

Social and Environmental Dimensions of Rented Land in Iowa: Producer Perspectives

Symposium on
Absentee Landowners
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Photo by USDA-NRCS

Why worry about landownership and tenure?

- **Environmental and social implications**

- **Environmental stewardship of rental land a concern**

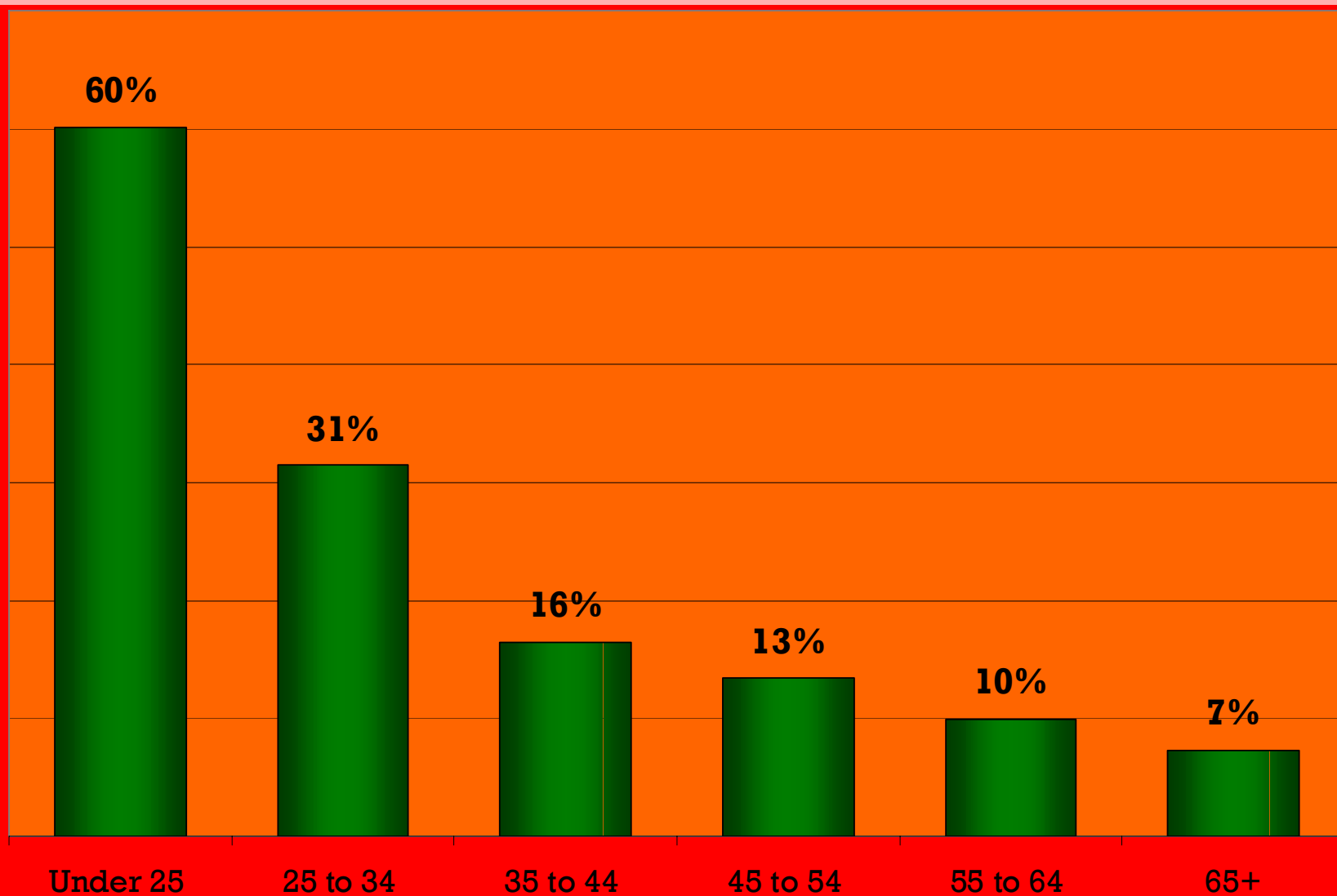
- “Absentee” landowners viewed as indifferent to soil and water quality
 - Decision-making authority regarding landscape alteration generally landowner’s

- **Ownership is control, access to farmland critical to success in farming**

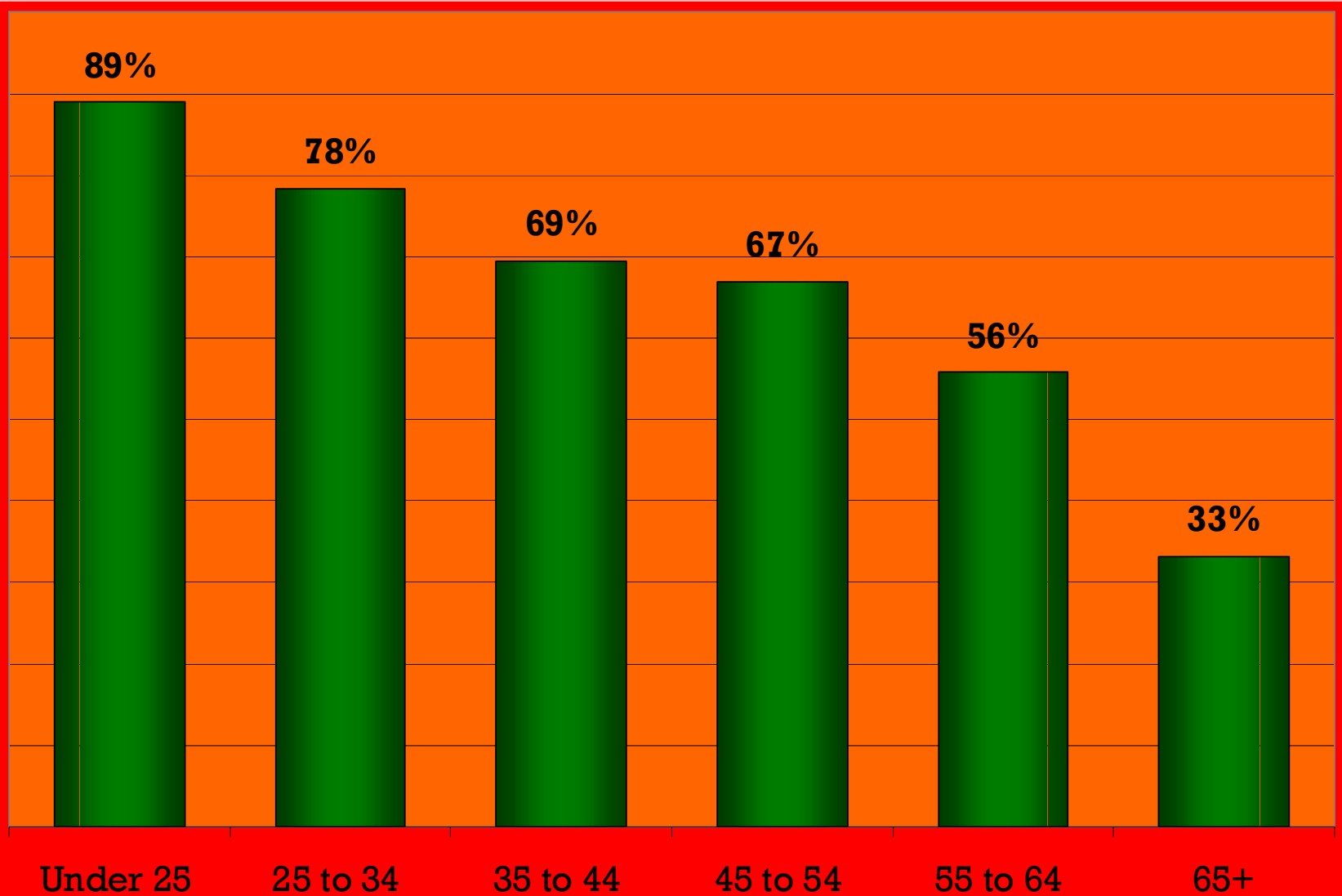
- Loss of land to higher bidders can determine profit or loss
 - Smaller-scale, less established farmers more vulnerable

