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LOCAL FOOD INTEREST BY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN:

A REPORT FOR EASTERN MARKET CORPORATION

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
CRFS
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INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY PROCESS

In February 2012, a survey of institutions located in the southeastern Michigan region around metropolitan Detroit was conducted to gather baseline information about their interest in local food purchasing for the dual purposes of coordinating food sourcing and distribution and informing Farm to Institution outreach and education activities.

Survey design and dissemination was coordinated by the Michigan State University (MSU) Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS) (formerly the CS Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems) with assistance from Eastern Market Corporation, the Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP) and the Ecology Center, all stakeholders in the development of Farm to Institution programs in the Detroit metro area. Given the non-personal nature of the questions, this survey was determined non-human subjects research by the MSU Institutional Review Board. Data analysis was conducted by MSU CRFS using SPSS analytics software.

The sample population of institutions included K-12 schools and school districts, hospitals and colleges/universities within a 60-mile radius (within Michigan) of Detroit. School food service contact information was obtained through a statewide database provided by the Michigan Department of Education and sorted for the appropriate geographic area through GIS software. Contact information for residential child care institutions was also included in this database and sorted appropriately. Hospital food service or food buyer information was provided by the Ecology Center, which coordinates the Michigan Health Care Without Harm campaign focusing on hospital sustainability including local food purchasing. College and university information was gathered through simple Google map searches and, if needed, follow up telephone calls to obtain appropriate contact information. After a pilot test of the survey tool, the final electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics survey software and sent by email to the contact database in early February 2012. A paper version of the survey was also available to respondents upon request. After two email reminders and an extension of the response deadline, the electronic survey was closed after five weeks.

RESULTS

The survey yielded 98 complete responses. Of these, 11 institutions said they did not have a food service program and were diverted to the end of the survey. Seven institutions stated that they only had outside food vendors and were also diverted to the end of the survey. The remaining 80 responses were analyzed and the results are presented below. Among the 80 institutions represented in this report are six hospitals, 23 schools, 42 school districts and nine “other” institutions, most of which are residential child care institutions. Of these institutions, all but the hospitals participate in the USDA National School Lunch Program. Due to this distinction and because hospitals only represent a small percentage of responses, which may not be well represented in the overall mean response, relevant differences in responses from hospitals are noted throughout the report. No college or university representatives responded to the survey.

FOOD PREPARATION METHODS

This survey clearly showed that institutions use a variety of food preparation methods. Approximately 20% of schools and other institutions participating in the National School Lunch Program always or frequently use scratch cooking methods. Nearly 70% of schools, districts and other institutions always or frequently use heat and serve foods and nearly 55% always or frequently use semi-prepared foods. The hospitals responding to the survey are doing more scratch cooking than the schools and school districts. One hospital said they always cook from scratch, three said they frequently do, one does sometimes and one does rarely. However, all but one of the hospitals are also using semi-prepared and heat and serve foods as well.

POPULAR FOODS

Figures 1 through 3 show the processed and unprocessed produce items, as well as the local foods, most frequently purchased by the institutions surveyed. Diced or sliced potatoes were in the top five processed produce items for five of the six hospitals. In addition to the items shown in Figure 1, sliced or diced tomatoes were frequently purchased by four of the hospitals, broccoli florets by three hospitals and celery sticks by two hospitals. Apples were in the top five unprocessed produce items for all six hospitals and, in addition to the Figure 2 items, cantaloupe was frequently purchased by two of the hospitals. Five of the six hospitals had purchased bread, bagels and buns locally, four had purchased green beans locally, and three had purchased corn and eggs locally.

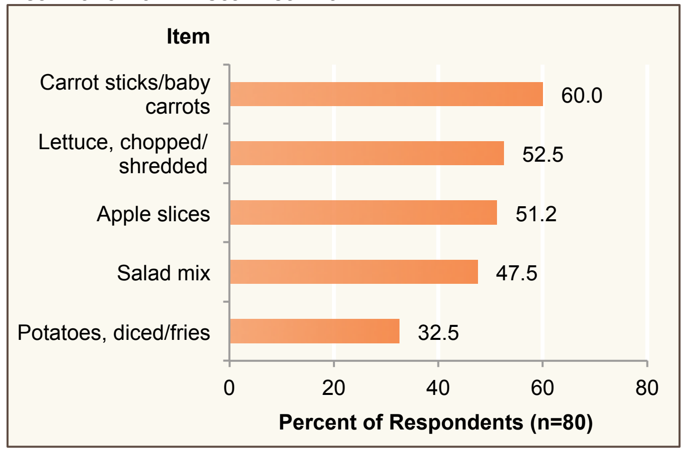
LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING

