

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF:

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The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), piloted in Oregon in 2001, provided \$100 worth of vouchers (aka coupons) to low-income seniors to buy fresh local produce from farmers at farmers' markets and roadside stands. Presented in a political ecology framework, this research integrated the perspectives of beneficiaries and their communities into a program evaluation. Convenience interviews of participants at farmers' markets around Oregon revealed significant economic, social and nutritional benefits resulting from the program. Findings also revealed areas of contention for some seniors: produce prices, transportation barriers, and lack of awareness of local agriculture. Reimbursement delays, policing of coupon-users and lack of information caused frustrations for farmers. Generally, farmers were appreciative of seniors as customers, and of the program for enabling farmers and their market to perform a social good; strengthening the community-building role of the farmers' market, providing a social activity for seniors and their support network, creating new relationships between the community and farmers, and enabling seniors to participate in the market experience and farmers to provide fresh produce that enhanced seniors' nutritional intake. Overall, SFMNP achieved its objectives in supporting low-income seniors, farmers and farm-direct marketing, and was an appealing program for seniors and farmers.

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Evaluation of the 2001 Pilot Oregon Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

by

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INTRODUCTION

“I see a lot of good working for people here. Good food and I’ve made beautiful lovely friends. One of the farmers gave me a box of green tomatoes that I can pickle. We come here because of the coupons. They made it possible.” (participating senior in a farmers’ market on the Oregon Coast)

In the fall of 2000, the US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) announced the availability of \$15 million in federal funds for a new program: the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Pilot Program (SFMNP). The program provided funds to states and tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with fresh produce direct from local farmers. SFMNP was largely modeled after the well-established Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program of the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) that has provided vouchers to WIC clients to use at farmers’ markets since 1988. Unlike its older sibling, the program’s requirements were more flexible allowing states to develop the best SFMNP possible to help their farmers and low-income seniors.

The *Request for Participation* (RFP) for SFMNP was announced on November 2, 2000, with a one month turn-around for submitting the grant application (see Appendix A for RFP). This program came at an opportune time for the state of Oregon, which was experiencing an increased use of food banks and food stamp programs, a growing elderly population (particularly food-insecure elderly), and a struggling fresh and frozen produce agricultural sector. Due to the cooperative efforts of state department heads and leaders of anti-hunger non-profit organizations, the State of Oregon was able to develop and submit a proposal within the one-month timeframe. This accomplishment was a result of their long working relationship with the Hunger Relief Task Force, a commission established in 1990 to advise Oregon’s legislators on policies related to hunger and food-insecurity (Thornberry 2001). They devised a program involving three separate state agencies and the Oregon Food Bank that would serve up to 15,000 low-income seniors statewide by providing them with \$100 worth of vouchers to use at roadside stands and farmers’ markets. In addition, approximately 200 seniors would participate in a pilot

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program. Oregon was awarded their full request of \$1.5 million early in 2001.

The 2001 SFMNP was a unique federal program in Oregon, which introduced FMNP to a new population, seniors, and provided them with a relatively large sum of money they could only spend with certain farmers for specific kinds of products. This provided a unique opportunity to examine how a federal program, often touted as contributing to community food security, was initially perceived by beneficiaries and participating government agencies (both experienced and non-experienced in FMNP) and how the program filtered from the national level down to the local level.

Objectives of the study

During the summer of 2001, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) had a significant impact on farmers' markets and the program was a common topic among farmers' market managers and advocates of the program. I contacted the state program administrators to see if a program evaluation was planned, and learned that due to staff and financial limitations only end-of-season surveys would be mailed to farmers and market managers. I worked with the program administrators to develop a research design to evaluate how the program operated on both the state and local level, what impact the program had on participants, and whether the program achieved its objectives in Oregon.

Research involved two main components -- interviews and document review. First, I conducted interviews in the last months of the program around Oregon at farmers' markets in order to maximize the number of interviews with farmers and seniors. Second, I completed an internship with the WIC program office,¹ where I analyzed the end-of-season surveys, and assisted in recruiting farmers' markets and farmers for the program's second season.

¹ Office of the WIC Program, a program of the Division of _____, Oregon Department of Human Services. From hereon, it will be referred to as the WIC Office, as the staff and place from which both the WIC-FMNP and part of the SFMNP operated.

The study was initially designed to evaluate whether the program achieved the three objectives of the SFMNP as stated in the RFP:

1. “provide resources in the form of fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs from farmers' markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs to low-income seniors,
2. “increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs, and
3. “develop or aid in the development of new and additional farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs” (Schumacher 2000: 65825).

Rephrased, these objectives become, (1) improve the nutritional intake of low-income elderly; (2) to increase sales of fresh produce within farmers’ markets, roadside stands (aka farmstands), and CSAs; (3) to support the development of these farm-direct market venues for local agriculture. In addition, the study would examine how these objectives were accomplished, and the expected and unexpected program outcomes.

The SFMNP utilized the marketplace for delivering benefits to very different populations, both of which were disadvantaged: farmers and low-income seniors. By providing seniors with the resources to purchase fresh produce directly from farmers, SFMNP increased consumer demand and strengthened this market for Oregon’s small and medium-sized farmers. In addition, the program provided seniors with the resources to purchase fresh produce, an important diet component as we age, but relatively expensive to purchase on a limited budget.

Understanding the impact of SFMNP in the marketplace requires an understanding of the role of farm-direct marketing to Oregon’s farmers and how food insecurity operates for the elderly. Within recent years, the wholesale fresh produce sector has declined in Oregon as processing facilities have closed and produce can be sourced more cheaply from other regions and countries. The consolidation of the produce sector means that small and medium-sized farmers are losing wholesale market access. Low-income seniors, on the other hand, face rising costs of living with decreased ability to physically care for themselves, and experience detrimental physical,

psychological and physiological changes as they age that contribute to decreased nutritional intake and thus increased food insecurity.

Individual food insecurity can be mitigated by community food security. There are as many ways to achieve community food security, as there are communities. Community Food Security (CFS) principles (Appendix D) stress the creation and strengthening of relationships between eaters and producers through increased consumption of locally and sustainably produced food. Local food economic development is essential to CFS to make the food system more economically just and ecologically sustainable. Efforts should support enhancing social and human capital in the production, processing, and distribution of food for greater food security at both the community and household level.

SFMNP addresses food insecurity through both production and consumption, and thus embodies Community Food Security principles. The main strategy of CFS is to institute change in the food system through top-down approaches of governmental policies and programs, which support bottom-up community efforts to create a more secure food system. Values-based program evaluation (described in methodology chapter) and CFS principles guided the development of the research questions.

- How does the new program impact markets at the local level?
- Does the program enhance community food security at the local level?
- How did the program fit with seniors' food management strategies?
- Did the program achieve its objectives, and what were unexpected outcomes?

Common to values-based program evaluation (VBPE) and CFS is the inclusion of community members in "the process," be it conceptualizing and instituting community food projects or program evaluation. The beneficiary's perspective is central to determining the successful delivery of the program and whether the program improves the community's welfare. The difference between these two philosophies is that CFS refers to a community of place, whereas VBPE often refers to a community of interest. This study examines the impact of SFMNP on communities of place in terms of local impacts and communities of interest at the statewide level.

Values-based program evaluation guided the research methods. Analysis and description of research findings was guided by political ecology, an approach that is key to describing the "landscape" or system into which the SFMNP coupons entered and their impact on this landscape. The findings are described as the reader follows the flow of SFMNP coupons, revealing positive responses, bottlenecks, and unresolved issues in the process. The research findings are followed by a discussion of the program's successes and challenges, and placing these within a CFS and political ecology context. The conclusion examines whether the program achieved its objectives and policy recommendations for improving the program's operation.

Political Ecology

"With each step upward in the hierarchy of biological order, novel properties emerge that were not present at the simpler levels of organization. These emergent properties result from interactions between components. A molecule such as a protein has attributes not exhibited by any of its component atoms, and a cell is certainly more than a bag of molecules. If the intricate organization of the human brain is disrupted by a head injury, that organ ceases to function properly even though all its parts may still be present. And an organism is a living whole greater than the sum of its parts." (From *Biology*, Campbell 1993: 4)

Campbell (1993) wrote of emergent properties within biology, describing the net effect of physical and chemical affects at different organizational levels of an organism. Similarly, Political Ecology utilizes multiple levels of analysis and multiple perspectives to describe behaviors found within a community. Central to political ecology is the recognition of the interconnectedness of community members, who are, in turn, connected with members of other communities both horizontally and vertically. Cultural, ecological, economic, and political pressures can restrict or promote behaviors within a community context that have significance at regional and global levels as the consequences of these behaviors can have an impact on other small and large communities.

The systems component of political ecology mean that these concepts implicitly interact and impact the components of the whole on various levels, each with properties unique to that level. Capra (1996) notes that every level has one above and one below, and higher levels are considered more complex than their lower if only because there are more total components acting upon it. This linking of systems, or linkages, is core to understanding how all the components at all levels interact.

Political ecology acknowledges that culture and social systems are dynamic as they are highly connected within a global system of exchange of ideas, people, technology, information, and resources. Indeed, researchers also have a dynamic role within these systems as they draw attention to specific aspects, such as, through program evaluation. Thus conducting research implies a responsibility for “making recommendations for culturally informed and appropriate solutions.” (Kottak 1999:25).

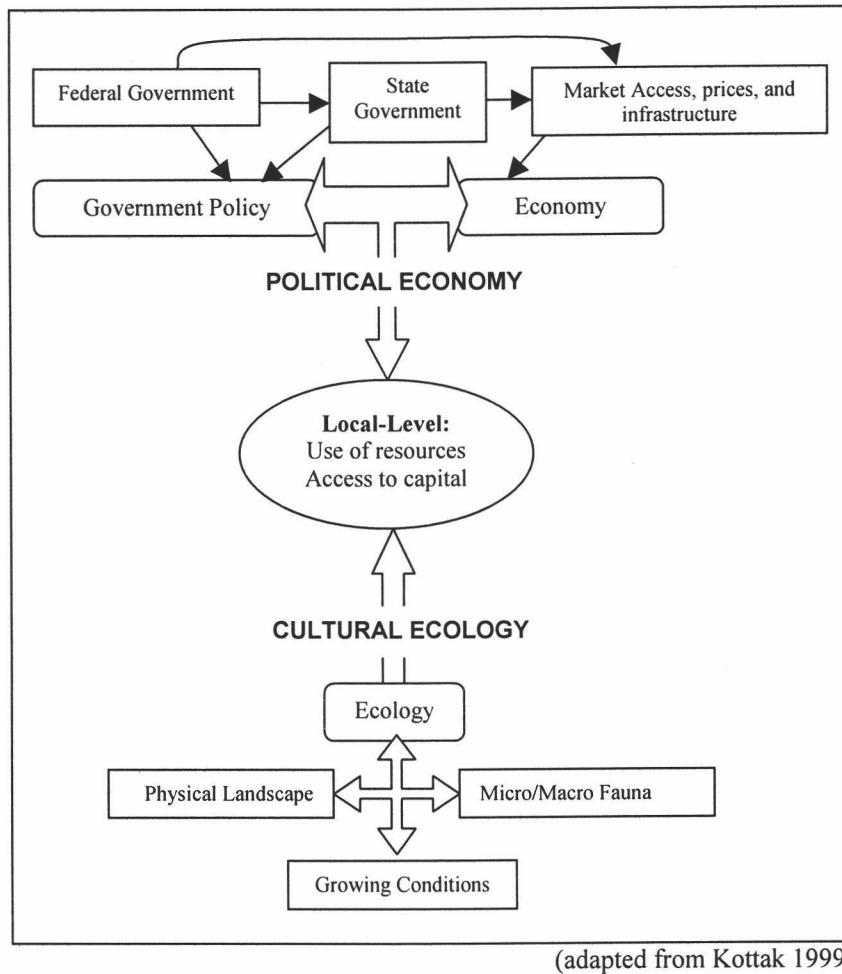
Political ecology has been used widely to understand and explain the political, economic, and ecological web in which people are embedded and how these forces have an impact on local choices in using local resources (Figure 2-1). Traditionally, political ecology explain why programs and political policies for environmental conservation failed, and how external economic and political pressures on the local-level behaviors resulted in degraded natural resources of third world countries (Thrupp 1993; Moore 1993; Schmink and Wood 1987), or how these pressures restrict a community’s ability to make wise choices in using their natural resources (Andreatta 1998; Stonich 1995). Regional situations translate to sometimes subtly different community responses to national or global policies and economic pressures (Moore 1993; Kottak 1999), and these differences must be personalized between and within program target populations (Allen and Sachs 1993:161)

Above all, political ecology emphasizes the links between nodes in human culture (values, economy, politics, ecology) and that the researcher must look at multiple levels and at multiple stakeholders in order to construct a context for behavior.

