

The Perceptions Of Farmers To Afforestation In Ireland



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Background

PAMUCEAF - *Poplar - a multiple use crop for European arable farmers*

EU FAIR-funded project 1999 - 2002

Project Objectives:

- to determine potential for poplar on surplus agricultural land
- to assess attitudes of farmers and public to this
- to examine demand level & markets for poplar

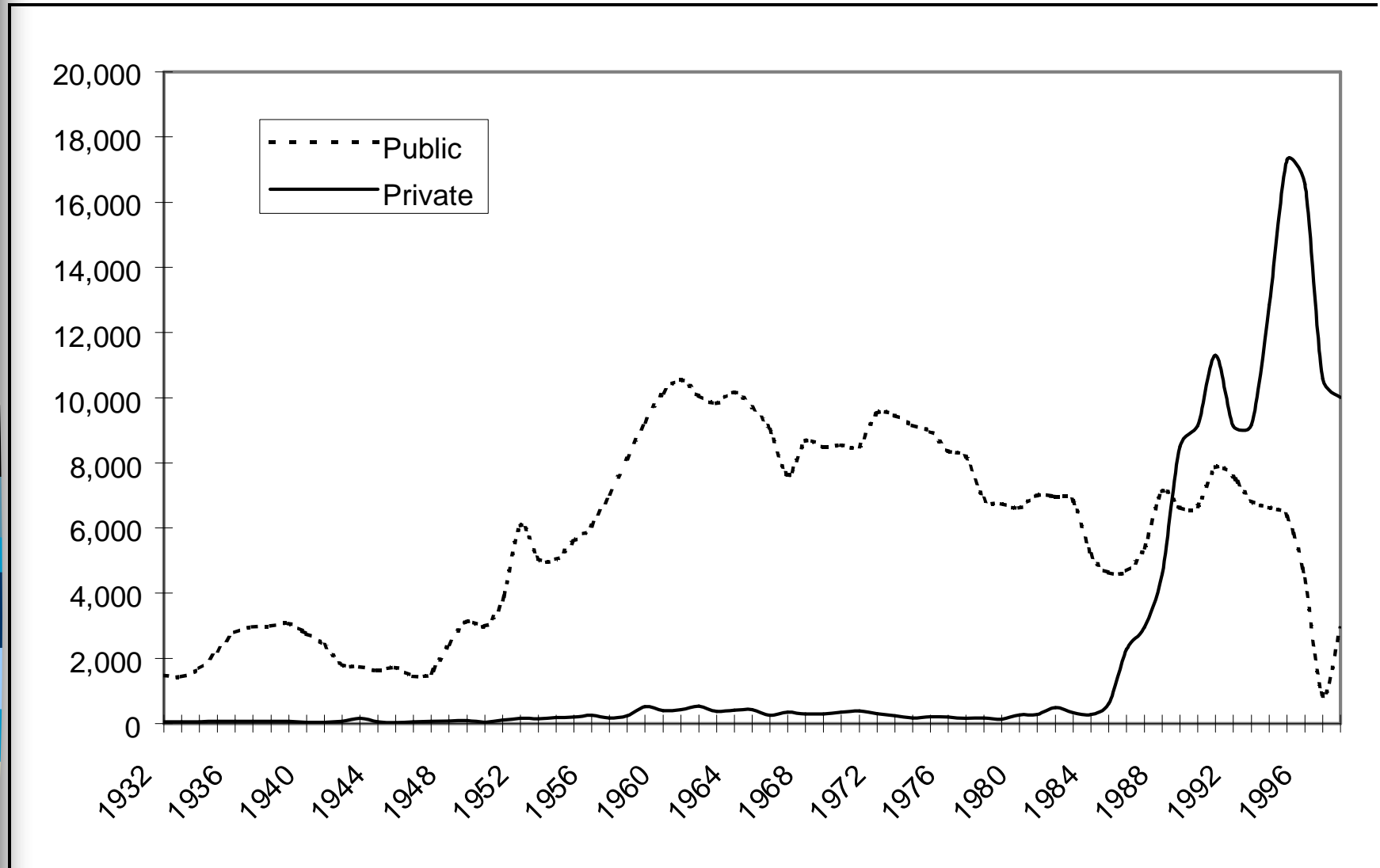


Forestry in Ireland

- Forest Area in Ireland is 9% of total land area
- c. 95% plantation, 5% natural / semi-natural
- 84% conifer, 16% broadleaf

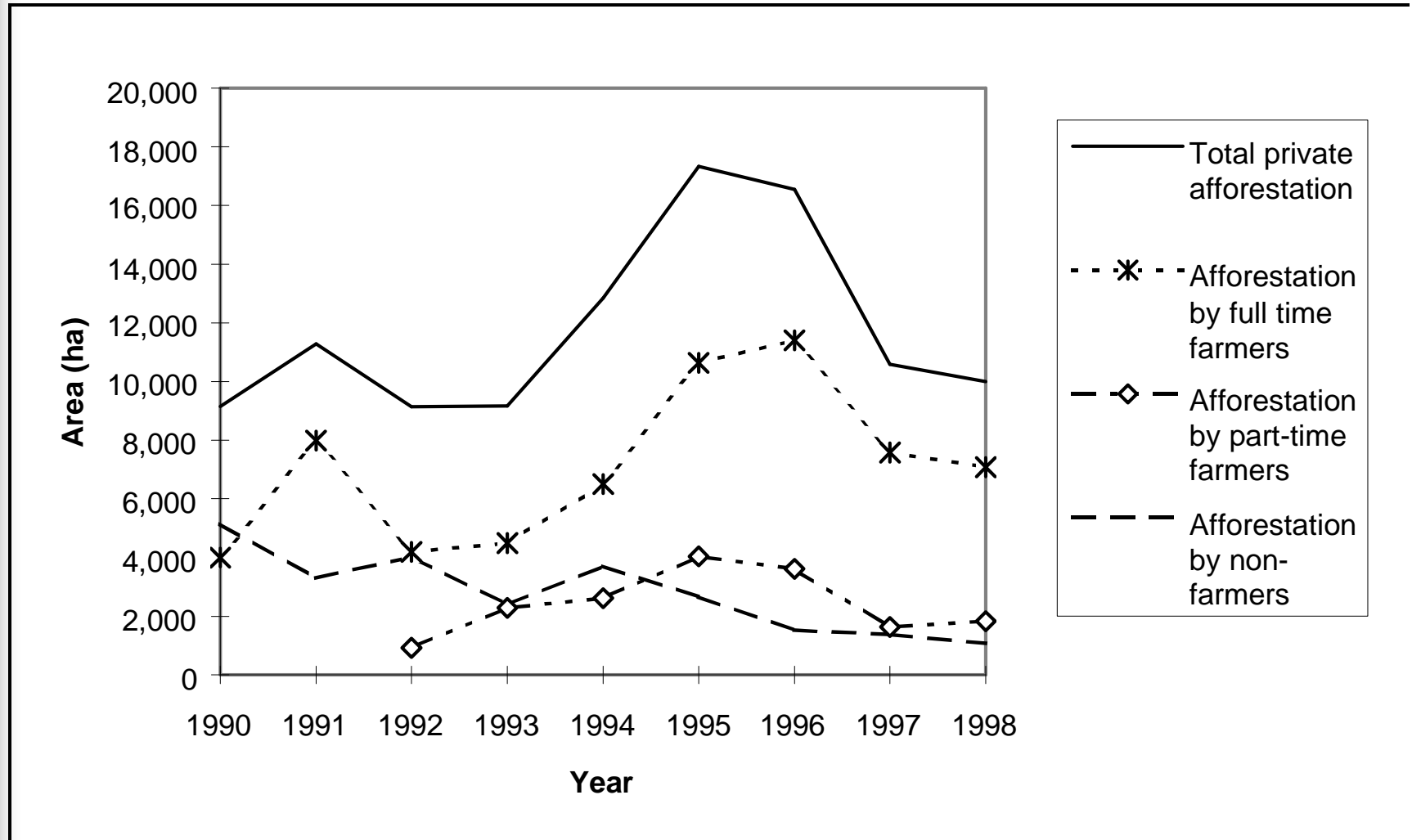
- National Forest Policy is to increase area to 17%
- Land base for further afforestation is private
- Primarily farmers diversifying from agriculture
- Supported by subsidies on establishment and income substitution