Approximately half (41) of respondents are getting requests for local foods from their customers and the majority (77.5%) had purchased local foods in the last year. Of the 18 who had not purchased local foods in the past year, or did not know if they had, 12 said they would be interested, five (all individual schools) said they would not be, and one did not answer the question. Of the 62 who had purchased local foods in the past year, 52 did so through a broadline distributor. Almost half (48.4%) purchased local food through more than one avenue. Twenty five institutions, but only one hospital, had purchased directly from a farmer or a farmer cooperative. Only a small number of the institutions that had purchased locally saw an increase in consumption (16.3%); the rest said they did not (37.5%) or did not know (23.8%).

INTEREST IN LOCAL FOODS

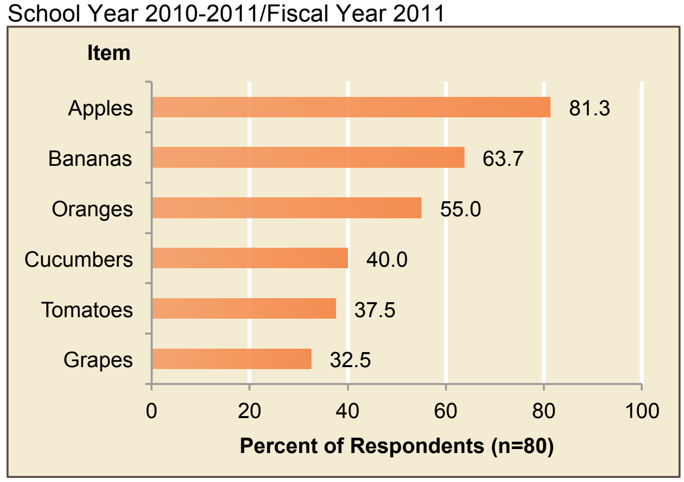
Tables 1 through 3 show the foods, and the forms of those foods, which the surveyed institutions indicated they would be most interested in purchasing. The vegetables the six hospitals were most interested in were cherry tomatoes (5), cucumbers, onions and summer squash (4 for each), all fresh and whole. The hospitals appeared to be relatively more interested in

FIGURE 1: Most Popular* Processed Produce Items in School Year 2010-2011/Fiscal Year 2011



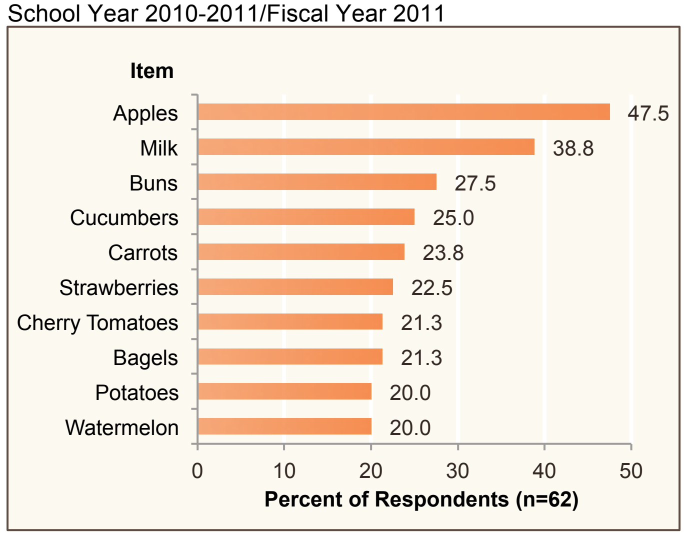
*Most frequently ranked in the top five most popular purchases

FIGURE 2: Most Popular* Unprocessed Produce Items in School Year 2010-2011/Fiscal Year 2011



*Most frequently ranked in the top five most popular purchases

FIGURE 3: Local Food Items Most Frequently Purchased in School Year 2010-2011/Fiscal Year 2011



frozen vegetables, with four expressing interest in frozen green beans and three in frozen corn, frozen peas, frozen carrots and frozen broccoli. The fruits the six hospitals were most interested in were apples (6) and strawberries (5), both fresh and whole. No more than one hospital was interested in any of the processed or frozen fruits listed.

