

## Introduction: 2010 County Commissioner Survey

The fourth annual County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey was conducted from September 1 to October 6, 2010. The design and methodology were previously reviewed and approved by the CSU Research Integrity and Compliance Review Office. A five-point scale was used for evaluation. The variables studied included: (1) the quality of programs and services provided by local Extension offices; (2) the expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel; (3) the responsiveness and service level of county Extension personnel; (4) the perceived value to citizens of Extension programs and services; and (5) respondent insights and comments regarding CSU Extension.

## Methodology

While the survey was designed by Extension, the survey was conducted by an independent contractor for the Office of Engagement. Participants received a letter directly from the President containing the link to take the survey online. A hard copy of the survey and a pre-paid return envelope were also enclosed, offering the choice to complete a paper survey. The letter stressed the importance of the input, and the confidential and voluntary nature of the survey. Roughly two weeks after the initial letter a second reminder letter and second hard copy survey was sent from the Chief of Staff, Office of the President. A final reminder email from the Chief of Staff was also sent. All results were received, compiled, and analyzed by the independent contractor.

Four years ago the survey was set up to assess county commissioner perceptions of local service. In compiling survey results, we learned that commissioners often assigned a single commissioner to respond for the entire board. We also became sensitive to the uneven number of commissioners in a single county. For example, Larimer County has three commissioners, while neighboring Weld has five commissioners. Broomfield has 9 commissioners/council members. In 2009, we decided to focus on county responses while continuing to survey all commissioners. The 2010 survey is a transition from simply reporting commissioner responses to focusing on responses from counties. In the following report, data is reported as commissioner response (N=95) where relevant, and also as per-county response. Per-county responses (N=49) were calculated using the mean of all commissioner responses for that county. Each graphic indicates the type of data calculation used.

A total of 204 surveys were sent to all commissioners/council members in counties where CSU has Extension offices or provides Extension services. The total number of surveys received was 95 (including five group responses), for a total response rate of 46.6 percent. A response rate of 30 percent is considered “good” for online surveys. The county response rate was excellent, with 49 of the 59 counties served by CSU extension responding (83%). Response rates by region were also excellent: Northern, 88%; Southern, 79%; Western, 83%. The counties that did not respond to the survey were: Adams, Boulder, Conejos, Costilla, Delta, El Paso, Jackson, Mineral, Montezuma, and Park.

One response was received but excluded from analysis because no county was identified. Three surveys from counties not currently served by Extension were also received, but excluded from analysis.

## Summary of Survey Results

Overall, commissioners responded favorably to questions about Extension program value and quality, and agent expertise and responsiveness. Comparisons between commissioner level and county level data reveal no statistically significant differences, indicating a trend toward consistent scoring with no extreme highs or lows. Commissioners in every region are very positive about their local agents and office staff. But, they remain concerned about staffing shortages and persistent budget shortfalls.

### Administrative Reorganization: Spring 2010

Based on qualitative data, respondents appear to be positive about President Frank's April 2010 administrative reorganization. Several respondents commented about regionalization in response to this question, which implies that regionalization issues may be more relevant to those respondents. Specific comments about administrative changes include:

- *I am very pleased with the direction things are going after the meeting in (county name) with the new president Tony Frank.*
- *Having face to face meetings with CSU leadership is definitely a step in the right direction. This year's meeting was very well received by (county name) employees and the Commissioners.*
- *We appreciate President Frank's personal interest & involvement in the (county name) Extension program.*

