

# A National Review of State Standards Relevant to Agriculture Teacher Performance and Program Quality

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## Purpose

Decision-makers have increasingly used quality standards to improve performance outcomes (Donaldson & Woulfin, 2018). These trends have appeared to influence how teachers view success in secondary agricultural education (Stair et al., 2016).

The purpose of this study was to describe commonalities and differences among state standards relevant to agriculture teacher performance and program quality.

## Framework

When creating policy decision-makers often draw on their beliefs, experiences, social interactions, and worldviews to organize their ideas into a cognitive framework that guides their logic.

Cognitive sensemaking (Coburn, 2006) was used as a lens to examine how decision-makers framed teacher performance and program quality to evaluate success.

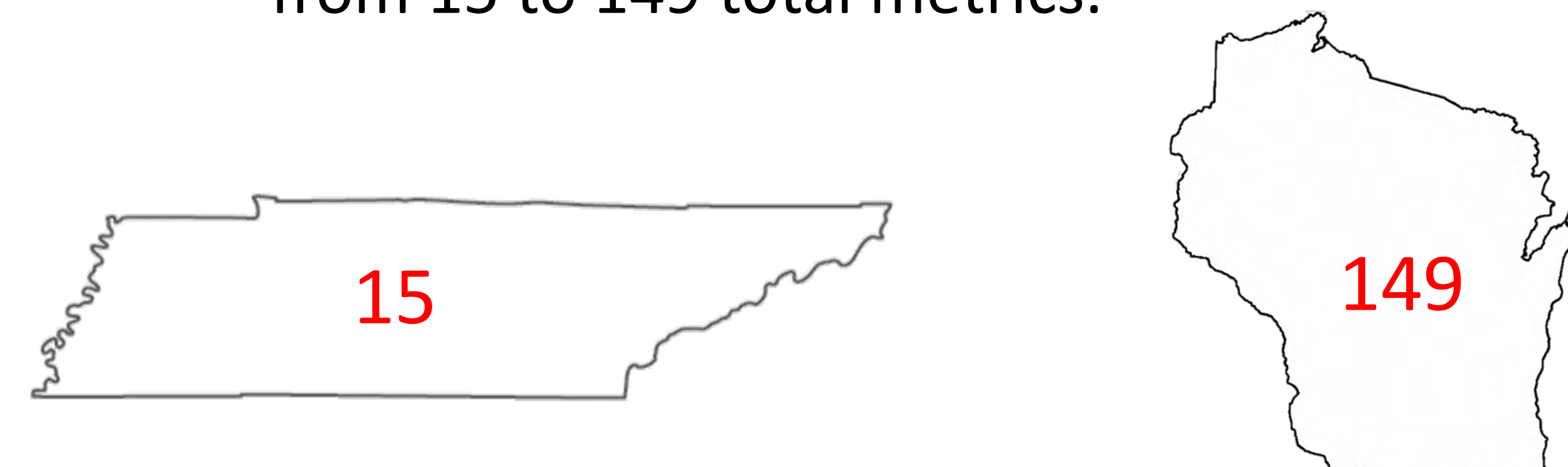
## Methods

Content analysis of standards, metrics, and quality indicators used to evaluate agriculture teachers and/or programs in each state as provided by state agricultural education leaders (N=50).

Five researchers analyzed each document using descriptive codes to identify links to the National Program Quality Standards for Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource Education.

## Results

- ✓ 47 responses, 32 documents provided
- ✓ 21 documents designed specifically for Ag Teachers
- ✓ Length ranged from 1 pg (TN) to 124 pgs (AZ)
- ✓ Variety in # of main and secondary standards ranged from 15 to 149 total metrics.



## EMERGENT STANDARDS

- 104 Curriculum & Program Design
- 59 Instruction
- 90 Facilities & Equipment
- 86 Leadership & Personal Development in FFA
- 53 Emergent Standards

- ✓ Majority of documents were organized into rubrics or rating systems with varying scales and degrees of detail
- ✓ 13 documents were to be used on an annual basis by the agriculture teacher
- ✓ Only 1 state (IL) delineated standards by levels of experience
- ✓ 36 documents implied all agriculture teachers must meet the same requirements regardless of experience

