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Leveraging Attitudes, Motivations, and Values from Farmers' Market Managers in Florida: An Opportunity to Improve Nutritional Outcomes Through Extension

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Increasingly, farmers' markets in the United States offer nutrition incentives to help limited-resource shoppers afford fresh fruits and vegetables and support local farmers. Despite increased attention to these efforts, there has been less focus on the market managers and staff members responsible for implementing and administering incentive programs. Using qualitative data collected from semi-structured phone interviews, we explore the attitudes, motivations, and values of farmers' market managers in relation to their efforts to administer and promote a nutrition incentive program at their respective markets in Florida. Results demonstrate that program adopting managers: 1) express concern for inclusivity, social justice, and equity; 2) sympathize with the economic pressures their produce grower-vendors face; 3) are motivated to provide locally grown foods to all shoppers; 4) take pride in ethical standards and transparency protocols; and 5) value loyalty between themselves, their vendors and their customers. We believe Extension professionals can leverage prevailing attitudes among market managers to improve manager engagement with nutrition incentive programs and ensure expanded nutritional access outcomes at farmers' markets for limited-resource shoppers.

Keywords: attitudes, EBT, farmers' markets, food access, market managers, nutrition incentives, SNAP, subjective norms

Introduction

Food Insecurity and Nutritional Disparities

Over the past two decades, researchers have documented growing nutritional disparities between high and low-income populations. Elmes (2018) found that the number of food-insecure households nationwide grew by nearly 33% between 2000 and 2014 in the United States. As a condition of limited, uncertain, or inconsistent access to nutritious foods, the issue of food insecurity has driven a wave of policy and research developments (United States Department of

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Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service [USDA FNS], n.d.). Federal programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program; and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) have been expanded to reduce food insecurity through assistance benefits for qualified individuals and families. While federal assistance programs such as SNAP supplements food costs for limited-resource individuals and families, researchers have argued the program does not do enough to improve access to nutrient-dense fresh fruits and vegetables and close the nutrition gap between high and low-income populations (Nguyen et al., 2014).

Growing awareness of this persistent nutrition gap has prompted researchers and food security advocates in the United States to focus on increasing SNAP access at farmers' markets to improve nutritional outcomes for limited-resource individuals (Johnson, 2014). Defined as a fixed location-space where grower-producers can sell their agricultural products directly to the general public (USDA FNS, n.d.), farmers' markets across the country employ different methods to distribute federal food assistance benefits. Most redemption of SNAP benefits at farmers' markets is currently done electronically, with markets designating a centralized location where SNAP shoppers verify their eligibility with a state-issued Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card (Mino et al., 2018). Typically, shoppers state the benefit amount they wish to redeem that day, the card is swiped through a point-of-sale terminal, and the shoppers receive their benefit amount in the form of the standard market currency for that market. As noted by Mino et al. (2018), most farmers' markets use some form of internal currency (e.g., tokens) to facilitate SNAP redemptions.

Farmers' markets have been touted for their potential to improve nutritional outcomes for a variety of factors, from their common proximity to urban centers to the abundance of local produce growers (Lucan, 2019). Studies suggest that living near a farmers' market is associated with greater produce intake (Gustafson et al., 2013; Park et al., 2011) and that the introduction of markets may increase the consumption of certain fruits and vegetables (Evans et al., 2012). However, some studies have contested farmers' markets' capacity for improving access and reducing nutritional disparities. Lucan et al. (2015) found that markets may carry less-varied, less-common, and more-expensive produce than nearby food retail stores. Researchers have also found limited resource shoppers are less likely to frequent farmers' market due to transportation barriers, a lack of awareness about SNAP access, and perceptions about expense (Hardison-Moody et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2015; Wetherill & Gray, 2015). The relevance of these farmers' market access barriers for limited resource SNAP shoppers is evident in national data concerning SNAP benefit redemption. According to a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) report, farmers' market sales only represent .02% of the total SNAP benefit redemption amount nationally (USDA FNS, 2018). While cost perceptions and material price barriers are not the only factors impeding greater engagement from SNAP shoppers with farmers' markets, they are highly influential. To further reduce the financial barrier of accessing fresh fruits and vegetables,

the USDA has promoted incentive-matching programs at markets to increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption across the country (Dimitri et al., 2015).