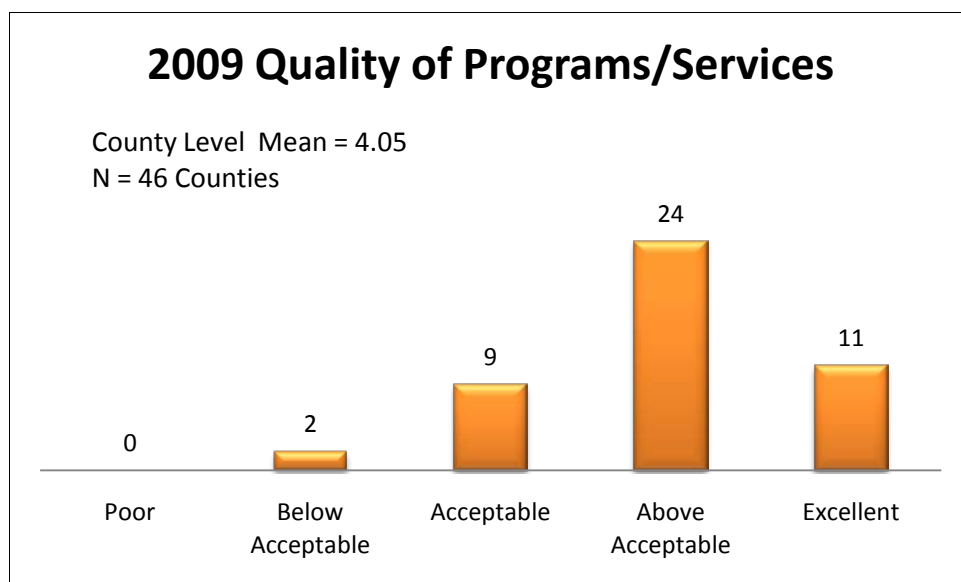
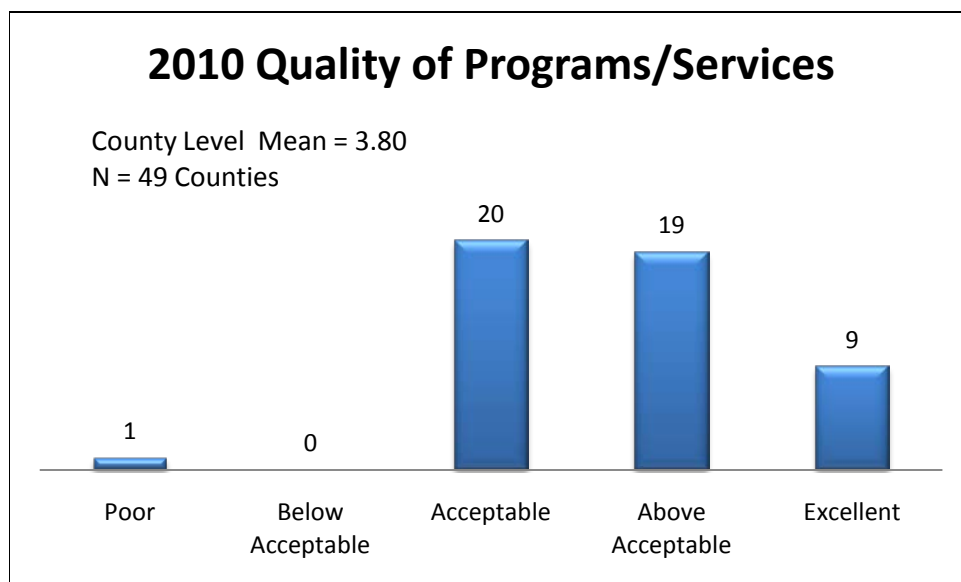
### Survey Results: 2009–2010 Key Indicator Comparison of County Responses

There is value in analyzing data at the county level—taking multiple responses from each county and averaging them, so that each county has one averaged response. It standardizes any potential systematic bias caused by some counties having a larger number of commissioners respond versus a county in which the Board of Commissioners assigns only one member to respond to the survey. This methodology levels the playing field and allows for a survey of *county attitudes and satisfaction*, rather than county commissioner attitudes and satisfaction.

