



U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

PLANT MATERIALS CENTERS

Customer Satisfaction Study

Final Report
April 2007

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Introduction

This report is about customer perceptions of services from the Plant Materials Centers of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. This report was produced by CFI Group in collaboration with the University of Michigan. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact CFI Group at 734-930-9090.

Overview of ACSI Methodology

ACSI is produced by the University of Michigan in partnership with CFI Group, and the American Society for Quality. The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the national indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of goods and services available to U.S. residents. It is the only uniform, cross-industry/government measure of Customer Satisfaction. Since 1994, the ACSI has measured Satisfaction, its causes, and its effects, for seven economic sectors, 41 industries and more than 200 private sector companies. ACSI has measured more than 100 programs of federal government agencies since 1999. This allows benchmarking between the public and private sectors and provides information unique to each agency on how its activities that interface with the public affect the Satisfaction of customers. The effects of Satisfaction are estimated, in turn, on specific objectives (such as public trust).

Additional information can be found in the appendices of this report.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the study was developed through a collaborative effort between CFI Group and the USDA NRCS Plant Materials Centers. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix A in the back of this report.

Appendix B: Respondent Background

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provided respondent sample of Plant Materials Center customers. Information about the respondents' backgrounds and responses to other similar questions such as 'How you became aware of Plant Materials Program and PMC's' can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix C: Attribute Score Tables

Respondents were asked to evaluate items on a 1 to 10 scale. Results to these questions are reported on a scale of 0 to 100 and are included in Appendix C: Attribute Tables. Aggregate scores are included in these tables as well as comparisons of scores by segments, such as organization; used plant releases from PMC versus did not use plant releases, etc.

Appendix D: Verbatims

Verbatim comments from all open-ended responses are included in Appendix D.

Data Collection

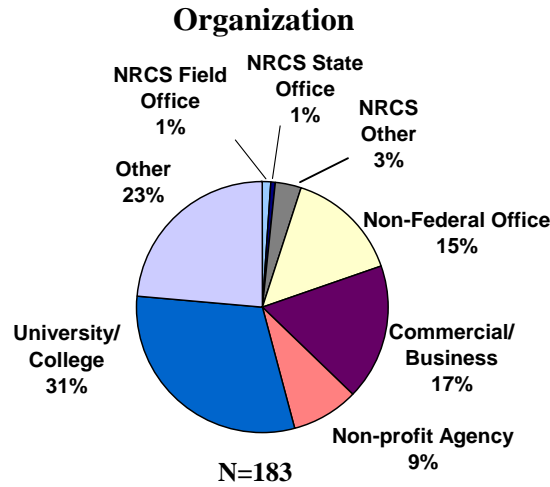
Interviews were conducted between December 1 and December 19, 2006, by the professional interviewers of Discovery Research Group working under monitored supervision according to specifications from CFI Group. Interviewers used CATI (computer-assisted-telephone-interviewing) terminals programmed for the specific questionnaire. The Plant Materials Centers provided CFI Group with customer names of those who used technical assistance or plant materials through Plant Materials Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) within the last two years. A total of 187 responses were collected, of which 183 were valid for modeling purposes. Respondent cooperation, participation among those who were qualified and successfully contacted was 96.4%. The response rate that also accounts for non-interview events, where a respondent could not be reached (e.g., busy, answering machine, voice mail.) was 20.3%.

ACSI Code	Definition	n
U	UNIVERSE OF SAMPLED TELEPHONE NUMBERS	1268
	Interviews	
I	Total completed interviews	187
P	Partial interviews	7
I+P	Total interviews	194
	Eligible cases that are not interviewed (Non-respondents)	
	Break-offs	0
	Refusal, qualified cases	0
RQ	Total qualified cases refusals	0
	Cases of unknown eligibility (Unknown eligibility/No contact—Non-interview)	
	Cases of unknown eligibility (Unknown eligibility/No contact—Non-interview)	965
	Foreign language/hard of hearing	1
UE	Total unknown eligibility	966
	Cases that are not eligible (Non-eligible Respondents)	
	Disconnect/out of service	10
	Computer/FAX	4
	Wrong number	32
	Filter	61
	Other Non-eligible respondent	1
NER	Total Non-eligible Respondents	108
	Quota Filled so respondent not eligible for interview	
	Case of quota-filled subgroup	0
	Scheduled for callback, but subgroup quota filled or interview period ended	0
QF	Total Quota Filled Respondents	0
U	Universe of Sampled Numbers	1268
NER	Less Non-eligible Respondents	108
QF	Less Quota Filled Respondents	0
EU	Universe of Eligible Numbers	1160

COOPERATION RATE (AAPOR (2)) = I/(I+P)+RQ	96.4%
e = (I+P+RQ+QF)/(I+P+RQ+QF+NER)	64.2%
RESPONSE RATE (AAPOR RR(3)) = I+COOP(QF)/(I+P+RQ+QF+NER+e(UE))	20.3%

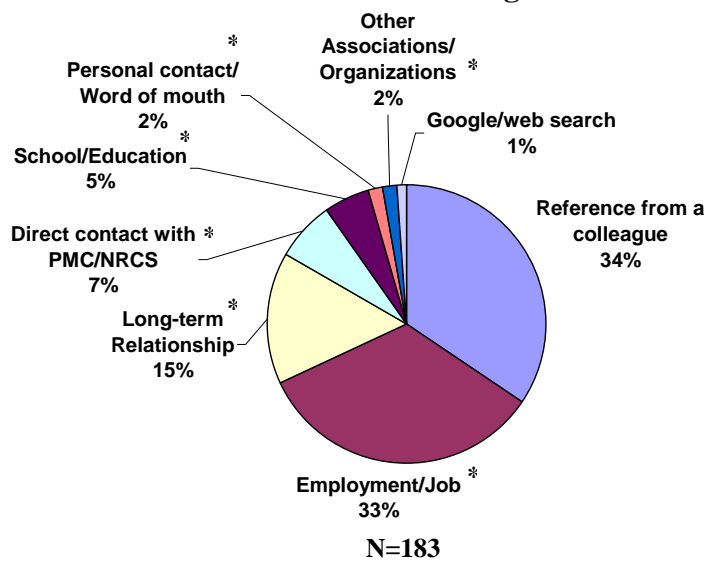
Respondents

Nearly one-third (31%) of the respondents identified themselves as being with a university or college. Commercial and business organizations accounted for 17% of respondents and Non-Federal offices accounted for 15% of respondents. Only 5% of the respondents were from NRCS offices. The chart below shows the percentage of respondents from each organization type.



Respondents were asked how they became aware of the Plant Materials Program and Plant Materials Centers. One-third (34%) mentioned a reference from a colleague and another third (33%) mentioned their job or employment. Fifteen percent indicated they learned about PMP and PMCs through their long-term relationship with PMP or NRCS. The remaining organization types are shown in the chart below. Note that on the survey 64% responded ‘Other’ and provided a verbatim response. Responses noted with an asterisk were coded and categorized from ‘Other’ verbatim responses. All verbatim responses are provided in Appendix D.

How became aware of Plant Materials Program and Plant Materials Centers



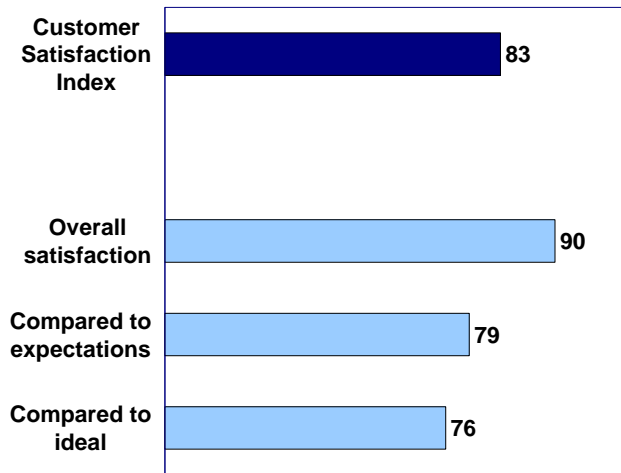
* Category from coded verbatim responses

Customer Satisfaction (ACSI)

The **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)** is a weighted average of the three ACSI benchmark questions Q26-Q28 in the questionnaires in Appendix A. The questions are answered on 1-10 scale and converted to a 0-100 scale for reporting purposes. The three questions measure: Overall Satisfaction; Satisfaction compared to expectations; and Satisfaction compared to an ideal organization. The model assigns the weights to each question in a way that maximizes the ability of the index to predict changes in agency outcomes.