Annual Afforestation in Ireland (1932 - 1998)



Source: Redrawn from Bulfin, 1999.

Private afforestation in Ireland, 1990 - 1998.



Source: Coggins 1999.



Objectives of Study

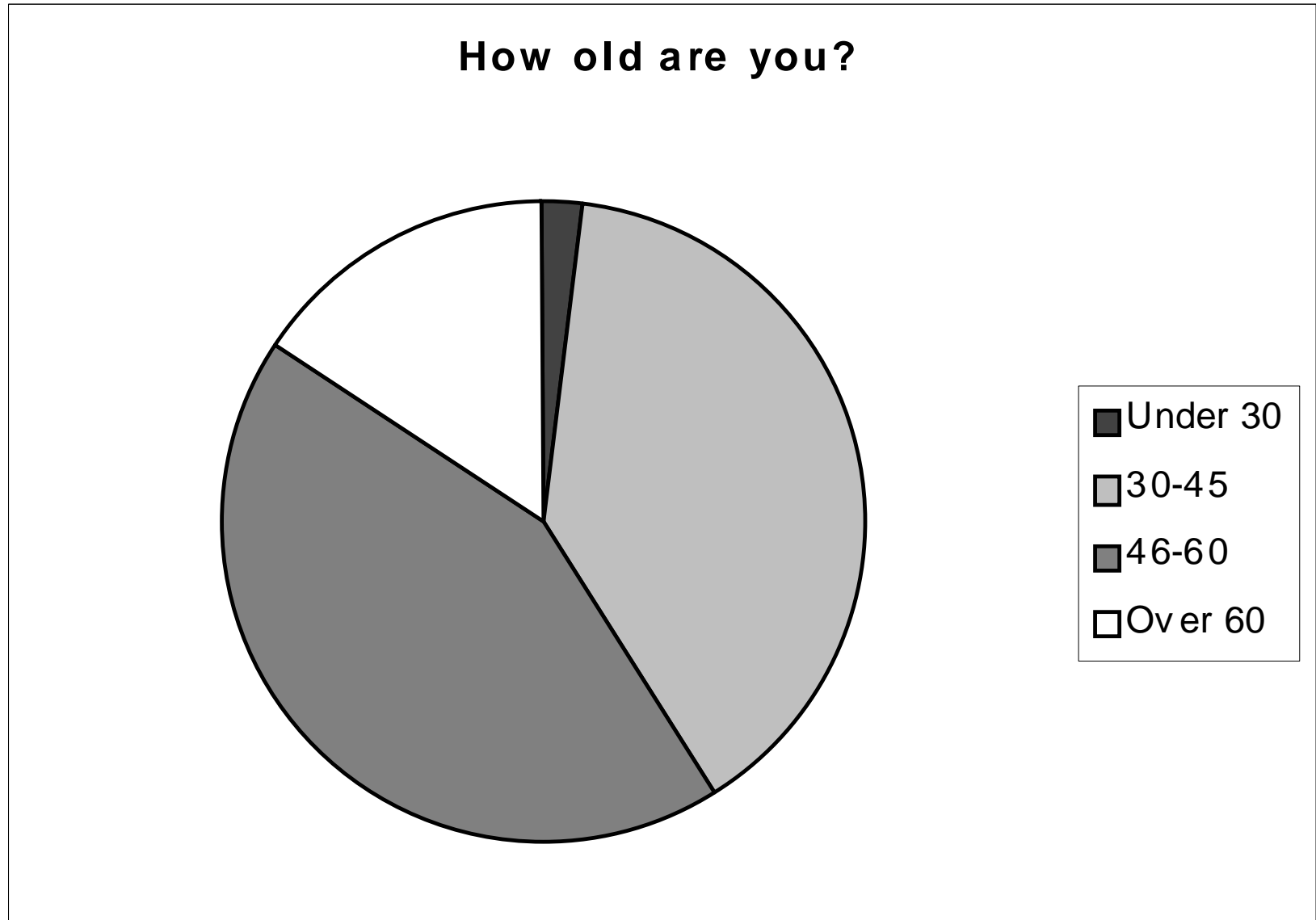
- Characterise the respondent & the farm type
- Determine current land uses including forestry
- Analyse farmers' perceptions of farm forestry
- Assess farmers' willingness to further afforest

