

Farm Fresh Food Boxes:

Expanding Rural Economies through New Markets for Farmers and Retailers



Research and Extension Project Team



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Background



Three Target Groups

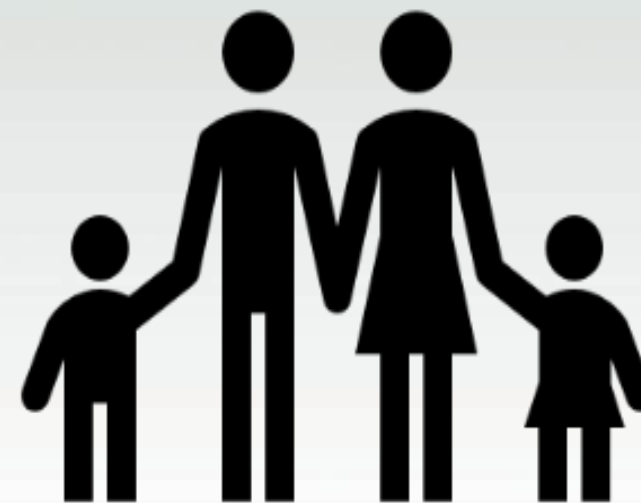
Farmers



Retailers



Consumers



Farming and Marketing Trends

- Large, centralized farms sell a large volume at low prices
- National retail chains have forced small retailers out of business
- Hard for consumers to access fresh, affordable produce in some areas



Direct to Consumer (DTC) Approaches



- DTC includes farmers' markets, CSAs, farm stands
- 8% of U.S. farms sold product using DTC or intermediated sales (farm-to-institution sales, and food hubs); 70% of these used DTC exclusively
- DTC provides ***economic benefits*** to the wider community and ***enhances social ties*** between farmers and consumers

Typical CSA Model

- Consumer pays for entire season up-front
- Weekly pick-up on farm or at designated site off farm
- CSA variations: no commitment, pay weekly in CA



Drawbacks of DTC

- Up-front CSA subscription may not adequately cover labor costs
- Farmers' markets require transportation and staffing time
- Market for CSAs and farmers' markets is saturated in some places
- Low income consumer access can be limited because of price, convenience and culture



