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Factors Influencing Fruit and Vegetable Farmers' Willingness to Participate in Market Outlets with a Food Justice Mission: The Case of Fresh Stop Markets

Margarita Velandia^a®, Xuqi Chen^b, Jaqueline Yenerall^c, Susan Schexnayder^d, Carlos Trejo-Pech^e, Keiko Tanaka^f, Heather Hyden^g, and Karen Rignall^h

^a*Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics,
University of Tennessee,
2621 Morgan Circle. 314 Morgan Hall, Knoxville, TN, 37996, USA*

^b*Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics,
University of Tennessee,
2621 Morgan Circle. 302 Morgan Hall, Knoxville, TN, 37996, USA*

^c*Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics,
University of Tennessee,
2621 Morgan Circle. 314 Morgan Hall, Knoxville, TN, 37996, USA*

^d*Senior Research Associate, Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries,
University of Tennessee,
238 Plant Biotechnology Building, 2505 E J Chapman Drive, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA*

^e*Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics,
University of Tennessee,
2621 Morgan Circle. 308 Morgan Hall, Knoxville, TN, 37996, USA*

^f*Professor, Department of Community and Leadership Development,
University of Kentucky,
704 Garrigus Building, Lexington, KY 40546, USA*

^g*Extension Research Coordinator, Department of Community and Leadership Development,
University of Kentucky,
500 Garrigus Building, Lexington, KY 40546, USA*

^h*Assistant Professor, Department of Community and Leadership Development,
University of Kentucky,
713 Garrigus Building, Lexington, KY 40546, USA*

®Corresponding author:

Tel: (865) 974-7409
Email: mvelandi@utk.edu

In the United States, low-income households tend to eat less nutritious diets compared to higher-income households. This could be explained by their challenges associated with food access, their food budget allocation, the time they have to prepare healthier foods, and their perceptions of food affordability.

An example of a market model trying to promote access to local and healthy foods among low-income families is the Fresh Stop Markets (FSMs). FSMs are “pop up” farm fresh markets organized biweekly for 22 weeks during the season at public spaces in food-insecure neighborhoods. FSMs provide local fresh produce to each market’s shareholders on a sliding scale based on income. The relative success FSMs have had in addressing the food access needs of low-income communities in Kentucky has increased the interest in the replicability of this model among various stakeholders (e.g., nonprofit organizations, government agencies, community leaders) in other states.

Evaluating farmers’ willingness to sell produce through FSMs is an important component for assessing the replicability of the model in other regions of the country, and one that has been limitedly explored in previous literature. We conducted a survey of Tennessee and Kentucky fruit and vegetable farmers to evaluate farmers’ willingness to sell produce through FSMs. Preliminary results suggest survey respondents willing to sell produce through FSMs perceive reduction of marketing efforts, ability to plan before production season, and to sell to low-income families as the most advantageous characteristics of FSMs. Additionally, survey results suggest more educated farmers, with annual gross on-farm revenue below \$25,000, selling produce through farmers’ markets, who run on-farm programs to educate the community about sustainable agriculture and food systems, would be more willing to sell produce through FSMs.

Keywords: food justice, Fresh Stop Markets, fruits and vegetables, willingness to sell, farmer survey