Nutrition incentive programs are designed to encourage increased redemption of federal assistance benefits such as SNAP for locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. The Florida-based Fresh Access Bucks (FAB) program is one such effort. Like most incentive or “doubling” programs operating at markets across the country, FAB is primarily funded through the USDA’s Nutrition Incentive Program grant, designed to support state-level organizations to address fruit and vegetable access barriers for SNAP-eligible communities (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, n.d.). FAB is intended to encourage SNAP shoppers to redeem their benefits at participating markets to directly purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from Florida farmers (Florida Organic Growers, n.d.). The program delivers a one-to-one match for every redeemed SNAP benefit dollar, allowing SNAP shoppers the opportunity to exchange for FAB tokens. These tokens can be redeemed for locally grown fresh fruits, and vegetables at any FAB partnered market in Florida.

Extension Engagement with Markets, Managers, and Nutrition Incentive Programs

Cooperative Extension has long been engaged in promoting farmers’ markets and other direct-to-consumer (DTC) outlets to improve nutritional access for limited-resource shoppers and improve economic solvency for local farmers (Abel et al., 1999). Since farmers’ markets are licensed by the USDA to accept federal assistance benefits, many state Extension networks have adapted specific programs in farmers’ market spaces to address food access concerns. These initiatives often feature consumer-centric programming to promote the use of federal assistance programs, such as SNAP or WIC, at markets and educate shoppers on cooking with seasonally grown fruits and vegetables (Abel et al., 1999; Dollahite et al., 2005). One such initiative in Florida is the Family Nutrition Program (FNP), which has provided free nutrition education to SNAP-eligible communities since 1996 (University of Florida/IFAS, n.d.). More recent outreach initiatives include the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), a federal Extension program designed to support participants’ efforts toward “self-sufficiency, nutritional health, and well-being” (USDA NIFA, n.d.). As with Extension efforts across the country, these programs have a presence at farmers’ markets and often engage key stakeholders to coordinate educational outreach activities such as cooking demonstrations or food tastings. These and other initiatives reflect Extension’s shifting role in food system development (Diekmann et al., 2017; Reynolds, 2011).

While the interaction between Extension, limited resource individuals, farmers’ markets, and nutrition assistance benefits have been previously examined, there is currently little research that explores the perceptions of farmers’ market managers as key stakeholders that may influence nutritional outcomes. This view is supported by Mino et al.’s (2018) assertion that there is a disproportionately low level of attention on farmers’ market personnel, given the rapid expansion

of market-related programs. While many research questions remain unanswered, there have been recent explorations of farmers' market managers. One study explored market manager views about the implementation of Extension educational materials designed to improve shopper decision-making around nutrition and healthy eating (McCormack et al., 2018). Another study examined whether market managers' communication skills and comfort with technology influenced their adoption of EBT (Hasin & Smith, 2018). Largely, where explorations of market manager perspectives have occurred, they have focused on the barriers that managers face in implementing SNAP/EBT access for shoppers (Roubal et al., 2016; Ward et al., 2015) or in implementing nutritional incentive programs similar to FAB (Hecht et al., 2019; Payne et al., 2013). Research to date has generally focused on those factors that may discourage manager adoption or engagement with related programs (i.e., barriers) instead of the potential for intrinsic attitudes, motivations, or values to influence those same outcomes. Explicit explorations of market managers' attitudes, motivations, and values independent of programmatic barriers are less common, despite the recognition that addressing managers' motivations, whether "they are business-oriented, healthy food access-oriented, or both, will be critical to improving the food environment through farmers markets" (Ward et al., 2015, p. 128). The role of personal motivations for market managers is increasingly salient as highly motivated managers have been shown to facilitate increased SNAP/EBT redemption (Roubal et al., 2016).

