



Local Food Safety  
Collaborative

# Needs Assessment Survey & Listening Sessions Results

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NECAFS February 12, 2020

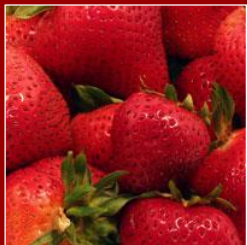


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# Background

- LFSC wanted to consider needs of “local” growers and processors
  - Define what it means to be local
    - Over 50% of food sold within 275 miles
- Knew from the beginning we would do both a survey and listening sessions
  - Clarify things from the survey through the listening sessions
- Focused on national scope and having representation in all the FDA regions
  - Survey has good national distribution
  - Diversity of responses in listening sessions cannot be completely attributed to region





## Survey Report



### Local Food Safety Collaborative Needs Assessment Survey Report

Elizabeth A. Bihn, Lindsay Springer, and Laura Pineda-Bermúdez  
Cornell University, Department of Food Science, Geneva, NY 14456

May 20, 2019



Cornell University

## Listening Session Report



### Local Food Safety Collaborative Listening Session Report

Elizabeth A. Bihn, Laura Pineda-Bermúdez, and Lindsay Springer  
Cornell University, Department of Food Science, Geneva, NY 14456

August 13, 2019

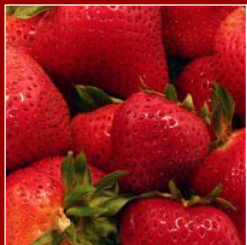


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<https://localfoodsafety.org/>







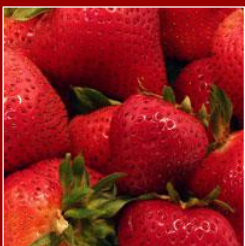
# USDA Identifiers

Identifier(s)	n	% *
Woman Farmer	307	24%
New and Beginning	280	22%
Limited Resource	206	16%
Registered with a Farm and Track #	160	13%
USDA Organic	111	9%
NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Services) Cooperator	94	7%
Socially Disadvantaged	65	5%
None of these	46	4%
Plain Sect Farmer	15	1%

*\*percent of total participants*

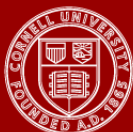


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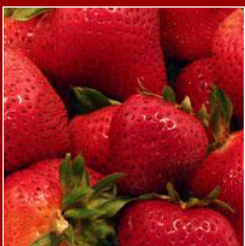


# Total Survey Participants: National vs Northeast

Identifier(s)	National		Northeast	
	n	%	n	%
Farmer Only	615	48%	78	38%
Farmer & Processor	94	7%	18	8%
Farmer & Packer/Aggregator	205	16%	45	22%
Farmer & Processor & Packer/Aggregator	222	17%	40	19%
Packer/Aggregator Only	56	4%	6	3%
Packer/Aggregator & Processor	26	2%	10	5%
Processor Only	55	4%	10	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1273</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>100%</b>



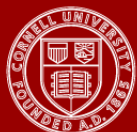
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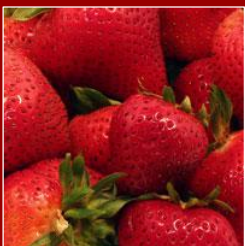
# Local Food Producer Gross Annual Sales

Gross Annual Sales	National		Northeast	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
\$0-\$24,999	304	51%	82	45%
\$25,000-\$250,000	185	31%	64	35%
\$250,001- \$499,999	24	4%	6	3%
\$500,000-\$1,000,000	24	4%	9	5%
Over \$1,000,000	24	4%	14	8%
I prefer not to say*	N/A	N/A	5	3%
Unknown	18	3%	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100%</b>

