



BIOCHAR SURVEY RESULTS REPORT

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Participants who attended the biochar session at the 2011 Integrated Crop Management (ICM) Conference organized by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (November 30 to December 1, 2011) were surveyed for their level of awareness and perceptions regarding biochar as a production agriculture commodity in the Midwest. The survey was electronically sent one week after the conference on December 7, 2011. One hundred and nine respondents of the 229 contacted responded to the survey (response rate of 47.59%). Of the 109 respondents, a majority were agronomists or agricultural retailers (54.60%) by primary occupation, followed by crop advisors (21.30%), producers (6.50%) and those working for Extension/educators (1.90%). There were also seed company personnel and agriculture researchers among the session attendees.

There was a significant gain in participants' knowledge about biochar because of what they learned at the biochar session. Participants' knowledge about biochar before attending the session was none-to-little, whereas they reported having gained some knowledge after attending this session. A majority of the participants (51.92%) expressed some interest in learning about biochar as a means of reducing nutrient leaching in a farming or nursery operation, with 21% showing a lot of interest. Seventy-eight percent thought that biochar could provide little-to-some economic benefits to them or their customers.

Extreme Weather Events viewed as a significant challenge. Overall, participants identified four production agriculture issues in the Midwest to be at least a moderate challenge. Slightly more than eight out of ten participants (81.48%) perceived extreme weather events to be a moderate to greatest challenge. A majority of participants ranked economic sustainability (65.42%), environmental regulations (60.18%), and public perception of agriculture (59.25%) as posing moderate challenges in the Midwest.

Perennial grasses hold promise. Almost nine out ten respondents believe that planting perennial grasses on marginal lands could improve extreme weather events (87.73%) and economic sustainability (86.79%). A majority of the respondents believed it to be somewhat likely that planting perennial grasses on marginal lands can improve environmental regulations (63.20%) and public perception of agriculture (53.77%).

The findings in this report are from self-reported data based on participants' perceptions. Perceptions tend to change with time, increased knowledge in biomass production strategies and developing biofuel markets. Nonetheless, these initial findings provide Cenusa Bioenergy with important information for making decisions regarding short-term educational efforts.

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