480 questionnaires posted to IFA arable farmers

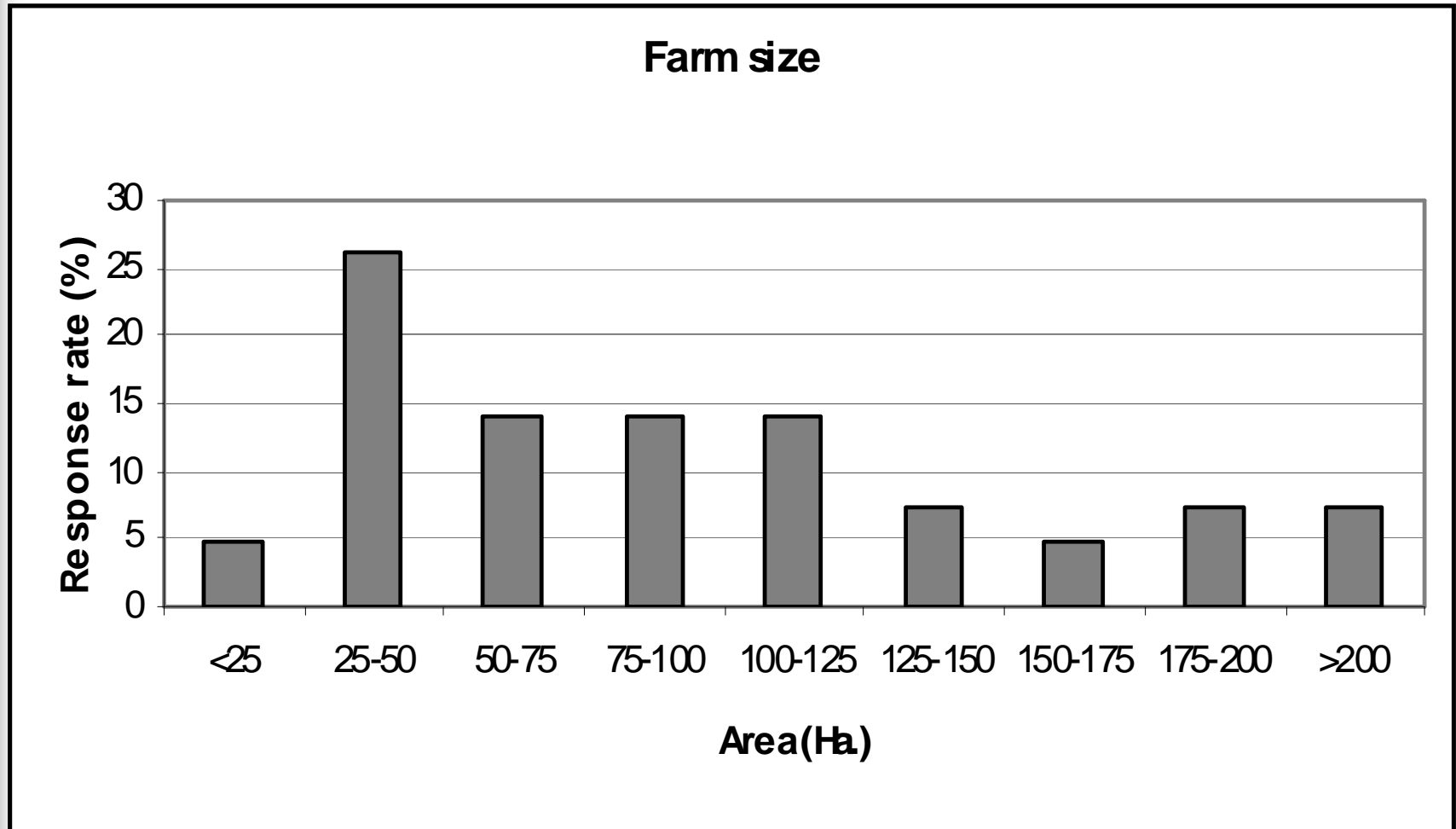
44 responses collated and analysed

This was an 8.8% response rate

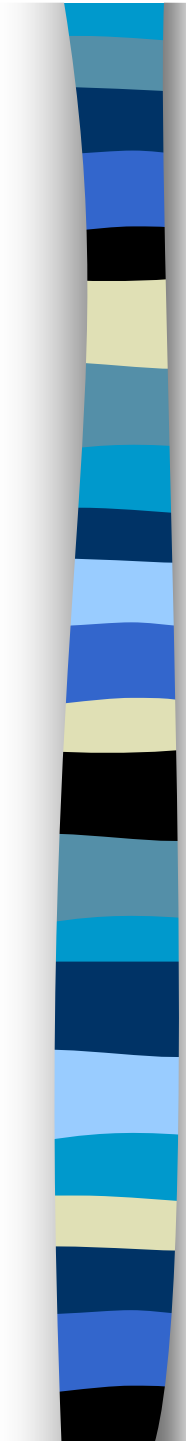
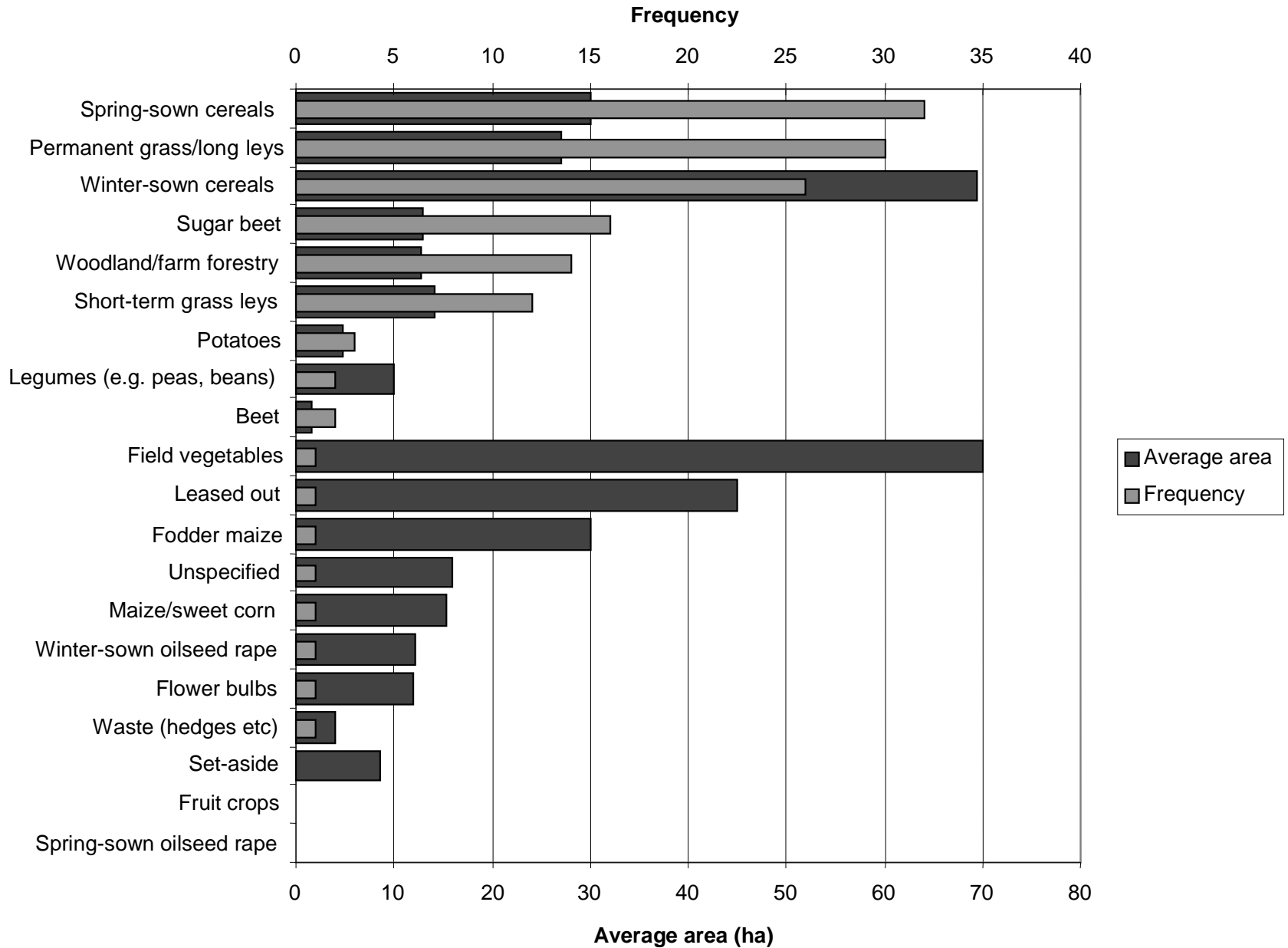
Age distribution of respondents