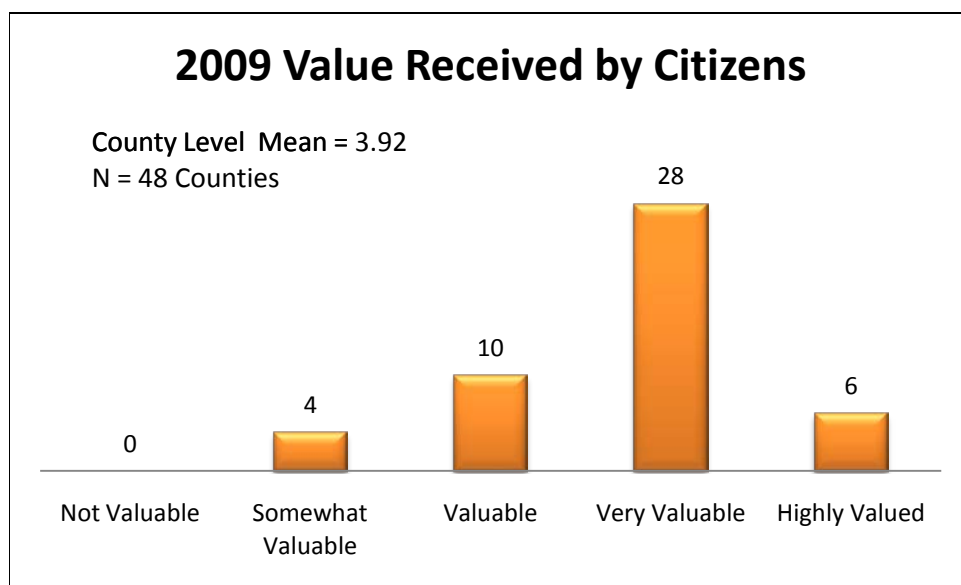
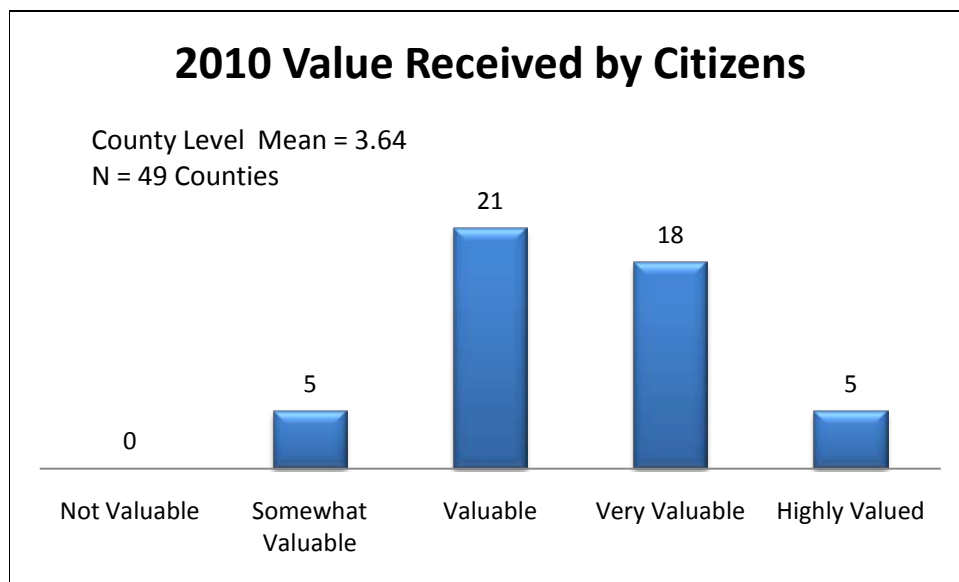
Overall, *counties* responded favorably to questions about program quality, value, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction. We compared 2010 data on four key indicators to 2009 data, and found a consistent trend toward slightly lower scores. Qualitative data indicates that this trend results from the loss of agents and therefore program capacity. A consistent trend toward lower scores therefore likely reflects the national recession and consequent budget reductions for counties and CSU Extension. Extension has taken an \$843,000 or 9.85% reduction to its state allocated budget. State and county budget cuts have created widespread concerns for commissioners across all counties.

The four key indicators are graphed below for both 2010 and 2009 county responses. This includes the “overall satisfaction” question, Q9, used to indicate mean satisfaction with CSU Extension.