While Extension websites routinely provide resource support and information on nutrition incentive programs at farmers' markets, comparatively few Extension efforts directly evaluate the impact of these programs or actively engage market managers and their experiences administering federal assistance and nutrition incentive programs. Given a lack of formative or summative evaluation focused on market managers, there is a need to improve Extension engagement with farmers' market managers, particularly in the context of nutritional incentive program adoption and administration. As the emergence of nutrition incentive programs, such as FAB, at markets is a relatively new phenomenon, there appears to be a less-established presence by Extension in terms of promoting these programs and in their engagement with market managers as program administrators. Extension, therefore, has a larger role to play in its outreach to this population.

Study Purpose and Objective

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of market managers' regarding their experience administering and promoting FAB to SNAP shoppers. Our core research objective was to examine the motivations, values, and personal attitudes of these managers. We conducted in-depth, semi-structured phone interviews with 13 FAB adopting farmers' market managers to explore their views. In the research reported here, formative results were used to communicate the salience of managerial perspectives and experiences in nutritional promotion efforts. We addressed implications for Extension professionals regarding their role in outreach to farmers'

market managers and broader outreach efforts to facilitate improved nutritional outcomes through increased awareness of nutritional incentive services.

Methods

Study Design

This case study's target population was managers overseeing administration of the FAB program at farmers' markets in Florida. Institutional review board (IRB) approval was secured prior to contacting the study participants. Participants were purposively sampled (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The target population was individuals over 18 years old in the role of market managers offering SNAP and FAB program access at their markets. Forty FAB adopting market managers were contacted for participation. A total of 13 participants agreed to participate in the study. We used a semi-structured questionnaire instrument for data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and conducted interviews that ranged from 35 to 90 minutes in length. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded.

We referenced a component of the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) to help construct our interview protocol and support and structure the emergent themes we elicited from market managers. The TPB describes the influences upon an individual and how those influences determine that individual's decision to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Within the model, these determinants of behavior combine to influence an individual's intention to engage in that behavior. The TPB contains three core constructs; behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. In a formal TPB study, each of these behavioral determinants would be directly measured to predict an individual's behavioral intention. In our case study, we isolated the behavioral belief construct, which explores an individual's attitude towards a behavior, to help frame and clarify our questions. Operationalizing this construct helped us conceptualize and frame participants' views towards their identity and role as farmers' market managers.

Managers were asked what motivated them to become a farmers' market manager and what motivated them to remain one. Both questions prompted terms like relationships, loyalty, and trust. Managers applied these terms to their grower-vendors and their customer base, particularly those customers newly engaged through the FAB program. The model construct was also used to position and organize emergent themes related to manager attitudes, motivations, and values towards administering and promoting the FAB program to limited resource shoppers. We continued collecting data until we had reached data saturation, which occurs when the researcher is no longer receiving and documenting new or unique information from participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Data Analysis

We used the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to identify the attitudinal, motivational, and value-based themes regarding manager experience with FAB. All participant interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Transcript files were then uploaded to a qualitative data analysis software program (QSR International Pty Ltd., NVivo Version 12.3.0). We classified and arranged information to examine relationships in the data. We began by establishing first-tier codes, which corresponded to questions used in the semi-structured interview protocol.

In the second phase, we identified emergent codes to represent concepts, themes, and meaningful patterns that emerged within each participant case. In this phase, we nested themes within the broader question-categories from the previous phase. Throughout the process, newly identified codes were re-named and re-ordered to ensure their relevance to the main study objective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Selective coding was applied as the final coding step within the constant-comparative method. Selective coding is a procedure to compare code categories to one another, validating relationships between them, and adapting categories that need further refinement and development (Kolb, 2012). The process of category formation, comparison, and rearrangement continued until every participant case had been thoroughly analyzed, and we felt the study's main objective had been adequately represented in the final set of thematic codes.

