Title of the Presentation

Preferences of Minority Farmers for Urban Agriculture and Learning Resources: A Case of Maryland.

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Abstract:

Reducing the knowledge gap of minority farmers is paramount to their sustenance in farming. A case study of 14 minority farmers was conducted in Maryland. The findings revealed a need for revising the adopted teaching modality, timing of Extension and training programs. One-half of the participants indicated strong preference for multi-session weekend workshops compared to 36% for multi-session weekday workshops. Likewise, 29% of them favored a daylong weekend workshop over a daylong weekday workshop. The results imply that farmers' preference for weekend training seems to be higher than for weekday programs. Participants preferred shorter weekend sessions over a daylong weekday events.

Objectives:

This study explores the preferences of smallholder minority farmers for urban agriculture and learning resources to enhance their knowledge and skills in urban agriculture.

Research Methods:

- An exploratory case study of smallholder minority farmers conducted in 2022.
- Administered a semi-structured survey to 14 purposively selected backyard/kitchen gardening farmers.
- Survey instruments consisted of a five-point Likert scale, open- and close-ended, multiple-choice, rating scale, and demographic questions.
- Conducted an in-person interactive interviews/workshop, online survey, email and telephone communications
- Visited farms/fields to triangulate collected information.

Background Information:

- Urban agriculture (UA) also referred to as urban and community gardening has emerged as a reliable source of fresh produce and family income.
- Despite the multi-faceted contribution to food security and ecosystem conservation, small-scale farming is at a crossroads of survival in Maryland.
- Small-scale producers have been abandoning farms they inherited/owned/leased.
- Smallholder, limited resources minority farmers have been shifting to UA overtime.
- The iGeneration also seems reluctant to engage in agriculture because farming is relatively less lucrative.
- Indeed, such a scenario challenges agricultural professionals and Cooperative Extension (CE) in developing time-fitting strategic plans for economically viable and sustainable UA such as CG/BF.
- In addition, the existing knowledge gap of small-scale farmers about production economics of UA and inability to stay updated about fast-moving developments in technologies accompanied by a lack of systematic, regular, and need-based Extension and training programs made them technically and economically inefficient.
- Consequently, they are incapable of making informed decisions, losing self-employment opportunities, and unable to supplement household income.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

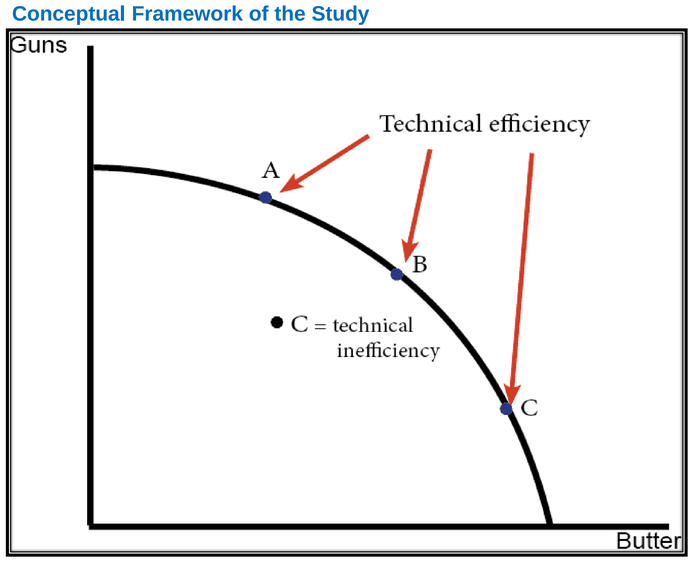

Figure 1: Pareto/Technical Efficiency in Production

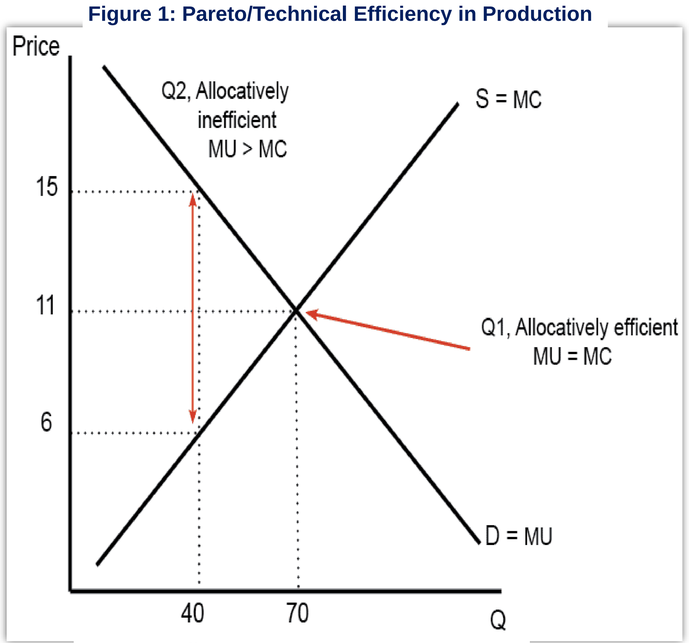

Figure 2: Allocative Efficiency in Production

Data Analytical Approach:

