The objective of this study was to evaluate the perceived importance and role of Cooperative Extension in soil testing in Pennsylvania, and to look at the reported impact of extension recommendations on producer practices.

A random subset of 550 laboratory users was selected from the total listing of those who had used the laboratory for soil analyses in the past 3 years. A survey with cover letter was sent to the sample of users, followed by a reminder postcard. For those not responding within 2 weeks, a second letter and survey were mailed, followed by another reminder postcard. The return rate was approximately 75%. The survey was comprised of 23 questions in areas focused on 1) testing process and quality of services, 2) use and importance of soil testing in Pennsylvania and 3) the role of extension in soil testing. The strength of the Pennsylvania Analytical laboratory appears to be due in part to its strong connection with the Extension Soils program and local extension offices.

The biggest barrier to soil testing was considered to be the time required. In spite of that, most respondents said they were likely to use the lab again within the next 5 years.