“Linkages research extends to the levels at which policies are worked out, examining archives and official records and interviewing planners, administrators, and others who impinge on the study population(s). The

aim of linkages methodology is to link changes at the local level to those in regional, national, and world systems” (Kottak 1999:30).

Figure 2-1: Political Ecology



Definition of Key Terms

Several terms in this study have multiple meanings depending upon their context. Refer to the Glossary (Appendix B) for definitions of key terms and a list of abbreviations.

BACKGROUND

Within the last half century the industrialization of the US food economy, from seed to table, has led to significant changes in the way food is produced and how consumers shop and eat. Corporate consolidation and technological advances in production and distribution have made these changes possible (Grey 2000; Spitzer and Baum 1995; Harrington and Manchester 1986; Heffernan 1999; Kinsey 1999; Marsden et al. 1997). While consumers may see any produce item at any time of the year, there is a cost for the smaller acreage farmer who does not have the volume to compete for contracts nor make a profit in the global market. Unable to make a living, the country has lost of family farms, decreasing from 42% of Americans working on farms in 1900 to 2% ninety years later (Castle 1998:7).

The sustainable agriculture movement developed in response to the environmental degradation caused by the industrialization of agriculture, and to the lack of adequate market access and/or market price for farmers (Ikerd 1996). Gaining a foothold in USDA in 1981 with the establishment of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE), sustainable agriculture stresses adoption of ecological farming and alternative marketing practices to reduce off-farm inputs, create higher quality products and enjoy higher prices.

Many sustainable agriculture farmers use wholesale markets, but farmers can often receive a higher price, if not retail price, by selling direct to consumers (aka farm-direct marketing). Selling direct enables farmers to form relationship with customers and learn directly of their preferences, whether it is for production practices or specific varieties of produce. Such venues, such as farmers' markets, have increased in number steadily in recent decades. For example, after enjoying a rebirth in the 1970s, farmers' markets in the United States rose 79% from 1994 to 2002, when there were over 3,100 farmers' markets involving 19,000 farmers nationwide (USDA 2003). They provide a space for consumers and farmers in their communities to meet and build new market relationships (Hilchey et al. 1995; Feenstra and Lewis 1999), and are important

alternative marketing venues for farmers with limited production (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002).

While providing some of the least expensive food in any developed country, the American agri-food system provides food of questionable nature (Schlosser 2000). Consumers have increasingly purchased prepared foods and highly processed foods high in fat, sugar and salt in the last half century. These foods are a large percentage of low-income diet, presumably because they are more affordable and are less likely to go to waste.

Concomitant with an increase in poor diet habits, there has been a steady rise in the rates of food insecurity among Americans. In 1972, congress legislated the Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP), which offers a variety of programs to help seniors meet their nutritional needs (mainly Meals-on-Wheels and Congregate Meal Sites). A 1980 study of Oregon's Food System estimated that over 50% of the elderly were not receiving adequate nutrition, mainly because they could not afford it (Horowitz et al. 1980). However, the Elderly Nutrition Programs, the food stamp program and food banks have been crucial in reducing levels of food insecurity among the elderly in the last quarter century. Beginning in the 1980s, food banks developed around the country (Poppendieck 1998) and today, food banks and other organizations serve people who are not able to get food otherwise. Yet, the need for food-assistance may be growing. In the 2001 measure of hunger, the elderly were the only group experiencing an increase in food insecurity and hunger in the United States (Nord et al. 2002).

This chapter has three distinct sections. The first reviews literature regarding the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. The second section describes food insecurity among the elderly, providing a context for how food insecurity arises and what strategies individuals use to meet their food needs. The third section discusses characteristics of farm-direct marketing and research on farmers' market vendors and customers and an overview of Oregon agriculture.

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

In response to the lack of market access for local farmers and concern for the health of those who are nutritionally-at-risk, Massachusetts established and funded the first Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) in 1987, distributing \$5 worth of vouchers to WIC clients, disabled and the elderly who exchanged them for fresh produce at participating farmers' markets. Due to the success of the program, the next year the Hartford Food System (non-profit organization) received funding from state agencies and private sources to start a similar coupon program in Connecticut. Seniors in low-income housing and congregate meal sites in 12 towns and cities received \$10 worth of bank checks to exchange with farmers for fresh produce (Biehler and Sepos 1999)

Due to the success of these two state-funded coupon programs, in 1989 Congress tested the coupon program in ten states for three years (FNS-USDA n.d.). After hearing from state representatives and WIC Program representative, the House Committee on Agriculture (1992) recommended the continuation and expansion of the WIC-FMNP. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-314) was passed and the WIC-FMNP has been authorized ever since. However, conflicts between state agriculture interests and federal nutrition services (FNS) during the 1992 Hearing shaped the development of the program's annual participant evaluation forms and future academic research of FMNP.

Table 3-1: Development of WIC-FMNP

No. of Years	Years	FMNP Development Stages
2	1987-1988	State-funded, state-initiated (MA, CT)
3	1989-1992	Federal Demonstration Project with 10 states
9	1992-2000	Federally authorized and FNS-operated grant program. Open to all states and tribal governments.

During the House Committee on Agriculture hearing in May 1992 the WIC Program representative, Janice Lilja (Director, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, FNS, USDA), argued that redemption rates by FMNP clients were lower by 20% than regular WIC Program redemption rate. These lower redemption rates implied that WIC clients

“did not perceive the project and the benefits of the project to be as valuable to them as the regular WIC benefit” (Committee on Agriculture 1992:18). In addition, coupon program funds would better serve in funding more eligible families to participate in the WIC Program² as it did not have enough funds to cover all eligible families.

Alternatively, four state representatives from non-government organizations and state agriculture departments (IA, TX, CT, MA) testified that the WIC FMNP was very successful from the perspective of their farmer’s markets and farmers. They found that the coupon program acted as a catalyst for improving local agriculture on multiple levels. The program was credited for instigating small-scale marketing changes that benefited customers as well as farmers. Larger-scale changes, such as formalizing the operation of the farmers’ market, demanded by the program regulations improved the overall operation of farmers’ markets and resulted in more shoppers coming to the market and an increase in market revenue (Cooper 1992: 56).

Ms. Lilja noted that the coupons were not evenly distributed among the farmers, and survey results demonstrated unequal benefit from the coupon program.

“...[F]armers reported average increases in sales of approximately 12 percent. However, the average is not representative of the typical farmer’s experience....42% of participating farmers reported no change in sales and 13 percent reported increases of less than 5 percent. In addition, the project appears to have had little or no effect on farmers’ marketing practices.” (Committee on Agriculture 1992:19)

Each participating state reported an overall increase in the number of farmers’ markets, countering the assertion from the WIC program that it favored only a few WIC clients that happened to be living near a farmers’ market. James Hines from Massachusetts was particularly adamant about the role of WIC-FMNP played in developing local agriculture and in promoting community food security³. He attributed

² WIC is not an entitlement program and thus participation is limited to available funds, whereas the Food Stamp program is an entitlement program such that anyone who is eligible for food stamps are entitled to receive them. There is no participation limit for food stamps, but there is for the WIC program.

³ The term, Community Food Security, was not then coined, but the principles of adequate access was a particular issue among advocates of sustainable agriculture in that first markets were established in areas where customers were middle to upper class. It was a great concern that sustainable agriculture be available to everyone regardless of income.

the general rise in the number of farmers' markets in lower-income areas to the WIC-FMNP (Hines 1992). In addition, Hines noted that promotion of local agriculture and farm-direct marketing was important to the development of a stronger Massachusetts agriculture, and the coupon program by encouraging the growth of farmers' markets assisted the state in achieving this end.

[The development of farmers' markets is a] "very important component of our department's strategy for ensuring the long-term viability of the farm sector. They remain an important first outlet for new-entry farmers, who must continue to enter agricultural production if farming is to thrive in the Commonwealth...similarly, the markets have helped farmers in transition from other types of production" (Committee on Agriculture 1992:54).

Operation and Evaluation of WIC-FMNP

Upon its authorization in 1992, the WIC-FMNP became a program of the Federal Nutrition Services of the US Department of Agriculture (FNS or FNS-USDA), which operates the regular WIC program. FNS also oversees the operation of WIC-FMNP and its annual evaluation. As a matching grants program the state or tribal government contributes at least 30% of funds either in cash or in-kind services. Federal funds can be used for administration, education, program evaluation, and distributing coupons to WIC clients. The WIC-FMNP brochure readily acknowledges the two unique goals of the program:

- "To make locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables available to low-income, nutritionally at-risk women, infants and children
- "To expand awareness and use of farmers' markets and to support local farmers who use such markets." (FNS-USDA n.d.)

To assess the success of the WIC-FMNP per state and across the nation, each state is required to conduct year-end evaluations by market managers, participating farmers and WIC clients. These year-end evaluations are self-administered, and include a set of predetermined questions for national comparison. The evaluations are mailed to the WIC program, which then reports the results to FNS. Results are not readily available to the public and few of the results have been reported publicly. There has been

no ethnographic research on perspectives of farmers and market managers toward the program.

Researchers from Nutrition Sciences have evaluated the impact of WIC-FMNP, not surprisingly, whether the program influenced the food shopping and consumption habits of participating WIC clients (Alexander 1996; Balsam 1994; Anliker et al. 1992). These studies assess the short- and long-term outcomes of the program's coupon recipients, in particular:

1. Improved Nutrition of WIC clients: Are WIC clients eating more nutritionally? Are they eating more fruits and vegetables?
2. Creation of new customer base for local agriculture: Are WIC clients spending cash in addition to the coupons? Are they spending all their coupons?

Success of the WIC-FMNP program, however, is often measured by the percent of coupons distributed that were spent with farmers (also known as the redemption rate). Alexander (1996) reported that there were many operational methods to raising the redemption rate per state or per year. Several distribution methods that States employ to raise redemption rates are; 1) target distribution to WIC clients in close proximity of or easy travel to farmers' markets, 2) provide them to clients who are more likely to spend them all, such as in a first-come, first serve basis, 3) over-issue the number of coupons for available funds. Unexpected barriers (i.e. accessing market and no familiarity with selecting fresh produce) and life circumstances of WIC clients can contribute to lower redemption rates, while improved educational outreach can improve them (Alexander 1996; Wilkins 1998). Furthermore, differences between annual and geographic distribution methods further complicate comparing programs between states or the performance of a single program over time. The use of different distribution methods between states and between years, reduces the usefulness of redemption rate as an indicator of program success (Alexander 1996).

