

# Southeastern New England Fiber Production Survey



The Southeastern New England Fibershed and SEMAP conducted this survey to know more about the potential for regeneratively-managed fiber animal grazing land in Southeastern New England. Based on the information from this survey, we will be able to provide education, outreach, and marketing opportunities to fiber animal producers in our region.

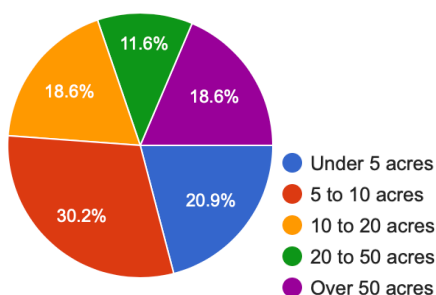
This information about the number of fiber farmers in our Fibershed (which we define as approximately a 100-mile radius around New Bedford, MA and Providence, RI) including the acreage and practices currently being used for grazing animals, the amount, type, and quality of fiber being produced and current marketing channels, prices for fiber, and producer education needs will better inform us of the support system we need to create.



*What is the potential of our region for regenerative textile farming?  
Do people want to engage with regenerative farming if they had funding to do it?*

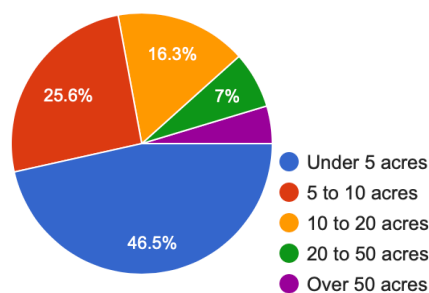
## Farm acreage (total)