Photo by USDA-NRCS

Percent full tenant by age group-principal occupation



Ratio of rented farmland to all farmland by age group-principal occupation



Rented Land: Major Issues

- Dominant leasing paradigm focused on economic variables: Cash rent per acre
- Social and environmental dimensions excluded
- When landowners absentee, rent money leaves communities
- Small-scale, beginning farmers may be impacted disproportionately

Photo by USDA-NRCS

Rented Land in Iowa: Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll

- Questions focused on
 - Extent of rented land
 - Where landlords live
 - Landlord relationship to farming
 - Tenant-landlord relationships
 - Perceived stewardship ethics among landowners

Photo by USDA-NRCS

Rented Land in Iowa: Extent

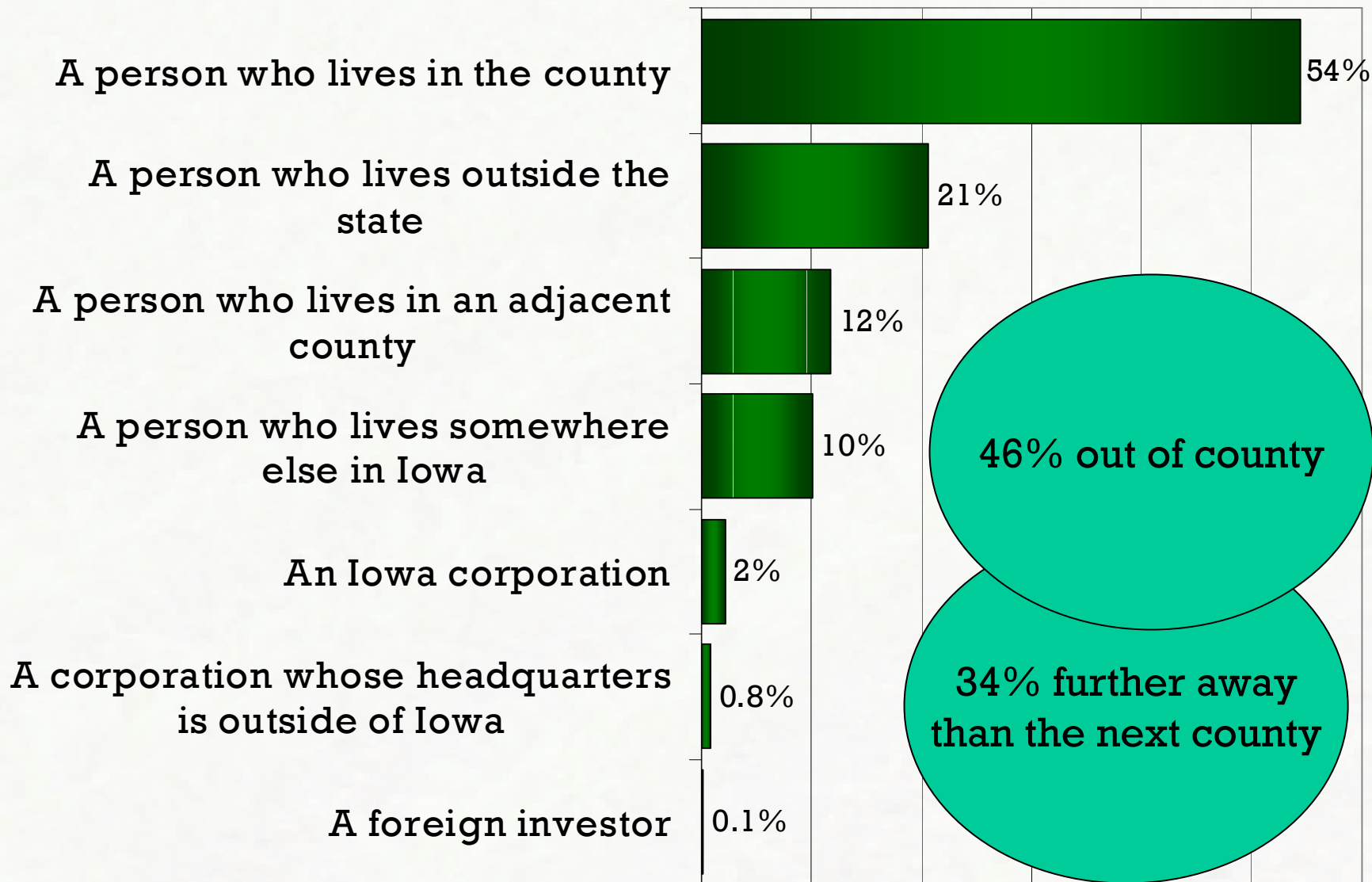
- Tenure categories
 - Full owners: 49%
 - Part owners: 45%
 - Full tenants: 6%
- 51% of operators rent some land
- Acres of land owned: 290
- Acres rented: 386
- Acres farmed: 675

