

# Farm to Institution: Guiding Marketing & Pricing Decision for Small & Medium Sized Farms

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# Overview

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# Introduction & Justification

- Farm to Institution: potential solution to two lingering problems
  - Farm profitability
  - Nutrition and health
- Inform marketing mix (4 P's)
- Value chain framework

# Objectives

- Identify logistical and other prominent features, constraints and keys to success of three farm to institution models
- Measure farm to institution actors' interest, perceived barriers and ability to participate in institutional market models
- Develop and test tools to measure farmer production costs and guide pricing decisions
- Develop and disseminate materials to guide farmers' decisions to participate in institutional markets

# Methods: MI

- 27 semi-structured interviews
  - Farmers
  - Distributors
  - Buyers
- Sampling through on-going statewide farm to school and farm to institution work and networks
- Qualitative coding
- 2 regional “learning labs”
  - Roundtable discussion with farmers, distributors and buyers

# Methods: VT

- 19 semi-structured interviews
  - Farmers
  - Distributors
  - Buyers
- Sample and questions vetted by Vermont FEED & state Farm to Institution Advisory Board
- Qualitative coding

# Results: MI

- Proximity and connections between farmers and institutions emphasized
- Low use of and interest in formal contracts
- A complex set of actors involved in farm to institution
  - Longer supply chain that is not linear
  - Enhances economic feasibility
  - Supports direct producer – consumer interactions

# Results: VT

- Double edged swords
  - Relationships
  - “Story” of the food
- Broad value of local produce but costs fall on farmers and non-profits
- Lack of infrastructure (delivery and processing)
- Role of Food Hubs



# Next Steps

- Production cost and price discovery study in VT
- Follow-up interviews in MI – specialty distributors
- Survey of MI vegetable farmers in partnership with MI NASS
  - Interest and willingness to participate
  - Perceived barriers and opportunities
- Development of farm to institution fact sheet series
  - Motivations and priorities
  - Agreements
  - Deal-breakers
  - Communication
  - Logistical arrangements

# Thank you

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