

Survey shows Md. rural landowners want land kept "as it is"

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Most rural landowners in Maryland strongly agree foreign ownership of land in this country should be restricted, believe that landowners should be able to do whatever they wish with their land short of harming the environment, and say they have a "moral obligation" to conserve rural land for future generations.

Those are just some of the results of an extensive survey of rural landowners and their attitudes in Maryland that also shows a "typical" rural landowner most likely was born and raised on a farm, is married, between the ages of 46 and 65, and retired.

The survey, part of a larger five-

year study of land use and land-use policies in Maryland, was designed by University of Maryland agricultural economists to provide state policy makers with basic planning information.

"State policymakers are looking for basic planning information as they come to grips with some land-use issues as farmland preservation, land speculation, taxation and the environment," said Billy V. Lessley, professor and research economist for the University's Agricultural Experiment Station.

Lessley said the survey of five representative Maryland counties offers some of that basic planning information.

The five counties — Dorchester,

Allegany, Garrett, Harford and Howard — were selected, according to research assistant Neal Bliven, because they represented four major categories of population growth and density in the state.

Other issues most rural landowners in Maryland agreed upon included giving farmland preferential tax treatment to keep the land in active agricultural production, Bliven said.

Most respondents to the survey also agreed high-quality farmland in Maryland should be preserved by public policy for agricultural use, he said.

But while rural landowners across the state agreed to a large

degree on these issues, other issues brought a variety of responses, according to Bliven and Lessley.

Asked if profits from rural land speculation in Maryland should be taxed at higher than the present rate, a large number of survey respondents said "no" or remained neutral, Lessley said.

Opinion also was mixed on issues such as restricting development in the state to land that is not well suited to agricultural production, he said, and the perceived need for zoning in rural areas.

When asked about governmental regulation of local land use, however, significant numbers of respondents in the survey said they "don't know" if there is too much,

too little or sufficient control, Lessley said, while a nearly equal number said there was too much.

The study also showed more than half of all rural land in the survey is titled in both a husband's and wife's names, ranges in size from five to 59 acres and, with the exceptions of Allegany and Garrett counties, is in active agricultural use.

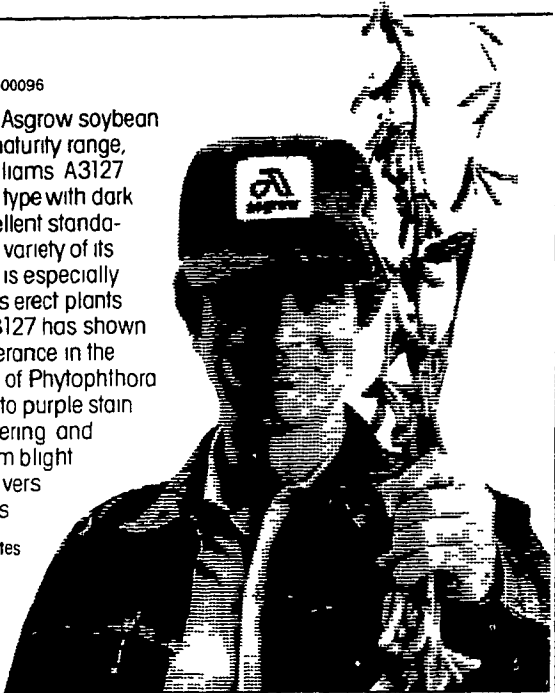
In those two counties, however, just under half of all survey respondents' parcels were in active agricultural use, Bliven and Lessley said, and a large majority in all five counties — ranging from 68-96 percent — said they foresaw no change in the future in how they will use their land.

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1980 & 1981 Summary; Maximum Yield Research with soybeans in New Jersey in 1980 & 1981, Roy L. Flannery, Specialist in Soils Rutgers University.

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