Photo by USDA-NRCS

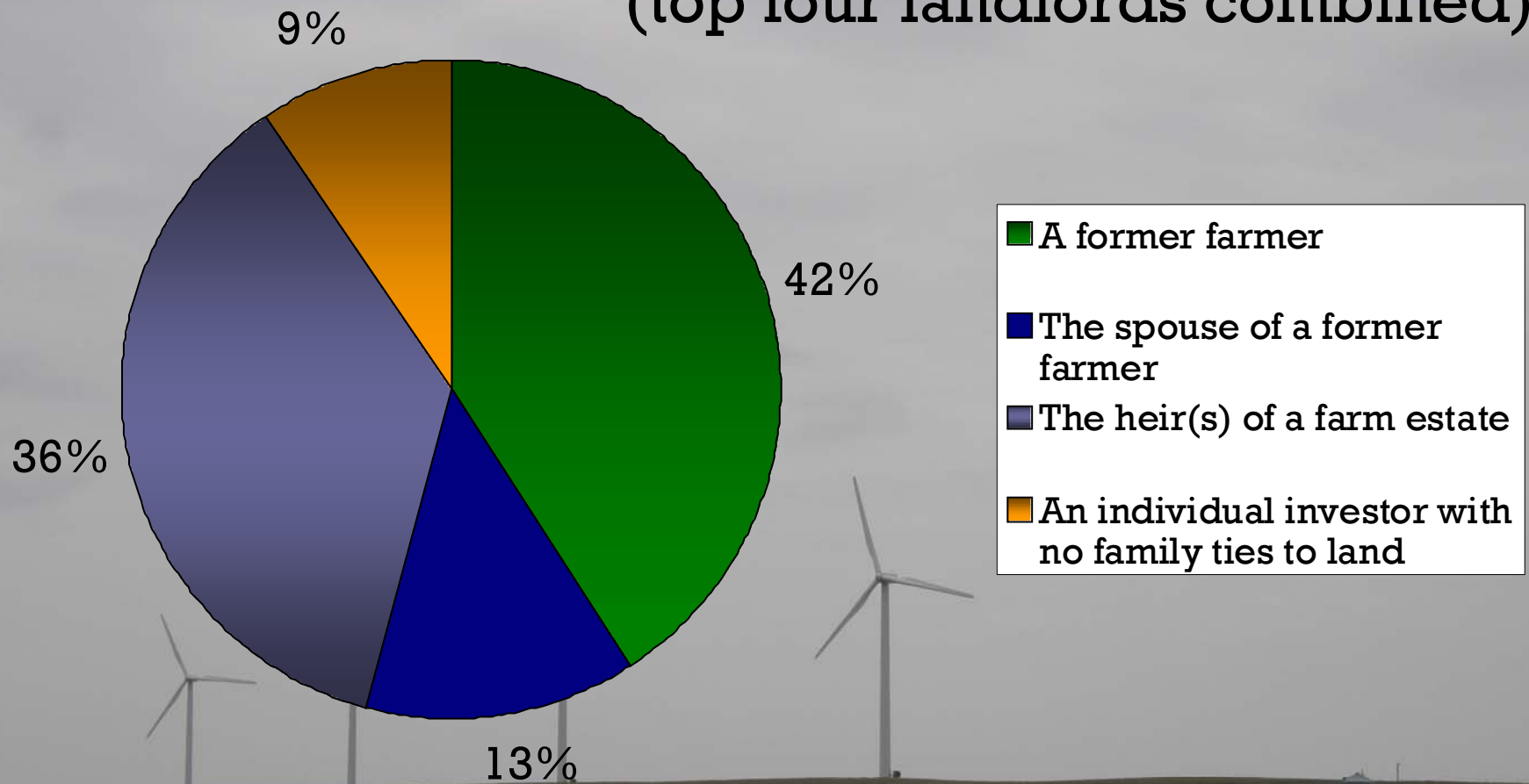
Owned and Rented Land by Tenure Category

	Acres Owned	Acres Rented	Acres Farmed
Full owner	249	0	249
Part owner	328	381	708
Full tenant	0	419	419
Total	270	197	467

Who owns the land (top four landlords combined)?



Who owns the land (top four landlords combined)?



Tenure relations

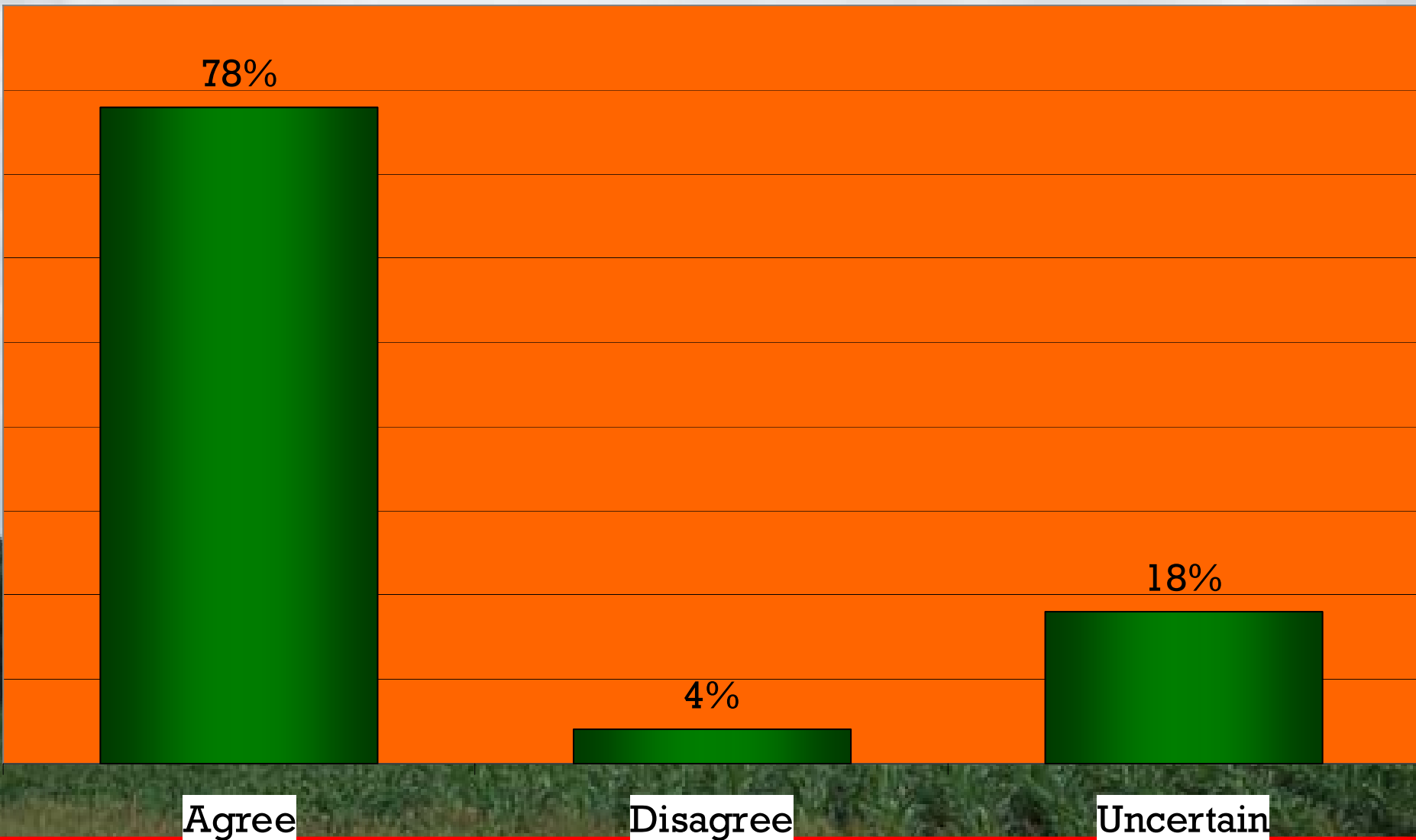
Questions:

-What are relationships with landlords like?

