

# Canadian Attitudes towards the Pork Industry

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## ▪ Introduction

### Background

The Canadian pork industry is confronted with several issues with respect to the public impression of the industry. Given this, the Angus Reid Group, Agri-Food Division was commissioned to conduct a study of public attitudes toward the pork industry.

The overall purpose of this research was two-fold:

- To benchmark in an accurate and reliable manner the attitudes of Canadians toward the Canadian pork industry.
- To provide information that can be used in the development of actions at a national and provincial level to address the issues confronting the pork industry.

### Objectives

- Measure the awareness of hog farm practices among Canadian consumers in both rural and urban areas, and among farmers in Western Canada.
- Identify key pork industry issues, and determine which issues are most important to Canadian consumers and farmers.
- Identify the key sources of information for consumers and farmers about pork production, and determine their credibility.
- Segment Canadian consumers according to their level of concern about hog farming issues, and the types of issues that concern them most.

### Research Methodology - Non-Farming Public

The methodology involved a telephone survey of approximately 15 minutes in length. Interviews were conducted between October 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 1999. The non-farm public sample involved an urban and rural split. The final study data was weighted to reflect the actual population distribution in each region.

Region	Sample	Statistical Accuracy
Alberta	200	+/- 6.9%
Saskatchewan	200	+/- 6.9%
Manitoba	200	+/- 6.9%
Ontario	200	+/- 6.9%
Quebec	200	+/- 6.9%
Maritimes (PEI, NS, NB)	200	+/- 6.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>+/- 2.8%</b>

### Research Methodology - Farmers

These interviews were conducted between Oct. 25th and Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999. Agricultural producers included in the study were recruited according to the following criteria:

- Main farm decision maker
- Minimum of 320 cropland acres in 1999
- Do not currently have a hog operation

Province	Number of Farmers	Statistical Accuracy
Alberta	100	+/- 9.79%
Saskatchewan	100	+/- 9.79%
Manitoba	100	+/- 9.79%
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>+/- 5.65%</b>

## ▪ Overall Impressions - Observations

### Non-Farming Public

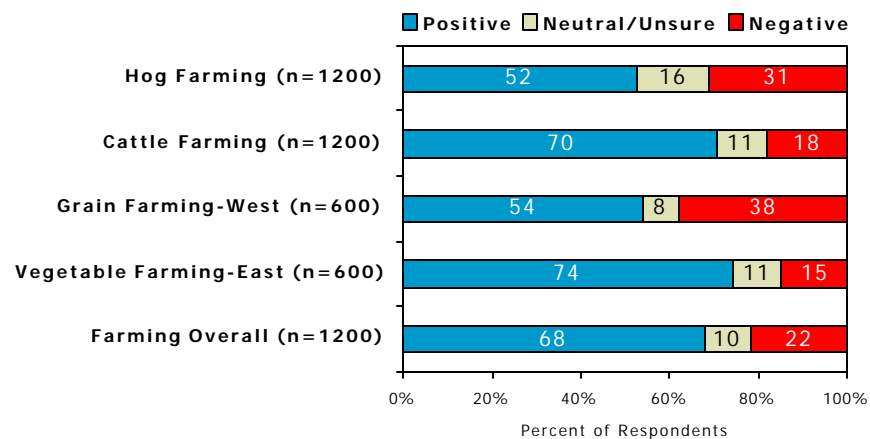
#### *Hog farming lags behind other types of Canadian farming.*

- Only 52% of all respondents have a positive impression of hog farming, compared to 70% for cattle farming, and 68% for Canadian agriculture overall.
- Of importance, less than 10% of the non-farming public claim to have extensive knowledge of the pork industry. Conversely, approximately 6 out of 10 Canadians claim to know nothing or very little about the industry.

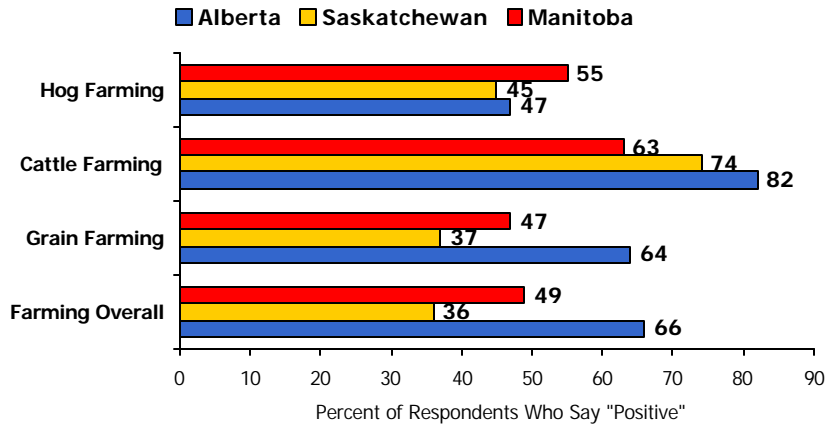
### Farmers

Farmers in western Canadian are more likely than non-farming counterparts to feel they have some understanding of the hog industry. Overall, only 25% of farmers claim they know nothing or very little about the industry.