Peer-debriefing was employed throughout the analysis process. Peer-debriefing involves exposing one's findings to an objective peer "for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Within each stage of the analysis process, the lead researcher would draft debrief memos to share with other study members. These efforts were intended to provide transparency on collection and analysis progress, procedural decisions made, and intentions for next steps. Peer-debrief memos also allowed all researchers to review and scrutinize emergent codes and themes established by the lead researcher. These exchanges forced examinations of internal bias and helped to produce consensus on themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

Results demonstrate that FAB-adopting market managers have strong personal motivations, attitudes, and values concerning their engagement with the program, their vendors, and their SNAP shoppers. We found that managers 1) express concern for inclusivity, social justice, and equity; 2) sympathize with the economic pressures their produce grower-vendors face; 3) are motivated to provide locally grown foods to all shoppers; 4) take pride in ethical standards and transparency protocols; and 5) value loyalty between themselves, their vendors and their customers. These formative findings have implications for facilitating future support for market managers and for how similar nutrition incentive efforts could be marketed and expanded for increased adoption and efficacy. Market manager participants are referenced in the following

section by a numerical code, prefaced by the letter P (for participant). Participant 1, for example, is referenced as (P1).

Personal Attitudes, Motivations, and Values

Concern for Social Justice, Equity & Diversity

Several managers expressed concern for limited-resource, SNAP-eligible shoppers. This concern was broadly compelled by a desire to address racial or socioeconomic inequities and improve diversity at their markets through assistance incentives. Managers cited some variation of these concerns as the foundational reason for choosing to provide SNAP and FAB access at their market. A few managers had prior experience in addressing social inequality. One respondent stated her college degree was in social work and that she had worked directly with homeless populations prior to coordinating the FAB program at her market. She said, "I have been working with the homeless my whole life in some capacity, volunteering mostly. So...that's my motivation here" (P2).

Other managers' commitment to improving food access was exemplified by the fact that they and their staff did not benefit financially from these extra administrative efforts. According to one manager, the desire to improve community access to food was a "common thread" (P4) that linked most FAB-partnered market managers. She stated that during the FAB implementation process, market personnel were mostly unpaid workers that "still don't have benefits or anything like that" and that managers and staff engagement with the FAB program is done "largely out of the goodness of your heart and the altruistic nature of trying to give people access to food" (P4). Another manager verified this comment more explicitly, arguing that while it was "hard to justify" the return on investment of the program given the time and effort required, she persisted because, as she stated, "interested in social equality in looking at our community as a whole... not to serve just a certain population" (P6).

Managers expressed a drive to provide an environment of equality and inclusivity. To some, this meant being aware of stigmas attached to SNAP-using, limited resource shoppers that didn't apply to the broader customer base. P2 said, "I try to make the distinction between a SNAP shopper and a cash shopper...non-existent. Like, it doesn't matter." Some managers reported that they needed to extend this attitude of welcoming and inclusivity to their volunteer staff, administrative assistants, and vendors. P5 stated,

The other thing that I've always impressed on people who work with this, be it volunteers or anyone who's employed by us, I don't care what type of customer it is. That is the customer. They will be treated equally. You have to treat everyone the same. They're all customers.

One manager relayed a story about a couple that came to her market for the first time and were deeply embarrassed about having to use their food assistance benefits. In response to that interaction, the manager indicated how important an empathetic response was to broader promotion and success of the FAB program. She said,

That message is really important. And if somebody's not passionate about it and doesn't cheerlead for it, sometimes it may make it a little more difficult for others to get behind it...if you don't believe it, you can't sell it to somebody else. And that, I think that is key.

