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Potential Benefits of Extended Season Sales through Direct Markets

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Abstract

Numerous studies have shown that consumers are on average willing to pay more for products at local direct markets, but tend to examine consumer preferences for goods available during the normal season. Studies which examine pricing and consumer preferences for local foods available outside of their normal season are few. One study finds that consumers would be willing to attend farmers' markets in the off-season, but does not assess their willingness to pay (WTP) for products in the off-season. A second study mentions that extending the market season may increase farmer income, but does not specifically discuss impacts to net returns resulting from price differentials. This study will assess enhanced revenue potential for out-of-season (winter, early spring, late fall) direct market sales, specifically those which can be produced through the use of season extension techniques such as high tunnels. The results of this study will provide agricultural producers with valuable information regarding potential revenue estimates which they can use to assess the financial impacts of implementing season extension techniques into their operation.

Study methods include a comparison of availability and pricing for fruit and vegetable products from May through October at farmers' markets in Utah and Colorado; a survey of farmers' market managers on the potential for extending the farmers market season; a survey of growers and Extension horticulturalists on the potential products and length of season extension for fruit and vegetable crops; and finally choice experiments designed to examine consumer WTP for local fruit and vegetable products across seasons.

Keywords: Consumer WTP, Fresh Produce, Pricing, Season Extension