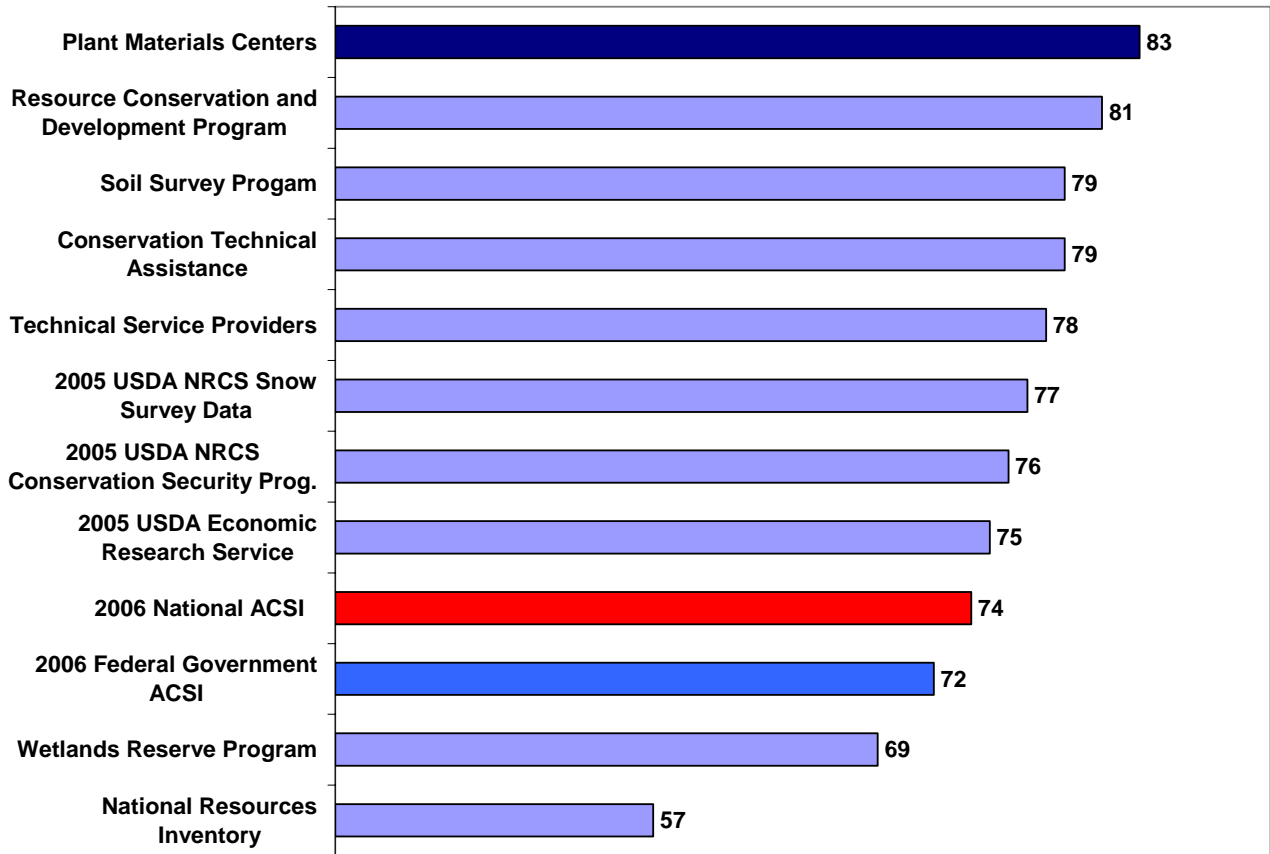
The Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for the Plant Materials Centers is 83 on a 0-100 scale. This score is well above the Federal Government’s Customer Satisfaction Index for 2006 of 72. Of the three Satisfaction index questions, ‘Overall Satisfaction’ received the highest score with a rating of 90. The chart on the following page shows other recent USDA and NRCS Satisfaction scores for benchmarking purposes.

PMC Customer Satisfaction Index



N=183

Satisfaction Benchmarks



Plant Materials Centers Satisfaction is significantly higher than Federal Government ACSI and the National ACSI. The respective eleven-point and nine-point gaps are significant at a 90% level of confidence. PMC also compares favorably to other USDA and NRCS measures of Customer Satisfaction.

Among the Satisfaction scores shown in the chart above, differences of three-points or greater are statistically significant at a 90% level of confidence.

Customer Satisfaction Model

The Plant Materials Centers Customer Satisfaction model illustrated on the following page should be viewed as a cause and effect model that moves from left to right. The rectangles are multi-variable components that are measured by survey questions or attributes shown on the far left of the page. Attribute scores are the mean (average) respondent scores to each individual question that was asked in the survey. Respondents are asked to rate each item on a 1-10 scale with "1" being "poor" and "10" being "excellent." CFI Group converts the mean responses to these items to a 0-100 scale for reporting purposes. It is important to note that these scores are averages, not percentages. The score is best thought of as an index, with "0" meaning "poor" and "100" meaning "excellent."

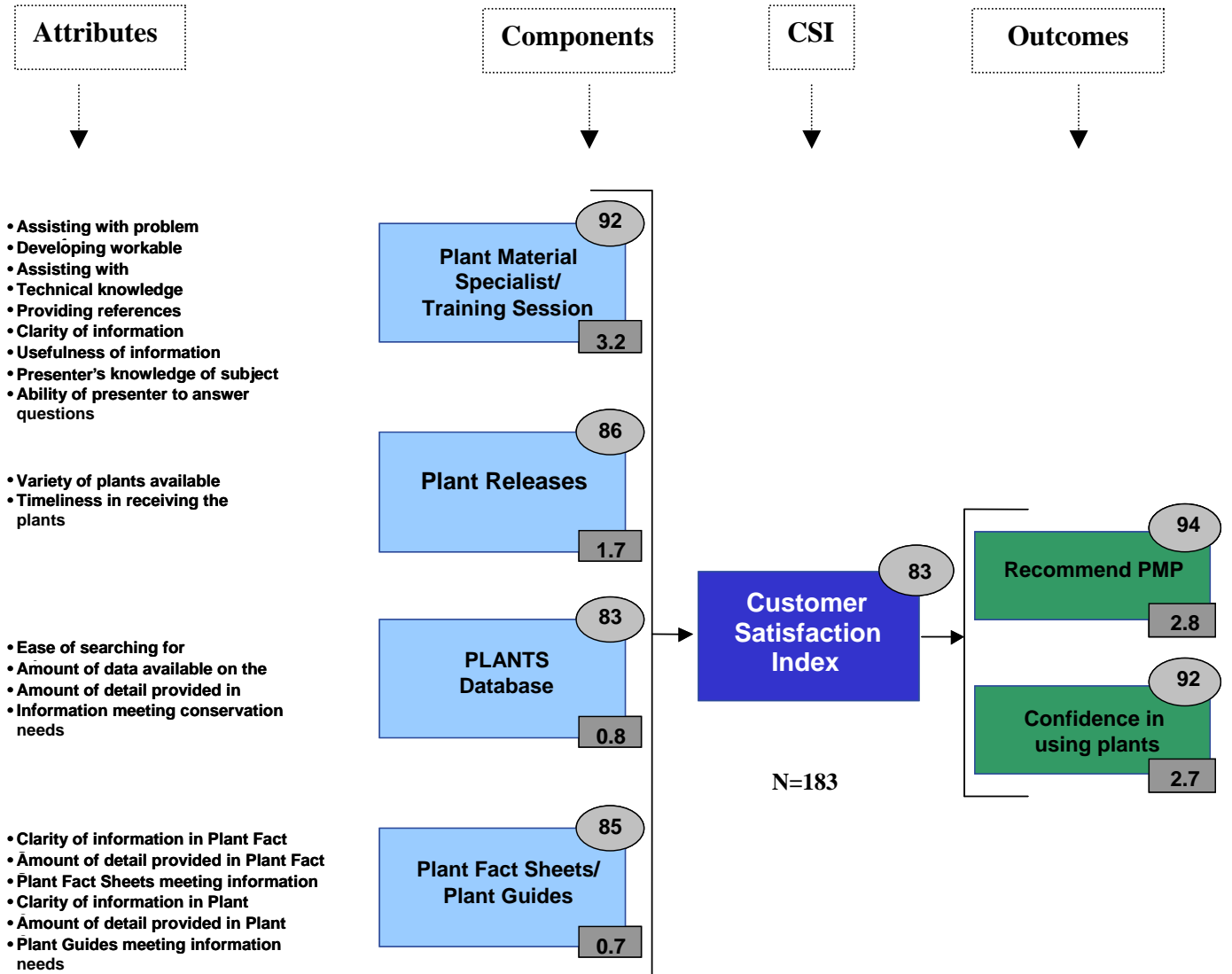
A component score in the ovals in the upper right corners is the weighted average of the individual attribute ratings given by each respondent to the questions presented in the survey. A score is a relative measure of performance for a component, as given for a particular set of respondents. In the model illustrated on the following page, scores for attributes such as 'Variety of plants available' and 'Timeliness in receiving the plants' are combined to create the component score for 'Plants.'

The numbers in the lower right corners of the rectangles represent the strength of the effect of the component on the left to the one to which the arrow points on the right. These values represent "impacts." The larger the impact value, the more effect the component on the left has on the one on the right. Impacts should be read as the effect on the subsequent component if the initial driver (component) were to be improved or decreased by five points. For example, if the score for Plants increased by five points (86 to 91), the Customer Satisfaction Index would increase by the amount of its impact, 1.7 points, (from 83 to 84.7). If the driver increases by less than or more than five points, the resulting change in the subsequent component would be the corresponding fraction of the original impact. Impacts are additive. Thus, if multiple areas were to each improve by five points the related improvement in Satisfaction will be the sum of the impacts.

Similarly, if the Customer Satisfaction Index were to increase by five points, outcomes such as 'Recommending PMP' or 'Confidence in using plants from PMP' would increase by the amount of their impact. In the case of Recommending PMP, the likelihood to recommend would increase by 2.8 points with a five-point increase in Satisfaction.

The USDA NRCS Plant Materials Centers can use the scores (in ovals) and impacts (in rectangles) from the model shown on the following page to target areas for improvement that will have the greatest leverage on Customer Satisfaction. As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in Satisfaction at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially if scores are lower for those components.