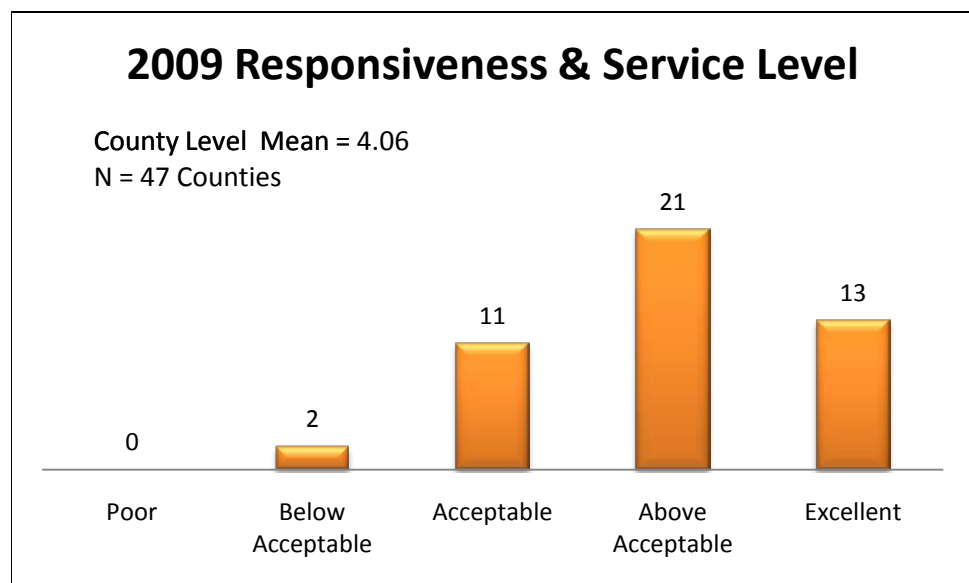
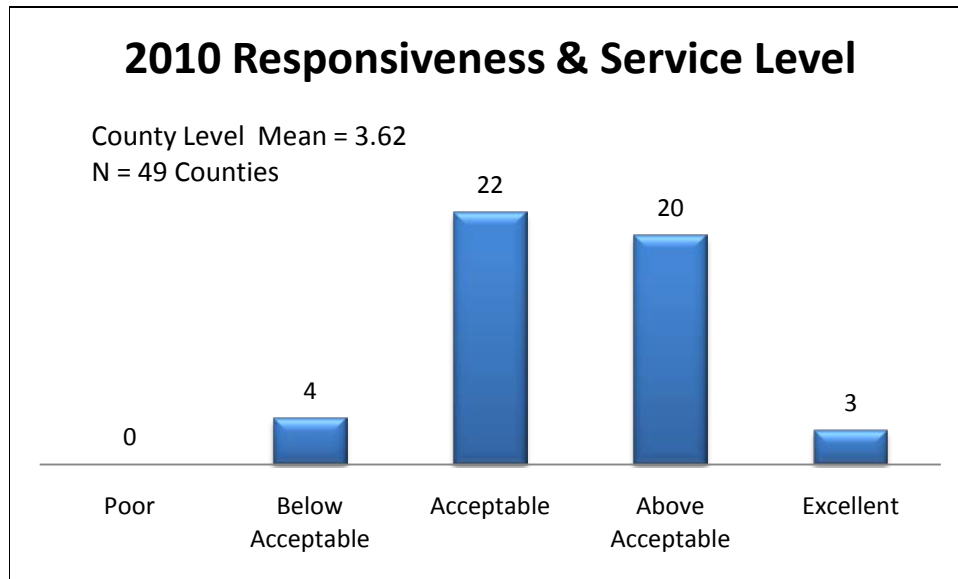
*Q4. Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office.*



