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Assessing Tennessee Consumers' Willingness to Pay for Food Protection

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This presentation highlights results of training workshops in agricultural bio-security and delivery of relevant information to diverse stakeholders. The workshops were held at the Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Research, Tennessee State University. They are funded by the CSREES, USDA. Two training workshops have been held, and another will be conducted during this year. The workshops were scheduled both during the academic year and in the summer. This was done to accommodate as many participants as possible. The participants involved in the workshops were mixed and include Tennessee State University students, teaching faculty, extension personnel, researchers, high school agriculture teachers, and health and other science instructors.

A majority of the participants were recruited through the State Department of Education and by direct invitation. Material on CD prepared by University of Kentucky Extension Service was shared with the participants. Speakers from universities and government agencies were also invited to make presentations on specific topics in which they have expertise. Some of the issues discussed were vulnerabilities in crops, livestock, and the food supply due to deliberate action aimed at causing economic and non-economic damage.

During the first workshop, a written assessment was given to evaluate how much the participants learned from the training. During the second workshop, a one-page survey was used to get feedback

from participants on a number of issues ranging from their level of concern about agricultural bio-security to socio-demographic characteristics. Of the fifty-three participants, responses were received from thirty-eight people, a 72-percent response rate. About 37 percent and 63 percent of the participants indicated that they have learned a lot and quite a bit, respectively. Two-thirds of the respondents were over thirty years old.

A very high proportion (87 percent) of workshop participants indicated that their concern about bio-security ranged from high to very-high. The participants indicated strong interest in protecting the food supply and are willing to pay between five percent and 20 percent extra. The training helped to increase awareness of bio-security issues among the participants. Each participant received a book titled *Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication* (CDC 2002) and a Certificate of training completion. Future workshop will engage more agriculture teachers and extension agents who have access to a large number of students and farmers, respectively. This work provides a useful basis to undertake related future work and can be adopted by others.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2002. *Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication*. <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/erc/leaders.pdf>.

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