Economic Viability for Vendors

Managers were motivated to ensure economic viability for their farmers and vendors. Some managers expressed this as a foundational value. One manager stated,

One of the most important things in the farmer's market is taking care of your vendors. To get quality vendors, you have to take care of them. You have to provide a great market for them, and they keep coming back. If you keep bringing people in, they don't wanna leave you.

Managers believed their engagement with the FAB program shouldn't interfere with the vendors' economic bottom-line and could instead, as P8 stated, they should "bring more customers into the market to spend their market dollars." One manager stated a primary goal was to ensure that vendors "make money...and continue to grow with us in the market" and credited the introduction of FAB as an important step to retain vendors and keep them happy (P10). The FAB program was "an economic boon to the farmers" vendors and the market overall, with one manager stating FAB related sales "brought in some...\$40,000 that wouldn't have been brought in without the program" (P5; P10).

Another respondent echoed the economic value of the program, stating that while the program was obviously beneficial to the newly accessed limited-resource, SNAP-using customer base, FAB also "really impacts the vendors in a major way" and for vendors is "something that's well-received" (P12).

Healthy, Locally Produced Food Access for Consumers

Managers recognized the nutritional disparity gap that existed in their communities broadly and between different customer segments at their markets. For managers, improving access and affordability of high quality, locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to shoppers was highly valued. For some managers, addressing "demand from customers who were searching for locally grown...organic, or all-natural vegetables" (P3) was not only a major motivation, it was the impetus for them starting or joining a farmers' market in the first place (P9). These managers

were motivated by the prospect of “filling a niche” (P3) and addressing demand for locally grown food. Furthermore, there was an explicit recognition that the mission to provide these foods should not exclude limited resource shoppers. As one respondent stated, “I want this to be as accessible as possible. We wanna get fresh fruits and vegetables in the hands of as many people as we can” (P3).

Another respondent explained how his market was situated within the “lowest income zip code” in the county and that the immediate area around the market had concerning “quality of life issues, in terms of education, social issues and health issues” (P9). He went on to describe his motivations in that context and the role the farmers market could serve:

[the market]...is generally viewed as a food desert by virtually everybody who looks at it, so we're really the primary source of healthy food for the area. When you see people each day...that are just so excited to be there, so excited to be shopping, finding their awesome deals. You know...the community gets so happy. And that's what makes me happy, to see that we've done our job; we've served them well. I mean, there's no better feeling than that. (P9)

Managers often relayed anecdotes of direct conversations they had had with SNAP shoppers and cited these interactions as highly motivating in their continued desire to provide affordable fruit and vegetable access through the FAB program. One respondent described a few market “regulars” that would come to the market weekly to redeem their SNAP benefits through FAB, stating that they usually “don't have that much money on their [EBT] card, so the fact that they're able to double it pretty much doubles the entire amount of SNAP they have a month...so they're super excited to be able to buy the fresh fruit and vegetables that might be cost-prohibitive otherwise” (P12). To be able to “improve peoples' relationship to food” through affordable access, another manager argues, motivates her continued effort to provide FAB at her market: “really FAB ...the way that's written and the way that it was conceived is really everything that you want in a food system” (P13).

Pride in Standards and Transparency

Managers valued honesty from their vendors in terms of how the quality standards of the food products their vendors brought to market and how those products were sourced. This motivation supported one of the main stipulations of the FAB program that any fruits and vegetables eligible for SNAP redemption must be locally grown and not re-sold from a wholesaler. For some managers, implementing these values meant addressing the tension over how local food production was defined and what the parameters for transparency in sourcing were.

Despite certain logistical challenges associated with finding FAB eligible local growers to supply their market, managers felt the benefits of these standards compliance and transparency efforts outweighed the limitations. As one respondent stated: “It's very important, as an organization, to

continue those standards and not to waver...it would be a lot easier if we were just going with...being a produce market and not a farmer's market. But...we're not okay with that. That's not why we're in business" (P1).

