

Surveying queer farmers: How heteropatriarchy affects farm viability and farmer well-being in U.S. agriculture

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Abstract

Qualitative studies have begun demonstrating how heteropatriarchy negatively affects queer farmer well-being and farm viability. However, quantitative surveys of farmers rarely ask questions about gender identity and sexual orientation, precluding analyses that could connect farmers' experiences to their queerness or to heteropatriarchy more broadly. In this article, we present data from one of the first surveys of U.S. queer farmers. This

article inquires: (a) What barriers to farm viability and farmer well-being do queer farmers report? (b) How are these barriers related to or influenced by gender and sexuality? (c) How, if at all, do queer farmers mitigate heteropatriarchal barriers in farming? We find that queer farmers explicitly attributed interpersonal areas of discrimination to their queerness—or rather, to heteropatriarchy—especially anticipated discrimination, social isolation, training opportunities and/or lack of skill, and family dynamics. We assert that farmers' reported challenges to farming success reflect areas of systemic heteropatriarchal oppression, especially in profitability, land access, health insurance, and affordable and/or available housing. At the same time, queer farmers turn to each other for support in navigating the heteropatri-

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archal landscape of U.S. agriculture. The top area that queer farmers found helpful for their success was LGBTQIA+ farm mentors or peers. Our findings indicate that heteropatriarchy is a central force negatively affecting queer farmers' well-being and farm viability. This research offers critical information for farmers, farming organizations, scholars, and policymakers to bolster farmers' contributions to U.S. agriculture and gain a more holistic understanding of (in)equity in U.S. agriculture.

Keywords

Farm Viability, Farmer Well-being, Food Justice, Gender, LGBTQIA+, Sexuality, Queer

Introduction

Surveys of farmers are a crucial way to gain information about the landscape of U.S. agriculture, yet surveys of farmers historically omit questions pertaining to LGBTQIA+ identities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Census of Agriculture is the most comprehensive database of U.S. agriculture used to guide policymaking. Nevertheless, this survey limits gender to male and female categories and does not inquire about sexual orientation. Increasingly, practitioners, agricultural organizations, policymakers, and researchers look to better account for the involvement of queer (non-cisgender and/or nonheterosexual) farmers and understand how heterosexism and cissexism shape U.S. agriculture. For example, in preparation for the 2027 USDA Census of Agriculture, the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) added sexual orientation and gender identity questions—including a transgender option—to the 2021 Farmer Producer Study to assess how these questions would impact the response rate of the nationwide census (Young & Rater, 2022). These questions are essential for understanding inequity in agriculture. Yet, responses to this data collection often utilize reductionist rhetoric. They reject the understanding that sexual orientation and gender shape involvement in agriculture, farmers' viability, and socio-environmental outcomes associated with agricultural production. For example, Missouri senator Josh Hawley tweeted:

MO [Missouri] farmer sent me Biden Admin's latest farm producer survey. It asks such important questions for farming as whether farmers identify as transgender, the gender they were at birth, their sexual orientation. For Joe Biden, even farming is about advancing his woke agenda. (Hawley, 2022)

In this tweet, Hawley, a right-wing conservative and former Missouri attorney general, renounces collecting data on farmers' gender and sexual identity as part of the "woke agenda." This satirical and derogatory term has been popularized in conservative discourse to describe performative political actions aimed at advancing racial and social justice. Hawley's dismissal of the need for this type of data collection illustrates a common issue in agricultural research and scholarship: a lack of understanding about how cissexism and heterosexism influence agriculture, including who farms in the United States. This study aims to address this gap in knowledge.

Through a survey of queer farmers, this article inquires: (a) What barriers to farm viability and farmer well-being do queer farmers report? (b) How are these barriers related to or influenced by gender and sexuality? (c) How, if at all, do queer farmers mitigate heteropatriarchal barriers in farming? These research questions informed survey questions designed to elucidate how queer farmers develop farm viability by accessing farming necessities, given the heteropatriarchal structure of farming in the U.S.

By investigating these research questions, this article contributes to an understanding of how social power impedes historically marginalized groups from fully engaging in the agrifood system: a central question of the food justice movement and scholarship (Leslie & White, 2018; Smith, 2019). Quantitative studies in agriculture have yet to fully consider queerness as a dimension of social power. Further, since farming organizations create resources based on survey data, the underrepresentation of LGBTQIA+ farmers in such surveys may perpetuate heteropatriarchal dominance in the agrifood system by erasing and neglecting queerness as an indicator of equity. Data on this subset of the farming community better enables outreach efforts

to tailor resources to this group's unique experiences and barriers. Thus, survey data on LGBTQIA+ farmers is crucial for further bolstering farmers' contributions to U.S. agriculture and gaining a more holistic understanding of (in)equity in U.S. agriculture.

