



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search  
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>  
[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

# **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (SFMNP) in west Tennessee and Puerto Rico: evaluating vendor and recipient perspectives**

**Rachna Tewari\*<sup>1</sup>, Carmen Alamo Gonzalez<sup>2</sup>, Franklin Roman Martinez<sup>2</sup>,  
Joseph Mehlhorn<sup>1</sup>, and April Jones<sup>1</sup>**

UT Martin<sup>1</sup>, University of Puerto Rico<sup>2</sup>

\*Corresponding author: rtewari@utm.edu

*Selected Paper prepared for presentation at the Southern Agricultural Economics Association Annual Meeting, 2018*

*Copyright 2018 by Rachna Tewari et al. All rights reserved. Readers may make verbatim copies of this document for non-commercial purposes by any means, provided that this copyright notice appears on all such copies*

# Abstract

Federal nutrition assistance programs at farmers' markets are considered effective strategies to support direct marketing of local produce, and to increase consumer access to healthy food in low-income communities. This research consisted of a preliminary exploratory survey for participating FMNP farmers and recipients at the farmers' markets in the regions of west Tennessee and Puerto Rico. Survey questionnaires were administered to participating FMNP vendors (farmers) and recipients at the farmers' markets in west Tennessee and Puerto Rico, in cooperation with the respective state agencies (Tennessee Department of Health, Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture and Puerto Rico Department of Family). The results from the study suggest that most recipients and vendors in both locations consider the program to be working effectively. Study findings will also provide policy recommendations to expand and improve the existing program, as well as to enhance direct marketing of local produce.

# Introduction

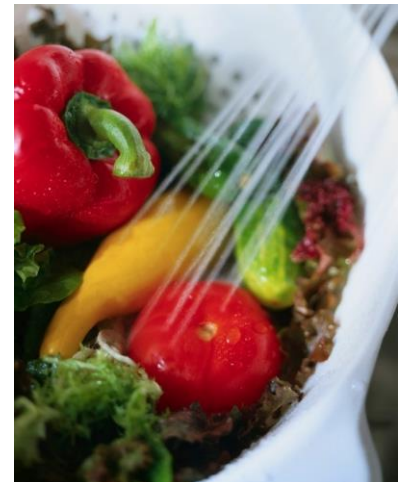
- Federal nutrition assistance FM programs support direct marketing of local produce, and increase consumer access to healthy food with a focus on food deserts and low-income communities (Kim 2011, Byker et al. 2013)
- **Two major programs:** Women Infant and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP) and the *Senior Farmers Market Program (SFMNP)*

# ***What is the SFMNP?***

- The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) awards grants to States, United States Territories, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs) at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs (USDA, 2015).

# Use of grant funds for SFMNP

- The majority of the grant funds must be used to support the costs of the foods that are provided under the SFMNP
- State agencies may use up to **10 percent** of their grants to support administrative costs for the program.



# What is the purpose of SFMNP?

- **Provide resources** in the form of **fresh, nutritious**, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey and herbs from farmers' markets, roadside stands and CSA programs to **low-income seniors**
- **Increase the domestic consumption** of agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs

# How the SFMN Program Works



USDA provides funds to State agencies



Agency distributes  
checks/cards to eligible  
Seniors



Participants use checks/ cards to buy produce from SFMNP  
authorized farmers at approved markets



# How the SFMNP Program Works

- SFMNP coupons can be redeemed by vendors at banks or State agency for reimbursement or electronic deposit via card readers.
- Nutrition education is provided to SFMNP recipients by the State agency.

# When does the SFMNP operate?

- Generally May through October (Tennessee), PR- Year round
- SFMNP season is shorter/ longer in some states based on growing seasons



# What is the current funding level?

- The 2014 Farm Bill provided \$19.199 million to operate the Program in FY 2016.(USDA, 2017).



# **SFMNP- Participant Eligibility**

- Senior citizens in Davidson, Dyer and Shelby, Hamblen, and Warren County – TN
- Residents of PR, farmers market - Caguas
- Seniors must be a resident of the county and 60 years of age or older
- They must have an income at or below 130% of the federal income poverty guidelines
- The SFMNP gives eight \$5 checks; sign up through TN Dept of Health

# Vendor Eligibility & Registration

- ☐ The farmer must be a vendor at an authorized FMNP Farmers' Market.
- ☐ The farmer must complete the SFMNP Authorized Farmer Application-Agreement.
- ☐ The farmer must sell fruits, vegetables and/or cut herbs and **grown only in the state** at an SFMNP authorized market.
- ☐ The farmer must **not** resell agricultural produce obtained from wholesale distributors.