While the redemption rate doesn't fully capture the community-building nor formal/informal learning that occurs from spending FMNP coupons among WIC clients and farmers (Alexander 1996), in conjunction with other indicators, the redemption rate

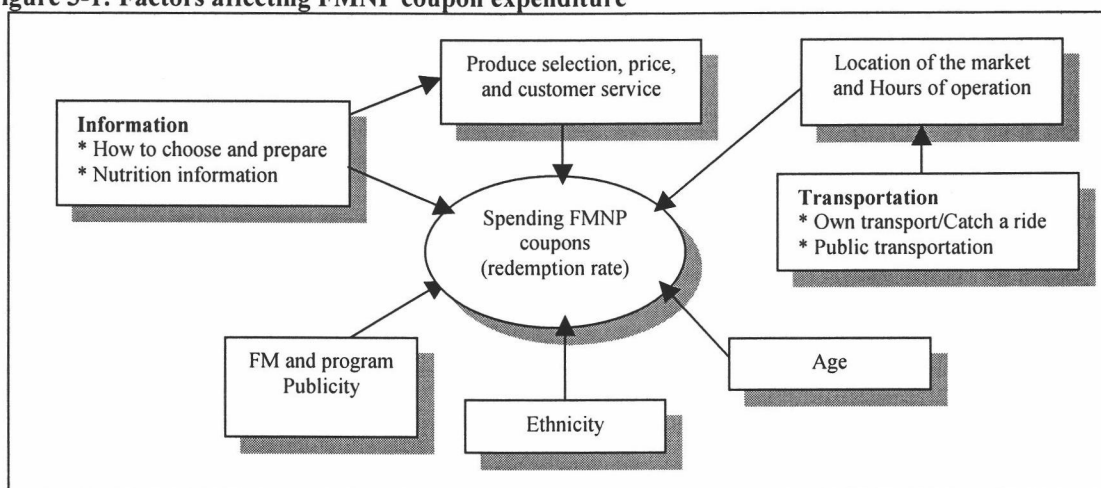
can be an indication of existing community cohesion. Redemption rate can represent the ability of individuals and communities to overcome barriers to spending the coupons. Indeed, WIC-FMNP advocates argue for the program because of community-building properties central to the principles of community food security:

- Inclusive. It makes the market more inclusive of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Farmers learn of segments of the population that have never been to the farmers' market (Cooper 1992).
- Brings New Customers to market. The coupons and publicity about the program also serve as "free advertising" for the farmers' markets as revealed by a significant percentage of coupon-recipients who had never shopped at a farmers' market before and continued to shop there after the coupons were spent (Alexander 1996; Balsam 1994; Anliker et al. 1992). Alexander (1996) found that *on average* WIC customers spent some of their own money at farmers' markets. The program also introduced a number of people who accompanied coupon-recipients to the farmer's market for the first time. The program subsidizes a market relationship, which would not exist without the FMNP benefit, bringing farmers' market into areas that do not otherwise have favorable demographics (James Hines and Rick Perry in 1992 hearing of the House Committee on Agriculture 1992).
- Federal funds stay within the community. "100 percent of the dollars allotted stay in the local community to work for the WIC client, the farmer and the local merchants" (Dan Cooper, IA in Committee on Agriculture Hearing 1992:56).
- Engages farmers in building client's food skills and knowledge. The FMNP encourages farmers to improve their marketing techniques to include information on how to prepare, store and serve their produce items. Coupon-recipients thus learn about produce items, and gain skills through the farmers' markets as well as through the WIC office.

Factors affecting coupon expenditure

Program operations, life circumstances and farmers' market factors impact a coupon-user's ability or desire to spend the FMNP coupons at farmers' market (Figure 3-1), and reflected in the redemption rate, the percentage of coupons redeemed of those sent to seniors. Nutritional and market education and how this information is delivered can lead to increased coupon redemption. Helpful information includes education on how to select and prepare regional fruits and vegetables within season, and their nutritive value (Alexander 1996), and consequently 'adds value' to fresh produce among WIC clients (Just and Weninger 1997). Typically clients receive this education at the WIC program offices, but Wilkins (1998) demonstrated that WIC clients benefited more when education was delivered in the market in an entertaining format. WIC programs can also improve redemption by continually promoting the coupon program through publicity programs in the communities of the clients and in-office reminders (Alexander 1996).

Figure 3-1: Factors affecting FMNP coupon expenditure



Life circumstances such as previous experience with farmers' markets, age, ethnicity and transportation opportunities factor positively into coupon expenditure. Yet Rose cautions that these findings are based upon dietary recall and food frequency surveys, which have "a poor ability to detect dietary inadequacies" (Rose 1998:1). Nonetheless, readiness to spend coupons at farmers' markets has been attributed to increased age (Anliker et al. 1992; Broughton 1998). Second year coupon-recipients

(previous experience) and WIC clients who were already shopping at farmers' markets will have higher redemption rates (Anliker et al. 1992; Rose 1998), and in Washington State, Broughton (1998) noted that coupon recipients who spent their coupons were already in the process of changing their shopping behavior in favor of farmers' markets. Ethnicity appears to have some significance in the redemption rate with Caucasians having the lowest rates, and Latinos and Pacific Islanders have the highest rates (Broughton 1998; Anliker et al. 1992).

Access to farmers' markets is tied to the forms of transportation that the coupon-recipient needs to get to the market and what forms are available to them. This is a particularly important issue when the market is not within walking distance and public transportation is unreliable or too inconvenient. "Subjects who walked, drove a car, or rode with a friend were at least twice as likely to go back to the farmers' markets as those who depended on buses or other modes of transportation" (Anliker 1992:188). Shopping at the market is further complicated by limited market hours of operation, which can conflict with work and family commitments (Alexander 1996).

Other market-oriented factors influence coupon expenditure at the farmers' market: selection of produce, customer service, ease of using coupons, and prices (Fisher 1999; Kindya and Perry 1998). While pricing is not mentioned in studies of WIC clients, Balsam mentions that higher prices at the farmers' market were an issue among the elderly coupon-recipients in Massachusetts.

"Pricing has been a noted problem for some elders. Large grocery chains may be able to sell produce at lower prices than small farmers, and make up the difference on other items. It is also possible that lack of competition at the markets may be a factor in keeping prices higher" (Balsam 1994).

A good selection of produce, in terms of quality and variety, makes the farmers' market more attractive for shoppers. Alexander 1996 recommended simplifying the certification process and adjusting eligibility in order to allow more farmers to participate and increase the number of farmers selling at farmers' market. In addition, Alexander noted that positive, friendly attitudes among farmers yield better customer service and improve redemption.

In summary, the program appears to help coupon clients achieve a higher level of food security by enabling and encouraging clients to consume fresh fruits and vegetables. However, we find that a subgroup of the factors that inhibit coupon expenditure, those external to the market and the program, are similar to factors contributing to food insecurity. The next section discusses these factors in the context of issues associated with aging.

New FMNP Customers: Seniors

Oregon has been among the top ten states experiencing both the highest rates of food security and food insecurity with hunger since 1996, shortly after the national measure was developed. For years 1996-1998, Oregon averaged a food insecurity rate of 12.6% and FIS with hunger rate of 5.8%, placing Oregon 6th (tied with Arkansas) and first, respectively, among state rankings (Nord, Jemison and Bickel 1999:3). Oregon's rates increased for years 1998-2000, on average, to 14.3% of Oregonians were food insecure and 6.2% were food insecure with hunger, with Oregon ranked third and first nationwide respectively (Sullivan and Choi 2002).

While the survey instrument is designed to determine a household's food insecurity status based upon ability to afford food (Nord et al. 2002), USDA's survey results demonstrate that income cannot completely account for the incidence of food insecurity. Income is a strong indicator of risk of food insecurity, yet there is no single contributor to food insecurity and a complex of dynamic factors resulting in individual and household food insecurity. This subsection looks at the factors that either lead to or mitigate food insecurity, and specifically the acquisition and utilization of fresh produce, among low-income seniors.

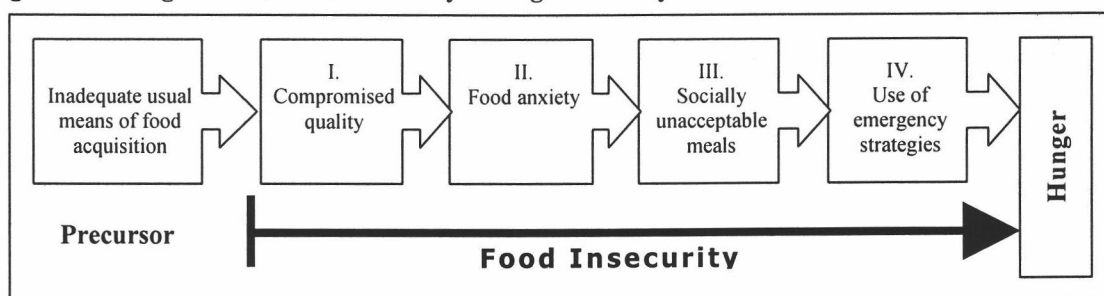
The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program placed diet improvement of low-income seniors as one of three objectives of the program, since as a category they are at increased risk of food insecurity (and malnutrition). The funding agency, CCC, exists to support the production of non-commodity agricultural products, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Through SFMNP, the CCC's mandate corresponded well with the societal goal of meeting the nutritional needs of low-income seniors. As discussed below, low-

income households and seniors are usually deficient in these food groups, and seniors require a larger share of produce in their diet. For the state of Oregon, participating seniors demonstrated need by three criteria: receiving food stamps or Medicaid, having an income below 135% of poverty, and living independently (not receiving food as part of a residential program).

In order to understand the impact the program had on seniors, it is necessary to understand the factors associated with nutritional intake and the food management strategies used by low-income seniors. “Food Management Strategy” is a concept introduced by Wolfe and Olson (1998) to describe the progression of food insecurity among seniors and the strategies employed to mitigate its effects at different stages. The concept of Food Management Strategies is a useful for understanding not only what factors mitigate food insecurity, but also how they operate and inter-relate with other factors. While food insecurity may seem like a condition brought on by a number of factors outside of a person’s ability to control, food management strategies demonstrate how people manage their situation.

As resources diminish, individuals must decide how to deal with scarcity or lack of certain foods. Given the presence of factors that hinder food access and limit purchasing power, low-income elderly will engage in food management strategies that are less costly and thus less nutritious. Wolfe and Olson (1998) identified four stages of food insecurity among urban and rural elderly in New York State (Figure 3-2). Only in the most advanced stage of food insecurity will elderly urban and rural households turn to their informal support network or emergency food pantries (Wolfe and Olson 1998).

Figure 3-2: Progression of food insecurity among the elderly



(Adapted from Wolfe and Olson 1998)

Each stage represents a set of food management strategies for accessing food while balancing available resources, food skills, food beliefs and values. The progression of FIS reflects the deterioration in the overall quality in diet as resources become limited. An increasingly compromised diet puts additional stress on seniors with special dietary requirements due to chronic illness (i.e. fresh fruits and vegetables for those with diabetes). This has particular relevance for the elderly with “functional impairments and health problems... to prepare, gain access to and eat food that is available in the household...which includes ways in which individuals prepare foods and combine foods into dishes, meals, and meal patterns” (Lee and Frongillo 2001; Quandt et al. 2000; Quandt et al 1998).