USDA NRCS Plant Materials Centers Customer Satisfaction Model



Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Plant Materials Specialist/Training Sessions

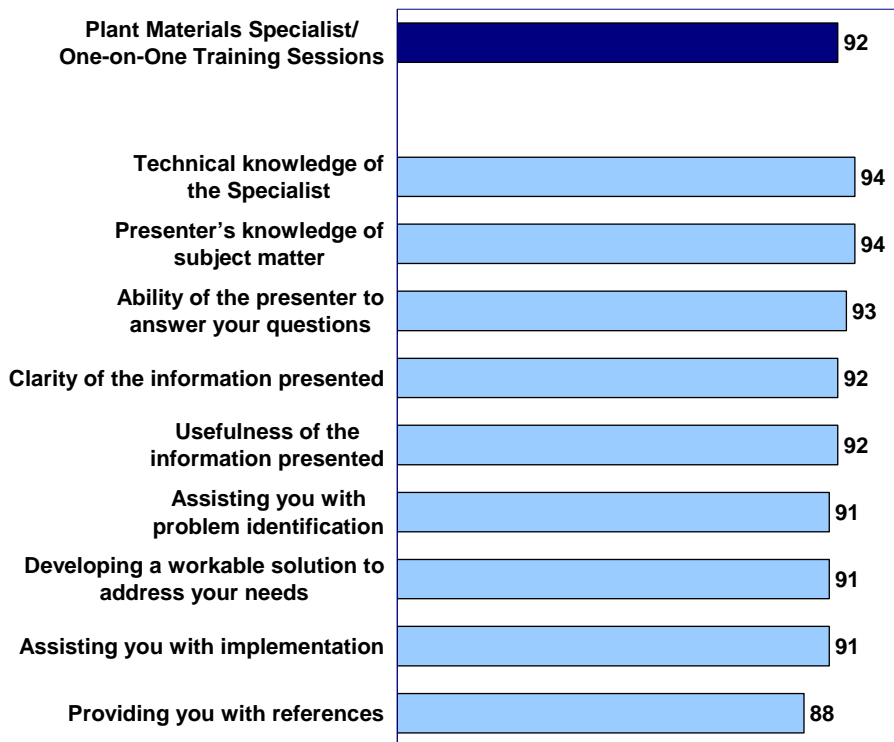
Impact 3.2

The clients’ interactions with the Plant Materials Specialist and the training sessions the Specialists conduct have the highest impact on Customer Satisfaction. While the questionnaire evaluated the Plant Materials Specialist and One-on-one training sessions as separate areas, the strong relationship between the two highly correlated areas points to them to be modeled as one component that includes nine items. With an impact of 3.2 ‘Specialists/Training’ is the key driver of Customer Satisfaction.

Respondents rated Specialists/Training as a strength of the PMC. Presenters also were viewed as experts on the subject matter they present in training sessions and in their ability to answer questions. Information was found to be useful and presented in a clear manner.

Specialists were found to possess great technical knowledge. Specialists also received high marks in helping in working with customers through the process of problem identification, developing a workable solution and assisting with implementation. Of the Specialist/Training items evaluated, only the specialist providing references scored below 90 with a score of 88.

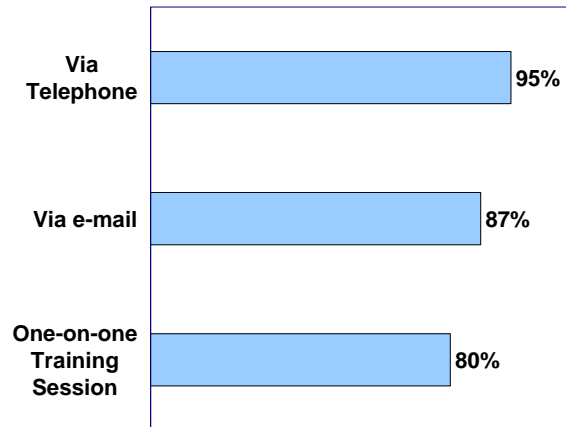
Plant Materials Specialist/Training Sessions



N= 183

Respondents used multiple modes to work with the Plant Materials Specialist. Nearly all (95%) used a telephone to work with the Specialist. Most also indicated they used e-mail (87%) and 80% received one-on-one training.

How worked with Plant Material Specialist

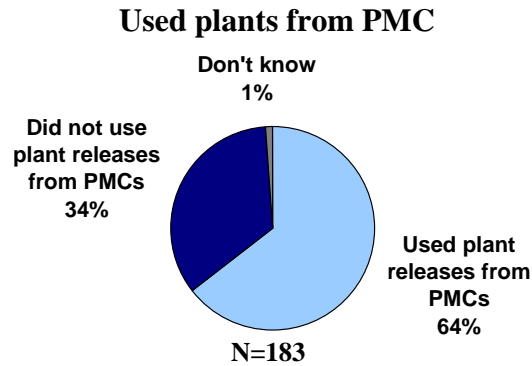


N=183

Plant Releases

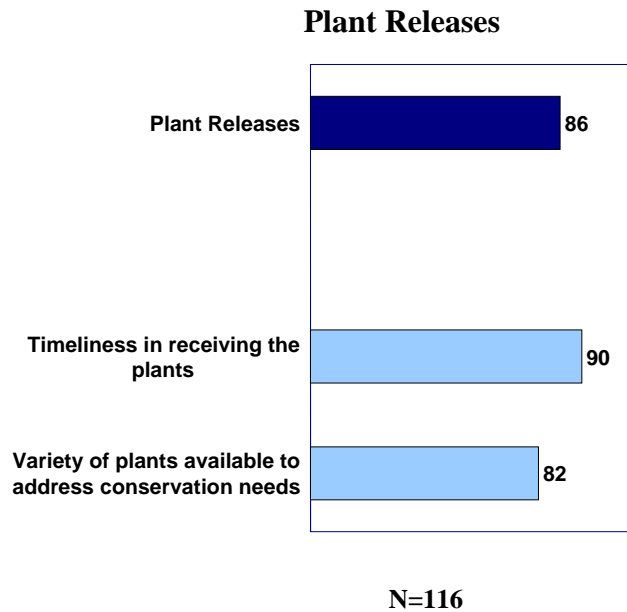
Impact 1.7

Nearly two-thirds of respondents used plant releases from PMCs. Those who had used plant releases were more satisfied with PMC (85) than those who used PMC for other purposes such as informational needs and did not use plant releases from PMC (80). This is a statistically significant difference at a 90% level of confidence.



Note: Percentages add up to less than 100% due to rounding

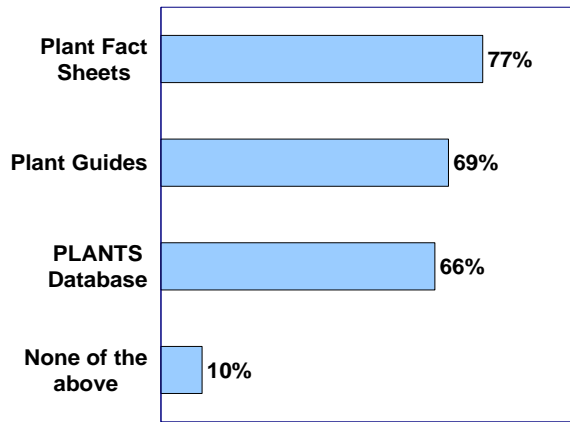
Plant Releases have a high impact on Customer Satisfaction with an impact of 1.7. Respondents received the plants in a timely manner (90). The variety of plants available is for the most part meeting conservation needs (82). However, there may be an opportunity to increase the already high performance in ‘Plants’ by offering a wider variety of plants to customers.



Plant Fact Sheets, Plant Guides and PLANT Database

Ninety percent of respondents have received information from the Plant Materials Programs in one or more of these formats. Over three-quarters (77%) have used the Plant Fact Sheets. Two-thirds of the respondents have used the PLANTS database, while just over two-thirds (69%) have used the Plant Guides.

Used the following from the Plant Materials Program



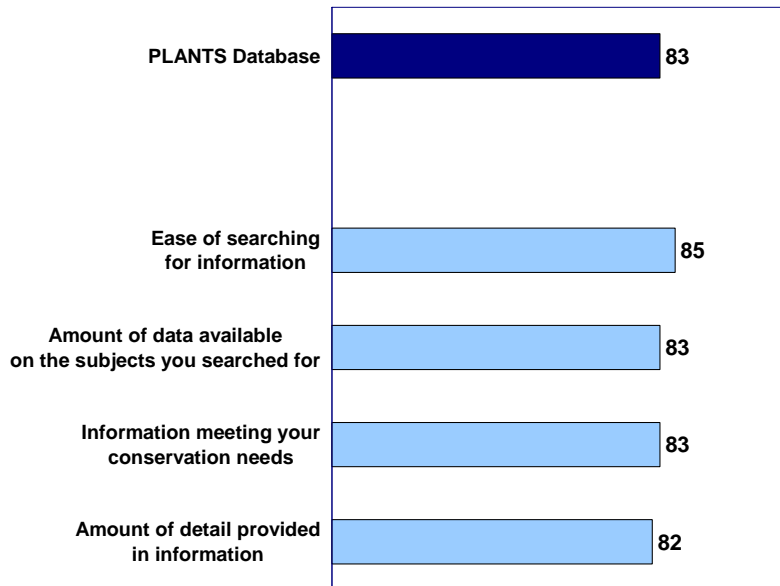
N=183

PLANTS Database

Impact 0.8

Respondents gave positive ratings to the PLANTS database overall. They found searching for information to be easy (85). The content received similarly high ratings. The amount of data on the subject, the amount of detail in the information and the information meeting conservation needs all scored well. The PLANTS Database has a moderate impact on Satisfaction with an impact of 0.8.