Distribution of farm size

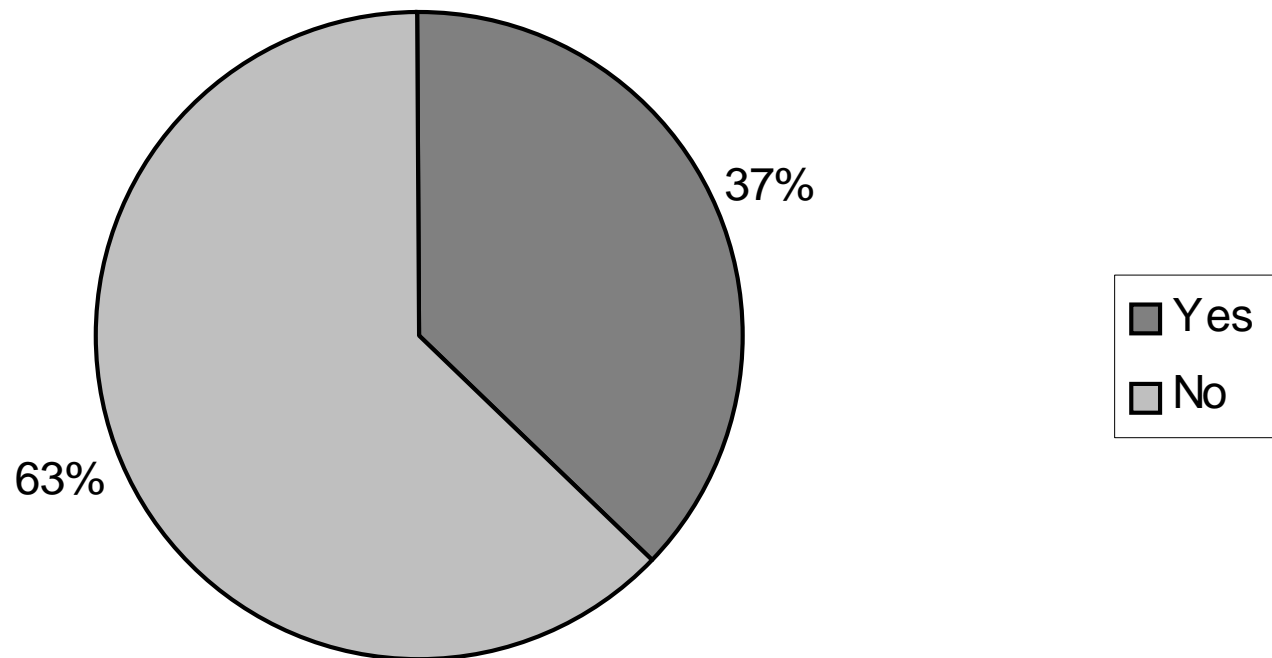


On-farm land-use

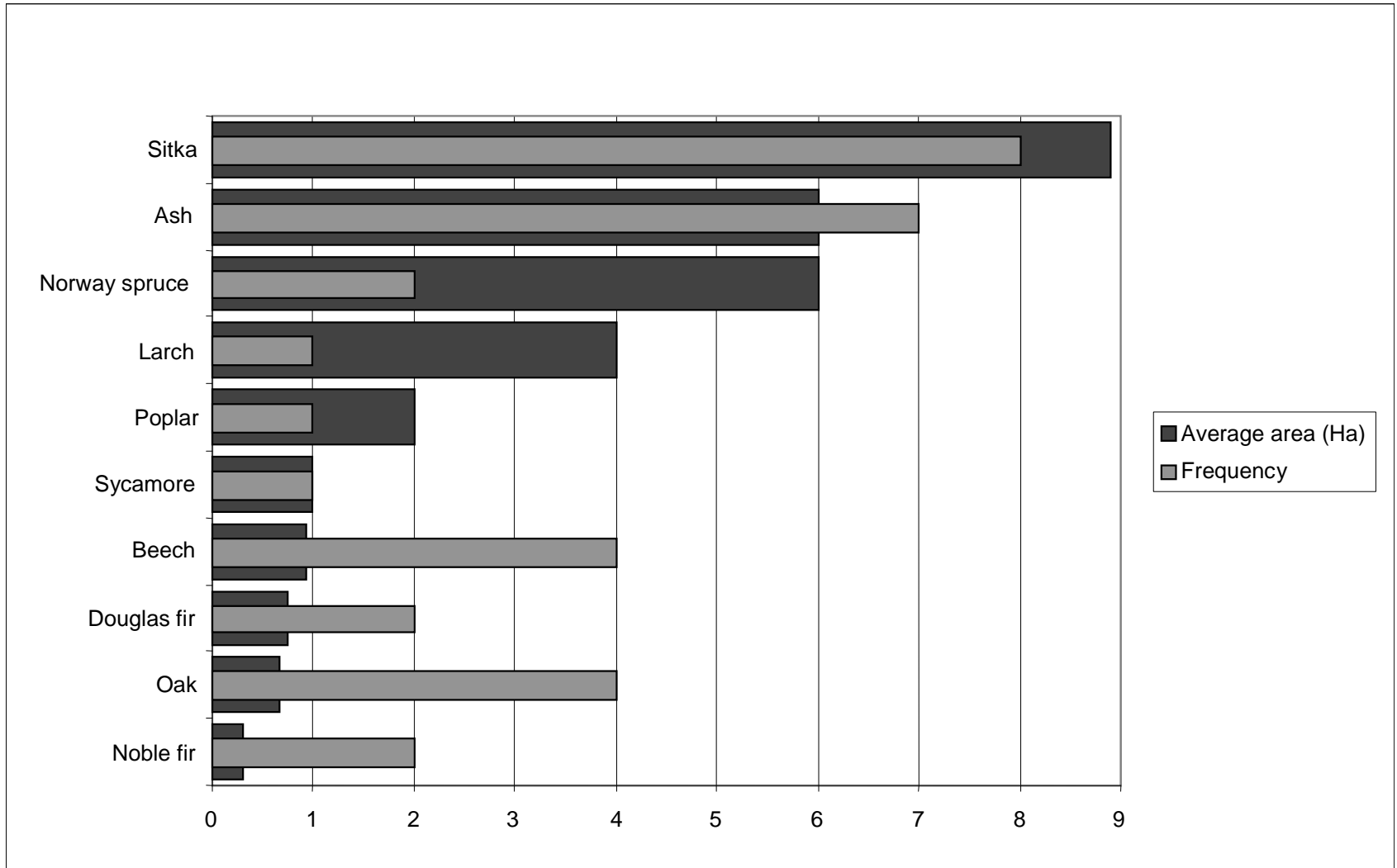