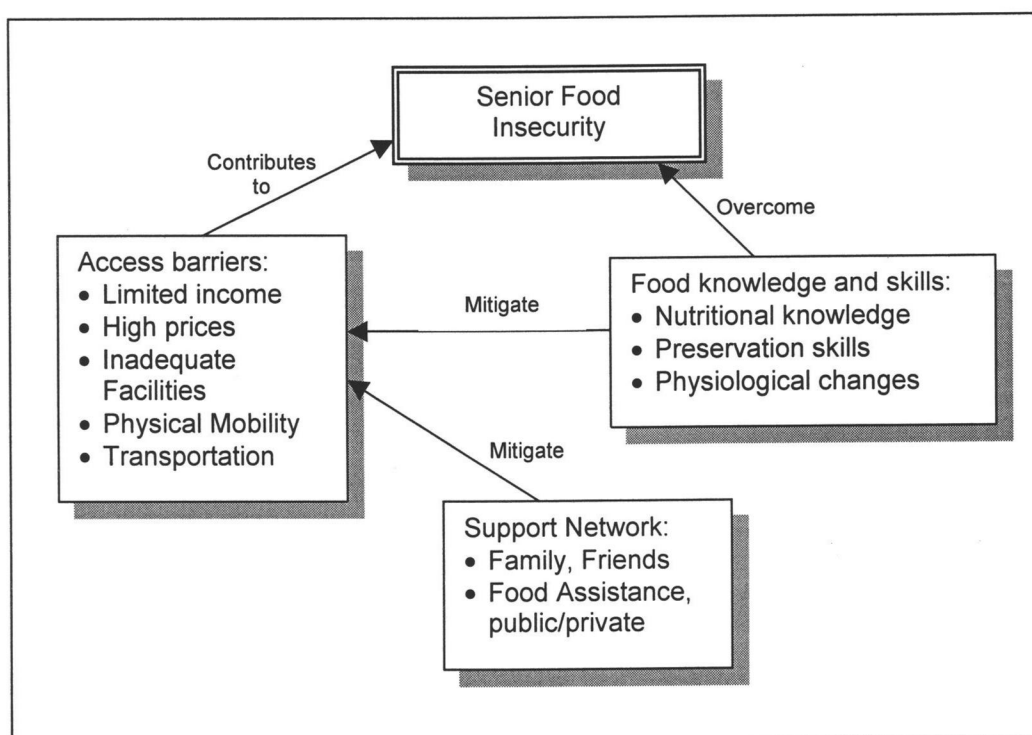
Wolfe and Olson (1998) found that both rural and urban elderly accessed emergency food sources only in the last stage of food insecurity. Urban elderly were more likely to access public food assistance, while rural elderly found private food assistance more agreeable (Wolfe and Olson 1998; Butler and DePoy 1996). Quandt and Rao (1999) found that rural elderly would go without food before asking for assistance. In Washington State, Gabor et al (2002) found that English and Spanish speaking seniors not on food stamps typically went to food banks or to congregate meals at senior centers for food assistance, because family was not nearby or they did not want to impose on their children who were struggling to feed their families. Korean seniors reported that they went first to their families, and did not want to bring shame to the family by applying for food stamps.

Factors of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the lack of access to an adequate diet for an active and healthy life. This concept can be broken into two large components: the ability of citizens to access healthy and nutritious food that they can afford, and the knowledge and skill to purchase, grow, cook, and preserve food (Figure 3-3). At a minimum, knowledge and skills are important for everyone regardless of their ability to access nutritious food and can greatly mitigate barriers to accessing nutritious foods. Access consists of two main components; (1) disposable income for purchasing food, and structural, and (2) physical

barriers which prevent maximization of this income. In addition to these general factors of food insecurity, there is an elderly dimension of food insecurity (FIS) that includes life experiences, values and issues associated with aging, which either contribute or mitigate FIS factors. I will give an overview of these categories, then discuss how they relate to the elderly who would be eligible to participate in SFMNP.

Figure 3-3: Overview of senior food insecurity factors



Limited Income

Income is strongly associated with costs of living and life experiences. With sufficient income one can overcome all other factors that contribute to food insecurity as one can pay people or for items that can help one stay food secure. However, when income no longer covers household and personal expenses, food is traditionally the first to item to be cut for two reasons. As an Oregon anti-hunger advocate explained, "There's no bill collector for food. Food is the most flexible item in the budget. It can be stretched and diluted with less expensive foods that fill the stomach, but may not be nutritionally adequate."

“Households with limited financial resources probably place a higher priority on relative food prices and other living expenses, such as rent, than does the general population...while low-income households appear to economize their food dollar very effectively, there is some danger that the nutritional quality of their diets may suffer from buying few highly nutritious foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables” (Gutherie 2002:17).

Lutz and Smallwood found that fresh fruits and produce are purchased less often by lower-income households (Lutz and Smallwood 1995). Whereas, Leibtag and Kaufman (2003) found that low-income households consume about the same amount of vegetables as higher income households, but spend the least per pound by buying lower-priced vegetables. Low-income households also spent the least per pound of fruit, but they consumed less than other households. They suggested that low-income households were buying lower cost fruit, with less variety and ruling out higher-priced fruit like berries.

As early as 1980, income from social security has been credited for a high incidence of food insecurity among Oregon’s elderly (Horowitz et al. 1980). Horowitz and colleagues estimated that over 50% of Oregon’s elderly were food insecure because social security income did not sufficiently cover rising costs of housing, food and medical care. Minority ethnic status, gender and rural residence typically mean lower life-time earnings putting these elders at increased risk of food insecurity in their advanced years (Glasgow 1990; Jensen and McLaughlin 1997).

Rising costs of living, and the increased need and cost of medical care put further pressure on limited funds. The cost of housing and utilities rose dramatically across Oregon in the last ten years. In Oregon, the median rent increased 45% from 1990 to 1998 (OHRTF 2001). According to results from OFB’s Hunger Factors Assessment (2001), half of responding households (food bank clients) paid more than 47% of their income for housing, and 30% paid over 70%. Health problems or unexpected costs contribute further risk for food insecurity among the elderly (Wolfe et al. 1996; Lokken 1999; Klesge et al. 2001).

Household size factors into household food costs. Single-person households have a higher monetary cost for purchasing and preparing meals than multi-person households (Davis and Stewart 2002; Nord et al. 2002). Gerrior et al (1995) found that elderly who

live alone tend to have lower incomes and poorer diet quality than those living in multi-person households, noting that “single-person households are often unable to take advantage of economies of scale when purchasing food and thus tend to spend more per capita on food” (Gerritor et al. 1995:113). Economies of scale are also lost to persons who don’t have space or facilities to store produce that can keep, such as apples, potatoes and winter squash, or to preserve food that is more perishable. This factor is particularly important for the elderly since increasingly, the elderly are choosing to live in their communities⁴ in more advanced ages and more are living alone (Gerritor et al. 1995).

Structural and Physical Barriers

Without sufficient income, structural barriers and physical mobility problems further stress the household food budget and compromise access to affordable and nutritious food. Food security requires an infrastructure on several levels that supports access to and use of food. Macro-level infrastructure occurs on a community level and includes the availability of services and transportation to more distant services. Micro-level infrastructure occurs at a household level and includes facilities to cook, preserve or grow food.

Macro-level barriers in low-income, rural or inner-city areas typically result from long distances or difficult access to an adequate source of food from household residences. Morland et al. (2002) found that distance to the nearest full-service grocery store had an impact on people’s nutritional intake. For rural areas and inner-city areas, the lack of full-service grocery stores is well documented (Ashman et al. 1993; Biehler and Sepos 1999; Public Voice for Food and Health Policy 1990). In the grocery stores that do exist, the fresh produce is often of poor quality and higher priced than in suburban stores (Fisher 1999; Horowitz, O’Brien and Powell 1980). The loss of full-service grocery stores in rural and inner-city households mean that low-income residents are caught between accessing higher-cost lower-quality food outlets nearer to them, or to use private or public transportation to access the lower-cost grocery stores that have a wider variety and typically better quality food items (Morland et. al 2002). Fresh produce is

⁴ As opposed to residential living and nursing homes

notoriously lacking in quality or quantity in small grocery stores and small food outlets that are located in low-income areas and this can leave residents few choices for maintaining a nutritional diet.

Personal or household level barriers include cooking facilities, equipment and space that complements a person's food skills and knowledge. Inadequate means for cooking, preserving or storing food negate any skills and knowledge that could be used to improve nutritional intake. According to OFB's Hunger Factors Assessment results, a third Oregon's food bank clients had to move within the last two years in order to find affordable housing (OFB 2001). As with other populations, when seniors are not able to keep up, they must find new housing that will likely be less than adequate either in terms of facilities or access to stores and services. An Oregon anti-hunger advocate stated the significance of this, "I can suggest that they join a Gleaning group,⁵ but if they don't have any place to store the food or a kitchen to cook the food, then they really can't participate."

A decrease in mobility can make food purchasing and preparation activities quite difficult, for instance, not being able to stand for long, or in the handling of food and utensils. Maintaining one's diet is critical for chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and heart-disease and for preventing illness and accidents which could otherwise further restrict a person's mobility both within and outside the home (Powell and Singer 1985) and is a factor contributing to the risk of food insecurity among the elderly (Frongillo and Lee 2001c).

Physiological changes in the elderly can contribute to reduced food intake and poor food choices, and require conscientious diet changes for a healthy and active life. Increasing problems with biting, chewing, and swallowing can lead to anorexia, eating soft carbohydrates that are typically nutrient deficient, and maldigestion and malabsorption respectively (Lewis 1978). Loss of smell or decreased or altered tastes can

⁵ Gleaners is a term referring to non-profit groups where low-income members harvest fresh produce from farm fields and collect donated products from grocery stores and bakeries. It is a group effort to collect and redistribute these donated foods and is a cost-effective way to receive abundant nutritious foods. Due to the nature of food collection, it is likely that participants may receive a bounty of one item requiring personal facilities for preserving food stuffs either through canning or freezing. For more information about gleaning in Oregon, see Kimberly Drage's OSU Masters thesis, 2003.

alter food choices (Morley 2001). Other physiological changes lead to a decreased ability to process fats and sugars, and when exacerbated by reduced physical activity, demand a diet that has low caloric intake but maintains or even increases vitamins, minerals and fibers (Powell and Singer 1985). Fruits and vegetables are key to healthy, “nutrient-dense” diet (Lewis 1978; Guthrie 2002; Oregon Dept of Human Services 2003). SFMNP participants appear to be in double jeopardy of FIS; as older persons tend to be deficit in vitamins and minerals (Klesge et al. 2001; Guthrie 2002) and lower-income households tend to purchase less fresh produce (Lutz and Smallwood 1995).

Food Knowledge and Skills

Knowing how to grow produce, cook produce and choose produce within one’s food budget can greatly mitigate food insecurity. Macro-level structural barriers to food can be improved when there is a household capacity to garden and the knowledge of how to garden, thus enabling a household to grow some of their produce needs (Olson and Rauschenbach 1997). In addition, knowledge of preserving and storing fresh produce along with facilities and physical capability can mitigate food insecurity by taking advantage of bulk or surplus produce. The nutritional sciences have largely contributed to our understanding of how people choose which resources to access and under what circumstances. Quandt et al. (2000) characterized this decision-making process as nutritional self-management, emphasizing meal preparation, eating patterns, and strategies for obtaining food in order to maintain one’s nutritional health. Culture and ethnicity provide the belief systems and experience that determine what an individual deems proper to eat (Quandt et al. 1998)

As stated above, physical, physiological and psychological changes requires older adults to be aware of what kinds of changes to make in their diet and greater diet diligence in order to maintain their health. McKie (2000) found that among elderly living in United Kingdom, providing nutrition education had little impact as seniors valued the food skills and knowledge acquired in their youth. According to McKie, seniors may take notice of nutrition education when they are faced with chronic diet-related diseases,

yet still have more faith in the nutrition adages of their youth after facing a lifetime of changing nutrition advice.

Life experience and beliefs, including religious beliefs, impact the perception of hunger or food insecurity, and play a significant role in formulating food management strategies and which resources they will access, such as private or public food-assistance. While food management strategies among the elderly are not particular to this age group, today's elderly have a set of life experiences that is unique. The childhood of many elderly were rooted in the Great Depression and many did not grow up with the variety of food storage and preparation appliances we have today (Wolfe and Olson 1998). There is an expectation that their early life experiences and their knowledge of foods and skills enable the elderly to be more food-secure.

Food gardening, animal husbandry and hunting are important sources of nutrition, particularly in rural areas where more land is available for gardening (Olson and Rauschenbach 1997; Quandt and Rao 1999). The cessation of these activities can mark a decline in fresh produce and meats – precisely those items that the low-income and elderly are less likely to buy when the food budget is meager (Quandt et al. 2000). Wolfe et al. (1996) succinctly summarized food management strategies used by the elderly.