PLANTS Database



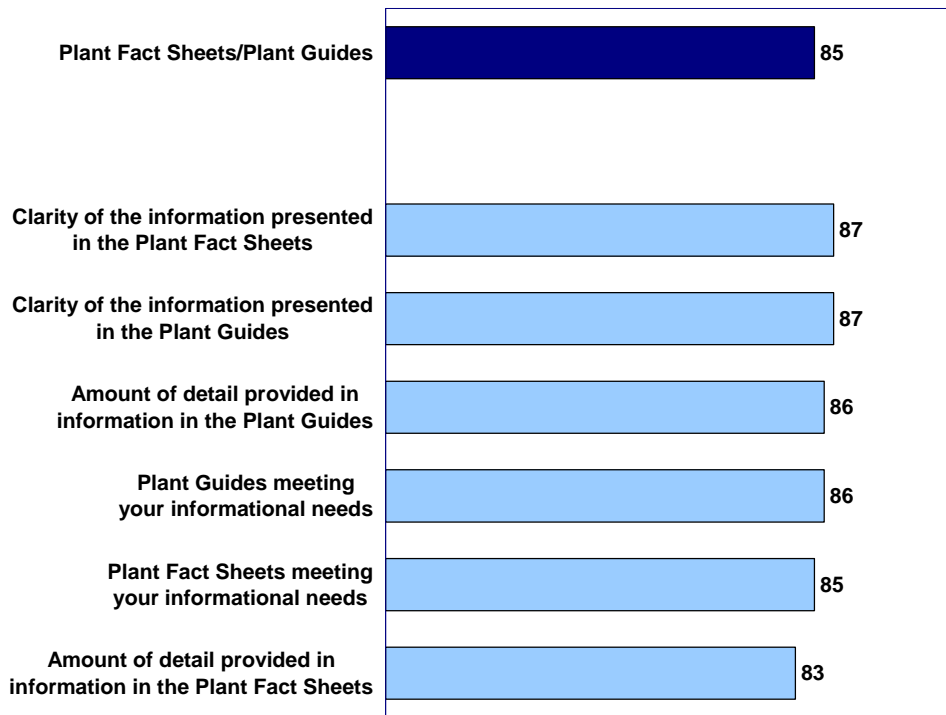
N=116

Plant Fact Sheets/Plant Guides

Impact 0.7

In modeling the respondent data, it was found that the responses to the Plant Fact Sheets and Plant Guides questions were highly correlated and therefore are represented as one component (Plant Fact Sheet/Plant Guides). This component has a modest impact on Satisfaction with an impact of 0.7. The information in the Plant Fact Sheets and Plant Guides was found to be clear and to meet the informational needs of the respondents. Respondents also gave positive ratings to the amount of detail in both the Fact Sheets and Plant Guides. Plant Guides received a slightly higher score for detail than Plant Fact Sheets; in this instance the three-point difference is statistically significant but only at a less stringent 80% level of confidence.

Plant Fact Sheets/Plant Guides



N=152

Outcomes of Customer Satisfaction

In addition to determining drivers of Customer Satisfaction, two outcome behaviors were measured. Respondents were asked about their likelihood to recommend the Plant Materials Program and about their confidence in the plant materials they use from the PMC.

Likelihood to recommend

Respondents are very likely to recommend PMP. They rated this item 94. Customer Satisfaction has an impact of 2.8 on the likelihood to recommend PMP. Thus, if Satisfaction were to improve by five points, customers likelihood to recommend PMP would increase by 2.8 points.

Confidence in using the plants

Customers also have a high degree of confidence in using the plant releases for their needs. Respondents rated their confidence in using plants 92. Satisfaction's impact on confidence in plant releases is similar to the impact it has on likelihood to recommend with an impact of 2.7.

Summary and Recommendations

Overall, customers are quite satisfied with the Plant Materials Centers. The Customer Satisfaction Index for PMCs (83) was significantly higher than the Federal Government average (72). The Satisfaction with PMC compares favorably to other NRCS and USDA Satisfaction measures, which have mostly been in the 70s.

Plant Materials Specialists interaction with customers and the one-on-one training they provide (Plant Material Specialist/Training Session) is the key driver of Customer Satisfaction for customers of the Plant Materials Centers. In the customers' ratings of Specialists/Training, Specialists were viewed as technical experts, who provided valuable help to respondents through the process of problem identification, developing a workable solution and assistance with implementation. Presenters were viewed as subject-matter experts who performed well in answering questions.

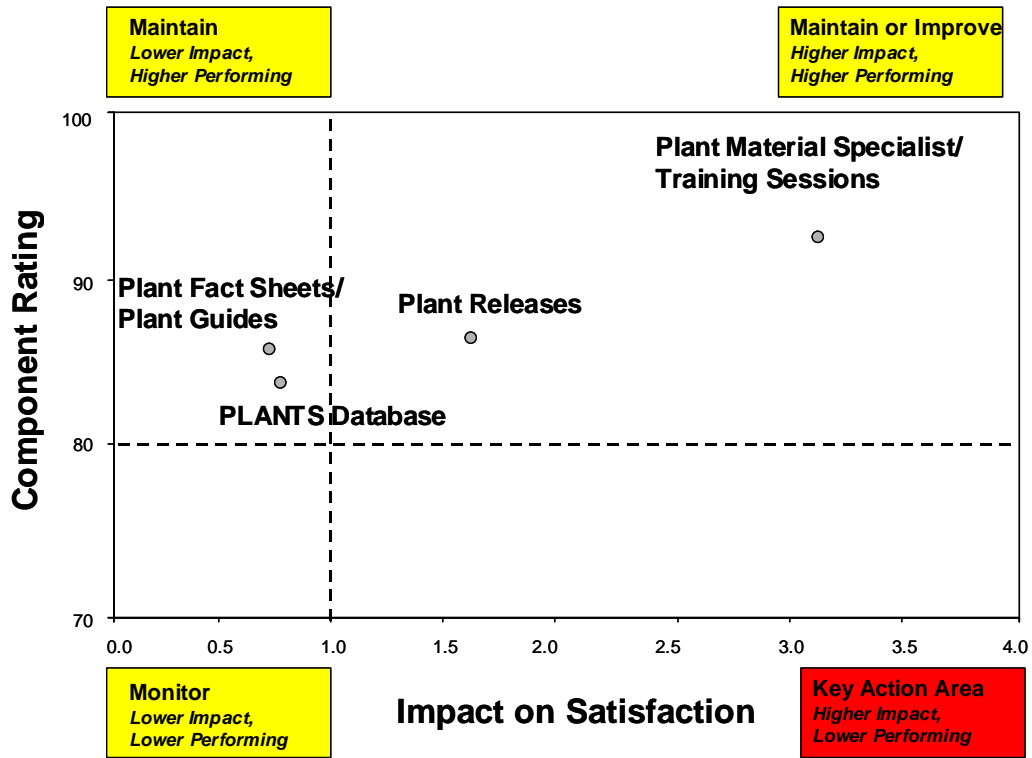
Respondents most mentioned becoming aware of the Plant Materials Program and the Plant Materials Centers from a colleague (34%), employment/job (33%) or having a long-term relationship (15%).

About two-thirds (64%) of the respondents used plant releases from PMC. Satisfaction was higher among those who used plant releases (85) compared to those who did not (80). Those who had used plant releases found they were receiving them in a timely manner and for the most part the variety was meeting their conservation needs. However, there may be an opportunity to improve the overall performance of 'Plants' by offering a wider variety of releases.

Ninety percent of respondents seek information from the Plant Materials Program via Plant Fact Sheets, Plant Guides or PLANTS Database. These information sources have a moderate impact on Satisfaction. Respondents found the PLANTS Database easy to search. The information was for the most part plentiful enough and sufficient in detail to meet their conservation needs. Likewise, the Plant Fact Sheets and Plant Guides were found to present detailed information in a clear manner that met respondents' information needs.

With respect to which areas PMC should focus on to improve Satisfaction, typically those high-impact, lower-performing areas provide the most opportunity to improve Satisfaction. As the grid shows, there are no low performing areas to target. Plant Materials Specialists/Training Sessions has the greatest impact on Satisfaction and Plant Releases has a relatively high impact as well. Even a small improvement in these high-performing, high-impact areas could increase Satisfaction. Maintaining performance may be a more realistic goal, given the high level of performance indicated by customers' ratings.

As a result of being highly satisfied with PMC, respondents were very likely to recommend PMC and had a high degree of confidence in using the plant releases from PMC.



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APPENDIX A : SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

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USDA PMC – Plant Materials Centers Customer Satisfaction Survey

Verify Respondent

Intro1. Hello. The Plant Materials Program of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has hired my company, [Data Collection Company], to call on their behalf. My name is _____. May I please speak with _____?

WAIT FOR RESPONSE

1. Correct Person on Phone (**GO TO INTRO**)
2. Not correct person, but Person is available (**HOLD UNTIL RESPONDENT ANSWERS AND READ BELOW**)

Intro2. Hello. The Plant Materials Program of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has hired my company, [Data Collection Company], to call on their behalf. My name is _____. (**GO TO INTRO**)

1. If Person not available (**Schedule a call back**)
2. If No Such Person **“Thank you and have a nice day!”**

Intro

IF SPEAKING WITH CORRECT PERSON CONTINUE BELOW

The Plant Materials Program of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) would like your feedback about them to ensure that they deliver the services that meet your needs.

Intro3. ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH PLANT MATERIALS PROGRAM FROM THE NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)?

1. Yes (Skip to Intro 4)
2. No/Don't Know (IF NO/DON'T KNOW PLEASE READ BELOW **IN BOLD**)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers several programs in order to provide technical assistance and financial incentives to enable owners and managers of privately owned land to make sound natural resource decisions and to promote conservation. One such program is the Plant Materials Program.