- Average number of landlords: 2.8
- Average years rented from primary landlord: 18, 80% more than five
- Average annual communication about farming practices: 17 times, but 50% three or less
- Average annual communication about conservation: 4 times, but 57% one or less

Photo by USDA-NRCS

My landlord is committed to my continuation as a tenant



Agree

Disagree

Uncertain

Tenure relations

- Long-term, stable relationships
- Encouraging in terms of bringing social and environmental criteria into conversation

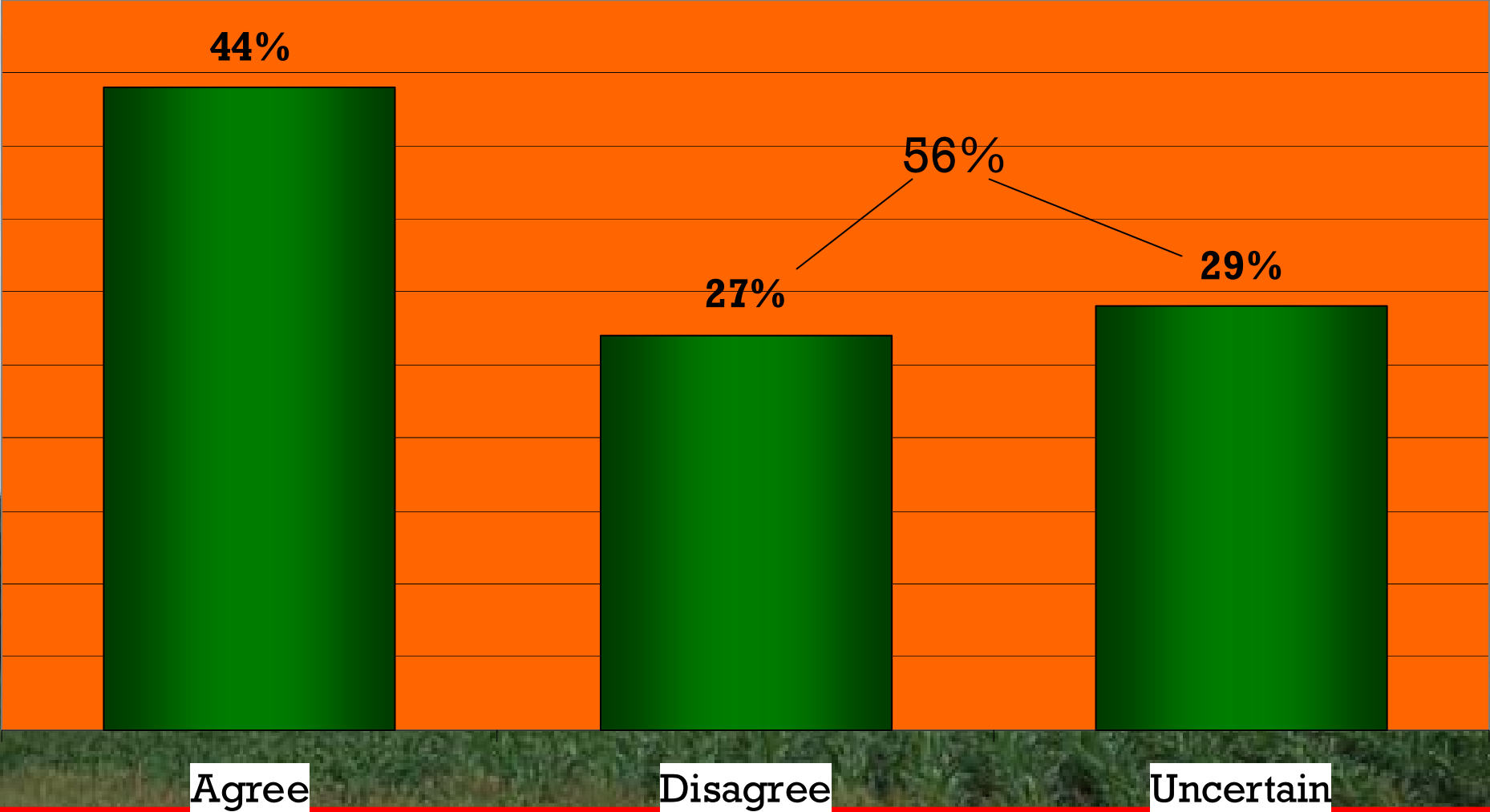
Photo by USDA-NRCS

Rented land and stewardship

Questions

- What are landlords' stewardship ethics?
- How is responsibility for establishing conservation practices shared?