# Significance of study

- Preliminary review of existing literature suggests lack of significant research studies
- Research could assist in expansion, awareness and support of these programs
- Relatively low enrollment numbers of authorized vendors participating
- Input for health promoting state level initiatives such as obesity reduction.
- Student involvement at UTM for research



# Study Objective

- To evaluate vendor and recipient perspectives about the effectiveness of the existing SFMNP program in west TN and PR.



# Methods

- Preliminary exploratory survey administered to participating FMNP vendors (farmers) and recipients at the farmers' markets in west Tennessee and PR.
- IRB approval from TN Dept of health, and approval from Dyer County Chamber of Commerce, PR Dept. of Ag, and University of PR obtained before the surveys were administered.



# Study Location-Dyer County, west TN

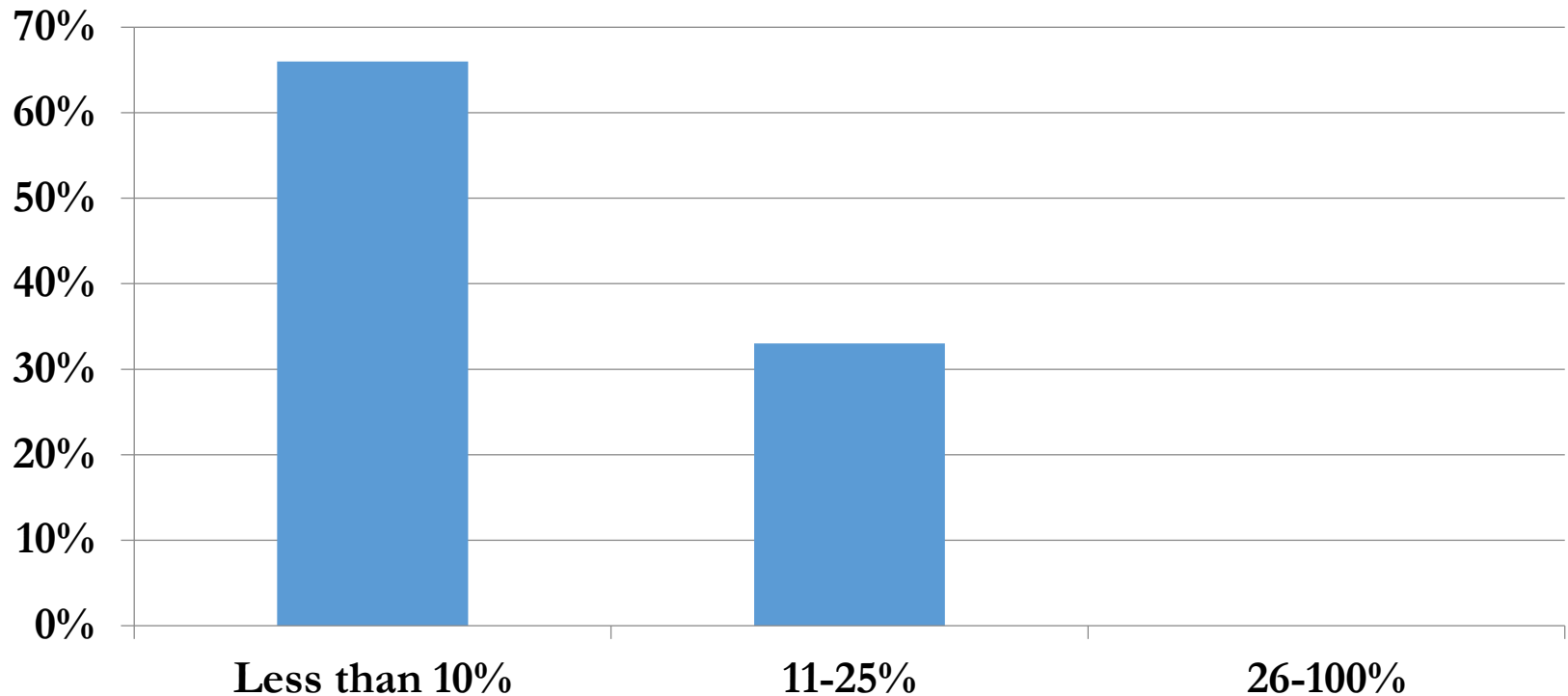


# Study Location –Caguas, PR



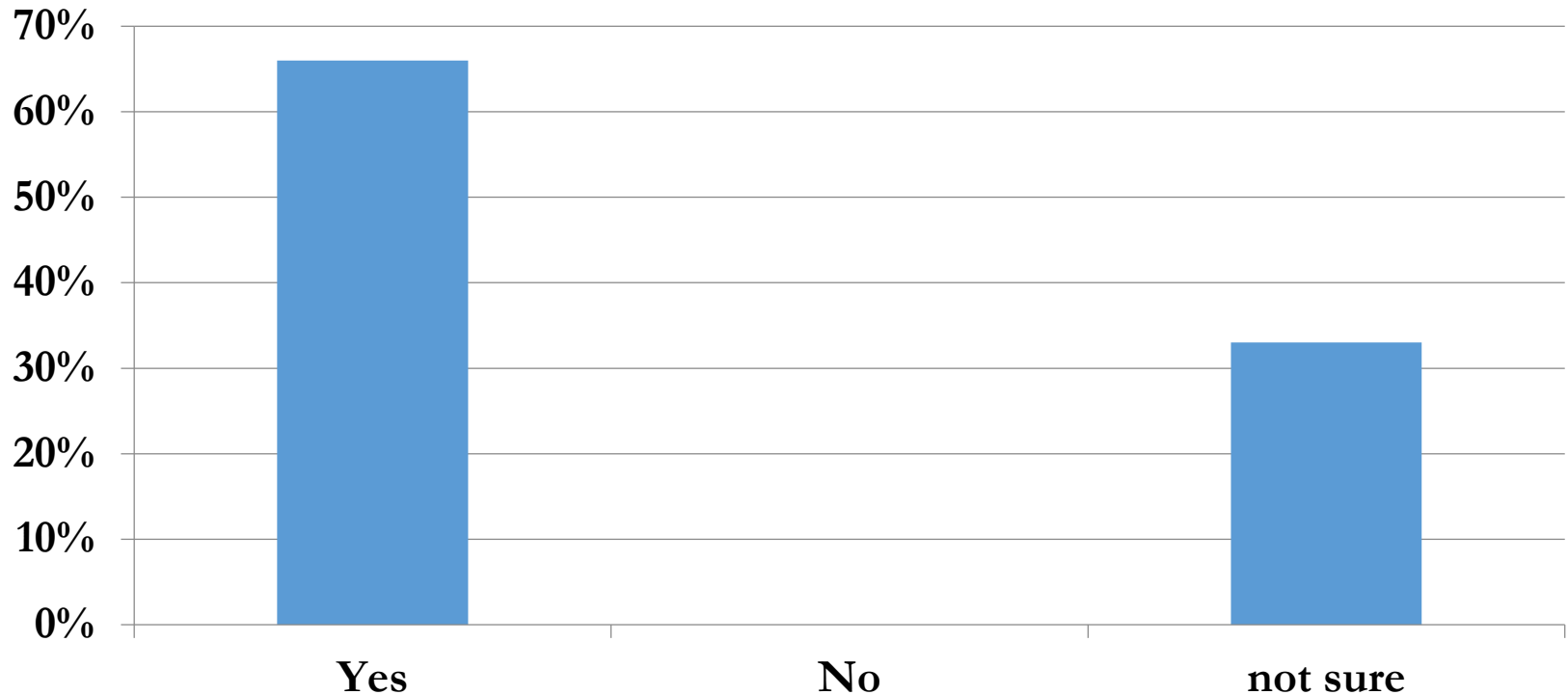
# Vendor survey results, TN

Approximately what percent of your sales were with FMNP coupons?