Intro4. We ask on behalf of the Plant Materials Program for your participation in a short survey that asks about your Satisfaction with the services it provides.

This survey will take approximately 8-10 minutes of your time. This survey is authorized by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget Control No. 1505-0191.

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: IF THE RESPONDENT HAS ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SURVEY PLEASE RECORD THE NATURE OF THEIR QUESTION AND HAVE THEM CONTACT MAGGIE RHODES)

Just to confirm, you have used technical assistance or plant materials through Plant Materials Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) within the last 2 years?

1. Yes (Continue)
2. No (Terminate)
3. Don't Know (Terminate)

Intro5. Is now a good time?

1. Yes (Continue)
2. No "Can we schedule a time that is more convenient for you?"

(For all questions, please include choices 98 = Don't Know and 99 = Refused/Hung Up)

Demographics

Demo1. Which of the following best describes your organization?

1. NRCS Field Office
2. NRCS State Office
3. NRCS Other (Center, Area Office, etc.)
4. Non-Federal Office (Conservation District, State Dept of Agriculture, etc.)
5. Commercial/Business
6. Non-profit Agency
7. University/College
8. Other (Specify)

Demo2. How did you become aware of the Plant Materials Program and Plant Materials Centers of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)?

1. Reference from a colleague
2. Google/web search
3. NRCS/PMC Newsletter
4. E-mail (e.g. listserv)
5. Newspaper/Print media
6. Other media (e.g. television, radio, etc)
7. Other (Specify)

Plant Materials Specialist

Q1. Have you worked directly with a Plant Materials Specialist or Manager from a PMC?

1. Yes (Continue to Q2)
2. No (Skip to Q1)
3. Don't Know (Skip to Q12)

Q2. (IF Q1 = YES) How did you work with the Plant Materials Specialist? (Select all that apply)

1. Via Telephone (ASK Q3-7)
2. Via e-mail (ASK Q3-7)
3. One-on-One Training Session (ASK Q3-11)

Thinking about the Plant Materials Specialist that worked with you, on a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" is "Poor" and "10" is "Excellent" please rate the Specialist on the following:

- Q3. Assisting you with problem identification
- Q4. Developing a workable solution to address your needs
- Q5. Assisting you with implementation
- Q6. Technical knowledge of the Specialist
- Q7. Providing you with references

One-on-One Training Sessions

Thinking about the Specialist or Manager from PMC who help you with information or training scale from 1 to 10, where "1" is "Poor" and "10" is "Excellent" please rate the Specialist or Manager on the following:

- Q8. Clarity of the information presented
- Q9. Usefulness of the information presented
- Q10. Presenter's knowledge of subject matter
- Q11. Ability of the presenter to answer your questions

Printed Information

Q12. Which of the following have you used from the Plant Materials Program? (Select all that apply)

1. Plant Fact Sheets (Ask Q.13-15)
2. Plant Guides (Ask Q.16-18)
3. PLANTS Database (Ask Q.19-22)
4. Other (Specify) (skip to Q23)
5. None of the above (skip to Q23)

Please rate the Plant Fact Sheets on the following. Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "Poor" and 10 means "Excellent."

- Q13. Clarity of the information presented
- Q14. Amount of detail provided in information
- Q15. Meeting your informational needs

Please rate the Plant Guides on the following. Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "Poor" and 10 means "Excellent."

- Q16. Clarity of the information presented
- Q17. Amount of detail provided in information
- Q18. Meeting your informational needs

Please rate the PLANTS database on the following. Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "Poor" and 10 means "Excellent."

- Q19. Ease of searching for information
- Q20. Amount of data available on the subjects you searched for
- Q21. Amount of detail provided in information
- Q22. Information meeting your conservation needs

Plant Releases

- Q23. Have you used plant releases from Plant Materials Centers (PMC)?
 - 1. Yes (Ask Q.24-25)
 - 2. No (Skip to Q.26)
 - 3. Don't Know (Skip to Q.26)

Please rate the plants you have received from PMC on the following. Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "Poor" and 10 means "Excellent."

- Q24. Variety of plants available from PMC to address your conservation needs
- Q25. Timeliness in receiving the plants

ACSI Benchmark Questions

Now we are going to ask you to please consider your experiences with the Plant Materials Program (PMP) and its products and services in answering the following.

- Q26. First, please consider all your experiences to date with the Plant Materials Program (PMP). Using a 10-point scale on which "1" means "Very dissatisfied" and "10" means "Very satisfied," how satisfied are you with the Plant Materials Program (PMP)?
- Q27. To what extent has the Plant Materials Program (PMP) fallen short of your expectations or exceeded your expectations? Please use a 10-point scale on which "1" now means "Falls short of your expectations" and "10" means "Exceeds your expectations."
- Q28. Forget about the Plant Materials Program (PMP) a moment. Now, imagine the ideal program that would provide you with plants and information about plants. How well do you think the Plant Materials Program (PMP) compares with that ideal? Please use a 10-point scale on which "1" means "Not very close to the ideal" and "10" means "Very close to the ideal."

Outcomes

- Q29. How likely are you to recommend the products (such as the plants) and services of the Plant Materials Program to your colleagues? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where “1” means “not very likely” and “10” means “very likely.”
- Q30. How confident are you in using the plants provided by Plant Materials Centers for your needs? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where “1” means “not very confident” and “10” means “very confident.”

Open-End

- Q31. How could USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program (PMP) better serve the needs of its customers?
- Q32. Now think specifically about the plant technology that Plant Materials Program provides. What else could PMP do to help you meet your plant technology needs?

Closing

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Plant Materials Program (PMP) would like to thank you for your time and participation today. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

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APPENDIX B: CUSTOMER BACKGROUND

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	Percent of Respondents
Organization	
NRCS Field Office	1%
NRCS State Office	1%
NRCS Other	3%
Non-Federal Office	15%
Commercial/Business	17%
Non-profit Agency	9%
University/College	31%
Other	23%
Number of Respondents	
183	
How you became aware of Plant Materials Program and PMCs	
Reference from a colleague	34%
Google/web search	1%
Other	64%
<i>Other: Employment/Job</i>	33%
<i>Other: Long-term relationship</i>	15%
<i>Other: Direct contact with PMC/NRCS</i>	7%
<i>Other: School/Education</i>	5%
<i>Other: Personal contact/Word of mouth</i>	2%
<i>Other: Other associations/Organizations</i>	2%
Number of Respondents	
174	
Worked directly with a Specialist or Manager from a PMC	
Yes	97%
No	3%
Number of Respondents	
183	
How you worked with the Plant Materials Specialists*	
Via Telephone	95%
Via e-mail	87%
One-on-one Training Session	80%
Number of Respondents	
183	
Used the following from the Plant Materials Program:*	
Plant Fact Sheets	77%
Plant Guides	69%
PLANTS Database	66%
None of the above	10%
Number of Respondents	
183	
Used plant releases from PMCs	
Yes	64%
No	34%
Don't know	1%
Number of Respondents	
183	

* Multiple responses allowed

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APPENDIX C: ATTRIBUTE TABLES

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Aggregate Scores and Impacts

	Score	Total Impact
Plant Materials Specialist/One-on-One Training Sessions	92	3.2
Assisting you with problem identification	91	
Developing a workable solution to address your needs	91	
Assisting you with implementation	91	
Technical knowledge of the Specialist	94	
Providing you with references	88	
Clarity of the information presented	92	
Usefulness of the information presented	92	
Presenter's knowledge of subject matter	94	
Ability of the presenter to answer your questions	93	
Plant Fact Sheets/Plant Guides	85	0.7
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Fact Sheets	87	
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Fact Sheets	83	
Plant Fact Sheets meeting your informational needs	85	
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Guides	87	
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Guides	86	
Plant Guides meeting your informational needs	86	
PLANTS Database	83	0.8
Ease of searching for information	85	
Amount of data available on the subjects you searched for	83	
Amount of detail provided in information	82	
Information meeting your conservation needs	83	
Plant Releases	86	1.7
Variety of plants available to address conservation needs	82	
Timeliness in receiving the plants	90	
Customer Satisfaction Index	83	
Overall satisfaction	90	
Compared to expectations	79	
Compared to ideal	76	
Likelihood to recommend PMP	94	2.8
Likelihood to recommend PMP	94	
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	92	2.7
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	92	
Number of Respondents	183	

Scores by Organization

	Non-Federal Office ^	Commercial/ Business	Non-profit Agency ^	University/ College	Other
Plant Materials Specialist/One-on-One Training Sessions	92	91	93	94	91
Assisting you with problem identification	93	90	91	94	90
Developing a workable solution to address your needs	89	90	94	93	91
Assisting you with implementation	89	90	93	94	90
Technical knowledge of the Specialist	95	94	95	94	93
Providing you with references	88	91	86	91	85
Clarity of the information presented	93	92	94	93	90
Usefulness of the information presented	94	89	94	95	89
Presenter's knowledge of subject matter	94	92	96	94	94
Ability of the presenter to answer your questions	93	91	95	94	93
Plant Fact Sheets/Plant Guides	81	82	89	88	85
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Fact Sheets	89	84	91	90	88
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Fact Sheets	82	80	89	84	82
Plant Fact Sheets meeting your informational needs	78	81	93	88	87
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Guides	81	83	89	91	87
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Guides	82	84	89	87	86
Plant Guides meeting your informational needs	79	82	91	89	88
PLANTS Database	81	80	84	85	84
Ease of searching for information	76	87	82	87	87
Amount of data available on the subjects you searched for	82	78	87	84	85
Amount of detail provided in information	83	76	80	83	84
Information meeting your conservation needs	81	83	92	85	81
Plants	86	82	88	88	88
Variety of plants available to address conservation needs	80	78	86	83	84
Timeliness in receiving the plants	91	85	91	92	93
Customer Satisfaction Index	79	79	84	86	85
Overall satisfaction	84	90	91	91	90
Compared to expectations	76	72	80	82	82
Compared to ideal	73	72	75	79	78
Likelihood to recommend PMP	91	93	93	95	94
Likelihood to recommend PMP	91	93	93	95	94
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	90	92	93	93	93
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	90	92	93	93	93
Number of Respondents	27 ^	32	16 ^	56	43