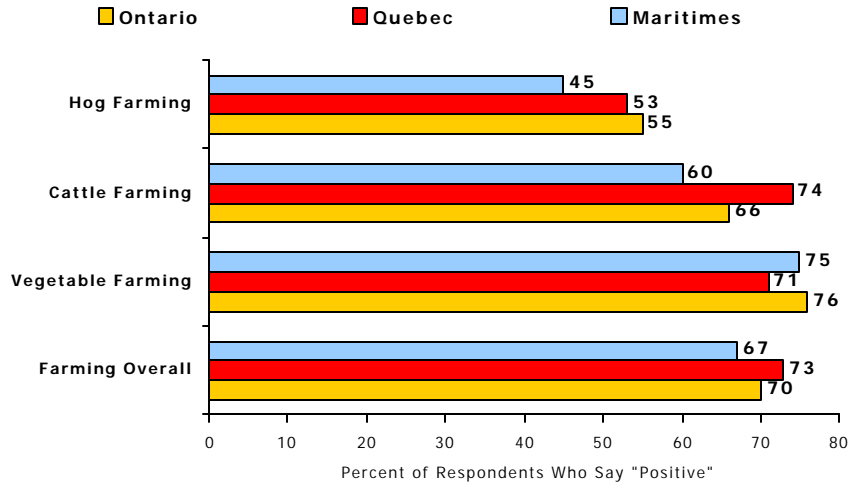
**Figure 1. Overall Impressions**



**Figure 2. Overall Impressions – Western Canada**

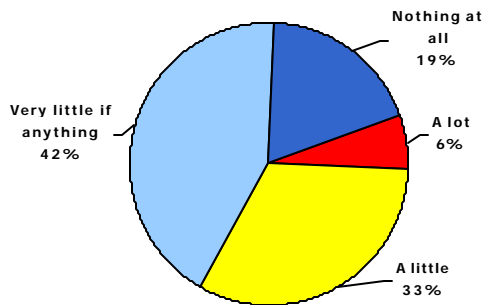


**Figure 3. Overall Impressions – Eastern Canada**



▪ **Knowledge of Hog Farming Practices**

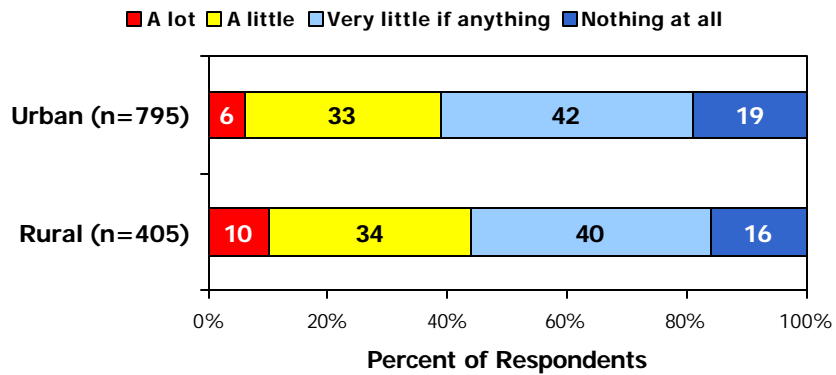
*Question - “Would you say you know... about hog farming practices?”*



**Overall, men were more likely than women (48% vs. 33%) to say that they knew either a lot or a little about hog farming practices. (n=1200)**