43 responses



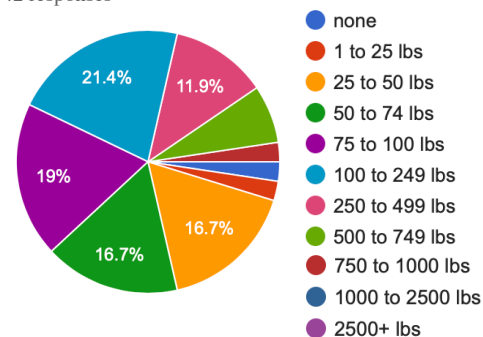
## Pasture acreage

43 responses

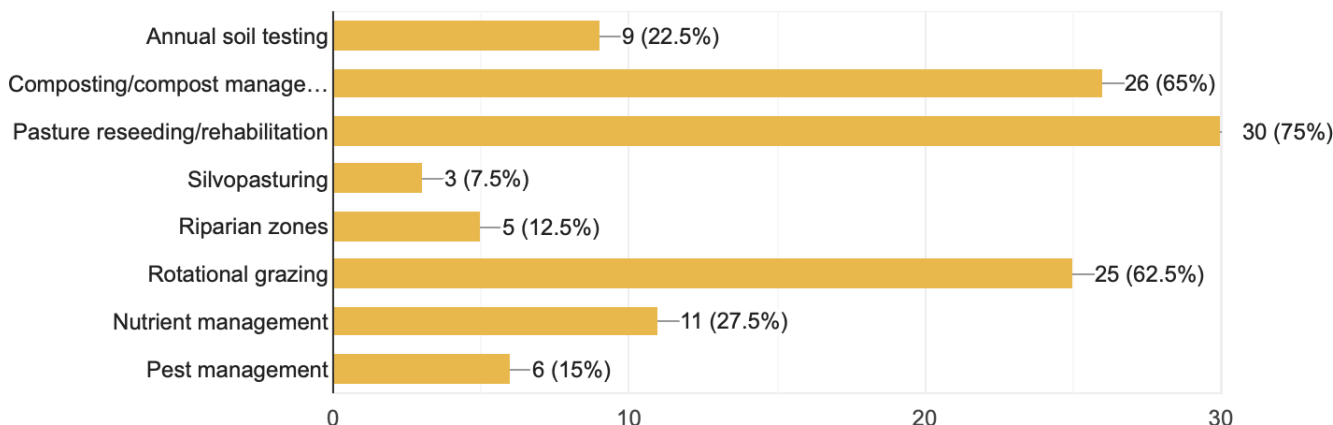


## Weight of fiber produced in lbs (annually)

42 responses



## Pasture management practices (40 responses)



# Fiber Production

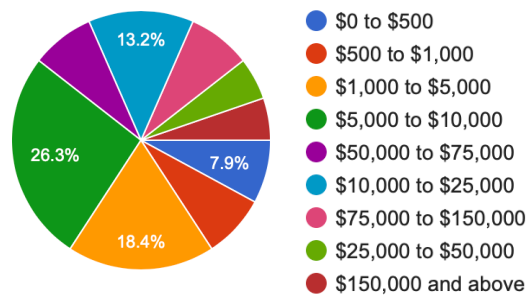
*“I’d like to see more education for fiber consumers. “Local” isn’t enough — a lot of farmers produce/sell fiber as an afterthought. For us, it is our primary concern. If someone buys local yarn and it’s scratchy or poor quality, what are the chances they’ll buy local yarn again? Different fibers have different purposes, and people should know that going in.”*

Alpaca is the most prominent farm fiber animal in the Fibershed, with the southdown and border Leicesters being the next in line for popularity. Roughly a third of the survey responders have 5-10 acres of land, with almost half saying that less than 5 acres are dedicated to pastures. For about a quarter of the responders the fiber produced on their farms is actually not used for textile production but thrown away or composted instead. For those who do make it to a point of sale with their fiber most commonly sell it in the form of yarn, but the next most popular fiber products sold include raw fleece and roving. Farmers markets and farm stores are showing to be critical for product sales, probably because they attract a certain kind of consumer and provide an opportunity for direct person-to-person engagement and education.