Literature Review

To our knowledge, only two nationwide surveys have sought to capture queer people's participation in agriculture prior to the USDA's Farmer Producer Survey in 2021. First, the 2017 National Young Farmer Coalition's (Young Farmers) survey inquired about gender identity beyond the USDA's traditional male or female categories; 1% of the sample identified as transgender. However, Young Farmers did not use the transgender category for analytical purposes. Further, the 2017 Young Farmers survey did not contain questions about farmers' sexual identities (Ackoff et al., 2017). This article focuses on the second survey accounting for queer farmers, which expanded beyond basic accounting to understand the impact of cissexism and heterosexism more fully in farming. To our knowledge, this is the first survey to do so.

The rarity of counting queer people in agricultural studies and surveys thwarts understandings of a farming population's barriers and successes. A better understanding could coalesce into policies and funding that support the group's well-being and farm viability. Examining the trajectory of women in agriculture illuminates this process. Before 1978, the USDA Census of Agriculture did not ask about farm operators' gender (Pilgeram et al., 2020). When surveys began to inquire about gender, researchers and policymakers gained information on the number of women farmers and how gender-based discrimination impacted their success. For example, researchers learned that lenders and educators take women less seriously than men in agriculture, limiting women farmers' financial viability and training opportunities (Sachs et al., 2016). Researchers also identified how women farmers sought to alleviate sexist barriers by entering smaller-scale, high-value production that required less land and capital input; joining women's agriculture networks; and attending women-centered agricultural training (Sachs et al.,

2016). Today, the USDA considers "women" to be a special category when providing loans and trainings in order to inhibit gender-based discrimination in agriculture. The trajectory of women farmers in surveys—from accounting for their presence to learning about successes and challenges, in turn informing supportive policies—highlights the significance and impact that surveys accounting for queer farmers may yield.

Existing research likely both undercounts queer farmers and underreports cissexism and heterosexism. Although the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture data did not ask about gender identity and sexual orientation, Dentzman et al. (2021) attempted to use this data set to count men married to men and women married to women among two-producer farming operations, identifying 23,701 of these farmers. This count did not include queer farmers who were not married, queer farmers with more than two producers operating the farm, transgender farmers, queer farmers who might be married to someone of another sex, or queer farmers who did not fill out the Census of Agriculture. Notably, the Census of Agriculture only includes farm owners. Given wealth disparities between cisgender heterosexual and queer people (DeFilippis, 2016), it is more likely that queer farmers are workers rather than owners. Even existing qualitative studies oversample farm owners, farmers who are currently practicing the profession, and white farmers, a privileged segment of the queer farmer population (Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2017, 2019; Wyppler, 2019). Thus, existing studies likely underreport the number of queer farmers and the extent of cissexism and heterosexism in agriculture.

Despite this underreporting, qualitative studies have found examples of interpersonal cissexism and heterosexism in farming. For example, Hoffelmeyer (2021) found that a transgender woman was forced to leave her farming operation over safety fears due to harassment from a transphobic neighbor. Leslie (2017) uncovered a case in which a family reneged on their child's succession plan to take over the farm after learning that he was gay. While these are two overt examples of the heterosexism that queer farmers have experienced, simply the anticipation of discrimination and heterosexism is

omnipresent in queer farmers' decisions on where, how, and with whom to farm (Cramer, 2020; Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2017; Wypler, 2019).

Cissexism and heterosexism in agriculture not only occur through interpersonal interactions but also through the less visible but pernicious systemic processes that affect farm viability. Land, labor, credit, and knowledge are among the top challenges for farmers (Ackoff et al., 2017; Leslie, 2019). Research has found that cissexism and heterosexism in agriculture influence each of these challenges to farm viability, including land, labor, credit, and knowledge (Cramer, 2020; Dentzman et al., 2020; Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2019; Wypler, 2019). For example, while rural land is often the most affordable and best suited for farming, queer people often expect to encounter discrimination—but not queer community—in rural areas, discouraging queer farmers from pursuing land access in the countryside (Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2019). Whereas many heterosexual farmers often access land and labor through an intimate or sexual partner in a “family farm” (Pilgeram and Amos, 2015), queer farmers are often sidelined in this model of farming due to the challenge of finding rural and/or queer partners and incongruence between the “family farm” model and queer chosen families (Leslie, 2019). Credit is critical for turning land into a viable farm, yet queer people experience higher rates of poverty and job discrimination and have overall lower credit scores (Badgett et al., 2019; McFadden, 2020; Watson et al., 2021), thereby exacerbating related challenges, such as student loan debt, experienced by other farming subpopulations, especially young farmers (Ackoff et al., 2017). Queer farmers struggle to find safe places to learn to farm (Cramer, 2020; Wypler, 2019), leaving publicly visible queer-owned farms with an overwhelming number of queer job applicants (Bell et al., 2020).

Systemic cissexism and heterosexism further occur in health, housing, and market access, three other key areas of farm viability. For example, farmers and those in the LGBTQ+ community experience disproportionately high suicide rates (Behere & Bhise, 2009), yet healthcare services that cater to queer-specific health needs are few and far between, especially in rural areas and farming com-

munities (Rosenkrantz et al., 2017; Wypler & Hoffelmeyer, 2020). Finding housing on or near the farm that is both safe and affirming is all too rare, and family farm housing can rarely accommodate less-heteronuclear queer chosen families (Leslie, 2019; Leslie et al., 2019). Moreover, when queer farmers go to sell their products, many feel pressured to temper their outness for fear of losing business (Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2017).

