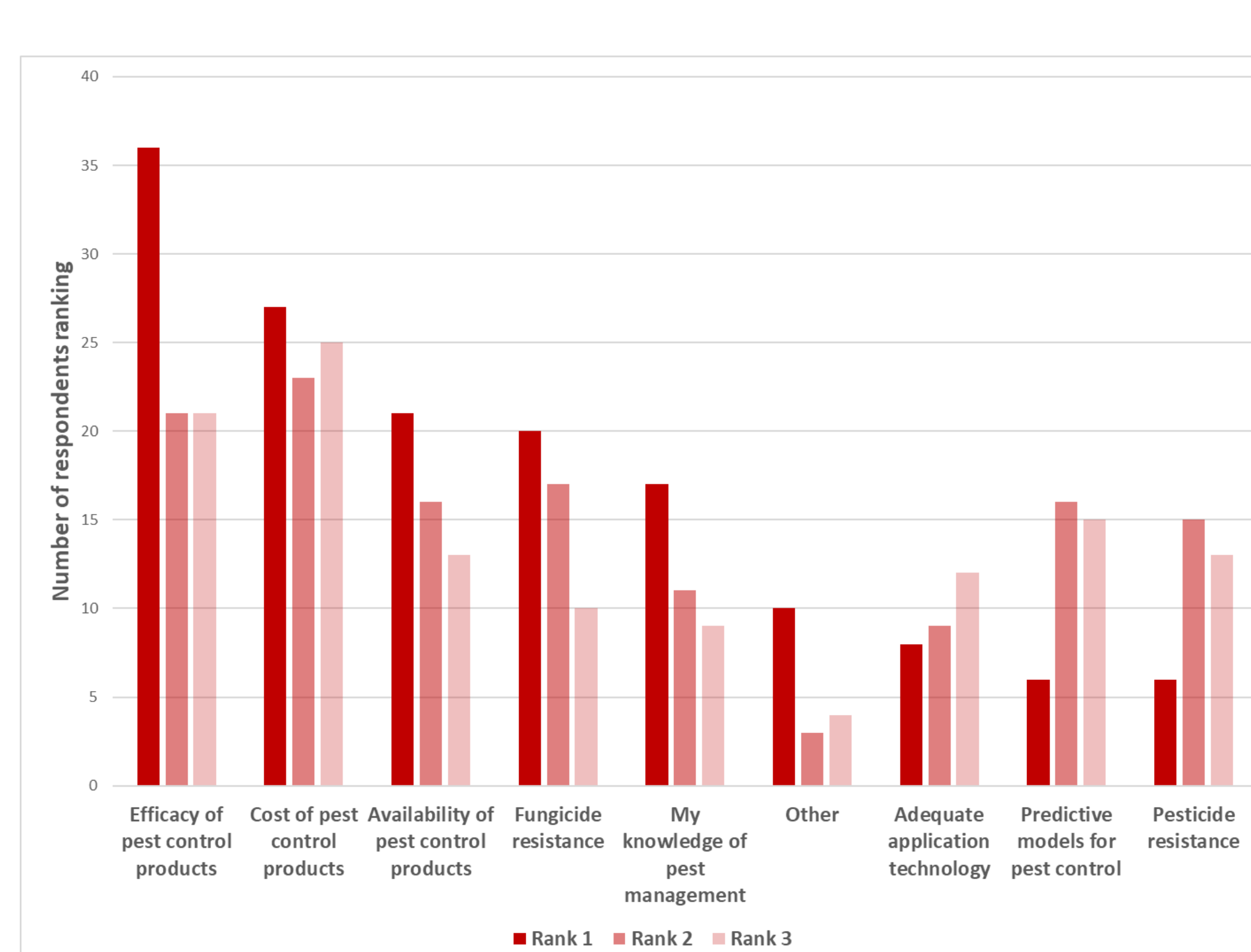
## Need Information in These Areas



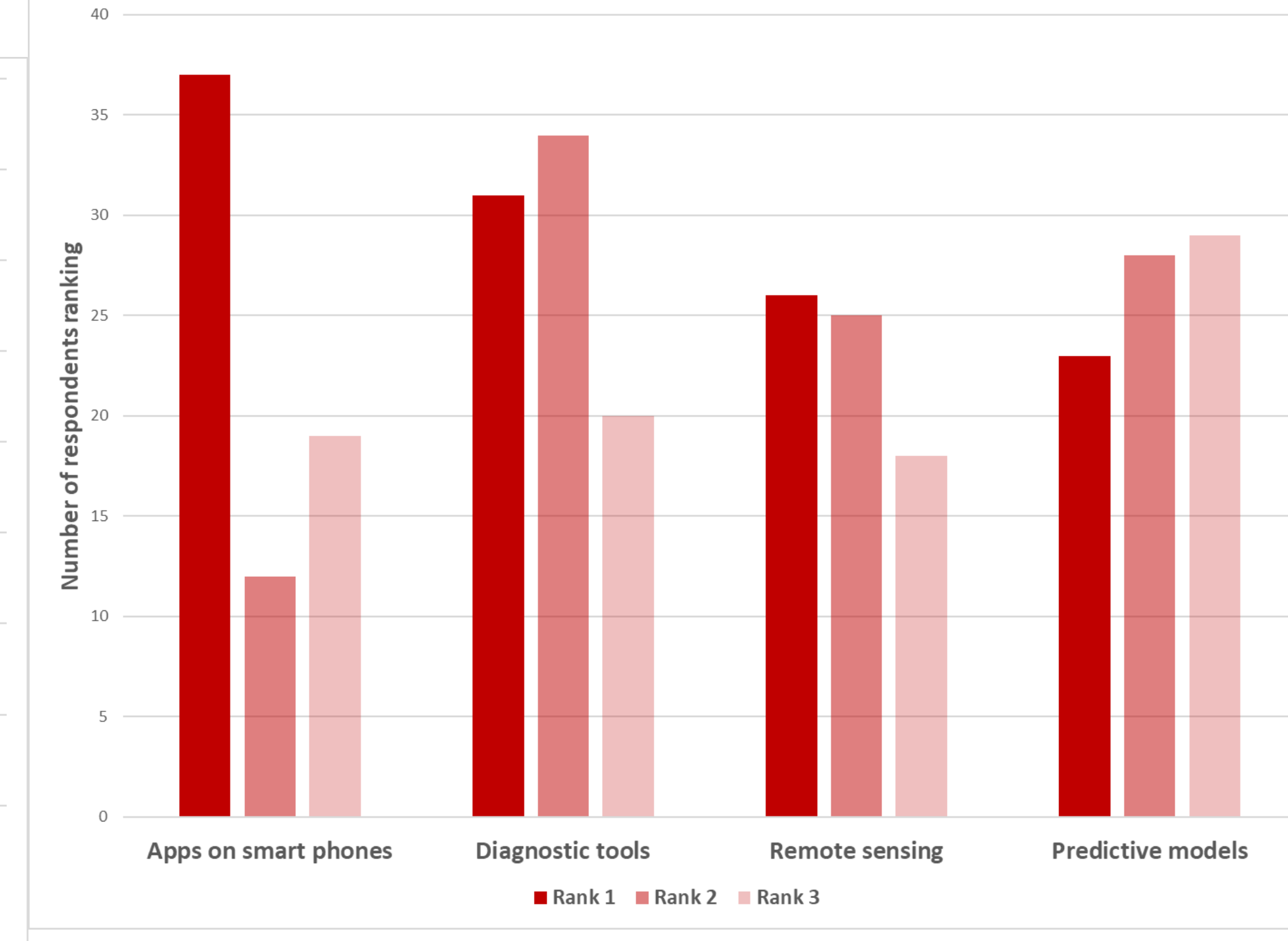