My landlord places land stewardship goals ahead of income goals

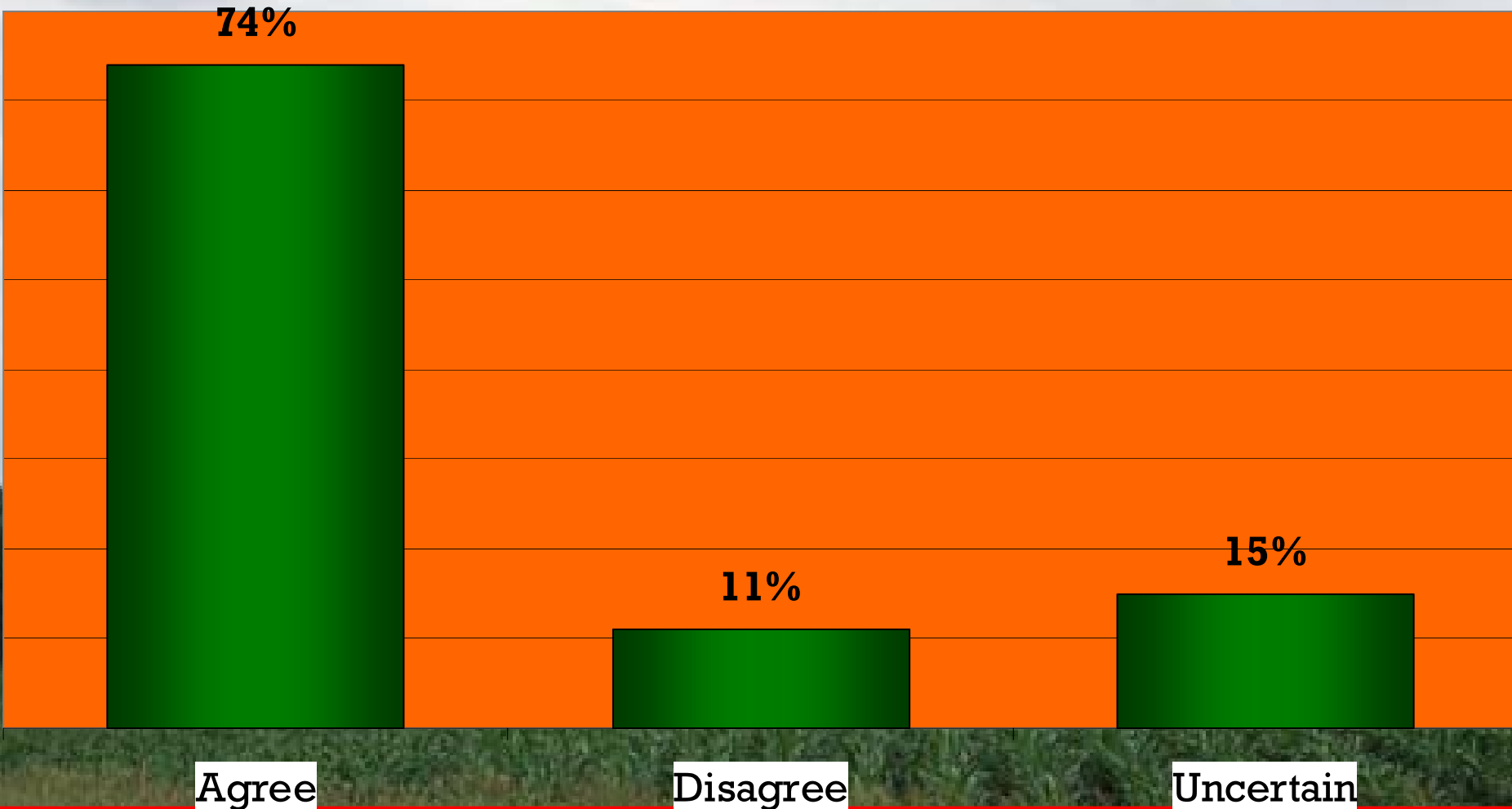


Agree

Disagree

Uncertain

My landlord cares about how my farming practices impact soil and water quality



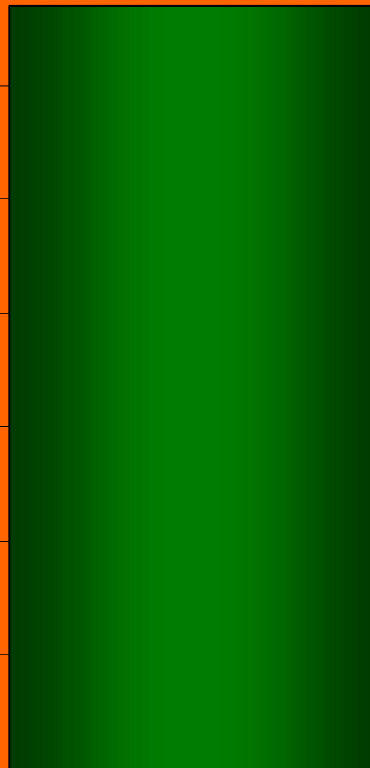
Agree

Disagree

Uncertain

If conservation practices are needed on the land I rent, it is my responsibility to address the need

67%



14%



18%

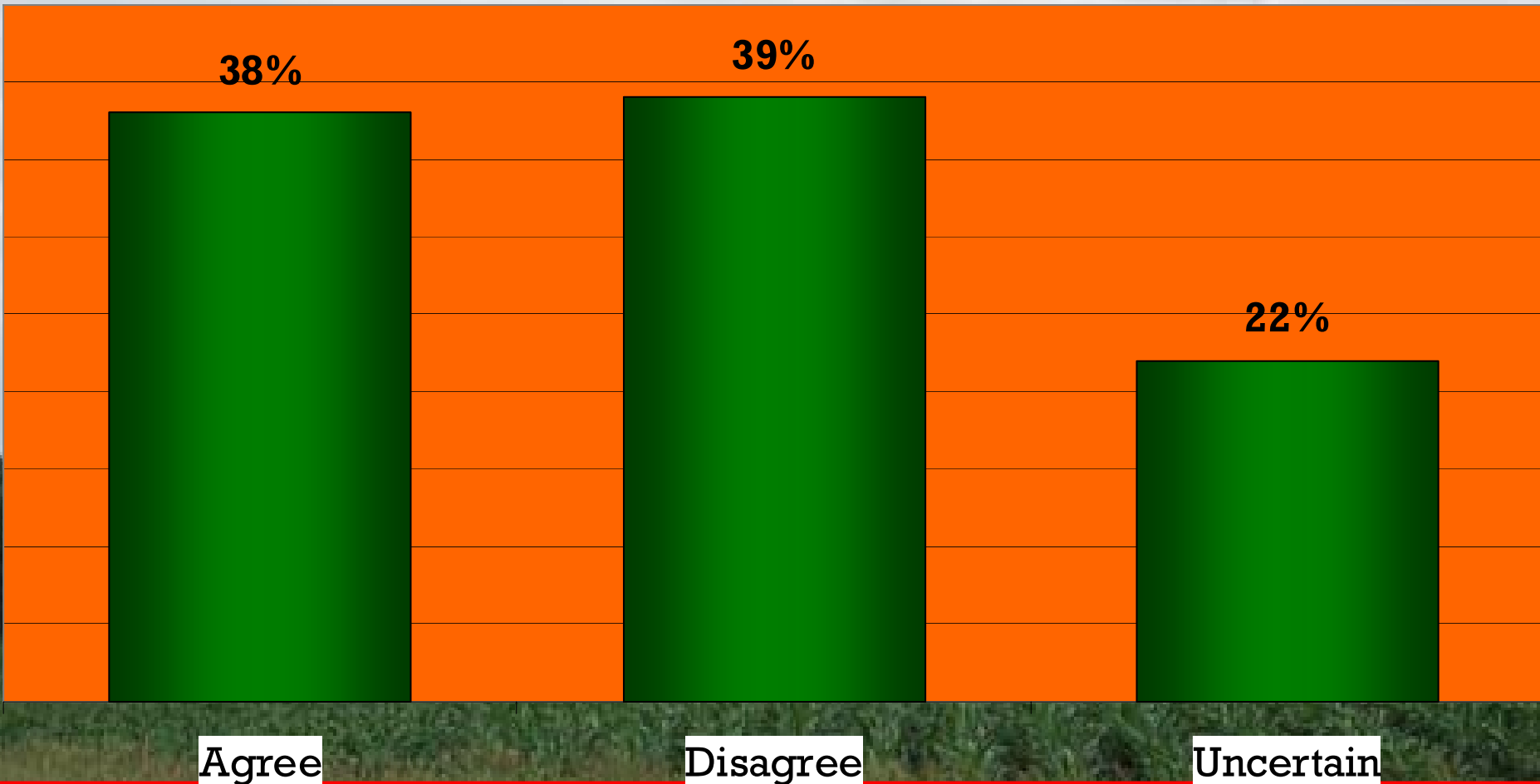


Agree

Disagree

Uncertain

If conservation practices are needed on the land I rent, it is my landlord's responsibility to address the need

