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## A FOOD RETAILING DATA BASE

by  
Terry Crawford  
Agricultural Economist  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture is initiating a major new data collection program for Supermarkets. Data will include prices, margins, volumes and costs for each item in the store. The program will provide continuous data collection with reports at four-week intervals. Both firms and the public will benefit from the potential analyses. The paper will discuss the sample design, data collected, and possible analyses.

The sample will consist of 10 large geographic or warehouse service markets (representing 50 SMSA's and 35 percent of U.S. sales) containing 30 distribution centers and 600 supermarkets. The program will start initially, with three distribution centers and will be increased later to the full 30 distribution centers. Data will be grouped into 1000 commodity sets for each store and will additionally be summarized by 100 categories based on store characteristics (giving a total of 100,000 records).

Researchers, industry, and the public can then analyze the impact on sales, prices, margins, volume of movement, promotions and costs by selected marketing and demographic characteristics associated with each store or distribution center. Examples of these characteristics are: geography, income, average family size, degree of urbanization,

store image, size of store, number of grocery deliveries per week, ethnic influences, sales per square foot of selling area, share of food stamps of total sales, type of retailer (chain or nonchain), store's distance from its distribution center, firm's relative market rank, number of items carried in the store, national size of the firm and its distribution center's actual market share in the sample market area.

Policy questions as to the impact food stamps on sales mix can be addressed. Private considerations as to image or store size's effect on profitability can also be considered. Detailed margins data, can now be used to analyze price performance and efficiency questions. Selected consumer issues can be addressed as well as estimation of demand elasticities.

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