Priority 7: Develop and promote affordable **ENERGY CONSERVATION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES** for small farms

**236 out of 584 respondents (40%) ranked this topic as highest priority. Of those, 95 provided justification as follows:**

* 44 respondents (or 46%) commented that it is important to develop and promote affordable energy conservation and renewable energy sources for small farms to help small farmers offset high and volatile energy costs and to subsequently increase farm profitability and investment in other areas.

*“Farms are expensive to run. The less money spent on energy, the more money that can be put back into the business or into the savings accounts of the farmers.”*

* 20 respondents (or 21%) commented that in addition to helping small farmers reduce costs and increase profits, the use of energy conservation and renewable energy sources is also essential to promoting environmental health and sustainability.

*“Energy costs are volatile and increasing over time. Energy conservation and use of renewable energy sources reduces the volatility of production costs and makes the farm more environmentally sustainable.”*

* 12 respondents (or 13%) commented that developing and promoting affordable energy conservation and renewable energy sources for small farms will make these technologies more accessible to small farmers, who are currently unable to afford them or not eligible for incentives.

*“On-farm renewable energy projects can be very expensive and out of the financial reach of many farmers that would like to implement them.”*

* 8 respondents (or 8%) commented that developing and promoting affordable energy conservation and renewable energy sources is crucial to conserving resources and promoting environmental health and sustainability.

*“Affordable energy conservation and renewable energy sources are integral for the continued existence of our species.”*

* 8 respondents (or 8%) commented that developing and promoting affordable energy conservation and renewable energy sources would foster greater self-sufficiency among small farmers and increased farmer control over energy markets, resulting in improved farm viability, sustainability, and resilience.

*“Keeping our farms energy independent keeps them sustainable and therefore longer lasting and more resilient.”*

* 3 respondents (or 3%) commented that developing and promoting affordable energy conservation and renewable energy sources could create additional revenue streams for small farmers.

*“Many of our farms are being lost to aging farmers selling off their land or are being forced to sell because of economic reasons. If these farmers could use their hay land to make grass pellets or lease their seldom used land to make solar or wind farms, that might allow them to keep their farms.”*