In sum, qualitative research suggests that queer farmers experience systemic discrimination in these critical areas of farm viability: land, labor, credit, knowledge, health, housing, and market access. While qualitative research can uncover the existence of these processes, we need quantitative research to measure their prevalence. In addition to queer farmers' perceptions of their own experiences of cissexism and heterosexism, quantitative research must inquire about areas of farm viability to uncover the—often less visible—systemic cissexism and heterosexism in agriculture.

Applied Methods

Survey Design

This survey was developed in the spring of 2019 through an adaptation to the Young Farmers 2017 survey (Ackoff et al., 2017). While Young Farmers surveyed farmers and inquired about gender identity (beyond the USDA's male or female sex categories) in 2017, this survey did not ask about sexual orientation. As such, the current study contains adapted questions relating to farmers' demographics, land access, markets, and challenges. It specifically orients these questions to queer farmers in the United States, including their identities and experiences. Young Farmers provided their original survey tool, containing 75 questions. Co-author Jaelyn Wypler recreated the original survey in Qualtrics, including all questions, response categories, and skip patterns. Wypler made minor adjustments to some questions for clarity and bias, rewording questions about “challenges” to be “issues.” They also adjusted the adapted survey to better capture seasonal work on farms. The goal was to gain a more holistic understanding of queer farmers' involvement in agriculture not limited to current farm ownership.

Wypler further adapted the Young Farmers' survey to reflect queer people and queer experiences. For example, based on their multiyear ethnographic fieldwork with queer farmers, Wypler adjusted response options to existing questions to reflect LGBTQIA+ experiences. The gender demographics response categories were expanded from "male, female, transgender, prefer not to answer" to "agender, cisgender man, cisgender woman, genderqueer, nonbinary, transgender man, transgender women, two-spirit, prefer not to share, other (please specify)." The adapted survey also included the following note: "cisgender refers to sex assigned at birth and gender identity aligning; for example, someone assigned male at birth and identified as a man." The adapted survey also inquired about sexual orientation with the following options: "asexual, bisexual, gay, straight (heterosexual), lesbian, pansexual, queer, questioning or unsure, same-gender-loving, prefer not to share, other (please specify)."

After making initial changes to the Young Farmers survey, Wypler made revisions based on two rounds of feedback from a four-person farmer advisory board. The farmer advisory board included four cisgender women of different races/ethnicities: biracial, Black, Latinx, and white. Each board member owned or worked on a farm in the U.S. and was based in California, Maine, or Pennsylvania. Additionally, Wypler received feedback at several stages from co-authors Hoffelmeyer and Leslie. Before launching the survey, the advisory board, co-authors, and consulting farmers tested the finalized survey for flow, length, and content.

Survey distribution began at the end of February 2020. The survey outreach language explicitly stated that the survey was intended for aspiring, current, or former farmers who identify as LGBTQIA+. The survey invitation was sent via the Young Farmers LGBTQ+ affinity group; Young Farmers chapters nationwide; Young Farmers survey partners, which include farming organizations nationwide; online listservs; a Facebook group for queer farmers; and additional targeted outreach to farmers of color and farmworker organizations (19 in total). Distribution paused due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and relaunched in May 2020. The survey

closed on October 18, 2020.

We collected 212 survey responses. After reviewing for completion, we deemed a total of 188 responses sufficient for analysis based on the percentage of the survey completed and if participants reported their gender and sexuality. Responses were first cleaned in Microsoft Excel by an undergraduate assistant and then transferred to STATA for analysis.

Participant Characteristics

The survey collected individual demographic information. Table 1 details participants' demographics (race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation). While relying on discrete categories, this survey adopted a queer theory-informed approach to gender and sexuality by asking respondents to select all that apply, thereby prioritizing respondents' self-identification (Keller, 2015; Patterson, 2019).

For relationship status, respondents selected all that applied, including single ($n=43$), would like to date but lack opportunities ($n=24$), dating ($n=41$), in a non-monogamous relationship or relationships ($n=44$), in a monogamous relationship ($n=64$), married ($n=33$), and divorced ($n=12$). Regarding disability/ability status, respondents selected all that applied, including "I do not identify with a disability or impairment" ($n=99$), mental health disorder ($n=62$), learning disability ($n=24$), sensory impairment ($n=16$), long-term medical illness ($n=11$), temporary impairment ($n=10$), mobility impairment ($n=7$), neurological disease/disorder ($n=2$), and other ($n=12$).