Descriptive statistics

- Preference ranking
- Index values
- SWOP analysis
- SPSS
- Econometric Approach

Study Counties:

Baltimore
Baltimore City
Somerset
Wicomico
Anne Arundel

Farmers' perception about urban agriculture/gardening:

- 86% were engaged in urban agriculture (UA)
- UA interlinked to developing green city/green economy
- Localized production
- Reliable source of fresh produce
- Minimizing food travel miles
- Environmentally friendly practices
- Promoting healthy communities
- Effective Extension educational model
- Eating healthy campaign for all
- Revamping the vacant, under-utilized, abandoned land
- Fresh edible gardens
- Increasing economic activities locally
- Stimulating farmer markets, restaurants, groceries and School feeding programs
- Positive influence on food security and ecosystem conservation
- Substituting green import

Farm Characteristics/Research Findings:

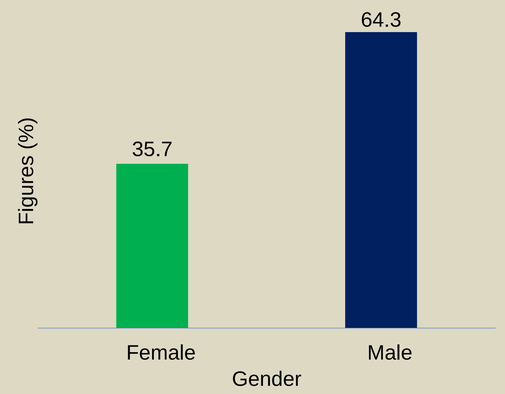

Figure 3: Farmers by gender

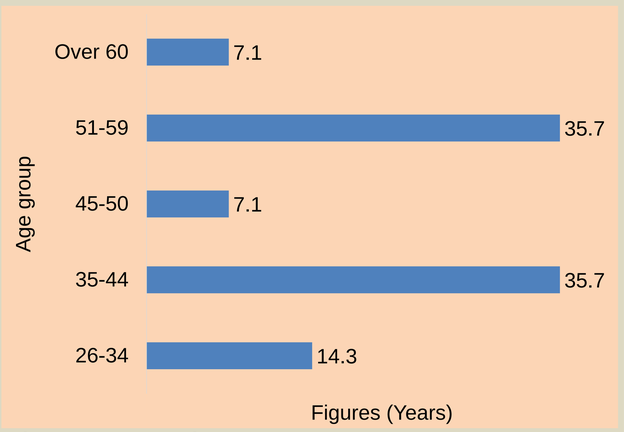

Figure 4: Farmers by age group

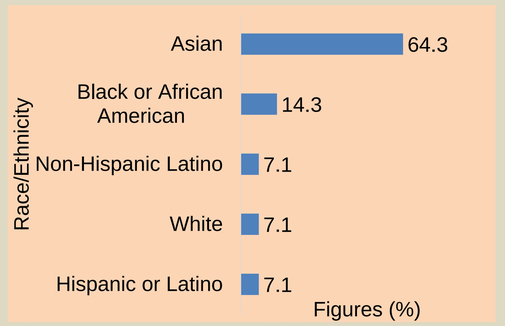

Figure 5: Farmers by race/ethnicity

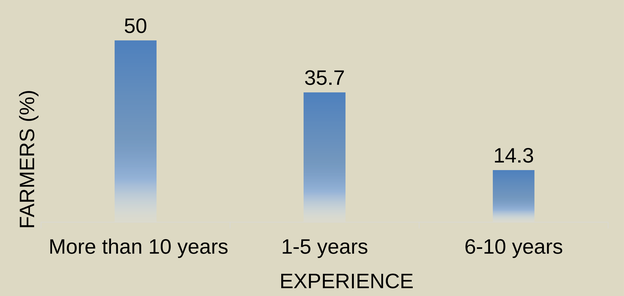

Figure 6: Farming experience

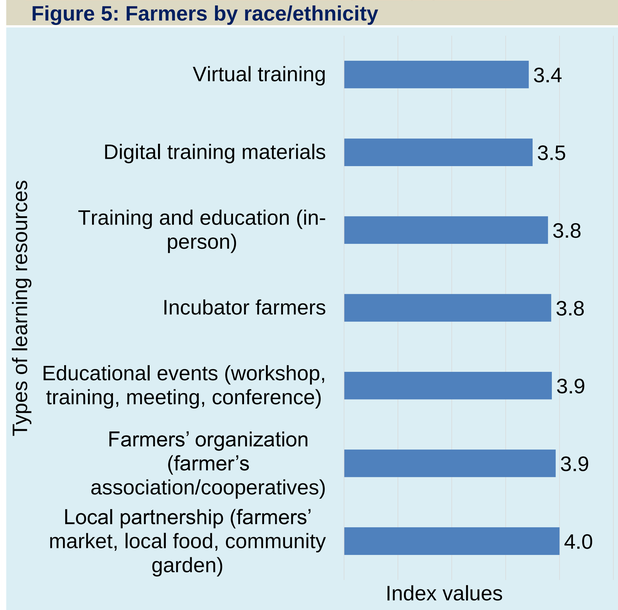

Figure 7: Important resources for small, socially disadvantaged and minority farmers (Index values)