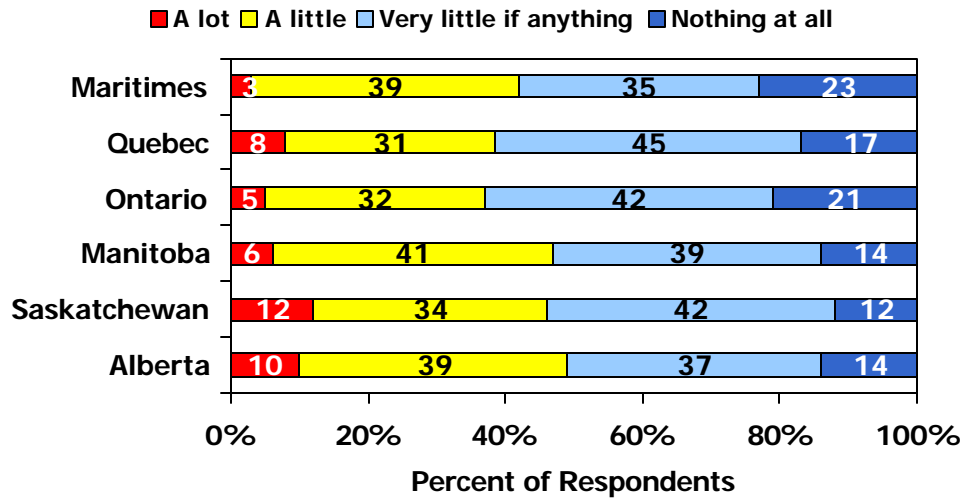
**Knowledge of Hog Farming Practices - Rural versus Urban**

Rural respondents were somewhat more likely than their urban counterparts to say that they know something (a little or a lot) about hog farming practices.



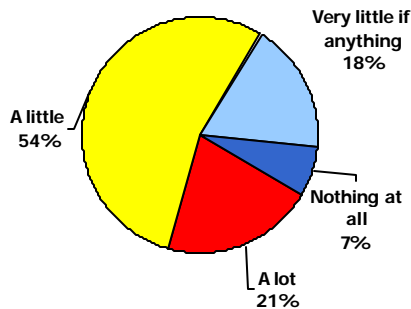
### Knowledge of Hog Farming Practices - by Region

Eastern Canadians were somewhat less likely to state that they know something (either a lot or a little) about hog farming practices, compared to Western Canadians.



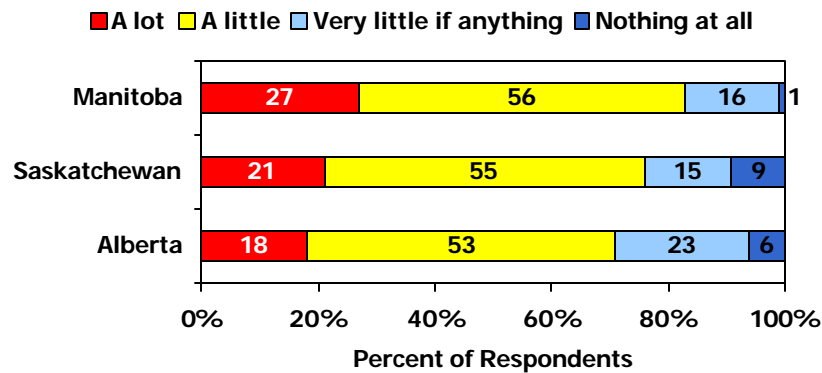
### Knowledge of Hog Farming Practices- Farmers

*Question: “Would you say you know... about hog farming practices?”*



**Three in four producers felt that they knew either a lot or a little about hog farming, compared to only 39% of the general public. (n=300)**

## Knowledge of Hog Farming Practices -Grain Provinces



Farmers in Manitoba feel somewhat more knowledgeable about hog farming practices than do their western neighbours.

### ■ Most Important Issues - Observations

#### *Non-Farming Public*

Ensuring the safety of Canadian pork products is the most important hog farming issue for respondents (see following tables). Improving the care and treatment of hogs is the second most important issue overall, followed closely by genetic engineering and environmental issues.

- Improving animal care is a more important issue to urban consumers than to rural respondents.
- Environmental issue is of more importance to Manitoba respondents.

#### *Farmers*

Ensuring the economic survival of hog farms is very important to farmers (see following tables). This issue is on par with ensuring the safety of Canadian pork. Reducing the environmental impact of hog farming is the next most important issue. This issue is of relatively less importance to farmers in Saskatchewan, and most important to farmers in Alberta.

**Most Important Issues -Overall (percentage of respondents, n=1200)**

Issue	Overall, %
1. Ensuring the safety of Canadian Pork Products	71
2. Improving the Care & Treatment of Hogs	53
3. Ensuring the Economic Survival of Hog Farms	51
4. Avoiding Genetic Engineering in Hog Production	48
5. Reducing the Environmental Impact of Hog Farms	45
6. Reducing the Odour Produced by Hog Farms	27

**Most Important Issues – by Province (percentage of respondents)**

Issue <sup>1</sup>	Alberta	Sask	Man	Ontario	Quebec	Maritimes
1	70	72	76	73	67	70
2	55	45	42	54	51	56
3	51	58	44	53	50	49
4	50	44	50	51	42	48
5	45	48	53	46	41	45
6	22	28	32	18	43	26

<sup>1</sup> Issues numbered as per previous table.

