

# Retailers Need to Take a Stand



Contact Mike Weddel for more information:  
[mikeweddel@stratusresearch.com](mailto:mikeweddel@stratusresearch.com)

**Stratus**  
AG RESEARCH

It's no secret that ag retailers have a lot of influence on the crop protection decisions made by their farm customers. But some retailers choose not to recommend anything, and that hurts their business. Farmers want to hear recommendations from their retailer.

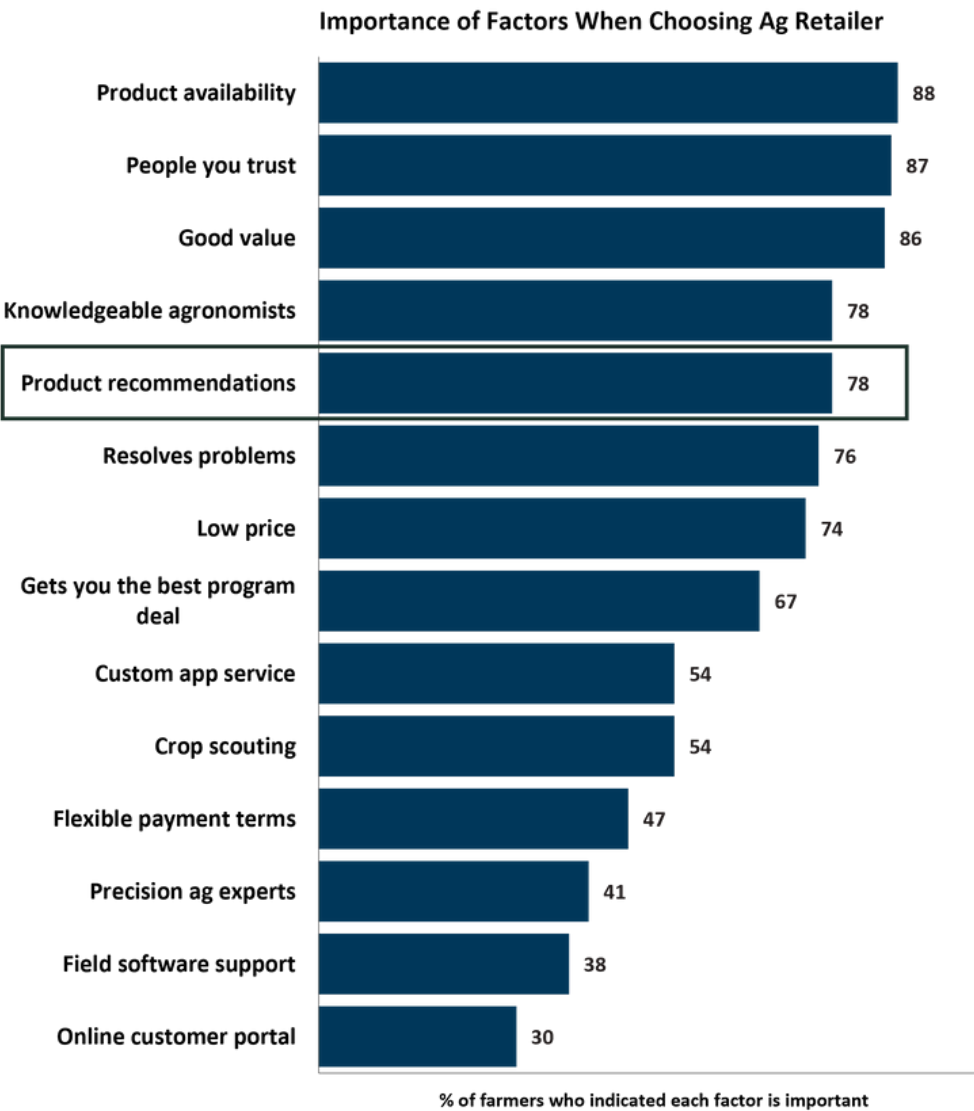
Each year, retailers provide feedback to Stratus about key **Crop Protection** brands in major markets in the USA. They tell us about the brands they sell, what they like and don't like about those brands and how they position those brands with their customers. But before we get into that, let's look at farmers' expectations of their ag retailer.

# Farmers Expect Their Retailer to Make Recommendations

In the fall of 2024, we asked 800 US farmers: "How important is each attribute when deciding which retailer to purchase your crop protection products from?"

We found that "Advice and recommendations about which products are best suited to your farm" is one of the most important factors when farmers are deciding which retailer to support.