The six hospitals were relatively more interested in many of the meat products. Four were interested in whole muscle beef cuts and three were interested in ground beef, formed beef, whole muscle chicken and formed chicken. Two hospitals were interested in whole muscle turkey, formed turkey and whole muscle pork. The hospitals were also relatively more interested in dairy products, with the exception of milk, in which only two hospitals were interested. Five of the six hospitals were interested in yogurt, four were interested in cheese and eggs and three were interested in ice cream.

Interest in grain products was relatively similar between the six hospitals represented and the total group of respondents. No more than two hospitals expressed interest in any single item. Bread products were generally the most appealing to hospitals: bread, bagels, buns and breadsticks. One institution specified that it was interested in 10” whole grain tortillas. Like the survey sample as whole, hospitals were far more interested in canned beans than dried beans. However, hospitals did express proportionally greater interest in several bean types. Five hospitals were interested in chickpeas and red kidneys; four were interested in black beans; and three were interested in cannellini beans, navy beans and split peas.

TABLE 1: Interest in Local Produce*

Vegetable & Form	Total % Interest (n=80)	Fruit & Form	Total % Interest (n=80)
Cucumbers	56.3	Apples	60.0
Cherry Tomatoes	53.8	Strawberries	56.3
Tomatoes	43.8	Grapes	51.3
Onions	41.3	Watermelon	51.3
Carrots	40.0	Blueberries	47.5
Peppers	40.0	Peaches	45.0
Lettuce	38.8	Cantaloupe	45.0
Broccoli	36.3	Plums	35.0
Potatoes	35.0	Apples – processed	32.5
Beans, Green – frozen	33.8	Raspberries	32.5
Carrots – processed	33.8	Blackberries	28.8
Asparagus	32.5	Cherries	28.8
Beans, Green	31.3	Blueberries – frozen	22.5
Corn	31.3	Peaches – processed	21.3
Corn – frozen	30.0	Strawberries – frozen	21.3
Peas – frozen	30.0		
Summer Squash	30.0		

*Includes vegetables with total interest of 30% or greater and fruits with total interest of 20% or greater. All produce items are fresh and whole unless otherwise noted.

TABLE 2: Interest in Local Meat & Dairy Products*

Meat Product & Form	Total % Interest (n=80)	Dairy Product & Form	Total % Interest (n=80)
Chicken – formed	38.8	Milk	45.0
Beef – ground	35.0	Yogurt	41.3
Beef – formed	32.5	Eggs	37.5
Chicken – whole, whole muscle cuts	26.3	Cheese	35.0
Turkey – formed	23.8	Ice Cream	27.5
Turkey – whole, whole muscle cuts	22.5		
Turkey – ground	22.5		

*Includes meat and dairy products with total interest of 20% or greater.

TABLE 3: Interest in Local Grains, Beans and Legumes*

Grain Product	Total % Interest (n=80)	Bean/Legume & Form	Total % Interest (n=80)
Buns	37.5	Red kidney – canned	30.0
Bread	35.0	Chickpea/garbanzo – canned	27.5
Bagels	33.8	Black – canned	25.0
Muffins	30.0	Navy – canned	23.8
Breadsticks	27.5	Pinto – canned	23.8
Pastas	26.3	Cannellini/white kidney – canned	21.3
Flour tortillas	26.3		
Granola	21.3		
Corn tortillas	20.0		

*Includes grain, bean and legume products with total interest of 20% or greater.

MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

The top motivation for purchasing local foods was supporting the local economy and community (51.2%). Other major motivations were helping Michigan farms and/or businesses (47.5%), access to fresher food (31.3%), the ability to purchase small or variable quantities (26.3%) and higher quality food (23.8%). Six institutions also wrote in that cost/price is or would be a motivating factor for purchasing locally. Hospitals' motivations were similar to the motivations for the whole group of institutions, with all six hospitals selecting "supporting the local economy and community" as one of their top three motivations for purchasing locally, five of the six selecting "helping Michigan farms and businesses" and five of the six selecting "other." One of the hospitals selecting "other" wrote in "competitive pricing."

The major barriers noted by the institutions were lack of products available during certain times of the year (41.3%), budget (35%), liability concerns (35%) and food safety concerns (32.5%). Seven institutions selected "other" as one of their top three barriers. The explanations they gave were being able to purchase in small quantities for freshness and shelf life, corporate, delivery, lack of large quantities needed, no receipt given by local farmer's market or Eastern Market vendors and poor quality (2). The hospitals in the survey sample indicated they experienced the same major barriers noted above; none selected "other."