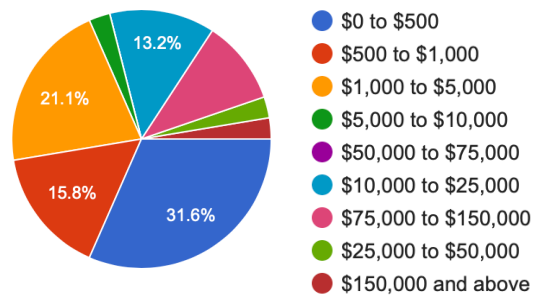
## Gross Farm Sales

38 responses

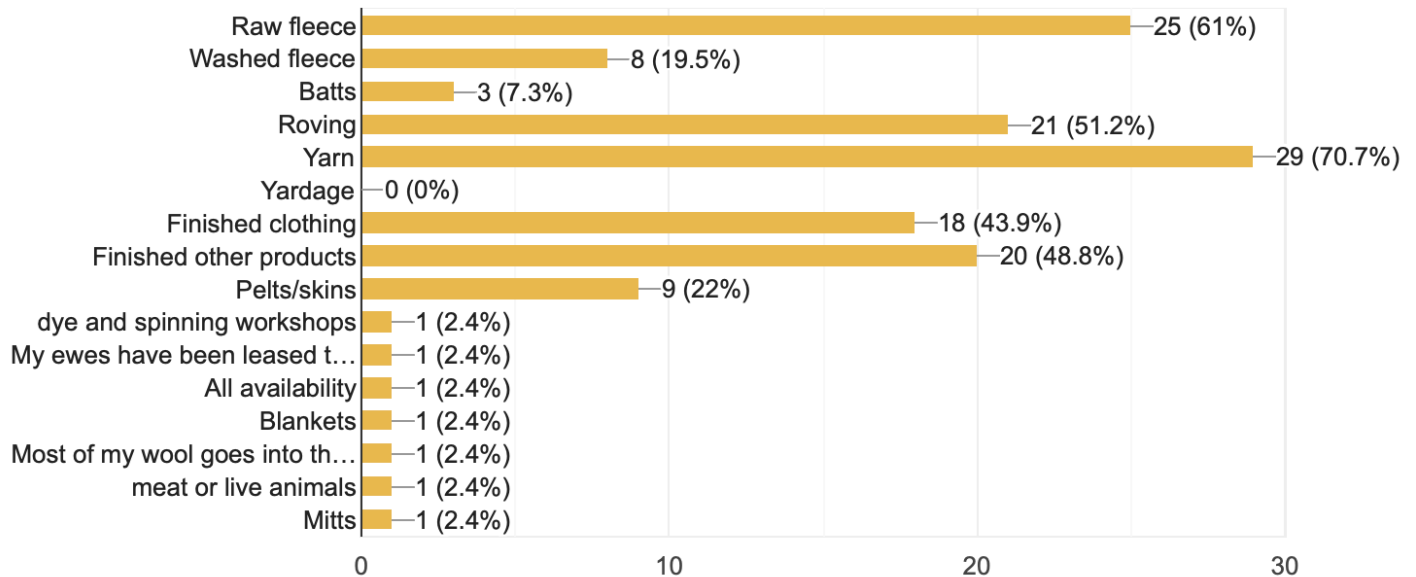


## Fiber and Fiber Product Sales

38 responses



## Types of products sold (41 responses)



# Outlets and Challenges

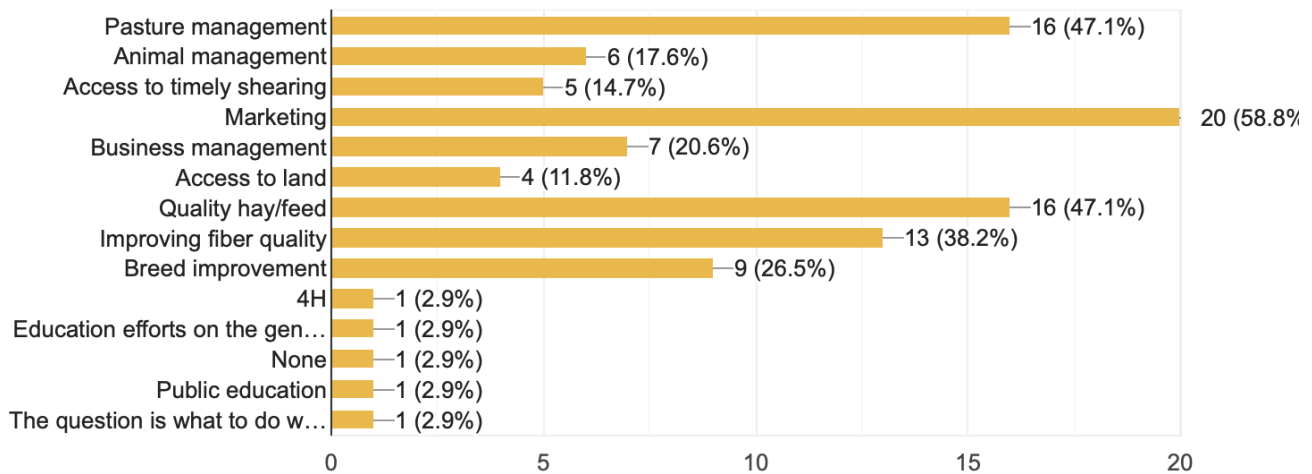
*“Not enough time and financial resources for permanent fencing, predator control, pasture improvement etc. Small flock difficult to get timely shearing done. Expenses (Grain, hay, and shearing) still exceed income.”*

The most common response to the question “What’s stopping you” is “time”. Processing fiber is simply time consuming and isn’t always feasible for people actively farming, the elderly, or folks with multiple jobs. Additionally, there isn’t enough local infrastructure to process the wool without having to send it off. Marketing the fiber product, finding sales outlets, and educating the consumer are also time consuming tasks that each farmer isn’t capable of tackling on their own. Our fiber consumer isn’t educated on local fiber and quality of fiber, which causes a diminished value for the product, which ultimately doesn’t justify the time spent processing it.

