
AWRA 2011 ANNUAL WATER RESOURCES CONFERENCE
Albuquerque, New Mexico

November 7-10, 2011

Copyright © 2011 AWRA

**THE USE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES BY
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE STATE OF TEXAS**

Lindsay Graber*, David Doerfert

ABSTRACT: Communication has been a key factor in bringing about change in agriculture in the past suggesting that social media technologies could be used to advance agriculture in the future, as well as keeping agricultural specialists up-to-date on current events and information. The increasing pace of advancements in agriculture and communication technology have created a significant need for the industry to continue to effectively communicate agriculture and issues to the public. Social media and networking websites are becoming the most popular forms of inter-personal communication available today. However, little is known of the extent that social media is being used by agriculture stakeholders in the state. According to Farm Service Agency data, there are approximately 90,000 farmers in Texas. The purpose of this study was to understand the current use of social media by agricultural stakeholders and producers in the state of Texas. A random sample was used to survey 3,000 farmers collecting quantitative data related to communication technology use and the extent of trust extended to the sources as they use the various communication technologies to disseminate information. The data analysis process used a set of complementary processes of coding data, categorizing data, and writing informal analytical memos about the data and the resulting categories by each of the researchers. Results of the coding for each stakeholder group were examined into coding families. In this final data analysis step, the researchers examined the results of the stakeholder groups to identify similarities and differences between the groups. Results indicated that some agricultural producers and stakeholders in Texas have adopted social media, or are in the process of adopting social media. Producers and stakeholders identified specific communication channels that are predominantly utilized for agricultural news. Reasons for use of social media were identified, while factors of trust in the media were revealed. The results will facilitate the development of communications plans including guidance on the incorporation social media.

* Graduate Assistant, Texas Tech University, Department of Agricultural Education and Communications, MS 42131, Lubbock, TX 79409 USA, Phone: 806-742-2816, Fax: 806-742-2880, Email: lindsay.graber@ttu.edu