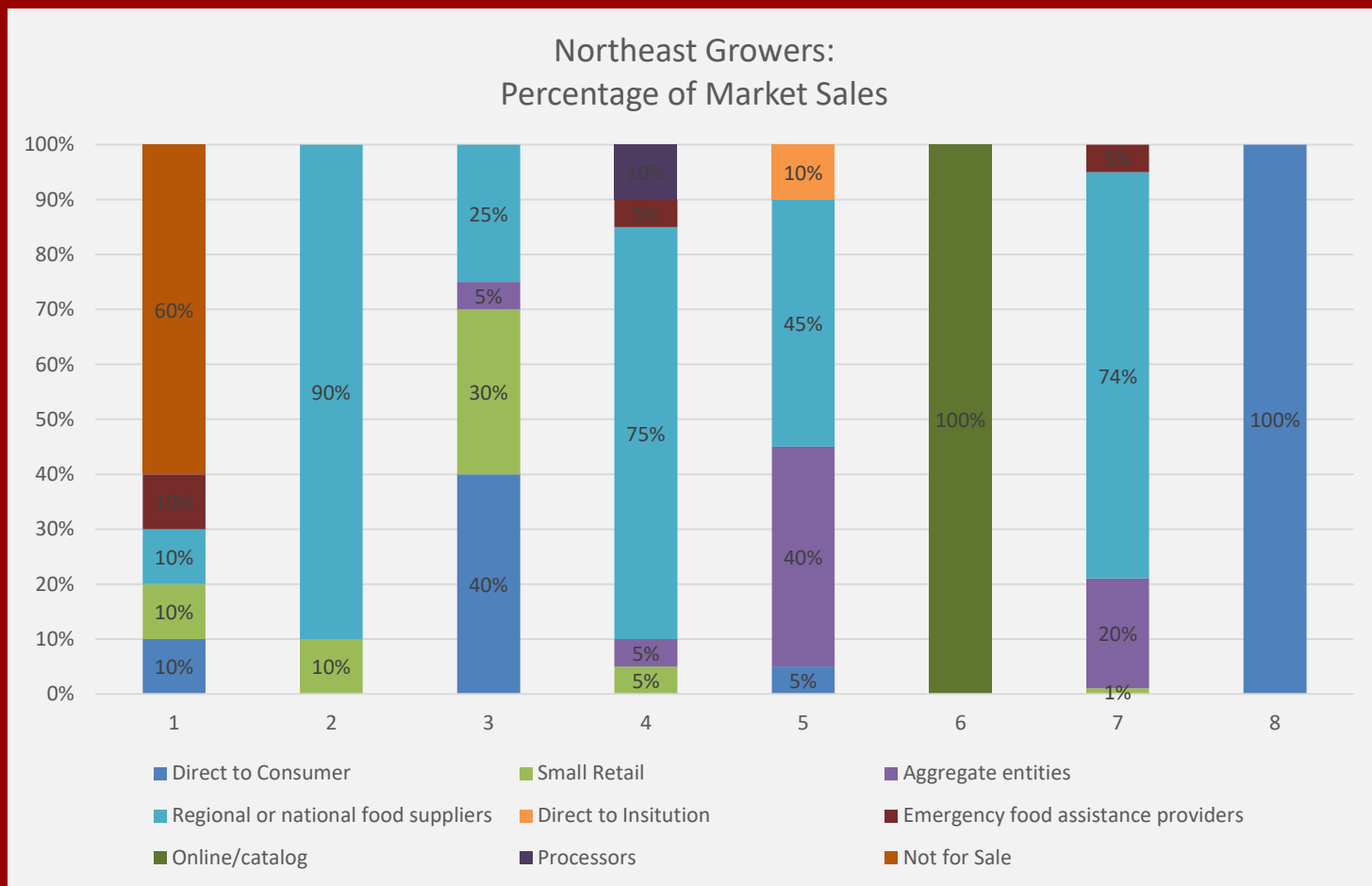
\* "I prefer not to say" answers not included in n for National producers



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# Every Market Supplied by Local Food Producers



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\*\* In survey, USDA foods-commodity program was not supplied  
BUT family & friends was added as an 'other' category