**Most Important Issues – Farmers (percentage of respondents, n=300)**

Issue <sup>1</sup>	Overall	Alberta	Sask	Man
1	67	61	70	71
3	67	64	70	61
5	49	62	40	54
2	37	36	39	33
6	35	39	33	33
4	31	31	31	34

<sup>1</sup> Issues numbered as per previous table.

## ▪ Safety of Canadian Pork - Observations

### *Non-Farming Public*

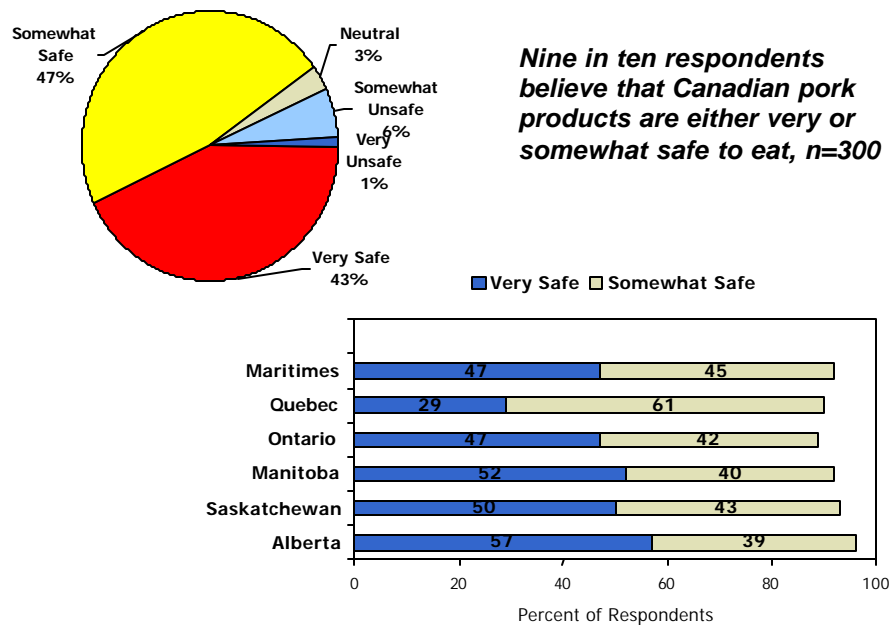
The majority of respondents feel that Canadian pork is safe. The majority of respondents believe that both farmers and government are ensuring that Canadian pork is safe. However,

- there are concerns about the use of antibiotics in pork production.
- There are concerns on the issue of genetically modified (GM) hogs and to a slightly lesser extent the use of GM crops for feed.

### *Farmers*

A majority indicated that they believe pork is safe to eat. Farmers also display a high level of trust in both government and other farmers when it comes to ensuring the safety of pork. Of interest,

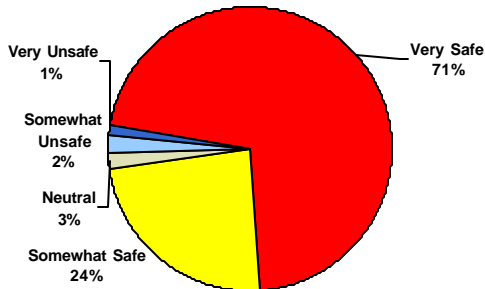
- farmers displayed levels of concern about the antibiotics used in hog production that are similar to those of the non-farming public.
- Farmers indicated a greater comfort level with genetically modified pork and crops used for feed than does the general public.



### Attitudes toward Food Safety -Overall and Rural/Urban

	Overall n=1200	Rural n=405	Urban n=795
I believe that checks are in place on farms to ensure that pork is safe	81	81	81
I trust that the government food inspection system ensures the safety of Canadian Pork	77	80	76
Feel comfortable eating pork products from hog that has been fed GM pig feed	48	49	48
Concerned about eating pork from a GM hog	75	73	75
Concerned about antibiotics given to hogs	76	72	77

### Safety of Canadian Pork – Farmers



*Nearly all farmers believe that Canadian pork products are either very or somewhat safe to eat. (n=300)*