Farm Fresh Food Box (FFFB) Model



Farmer Role



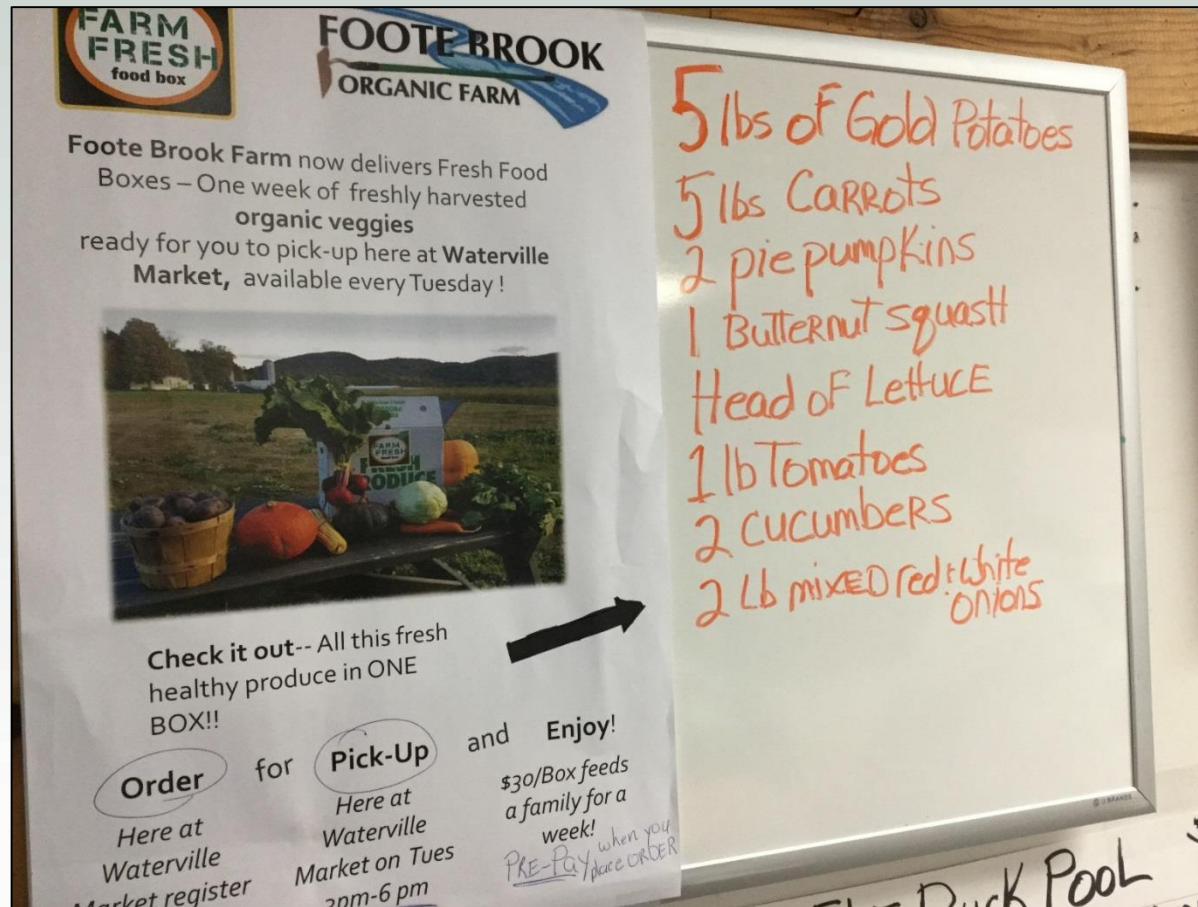
Farmers offer weekly FFFB at participating retail sites that consumers can easily access. Box contents (and flyers) change throughout the season, to move product that is most abundant.

Retailer Role

Retailers provide a drop-off point for the FFFB, in exchange for a nominal transaction fee. Retailers advertise via sandwich boards, flyers, social media, and whiteboards detailing the cost and weekly content of the FFFB.