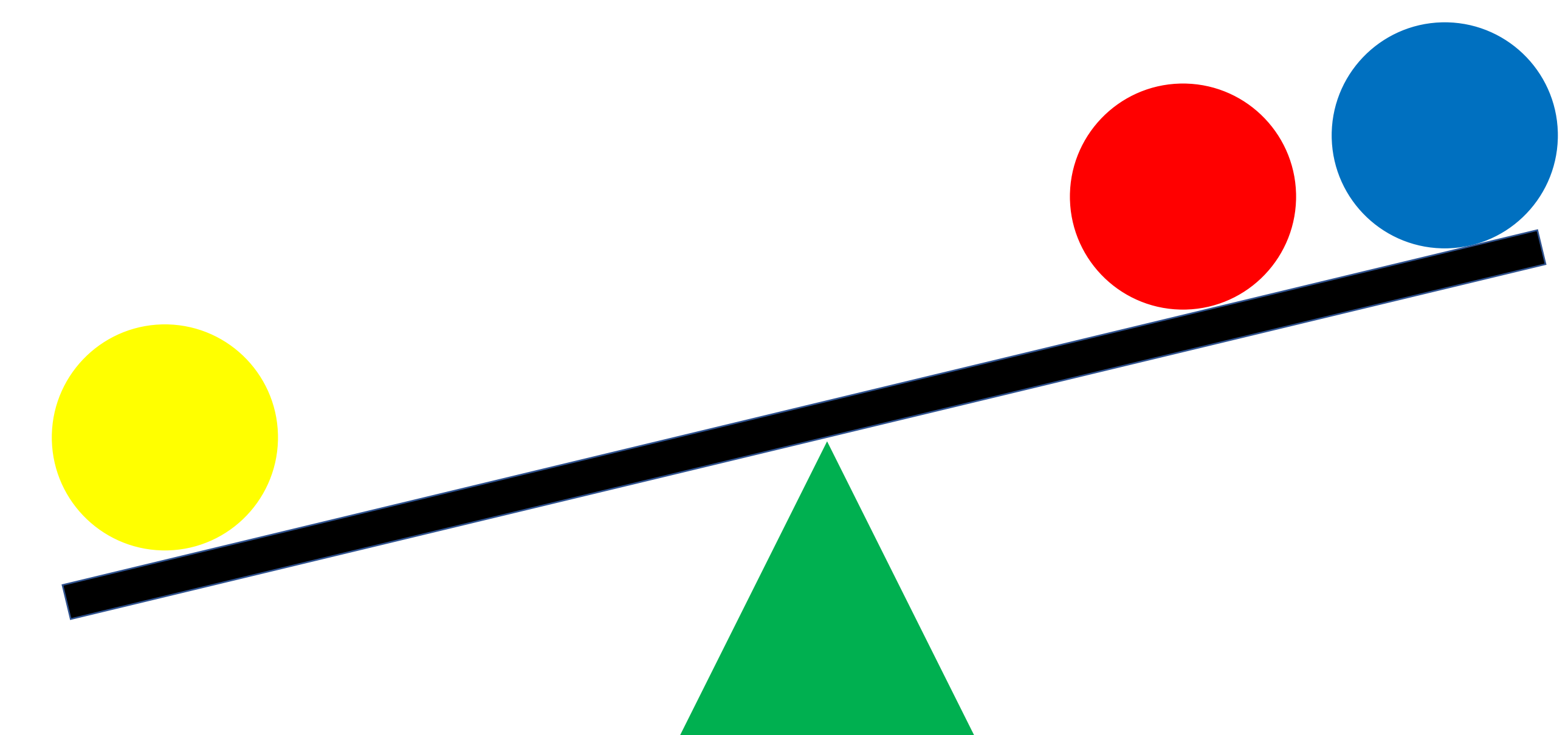
## Conclusions

When viewed through the lens of cognitive sensemaking (Coburn, 2006), results from this study illuminated that great variety existed by which secondary agriculture teachers and their programs are evaluated. Quality indicators varied greatly from state to state.

## Impact on Profession

Secondary agriculture teachers have numerous responsibilities, many of which go beyond classroom instruction.

Standards indicated an imbalance in the total agricultural education model.



## Recommendations

Future studies should engage in an in-depth analysis of the content of each document to understand the philosophical and logical underpinnings (Coburn, 2006).

For practitioners and state leaders, we recommend a critical examination of standards and evaluation with attention paid to *who* (e.g. individual vs. program) is being evaluated and *what* are the rewards or consequences of evaluation.