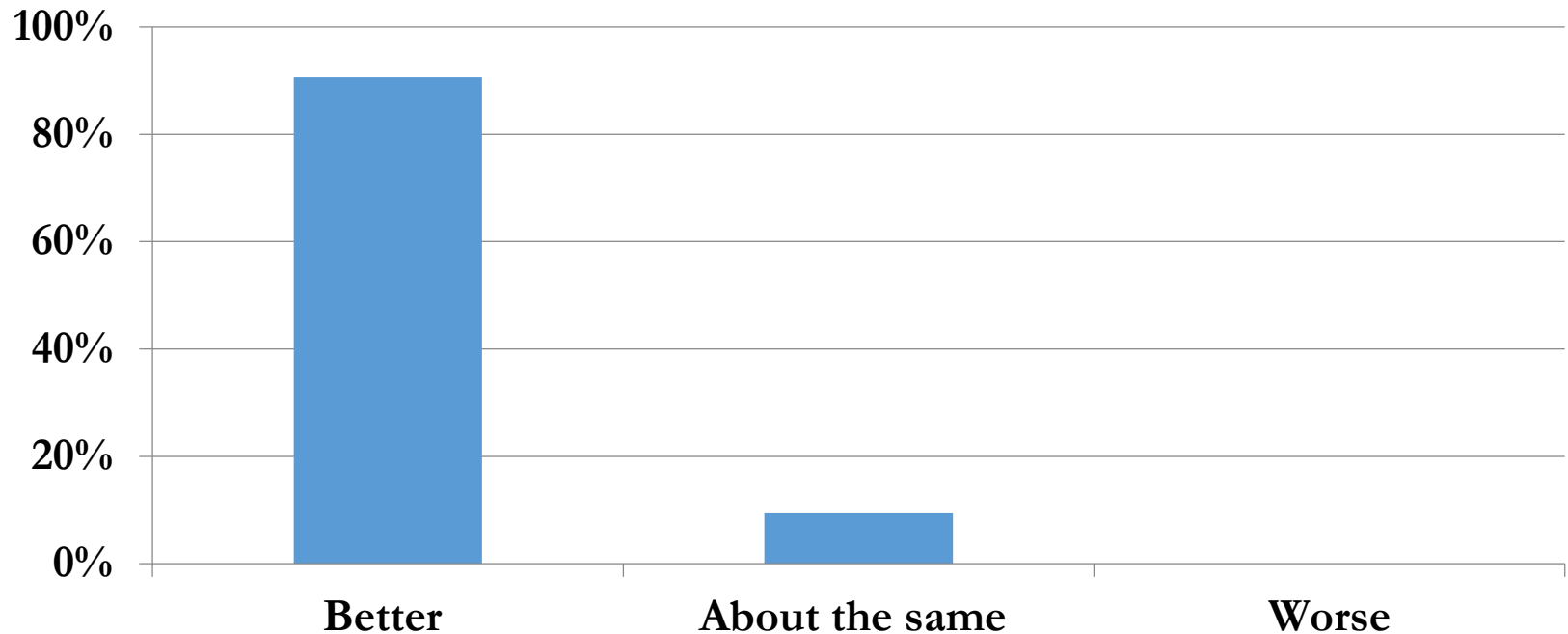
# Vendor survey results, TN

Would you recommend this coupon program to other farmers in your area?