“Many elderly used the term “manage” in describing how they obtained food on their limited incomes...these strategies included tight budgeting (most paid their bills when they received their check and then determined how much was left for food), shopping practices such as using coupons and sales and not buying food on credit, “stretching” food (e.g., making a small piece of meat last several days by making it into a stew), stocking up with canned or other goods for times when their money was “short”, and, in the rural area, home food production and preservation (gardening, canning and freezing, hunting and raising small animals). Many elderly appeared to be very proud of these skills...In contrast, not being able to use these skills...contributed to feelings of food insecurity and anxiety” (Wolfe et al. 1996:98).

These food management strategies, such as “belt-tightening” tend to be used before calling on social networks (Wolfe et al 1998; Quandt and Rao 1999). Butler and DePoy (1996) said of the rural elderly women they interviewed, “their responses

indicated a theme of self-sacrifice, through giving, enduring, and adapting, which was not surprising in this generation of women, isolated from urban centers” (Butler and DePoy 1996:77)

Support Network

Support networks are those that surround one and provide support and companionship, and for the purpose of this study, are characterized as formal and informal support networks to clarify between institutions and staff that paid to assist elders, and the informal support networks where job performance standards are lacking. Formal support networks consist of persons from public or private institutions that provide elders assistance, such as food banks and caregivers. However, this distinction softens when the members of the formal support network form friendships with the elder, similar to members of the informal support network, and provide emotional support as well.

Informal support networks can consist of family, friends and neighbors, who the elder can confide in and communicate well with on a regular basis, and lives nearby, and are important during times of stress or significant life changes (Poff Davis 2000). Family often playing a key role within informal support networks in caring for the elderly (Glasgow 2000; Chapman and Pancoast 1985). Garretson’s study (1986) of health care in Appalachians of Ohio, affirms the strong preference of elders and their caregivers toward community based, family-provided support rather than institutions. Informal support networks can become less responsive when they are exhausted, and formal assistance can play an important role in revitalizing the network by providing resources and reducing the caregiving load. Chapman and Pancoast (1985) warn that agency structures can limit the ability of the informal support network to provide assistance.

The importance of informal support networks should not be underestimated for maintaining the elder’s health and well-being. The lack of an informal support networks is a contributing factor to food insecurity among older Oregonians (OCP 2001). Oregon Center for Public Policy reports that 1 in 27 Oregonians 65 years and older live in a food insecure household (OCP 2001). High population in-migration and high rural

populations typify the “hunger crescent” – southern and western states with the highest rates of food insecurity – may translate into a small or non-existent support networks that cannot buffer against hunger (Palmer 2001).

The importance of the informal support network grows as elderly incomes decline (Glasgow 1990), providing essential emotional and concrete support (Butler and DePoy 1996). Quandt et al (2001) found a very high level of food sharing, where elders both received and gave food and garden produce was the most common food item exchanged. Family and neighbors frequently gave food to elders and found that elders shared their surplus with others, including food pantries. They found that the sharing of food, or food gifts, significantly mitigated elders’ food insecurity and contributed to their sense of community (Quandt et al. 2001). Garden produce was one of the more common items to be shared with the elderly (Quandt et al. 2001), even as private and public food assistance programs may not be able to provide sufficient fruits and vegetables for a quality diet (Palmer 2001).

In addition to providing food, support networks are vital to keeping the elderly from becoming isolated and depressed, which can reduce nutritional intake. Support networks are important to the elderly “because so many factors related to both the biological and social dimensions of nutrition change in old age” (Quandt et al. 2000: 87) putting the elderly at risk of food insecurity. Loss of social support network, inability to pay bills, and substandard housing result in a situation where declining resources and decreasing ability to care for one’s needs leave seniors with difficult life threatening choices to make and leading many to depression (Powell and Singer 1985; Klesges et al. 2001). Increasing isolation leads to depression, which then contributes to poor food choices and decreased food intake (Oregon Dept of Human Services 2003). Having commitments outside the home and being involved with one’s community are essential for combating depression. Butler and DePoy found that rural elderly women “emphasized the importance of staying busy and helping others in their descriptions of how they maintained their health and well-being” (Butler and DePoy 1996:77).

Formal Food Assistance

In terms of food assistance, public and private food assistance programs are the primary providers in a senior's formal support network. They strive to help seniors maintain an adequate nutritional intake through a variety of complementary programs. Oregon's elderly benefit from programs geared to the elderly or to limited-income households, and the diversity of programs is credited with address different barriers to good nutrition and lowering the rate of elderly food insecurity (Ponza et al. 1996).

Three public food assistance programs serve low-income seniors who live independently or with younger household members. These programs address a variety of situations which prevent seniors from acquiring an adequate diet: the Food Stamp Program (FSP) provides funds for purchasing food at participating retail food stores⁶; the Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP) provides prepared meals in group settings (aka congregate meals) or home-delivered meals (aka Meals on Wheels)⁶; and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) supplies federally donated boxed and canned foods to participants in 22 states in specific locations (Robertson and Summers 2000:3). ENP and FSP are the two programs that are most widespread throughout the United States, but many elderly do not use these government programs (Cohen et al; Robertson and Summers 2000). Later, this paper will look specifically at ENP and FSP programs as they may influence acceptance of or resistance to SFMNP.

Private food assistance has been around for decades, but became more organized, networked and structured starting in the early 1980s as nationwide organizations linked disparate programs (Poppendieck 1998). In Oregon, the Oregon Food Bank (OFB) is the overarching organization that is networked with Regional Coordinating Agencies which further coordinate food supplies and operational funds with the Direct Member Agencies in their region, such as food pantries, gleaning groups, and community-based organizations that provide further assistance, for example, through CSFP distribution and brown-bag programs. Though they may receive some federal government funds, often

⁶ See Appendix E for background on the Elderly Nutrition Program and the food stamp program in addressing food insecurity among the elderly.

the direct member agencies are primarily self-supporting through community donations of funds, food, building supplies, and labor.

There are regional differences in the acceptance of private and public food assistance programs. For instance, urban elderly tend to prefer food stamp program (FSP) to food pantries (Wolfe and Olson 1998), while rural elderly prefer food pantries. Community operated and perceived as non-governmental (although they are federally supported through operational funds and food items) private food assistance is preferred in rural areas over direct government assistance. In addition, by volunteering for the food bank or other food programs where seniors can contribute, seniors don't perceive the food they take home as assistance (Wolfe et al. 1996; Anderson 1990). Volunteering and being able to give back to the community are key to rural elderly women's self-perception of health. However, "they are also willing to accept help when their responsibilities become burdensome" (Butler and DePoy 1996:92)

In the food-assistance landscape, Food Stamp Program (FSP) most closely resembles FMNP, in addition, a number of seniors were eligible for participation because they participated in food stamps. Food Stamps are distributed through two agencies in Oregon: families apply for and receive food stamps through Adult and Family Services, and Seniors apply and receive food stamps through Seniors and People with Disabilities Services (SPDS), which contract with public and private agencies around the state to process FSP applications and deliver food stamps. The application process requires the senior to demonstrate their need and lack of resources in person, and repeat this process when they renew their registration. This process can be emotionally difficult for a number of seniors (personal communication with local branch staff).

Food stamps were previously issued in paper form and spent like vouchers at grocery stores, convenience stores, and other places that accept food stamps. In paper form, nearly any kind of food outlet could accept food stamps as long as they sold qualifying foods.⁷ However in 1997, the State of Oregon adopted Electronic Benefits

⁷ Before EBT, farmers' markets and roadside stands could be authorized to accept food stamps for nearly any edible food item sold. The conversion of food stamps from paper to EBT has largely restricted any use food stamps at farmers markets due to infrastructure needed to process the cards.

Transfer (EBT) and discontinued the paper form. On the EBT card, the food stamp value is added monthly to the card's food stamp account, much like a bank debit card or a credit card. State and federal guidelines determine which foods eligible for purchase with food stamps.

Several studies were conducted to elucidate the physical and social reasons for FSP non-participation and examined the experiences of seniors on and off food stamps (Hollonbeck and Ohls 1984, and McConnell and Ponza 1999). Barriers to participating in FSP include; limited transportation, psychological reasons, and lack of perceived need or lack of information, and belief that the expected benefit do not outweigh the costs associated with applying (Gabor et al. 2002; Robertson and Summers 2000; McConnell and Ponza 1999; Butler and DePoy 1996; Hollonbeck and Ohls 1984). Transportation can be difficult in both rural and urban areas in terms of cost and availability, such as proximity of routes to home and services and bus times and frequency.

Psychological reasons include the stigma of applying for and using the food stamps. Some seniors fear how accessing public food assistance would reflect upon their families, while other have a strong prejudice against receiving government assistance. Some seniors may not believe themselves to be in need or that they are only temporarily food insecure, and thus do not feel like they need to apply for food stamps. Others do not believe they are eligible and thus do not apply, perhaps because they had attempted previously. Lastly, the benefit may not justify the cost of application. A quarter of seniors on food stamps receive only \$10 a month and some seniors feel that the anticipated benefit is not worth the burden of application, which includes time, labor and money in getting the required papers together and to the office (Gabor et al. 2002; Robertson and Summers 2000). The recertification period varies from state to state, but most states require recertification within 3-6 months that can be as burdensome as the initial application. Some seniors feel that the applications are complex or intrusive. Some seniors also feel that food stamps is a limited resource and do not want to take them from someone who is more needy (Gabor et al. 2002).

In the state of Washington, Gabor et al. (2002) found that seniors receiving food stamps generally believed the program benefited them by fulfilling basic food needs that

food pantries cannot, enabling them to buy healthier food items, and by releasing some monthly income for rising costs of shelter and prescription medicines. Of those seniors receiving \$10 a month of food stamps, some seniors will hold their food stamps for several months until there is a large expenditure as with holidays (Gabor et al 2002; FSP n.d.). With the introduction of Electronic Benefit Transfer, an ATM-type card used like a debit card and where FSP funds are added monthly. However, unlike paper food stamps, after three months of non-use the food stamp benefit is “frozen,” and one must reapply in order to use them again. For a number of seniors this has been a confusing transition from paper to card, with seniors complaining that they didn’t know the amount left on the card and were either confused about how to use it or couldn’t remember their PIN number. For seniors who did adjust to the new system, most reported that they liked the increased anonymity of using food stamps.

Gabor et al (2002) also found that some seniors complained of a lack of choice with the food stamps, when they were not able to get cultural food items. Others noted that the EBT card prevented them from sharing their food stamp benefit with others who need them or to use them to pay for congregate meal sites.

In a study of food stamp participation, a majority of elderly did not admit to experiencing hunger or food insecurity, but the amount of assistance was insufficient (\$10/month) (Lokken 1999) as many were still food insecure. “Food Stamps, then, are reducing user households’ food insecurity and hunger levels similar to their non food stamp counterparts” (CPW 2000; Nord et al. 2002). In examining the nutritional practices of seniors receiving food stamps, Lokken found that poor nutritional practices were due to lack of money, limited access to transportation, poor overall health, and lack of nutrition education.