^ Low sample size

Scores by Used Plant Releases from PMC versus Not Used

	Have used plant releases from PMC	Have not used plant releases from PMC	Significant Difference
Plant Materials Specialist/One-on-One Training Sessions	93	90	
Assisting you with problem identification	92	90	
Developing a workable solution to address your needs	93	89	
Assisting you with implementation	92	88	
Technical knowledge of the Specialist	95	92	
Providing you with references	90	85	
Clarity of the information presented	93	89	✓
Usefulness of the information presented	93	91	
Presenter's knowledge of subject matter	94	93	
Ability of the presenter to answer your questions	93	92	
Plant Fact Sheets/Plant Guides	85	84	
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Fact Sheets	87	89	
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Fact Sheets	83	82	
Plant Fact Sheets meeting your informational needs	85	84	
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Guides	87	86	
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Guides	86	84	
Plant Guides meeting your informational needs	87	84	
PLANTS Database	84	80	
Ease of searching for information	87	81	
Amount of data available on the subjects you searched for	84	81	
Amount of detail provided in information	83	80	
Information meeting your conservation needs	85	79	
Plant Releases	86	--	
Variety of plants available to address conservation needs	82	--	
Timeliness in receiving the plants	90	--	
Customer Satisfaction Index	85	80	✓
Overall satisfaction	92	85	✓
Compared to expectations	80	78	
Compared to ideal	78	72	
Likelihood to recommend PMP	94	92	
Likelihood to recommend PMP	94	92	
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	93	90	
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	93	90	
Number of Respondents	118	63	

Scores by Type of Information Used

	Plant Fact Sheets	Plant Guides	PLANTS Database	None of the above ^
Plant Materials Specialist/One-on-One Training Sessions	92	92	92	89
Assisting you with problem identification	92	91	92	88
Developing a workable solution to address your needs	91	91	92	90
Assisting you with implementation	91	90	92	85
Technical knowledge of the Specialist	93	94	93	93
Providing you with references	89	88	89	86
Clarity of the information presented	92	92	92	90
Usefulness of the information presented	92	93	92	91
Presenter's knowledge of subject matter	94	94	93	93
Ability of the presenter to answer your questions	92	92	92	93
Plant Fact Sheets/Plant Guides	85	85	85	--
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Fact Sheets	87	87	87	--
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Fact Sheets	83	83	83	--
Plant Fact Sheets meeting your informational needs	85	84	85	--
Clarity of the information presented in the Plant Guides	88	87	87	--
Amount of detail provided in information in the Plant Guides	86	86	86	--
Plant Guides meeting your informational needs	87	86	86	--
PLANTS Database	83	83	83	--
Ease of searching for information	85	84	85	--
Amount of data available on the subjects you searched for	82	83	83	--
Amount of detail provided in information	81	82	82	--
Information meeting your conservation needs	83	84	83	--
Plants	85	86	84	93
Variety of plants available to address conservation needs	80	80	79	94
Timeliness in receiving the plants	90	90	89	92
Customer Satisfaction Index	83	83	83	81
Overall satisfaction	90	90	90	88
Compared to expectations	79	80	80	74
Compared to ideal	75	75	76	79
Likelihood to recommend PMP	94	94	94	90
Likelihood to recommend PMP	94	94	94	90
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	91	92	92	95
Confidence in using the plants provided by PMCs	91	92	92	95
Number of Respondents	141	126	120	18 ^

^ Low sample size

APPENDIX D: VERBATIM COMMENTS

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**Demo1. Which of the following best describes your organization?
Responses to ‘Other’**

USDA (20)

Another U.S.D.A. Agency

Forest Service Research (2)

U.S. Forest Service (5)

U.S.D.A. (2)

U.S.D.A. AES

U.S.D.A. Agricultural Research (6)

U.S.D.A. Department of State Research And Education Services

U.S.D.A. Research (2)

Other Departments (24)

Army National Guard

Bureau Of Reclamation

Department of Interior (2)

Department of Defense

Department of The Army

Federal Office

Fish and Wildlife Service (5)

Land Management (2)

National Park Service (4)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2)

United States Geological Survey

U.S. Army

U.S. Navy

Demo2. How did you become aware of the Plant Materials Program and Plant Materials Centers of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)?

Responses to ‘Other’

Employment/Job (58)

Employment (21)

Employment on research project

For research purposes

Former NRCS employee

I was employed at the NRCS

I worked directly with the PMP in the past

I worked for the NRCS

I worked very closely with PMC personnel in the past

Institutions affiliation

Job (14)

Known of them through my entire career

Long-time employee of NRCS

Our agency jointly administers a program with the NRCS

Past employment

Professional knowledge

Through a professional connection

Through employment (2)

Through employment with NRCS

Through my army career

Through my business

Through my job

Through yearly meetings with NRCS employees

We work directly with the NRCS

Worked for NRCS for many years

Long-Term Relationship(26)

A close working relationship

A long-term business relationship

A long-term work history with the NRCS

I have had a long-term work experience with them

I have worked with nrcs and have known of them since I began working

I have worked with the PMP since leaving the military

Long business relationship

Long employment association

Long professional knowledge since college

Long-term

Long-term business relationship

Long-term familiarity

Long-term involvement in seed business

Long-term professional

Long-term professional contact (3)

Long-term professional knowledge
Long-term relationship
Long-term work experience
Long-term work relationship (2)
Long-term working relationship (3)
Long working relationship
Over 20-year relationship

Direct contact with PMC or NRCS (12)

An employee of the PMC
An individual who works for the NRCS
Contacted long ago by the local office
Direct contact with station
Direct personal contact with the staff over the years
Directly from NRCS
Interacting with PMC centers
NRCS agents directly
Plant materials representative for NRCS
The NRCS responded to our proposal requests
Through a presentation from PMP
Through an NRCS staff person

School/Education (8)

A university tour
As a student
Direct contact with PMC on campus
I learned about them while in school
Known of since I was in college
Learned of them in school
Learned through school
Since college

Personal contact/Word of mouth (4)

From My Father
My Father Worked With Them
Personal Contact (2)
Word Of Mouth

Other Associations/Organizations (3)

Soil Conservation Service
State Agronomist Georgia and Alabama
Texas Seed Trade Association

Q31. How could USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program (PMP) better serve the needs of its customers?

Availability/Access (3 comments)

Accessibility is a problem. Being able to reach people is the key.

I think they should be more available to the general public especially in working with extension services, especially in the area of wetland plants. There should be more people in RCD slots doing more plant work and more demonstration work in various states, maybe at least one per state.

They need to address the field centers to a better degree.

Advertise (20 comments)

Be out in the public eye, off of the research station. Better advertise the services available.

I don't think they are very well known; they need to advertise their services more.

I think getting more information out about their presence and what they do.

I think they need to promote their existence a little better through various media, they are very well known in the industry but not so well to the public.

I would say become more visible, a lot of people don't know about them.

Let people know they are there and what they can do. Many don't know of their existence.

Make people more aware of the services that are available.

Maybe have a little more advertising of the services that they offer.

More publicity about the services offered and public relations

One area that might be improved would be to provide more information to the public about the services available.

Perhaps by advertising a summary of their technology, varieties and services through agricultural forums and education.

Probably by improving the knowledge of the program in general. Increase the marketing so more people are aware of the program. More funding and improving the ability of plants in border states to work with other countries would be helpful.

There needs to be more advertising that they are available.

They could provide more information to the public about the services they provide. Better marketability of the service.

They could share information with other government agencies about what the program does and its availability.

They need to get the word out about all the things they offer.

They need to have more field days to get their name out there to the public.

They need to make people more aware of what services they provide. People are not widely aware of their existence.

They need to recognize that the plant materials program is very important and useful to the public. They also need to promote their services to a far greater degree.

They should be a little more visible to the public through news releases or through news stories.

Billing System (2 comments)

Their billing is terrible. They need to correct problems in that area. It is critical for my needs.

They need to improve their billing so that we can pay more quickly.

Communication (5 comments)

A little more listening to district conservationist and disciplinarians other than planters to develop the flexibility to take in that input. The Plant Material Center should also do this with non-commercial landowners. They also need to work on seed compositions and water rates.

Do more interaction with the community.

I think they need to get more feedback direct from the field.

I wish they had a better connection with other branches of government and that they could sell their services to other branches such as the Forest Service.

Perhaps a little more communication. The person I dealt with was not responsive to attempts to communicate with them.

Conservation (4 comments)

By focusing more on conservation and endangered species recovery.

Since it's a publicly funded program it needs to develop a leadership roll in what plants should be recommended for a conservation role, such as mixed plants that are indigenous or native to site.

The main problem is the needs for conservation. It is very broad and they don't have enough money to do the things they really need to do in the area of wetlands and farms. Overall more variety of plants.

They could continue to bring both conservation and indigenous species, most importantly forbs and legumes to the market.

Costs (2 comments)

If the costs of the plants could be lowered it would be good.

They are too expensive. For large-scale projects they rely on outside funding for development. They need to have more federal support so that they could be more affordable to state agencies.