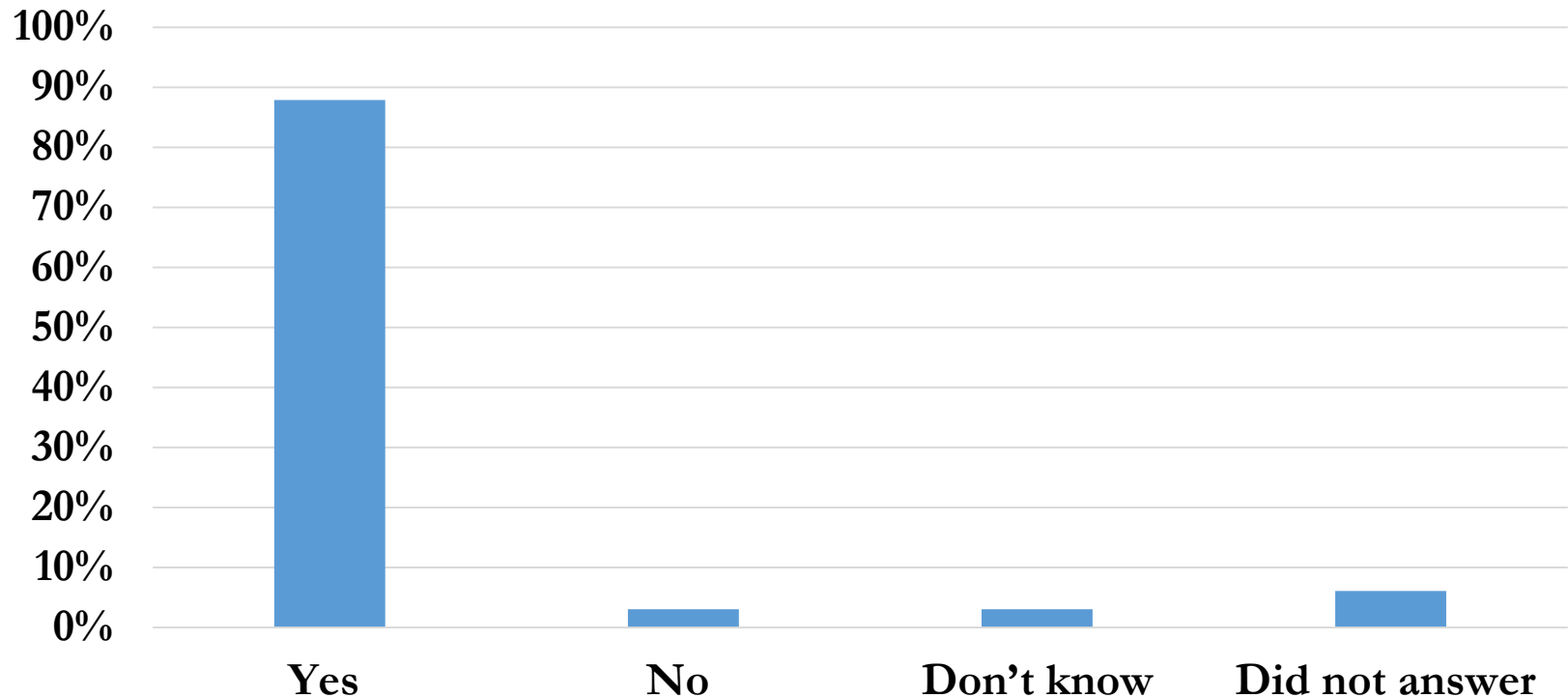
# Recipient survey results, TN

How did the quality of fruits and vegetables at the farmers' market compare to their quality at your grocery store?