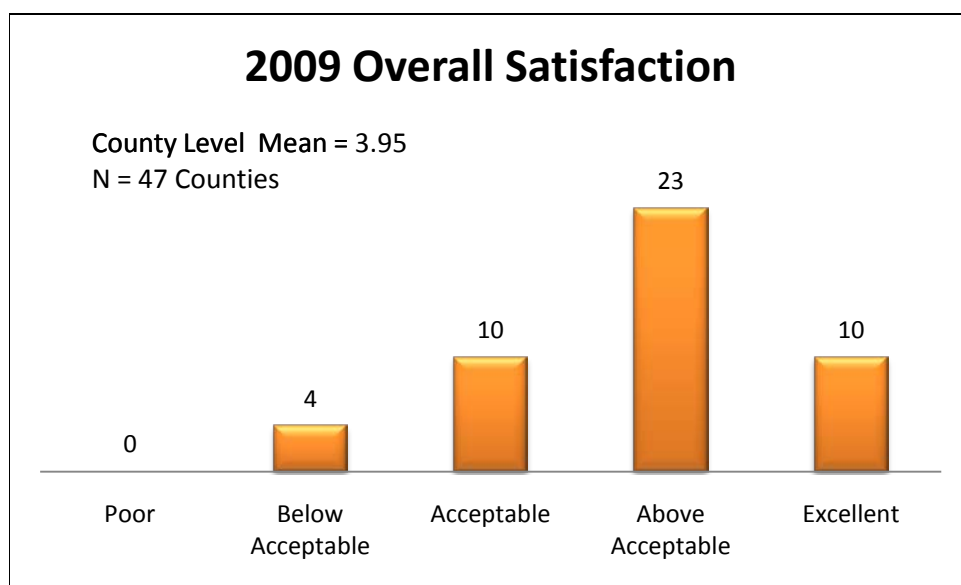
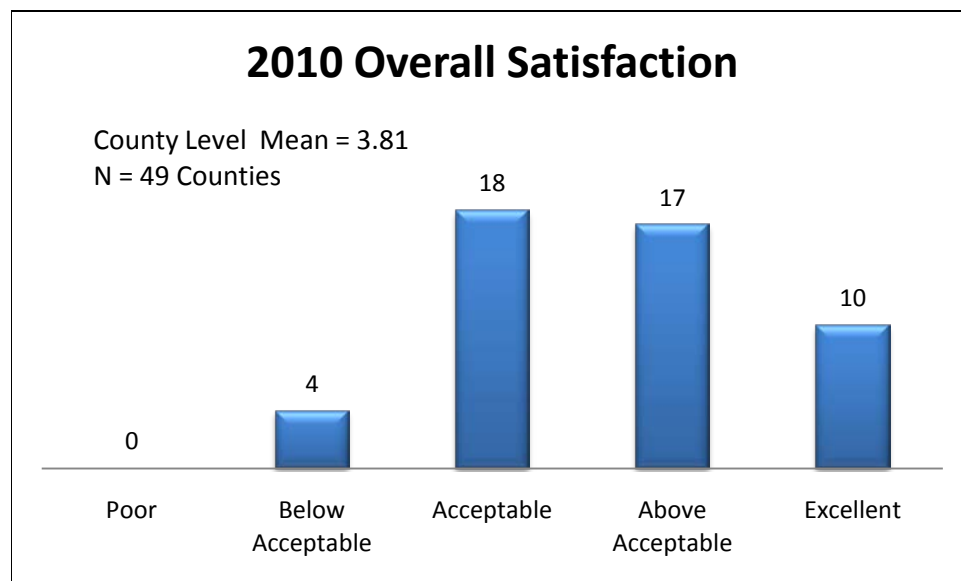
*Q6. How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?*



*Q8. Rate the responsiveness and service level of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens.*



*Q9. Rate your overall satisfaction with the service the citizens receive from your local county/area Extension office.*