Overall, the participant characteristics demonstrate that the sample was predominately white of non-Hispanic origin. The sample included higher rates of cisgender women and nonbinary farmers, with cisgender men and transgender farmers less represented. Of those reporting a disability, 43% reported a mental disability such as depression and anxiety. Finally, 65% were between 18 and 34 years old, 28% were between 35 and 54 years old, and 6% were 55 or older. Additionally, nearly 80% of the sample reported their highest education level to be a bachelor's degree, master's degree or equivalent, or doctorate or equivalent. As such, young, educated farmers are heavily represented in this sample.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Frequency
Race	
White	167
More than one race	17
Asian	1
Black or African American	1
Other/Prefer not to share	2
Ethnicity	
White, non-Hispanic	177
Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin	11
Gender (select all that apply)	
Cisgender woman	90
Nonbinary	56
Genderqueer	47
Cisgender man	20
Transgender man	10
Agender	5
Two-Spirit	2
Transgender woman	0
Other/Prefer not to share	17
Sexual Orientation (select all that apply)	
Queer	121
Bisexual	53
Lesbian	50
Gay	45
Pansexual	32
Same-gender loving	11
Asexual	11
Questioning or unsure	7
Other/Prefer not to share	7

Farm Characteristics

This survey offers a more holistic perspective of farmers by including current, former, and aspiring farmers. When allowed to select from these three options, 162 of the 188 respondents reported they were currently farming, 21 were aspiring farmers, and 16 were former farmers. Among the former farmers, 13 had stopped farming in the past 10 years. Utilizing a more capacious understanding of

the “farmer” identity, this survey aimed to understand the mechanisms that facilitate farm exit and entry, which can be shaped by gender and sexuality (Wypler, 2019). However, due to the low sample size of former and aspiring farmers, this analysis centers the experiences of queer farmers who are currently farming.

Among current farmers, the majority of participants learned to farm by working on a farm ($n=120$), potentially diverging from more traditional ways of gaining farm knowledge by growing up on farms. Other common education channels included farm conferences or workshops ($n=71$), community gardening ($n=53$), apprentice programs ($n=48$), and a higher education program ($n=36$).

The survey conceptualized the farmer identity as including both farm owners and workers, recognizing that farm ownership alone does not capture the diverse array of characteristics that compose farmer identity (Leslie & White, 2018). As such, the survey captured participation beyond ownership. The majority of respondents ($n=79$) identified as farmworkers, while 62 identified as farm owners and 26 as farm managers. Among farmworkers, 48 received hourly wages, and seven received a salary. Among apprentices ($n=23$), 13 received hourly wages and education, and 10 received a stipend. A smaller number ($n=9$) were unpaid, and three were in an agricultural program in which they paid for the experience. Regarding farm and business partners, 39 farmed with a family member(s), 54 with a current or former romantic partner(s), 37 with longtime friends, and 76 with others, such as volunteers.

In terms of farm size, 85% of the current farmer respondents farmed less than 51 acres. Finally, current farmers reported farm products including vegetables ($n=114$), livestock ($n=130$), flowers ($n=73$), fruits and nuts ($n=66$), value-added products ($n=35$), and field crops and small grains ($n=32$). Further, three respondents reported only one product, which in all cases was flowers. As such, the majority of farms were diversified in their production.

In sum, farm characteristics show that the sample included both farmworkers and farm owners. Farm owners represented nearly 34% of the sample. Farmworkers, including apprentices,

interns, and volunteers (paid or unpaid) represented 43% of participants, while 14% of participants were hired farm managers or in other positions (8%). The majority of farms in this sample were under 51 acres and produced more than one product.

Results and Discussion

In order to understand the barriers that farmers face in operating a successful farm, we first took stock of the farmers' reported issues and challenges. Next, we explored the degree to which these issues were reported as creating challenges for their farming career. Finally, we explore the

resources that queer farmers reported as beneficial to supporting their farming livelihood.

Barriers to Viability and Well-being

The survey inquired about the most significant challenges these farmers face as well as any issues they have encountered due to their gender or sexuality. As Table 2 illustrates, farmers drew clear parallels between their queerness and anticipated discrimination, social isolation, training opportunities and/or lack of skill, family dynamics, and business skills/or business planning. Anticipated discrimination was the top issue farmers encountered due to their queerness, with 72.3%¹ of respondents

reporting this issue. This finding illuminates how queer farmers, even if not currently experiencing discrimination, expect discrimination due to their queerness from their community members, customers, other farmers, and/or service providers in agriculture. Coupled with the high rate of social isolation reported (36.6%), queer farmers in this survey face significant deterrents to entering and remaining in farming. Results also suggest that cissexism and heterosexism exist in places where farmers learn about agriculture, as 27.7% of respondents reported training opportunities and/or lack of skill to be a challenge encountered due to queerness. Further, queer farmers reported experiencing issues with family dynamics at a rate of 25%. The process of biological family rejection is also well-documented in broader queer literature (Hailey et al., 2020; Newcomb et al., 2019; Weston, 1997). Qualitative research suggests that the procession of intrafamily succession planning, a cornerstone for many beginning farmers, likely hampers queer farmers (Leslie, 2019). Queer farmers reported encountering issues surrounding accessing housing, health insurance, and land