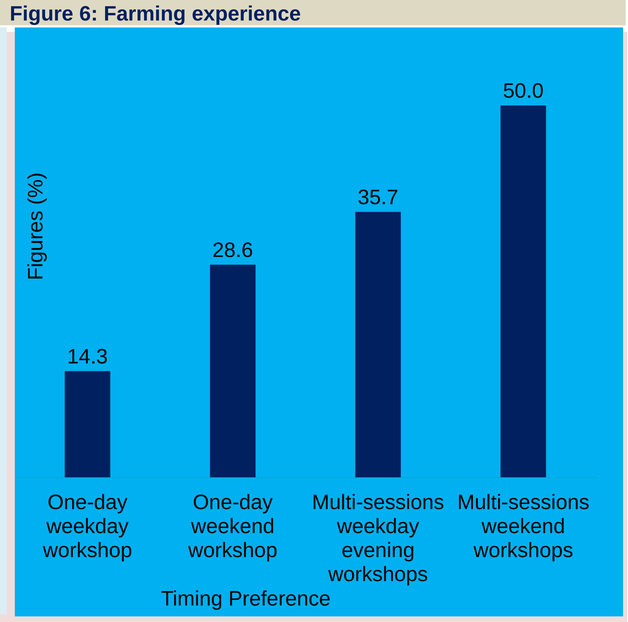

Figure 8: Time preference for training reported by farmers

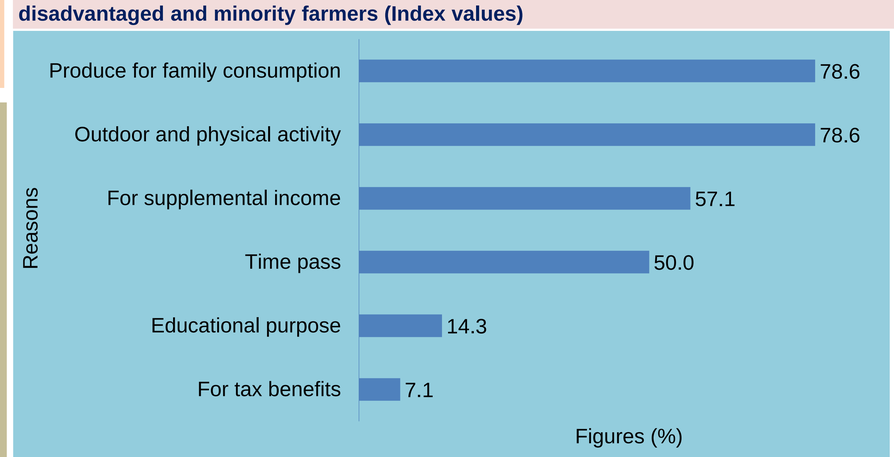

Figure 9: Reasons for farming (backyard/kitchen gardening)

Crops Cultivated	N	Percent
Eggplant	6	42.9
Spinach	5	35.7
Okra	7	50
Peppers	8	57.1
Bitter Melon/Gourd	1	7.1
Red Rice	1	7.1
Bottle Gourd	1	7.1
Ash Gourd	1	7.1
Snake Gourd	1	7.1
Smooth Gourd	1	7.1
Colocasia/Taro	1	7.1
Chamsur/Garden Cress	1	7.1

Table 10: Ethnic crop growers

Deficiencies in farm management practices:

- 70% farmers reported lack of record keeping
- Need for hands-on training: Systematic record-keeping, Time-fitting Extension education, Enterprise budgeting, Input-output modeling
- Need based farmers pedagogy
- Revise the on-going training practice
- Integration of medicinal herbs into vegetable production
- Production and health economics
- Farm business management of agricultural enterprises
- Frontier level of production

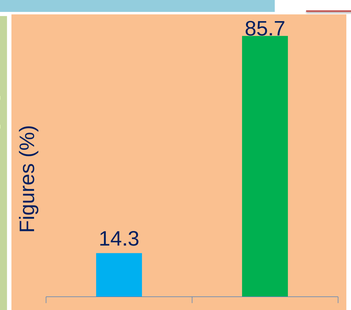

Figure 11: Types of farmers

Acknowledgement: Northeast SARE Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education