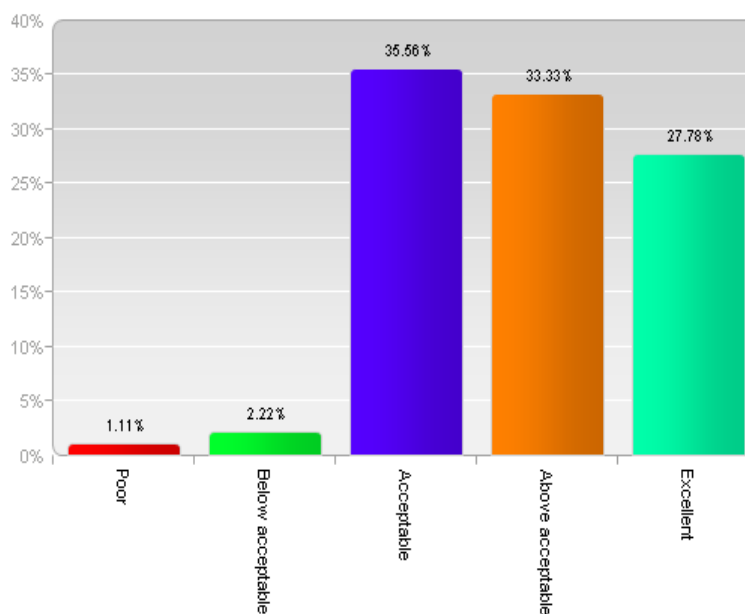


### Survey Results: Commissioner Level Data on Program Value and Agent Ability

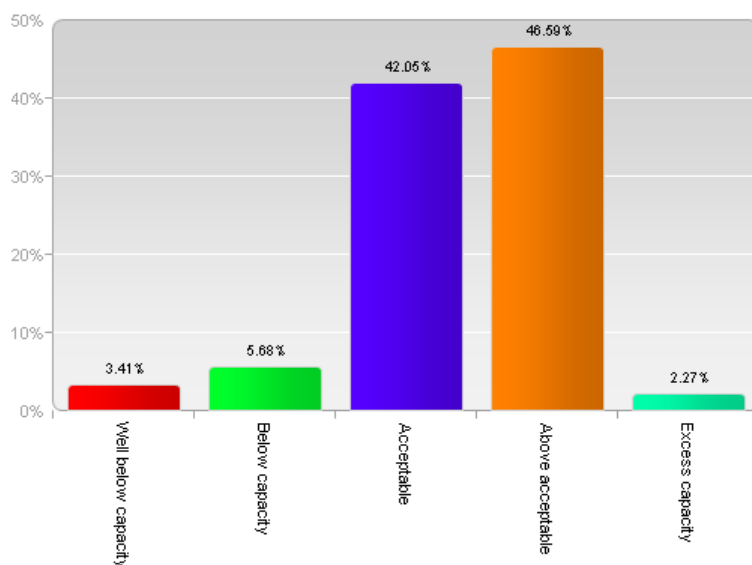
As indicated below, commissioner responses were positive about Extension services, program quality, and agent expertise. Results were slightly less positive regarding office ability to meet county needs; comments indicated that this is due to funding and/or number of agents, not agent ability. Specific questions with their response frequencies and related comments are below.

*Commissioners rated the services provided from local Extension office favorably, with 96.67% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. As one commissioner states: "Extension has a great presence in our community and works to grow that on a constant basis."*

Q5. Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office.



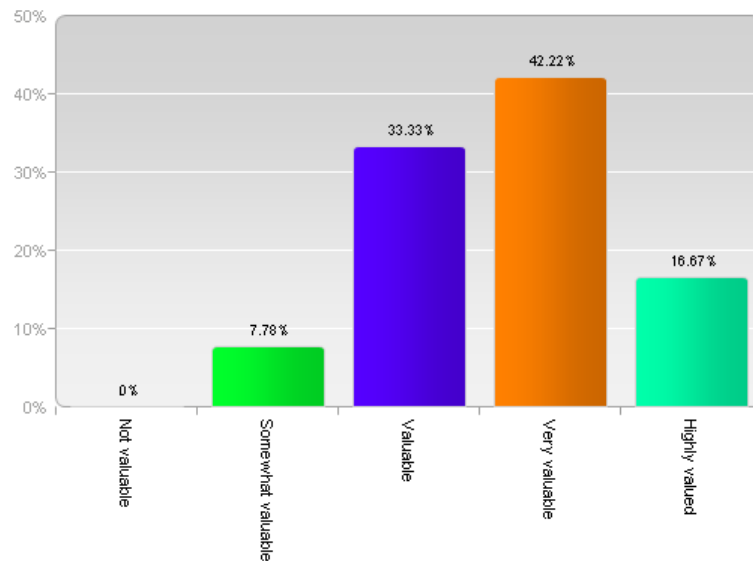
Q7. Please rate the local offices' ability to meet the needs of your county.