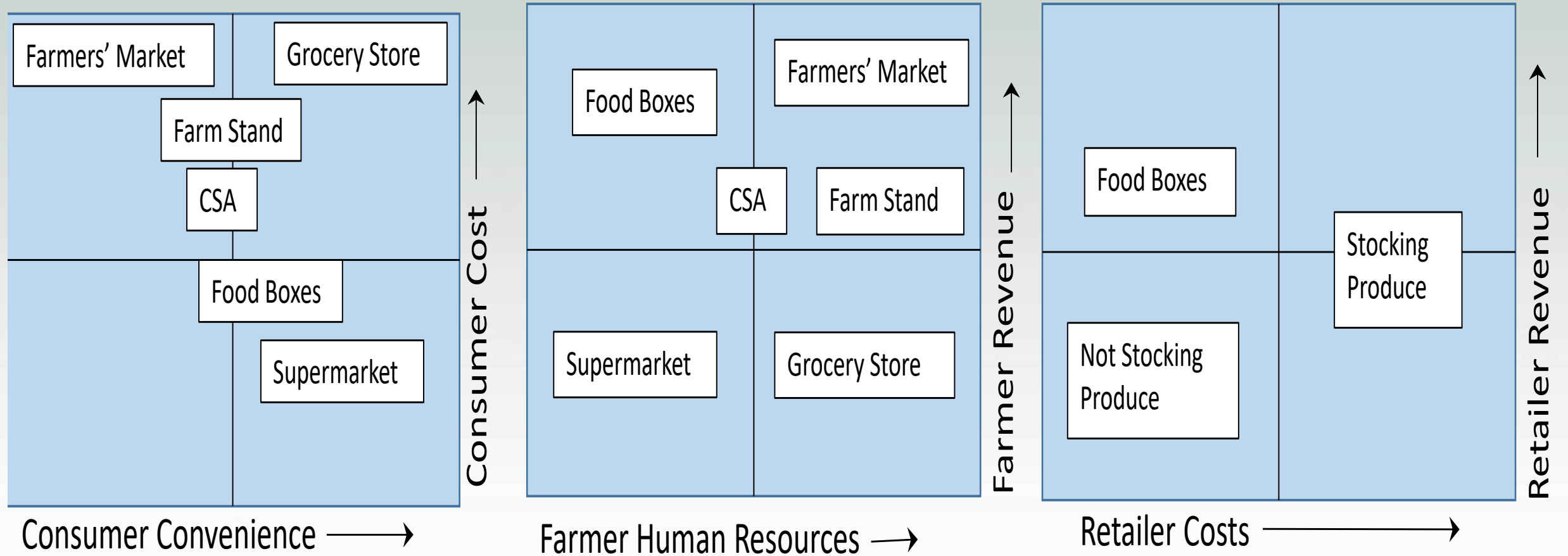
Consumer Role



Customers pre-order a weekly FFFB at the retail site or on-line on a week-to-week basis for later pick-up.

Customers can use SNAP/EBT.