The lack of a distribution method to get local food products into a food service program was the most frequently selected logistic challenge to sourcing local food, noted by 57.5% of institutions. Other major logistic challenges were a lack of labor to prepare local foods (46.3%), lack of facilities to handle local food (33.8%) and lack of storage (26.3%). Some respondents provided other reasons for challenges, including whether veggies are washed, district policies cumbersome, lack of funds, local farmers' market is only open on weekends and they only have staff to purchase food Monday through Friday, and the need for a small amount at a time. Four hospitals each noted that labor and distribution were top challenges. Lack of storage, however, was not a challenge that any of the six hospitals noted.

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APPENDIX A: INTEREST IN LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS – COMPLETE LIST

Note: Respondents were able to indicate interest in multiple food items and in multiple forms; as such, the percentages in the following tables are *not* additive.

TABLE A1: Interest in Local Vegetables

	% Interested		
Vegetable	**Fresh & Whole**	**Processed**	**Frozen**
Asparagus	32.5	8.8	12.5
Beans, Green	31.3	21.3	33.8
Beets	6.3	8.8	2.5
Broccoli	36.3	20.0	22.5
Brussels Sprouts	10.0	3.8	8.8
Cabbage	16.3	17.5	2.5
Carrots	40.0	33.8	23.8
Cauliflower	21.3	13.8	11.3
Cherry Tomatoes	53.8	12.5	3.8
Corn	31.3	15.0	30.0
Cucumbers	56.3	8.8	6.3
Edamame	8.8	0.0	6.3
Eggplant	8.8	3.8	N/A
Greens, cooking	18.8	10.0	7.5
Herbs	25.0	3.8	0.0
Lettuce	38.8	28.8	N/A
Mushrooms	23.8	13.8	3.8
Onions	41.3	17.5	6.3
Parsnips	3.8	2.5	1.3
Peas	16.3	10.0	30.0
Peppers	40.0	16.3	7.5
Potatoes	35.0	20.0	20.0
Radishes	16.3	2.5	0.0
Rutabaga	6.3	0.0	1.3
Salad Greens	28.8	26.3	N/A
Summer Squash	30.0	10.0	7.5
Sweet Potatoes	27.5	18.8	12.5
Tomatoes	43.8	11.3	1.3
Turnips	3.8	0.0	0.0
Winter Squash	20.0	7.5	6.3

TABLE A2: Interest in Local Fruits

Fruit	% Interested		
	Fresh & Whole	Processed	Frozen
Apples	60.0	32.5	12.5
Strawberries	56.3	15.0	21.3
Grapes	51.3	8.8	3.8
Watermelon	51.3	13.8	N/A
Blueberries	47.5	7.5	22.5
Peaches	45.0	21.3	16.3
Cantaloupe	45.0	7.5	N/A
Plums	35.0	6.3	3.8
Raspberries	32.5	7.5	16.3
Blackberries	28.8	6.3	13.8
Cherries	28.8	18.8	12.5
Rhubarb	11.3	7.5	1.3
Other: Pears	2.5	N/A	N/A

TABLE A3: Interest in Local Meats

Meat	% Interested		
	Whole/ Whole Muscle	Ground	Formed
Beef	17.5	35.0	32.5
Chicken	26.3	10.0	38.8
Turkey	22.5	22.5	23.8
Fish	10.0	2.5	10.0
Lamb	3.8	3.8	5.0
Pork	13.8	10.0	12.5

TABLE A4: Interest in Local Dairy Products

Dairy	% Interested
Milk	45.0
Cheese	35.0
Eggs	37.5
Yogurt	41.3
Ice Cream	27.5

TABLE A5: Interest in Local Grain Products

Grains	% Interested
Buns	37.5
Bread	35.0
Bagels	33.8
Muffins	30.0
Breadsticks	27.5
Pastas	26.3
Flour tortillas	26.3
Granola	21.3
Corn tortillas	20.0
Frozen pizza dough	15.0
Pre-baked pizza crust	12.5
Wheat flour	12.5
Cornmeal	10.0
Corn flour	10.0
Other	2.5

TABLE A6: Interest in Local Beans and Legumes

	% Interested	
Beans & Legumes	**Dried**	**Canned**
Adzuki	1.3	6.3
Black	10.0	25.0
Cannellini/White Kidney	6.3	21.3
Chickpea/Garbanzo	6.3	27.5
Lentil	10.0	10.0
Lima	7.5	15.0
Navy	17.5	23.8
Pinto	8.8	23.8
Red kidney	10.0	30.0
Split pea	13.8	7.5