**78%** of farmers said that recommendations are important to them.





# Some Ag Retailers Choose To Not Recommend Any Products

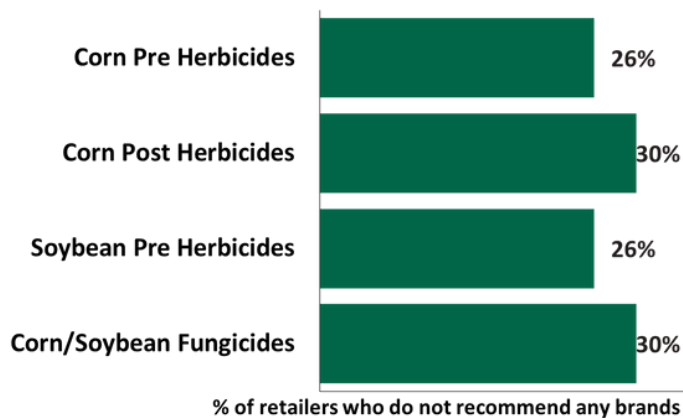
But some retailers do not recommend anything. In the summer of 2025, we asked 250 retailers in the USA to tell us about their experiences selling pre-emergent corn herbicides. One of the questions was about their willingness to recommend the products that they sell to their farm customers.

We found that about **one-quarter** of retail people do not recommend any of the pre-emergent corn herbicides that they sell.

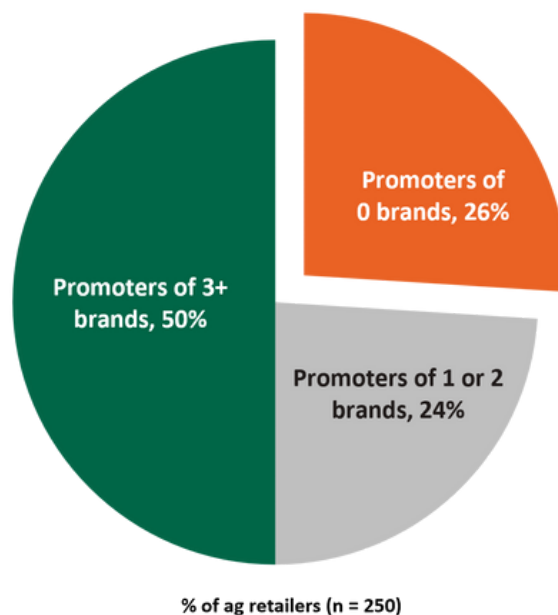
There were no significant differences based on size of retail operation. Smaller retailers were just as likely to not recommend any products as large retailers.

We also found that there was no difference between location managers, salespeople or agronomists. For all 3 types of employees, **25%** would not recommend anything.

The type of retail channel did not make a difference. National accounts, co-ops and independent dealers were all the same with one quarter not recommending any products. And we found that there was no difference based on the service levels offered by the retailer. High service retailers were just as likely to not recommend anything as low service retailers.



Promoters of Pre-Emergent Corn Herbicides



So, then we wondered if this was peculiar to corn pre-herbicides. We looked at retail behavior in 3 other markets. The soybean pre-herbicide market was the same as corn pre-herbicide market, with **26%** of retailers not recommending any of the brands they sell. For the corn post herbicide and corn/soybean fungicide markets, **30%** did not recommend anything.

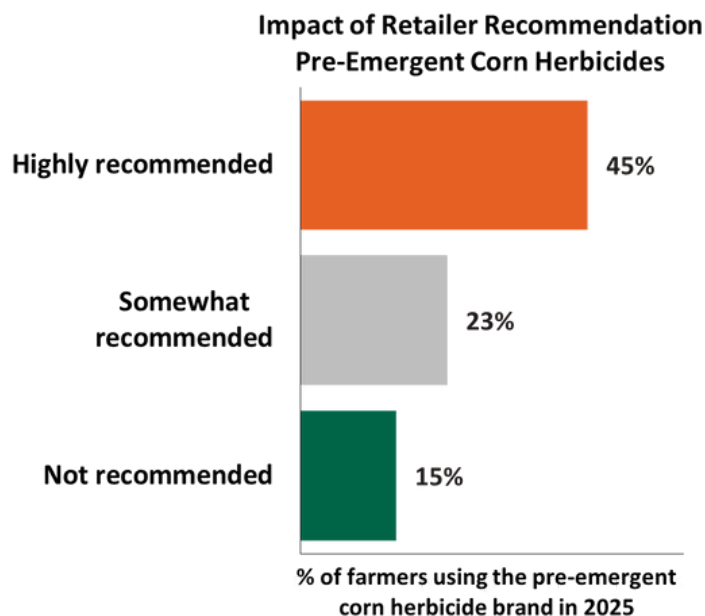
**This is a behavior that is consistent across multiple crop protection product categories.**

# Retailers Who Provide Recommendations are More Successful

When retailers make product recommendations to their customers, they are much more successful.

Using pre-emergent corn herbicides as an example, **45%** of the time, if a retailer highly recommends a product, the farm customer will use that product. If a product is not recommended by the retailer, the sales success rate drops to just **15%**.