Table 2. Challenges Encountered Due to Queerness

Response Categories	Frequency (n)	Percent
Anticipated discrimination	81	72.3%
Social isolation	41	36.6
Training opportunities and/or lack of skill	31	27.7
Family dynamics	28	25
Business skills and/or business planning	15	13.4
Affordable and/or available housing	13	11.6
Health insurance	13	11.6
Land access	13	11.6
Labor	10	8.9
Competition	8	7.1
Personal health or age	8	7.1
Market access	8	7.1
Other	7	6.3
Credit access	5	4.5
Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or country of origin	4	3.6
Farm debt	3	2.7
Appropriate technology	3	2.7
Student loan debt	3	2.7
Childcare	2	1.8
Profitability	2	1.8
Health of a family member	2	1.8
Taxes	1	0.9
Water	1	0.9

Note: Respondents could choose multiple responses. Any options with none selected were excluded from table.

¹ All percentages reported in the results and discussion section are based on the total respondents who answered that specific question.

(11.6% each), demonstrating that some queer farmers view heteropatriarchy as affecting these basic necessities in farming.

When queer farmers selected their most significant challenge to farm successfully, these results differed from issues respondents directly tied to their queerness. As Table 3 shows, profitability (12.9%) and land access (11.6%) were the most significant issues for farmers. However, we argue that although respondents did not consider their most significant challenge and the challenges encountered due to queerness at the same rates, structural cissexism and heterosexism may impact profitability and land access as well. Existing research outlines how heteropatriarchy negatively affects land access for queer farmers (Leslie, 2019). Profitability reflects the most prominent barriers farmers encounter to their farming success. Existing research demonstrates that heteropatriarchy exacerbates the challenges identified in this survey—land, labor, health insurance, and affordable and/or available housing—for queer farmers (Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2019; Leslie et al., 2019; Wypler, 2019).

Degree of Barriers to Viability and Well-being

To further elucidate the barriers to farmer viability and well-being, the survey asked respondents to indicate the degree of each challenge that they faced as “not a challenge,” “somewhat a challenge,” or a “significant challenge.” Figure 1 delineates these results. Respondents most frequently reported the following to be significant challenges: health insurance (47.3%), affordable/available housing (41.2%), land access (31.5%), student debt (29.8%), and isolation (26.5%). These results highlight the most intense barriers for queer farmers.

However, these difficulties change when considering areas that were “somewhat a challenge.” The top five shifted to include “lack of business skills

or business planning” (57%), “pests/disease” (53.4%), “expenses” (50.4%), “market access” (50%), and “anticipated discrimination” (49.3%).

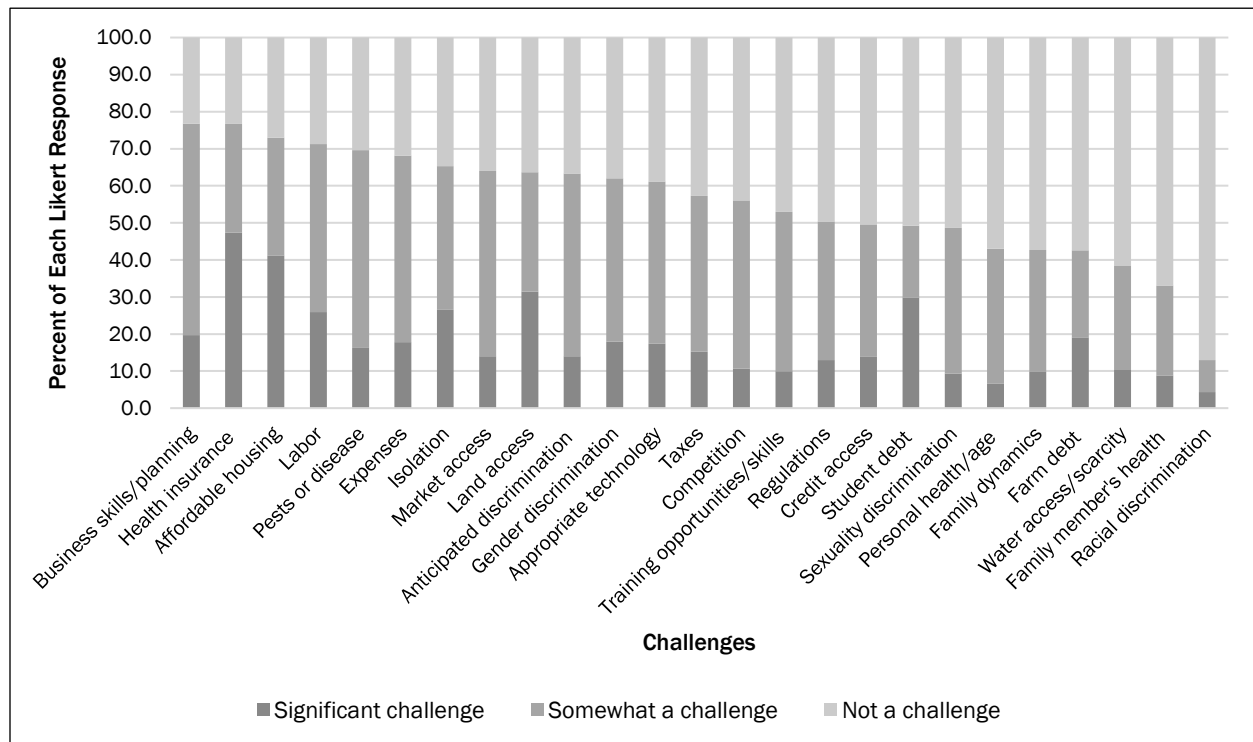
Among the challenges—including those that were “significant” and “somewhat a challenge”—lack of business skills or business planning was the top issue, followed by health insurance and affordable housing. All farmers share some challenges, but when considering the role of heteropatriarchy, these issues may become exacerbated for queer farmers. For example, when considering business

