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**AWRA 2011 ANNUAL WATER RESOURCES CONFERENCE**  
**Albuquerque, New Mexico**

**November 7-10, 2011**

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**THE ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS  
TOWARD SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE ON THE HIGH PLAINS OF TEXAS**

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**ABSTRACT:** Agricultural producers face several issues in their operations including water conservation, sustainability, legislation, and carbon sequestration. Understanding the issues facing farmers, as well as the attitudes and perceptions producers have regarding these issues, will provide a better understanding of how to help producers implement change within their operations. The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes and opinions toward sustainable agriculture through focus groups with agricultural producers in the High Plains of Texas. To achieve this purpose, this study used a qualitative approach with a series of four focus groups conducted in different areas of the region with 13 participants who were directly involved in agricultural production. The study revealed that the selected agricultural producers in the region face many complex and intertwined problems - water, legislation, policy, technology, production costs, markets, and outward expansion. Water was by far the most significant concern shared by the participants. The producers are conscious of the depleting supply of water in the Ogallala Aquifer and most supported desired future conditions. All the mentioned problems are related to profitability, except for outward expansion. The participants were very concerned about issues that impacted their ability to successfully operate their agricultural enterprises. Although producers are focus on the day-to-day success of their operations, they are also concerned with how agriculture is viewed by others. The participants also said they plan to increase their sustainability through future conservation practices. Because the participants in this study had adopted sustainable agriculture practices and viewed them as sustainable, they are more likely to adopt similar practices in the future. The producers did not agree on a specific term or definition for sustainable agriculture, but each agreed that conservation and stewardship is of utmost importance in production agriculture. The most important aspect that influenced the adoption of sustainable practices was profitability. Based on the findings of this study, a decision making model was developed for agricultural producers on the region. Future research to develop and disseminate recommended sustainable agricultural practices should also examine the potential for economic profitability as this was an important attribute for producers in this study.

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