



University of Michigan School for
Environment and Sustainability

Farm Stops:

A New Way to Enhance
Local Food Economies

Presented by
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Key Partners

This project was supported by the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability, as well as a number of key partners across the country. These partners included the Farm Stop owners and operators interviewed, their customer base and communities, and the producers they work with.

Thank you for your time and contributions to this project!



Project Overview: Background

Project Design and Purpose



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To understand how Farm Stops help to generate or strengthen resilient, local and regional food systems.

Project Overview: Purpose of this Research

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Farm Stops are year-round, brick and mortar markets that support primarily local farmers and operate on consignment.

They give local producers 70–80% of the retail price, while taking a small percentage to maintain operations. This gives producers a higher price for their goods, flexibility with their time and product offerings, and enhances community connections.

Project Elements

1

Customer Survey
on Cultural and
Social Impacts of
Farm Stops

2

Guidebook
on How to
Start Farm
Stops

3

Producer
Interviews on
Alignment with the
Farm Stop model

Understanding Community Impact: Survey Instrument and Methodology



Participating Farm Stops

 No longer operating on consignment

 No longer in business

Farm Stop	Business Structure	Location	Diversified Revenue	Years in Operation
Acorn Farmer's Market & Café 	501(c)(3) non-profit	Manchester, MI	Café, Outdoor farmer's market, Educational calsses	2019-2022
Argus Farm Stop	Low-profit Limited Liability Corp (L3C)	Ann Arbor, MI	Café, Subscription service food boxes, educational classes, community events, trainings	2014-2025
Boone Street Market	501(c)(3) non-profit	Jonesborough, TN	Café, Community Events, Commercial Kitchen	2014-2025
Local Roots Market & Café	Member owned Co-op	Wooster, OH	Café, Commercial/Incubator Kitchen, Outdoor farmer's market, Community Events, Subscription service food boxes	2009-2025
Random Harvest 	Worker owned Co-op	Craryville, NY	Café, Community Events, Educational Classes, Incubator kitchen/community space,	2018-2025
The Wild Ramp	501(c)(3) non-profit	Huntington, WV	Commercial/Incubator Kitchen, Mobile Market, Community Events, Educational Classes	2012-2025

Survey Questions

Food Purchasing

Economics

How Farm Stops may influence purchasing behavior and inform people's reasons for visiting.

Community Values

Community and Advocacy

How Farm Stops may add additional value to communities, and how people perceive of Farm Stops in their communities.

Accessibility

Resilience

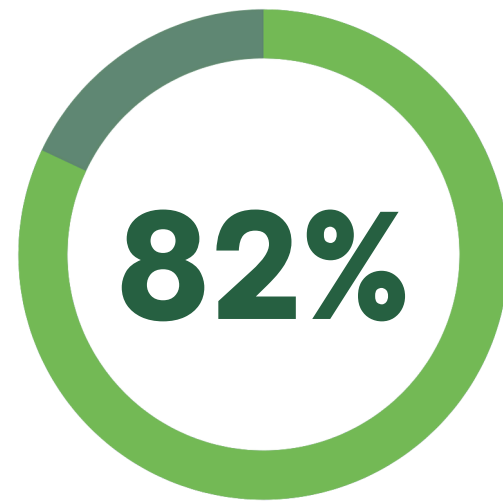
If Farm Stops have reliable hours and availability, and enhance resilience and food access.

Demographics

Race and ethnicity, annual income, age, highest level of education, and the number of people living in their household.

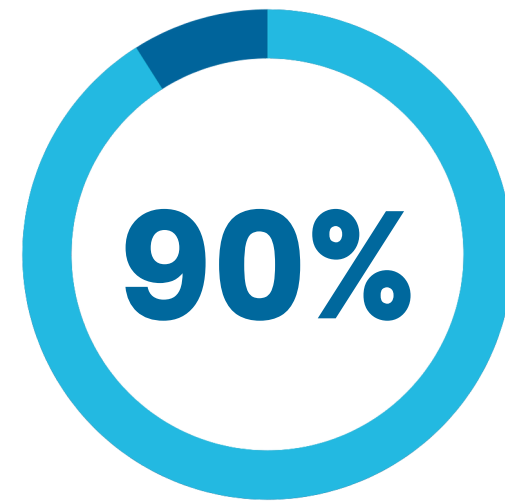
Initial Results, n = 278

Economics



Very or somewhat willing to pay more for groceries from a Farm Stop.