Table 3. Queer Farmers’ Most Significant Challenge

Response Categories	Frequency (n)	Percent
Profitability	19	12.9%
Land access	17	11.6
Affordable and/or available housing	10	6.8
Health insurance	10	6.8
Labor	10	6.8
Social isolation	9	6.1
Other	9	6.1
Student loan debt	7	4.8
Personal health or age	6	4.1
Family dynamics	4	2.7
Business skills and/or business planning	4	2.7
Credit access	4	2.7
Farm debt	4	2.7
Discrimination based on gender/gender expression	4	2.7
Pests or disease management	4	2.7
Competition	3	2.0
Appropriate technology	3	2.0
Water	3	2.0
Product prices	3	2.0
Childcare	2	1.4
Anticipated discrimination	2	1.4
Training opportunities and/or lack of skill	2	1.4
Taxes	2	1.4
Slaughterhouse and/or processing access	2	1.4
Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or country of origin	1	0.7
Health of a family member	1	0.7
Discrimination based on sexuality	1	0.7
Regulatory burden	1	0.7
Market access	0	0

Note: Respondents could choose only one response.

Figure 1. Challenges Reported by Queer Farmers



skills or business planning, many of the farmers in this sample gained such skills by attending higher education institutions, such as land-grant universities or technical colleges, and/or through apprenticeships or on-farm training opportunities. Further, farmers may gain additional business skills by joining farmers' networks or attending conferences that discuss these skills and share resources. However, these opportunities for knowledge sharing are shaped by cissexism and heterosexism. For example, Wypler (2019) demonstrated that even among women's agriculture conferences, lesbian farmers felt excluded and disconnected. Many of these agricultural conferences refuse to acknowledge the presence of queer farmers in their organization or fail to provide resources such as all-gender bathrooms at their events, implicitly excluding transgender and nonbinary farmers. Agricultural apprenticeships with cisgender heterosexual farmers can be uncomfortable and even dangerous for beginning queer farmers (Leslie, 2019).

In the case of health insurance, married heterosexual farming households often rely on off-farm employment (Leslie et al., 2019). For queer farm-

ers, farming with a married partner to access insurance is likely less common due to marriage norms. For example, even though same-sex marriage has been federally legal since 2015, heterosexism still creates barriers in society for queer people to be in these types of relationships. Further, queer farmers may reject the idea of marriage and monogamy (Leslie, 2019); for some queer people, marriage is associated with "homonormativity" (Duggan, 2002) or the idea that queer people are attempting to replicate heterosexual norms. Health insurance remains a core issue for many farmers regardless of sexuality, gender, or race. Queer people face additional hurdles in this area due to the linkage of insurance to marriage and the paucity of queer-specific health care in rural areas (Jerke, 2011; Rosenkrantz et al., 2017).

In many cases, queer farmers are attempting to farm in rural areas or work on farms located rurally, where lack of affordable housing remains a common issue for all people (Movement Advancement Project, 2019). However, housing remains an issue shaped by heteropatriarchy. For example, many local zoning regulations stipulate that

accessory dwelling units may only be occupied by people related to the main house by blood or marriage. Regulations that use biological and state-sanction kinship to determine the legality of unrelated people on land mean that queer people are prohibited from living in certain places. Further, issues of safety and farm viability also come to bear in the case of land access. These results illustrate that farmers expect discrimination. As such, queer farmers must consider how safety and acceptance in the community where they live and/or work will impact their livelihood as farmers.

Federal and state governments, nongovernmental organizations, and agricultural sciences pour vast resources into topics such as pests and disease, market access, and land access, as these remain crucial topics for farmers. However, these results highlight that queer farmers report isolation and anticipated discrimination as substantial barriers to farming success. These findings suggest an increased need for governmental and nonprofit organizations to invest in addressing these social barriers to ensure that queer farmers are better positioned to address economic and environmental barriers. Further, 63.3% of respondents reported anticipated discrimination as somewhat of a challenge or a significant challenge, detailing a core deterrent for entering and remaining in the profession, especially rurally, where farming typically occurs.