### Farmer Attitudes toward Food Safety –by Region

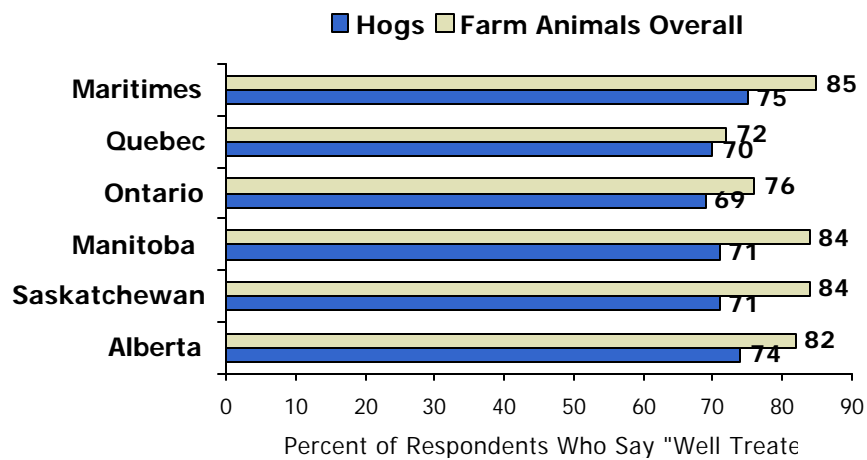
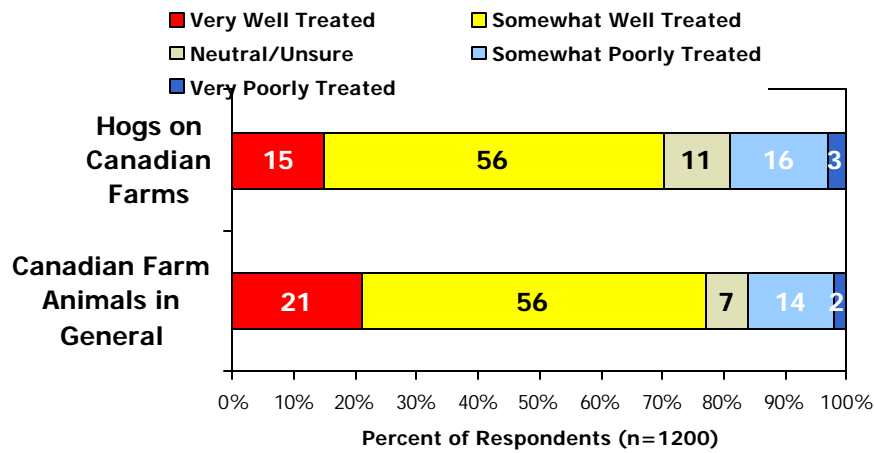
	AB	SK	MB
I believe that checks are in place on farms to ensure that pork is safe	82	83	76
I trust that the government food inspection system ensures the safety of Canadian Pork	88	87	84
Feel comfortable eating pork products from hog that has been fed GM pig feed	65	56	53
Concerned about eating pork from a GM hog	55	46	60
Concerned about antibiotics given to hogs	70	66	70

▪ **Treatment and Care of Hogs -Observations**

*Non-Farming Public*

Seven in ten respondents feel that hogs on Canadian farms are treated well. This is not significantly different from the perceptions about the treatment of farm animals in general. However, there is some concern with respect to:

- conditions in modern barns
- farmers put profit ahead of animal welfare.



***Farmers***

The large majority of farmers feel that hogs on Canadian farms are treated well. Levels of concern with respect to conditions in modern barns and farmers putting profit ahead of animal welfare are lower than that recorded for the general public.

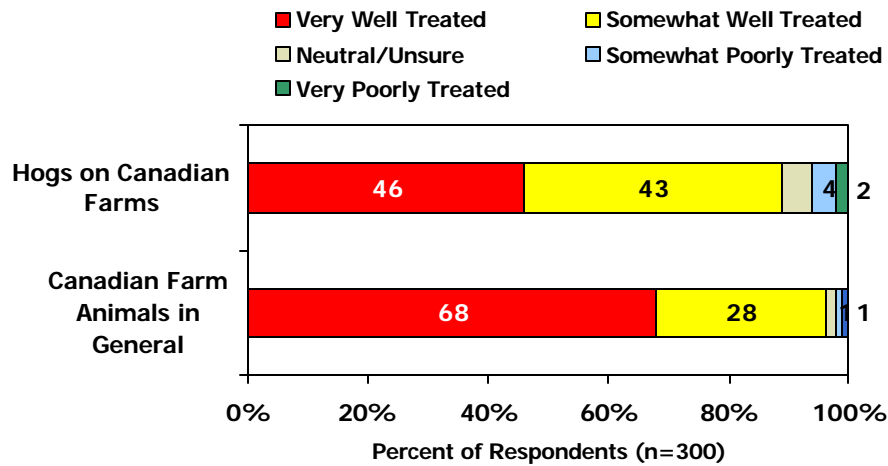
**Non-Farm Attitudes toward Hog Treatment – Overall & Rural versus Urban**

