Priority 5: Advocate for **GREATER INVESTMENT IN SMALL FARMS SERVICES** (i.e. research, extension and education)

**241 out of 584 respondents (41%) ranked this topic as highest priority. Of those, 100 provided justification as follows:**

* 28 respondents (or 28%) commented that greater investment in small farm services is essential to maintaining the viability of small farms and the small farm economy now and into the future.

*“We need to help small farmers in whatever ways possible to remain viable in today’s economy. We need to be sure that resources are there to help us grow into the future when food production will become even more critical than it is today.”*

* 23 respondents (or 23%) commented that greater investment in small farm services would improve small farmer access to information and support that is currently non-existent because of lack of funding and staff time or is not accessible because of prohibitively high costs (such as of courses) or because of small farmer time constraints.

*“Especially when setting out to do new, alternative projects, there is an overwhelming array of things to learn and do. Greater support and training in everything from working with town boards for permits to applying for department of energy solar grants to learning how to improve your elderberry crop – just having access to local resources and support – would make a huge difference in the success of small farmers.”*

* 12 respondents (or 12%) gave justifications grounded in their own personal interests, such as the desire to answer questions or to address needs particular to their farms or organizations.

*“This would help fund what my organization does, and improve the profitability of our agricultural business.”*

* 9 respondents (or 9%) commented that greater investment in small farm services would help to counter the general bias of agricultural research toward large-scale, conventional farms and encourage research in support of small farm growth and success.

*“Small farms* can *feed their communities, but as of now, there has not been enough research and training into how that will happen. Giant agribusiness will continue to mine our soils until more research dollars are put into this topic.”*

* 8 respondents (or 8%) commented that greater investment in small farm services is necessary to generate new information and technologies and to encourage innovation in the small farm sector, contributing to small farm viability and growth.

*“Access to sound research and training is critical for new farmers and old farmers alike. If we are going to complete with the big boys, we need to outsmart them with innovative methods and very low overhead costs and minimal labor inputs. Grampa’s ways put grampa out of business.”*

* 5 respondents (or 5%) commented that increased support to small farmers is crucial to encouraging sustainable farming practices and maintaining environmental health.

*“Research and education are really important to fostering sustainable farming – at any size/scale. The public seems less interested in funding these important tools, at the same time there seems to be greater interest in regulating/restricting farm practices. Education may be the most important factor in bringing up the next generation of farmers.”*

* 5 respondents (or 5%) commented that increased support and services for small farmers benefits not only the small farm sector, but also local economies and communities.

*“Good research and extension can be a great support to local industries.”*