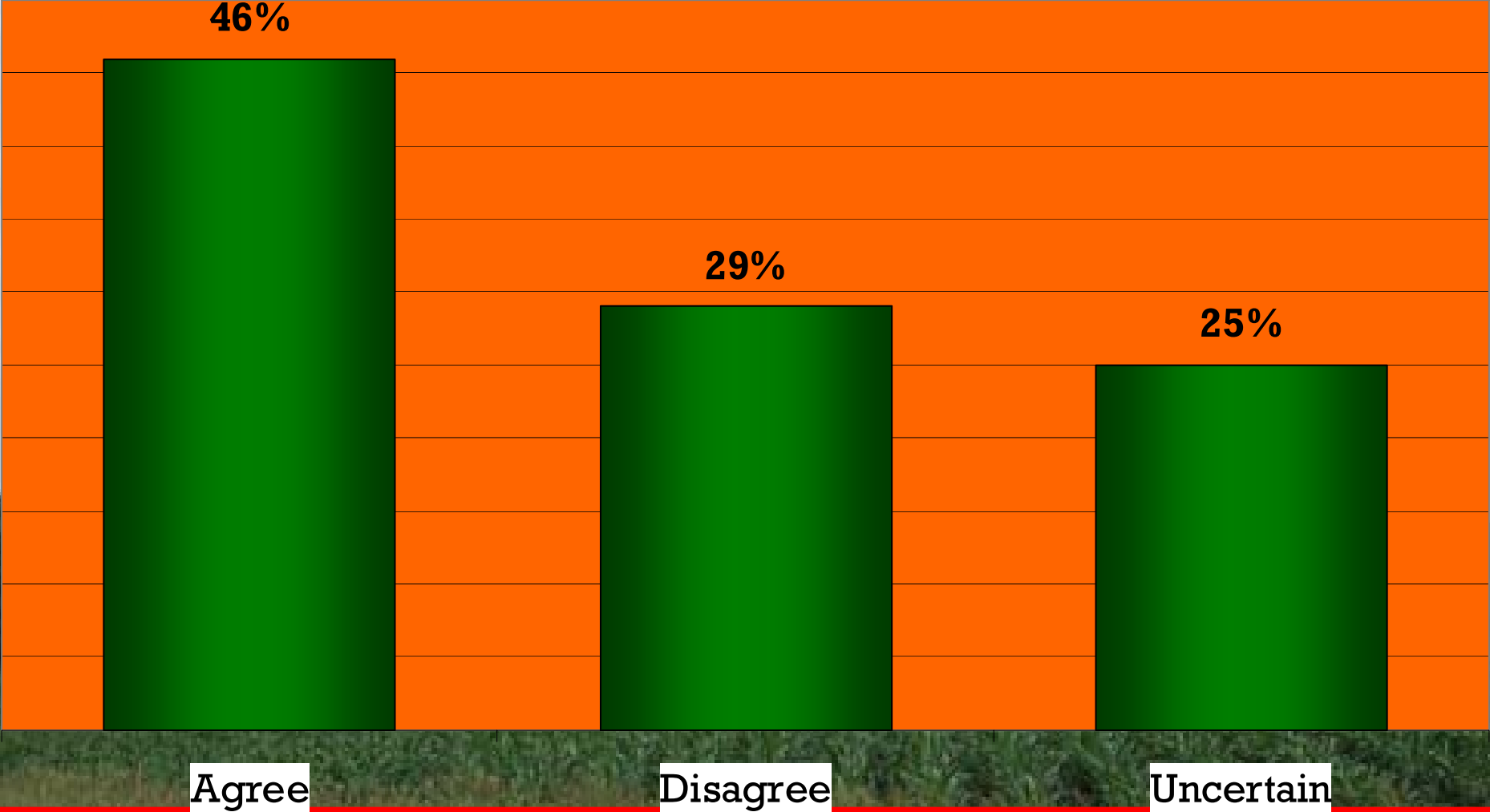


Agree

Disagree

Uncertain

My landlord requires me to minimize impacts on soil and water quality



Agree

Disagree

Uncertain

My landlord cares about wildlife on his/her land

38%

37%

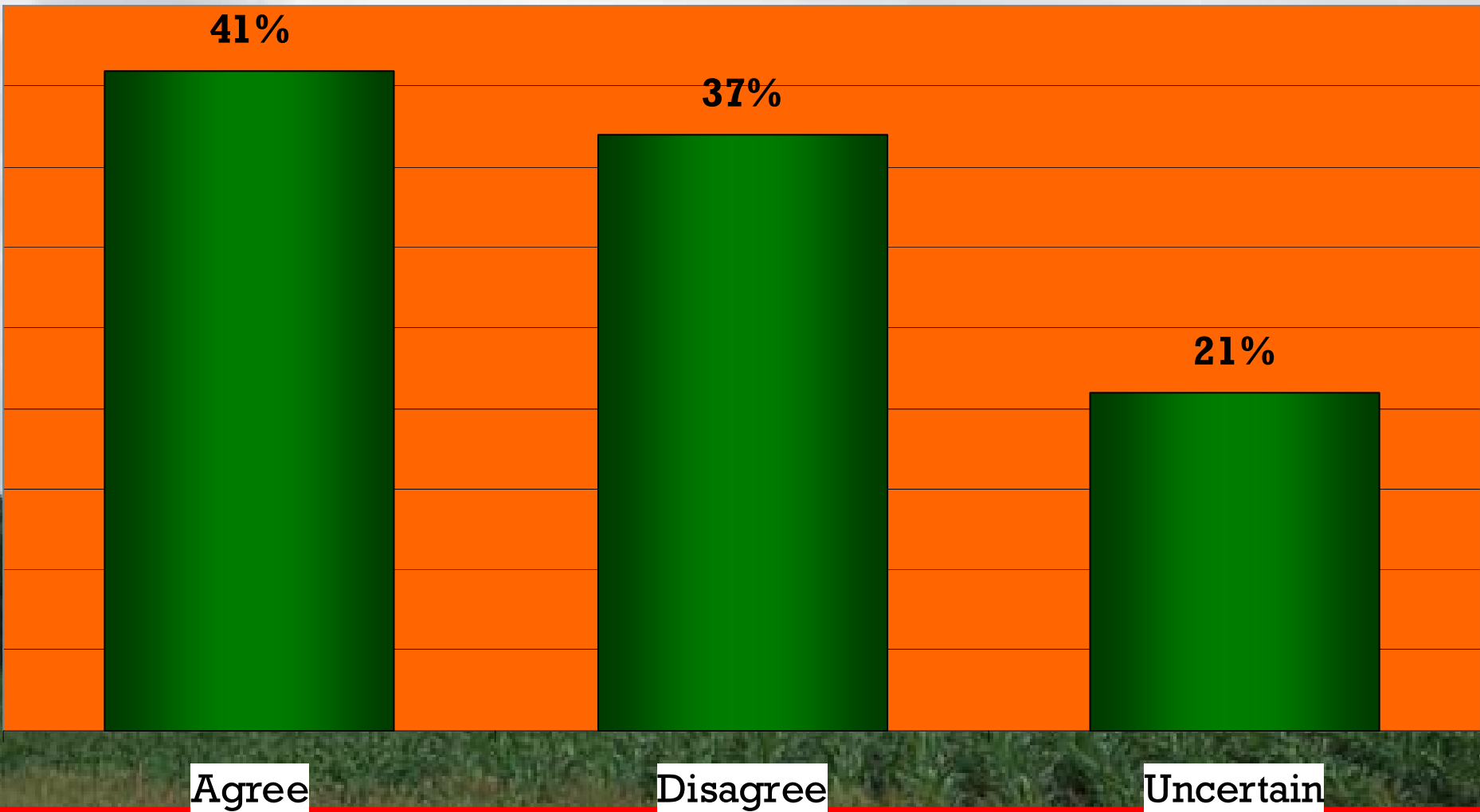
25%

Agree

Disagree

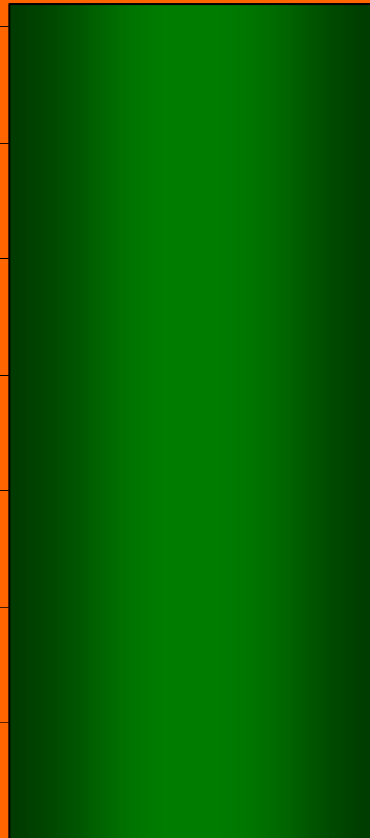