Farm-Direct Marketing

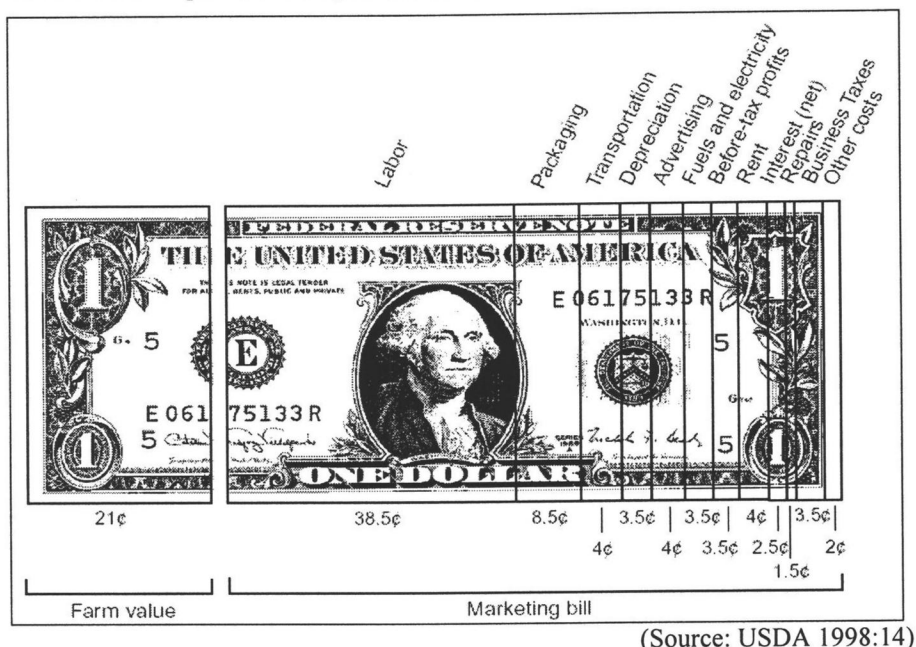
The second objective of the RFP was to support local agriculture, stressing direct-marketing efforts by farmers. Often touted as the best way to support local farmers, direct-marketing allows consumers face-to-face contact with the growers (either farm owners or field laborers), or at least someone connected with the growing (Norberg-

Hodge 2002) . While successful larger farmers may need to hire someone to sell at a market for them, in order to sell at more than one market at a time, who will often have intimate knowledge of the farm and the farmer. There is a growing body of studies on farmers markets and CSAs and a few regarding roadside stands. These studies often try to capture the economic and social impact of these markets, however, the variety of markets make this is difficult even when controlling for geographic area and time (Brown 2002).

Farm-Direct Marketing (FDM) refers to a set of marketing strategies that enable growers to sell directly to the end consumer, such as households and institutions like schools and hospitals. By providing direct access to customers, FDM venues theoretically enable farmers to earn more for their produce by receiving a price more comparable to retail rather than wholesale prices. Without a middleman, the farmer takes home more of the “food dollar” (Figure 3-4). The Economic Research Service of USDA reported that in 1997, 21% of every dollar spent on food went to the farm, and the rest went for “marketing, including labor, packaging, transportation, advertising, fuel and electricity, and rent among other items” (USDA 1998:14).

For some producers, a farmers’ market or a roadside stand are the only market venues that remain or are potentially viable (Andreatta 2002). For mid-sized producers, these venues are sources of extra income and are important for staying in business (Burns and Johnson 1996). While they involve considerable investment in labor, time and resources (Govindasamy et al. 2003), FDM markets are easier to enter and require relatively little investment compared to other outlets, and provide a social network that supports farmers entering a new market. These market venues act as business incubators, either supporting beginning farmers, farmers transitioning to direct- marketing, or those wanting to introduce new produce varieties or added-value items to customers (Spitzer and Baum 1995; Markley and Hilchey 1998; Hilchey, Lyson and Gillespie 1995; Grubinger 1999; Corum et al. 2001; Committee on Agriculture 1992).

Figure 3-4: What a dollar spent on food paid for in 1997



In farm-direct marketing, each on and off-farm enterprise and market venue advertise the others employed by the farm to sell its produce and other products. Farms with established roadside stands may begin selling at the farmers' markets to advertise the roadside stand operation in addition to gaining extra income (Griffin and Frongillo 2003). Roadside stands and farmers' markets can be the entry point for customers to any number of farm-based enterprises, such as U-picks (where customers pick the produce themselves at the farm), Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA, where customers pay the farmer in advance for a weekly supply of in-season produce), and agri-tourism (corn mazes, pumpkin picking, wagon rides, etc.)

Benefits of FDM to farmers and consumers take on many dimensions of sustainability. Farmers' markets are educational arenas where customers learn from farmers about eating seasonally and regionally and production practices (Baber and Frongillo 2003; Griffin and Frongillo 2003). Customers can typically find regional varieties or organically grown produce that would not be available from the global market, but require less energy to grow under local conditions and with less packaging. Eating within season and region, avoids support of foods that require high-energy input in

either out-of-season production, transportation, and inputs used to control local growing conditions.

Yet, there is often a learning curve and concomitant life style changes as consumers embrace seasonality and regionality. To eat seasonally is to shop for food items that are available when they are ripe within one's region; for instance, tomatoes tend to be available from mid-July until the weather turns cold. To eat regionally refers to eating items that your region can grow. Committing to eating within season and within region is often accompanied by unlearning cooking habits while acquiring new skills and knowledge for utilizing local produce despite the increasing prevalence of pre-made meals, instant and quick prep foods in grocery stores (Roberts et al. 1999). It means relinquishing the privilege to purchase any food item at any time of the year, and forgo food shopping for a meal, and instead create a meal from the crops that are available.

In Oregon, the expression of regionality in farmers' markets is dependent upon the origin of the vendors and their skill. Regionality is not limited to a particular climate or soil regime but is also a testament to the ability and knowledge of the farmer to grow an item in an area it would not necessarily thrive in. In addition, regionality is "expanded" when farmers from other regions sell at a farmers' market, for instance, artichokes from the Oregon Coast region can be sold in a farmers' market elsewhere if the grower makes the trip. Several farmers' market vendors at the Bend farmers' market lived in the Willamette Valley and traveled four hours or more on mountain roads to sell at the market during the 2001 season. In Klamath Falls, the rules of the market limit participation to farmers who live within 50 miles (Bragg 2001). In the end, the customer will not have access to a particular item if a vendor does not bring it or grow it and this raises the possibility of frustration for seniors who expected more.

Roadside Stands

Roadside Stands have been a traditional venue for farm-direct marketing. Simple roadside stands have few regulations and can be relatively inexpensive means of selling direct, particularly when the roadside stand is located on a well-trafficked road. Roadside stands are normally operated by one grower who determines how sophisticated the

business can become, either selling their own product or expanding their produce line with fruits and vegetables bought from neighbors or wholesalers. Roadside stands are extremely diverse in their earning potential, how they operate, what they sell, and their seasonal length and operating hours. They can range from a little booth selling garden surplus on an honor system, or it can be a multi-million dollar business with a permanent weather-proof structure and offer a variety of goods and added-value products that are grown and produced from a large region.

As the roadside stand becomes more sophisticated, like a “store in the country”, it becomes necessary to make a jump in scale and hire at least one person to run the roadside stand on a regular schedule (Davis and Love n.d.). The same is true as a farmer adds market venues and other FDM enterprises, some of which may run concurrently, requiring the farmer to have other people sell for them. Thus the farmer may not be the vendor selling at the farmers’ market or roadside stand. In the case of both roadside stands and farmers’ markets, it is in the interest of producers to have a salesperson who knows about the product; how it was grown, how to prepare it, and how it grows in the field.

Farmers’ Markets

Most farmers’ markets in the United States are seasonal, open-air venues, where a number of producers and other vendors meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to sell directly to consumers (Burns and Johnson 1996). Most are established in population centers, such as rural towns, inner-city neighborhoods and downtowns, and suburban centers. Yet, they can be located in any area where booths can be set up and people can stroll by, such as a parking lot, park, plaza, a blocked off street, or in a county fairground. In a study of California farmers’ markets, Feenstra and Lewis (1999) found that rural markets could accommodate more farmers suggesting capacity for growth in these markets. Yet urban farmers’ markets have better returns, with typically higher gross sales and greater demand for add-value products, but are more difficult for farmers to enter.

Some farmers' markets are started by growers, but increasingly local governments or community-based organizations are starting farmers' markets as a means of revitalizing downtown areas or community centers and to provide a source of quality fresh produce for inner-city neighborhoods and rural towns (Hamilton 2002; Center for Rural Pennsylvania n.d.). Each farmers' market is the culmination of its community of vendors and customers, forming its own unique identity and largely structured around the needs of the buyers and sellers. Identity is shaped by internal factors such as the goals of the market, what organization starts and supports the development of the market, the mix of products, and weekly and seasonal availability of vendors. External factors such as weather patterns, and what day and what time of the day the market operates also shape the market's character, and "influence the marketing and customer volume" (Griffin and Frongillo 2003:195). Poor weather conditions and quickening darkness deter customers from coming to the market.

Farmers' markets are gathering places for the community; a commons, where shoppers can bring family and friends, meet those who grow the food, and enjoy music and food, and learn about services and opportunities in the area. FM Farmers generally appreciate the market for the ability to interact directly with customers, receive customer feedback and share information about their products and farm (Corum, Rosenzweig and Gibson 2001; Andreatta 2002; Hilchey, Lyson and Gillespie 1995; Griffin and Frongillo 2003). FM farmers also find rewards in the better prices they can receive (Andreatta 2002; Govindasamy et al. 2003), often recognizing that economic success is as much a market effort by all vendors as it is personal skill (Griffin and Frongillo 2003).

Customers surveyed for why they shopped at the farmers' market appreciated the higher quality fruits and vegetables at Farmers' Markets, their freshness and taste, and that the produce is grown locally and not imported, and safer (Wimberly et al. 2003; Abel et al. 1999; Davis and Love n.d.; Andreatta 2002; Winter 1996). Stephenson and Lev (1998) found that over 90% of customers of two small cities in the Mid-Willamette Valley of Oregon preferred domestic produce over globally sourced, and 75% preferred locally grown produce to produce grown in other areas of the state. Lastly, customers at

farmers' markets can find varieties not available at grocery stores, enabling farmers to niche market while growing a variety better suited to the local growing environment.

“[L]arge producers often abandon some of the excellent quality varieties for various reasons. The consumer still likes and would buy many of these items if he could. This offers opportunities for the smaller grower with a favorable market site who has neither the land, capital, nor desire to produce in large quantities of horticultural crops” (Davis and Love n.d.: 1)

Customers at farmers' markets in low-income areas appear to be sensitive to pricing at the market. In a study of low-income markets, Fisher noted that the successful markets are those that offer a large volume at lower prices and sufficient selection. Organic farmer, often with smaller farmsteads and requiring higher prices, can exist at markets catering to a low-income customer base. Yet higher prices across the market, particularly as globally sourced and cheaper produce is readily accessible at nearby stores, appear to be a significant factor in the failure of some low-income markets (Fisher 1999:16, 38). These markets also need to be sensitive the food culture of community residents, allowing some bending of market rules to allow certain, highly desirable items to be available to market-goers (Fisher 1999: 32). One low-income market in Maryland allowed resale of hard to grow items in their area, permitting onions, potatoes and carrots to be resold, but not tropical fruit (which are not capable of growing in Maryland), in order to “meet the needs of the community” (Fisher 1999: 29)

Oregon Agriculture

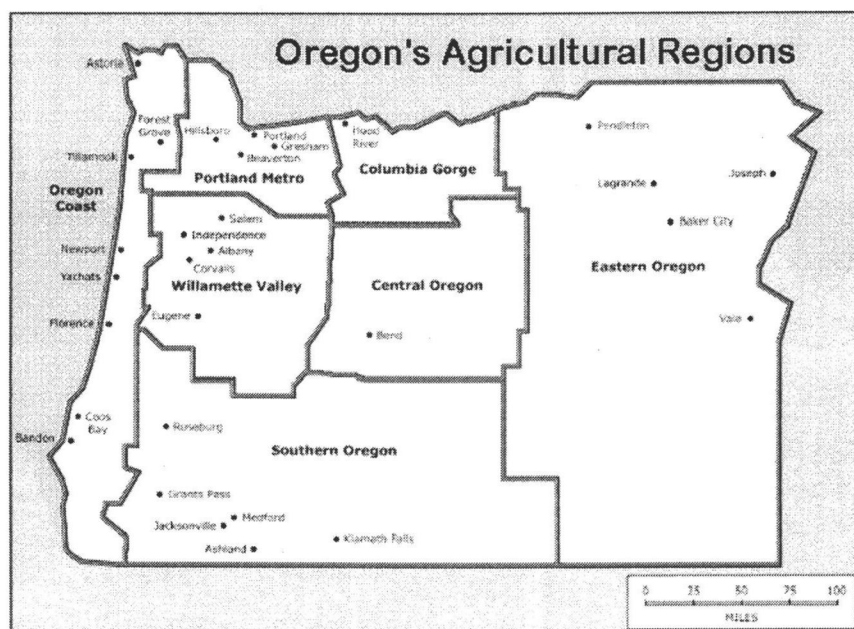
Climate, soils, hydrology and geology play a central role in determining what kinds of food products are produced in a given region. In order to understand the various regions in Oregon and the kinds of produce they support we need to consider daily and annual patterns of temperature, rainfall patterns, and available sunlight, soil types and topography. While nearly most crops available in Oregon can grow in nearly every region with nurturing, some do particularly well in one or two regions (see Appendix C for list of crops and availability during the season for the Willamette Valley).