The low reporting of personal health/age and racial discrimination as crucial barriers likely illustrates that our sample was younger, thus experiencing fewer health/age issues, and predominately white, thus not experiencing racism. The higher reporting of gender discrimination and farm debt likely signals a larger representation of women farmers and younger farmers.

The survey also inquired in detail about three core issues for farmers, including credit access, land access, and market access. Table 4 details the specific ways in which queer farmers experience barriers in these areas.

As highlighted in the literature, queer populations struggle to obtain credit (Badgett et al., 2019; McFadden, 2020; Watson et al., 2021). The issue of credit is mirrored for queer farmers who are unable to access credit due to a lack of credit history or

low credit score. The smaller number reporting that the loan officer did not understand the business model ($n=8$) may indicate how some queer farmers attempt to build models not based on family farms, but these may be illegible to loan officers. Like many young farmers (Ackoff et al., 2017), land affordability remains a core deterrent to farming. However, queer farmers also reported struggling to find land in locations that allowed them to feel safe or supported as a queer person and encountered barriers in finding land with housing. We have demonstrated these issues are inherently intertwined with heterosexism. Higher reporting of market-based issues such as saturated markets or distance from markets may indicate how queer farmers may be systematically excluded from regions with more market opportunities or from farms more ideally positioned near markets. However, lower reporting of heterosexism and cissexism in the marketplace may indicate how queer farmers are self-selecting places where they receive support for being queer-owned, as some visible queer farm owners report positive experiences despite expecting discrimination (Hoffelmeyer, 2021).

What Helps Queer Farmers Be Successful?

The survey also asked farmers to report on the resources that helped them be successful. Table 5 shows how queer farmers ranked the significance of resources in contributing to their success. LGBTQIA+ farm mentors or peers substantially contributed to farmers' success, as 18% of respondents noted that this was the most significant contribution to their success, over three times the number who reported Cooperative Extension (5%) as being beneficial to their success. The lower reporting of assistance gained from LGBTQIA+ farmer programs, events, or networks may indicate a lack of these programs, even though such offerings would likely provide additional opportunities to connect with queer farm mentors and peers. These findings suggest the crucial role that other queer people in agriculture play in the success of queer farmers, as reflected by qualitative studies (Hoffelmeyer, 2021; Wypler, 2019). Further, these data highlight how queer farmers may be excluded from traditional support

Table 4. Credit, Land, and Market Issues

If you find credit access to be a challenge, what specifically seems to be a problem?	Frequency
Lack of credit history or a low credit score	26
Denied credit by a bank because the loan officer did not understand my practices or business model	8
Qualified for a loan, but it was too little money	5
Denied credit by USDA because I don't have the required farming experience	1
Denied credit by USDA because the FSA agent did not understand my practices or business model	1
Denied credit by USDA because I was told by USDA that there were no loan funds available right now	1
Denied credit by a loan agent because the agent did not take me seriously because of my gender, gender expression, or sexuality	1
Other	4
If you find land access to be a challenge, what specifically seems to be a problem?	
Cannot find affordable farmland for sale	49
Land costs more to purchase than the value of what I can produce	41
Cannot find affordable farmland for rent	26
Land costs more to rent than the value of what I can produce	26
Cannot find land where I feel supported in my LGBTQIA+ identity	25
Cannot find land with housing or in an area close to where housing is available	24
Cannot find land with the appropriate resources for my business	22
Current land access is insecure, and I worry that I will lose access to the land	21
I do not know how to look for land	20
When I try to purchase land, I am outbid by non-farmers	7
When I try to purchase land, I am outbid by other farmers	4
Other	5
If you find market access to be a challenge, what specifically seems to be a problem?	
Prices are too low	32
There are too many farmers in my area producing the same product(s)	28
Located too far from a viable market	19
Cannot access a market where my LGBTQIA+ identity is supported	8
Do not have correct certifications (like GAP*) to access the markets I want	6
Other	11

*Good Agricultural Practices (“a voluntary certification program which verifies ... that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards” [New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, n.d., para. 1]).

networks aimed at helping farmers be successful. As shown in Table 5, the Affordable Care Act also provided substantial support to these farmers. When respondents were asked about their ability/disability status, they reported sensory impairment ($n=16$), learning disability ($n=24$), neurological disease/disorder ($n=1$), long-term medical illness ($n=11$), mobility impairment ($n=7$), mental health disorder ($n=62$), and temporary impairment ($n=10$). Like the Young Farmers survey, which found health insurance was a top barrier, this survey sug-

gests that access to healthcare helps queer farmers maintain farm viability and farmer well-being.

Apprenticeship and community supported agriculture were also reported among the most beneficial resources for farmers' success. These areas reflect the importance of knowledge, social networks, and credit (community supported agriculture includes a loan component to the farmer) to queer farmers' experiences, which has been supported by qualitative studies (Leslie, 2019; Wypler, 2019).