Another manager echoed this sentiment, stating a culture of transparency around the market "sets up a positive perception about the product, the fact that our patrons can come and talk to the farmers and know where their food is grown, have conversations. It's a very personal approach. I think that works better" (P5).

Relationships and Loyalty

Managers said they were motivated by the relationships they had with their grower-vendors. One manager stated she was "on a one-on-one basis" with each of her vendors and believed their relationship felt "like one big family. I know them personally; they know me personally" (P11). P10 discussed how she cultivated this connection and the impact those efforts had on morale by stating,

I instituted a vendor luncheon four years ago. And at the end of the season, we all get together for a free lunch. I buy them lunch, and we have a gift exchange. And you give a gift to get a gift, and...its camaraderie kind of thing where everybody is excited and having a good time....I just really enjoy it. I enjoy them, seeing them being happy.

One manager was highly motivated by the personal connections anyone could establish with farmers and growers at markets. The opportunity to appreciate vendors and "shake the hand that feeds you," she felt, was inspiring to her and should be inspiring to customers at the market (P1). She elaborated further,

You don't get that connection through buying something online...so I just think...putting your dollars in the hands of somebody who actually grew the food...that supports a family, it supports a mission, a value, farms that, at least the ones that I work with, are trying to do good by conservation, and environmental rights, and all sorts of things.

In addition to their attitudes towards vendors, managers considered cultivating customer relationships within the market space as highly motivating, to "get people there [to the market] and give them a good experience" (P13). To some managers, the presence of repeat SNAP using customers was perceived to be an indication of loyalty and was highly validating to their engagement with FAB. As one manager states, "we have very, very, very loyal customers and they get very attached to the market" (P8). The manager also described how intimate interactions with SNAP shoppers had reaffirmed the impact of FAB:

It's definitely a feel-good thing when we have FAB customers. I have FAB customers [that] come up, and they hug us, and they have lost weight, and they're eating better, and you can see it now. I mean, I've actually seen the results, and I've had people crying in my shoulder because they were so grateful for the program. It's been very impactful in many ways. I've gotten very deeply attached to the program (P8).

Another manager was similarly motivated by the loyalty of SNAP shoppers once they had been able to redeem their benefits through FAB. She relayed anecdotes about interactions she had with several SNAP shoppers who had become loyal market customers after realizing they could double their benefits. Knowing she would be now be seeing these shoppers "next week, and the week after and the week after that" (P1) was perceived to be a validating and highly motivating. She said,

Our [SNAP] customers that we do have, have been so loyal. They've been with us since inception, and they really value the things that we have and value our values, and so it's kind of a great relationship there.

One manager summarized the end goal of committed outreach to limited resource shoppers through the program: "creating a regular, to me, is the answer. And creating a regular who will pass it on to their children. To me...it's all about improving access...not just to healthy food, but to a community space" (P13).

Discussion

We found managers who adopted the FAB program at their market expressed a desire to cultivate a welcoming, inclusive environment. Several managers expressed concern for limited-resource, SNAP-eligible shoppers. This concern was driven by a desire to address racial or socioeconomic inequities and improve diversity at their markets through assistance incentives. This finding broadly corresponds to the conclusion that providing an atmosphere of inclusivity and "serving the community" were highly motivating to market managers (Hecht et al., 2019, p. 4).

Managers were also motivated to ensure economic viability for their farmers and vendors. Many believed they were facilitating this goal by increasing vendor access to shoppers through the adoption of FAB. Both Hecht et al. (2019) and Ward et al. (2015) similarly found the desire to improve vendors' economic security as a highly facilitating factor in managers' continued engagement with nutrition incentive and federal assistance programs.

Recognizing the nutritional disparity gap that existed in their communities broadly and between different customer segments at their markets, several managers insisted they were passionately driven to "improve people's relationship to food" and explicitly identified that goal as aligned

with their market's mission (P13). This perspective is supported empirically by survey results conducted by Hecht et al. (2019), indicating that managers view increased access to healthy food for limited-resource shoppers as highly motivating. Additionally, Roubal et al. (2016) found a manager's personal motivation to improve food access was salient in improving nutritional outcomes at markets and that external community support for improving food access had a facilitating effect on managers' pre-existing motivations.

