

2007 Highlights: USDA Farm Service Agency's Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Background:

- U.S. Department of Treasury's Federal Consulting Group and Claes Fornell International (CFI) Group collaborated with USDA Farm Service Agency to develop several questionnaires, using American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) methodology.
 - Measured Satisfaction with Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) and Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment (DCP) Programs
- CFI collected data via phone from January – February 2007
 - Collected 500 responses for each program
 - Regionally representative – 5 Regions (based on USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, NASS)
 - Atlantic, Midwest, Plains, South, and West

Key Findings:

- **Satisfaction with Marketing Assistance Loan Program and Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program is significantly higher than the December 2007 ACSI Federal government aggregate.**
 - ACSI is comprised of three questions:
Overall satisfaction, satisfaction compared to expectations, and satisfaction compared to ideal
 - Customer Satisfaction Index for DCP is 75 and 71 for MAL; ACSI Federal Government Index is 67.8.
 - Satisfaction with MAL is significantly higher in Atlantic and Midwest compared to West and Plains.
 - Satisfaction with DCP is significantly higher in Atlantic and South compared to West and Plains.
 - Payment is the key driver of satisfaction for DCP; payments found to be accurate and timely for most.
 - Clarity of program terms and eligibility requirements are areas for improvement with DCP.
 - Payment is one of the key drivers of satisfaction for MAL.

- Respondents found MAL payments accurate; timeliness may be an opportunity to improve.
- Application/sign up is also key driver area for MAL.
- Clarity of MAL program terms, eligibility requirements, and easier application processes are opportunities to improve.
- Respondents found staff professional, knowledgeable, and provided valuable assistance in timely manner for both programs.

Demographics:

- For each program, most respondents are in age range of 50 – 59.
- DCP had higher proportion of respondents ages 60+ than MAL (44% versus 34%) while MAL had more under 50 (31% versus 23%).
- Most respondents are farming as individual or family farm.
- Most mentioned income range for both programs is \$25,000 - \$99,900.
- More MAL respondents are in higher farm income categories compared to DCP respondents (40% for MAL versus 21% for DCP).
- Over four-fifths of respondents live within 30 minutes of field office.
- While “convenience of location” falls with increase in drive time, satisfaction does not for both programs.
- A majority of respondents have personal computers with Internet access.
- Of those with Internet access, half have high-speed access
 - Approximately one-third of all respondents

Overall:

- **Payment is a key driver for both programs, as is the application process.**
- **Customer Service/Staff is viewed as the biggest strength of each program.**