Benefits for Consumers, Farmers & Retailers

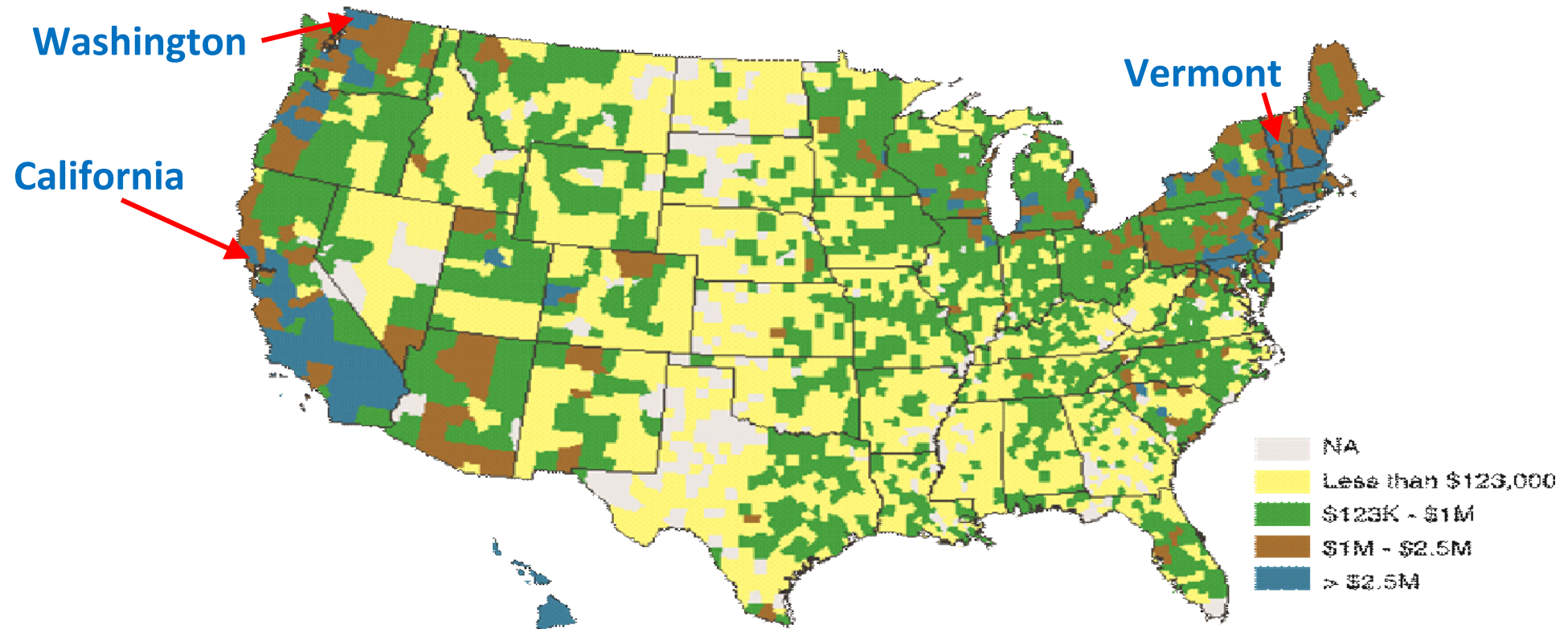


FFFB Research and Extension Pilot



Pilot Sites in CA, VT, and WA

Direct to Consumer Sales by County, 2012



Source: USDA Economic Research Service, data from Census of Agriculture, 2012.

Extension Objectives

- Recruit 2-4 farmers in each of state;
- Connect farmers with 4-6 retailers;
- Provide consumers with access to healthy foods at affordable prices in an accessible, convenient, and “comfortable” location;
- Determine best practices and disseminate information to producers and retailers.



Research Objectives



- Assess the market potential for the FFFB;
- Measure impact of FFFB project returns to farmers and retailers;
- Measure acceptability and use of FFFB among consumers;
- Compare benefits and barriers of FFFB project to farmers, retailers and consumers with the benefits and barriers of other direct sales approaches, namely farmers' markets and traditional CSAs.

Pre-Season

Extension

- Engages Retailers & Farmers
- Provides FFFB Materials

Farmers

- Get FFFB boxes and stickers
- Take the Demographic Survey!

Retailers

- Get Flyers, Sandwich boards and white boards
- Gets training on the Weekly Tracker from research team
- Take the Demographic Survey!
- Get customer order pads

During Growing Season

Extension

- Ongoing technical support

Farmers

- Tells retailer weekly box contents
- Puts customer survey in box
- Receives orders from store, packs boxes, delivers to store

Retailers

- Display flyers, sandwich boards and white boards
- Takes orders, collects payments,
- Relays weekly orders to farmer
- Distributes boxes

Post-Season

Extension

- Supports data collection
- Provides stipends to participants

Farmers

- Participates in post-season interviews with researchers

Retailers

- Participates in post-season interviews with researchers
- Gets 10% of box sales from FFFB extension team



Outcome Measures and Analysis

Pre-Season


- *Demographic Survey*
- *Pre-season FFFB Roster*

During the Growing Season

- *Weekly Tracking Form*
- *Customer Survey*

Post-Season

- *Qualitative Interview*



Farm Fresh Food Boxes Customer Survey

Thank you for participating in the Farm Fresh Food Box program! This program is a part of a University of Vermont study looking at getting fresh food from farmers to community members. This survey is voluntary, and we greatly appreciate your feedback. If you prefer, you can complete this survey online at FarmFreshFoodBoxes.com. If you have any questions or concerns about participating, please contact the main researcher, Jane Kolodinsky at kolodinj@uvm.edu.

Pick up date	
Farm Name	

Is this your first time purchasing a Farm Fresh Food Box?

Yes No

If not, how many Food Boxes have you purchased before today?

What do you like most about your Food Box?

What do you like least about this Food Box?

Please tell us about your experience picking up this Food Box. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very satisfied and 1 being very dissatisfied, how satisfied were you with:

	Very Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	Very Satisfied
Ease of ordering	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
Convenience of pick-up	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
Interaction with retailer	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
Value for your money	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
Quality of the produce	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
Variety of produce	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	

When thinking about your Farm Fresh Food Box, please consider to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. 5: Strongly Agree, 4: Agree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 2: Disagree, 1: Strongly disagree

	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
It was easy to try	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
I could afford to try it	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
I knew how to prepare all the items in the box	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	

How did you feel when you opened your Food Box? Circle all that apply.