Managers appreciated both the quality standards of the food products their vendors brought to market and the level of transparency in how administrative decisions at the market were made. Since one of the major stipulations of FAB was that all eligible grower-vendors must produce their fruit and vegetables locally, managers were very sensitive to ensuring this standard was met. While our results show that several managers view this condition favorably and find it an opportunity to promote a broad "culture of transparency" at their market (P5), others believe it creates an undue administrative burden and limits the overall reach and impact of efforts to get fruits and vegetables into the hands of those who may need them most. The latter view was represented in survey results indicating managers viewed certain standards as burdensome and a barrier to sustaining similar nutrition incentive efforts (Hecht et al., 2019).

Managers valued the loyalty and relationship webs between themselves, vendors, and shoppers and considered them a key determinant of the success of both FAB and the market broadly. Managers consistently described the value of positive relationships with customers and the utility of consistent meetings with vendors. These findings are supported by Dollahite et al.'s (2005) description of the results of a three-year collaboration initiative to improve the outcomes of the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, a coalition partnership designed to improve food access for limited-resource individuals. The researchers suggest that efforts to maximize relationship-building, collaborative engagement, networking, and capacity building efforts positively associate with an increase in fresh, locally produced fruit and vegetable access for limited-resource shoppers (Dollahite et al., 2005).

Implications and Recommendations

Currently, many Extension programs do not actively promote federally funded nutrition incentive programs. While many Extension websites provide resource support and information about program impact (often linking to external evaluations conducted by federal agencies or third-party organizations), these efforts may not go as far as they could to achieve Extension's potentially crucial role in supporting the economic viability of farmers' markets and the improvement of food access and affordability (Norman et al., 2018). There are exceptions to this in cases where Extension efforts have directly evaluated the impact of nutrition incentive programs at markets (Krokowski, 2014) and in the less common cases where Extension services directly manage, administer, and market incentive programs at markets (South Dakota State University, n.d.).

There has also been a lack of direct engagement with farmers' market managers as the population that is primarily tasked with administering these programs in states across the county. As such, there is a gap in understanding how Extension can leverage the unique and valuable perspectives of farmers' market managers to improve nutritional and economic outcomes for managers, farmers, and the communities they serve. Previous efforts to improve Extension's engagement with local food stakeholders and improve Extension's programming for local food system development have similarly called for leveraging the unique perspectives of producers, consumers, and other community stakeholders (Lelekacs et al., 2016; Rumble, Lamm, & Gay, 2018). These studies reflect a growing demand for Extension to be more adaptive in its engagement with food access issues and its outreach to marginalized communities and alternative audiences (Diekmann et al., 2017; Reynolds, 2011). In these contexts, researchers have also called upon Extension educators to "combine the traditional role of educator with that of facilitator" (Diekmann et al., 2017, p. 73). Beyond the traditional role of delivering information about current research and related resources, facilitation work requires educators to participate in collaborative problem-solving efforts to address issues identified by community members, particularly under-engaged stakeholders such as farmers' market managers (Diekmann et al., 2017). Following these perspectives, we believe Extension can play a valuable and active role in facilitating improved outcomes for farmers' market managers, vendors, and the limited-resource communities they serve.

This study's findings indicate that farmers' market managers who have adopted a nutrition incentive program were personally motivated to do so. Results suggest that the decision to adopt and administer the program aligned with values that were personally salient to managers. While these results are formative, we recommend that Extension professionals consider deeper engagement with market managers to empower their motivations and help them feel supported in their efforts to expand nutritional access at farmers' markets across the country. The following recommendations are offered as starting points to consider for Extension professionals interested in improving their engagement with farmers' market managers or those interested in improving nutritional access to limited-resource communities.

