**INTRODUCTION**

In our research on U.S. and Chinese farms, our group wanted to especially investigate the motivations behind specific farmer choices and how these motivations differed between the U.S. and China. Specifically, we wanted to know why farmers chose particular sustainable or non-sustainable farming methods. Were they influenced by cost? Environmental concerns? Food safety or health concerns? Were farmers even conscious of alternative methods, or were they simply going with what they knew? Once we obtained these answers, we compared the answers in terms of farm size, location, and sustainability score, as well as other factors, in order to find trends in farmer motivation in various different demographics.

**METHODS**

In order to investigate the motivations behind farmers’ choices, we developed a series of broad questions with the aim of getting farmers to talk about the reasons behind the choices that they make. We were especially careful not to indicate our interest in environmental motivations as we did not want to sway their response. For the farms that we visited in China, we asked these questions directly to the farmers, often through translators. We asked the same questions of the farmers that we visited in the United States, both during our visits and also on the class-created survey that we had each American farmer fill out. Although the questions were not always exactly the same, they tended to follow the general themes of:

- **Why do you farm?**
- **How did you get into farming?**
- **Where did you learn your farming practices?**
- **How do finances influence your farming choices?**
- **What else influences your farming choices?**

**RESULTS**

As expected, farmer responses to our questions varied widely in both the U.S. and China. Motivations for specific farming methods ranged from concerns for the environment to concerns for food safety and family health to most cost effective approach for highest yield. Farmers learned their farming practices from their parents, as well as from books, universities and many other sources. See Table 1 (separate from the poster) for a complete compilation of farmer responses to our questions. Note that, due to various time and language constraints, the information that we gathered from each farm differed to some extent, especially between Chinese and U.S. farms.

Mr. Liu, above and left, farms because of the freedom he feels. He finds it interesting that the same piece of land can produce many different kinds of crops.

**DISCUSSION**

**Chinese farmers were often concerned about family health and food safety while American farmers voiced concern for environment and land health.**

The underlying motivations for sustainable farming practices differed for Chinese and American farmers. Many Chinese farmers cited the health of their families as a reason not to use pesticides. Some Chinese farmers were conscious of the environment but did not cite environmental protection as the overarching reason for their farming practices. Across farms, there was a general distrust of chemicals. Farmer Duan uses organic practices simply because he does not want to eat chemicals, and the Gao family believes organic farming is good for both their family’s and their customers’ health. In contrast, when American farmers chose not to use chemicals, they were more likely be concerned about the environment or the health of their land rather than food safety. Gardener of Eagan, for example, switched to organic techniques after learning the negative effects of conventional farming.

**I was born a farmer.**

- Mr. Ai, a farmer outside of Beijing, on how he began to farm. Generations of his family before him have farmed the same land.

- Chinese farmers felt they needed to take care of the land in honor of past generations and for the health of future generations, while American farmers that treated the land well seemed to feel a moral duty to the environment as a whole.

Finally, we noted a difference in the way Chinese and American farmers view the environment. Chinese farmers spoke about the environment in terms of how to sustain the land in order to keep it going from past to future generations. Farmers from Little Donkey, the Gao family farm, and Duans farm all expressed a desire to preserve the land as a provider for their children. Whereas Chinese farmers felt a personal, familial connection to the environment, American farmers tended to view the environment as a separate, completely different entity. American farmers likely to cite the health of their families when discussing rationales for environmentally-friendly practices. Steve Schwen, for example, seemed to feel a moral duty to the environment at large. Many American farmers shared this perspective that their farm’s actions have wide-reaching environmental consequences for the global environment. This suggests that American farmers are more likely to think of the environment in global terms and Chinese farmers are more likely to farm sustainably because they see a direct connection between their health and the land’s health.

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**Mr. Pahl, above, grew his family’s farm by participating in a movement. He finds it interesting that the same piece of land can produce many different kinds of crops.**

**Mr. Wirth, below, farmed his family’s farm by participating in a movement. He feels a moral duty to the environment.**

**Mr. Schwen, on the far left, farmed his family’s farm by participating in a movement. He feels a moral duty to the environment.**