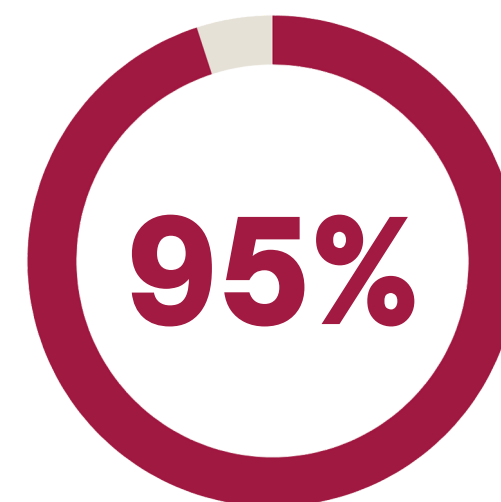
Community



Farm Stops have a strong presence in the community.

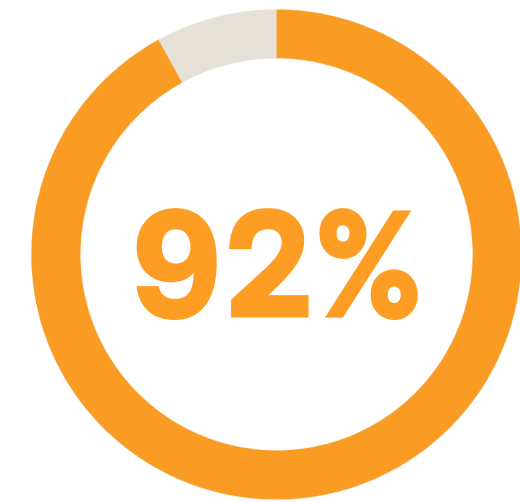
Enjoy spending time at Farm Stops.

Advocacy



Felt they are helping to grow a local food economy by purchasing food at Farm Stops.

Resilience



Believe Farm Stops increase the long-term resilience of neighborhoods to crisis events.

Key Takeaways:

1

Farm Stops seem to keep local money circulating within a local radius, thereby supporting local producers, residents, and businesses.

2

They seem to enhance the financial and cultural resilience of communities to crisis events such as global pandemics and national recessions.

3

They seem to enhance a sense of place in a community via their mission, and by creating welcoming and inclusive spaces

4

They seem to encourage participation in a local food system

Limitations:

- 1 Results only represent a targeted sub-population of the communities involved – one that may already/can prioritize purchasing local foods
- 2 Certain survey questions may have led respondents to answer in a particular way that may have skewed the results.

What's Needed?

- 1 More research with a broader and more diverse sample size
- 2 Stronger and more comprehensive survey development