- 1) A critical first step in improving Extension's programmatic support for farmers' market managers' efforts to expand nutritional assistance is to gauge the scope and scale of current outreach to managers. Extension specialists in community development, food systems, health and nutrition, urban agriculture, or family and consumer sciences may be encouraged to survey with Extension agents who offer nutrition-based education services or resource support in food system contexts. Results may or may not identify an outreach gap with farmers' market managers or demonstrate a lack of awareness about nutrition incentive "doubling" programs at markets. Once this needs assessment data is collected, specialists and faculty members can interpret implications and priorities for future outreach efforts.

- 2) Following the recommendation by Mullins et al. (2015), relevant subject specialists, program leaders, and administrators can provide a platform for local county agents to develop a contextually appropriate plan of work to improve outreach. The guidance provided can help agents organize and prioritize support for farmers' market managers in their adoption of nutrition incentive programs. Specialists, administrators, faculty, and agents may also incorporate targeted outreach strategies into existing priority workgroups and action plans to address community health and wellness, nutrition disparities, or local food system development. A plan of action typically involves phased actions, beginning with a needs assessment or situation statement (addressed in recommendation 1), networking and partnership building with target audience key stakeholders, internal capacity building (i.e., in-service trainings), program implementation through planned activities, outcome and evaluation planning, and a diversity and marketing plan (Weinstein, n.d.).
- 3) There is an opportunity for Extension professionals to increase their engagement with market managers and to improve educational outreach about nutrition incentive programs. Increased outreach to market managers can help develop Extension's capacity to understand managers' needs and better support their goals and efforts. An in-service training could educate agents about the attitudes, motivations, and values that facilitate manager adoption of programs such as FAB. For example, given market managers were motivated to provide an inclusive environment for their limited resource shoppers, Extension practitioners could develop a training protocol for managers to share best practices on welcoming limited-resource shoppers to markets.
- 4) Extension professionals can ultimately develop, implement, and evaluate programs that incorporate findings related to those presented in this study. These programs can aggregate current research on nutrition incentive administration strategies across the country and share key takeaways in an accessible format. Given that managers valued the ethical standards and transparency of their vendors' products, Extension could, for example, host a workshop to train managers on how to better market those local growers that meet an incentive program's local eligibility criteria. For any programming effort, Extension professionals should create short-, medium-, and long-term outcome indicators that measure reported increases in manager confidence, positive attitudes, motivations, and values. As with all program design efforts, strategic use of the Extension Program Development Model in this context can ensure efficient use of fiscal resources, enhance accountability, and improve program relevance and impact (Franz et al., 2015).
- 5) To address managers' concern for cultivating an environment of inclusivity and equity at their market, Extension professionals could take the lead on designing locally appropriate and adaptable resources on strategies to improve limited-resource

shopper comfort in market spaces. Extension professionals could additionally host trainings for managers on how to address similar concerns.

Conclusion

In this study, we explored the attitudes, motivations, and values of farmers' market managers in relation to their efforts to administer and promote a nutrition incentive program at their respective markets in Florida. Our findings identified the attitudinal, motivational, and value-based factors salient to the sample of farmers' market managers we interviewed. We found that market managers: 1) expressed concern for inclusivity, social justice, and equity; 2) sympathized with the economic pressures their produce grower-vendors face; 3) were motivated to provide locally grown foods to all shoppers; 4) took pride in ethical standards and transparency protocols; and 5) valued loyalty between themselves, their vendors, and their customers. To leverage these perceptions, we provided recommendations for Extension professionals interested in improving their engagement with farmers' market managers and those interested in improving nutritional access to limited-resource communities.

Limitations

This case study was limited to the sample of farmers' market managers partnered with Florida's FAB program. Because both farmers' markets and nutrition incentive programs in states around the country have distinct structures and operational mandates, the attitudinal, motivational, and value-based themes that apply may have limited transferability.

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