Retailers are far more successful when they recommend a brand to their farm customers. It is important to get the retail sales team equipped to recommend products.



# Retailers Who Do Not Recommend Any Products Lack Confidence

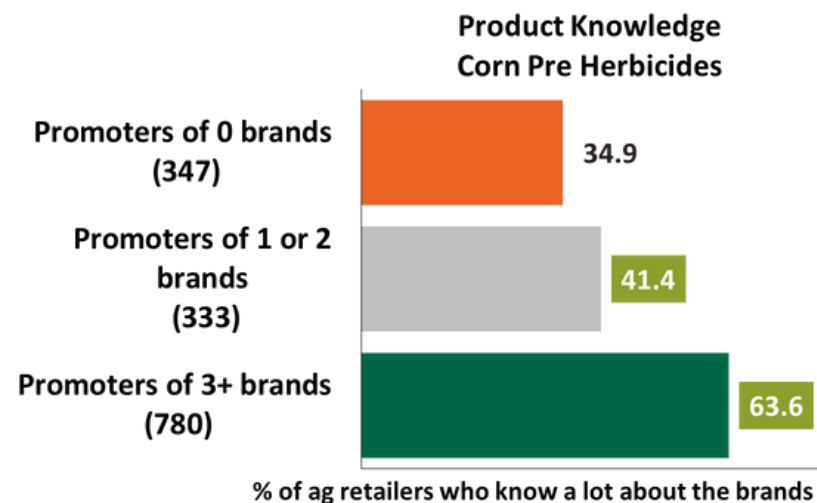
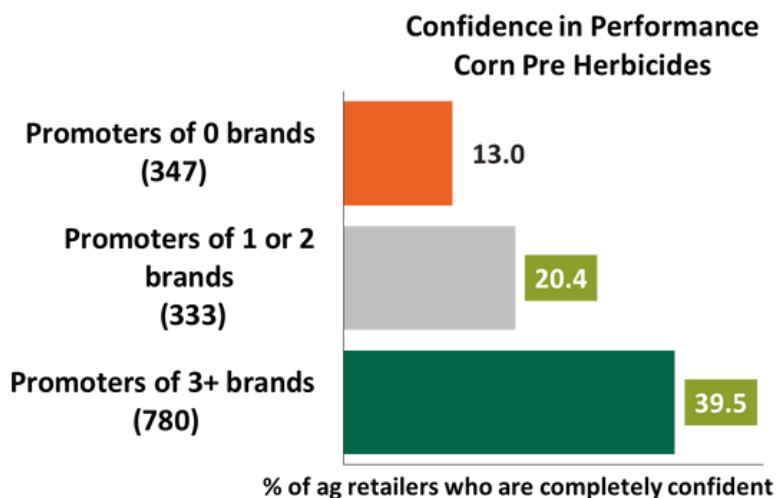
There are many potential reasons why some retailers choose not to recommend products. For example, they may not want to assume any reputational risk by recommending a product that might not meet the customer's expectations. Or they may not have the time or resources to fully understand their customers' situation and do not want to blindly make a recommendation.

But one reason for not making a recommendation is that they lack confidence in the performance of the products.

To recommend a product to their customers, a retailer needs to feel confident that their customers will be happy with the results. Among those retailers who recommend 3+ brands, confidence is significantly higher.

Retailers who do not recommend any brands usually lack confidence in the performance of the brands that they sell.

There could be several reasons why retailers lack confidence in the products they sell. But one reason for lacking confidence is that they lack knowledge of the products, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they perform.



Nearly **two-thirds** of retailers who recommend 3+ brands say they know a lot about the brands they sell, significantly higher than those who do not promote any brands.

Lack of product knowledge is one of the reasons that some retailers do not recommend any of the brands that they sell.



Based on this research, we can conclude the following:

1. Most farmers expect their retailer to provide advice and recommendations about which products are best suited to their farm. Retailers who fail in this area will eventually lose customers as those farmers seek alternative purchase sources.
2. Retailers are more successful when they make recommendations. There is a strong business case for retailers to take a position on selected products.
3. About **25% to 30%** of ag retailers do not recommend the products that they sell. They may sit back and wait for the customer to make a choice. Or they may outline the various options. But they do not make a recommendation.
4. Those retailers who do not recommend any products usually lack confidence in the products they sell. With a lack of confidence, it is understandable that retailers would hesitate to put their reputation on the line.
5. One of the reasons they lack confidence is that they lack knowledge. Manufacturers of crop protection products must help retailers to become familiar with their products, to see them in action, and to understand when and where the products should be used.

Retailers need to take a stand to get behind specific products and recommend those products to their customers.

To discuss these findings, contact Mike Weddel at [mikeweddel@stratusresearch.com](mailto:mikeweddel@stratusresearch.com)