The growing conditions are extremely diverse across the state of Oregon, but the majority of agricultural land in Oregon lies in two major climates; a mild maritime climate on the west side of the Cascades favors many crops, and on the eastern side arid conditions and temperature extremes require hardier crops (Bubl and Stephenson 2001). The two mountain ranges in Western Oregon trap moisture from the Pacific Ocean creating a wet and mild region west of the Cascade Mountains where the majority of Oregon's population lives. Land east of the Cascade Mountains is characterized as high desert. These lands have little precipitation, higher elevation, rockier terrain and more extreme daily and annual temperate regimes. Except for the Willamette Valley, much of Oregon is either mountainous or hilly with soils suited for timber or grazing livestock, and not row crops. Grains and produce are grown in microregions where soil conditions allow.

In the 2002 brochure of Oregon Farmer's Markets (ODA 2002), ODA identified seven agricultural regions (Figure 3-5). Primarily delineated by county lines, these regions roughly capture ecological-economic differences within Oregon, particularly in regards to agricultural production. Agriculture is not only determined by natural resources (soil, water, and climate), but also by man-made infrastructures supporting production, processing and distribution. These seven regions serve well to understand and appreciate responses and reactions to the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Beyond agro-ecological systems, marketing and land-use laws play an important role in what will be grown and where it will be grown within a region. Similar crops are typically grown in the same area because the soil and climate conditions favor them and because there is a farming community of informal or formal relationships and partnerships around these crops. These communities are further strengthened by mentoring relationships or relationship of exchange and cooperation. Farmers can work together co-operatively for an economy of scale that lowers the cost of production, strengthens their position in agricultural markets, and increases the profitability of agriculture. Until the recent decline of frozen vegetable processing in the Willamette Valley, this cooperative system supported a large number of farmers.

Figure 3-5: Oregon's growing regions



(Source: "Oregon Farmers Markets 2002" brochure, ODA 2002)

Market price and crop risk can also determine what items are grown in which regions. Fresh produce, including berries, have the highest market price per pound relative to any other food crop (Bubl and Stephenson 2001), however it also comes with the highest risk of decimation from severe weather, insects and disease. Fresh fruits and vegetables are demanding crops to grow as they have relatively small windows of opportunity to harvest and deliver to the customer before they perish. Hot weather or wet weather can accelerate deterioration and make this period even shorter. Technology can help the farmer control for a variety of growing and storage conditions, reducing the risk of crop failure but increasing the cost of production.

Farm-Direct Marketing in Oregon

Estimated FDM sales for Oregon in 1997 was \$14,287,000 as reported in sales direct to individuals for human consumption⁸ (NASS 1997a). This up 38% from 1992

⁸ "this item represents the value of agricultural products produced and sold directly to individuals for human consumption from roadside stands, farmers' markets, pick-your-own sites, etc. It excludes nonedible products such as nursery products, cut flowers, wool, etc. Sales of agricultural products by

when Oregon farmers reported \$10,323,000 in direct sales⁹. This represents nearly a million dollar increase per year on average for Oregon farm-direct marketing, yet this amount is likely to be underestimated. Brown (2002) notes that FDM returns are underestimated in the Agricultural Census¹⁰ in two ways. The survey relies on farmers' recall for estimates on the value of FDM, which is problematic as most FDM transactions are in cash. Secondly, small-scale farmers are rarely surveyed by the Agricultural Census, yet are more likely to sell direct to consumers through farmers' markets and roadside stands. In Oregon, this is of special significance since 1997 Census of Agriculture results showed the majority (62%) of Oregon's farms earned less than \$10,000 per year yet only accounted for 2% of state agricultural sales in 1997, whereas the largest farms (3.5%) earned over \$500,000, accounting for 63% of sales (Cornelius et al. 2000:6).

Farm-Direct Market results show only the agglomeration of all FDM activities, but do not differentiate between market venues. In the late 1990s, ODA estimated that several million dollars worth of product were sold in farmers' markets each season (McLain 1998), however, this estimate does not differentiate between fresh produce and all other products available in farmers' markets. Fresh produce can be particularly difficult to ascertain in both roadside stands and farmers' market as these markets are likely to sell more than fresh produce, and roadside stands may offer many more items that are resell than farmers' markets.

Farmer's markets in Oregon have shown great growth in the last couple of decades even as markets blossomed nationally. In the mid-1970s, Oregon's farmers' markets enjoyed a rebirth in several communities along the I-5 corridor in the Willamette Valley and Southern Oregon. ODA estimated that about ten farmers' markets were operating as early as 1980 (Stephenson and Lev 2001; Novak 1998), with numbers steadily increases in the 1990s. In recent years, there has been steady and incremental growth in the overall number of farmers' markets annually participating in FMNP,

vertically integrated operations through their own processing and marketing operations were excluded (NASS 1997b)

⁹ with 4,594 and 4,263 reporting farms respectively. 1997 is the most recent data available.(NASS 1997a)

¹⁰ Conducted every 5 years by the US Department of Agriculture

demonstrated in Table 4-1 (below) and derived from annual newspaper article in the Oregonian and the ODA brochure from last three years. The table shows a phenomenal increase of 9 farmers' markets participating in FMNP from 2000 to 2001, but this is largely due to changes in participation rules that made more markets eligible to accept coupons.¹¹

Table 3-2: Farmers' markets participating in FMNP by region

Region	From Oregonian	From ODA Brochure		
	1999	2000	2001	2002
Central	1	1	1	1
Coast	4	4	9	7
Eastern	1	0	2	5
Gorge	1	1	1	1
Portland	13	17	20	18
Southern	6	6	7	9
Willamette	11	12	14	17
Total	37	41	54	58

(includes only those farmers' markets participating in WIC-FMNP)

Two regions, Portland and Willamette, contain the most farmers' markets along with a majority of the state's population. There has been no increase in the Gorge region and until 2002, no growth in Southern or Eastern regions. The Coast region experienced significant growth in 2001 and declined again for 2002.

Before SFMNP, there was no organization nor listing of roadside stands for the state of Oregon, however, analysis of the 2001 Oregon Farmers' Market brochure (ODA 2001) and the SFMNP list of authorized roadside stands, there are some remarkable differences between these two market venues in terms of the length of their seasons, hours of operation and days per week. Some of this difference is to be expected as they each operate under a different premise; farmers' markets are weekly market events bringing farmers and customers together within a set time and place, whereas roadside

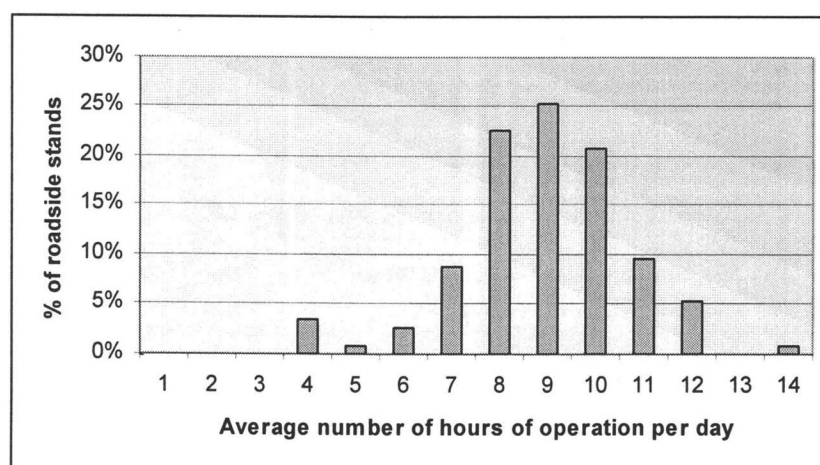
¹¹ There is no current data on the growth and development of farmers' markets in Oregon, but this topic has been researched and is to be released by Garry Stephenson, Oregon State University Extension (Ph.D. dissertation to be published in 2004 through University of Oregon).

stands is a storefront for the farmer's produce, yet as a business person the farmer can offer any variety of items that they feel will sell. In many respects the full-service roadside stands could compete with smaller, struggling farmers' markets on volume and diversity of product. Approximately 14% of roadside stands only offered a handful of items, as reported in the roadside stand survey (question 5), but the majority (80%) sold 5 or more items suggesting that they either grew or resold a variety of produce items.

The structural differences between farmers' market and roadside stands are immediately apparent when visited. Farmers' markets are essentially temporary; farmers' stalls go up and come down on the same day. Roadside stand operations tend to be permanent and can be secured when closed. In addition, customers can often drive up to them and park nearby. This may not always be the case with larger farmers' markets where parking may be difficult and require some walking to get to the market.

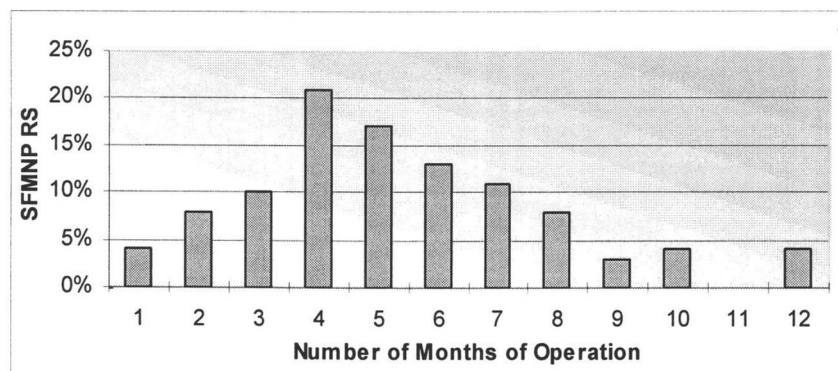
Nearly all of the 113 participating roadside stands (90%) are open 6 to 7 days a week. (Figure 3-6), whereas farmers' markets typically operated 4-5 hours while 3 operated for more than six hours per week.

Figure 3-6: Hours of Operation per week, roadside stands



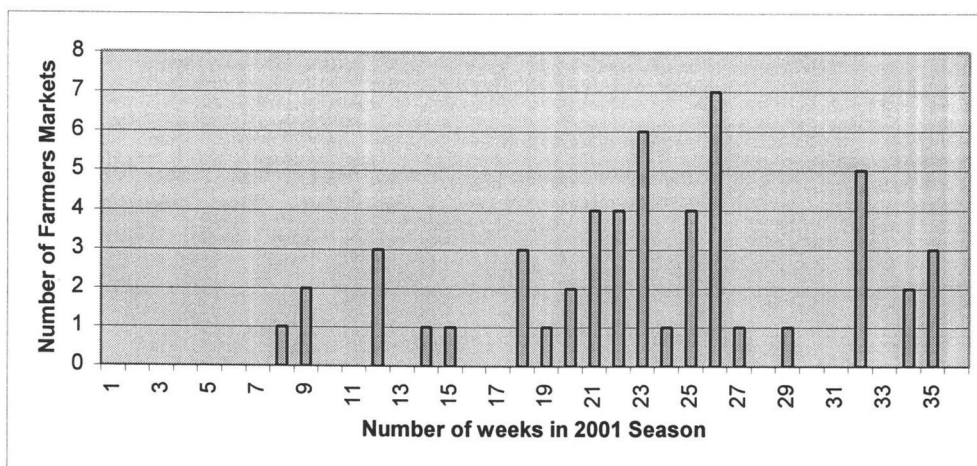
Lastly, roadside stands had a greater range of seasonal length than farmers' markets. About 25 (22%) RS operated for a very short time, between 1-3 months, whereas 9 (8%) RS operated between 10-12 months longer than any of the farmers' markets (Figure 3-7). Farmers' markets also had some diversity, but within a small

Figure 3-7: Length of SFMNP roadside stands



range of time periods and with fewer markets at the extremes: 6 (11%) of farmers' markets operated for three months (12 weeks) or less, and 5 (9%) operating between 8 and 9 months (Figure 3-8). However, unlike roadside stands which have no clear groupings, the seasonal length of farmers' markets appear to fall into three groups: (1) 2-4 months, (2) 4-7 months, and (3) 7-9 months.