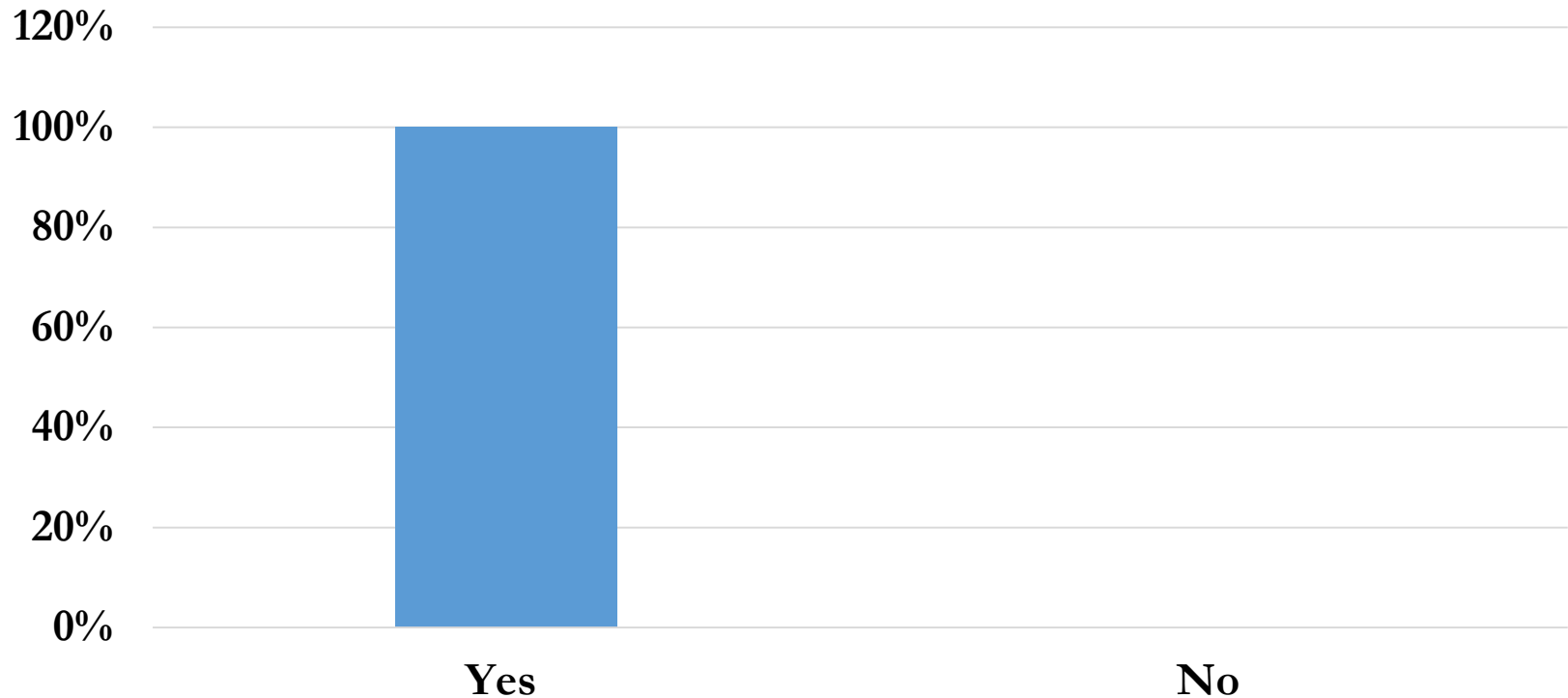
# Recipient survey results, TN

Would you continue to use the Farmers' Markets, even if you did not receive coupons?



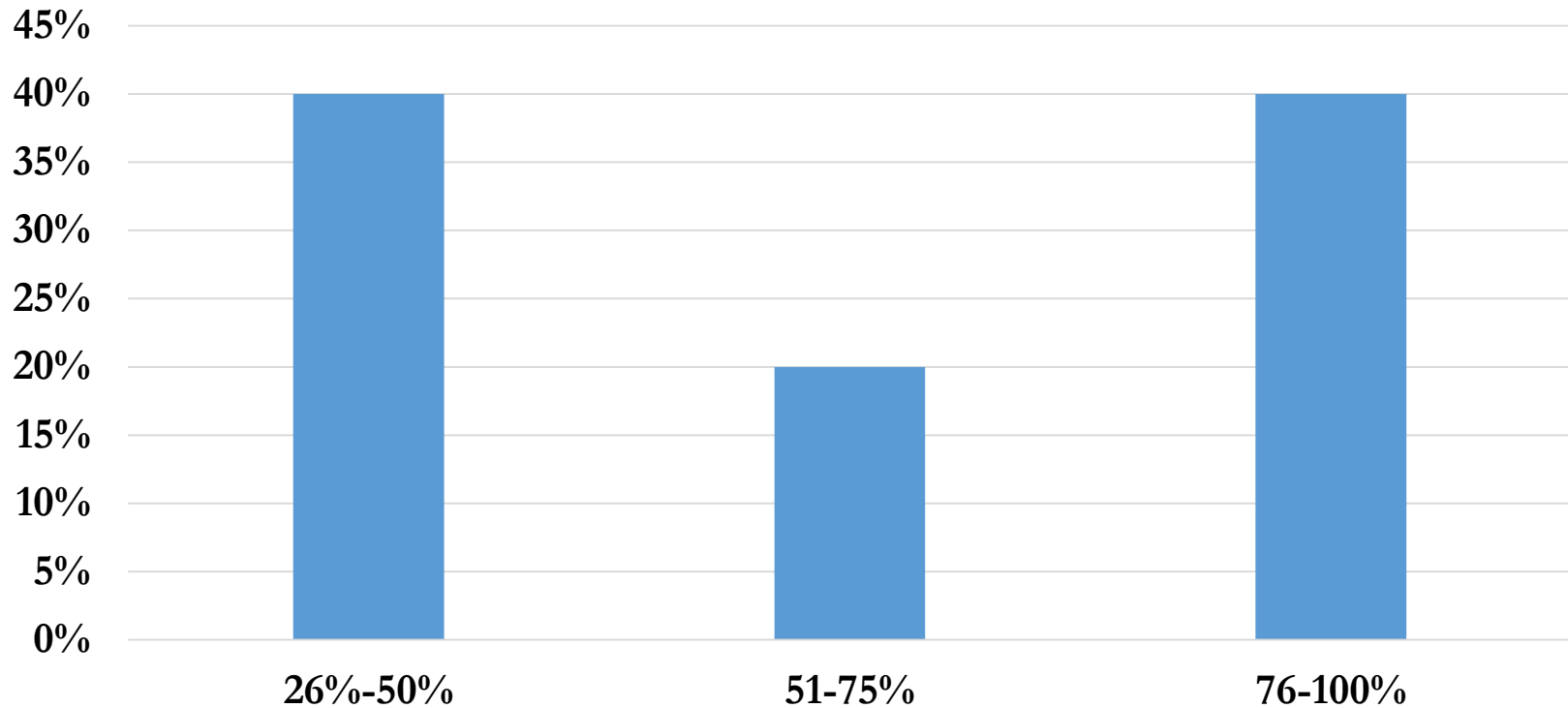
# Vendor survey results - PR

Would you recommend this coupon program to other farmers in your area?