Presence of woodland/forestry on the farm

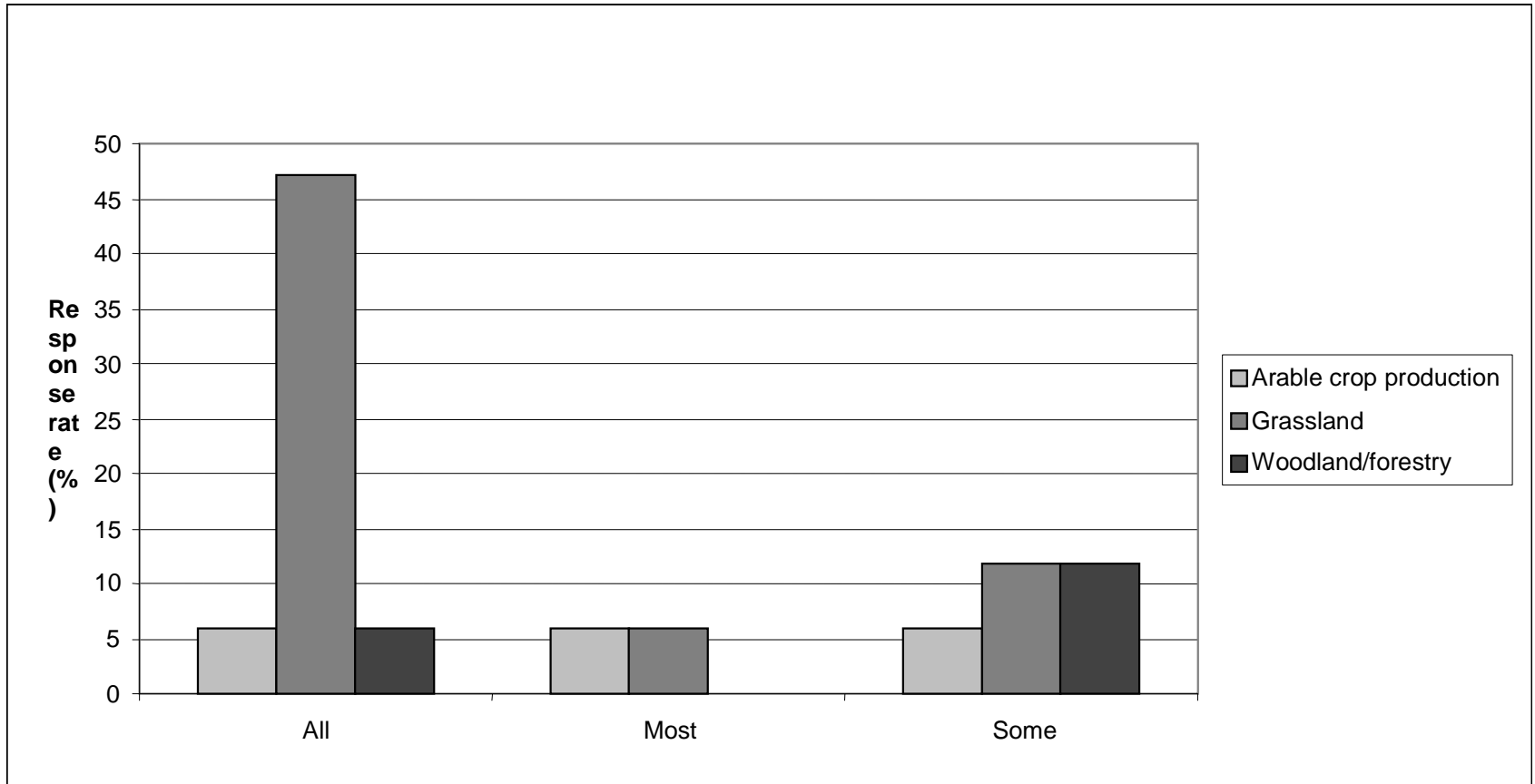
Woodland or forestry present on the farm.