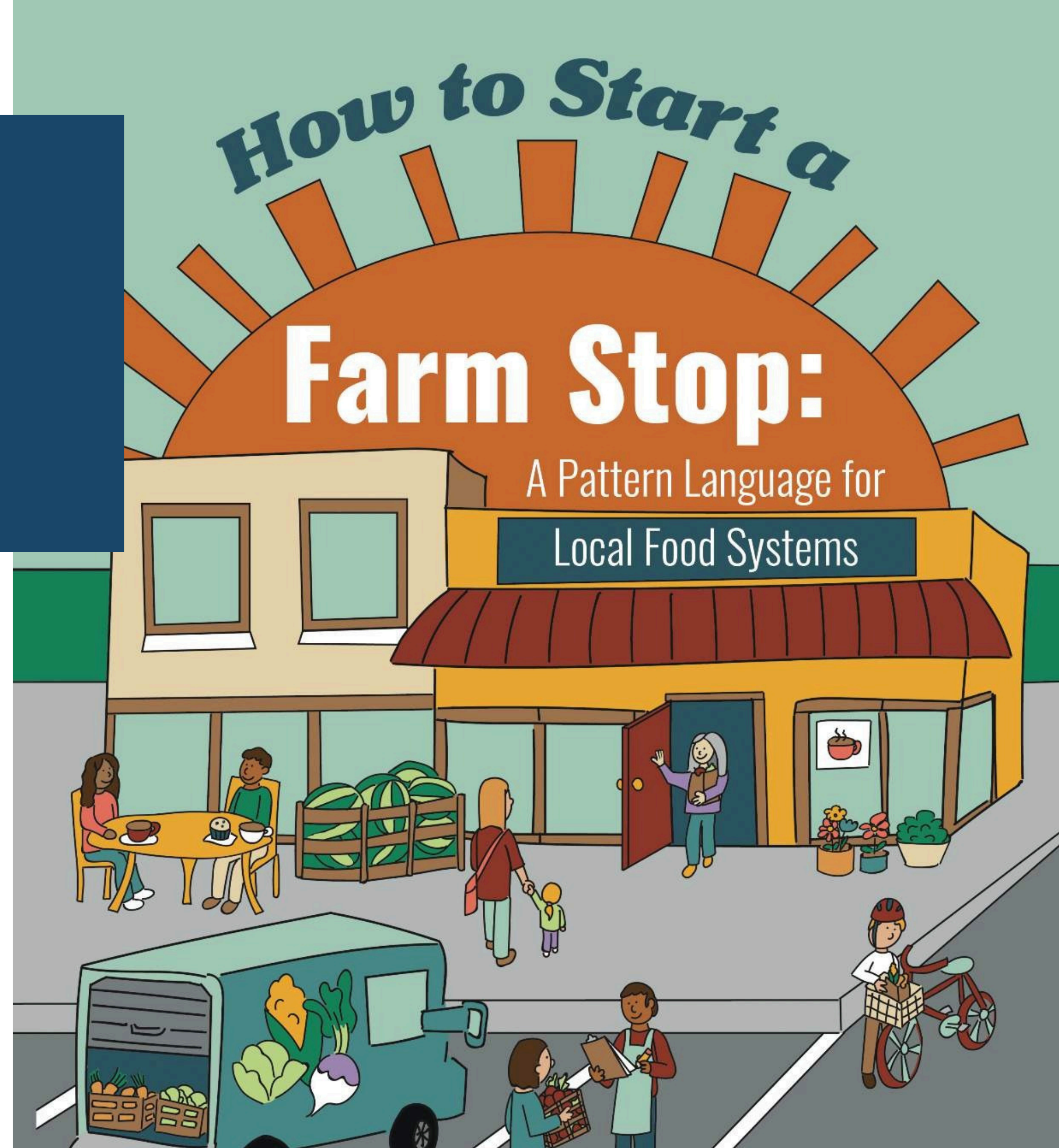


What's Needed?

We Need More Farm Stop Research!



Download for free, or purchase here!



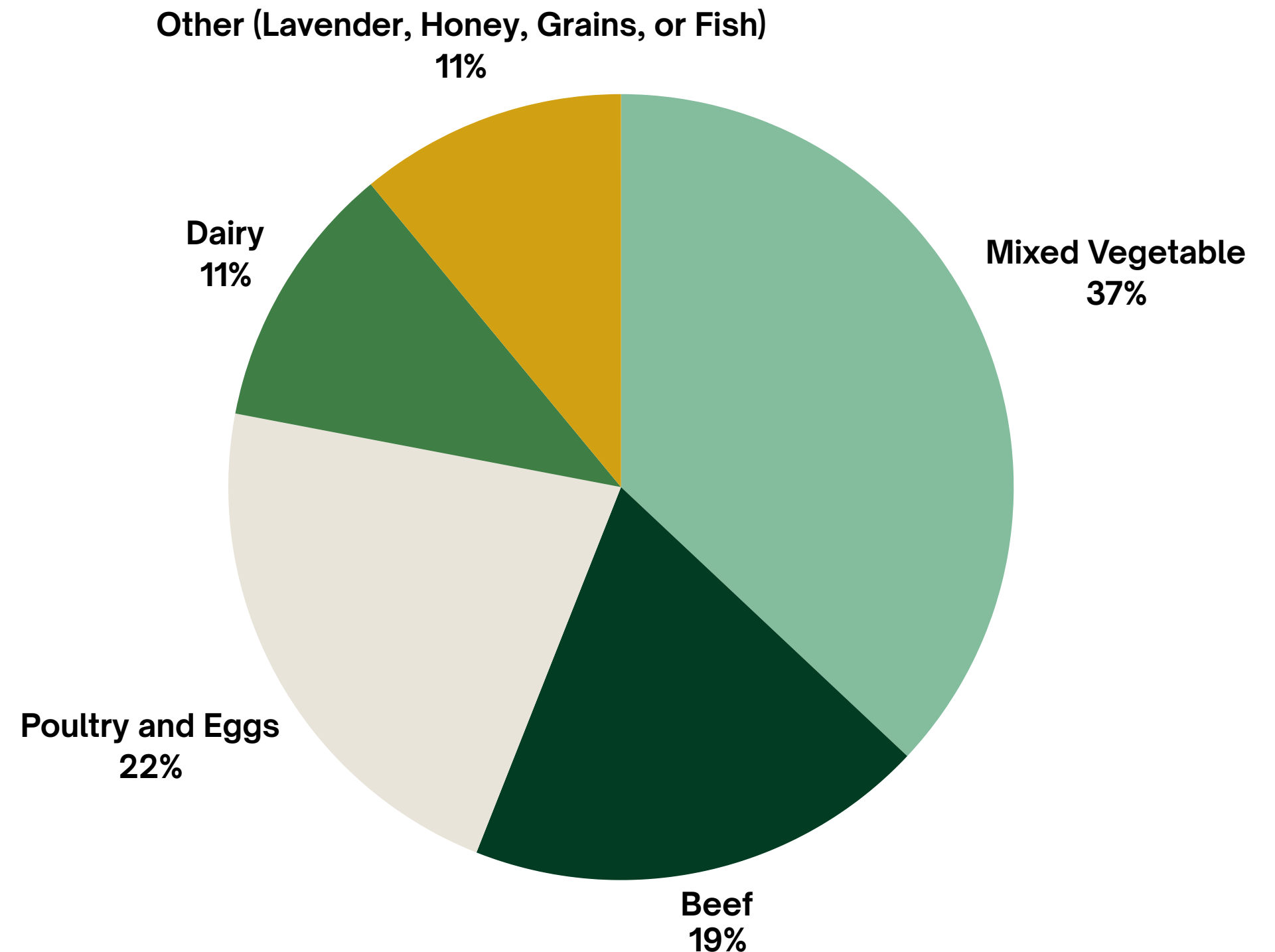
Understanding Farmer Perspectives:

Interview Instrument and Methodology



Farmer Interview Methods

- **Interviews:** took place in 2021
- **Total Number of Farmers Surveyed: 37**
 - Argus Farm Stop: 24
 - Local Roots: 9
 - Random Harvest: 4
- **Farm Size:**
 - Most farms interviewed did not exceed the USDA definition of a mid-sized farm (sales exceeding one million dollars yearly)



Research Questions

Community Resilience

- Do Farm Stops increase community resilience by supporting local farmer's operations?

Farmer Engagement with Community Relationships

- Do Farm Stops enhance farmer's relationship with the community?

Viability of the Farm Stop Model

- How does a Farm Stop fit into existing distribution channels?
 - What channels do farmers prioritize?
- What do farmers feel are the biggest barriers to working with a Farm Stop?
- Do farmers feel this is a viable outlet worth pursuing (financially and/or socially)?

Overall Conclusions

- **Community Resilience**
 - Farmers interviewed believed Farm Stops enhanced their community resilience to crisis events
 - Farmers interviewed believed Farm Stops enhance the local food economy, which may enhance community resilience.
- **Farmer Engagement With Community Relationships**
 - Farmers interviewed believed Farm Stops enhanced community relationships (via personal and professional relationships).
- **Viability of a Farm Stop Model**
 - Improvements to the model include enhancing communication and inventory management
 - Farmers interviewed prioritized Farm Stops to varying degrees even if they were not their primary source of income
 - Overall, farmers interviewed enjoyed participating in Farm Stops and found the consignment model supportive of their operations
- **More Research is Needed!**

Limitations

- **Limited sample size**
- **Bias in farmer responses**
- **Broader diversity of farmers is needed:**
 - More representation from other Farm Stops
 - Different kinds of producers
 - Producers of differing sizes
- **Differing research methods may be more supportive**
 - Deductive Research Design

What's Next?

The National Farm Stop Network



The National Farm Stop Network

- **NETWORKING** to provide a strong support system for existing and aspiring Farm Stop owners.
- **RESOURCES** in the form of case studies, replicable templates, funding directories, and more.
- **RESEARCH** to understand the ever evolving Farm Stop landscape as a means of strengthening the efficacy and credibility of the model.
- **TECHNICAL SUPPORT** via connections to existing educational opportunities and experts, communities of practice, webinars, support for the initial planning phases, and connections with existing Farm Stops

Join a growing community of existing and aspiring Farm Stop owners to share best practices via Slack!





Thank you!

Questions?

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