Uncertain

My landlord participates substantially in conservation decisions



My landlord has established adequate conservation measures on his or her land

72%



13%



15%



Agree

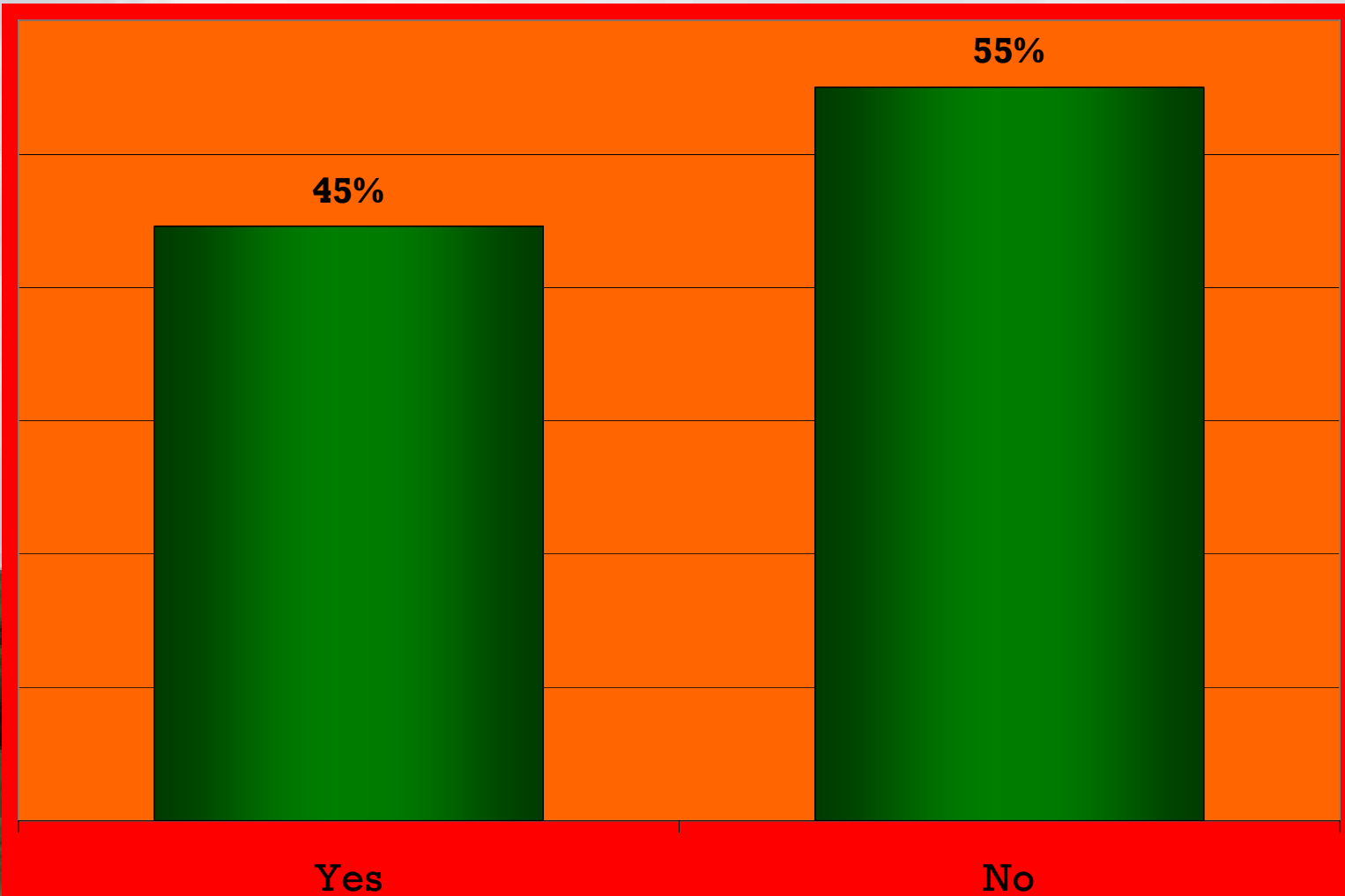
Disagree

Uncertain

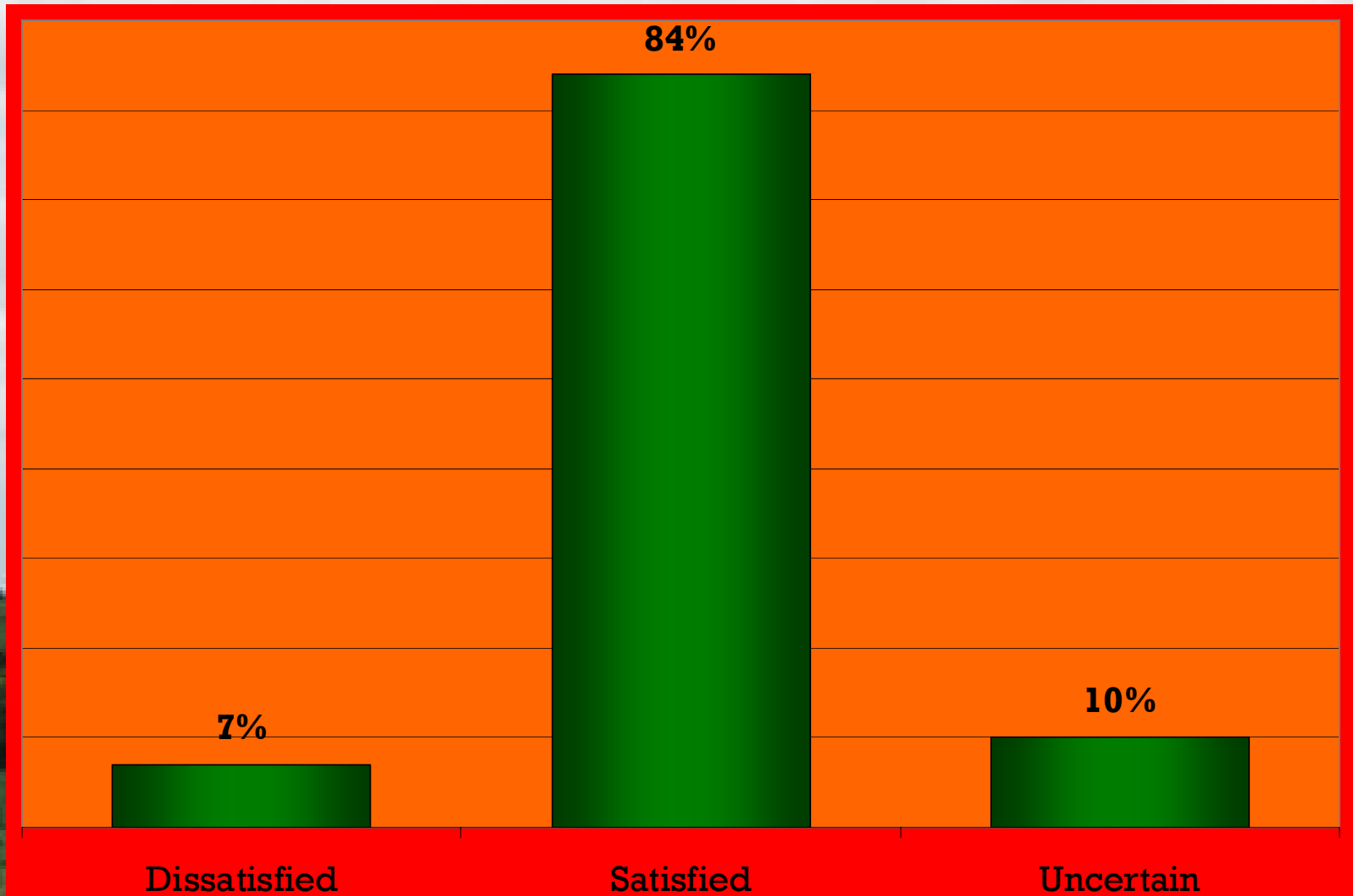
Are landlords conservation-minded?