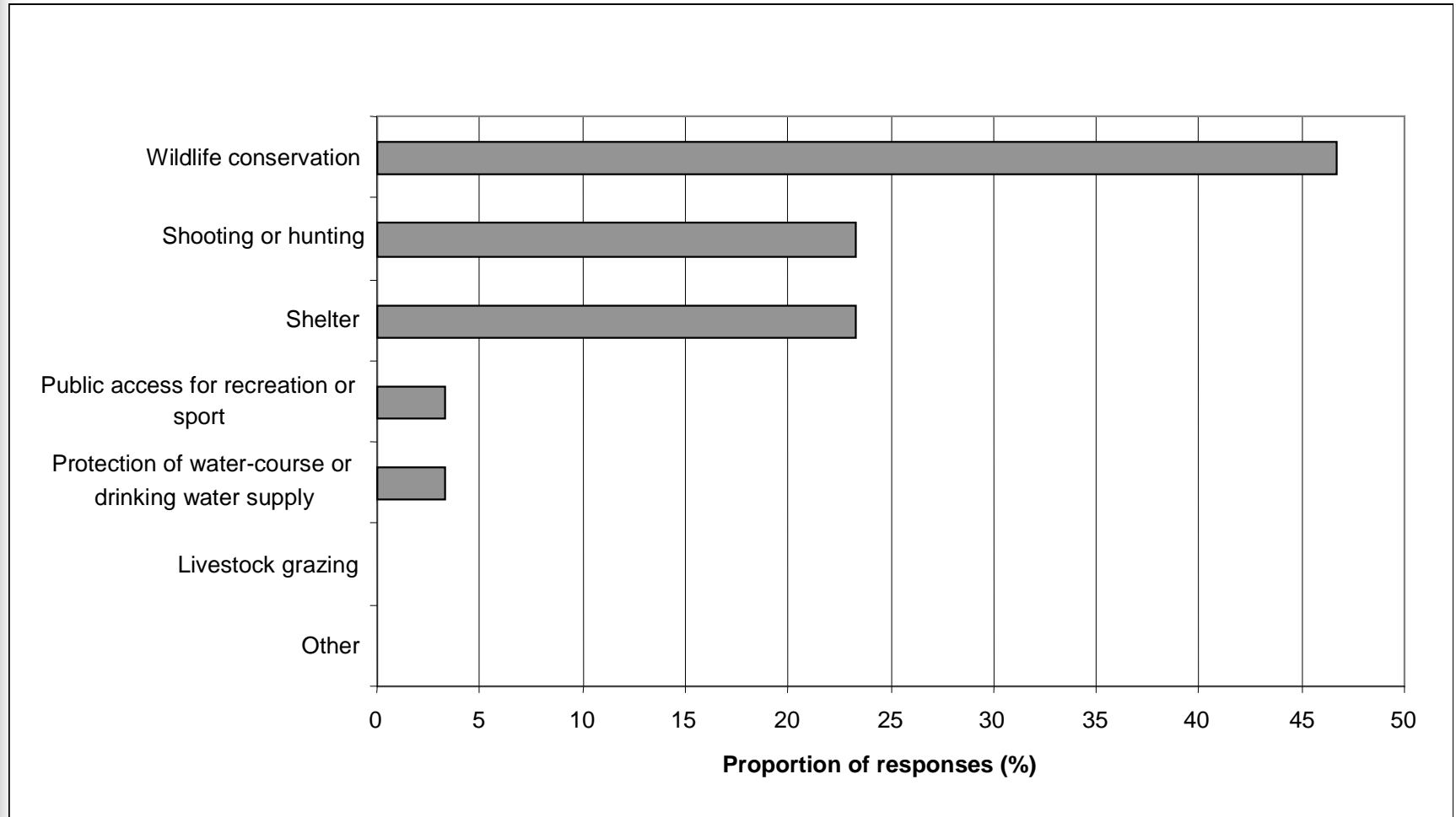
Composition of afforestation



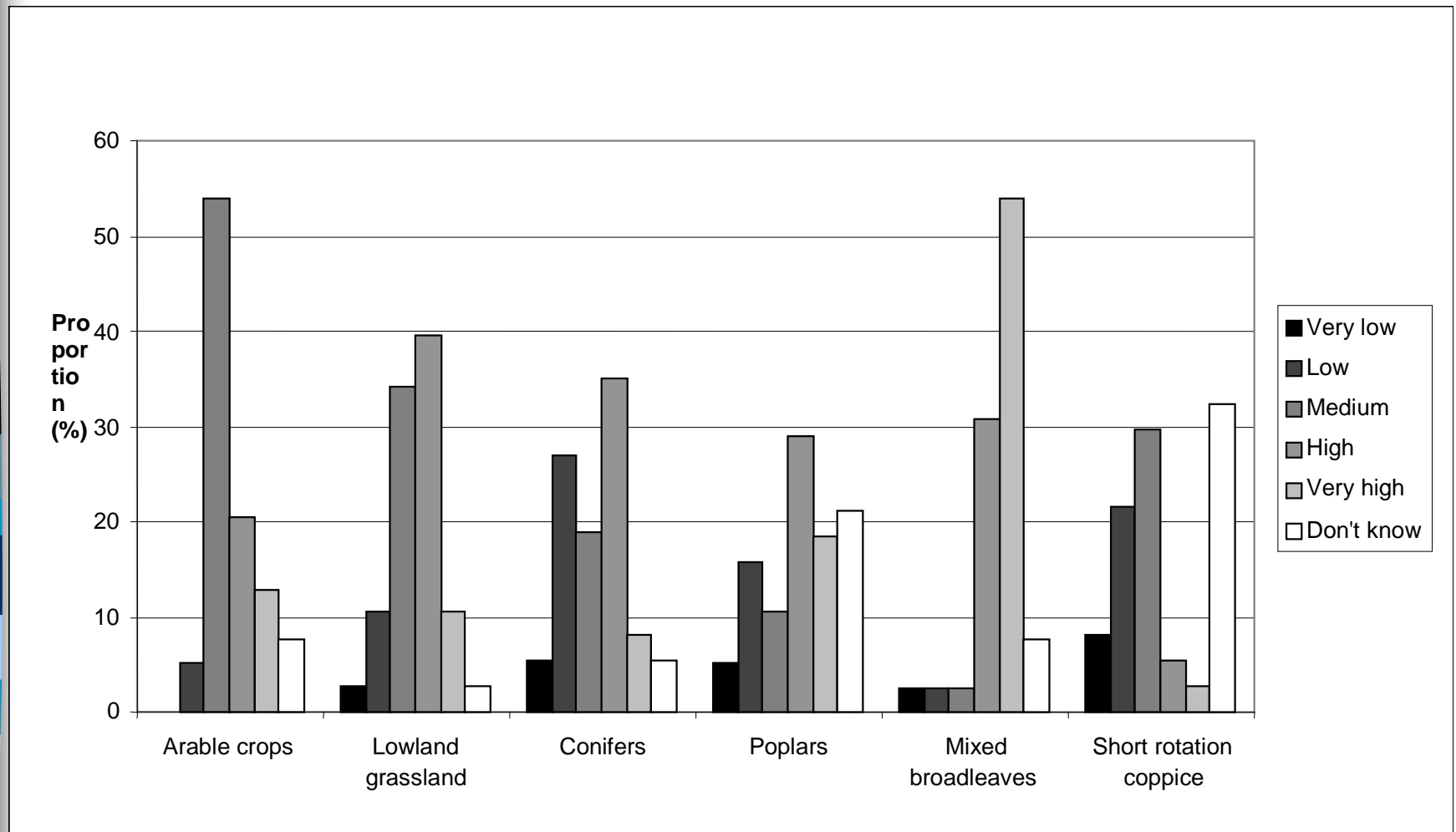
Land-use prior to afforestation



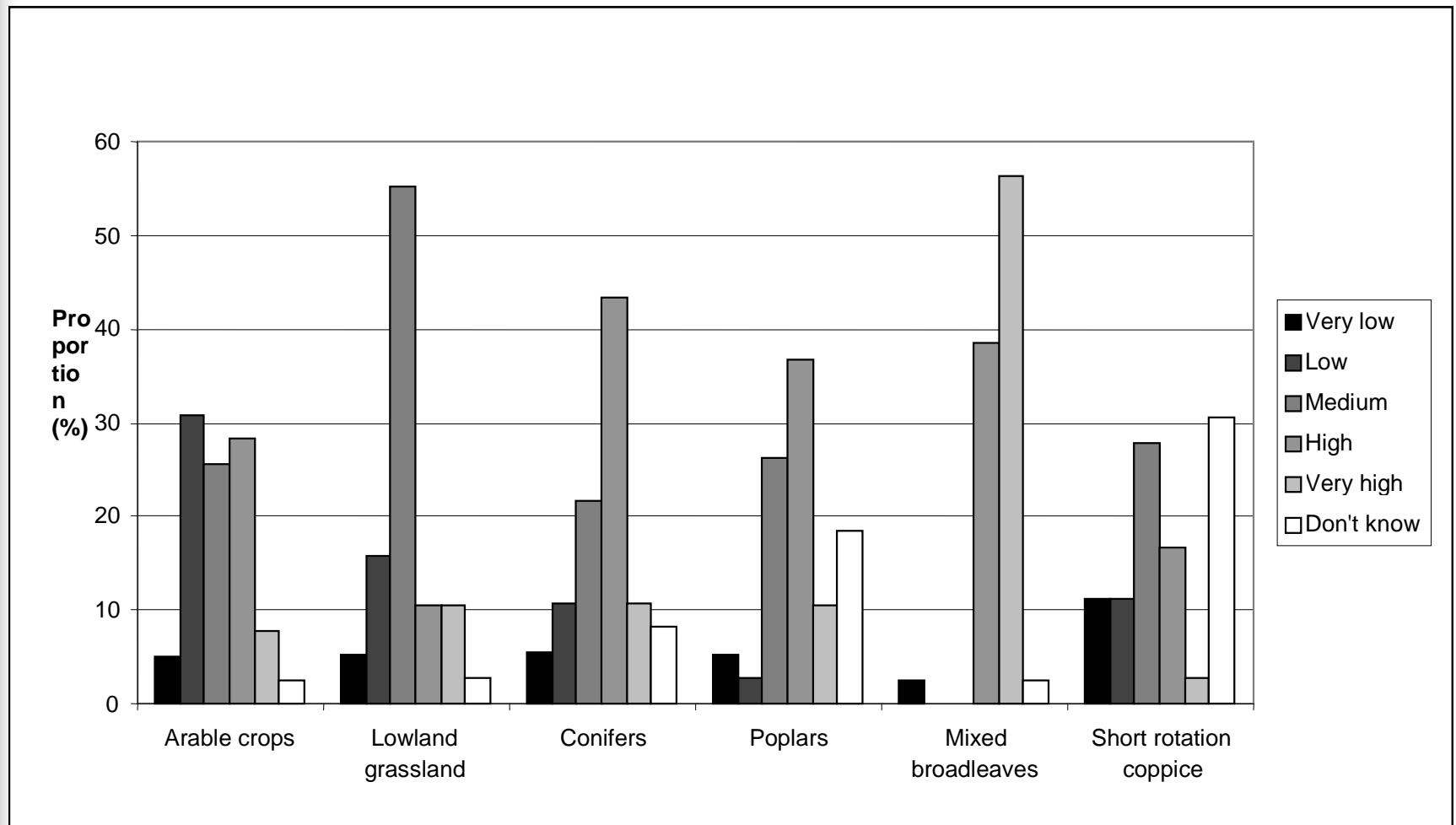
Non timber production uses of woodland



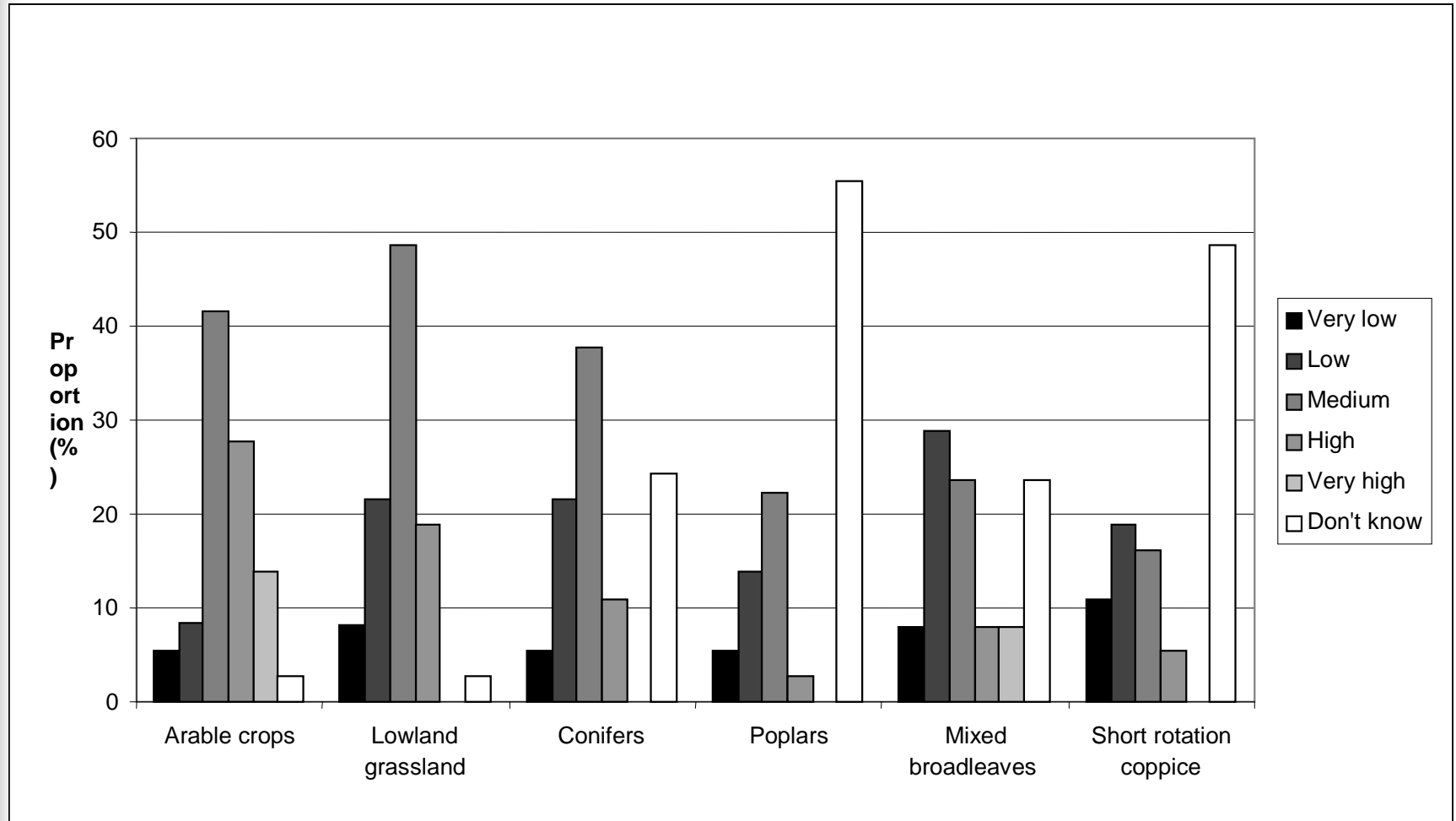
Perceived landscape value of land-uses



Perceived wildlife value of land-uses



Perceived economic value of land-uses