<b>Percentage Respondents Agreeing</b>	<b>Overall (n=1200)</b>	<b>Rural (n=405)</b>	<b>Urban (n=795)</b>
Hogs receive proper medical care	80	84	79
Hogs are well fed and have access to clean water	79	83	78
When I shop, I consider how the animals were raised	46	50	45
Barns provide enough room to move	42	45	41
Barns are like factories	62	60	63
Profit is more important than animal welfare	68	65	68

**Attitudes of Non-Farmers toward Hog Treatment – By Region**

<b>Percent Respondents Agreeing</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>Maritime</b>
Hogs receive proper medical care	84	82	81	79	79	83
Hogs are well fed and have access to clean water	86	83	84	79	74	89
When I shop, I consider how the animals were raised	41	46	41	43	53	51
Barns provide enough room to move	42	45	37	47	34	42
Barns are like factories	60	59	67	54	76	59
Profit is more important than animal welfare	62	63	62	63	78	67

### Farmer Attitudes towards Treatment of Hogs



### Farmer Attitudes towards Treatment of Hogs – by Region

Percentage of Respondents	AB	SK	MB
Hogs are well fed & have access to clean water	98	99	98
Hogs receive proper medical treatment	94	97	99
Barns provide enough room to move	53	66	59
When I shop, I consider how the animals were raised	49	47	45
Profit is more important than animal welfare	51	38	46
Barns are like factories	69	51	59

## ▪ Genetic Modification in Hogs

### *Non-Farming Public*

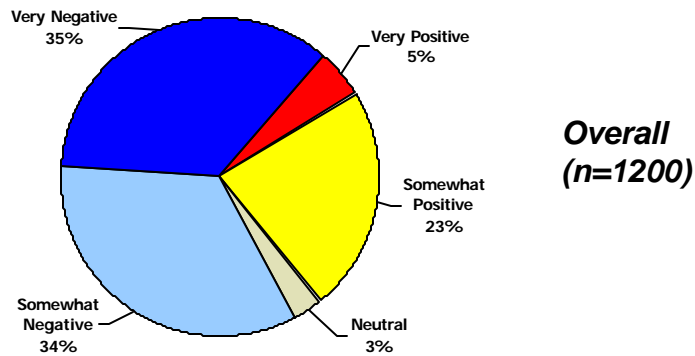
Opinions on this issue seems to be fairly unanimous across the country, with approximately 7 in 10 respondents in every region indicating that they feel the trend is either somewhat or very **negative**. However, the majority of respondents expressed a **positive** response to the potential new traits that could be incorporated into hogs through genetic modification.

### *Farmers*

Almost one-half of western farmers see the trend to genetic modification as positive. Farmers are most interested in seeing GM hogs that do not need to be given as many medications to fight disease, followed by hogs with more environmentally-friendly manure.

## Genetic Modification in Hogs – Overall

*Q. “Do you view the trend towards genetic modification in hogs in Canada as .....*

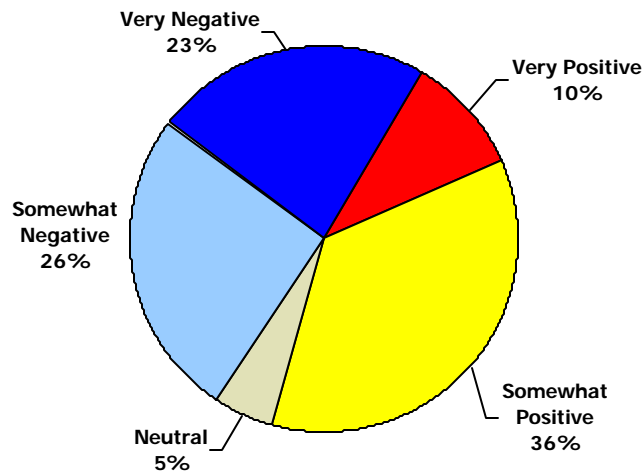


### **By Region:**

% Respondents	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Alberta	31	66	3
Saskatchewan	31	65	4
Manitoba	29	66	5
Ontario	28	70	2
Quebec	26	72	2
Maritimes	31	67	2

### Genetic Modification in Hogs – Farmers’ Attitudes (n=300)

Q. “Do you view the trend towards genetic modification in hogs in Canada as ....”



### Genetic Modification in Hogs – Non-Farming Public versus Farmers’ Attitudes

Q. “What new traits would you like to see incorporated into Genetically Modified Hogs? How about hogs that ...”

Percentage Responding “Yes”	Non-Farming n=1200	Farmers n=300
Produce manure that is more environmentally friendly	68	71
Do not need to be given as many medications to fight disease	67	77
Produce meat with special health benefits	55	64

## ■ Environmental Impact of Hog Farming

### *Non-Farming Public*

Overall, Canadians view agriculture in general as being more environmentally friendly than hog farming.