Education/Outreach (9 comments)

Have regional watershed and landholder meetings in the area of research. They should have more such events to let people know of new research.

I think they could work with growers a little more closely.

I would like to see them more active with private landowners to reintroduce native plants. It would be nice if they let the specialist travel farther to give demonstrations on native plants.

Maybe have a demonstration garden to show people how things work.

More demonstration, conservation field trials

Possibly have other educational seminars in our area.

They could hold more customer workshops where they provide more direct interactions with customers in more areas so that it would be more convenient for customers to get information.

They would need additional specialist, to perform additional outreach to farmers.

Funding (28 comments)

Bigger appropriations from congress, they could do a lot more with more money.

By keeping them open and funded, they are a great resource.

First the National Plant Materials Program needs better funding, without the plant materials program there will be no seeds available for conservation programs. We spend a lot of money to assist landowners but we fall short in providing the tools they need such as seed.

Fund the program. They have been cutting it. There is a lot of potential to do research. I would like to see a closer relationship with ARS and PMP.

Fund them more substantially. They are barely funded. It is their biggest problem.

I think all government agencies have been closing some centers and that they are not getting the funding they need for research.

Increase funding so they have the support to provide.

It needs to be funded to a far greater extent to increase their ability to provide services.

It needs to have strong funding directed at providing native plant materials and multiple resource education.

Probably greater funding, staffing and resources

Provide adequate funding for the plant material programs.

Provide more plant materials and plant selection and more funding would help.

Provide them with more funding.

The states are under-funded. There are not enough locations to conduct research.

There should be a new infusion of money to look at more plant materials.

They could use more funding and a permanent budget. They could also use more staff.

They could use more funding and people.

They could use more funding and personnel.

They have many handicaps due to lack of funding and I think the funding needs to be increased.

They need additional funds and more assistance.

They need more funding to do their job.

They need more funding. They just don't have enough funds.

They need more resources in staffing and funding but they have a great service.

They need more resources, funding and personnel. They also need to market their services a lot more, outreach to end-users.

They need more support in funding and react to a changing market place more quickly. They really need to adapt to a changing.

They need to have additional funds to work with and be able to provide a better service all around. They need to keep the plants database up-to-date and current.

They need to increase funding for testing and to make more plants available for trials.

They would have to get a boatload of new money to put on more people to help with services; they are not funded well at all. They are overworked to a great degree.

Native Plants (8 comments)

I would say more extensive use of native plant materials from sources where there are not good banks for the materials close to a planting site.

If the NRCS itself put more of the plants into individualized management plans there might a bigger demand for native plants.

Right now there is a push to plant only native, which I think is a mistake. I feel the NRCS is pushing a political agenda that is not the best for the environment.

There are some key specific species that we need to get into production. We need forbs for native grasses and species developed for specific use in the Midwest.

There is a big push for native species at this time that I am not sure is warranted.

They should place more emphasis on native plant development.

Try to develop more native species that are locally adapted and the technology that goes with it such as processing and growing. Species more in-tune with local needs.

Work more with stream bank vegetation and work more with native plants to re-vegetate area of disturbed environment.

Plant Information/Database (18 comments)

Better online information and a closer link to Guides and Fact Sheets.

By providing good comparison of different plant materials on the market and their abilities to address conservation needs.

Do more research on non-native invasive species and disperse that information in an easy to understand format. And get information out to the small landowners who need it the most.

I think that the PLANTS national database could have a lot more information on it. It is a little skimpy at times.

Maybe they could provide more web-based information so that it is readily available.

Probably increase the database, keep building on it.

The PLANTS database is useful but much of the information posted is not accurate and it needs to be updated to the current standards. New research has created newer information that is not available on the website.

The PLANTS database needs significant improvement in the area of subject matter and search ability and clarification of citations.

The PLANTS database needs to have much better identification of photos as to species and there are errors in the drawings and visual designations.

The PLANTS database needs to include specific diagnostic features of the plants and characteristics if they are available. I have been unable to find them on the site.

They could do some refinement on the PLANTS database and have interactive keys available.

They could update the website and modernize the website.

They may want to establish a very active web presence.

They need to have more specific information of a technical sort, especially for people doing research.

They need to improve the information available on the website and link it to other sites, and the information needs to be downloadable. Also have the information available in Spanish.

They should continue both the field days and fact sheets and include more information on the website.

We need more technical data on production.

Well I think they have done a good job but in the past due to budgets there have seemed to be problems in getting information out to us.

Staffing levels (14 comments)

Expand their programs, but they are under-funded.

Expand their technical support staff.

Have a few more field specialist around or plant materials. There should be more presenters who can speak on a level that others can understand.

Have more people and more offices.

Have more technical people out in the fields.

I think if they had more personnel at the center it would help.

I think we need more offices, especially one in the Mojave Desert area.

Make sure the Plant Material Centers stay staffed and they should be able to keep stock on hand of specific plants.

They could have more field people to work with those who need the services but it was overall excellent.

They need to be able to travel more. Their travel budget needs to be increased and they need more staff.

They need to have additional staffing to do a better job for working with their clients. My experience has been that they often are unable to meet commitments.

They need to increase staffing but other than that they are very good.

We deal with WV centers and there is no botanist on staff and they need to have one

We need more regional centers that are staffed with more people.

Timing of Releases (5 comments)

I'm sure part of the problem is funding but the volumes of material created are too small for commercial operations. If they are producing a native grass seed it may take years to produce. They need more production blocks in seed production.

It takes too long to get varieties released; they need to do it more quickly. They have to spend too much time in trying to get funding.

Releases are not being pursued as fast as I would like to see. I would also like to see more pictures and details on the taxonomy of plants at the website.

They could produce materials a little more quickly.

They need to better inventory management and timing of seed delivery.

Variety of Plants (14 comments)

Have more knowledgeable specialist in the native plants, have wider local ecotype releases and avoid the use of exotic invasive plants.

I think they should focus on urban environments and plants for that area more than they do now.

I think they should increase the number of plants that they introduce.

I would like to see it expanded; I would like to see them growing more varieties that they currently supply with more emphasis in native plants for restoration and rehabilitation.

I would like to see more emphasis on rare and endangered species.

I would like to see them work more in the area of woody plants.

I would say grow more species and provide more networking and outreach services.

If they could get the variety of plants to more of the commercial producers so that they would be more available. Make their services more well known.

Provide a wider variety of plants.

Test more varieties of grasses.

They have done a good job but if they could increase the work they do with a wider range of natives species especially grasses and forbs.

They need to continue to stay focused on producing varieties and releases that are most useful to growers.

They need to have more grass seed available.

They need to increase the number of products available and increase funding.

Other (28 comments)

Expand the program in terms of addressing emerging needs in biological energy.

For us it would be very good if they would consider our students for internship programs.

Get companies to work with some of the herbicides.

Have more trials in more areas so that the confidence level in recommendations would be higher.

I think it needs to provide more seed that are cultivars of the ones they have available. There is not enough being produced to meet demand.

I think the USDA and NRCS need to widen the parameters under which the local office works under. Recommend such things as seeding rates and varieties as they apply to native and non-native plants.

I think they do a good job in erosion control but they need to strengthen efforts in wildlife planting including perennials. I think they should speed up on concentrated efforts in this area.

I think they do a great job in the areas of research and development but I don't feel they should be selling their product to the general public. It is not good when a government entity competes with a private company in the open market.

I think they need to have more diversity of culture in the employee base because the customer base is changing in culture and language.

I think they need to have several focus groups in determining what their priorities should be and focus groups with a wide variety of individuals involved. I would also like to see more collaborations with universities and maybe outsourcing some services to universities.

I would say do more surveys as to what they need to do to provide better services to people.

In light of what's happening in genetics, they need to have a better breeding program than currently exists in the system. With the advent of biomass for energy we are woefully behind in the area of genetics.

In many respects they do serve their customer's needs but in the area of the scientific basis of the work, it needs to be improved in the area of taxonomy and genetics. That would be a benefit to their customers.

In recent times I don't think there has been as much connection with the university land grant program; I would like to see more collaboration.

Increase efforts on native perennial grasses.

Just keep the PMS with good people. Possibly more PhDs or encourage their employees to pursue higher degrees.

Maybe having a little more input as to their investigation of which plants to use in my local area.

More help and money for cleaner seed and weed control.

Plant material centers fail to include documentation with the seeds. This makes it very difficult to certify.

The PMC's have become more involved in production of specific seeds and that has taken effort from plant reclamation, which is very much needed. They need to increase the efforts in production in that area.

The system has failed to articulate a vision of the future and its role in it. Time and funding have passed it by and I attribute that to leadership.

There have been a few issues as to seed quality and purity needs more attention.

They could have more seed zone based plant materials other than cultivars.

They need to get the vegetation spec. Tools up and running if possible and be tied to state levels and standards. Expand on the development of culturally significant plants especially in the area of Native American tribes.

They need to have closer interaction between ARS and NRCS, it seems to me as though second tier people are in the NRCS area at least currently. If a vacancy occurs it needs to be filed quickly.

They should do more research in specific needs areas for different areas of the country, such as plants for a geographic area.

Try to do something about invasive species.

Work more with woody plants.

No Suggestions/Positive Feedback (27 comments)

Everything has been excellent.

Great job

I am very satisfied with all aspects of the service.

I think they are doing a good job.

I think they do a great job, especially in universities.

They are doing an exceptional job.

They are doing fine at this time.

They have done a great job, nothing to suggest.

They do an excellent job. Nothing to suggest.

I'm a researcher and from my standpoint they are outstanding.

Not applicable; we are not a typical customer in what we do.