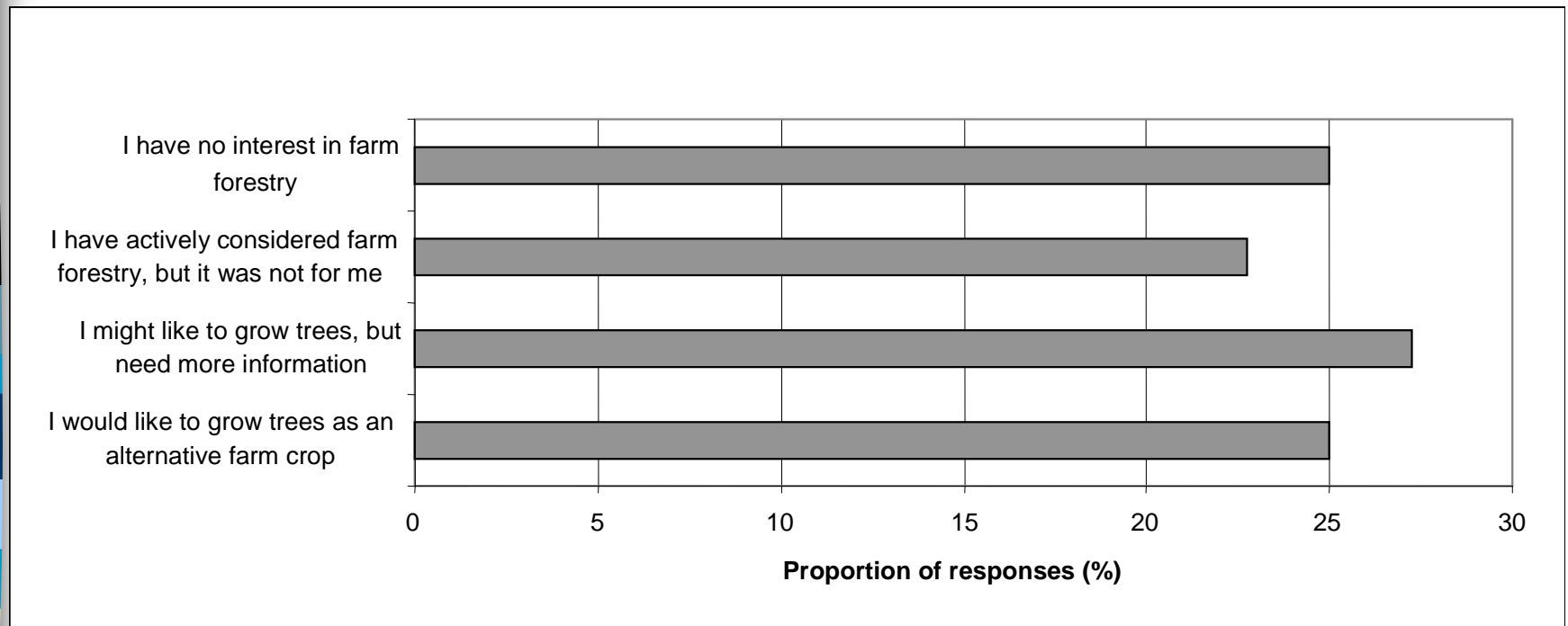




Perceptions on land-uses - summary

Land-use	Modal response		
	Landscape	Wildlife	Economics
Arable crops	Medium	Low	Medium
Lowland grassland	High	Medium	Medium
Conifers	High	High	Medium
Mixed broadleaves	Very high	Very high	Low
Poplars	High	High	Don't know
Short rotation coppice	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know

Attitudes towards farm forestry





Conclusions

- Many arable farmers already engaged in farm forestry
- Variety of tree species grown conifer & broadleaf
- Most farmers had multiple objectives for their farm forests
- Perception is farm forestry will increase in future
- Main reason is due to uncertainties in farming.
- Majority willing to consider forestry as an enterprise
- Perception that afforestation reduces value of land