# Vendor survey results - PR

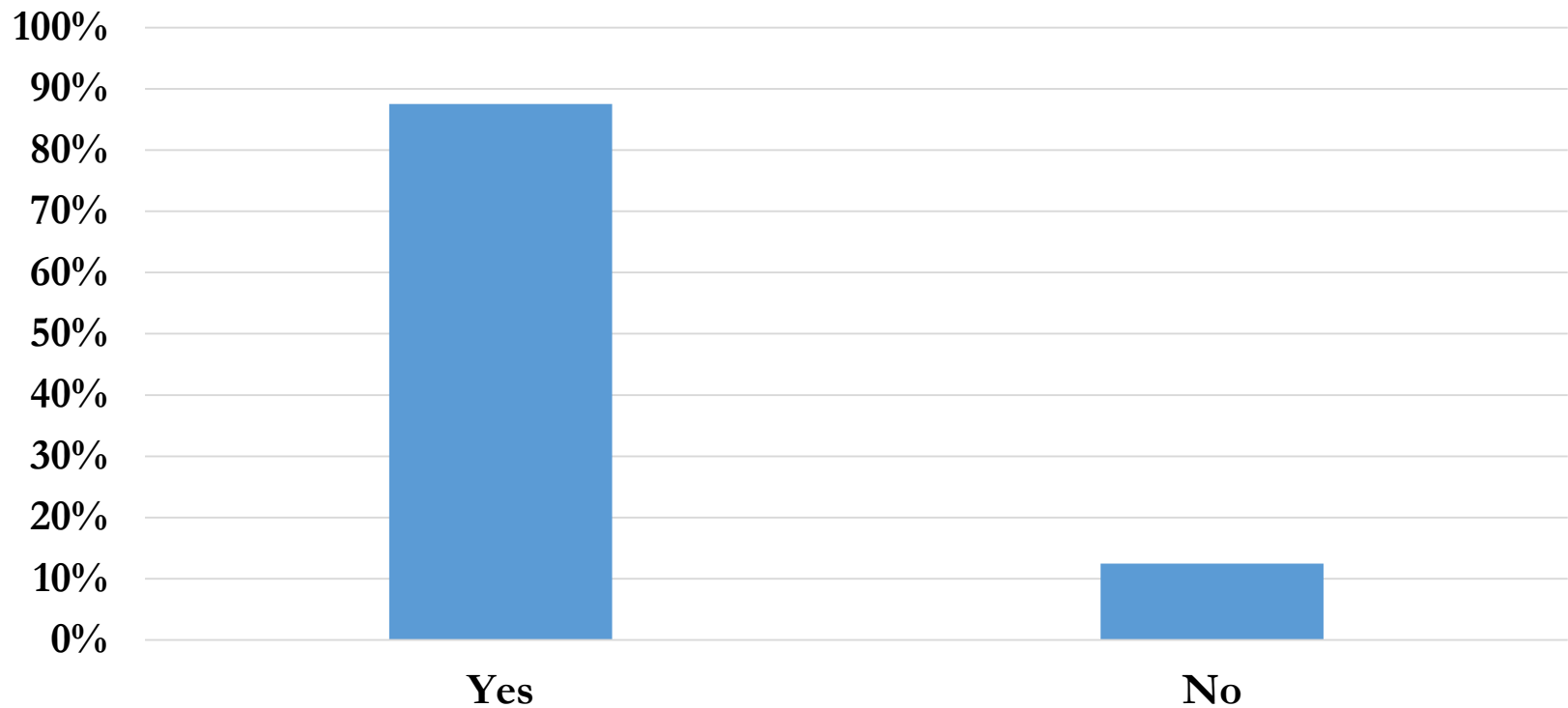
Approximately what percent of your sales were with FMNP coupons?