## Most Threatening Pest Type



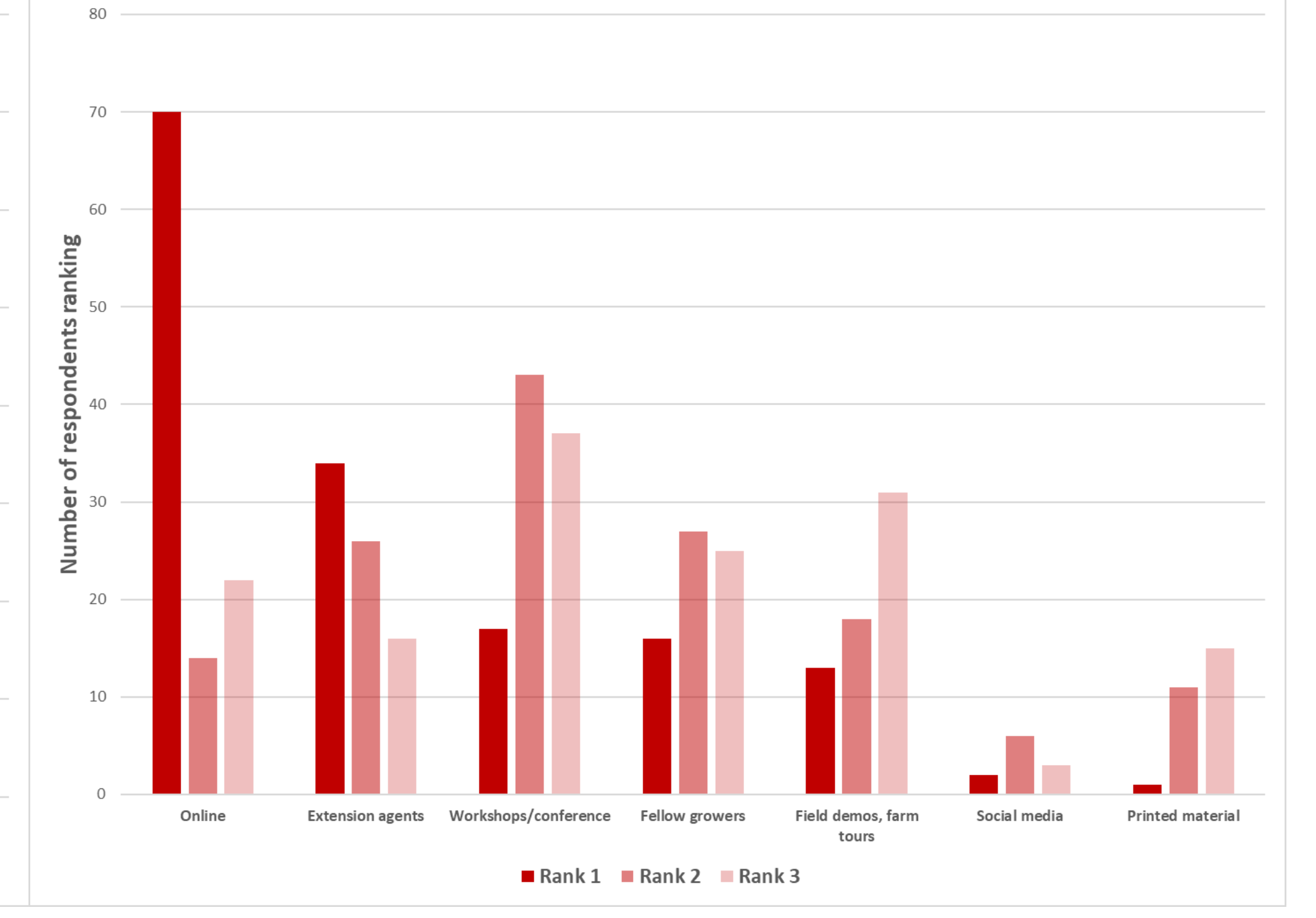
## Pest Management Limitations



## Technologies That Are Missing



## Best Way to Get Information



\*"Ranks" represent respondents' ranking of top 3 concerns or issues