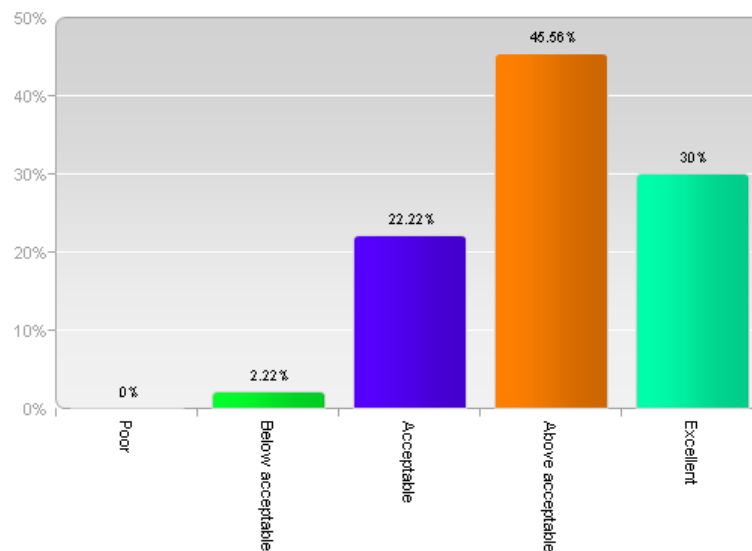
*Commissioners were satisfied with the local offices' ability to meet the needs of each county, with 90.91% rated acceptable, above acceptable or excess capacity.*

*The value received by the citizens from programs and services delivered by Extension: was valuable, very valuable or highly valuable according to 92.22% of respondents. One commissioner explains: "We regularly get positive feedback from our citizens."*

Q9. How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?



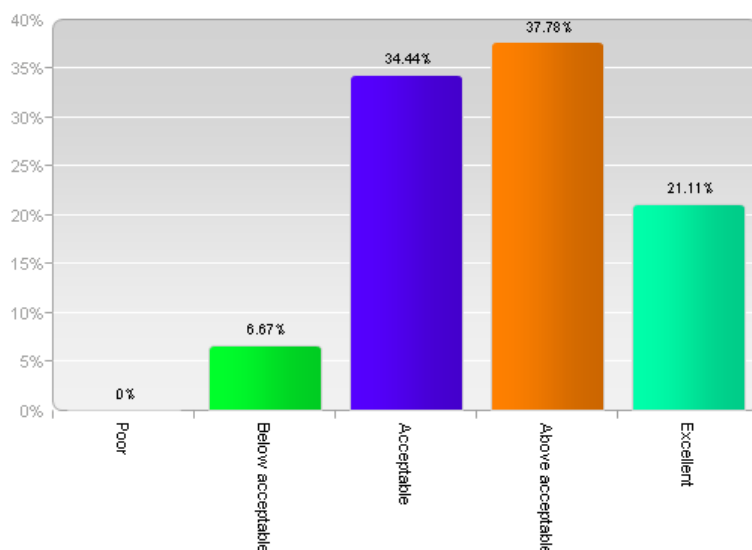
Q11. Rate the expertise and knowledge of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens.



*Commissioners rated the expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel positively, with 97.78% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.*



Q13. Rate the responsiveness and service level of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens.



*The responsiveness and service level of Extension personnel in meeting the needs of citizens was found to be 93.33% acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.*

### Regional Results Comparison: Commissioner Level Data

The table below reports commissioner responses by region as percentages. As these percentages indicate, all three regions are similar in their response trends. The Western region trends higher in all responses. The Southern region trends lower on issues of capacity, agent responsiveness, and overall satisfaction; the Northern region trends lower on issues of capacity and program value.

Regional Results Comparison									
	Excellent/Above Acceptable			Acceptable			Below Acceptable/Poor		
	North	West	South	North	West	South	North	West	South
Program Quality	53%	76%	57%	43%	24%	37%	3%	0%	6%
Capacity	45%	64%	41%	45%	32%	47%	10%	4%	12%
Value	40%	92%	52%	50%	8%	37%	10%	0%	11%
Knowledge	70%	84%	74%	30%	12%	23%	0%	4%	3%
Responsiveness	60%	76%	46%	30%	24%	46%	10%	0%	9%
Satisfaction	65%	92%	43%	29%	4%	49%	7%	4%	9%

### Survey Comments: Kudos and Concerns

Each question on the survey allowed unlimited space for comments. Comments on local agents and offices were generally very positive. Comments also, however, emphasized the need for

appropriate/increased local staffing and raised concerns regarding regionalization. A selection of comments follows. Complete comment data has been provided in a separate document.

