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Factor Analysis of Consumer Attitudes toward Farm Direct Markets

Hsiang-tai Cheng, Lili Dang, and Donna Lamb

Farm direct marketing, or farmers selling their products directly to the final consumer, presents an opportunity for small farms to increase sales and obtain higher marketing margins; it also poses a variety of managerial and marketing challenges.

A consumer-survey study was conducted in 2003 to assess direct-marketing opportunities and barriers for farmers in the Maine Highlands region (Piscataquis and Penobscot Counties). The survey addressed five direct-marketing methods: farm stand, pick-your-own (PYO), tailgate market, home delivery, and farmers market. The questionnaire was designed to determine whether the current outlets of farm products satisfy consumer needs

and to identify potential areas of direct marketing of farm products that can better serve the needs of consumers.

Also contained in the survey data are various reasons given by the respondents for shopping or not shopping at these farm-direct markets. A tabular analysis was conducted and the result was unsatisfactory due to the relatively large number of variables involved.

This study uses factor analysis to assess the common factors that explain the pattern of relationships among these reasons and hence provides concise information about consumers' attitudes toward farm direct markets in the area.

The authors are associate professor, former graduate student, and associate extension professor, respectively, Department of Resource Economics and Policy, University of Maine, Orono.