Of concern to the industry, roughly 2/3 of all respondents feel that strong government regulation is needed in order to limit the environmental impact of hog farming (vs. a voluntary code of practice).

The main environmental issues are water contamination and soil contamination.

On a positive note, 3/4 of all respondents agreed that hog farmers are committed to improving the environment on their farms.

### *Farmers*

Farmers generally feel that Canadian agriculture is more environmentally friendly, compared to hog farming.

A slim majority of producers feel that a voluntary code of practice from the industry is enough to limit the environmental impact of hog farms.

### *Question: Is farming/hog farming Environmentally Friendly?*

Percentage Responding "Yes"	Farming in General	Hog Farming
Urban (n=795)	64	46
Rural (n=405)	65	52
Alberta	70	51
Saskatchewan	61	42
Manitoba	64	38
Ontario	62	47
Quebec	68	47
Maritimes	60	49

### Environmental Rules for Hog Farms

<b>Percent Responding</b>	<b>Voluntary “Code of Practice” is enough</b>	<b>Need Strong Government Regulation</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
<b>Overall (n=1200)</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>2</b>
Alberta	41	56	3
Saskatchewan	42	57	1
Manitoba	30	67	3
Ontario	36	61	3
Quebec	23	75	2
Maritimes	35	65	0
<b>Farmers (n=300)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>1</b>

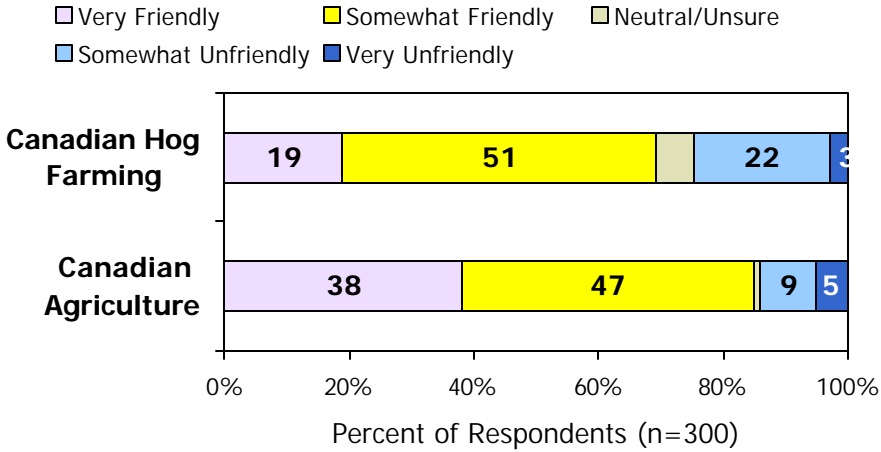
### Environmental Attitudes of Non-Farmers – Overall & Rural versus Urban

<b>Percentage of Respondents Agreeing</b>	<b>Overall (n=1200)</b>	<b>Rural (n=405)</b>	<b>Urban (n=795)</b>
Hog farmers committed to improving the environment on farms	76	75	82
Most hog farms are family farms	68	64	70
There is very little risk of soil contamination	39	42	38
Concerned by unpleasant odour	56	61	54
Concerned about water contamination	70	69	70

**Environmental Attitudes of Non-Farmers – By Region**

<b>Percent Respondents Agreeing</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>Maritime</b>
Hog farmers committed to improving the environment on farms	76	72	70	75	80	80
Most hog farms are family farms	60	52	46	70	75	69
There is very little risk of soil contamination	36	37	31	38	42	41
Concerned by unpleasant odour	51	61	68	45	69	56
Concerned about water contamination	71	72	78	67	72	74

**Environmental Impact of Farming –Farmers**



## ▪ Information Sources

### *Non-Farming Public*

Almost half of all respondents mentioned the newspaper and/or the television as a place where they receive most of their information about hog farming.

Urban respondents were more dependent upon these information sources than their rural counterparts, who were more likely to receive information directly from a farmer.

Even though they may not feel very well informed about hog farming practices, only one in five respondents indicated that they would be interested in learning more about hog farming.

### *Farmers*

Most farmers receive a large proportion of their information about hog farming directly from hog farmers.