- Farm Poll results encouraging
 - Many farmers believe that their landlords care about the land
 - Many tenants believe that they are responsible for ensuring proper stewardship
- Grain of salt

In 2007 did you use conservation methods such as no-till or limited tilling, filtering runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals from streams, etc.?



How satisfied are you with the adequacy of conservation measures on your farm?

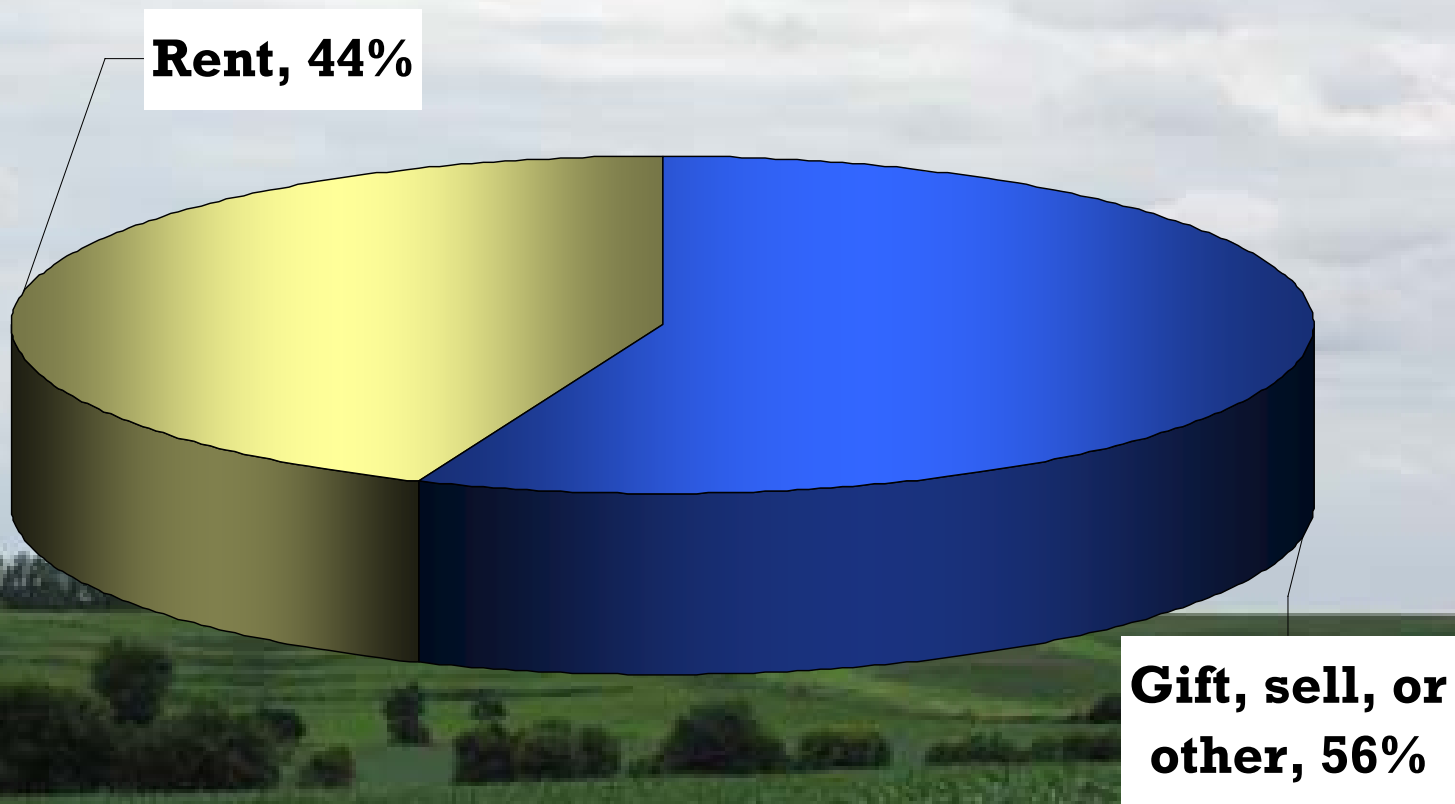


Dissatisfied

Satisfied

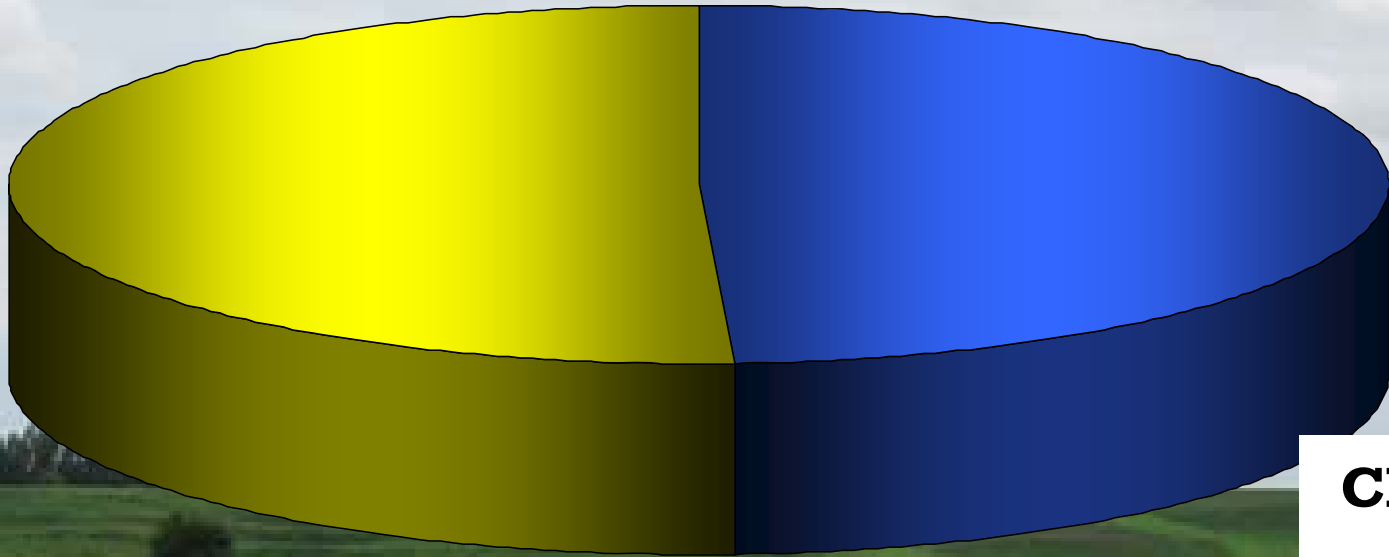
Uncertain

What will happen your land upon retirement?



Who will retiring farmers rent to?

**A non-family member,
51%**



**Children,
other
family, 49%**

Closing thoughts

- Percentage rented farmland likely to increase
- Farm Poll results encouraging
 - Perceived stewardship ethics
 - Long-term relationships imply trust, stability: could withstand discussion about conservation
- Need for more research and outreach
- Need to incorporate social and environmental criteria into leases and leasing decisions

Thank you!



Photo by Nick Vanberkum