No ideas at this time except don't close down.

None

Not enough experience at this time

Nothing (5)

Nothing really. They have done a good job.

Nothing to suggest (3)

Nothing to suggest, they are always good.

Nothing. They do a good job. (2)

As far as I am concerned they are doing a great job, I can't think of how to improve it.

Q32. Now think specifically about the plant technology that Plant Materials Program provides. What else could PMP do to help you meet your plant technology needs?**Communication (5 comments)**

Keep us abreast of new species of plants for research purposes.

Let others know more about what they are doing, share information in a better way.

They need to be more in touch with end users such as the BLM or Forest Service so that they will better know their needs.

They need to improve their level of communications and responsiveness to questions.

They need to work more in the area of restoration in native species and be more responsive to customers and do more research.

Demonstrations/Workshops (4 comments)

As a whole we need more demonstration projects with seed timing, application and methods of application and there is not enough seed.

Help with demonstration sites at centers or private lands where training can be developed and we could bring other agencies and private organizations to show them what we can do. They need to market themselves better.

Just add staff to provide for more workshops.

Maybe have a little more hands-on workshops, more direct training especially for federal employees.

Funding (2 comments)

Add more money for more research.

They are accomplishing what they are doing but they seem to be limited on funding and some equipment.

Guidance (7 comments)

Better recommendations for restoration techniques.

Closer communication with specialist as to what we need in the field, such as fertilization timing, possibly have more meetings and presentations with the PMP personnel.

More on site visits with commercial growers and they need to hire resource managers with experience or knowledge in what the PMC is supposed to do.

Provide help in the actual establishment of the specialty materials.

Provide more detail concerning native habitat for each plant, concerning the native region.

Provide more detailed guidance on how best to plant and care for materials they provide.

Provide more guidance on the ground applications.

Information/Database (19 comments)

Continue to keep improving the website and other services.

Gather information on the specific plants we need information for.

Have a website outlining traits of plants and which plants are best for specific purposes.

I would like to see more information on carbon storage in different species.

It is important that materials be available in other languages such as Spanish and written on a level that non-academics can understand.

Keep adding to the PLANTS database because it is used as a reference quite a bit.

Maybe provide more information on some of the releases, as a producer it can be a problem if people are not aware what the new release are or what the benefits of using it are.

More information about native forbs production.

More information on cultivating annuals and native grasses that haven't been cultivated before. Also information on increasing seed production on species we would like to use.

More information on species that aren't quite so common as well as putting the information in the plant database.

There could be further development of Internet-based information on knowledge of propagating plant materials.

They could get out more information on the wildflower seeds.

They could provide more information in print and on the website.

They could put more information in the native seed production manual concerning planting and practices.

They might add information do's and don'ts for some of the new releases since there can often be minor differences with new strains.

They should make more information available on greenhouse technology or season extension. Also they could know more about organic farming and permaculture for natural resources and low impact methods.

They should provide information that is more eco-regional specific.

We are involved with new areas of plants at the university. It would be good if they could provide more information about the newer varieties.

We try to take the USDA information and provide it to farmers. The information needs to be provided in a way that a farmer might find easier to understand and use.

Plant Releases (13 comments)

Expand their source collection activities for new releases.

Have additional material from native plant sources. Many are difficult to find commercially. We are not using non-native species at this point since guidelines have changed.

I would like to see when they do a new release on plants they release them to commercial growers and we need to get a list of those growers.

I would like to work to develop a joint varietal release with the PMP and the university to serve our unique community.

If they could distribute the germ plasma releases earlier and more widely.

Increase the amount of species that they are working with.

More new releases and varieties would be better.

Perhaps have faster seedling development to minimize weed pressure.

Provide more local native plants for the Mojave Desert area.

They are usually planting materials for water erosion control, I would like to see more plants in the area of wind erosion that are very hearty and able to withstand many environments.

With military needs to reclaim lands there should be more variety of plants to work with in this area.

They could have more plants available at the time they are needed, if they had the plants on hand it would be helpful.

We need plants in general, not limited to new research.

We need to have releases of native types of warm season grasses to promote in restoring the ecosystem.

Research (16 comments)

Continue to research new plant materials for different uses.

Experiment more with chemicals in the area of weed control.

Have more trials on invasive species control methods, especially in the area of equipment and practices for small landowners.

I think more concrete scientific research on native species, adaptability and how wide the adaptability is, needs to be done.

I would love to see them expand research on plants for public use.

It sounded like they did a lot of research on a small scale. I would like to see a large-scale representation of the research.

Just continue efforts in field evaluation of native plants.

More regional testing trials would be helpful. Both irrigated and dry land and set them up in a statistical format. Often the result provided do not include statistical information.

Possibly work more with herbicide-resistant plants.

Test more variables within a specific variety.

They could enhance the amount of testing there is for native species.

They need to be testing more ecotypes and species.

They really need to present research with far more genetics background; they are often using one individual from a given population. If you use cloning to do a study you are not getting a representative sample of the true population so I believe that ARS needs to be closely involved.

They should provide more R & D on equipment for bareroot nurseries.

Use innovative ideas for different kinds of species to use. They should experiment with a wider variety of species.

We are always looking for more salt tolerant species that are robust, if they could do a little more research in that area it would help.

Use of Technology (5 comments)

Continue technical advances on wetland species and continue to collect and propagate wetlands species. This is something they need to start doing now so that species will be available.

Given the resources, they should get into the area of hi-tech. Propagation of germ plasma to develop materials more quickly. Also a more aggressive outreach program.

I think as a result of underfunding they probably don't have access to the latest technology but they either need better or more access.

Make the technology more accessible to both visual and audio formats and again make it downloadable in a variety of formats for burning to CD and I-pods etc.

They need technology to improve planting success for mixtures of native warm season grasses and other native ground cover. Developing very workable solutions for integrating locally indigenous native ground cover into everyday operations of users, as in forest areas, cultivated agricultural areas, haying, grazing and livestock areas, riparian and wetlands areas.

Other (31 comments)

Continue to work on things like weed control measures in the area of specialty crops, also pest control.

From our standpoint of seed production we need to make sure that it remains economical to produce seed. Native plants need to be developed and tested for local areas.

Get things out faster but that can create its own problems.

Have more field observation work done on-sites.

I would like to see more of a focus on habitat values for wildlife in terms of the plants provided.

Improve planting equipment if possible.

It would be nice to have seed storage facility in the local area and if there was a way to collaborate on establishments of additional tree plantations.

It would help if they had plants that help reduce erosion in all areas such as aquatic, dry and normal.

Just expand their greenhouses.

Make sure that the plants we are using are adaptable to both climate and region of the country being used. The program has been very beneficial to farmers.

More extension outreach with feed harvest in the area of production.

More materials to solve erosion problems, especially in the area of native plants.

More on wildfire restorations would be good.

Perhaps send a survey out to find out feedback and comments on problems throughout the county, especially to the farmers.

Plants that are suited to natural ecosystems and native plants should be concentrated on to a greater degree.

Provide more research on grasslands species in the arid southwest.

Publish some field studies about plants reacting in certain situations.

The coastal erosion program needs more cultivators developed than are currently available.

The USDA and the NRCS seem to need to work together more closely; there is a sense that they often do not work on the same page, which creates some problems.

They could furnish individual plants for demonstration purposes.

They could use more assistance in the field trials area. It is often difficult to get people at the field offices to realize the resources available. There could be more budget available for training sessions.

They need resources to provide more services

They need stratification periods and protocols for native species.

They need to concentrate on wildlife plant development.

They need to work to come up with more wear resistant varieties for military installations, to have the ability to withstand heavy vehicles and other sorts of wear.

Try to work more in the area of shrubs and forbs.

We asked for species in xeric sites and other minimal water areas.

We need more cultivars of native forbs, especially legumes. Increase the diversity of native plants. We need research to test if improved cultivars are better than local varieties.

We need more of the specialists available to provide services.

With the evolving energy issues they need to ramp up on biomass plants for energy production, they may need to divert efforts or increase funding to work in this area.

Working well with the growers directly and the industry as well.

Nothing/Positive comment (85 comments)

At this time nothing. They do a very good job.

Can't think of anything at this time.

Does not apply

Don't know

I can't really think of anything.

I can't think of anything, I have had no problems.

I can't think of anything. (5)

I don't know without additional information.

I don't know. (2)

I have no response.

I really can't think of anything.

I really can't think of anything. They are doing a good job.

I'm not certain. Really haven't thought about it.

I'm not certain. I think they do a good job.

I'm not sure I understand the question.

I'm not sure.

I'm satisfied with what they do now. I am very happy.

It's about as good as it can get.

Most of what I have needed are things they are already working on so I can't suggest anything at this time.

N/A (3)

N/A. We have not used the plant technology resources.

No plant tech needs.

Not applicable for me.

Nothing (26)

Nothing at this time. They do a great job, but I would like to see better funding for the service.

Nothing at this time. (4)

Nothing comes to mind off hand, again make sure that the information on the services gets out to the public.

Nothing comes to mind. They have been very good.

Nothing from this area.

Nothing really

Nothing really that I can think of.

Nothing really, it's very good as is.

Nothing really, most of our needs are met

Nothing really. It's a good service.

Nothing right now (2)

Nothing that I can think of.

Nothing to add.

Nothing to suggest

They are a good group. They should be left to their own devices to decide how to best serve those who need their help.

They are doing a great job.

They are doing a very good job, nothing to suggest.

They are doing everything right.

They are doing great.

They do a good job, nothing to suggest. (2)

They do a great job. I use the technical areas often

They have always provided great service. I can't think of anything

We get what we need from them, I can't think of anything.