

Interview Questions with Agricultural Businesses

Summary

Twenty-five farmers responded to a series of 13 open-ended questions between September 1st and October 15th of 2010. For purposes of this survey, agricultural businesses within Waushara County were divided into three categories; vegetable, meat and/or eggs, and specialty. Sixty-four (64) percent (16) of the farmers interviewed grew vegetables, 20 percent (5) raised meat and/or eggs and the remaining 16 percent (4) were considered specialty producers (did not fit into one of the first two categories).

About two-thirds of the vegetable farmers sold their products at the farm/roadside stand; were interested in expanding their business; and were not interested in participating in a Community Supported Agriculture Project (CSA). Most of the farmers indicated that they were selling their product locally in some method. Selling produce to institutions received a mixed response. Half were not interested, while the remainder was either interested with concerns or already marketing their products in this manner. Most farmers are already donating surplus products to a variety of different outlets that benefit low income people. Finally, participation in a local farmer's market received a split reaction between seeing this market as beneficial and feeling that it would not be.

A majority of the meat and/or egg producers in Waushara County are marketing their products by word of mouth. All sell locally and are interested at some level of expanding their operations. There was a lack of interest by all in direct marketing through a CSA and selling to institutions. Surplus product was not an issue to any of the producers in this category.

Due to the varied nature of the specialty products, outlets of where products were sold varied as well (word of mouth, school fundraiser, farm stand, grocery store and wholesale). Most if not all of the agricultural businesses in this category were interested in expanding sales, selling to institutions and participating in a farmer market. Direct marketing through a CSA garnered a mixed response, as well as the question of surplus product. Only one producer stated that surplus product was allowed to rot in the field.

Highlights of the results follow:

For simplicity, the following answers are divided between the three types of agricultural consumer products: vegetables, meats and/or eggs, and specialty products.

Vegetable:

- Ten (62.5 percent) of the farmers sold their product at a farm/roadside stand.
- Ten out of the 16 (62.5 percent) agricultural businesses are interested in expanding.
- Most are already selling product locally.

Appendix A1: Summary

- Ten out of the 16 agricultural businesses (vegetable) in this category were not interested in participating in a CSA.
- Reaction to selling produce to institutions was mixed; five expressed interest with concerns, eight were not interested and three were already selling to institutions.
- Most donate surplus products to variety of different outlets that benefit low income people.
- Agricultural businesses in this category were split between the feeling that a farmer's market would benefit their operation (8) and no (6), it wouldn't.

Meat and/or Eggs:

- Four out of the five agricultural businesses sold their products by word of mouth.
- All expressed some level of interest in expanding sales
- All are already selling product locally.
- There was not a lot of interest expressed in direct marketing through a CSA.
- All were not very interested in selling to institutions.
- All stated that they did not have surplus products that they needed to get rid of.
- Only one business stated that they would participate in a farm market, if the markets were closer.

Specialty:

- Outlets for selling product varied from word of mouth (1), school fundraiser (1), farm stand (3), grocery store (1), and wholesale (1).
- All were overwhelming interested in expanding sales.
- All are already selling product locally.
- Agricultural businesses were split evenly over interest in direct marketing through a CSA and not utilizing this outlet.
- All expressed interest in selling to institutions.
- Due to the variety of products in this category, only one stated that the produce was allowed to rot in the field.
- Three out of the four agricultural businesses would be interested in participating in farmer's markets.