### Praise for Extension Agents and Services

- *Our Extension office has done an excellent job of succeeding with fewer resources and adapting to new areas of interest.*
- *It is amazing that the limited staff in our local office provides such tremendous programs for our community*
- *We continue to be amazed at the high caliber of personnel CSU extension attracts & retains*
- *Extension is a great program and a valuable program. CSU is a great University doing great things. Its infrastructure is truly valuable in connecting CSU to all of the citizens of Colorado. We must utilize this existing infrastructure, stay with the mission, deliver creative new programs that are supported by research at the University level, and deliver this information to the citizens of Colorado.*
- *The services provided by the CSU Extension Office are highly valued by the citizens of (county name).*
- *We are all in this budget crunch together. I appreciate the cooperation on making things work.*
- *I truly appreciate the changes being made at the highest levels of university administration to support quality Extension service throughout Colorado and making the wide range of programs available to all of us. We need what Extension has to offer in our small rural county and a full time Extension Agent that is willing to work as a team to make it happen. Thank YOU.*
- *Big improvement over last year.*

### Concerns: Regionalization and Staffing

- *Avoid regionalization. The distances are simply too great to be effective.*
- *Further regionalization would stretch current staff beyond their ability to provide excellent & responsive services.*
- *Regionalization of extension will only work as long as there is a presence maintained in all counties.*
- *Our area uses staff extremely well over a massive land area which then requires lots of travel time. These short staff makes things more stressful for every one - do not reduce numbers rather maintain staff numbers.*
- *We have struggled without an agent to fulfill our everyday needs. We had the food program & you took it away.*
- *Methods of filling open positions frustrate me a great deal. Whether a person has a PHD, MS. or BS. degree is not important to me. The right person for the job is the most important factor. If the right person for the job needs additional time to work on an advanced degree - hire them and allow a period of time to get additional degrees.*

### Recommendations from Respondents

Key recommendations from survey respondents included the need to publicize Extension services and respond to changing community needs. Several respondents also commented on the need to link Extension and the CSU land-grant mission more explicitly, and to create a clearly defined strategy that is well understood by county partners.

- *While programs are excellent, there is a general lack of awareness in the community, of what extension is and offers.*
- *There is still a sizeable portion of citizens in the county (mostly newer residents) who are unfamiliar w/ extension*
- *I think that extension has developed a perception that it doesn't serve the needs of the community as a whole. Again, I think the youth program is very well thought of, the average consumer does not really know what and what not extension does anymore.*
- *You need to do a better job informing the public what extension does for Colo citizens. Do you provide programs on money management, when it's time to buy equipment or land, and how to run a well managed & efficient operation? Some young farmers are coming into family operations and need some good advice from outside the family. Estate planning advice.*
- *Increase informational and promotional presence in community venues.*
- *I believe there must be constant attention paid to the information stream to citizens whether through the media, web sites, etc. so they know the service is available when a question comes up. This is important both locally and throughout the state.*
- *We must be progressive and creative in developing new programs to meet the needs of citizens. I truly believe that if we develop programs that citizens find value in then funding will be made available by local commissioner groups. There is never enough money to go around, therefore, Commissioners must decide which programs are the most needed by citizens and those programs will be funded. Extension must constantly evaluate the relevance of all programs.*
- *Make sure programs and services change to meet changing needs. Don't just continue to offer something because that is what has been offered in past.*
- *Somehow, CSU needs to reinvent and reintroduce their land grant mission. Somewhere along the way, we have lost that, and extension is the window to that.*
- *Be clear on organization of Extension and get a plan for future service, funding and strategies that counties are a part of.*
- *Please find a president that will stay more than a few months and try to reinvent extension every year. Decide on your mission and execute.*

## Conclusion

The 2010 survey data indicates that commissioners continue to feel very positive about their agents and the overall value of CSU Extension. They also, however, continue to struggle with funding and staffing shortages. Commissioners appear to be positive about Extension's administrative changes, although more concerned with local issues. The recommendation comments underscore the sentiment of respondents that Extension has valuable programs and needs to better publicize its achievements.