Conclusion

This study found both interpersonal and systemic oppression among a relatively privileged segment of the queer farmer population, suggesting that heteropatriarchal oppression in agriculture is likely much more pernicious and widespread than these survey findings suggest. While interpersonal discrimination can be evident on the surface, tools such as surveys helpfully detect systemic patterns of difference across social groups. In this survey, we found that the top four barriers that queer farmers faced related to their queerness—or rather, to heteropatriarchy—included anticipated discrimination, social isolation, training opportunities and/or lack of skill, and family dynamics. These are areas of interpersonal interaction that affect farmers' well-being and farm viability and, in farmers' eyes, are clearly associated with gender and sexual oppression. Additionally, respondents reported LGBTQIA+ farm mentors or peers as the most helpful resource for their success; together, these findings on challenges and supports point to the need to encourage and fund queer-to-queer farming networks and initiatives like the Queer Farmer Network and Northeast Queer Farmer Alliance. Such a high reporting of the importance of LGBTQIA+ farm mentors or peers emphasizes the salience of heteropatriarchal interpersonal interactions in queer farmers' daily lives. Further, the reported minimal help from Cooperative Extension and training programs in comparison to higher levels of help from LGBTQIA+ farm mentors or peers indicates a need for existing farmer programs to critically assess the heteropatriarchal culture of those spaces and to prioritize hiring more queer staff.

In addition to queer farm mentors or peers, this survey found that the Affordable Care Act, apprenticeships, and community supported agriculture were crucial for queer farmers' success. These respondents' top areas of support align with the

Table 5. What Helps Queer Farms Be Successful

	Frequency (n)	Percentage
LGBTQIA+ farm mentors or peers	24	18%
Affordable Care Act (health insurance exchanges)	19	14
Apprenticeships	17	13
Community supported agriculture (CSA)	14	11
Family and/or cultural knowledge	8	6
Student loan forgiveness	8	6
Farmers markets	8	6
Cooperative Extension	7	5
LGBTQIA+ farmer programs, events, or networks	4	3
State grants	4	3
USDA farm loan programs	4	3
Organic certification	3	2
Training programs	3	2
USDA conservation programs	3	2
Land linking programs	2	2
Land trusts	1	1
Local/regional food marketing	1	1
Marriage equality	1	1
Farm credit	1	1
Farm-to-school programs	1	1

Note: Respondents could select only one response.

top reported challenges of healthcare, knowledge, and credit, respectively, each of which is negatively affected by heteropatriarchy (Leslie, 2019). Queer farmers' reporting of high support from the ACA suggests that healthcare reform is a gender and sexual justice issue in addition to a top need for farmers in general, especially those who cannot access healthcare through their own or an intimate partner's off-farm work.

The top four areas queer farmers reported as challenges to farming success were profitability, land access, health insurance, and affordable and/or available housing. While these challenges differ from those that queer farmers attributed to their queerness, we argue that existing literature demonstrates how these top challenges are strongly affected by heteropatriarchy (Behere & Bhise, 2009; Cramer, 2020; Hoffmeyer, 2021; Leslie, 2017, 2019; Leslie et al., 2019; Rosenkrantz et al., 2017; Wypler & Hoffmeyer, 2020). These challenges reflect areas of systemic discrimination that

contribute to overall low profitability for queer farmers. This finding points to the importance of funding queer land, housing, and health access programs, especially in rural areas. The importance of healthcare coupled with the high reported rates of social isolation suggests the need for bolstering queer farmer mental health programs (Wypler & Hoffelmeyer, 2020).

The results from this survey also suggest the need for including LGBTQ+ people in the USDA's socially disadvantaged farmer category to make this extra class of resources available to queer farmers. The documentation of women in agriculture helped facilitate the understanding that sexism influences agricultural production. In the same manner, beginning to document queer farmers' involvement in farming suggests these farmers, too, require tailored support through the socially disadvantaged farmer category.

A glaring limitation of this study was its sample of predominantly white women farm owners. These results should not be interpreted as generalizable to all queer farmers. Rather, more research is needed to understand the challenges and successes of other members of the queer farming community, especially queer farmers of color, queer farmworkers, and transgender farmers.

This study implies the need to reform farmer surveys. Concretely, we must add gender identity and sexual orientation questions to the USDA Census of Agriculture and other surveys to learn about the prevalence of gender and sexual discrimination in agriculture. We need more diverse samples to distinguish differences that likely exist between

queer farmers based on race, ethnicity, nation, geography, gender, sexuality, and class. This study calls on government, advocates, and researchers to ask and oversample LGBTQIA+ farmers in order to reverse the continued erasure of queer farmers in agriculture. Fears that adding these questions will lower overall response rates must be put into context: is the goal to maintain a narrow definition of farmer or to broaden our horizons by designing surveys to fully capture agricultural communities, thereby contributing to an overall more resilient and equitable agrifood system?

We hope this early survey of queer farmers encourages researchers and practitioners to consider gender and sexuality more deeply as dimensions of social power, indicators of equity in agriculture, and central questions of the food justice movement and scholarship. Asking these difficult questions—on surveys and beyond—is central to food justice as well as to the project of advancing farmer well-being and farm viability.

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