Happy Relieved Sad

Surprised Curious

Overwhelmed Satisfied

Confused Worried Excited

Preliminary Findings



Farmer Recruitment



Jericho Settlers Farm
Fresh Food Box
Harvest Bundles
here at
Jericho Center Country Store!



LIMITED TIME ONLY!



ROOT 5 FARM
FAIRLEE GROWN ORGANIC

FOOTE BROOK
ORGANIC FARM

Retail Site Recruitment



Possible Retail Site



Consumer Consumption



Consumer Survey



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Pick up date:
 Farm Name:

Is this your first time purchasing a Farm Fresh Food Box?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If not, how many Food Boxes have you purchased before today?

What do you like most about your Food Box?

What do you like least about this Food Box?

How did you feel when you opened your Food Box? Circle all that apply.

Happy ☐ Relieved ☐ Sad ☐

Surprised ☐ Curious ☐

Overwhelmed ☐ Satisfied ☐

Confused ☐ Worried ☐ Excited ☐

Misled ☐ Hungry ☐

Disappointed ☐

Other:

Did you buy anything else at this store today? Yes / No

If so, what did you buy?

Did you leave a CSA program to try Food Boxes?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, what was the CSA Farm?

Please tell us about your experience picking up this Food Box. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very satisfied and 1 being very dissatisfied, how satisfied were you with:

	Very Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	Very Satisfied
Ease of ordering							
Convenience of pick-up							
Interaction with retailer							
Value for your money							
Quality of the produce							
Variety of produce							

When thinking about your Farm Fresh Food Box, please consider to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. 5: Strongly Agree, 4: Agree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 2: Disagree, 1: Strongly disagree

	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
It was easy to try							
I could afford to try it							
I knew how to prepare all the items in the box							
I wanted to try it							
I had enough information to try everything in the box							
It fits in with the way I usually eat							
It fits in with the way I plan meals for my household							
It fits in with the way I shop for food							
It fits in with the preferences of my family							

Where else do you typically get fresh produce? (Please circle all that apply)

Farmer's Market	CSA	Garden	Farm Stand
Grocery Store	Food Bank	Garden	
Supermarket	Food Co-op	Convenience Store	
Other:			

When thinking about your Farm Fresh Food Box, please consider to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. 5 - Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 - Neither agree nor disagree, 2 - Disagree, 1 - Strongly disagree

	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
It was promoted in the store							
I have seen others picking them up							
I have seen it promoted on the internet							
My neighbors would like the concept							
I will speak to friends/family about it							
The advantages make the box worth trying							
It gives me more access to fresh foods than I would have had otherwise							
It is convenient to pick up							
It is less expensive than buying produce at a Farmer's Market							
It is less expensive than other places I buy fresh produce							
It is convenient to get a mix of produce items together							
It allows me to give my food dollars directly to the local farmers in my community							
It is a good way for people to get food directly from their local farmers							
It has potential to increase fresh food consumed in the community							
It has potential to increase purchases at this store							
It will bring more of my neighbors to this store							
I hope it is in this store next year							
The contents are easy to prepare							
It made it simple for me to plan meals							
It made it easy to prepare meals							

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your Food Box experience?

In what year were you born?

How far did you travel to pick up your food box (in minutes)?

Including yourself, how many adults 18 years or older live in your household?

How many children under age 18 live in your household?

Are you Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin? (If so, Choose One)

What is your Gender:

With which race do you most identify with?

White ☐ Black or African American ☐ American Indian or Eskimo ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander ☐

Other:

What is your approximate annual household income last year? (circle one)

0 ☐ \$1-\$25,000 ☐ \$25,001-\$75,000 ☐ \$75,001-\$100,000 ☐ > \$100,000 ☐

About how often do you shop at this store?

Less than once a month ☐ Between 1 - 3 times a month ☐ Once per week ☐

More than once per week ☐ No Answer ☐

Project Goals

Farmer

- *Increase profitability*
- *Access new customers*

Retailer

- *Increase revenues*
- *Increase foot traffic*

Consumer

- *Purchase and consume additional produce*



Acknowledgements

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