



Community Economic Development Indicators

In 2018, the Farm Fresh Food Boxes project received a grant to test selected community economic development indicators developed by the North East Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD). These indicators are designed to ascertain the degree to which specific programs are making a difference in communities being served. Four indicators were tested, related to the number of farms and rural retailers making business improvements as a result of Extension technical assistance, as well as the number of businesses and jobs retained, and increase in unpaid/volunteer hours.

What is a Farm Fresh Food Box?

Farm Fresh Food Boxes are Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) style¹ boxes of produce customers can order and pick up at small, rural grocery stores and other community spaces that don't typically carry fresh produce without the commitment of a season-long subscription. We asked shoppers to share their opinion of this new way to buy fruit and vegetables as part of a national survey of locally grown foods.



Benefit to Farmers

- Attracts customers who wouldn't buy from farmer's markets or join a CSA.
- Aligns with volume farmer is able to produce & allows week-to-week flexibility in produce types provided.
- Saves time to staff a market stall & avoids unsold market produce.



Benefit to Retailers

- Food box pick up gives shoppers another reason to visit the store sites, which may lead to added sales.
- Retailers get a small percentage of food box price to cover transaction costs.
- Retailers don't have to invest in stock or equipment, since they don't have to purchase stock or store it.



Benefit to Shoppers

- Farm Fresh Food Boxes are priced affordably relative to CSA.
- No large up front payment, & no on-going commitment.
- Retail sites are familiar & acceptable places for consumers, are open daily, & offer longer hours for pickup than a typical CSA.

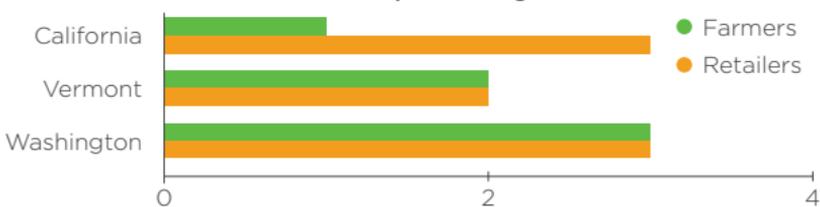
NERCRD Indicators



Number of Farm and Retail Businesses Making Changes in Marketing or Business Management

As a result of Extension outreach and technical assistance, a number of farmers in California, Vermont, and Washington State incorporated F3B into their marketing plans and strategies.

Farmers & Retailers Implementing F3B in 2018



why try the F3B MODEL?

“My main interest was to access a new customer base that was... where the store is and in that neighborhood...”

-Vermont Farmer

how is the overall EXPERIENCE?

“The produce was always really good quality and... a lot of people... felt like it was a pretty good value...”

-Washington Retailer

¹In a traditional CSA, subscribers purchase a “share” of the farmer’s harvest, provide an up-front payment, and receive a weekly box of produce throughout the growing season.

action indicator
#11

Number of Unpaid/Volunteer Hours

Each state's farmers noted the amount of additional unpaid or volunteer farm labor hours implementing F3B required over the course of the season. None of the retailers in the three states, however, had any unpaid staff.



California

Farmers said F3B required about 2-3 extra hours



Vermont

Farmers said that none of the labor was unpaid



Washington

Farmers noted F3B required a total increase of about 12 hours

action indicator
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Number of Firms Retained

All 6 F3B farms and 8 rural stores were still in business at the end of 2018. Some felt that F3B enhanced or strengthened their business by opening new markets for them. Store owners felt that F3B had a negligible contribution to their business in the first year of implementation, though one Vermont retailer saw potential benefit.



how has F3B impacted FARMERS?

“It's maybe given us a little bit more exposure... That's what business means to us, is connecting with more people. ”

-California Farmer

how has F3B benefit RETAILERS?

“I think... it maybe added a little something that other people don't have. ”

-Vermont Retailer

action indicator
#19

Number of Jobs Retained

During the year in which F3B was implemented, there were no changes in labor needs. None of the F3B farms and rural stores hired new staff or noted an increase in labor hours as a result of F3B implementation. Most noted a negligible amount of time initially to train staff in the following procedures:



taking orders



receiving box deliveries



communicating with the farmer

how is the process of training THE STAFF?

“[It was just a matter of reminding staff of] The few little details that they are supposed to pay attention to... and that extra time of recording and putting things where they need to go, but not much. ”

-California Retailer



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