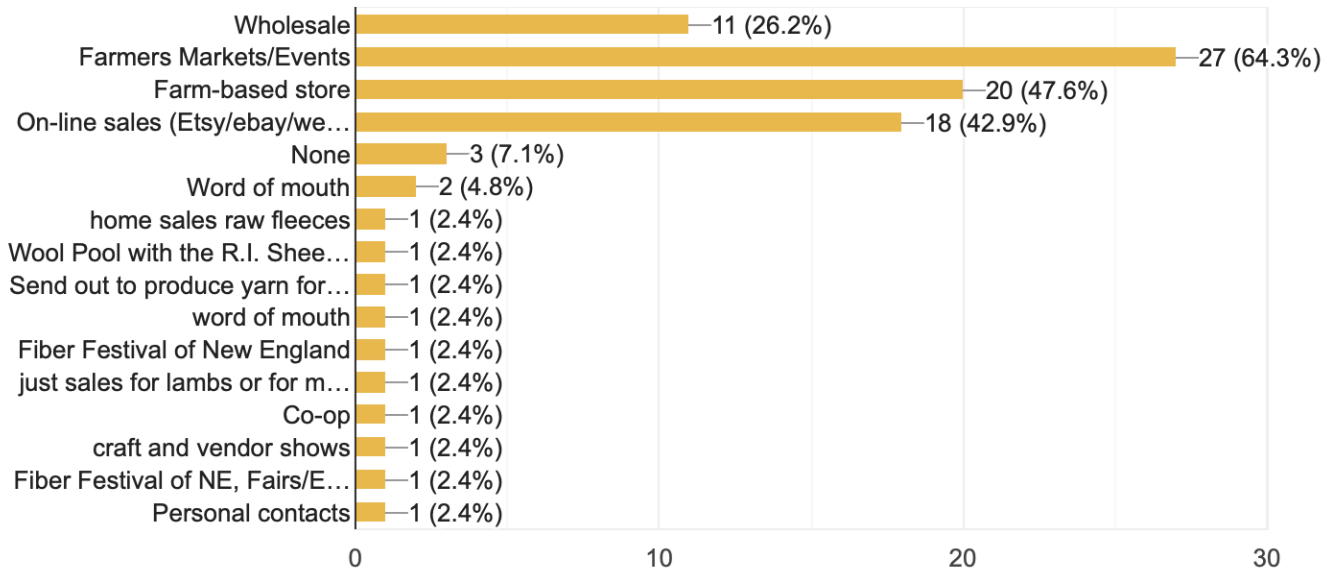


Lillooet Sheep & Cheesery | Boxford, MA

## Technical Assistance Needs (34 responses)



## Sales Channels (42 responses)



**What stops you expanding? What are the challenges?** (37 responses)

*“I would do more if getting it to a mill our other places if not for the cost to “ship.””*

*“Long turnaround time for fiber processing means \$\$ is tied up for months/years almost.”*

*“Lack of time and support”*

*“farm layout/land use; time: specifically the inability to process/spin my own wool”*

*“Age and cost of expansion”*

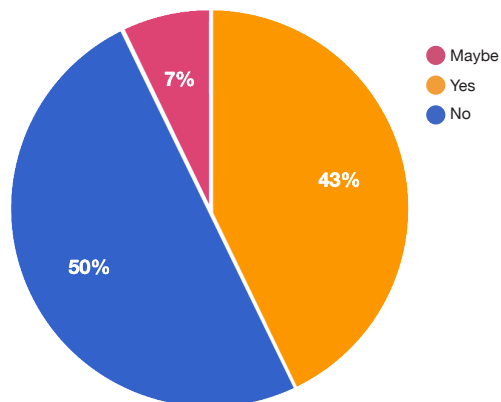
*“Land, Capitol improvement”*

*“Can not connect with customers wanting to buy what I take time to produce.”*



Little Falls Farm |Greene, RI

**Have you thought about expanding your fiber production?** (42 responses)



*“Yes but we need more infrastructure.”*

*“No we are pretty much at capacity.”*

*“Not for fiber but for a larger herd.”*

*“Yes, for wool.”*

*“In the next few years perhaps.”*

**Fiber Processing** (37 responses)

