Farm Fresh Food Boxes:
Expanding Rural Economies through New Markets for Farmers and Retailers
Research and Extension Project Team

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Background
Three Target Groups

Farmers

Retailers

Consumers
Farming and Marketing Trends

• Large, centralized farms sell a large volume at low prices

• National retail chains have forced small retailers out of business

• Hard for consumers to access fresh, affordable produce in some areas
Direct to Consumer (DTC) Approaches

- DTC includes farmers’ markets, CSAs, farm stands
- 8% of U.S. farms sold product using DTC or intermediated sales (farm-to-institution sales, and food hubs); 70% of these used DTC exclusively
- DTC provides **economic benefits** to the wider community and **enforces social ties** between farmers and consumers
Typical CSA Model

- Consumer pays for entire season up-front
- Weekly pick-up on farm or at designated site off farm
- CSA variations: no commitment, pay weekly in CA
Drawbacks of DTC

• Up-front CSA subscription may not adequately cover labor costs
• Farmers’ markets require transportation and staffing time
• Market for CSAs and farmers’ markets is saturated in some places
• Low income consumer access can be limited because of price, convenience and culture
Farm Fresh Food Box (FFFB) Model
Farmer Role

Farmers offer weekly FFFB at participating retail sites that consumers can easily access. Box contents (and flyers) change throughout the season, to move product that is most abundant.
Retailers provide a drop-off point for the FFFB, in exchange for a nominal transaction fee. Retailers advertise via sandwich boards, flyers, social media, and whiteboards detailing the cost and weekly content of the FFFB.
Consumer Role

Customers pre-order a weekly FFFB at the retail site or on-line on a week-to-week basis for later pick-up. Customers can use SNAP/EBT.
Benefits for Consumers, Farmers & Retailers

Consumer Convenience → Consumer Cost → Farmer Human Resources → Retailer Costs → Farmer Revenue → Retailer Revenue

- Farmers’ Market
- Grocery Store
- Farm Stand
- CSA
- Food Boxes
- Supermarket

Figure 1. Cost Comparison of Different Models for Consumers, Farmers, and Retailers

- Consumer Convenience
- Consumer Cost
- Farmer Human Resources
- Farmer Revenue
- Retailer Costs
- Retailer Revenue

- Farmers’ Market
- CSA
- Food Boxes
- Farm Stand
- Supermarket
- Grocery Store
- Not Stocking Produce
- Stocking Produce

- Benefits for Consumers, Farmers & Retailers

University of Vermont Extension - Cultivating Healthy Communities
FFFB Research and Extension Pilot
Extension Objectives

- Recruit 2-4 farmers in each of state;
- Connect farmers with 4-6 retailers;
- Provide consumers with access to healthy foods at affordable prices in an accessible, convenient, and “comfortable” location;
- Determine best practices and disseminate information to producers and retailers.
Research Objectives

• Assess the market potential for the FFFB;
• Measure impact of FFFB project returns to farmers and retailers;
• Measure acceptability and use of FFFB among consumers;
• Compare benefits and barriers of FFFB project to farmers, retailers and consumers with the benefits and barriers of other direct sales approaches, namely farmers’ markets and traditional CSAs.
**Pre-Season**

**Extension**
- Engages Retailers & Farmers
- Provides FFFB Materials

**Farmers**
- Get FFFB boxes and stickers
- Take the Demographic Survey!

**Retailers**
- Get Flyers, Sandwich boards and white boards
- Gets training on the Weekly Tracker from research team
- Take the Demographic Survey!
- Get customer order pads

**Post-Season**

**Extension**
- Supports data collection
- Provides stipends to participants

**Farmers**
- Participates in post-season interviews with researchers

**Retailers**
- Participates in post-season interviews with researchers
- Gets 10% of box sales from FFFB extension team

**During Growing Season**

**Extension**
- Ongoing technical support

**Farmers**
- Tells retailer weekly box contents
- Puts customer survey in box
- Receives orders from store, packs boxes, delivers to store

**Retailers**
- Display flyers, sandwich boards and white boards
- Takes orders, collects payments,
- Relays weekly orders to farmer
- Distributes boxes
Outcome Measures and Analysis

Pre-Season
• Demographic Survey
• Pre-season FFFB Roster

During the Growing Season
• Weekly Tracking Form
• Customer Survey

Post-Season
• Qualitative Interview
Preliminary Findings
Farmer Recruitment

Jericho Settlers Farm
Fresh Food Box
Harvest Bundles
here at
Jericho Center Country Store!

LIMITED TIME ONLY!

Root 5 Farm
FAIRLEE GROWN ORGANIC

University of Vermont Extension
Cultivating Healthy Communities

Foote Brook Organic Farm
Retail Site Recruitment
Possible Retail Site
Consumer Consumption
Consumer Survey

Farm Fresh Food Boxes Customer Survey

Thank you for participating in the Farm Fresh Food Box Program. This program is made possible by the University of Vermont, the support of local farmers and community members. Your feedback is valuable, and we seek to improve your experience. If you prefer, you can complete this survey online at farmfreshfoodboxes.com. If you have questions or concerns about participating, please contact the main account at farmfoodboxes.com.

Is this your first time purchasing a Farm Fresh Food Box today? Yes No

If not, how many Food Boxes have you purchased before today?

What do you like most about your Farm Fresh Food Box?

What do you like least about this Farm Fresh Box?

What did you buy today that you didn’t purchase previously?

What did you buy that you didn’t purchase previously?

Where did you purchase your Farm Fresh Food Box?

If yes, what was the CSA Farm?

When thinking about your Farm Fresh Food Box, please consider what you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly disagree.

1. I was satisfied with the overall experience.
2. I would recommend the program to others.
3. Fair price for quality and quantity.
4. Reasonably priced.
5. I feel that the vegetables taste good.
6. I feel that the fruits taste good.
7. Adequate variety and selection.
8. The food is high-quality.
9. The food meets my needs.
10. The food is fresh.
11. The food is convenient.
12. The food is healthy.
13. The food is diverse.
14. The food is seasonal.
15. I would purchase the program again.
16. The Food is timely.
17. The Food is convenient.
18. The Food is healthy.
19. The Food is diverse.
20. The Food is seasonal.
21. I would purchase the program again.
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100. The Food is timely.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your Farm Fresh Food Box experience?

With which race do you identify with?

What is your gender?

About how often do you shop at other stores?

Which is your favorite way of shopping?

Which of these words describes you best?

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Project Goals

Farmer
• Increase profitability
• Access new customers

Retailer
• Increase revenues
• Increase foot traffic

Consumer
• Purchase and consume additional produce
Acknowledgements

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[Image of a farmer at a market with the USDA and UVM Extension logos]