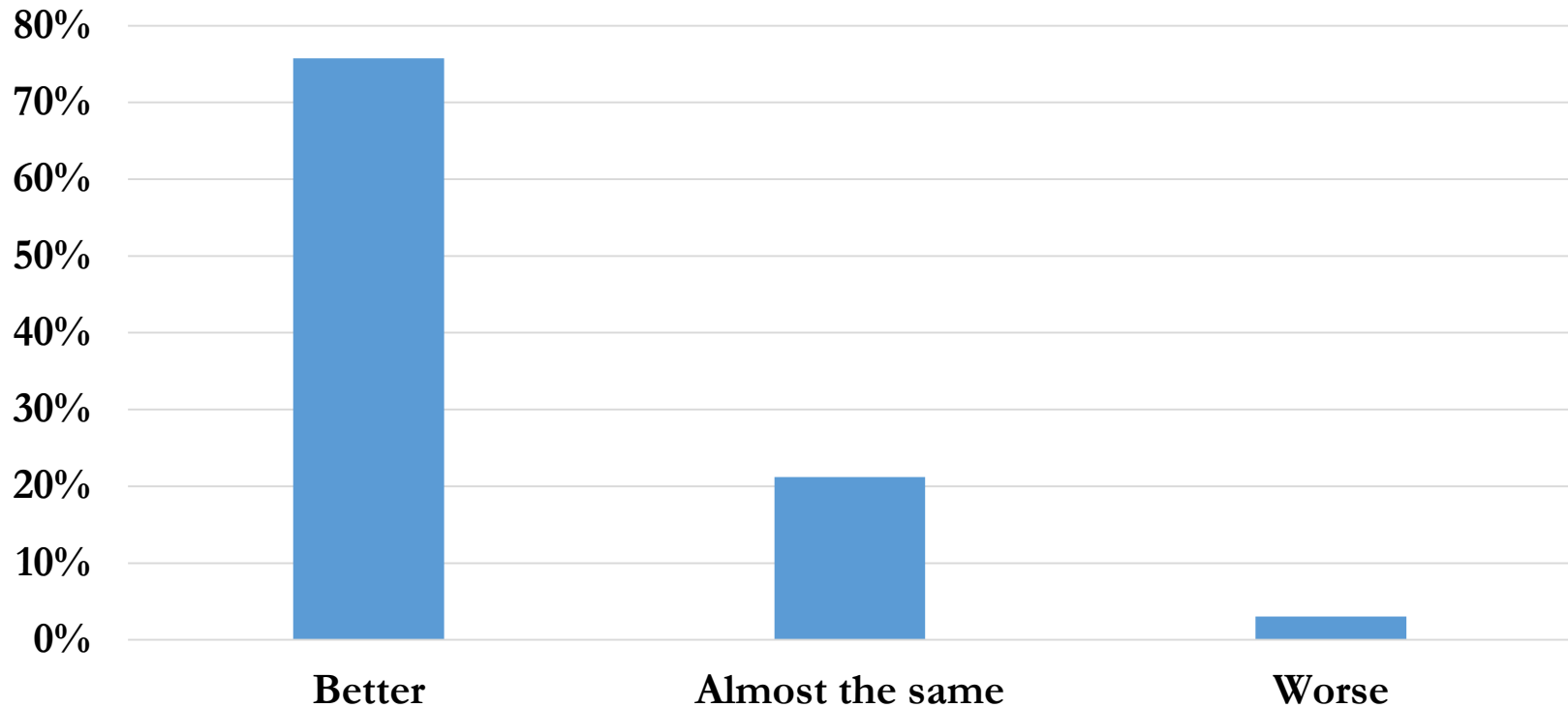
# Recipient survey results - PR

**Will continue to shop at farmers' markets, even without Farmers' Market coupons to spend there**



# Recipient survey results - PR

How did quality of fruits and vegetables at the farmers' market compare to their quality at your grocery store?



# Summary/ Survey Feedback

- Majority of recipients /vendors deem program effective, and find quality of products better than grocery stores.
- Vendors suggest additional eligible items such as honey, cheese, eggs in Tennessee.
- Recipients look for more produce availability, extended hours in west Tennessee, satisfied in Puerto Rico due to year round availability.
- Increases fresh F&V consumption among recipients and encourages visits to farmers markets.
- % of vendor sales attributed to vouchers higher in PR than TN.
- Administrative costs high in TN, lack of personnel a constraint.

# Future implications

- Initial foundation for continued in-depth analysis of the FMNP programs using structured surveys
- Surveys will provide policy recommendations at the regional and state level for expanding the program in west TN.

# References and acknowledgements

- Kim, S. (2011). USDA supports diverse food access through Farmers Market Promotion Program grants. Retrieved from: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2011/10/0441.xml>
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service (2015). Programs and Services. Food and Nutrition Service. Retrieved from: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/programs-and-services>

## Acknowledgements

- UT Martin faculty research grant program
- Steve Guttrey, Dyersburg Chamber of Commerce
- Janet Hilton, West TN Dept of Health
- Puerto Rico Dept. of Agriculture and Dept. of Families.