\*in LS, wholesale & export not supplied



# Worker Training Question

- Survey results “N/A”
  - Food safety trainings are provided for all workers
- Listening session clarifications
  - Informal, not written down
  - Small operations, 1 or 2 workers (owners)
  - Non-traditional work forces (family, volunteers, church)
    - Not considered workers
    - Running risk of insulting non-traditional workers
- Often not considered a food safety concept by farmers

Opportunity for educational materials for non-traditional workforces



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# Northeast Listening Sessions

- Diversity of operations make it difficult for growers to find assistance/ templates/ resources
  - Lack of consistent answers cited frequently
- **Technical assistance requested and specified as a need**
  - **Specific names** of people who were helpful
    - Extension associates, government personnel, organic inspectors
    - **Years of experience, high level of competency, not easily replaced**

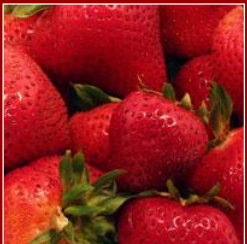


# Northeast Listening Sessions

- Grant writing assistance
- Very small farms, diverse operations
  - Unusual conditions (contract growers, rooftop farms)
  - Commodities (mushrooms)
- Crossroads of local, state, buyer, federal requirements
- Not being able to expand operation due to lack of technical assistance
  - Afraid to build or grow due to lack of consistency in interpretation of the rule

*In some cases, resources requested don't exist..*

*Some requested resources already exist, people just don't know where to look*



# Notable Quotes from Northeast Producers

"I'm finding myself at that fringe of a lot of different subjects. There is a lot of ambiguity in the food safety standards." -G

"You have to make time for this thing that you never had to make time for before." -G

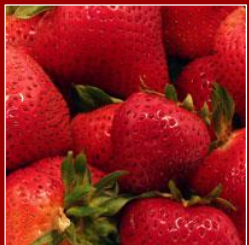
"it's like a part-time job to work with Whole Foods, I dunno if it's worth it." -P

"And the State ones, you have the same inspectors for three years and then they go on vacation and a different inspector comes and they want you to rip the place down and then build it up from start so it meets their—" - P

"To me it's like the government is funded to create all these regulations, why aren't they also funding, helping us follow the regulations." - P

"And yet the Food Safety Modernization Act has halted us from a planned expansion because it's been very difficult for us to get clear and definitive information about which local regulation we fall under..." -P





# Key barriers in Northeast Listening Session

Communication of appropriate, timely, clear information

- Inconsistency between state, federal, commercial requirements
- Confusing websites

Buyer pressures or requirements

- One step ahead of where industry is
- Harmonized GAP doesn't go to where they are, lost business

Time

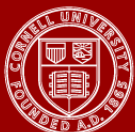
- Hard to find the time to DO things even if people are offering help

Paperwork

- Overwhelming volume
- Confusing & inconsistent requirements

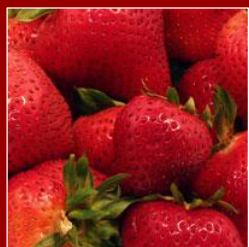
Labor

- Language barriers
- Worker-training



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# Key barriers in Northeast Listening Session

## Cost

- Infrastructure:

- Bathrooms
- Hand-washing stations

Grant structure inconsistent, not enough funding available

- Discouraged from writing grants
- Competition
- More funding sources for growers than for processors

## Understanding regulation

Ambiguity in interpretation of regulation

Unaware of a requirement until it's a problem during audit or inspection

- Applying regulation to operation

## Culture

- Changing the culture of farming
- Changing your mindset



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# Things to Ponder

- Some producers more “FSMA-ready” depending on organic certification, state of residence, buyer demand
- **Need to technical assistance is clear** – but that technical assistance needs to be competent in order to be helpful
- Inconsistent information/lack of information is a big problem
  - Unreasonable disruptions to farmers and processors
  - Creates lack of trust
  - Makes food safety seem like witchcraft as opposed to science
  - Stops people from expanding their operations
- Much work left to do



# Questions and Discussion