### Sources of Hog Farming Information (Total mentions)

Information Source	Percent of Respondents n=1200	Rural n=405	Urban n=795
Newspaper	49	40	51
Television	48	41	50
Farmer/Farm Worker	24	38	21
Radio	10	10	10
Magazines	10	9	10
Family/Friends	7	6	7
Haven't received any information	8	-	-

### Most Credible Sources of Information

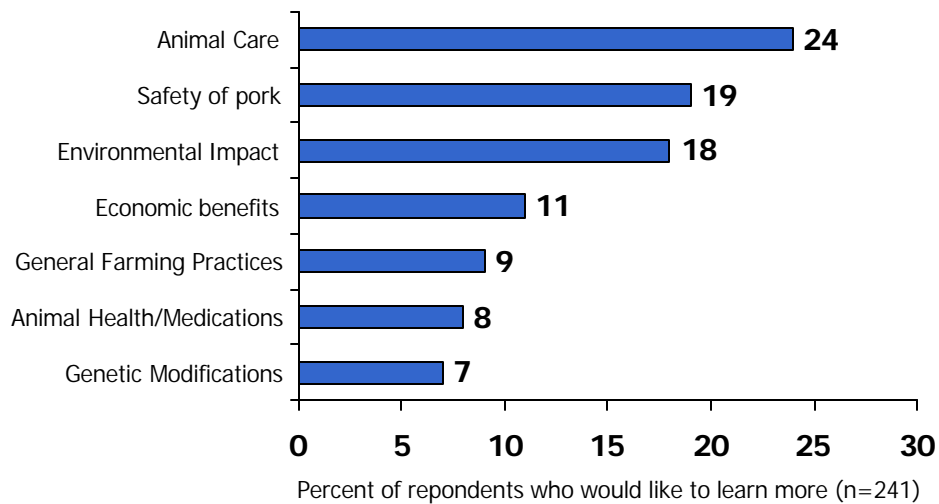
Information Source	Percent of Respondents n=1200	Rural n=405	Urban n=795
Television	22	19	23
Farmer/Farm Worker	18	27	15
Newspaper	16	12	18
Magazines	4	5	4
Radio	3	4	3
Family/Friends	2		

### Would you like to learn more about hog farming? (n=1200)

YES – 21%

NO – 79%

### Specifically, what would you like to learn about hog farming?



### Sources of Hog Farming Information – Farmers

Information Source	Percent of Respondents n=300
Other Farmers	41
Newspaper	37
Television	19
Magazines	15
Radio	12
Used to raise pigs	11

#### ■ Conclusions

While the most important issue confronting the hog industry is the safety of pork, the industry can take heart from the fact that Canadians are generally confident that pork products are safe.

In the case of animal care the public is reasonably confident that hogs receive proper care and treatment. The watchout on this issue is that opponents to the industry are significantly less comfortable.

Two issues that represent a public relations “land mine” are genetic engineering and the environment. While both of these issues are not as important relative to the safety of pork, on these issues, the public is less confident of the hog industry’s track record.

On the issue of genetic engineering, the public overall becomes more supportive when discussing particular traits.

In the case of the environment, the general public is less comfortable with the hog industry. A majority of respondents overall, within provinces and within segments feel there is a need for greater government regulation. Even farmers in the prairie provinces are also concerned with odor, and soil and water contamination.

Finally, it is not unexpected that the main stream media -television and newspapers - are a key source of credible information. It is interesting to note that the public does recognize farmers as a key source, and a potentially credible source of information.

## ▪ **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings the following recommendations have been made:

- First, the safety of pork products needs to be reinforced with Canadians. In particular, proper and safe use of antibiotics must be addressed.
- In all regions except Manitoba and Saskatchewan, any communications efforts must promote that farmers take proper care of their hogs. In particular, the issue that modern barns are perceived as factories and that farmers put profit ahead of animal welfare must be addressed.
- In Manitoba (and to a slightly lesser extent in other regions), the environment issue needs to be dealt with. In particular, the proper handling and storage of hog manure to prevent soil and water contamination, and reduce odor must be addressed. In addition, the industry needs to build on the belief that hog farmers are committed to improving the environment. This is required as part of the industry's efforts to promote that a code of standards is sufficient to reduce the potential negative impact of hog farms on the environment.
- Genetic engineering is probably the most difficult issue to deal with as this brings into play the broader discussion of GM food. It is believed that without a broader industry effort on the use of genetically modified organisms, it will be difficult for the hog industry to make headway on this issue. As a result, we would recommend working with other industry players rather than tackling this issue alone.
- In terms of information sources, it is imperative that the hog industry use the main stream media (television, print, radio). As part of these efforts, we would strongly recommend the use of hog farmers as spokespeople for the industry. Hog farmers could be an effective group to deal with the safety of pork, animal welfare and concern for the environment.