

Appendix 8: Off-Farm Income – Survey and Interview Data

Nine of fifteen households who responded to questions about household finances reported that at least one farm partner had an off-farm job (five were full time). In three of these households, both farm partners had a job. Seven said the main reason for their off-farm job was health insurance coverage, although guaranteed year-round income was important too. Four explicitly stated that they wanted to reduce off-farm work to spend more time on their diversified farming systems, multi-farm collaborative efforts, and participation in organizations, but could not afford to. However, four reported that having an off-farm job was important to them as another form of diversification. Particularly for farm wives, off-farm work provided intellectual, social, and professional opportunities not available on the farm, and one farmer's off-farm job was a political position that allowed him to advocate for policies to support resilience at larger scales. Although these four households appreciated the benefits of their off-farm work, however, they would have preferred not to depend on it for health insurance – as this constraint forced longer commutes, prevented off-farm workers from taking breaks to help with labor-intensive tasks like harvest, and made the elected official even more nervous about losing his next race.

Of the six households that did not earn off-farm income, three received Social Security plus military retirement and/or Medicare, and two were largely self-sufficient homesteads with strong religious values and access to strong church-based networks.