Figure 3-8: Variation in Season Length among Oregon Farmers Markets, in weeks



In terms of how the seasons of roadside stands and farmers' markets coincided with that of the program's period of operation, a surprising number of both market venues started after and/or ended before the program. This meant that seniors and proxy shoppers may have had a shorter period of time to spend their coupons than the program intended, or would need to travel to other, less preferred markets in order to use for the entire length of the program. Seniors who received coupons later in the summer had even

less time to spend their coupons, and could have faced increased transportation difficulties if markets within their area had ended before October 31. Table 3-3 shows the number and percent of roadside stands and farmers' markets, which had a season that did not compliment that of the program.

Table 3-3: Number, percent of markets that started earlier or ended after SFMNP season

Market Season	RS	FM	All outlets
Started after program* ⁺	51 or 45%	11 or 20%	62 or 37%
Ended before program ⁺	27 or 24%	24 or 44%	51 or 31%
Both; started after and ended before the program	23 or 20%	10 or 19%	33 or 20%

* starting the 2nd week of June. By then seniors from the first mailing batch should have received their coupons. ⁺ where no specific date is provided, the date is assumed not to have started after nor ended before the program. Percentages are based on 113 roadside stands and 54 farmers' markets. There was no data for three roadside stands and 1 farmers' market.

A fifth of all SFMNP outlets started after and ended before the program season. In fact, only 51% of roadside stands and 54% of farmers' markets operated for the full length of the program.

Very little research exists on the demographics and characteristics of Oregon farmers engaged in direct-marketing, namely farmers markets and roadside stands. Stephenson and Lev (2001) mailed a survey to nearly 1,000 vendors at 36 Oregon farmers' markets in winter 1999-2000 with a 65% response rate. Over fifty percent of farmers reported that the greatest share of their farm sales were fruits and vegetables. In addition, more than half the farmers were relatively new to selling at farmers' markets entering within the last five years. However, 15 percent of farmers had a relatively long history having sold at farmers' markets for more than ten years.

Surveying farmers' markets studies, Brown (2002) reports that many FM vendors are retired from other operations or are part-time farmers with other sources of household income. In Oregon, Stephenson and Lev (2001) found that nearly half of the farmers are employed full-time through their farming operation similar to the general farming population. This implies that farmers' markets were a viable market for a sizable share of farmers at the markets and demonstrates that farmers' markets are not just for hobby

farmers and part-time farmers. In addition, Oregon's FM farmers were well diversified in the marketing, with a third of the vendors highly reliant on farmers' markets. Another third received 30% or less of their sales from farmers' markets.

Oregon's FM farmers had much smaller acreages than general farming populations. There was a large range of acreages (1 to 1800), but 85% of farmers farmed fewer than 20 acres and the median acreage was 3 acres. Oregon's FM farmers appear to reflect the observation that FM farmers tend to be small-scale farmers and that farmers' markets are unfavorable to large-scale producers (Brown 2002; Griffin and Frongillo 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation research is a vital instrument for ensuring that government programs 1) reach their intended audience, 2) meet their objectives, 3) and have benefits (intended and unexpected) that outweigh the costs of implementation (Rossi and Freeman 1989; World Bank Group 2002; McNamara 1999). Two fundamental elements of any program evaluation are whether the program is reaching those who are in need and whether the program is benefiting those it is reaching (Greene 1994; House and Howe 1999).

The evaluation of any government program has political economic implications that result from which performance measures are chosen and whose views are represented. There are no hard and fast rules in determining accurate indicators used to judge progress toward a program's objectives and upon which level of administration – federal, state, local levels. In determining which evaluation methods are used, will also determine which values, whose values are promoted, and which interests will be promoted (Greene 1994; Rist 1994).

Values-based program evaluation, reflecting advances in social science theory, emerged from the realization that “varied audience orientations further represent, explicitly or implicitly, the promotion of different values and political stances” (Greene 1994: 531). VBPE developed in response to positivist methodologies stressing quantifiable measures that represent the evaluator's values and preconceptions of the program's intended benefit. The participatory and open-ended inquiries of values-based program evaluation methods allow for multiple perspectives in determining how the program operated for participants, what happened (expected and unexpected) during the program's operation, and what kind of difference the program made (Rossi and Freeman 1989; Rist 1994).

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program had two main stakeholders who were the direct beneficiaries of the program: participating farmers and seniors. Two secondary stakeholders had critical roles in delivering the program: farmers' market managers and state agencies. In addition, the Oregon Food Bank had an important role in promoting the program among its clients and in establishing the pilot CSA program.

SFMNP impacted other groups as well: agency staff serving low-income seniors, and other vendors at farmers' markets and produce stands that were not able to participate in the program.

Although every program has multiple stakeholders with different values, perceptions, and stakes in the program, no program evaluation can serve every interest. However, program evaluation is universally recognized in its usefulness (House and Howe 1999; Greene 1994; McNamara 1999; World Bank Group 2002):

1. As a decision-making tool for policy makers (expand, modify or eliminate the program);
 2. For estimating the magnitude of program effects and assigning causation (were effects due to the program or other unrelated causes?);
 3. To improve the effectiveness of the program (policy-makers and implementers); and,
 4. To aid in prioritizing actions, especially when resources are scarce.
- (Adapted from McNamara 1999; Rist 1994; World Bank Group 2002)

Participatory values-based evaluation methods derive questions from multiple stakeholders and allow for plurality of perspectives in the presentation of the program evaluation. When the evaluation process elicits the participation and the values of those who would be studied, it lends power to those who typically have the least voice to weigh in on the operation and the outcomes of the program by promoting their needs and values (House and Howe 1999; Rist 1994; Greene 1994). This study utilized an interpretivist approach (Greene 1994) to values-based program evaluation, stressing participant perspectives regarding the program and its impact. This approach was the most appropriate given research resources and the lack of previous research on either of the two program beneficiaries, farmers and seniors, and their perception and experience in FMNP. Key aspects of the interpretivist approach to values-based program evaluation are (adapted from Greene 1994: 532):

- **Key Values:** Pluralism/ understanding, diversity, solidarity
- **Key audiences:** Program directors, staff, and beneficiaries
- **Preferred methods:** Qualitative: case studies, interviews, observations, document review
- **Typical Evaluation Questions:** How is the program experienced by various stakeholders?

The first phase of research involved ethnographic methods to collect qualitative data on the perspectives of the program's main stakeholders about the program. The second phase of the research involved more ethnohistorical research, collecting qualitative and quantitative data on how the program operated, who was involved and the progression of the program over the season. The two phases of research allowed for triangulation of data during data analysis.

Data sources are summarized in Table 4-1 and notes the number of participants interviewed or surveyed from each stakeholder group. Other data sources accessed are expressed with a check in the corresponding box. The first phase of research included convenience interviews with participants within the farmers' market setting and semi-structured interviews with market managers, program advocates, staffs of senior service organizations, and program administrators. The second phase of the research was conducted during an internship with the WIC Program. My responsibilities included collection and analysis of three year-end surveys of participating farmers at farmers' markets, farmers at roadside stands, and market managers.

From the onset of the study, the administrating agencies of SFMNP provided access to program data. Seniors and People with Disabilities Services (SPDS) shared a large collection of newspaper articles regarding the program from 60 weekly and monthly newspapers around the state. After the program was completed, they shared 43 letters they had received about the program (after censoring name and address of the writer), their databases of who received an invitation to participate in the program and who was mailed a coupon packet.

The WIC program provided access to coupon redemption and reimbursement records and final participation records and surveys of farmers' markets, roadside stands, and farmers in farmers' markets for more detailed analysis on both regional and local levels (See Appendix F for a list of questions and responses, which provided data for this study). In addition, the first SFMNP program coordinator left behind a wealth of materials collected during the program's season, including records of emails and phone calls from a wide variety of stakeholders. My internship provided me with a unique

opportunity to access 2001 program data and materials for triangulating results from the first phase of the research.

Table 4-1: Summary of data sources for SFMNP stakeholders

Data Source	Farmers' Market Farmers	Roadside Stand Farmers	Market Managers	Farmers' Markets	Seniors	Program Administrator s	Program Advocates	Senior Advocates
Convenience Interviews	61		5		34			
Semi-structured Interviews			15		1			5
On-going semi-structured interviews						4	2	
WIC Program Year-end Survey	252	85	19					
Redemption/Reimbursement Records		X	X					
Coupon Mailing List					X			
Final Market Roster (SFMNP Binder)		X	X	X				
ODA Farmers' Market Brochures			X	X				
Letters about SFMNP (SPDS)					43			
2001 SMNP archived materials	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

The convenience interviews were conducted in September and October 2001, at the end of the farmers' market season. With reduced selection of produce and increasingly unpleasant weather, seniors who arrived at the market were those that still had coupons and wanted to spend them. Therefore, the research missed those seniors who spent all their coupons earlier in the season, or were dissuaded from shopping at the market due to the poor selection and/or weather. Convenience interviews resulted in the selection of farmers who grew produce throughout the season or only near the end of summer and meant that berry farmers who sold select varieties of berries over a shorter period of time earlier in the season were not interviewed.

The experience of SFMNP participating seniors is informed primarily from convenience interviews and secondarily from senior advocates (staff of different agencies and organizations). The research method did not address the seniors who did not participate in the program for any number of reasons:

- Seniors who met the income, age, and residence requirements, but did not qualify because they did not participate in one of the required federal programs;
- Seniors who qualified but did not receive an invitation nor were made aware of their qualification through other means;
- Seniors who received the invitation but chose not to participate in order to let others use the benefit; and,
- Seniors who received the coupons but were frustrated by their local market situation and chose to return their coupons.

Findings regarding produce stands are derived from interviews with other stakeholders, such as market managers, farmers, senior and program administrators, and archived materials at the WIC Program. The perspectives of roadside stands are limited primarily to convenience interviews with farmers who also participated at farmers' markets and WIC Program year-end surveys. The WIC office constructed these surveys, and while there was a high response rate among roadside stand farmers (75%), the survey was not anonymous. It asked farmers to include their contact information if they were interested in participating in the 2002 season. With the exception of two farmers, all who responded also planned to return to the program.

The Market Manager Survey conducted by the WIC Program asked 15 questions, six of which were related to how managers paid farmers and the reimbursement process. There were a number of open-ended questions ranging from what problems did seniors and farmers voice and how did the program benefit your market. The market managers were in agreement with a number of the farmers in terms of observations about the seniors, sales, and customer base, but they had a unique perspective on the impacts that the program had on the entire market. Although the response rate for the market manager survey was lowest of all three surveys (40%), it provided some idea of how markets

responded to the increased flow of funds due to the SFMNP. While the survey did not ask any questions characterizing the market for cross-market comparison, a recent study by Garry Stephenson will discuss these items in-depth (to be published).

Ethnographic Methods and Analysis

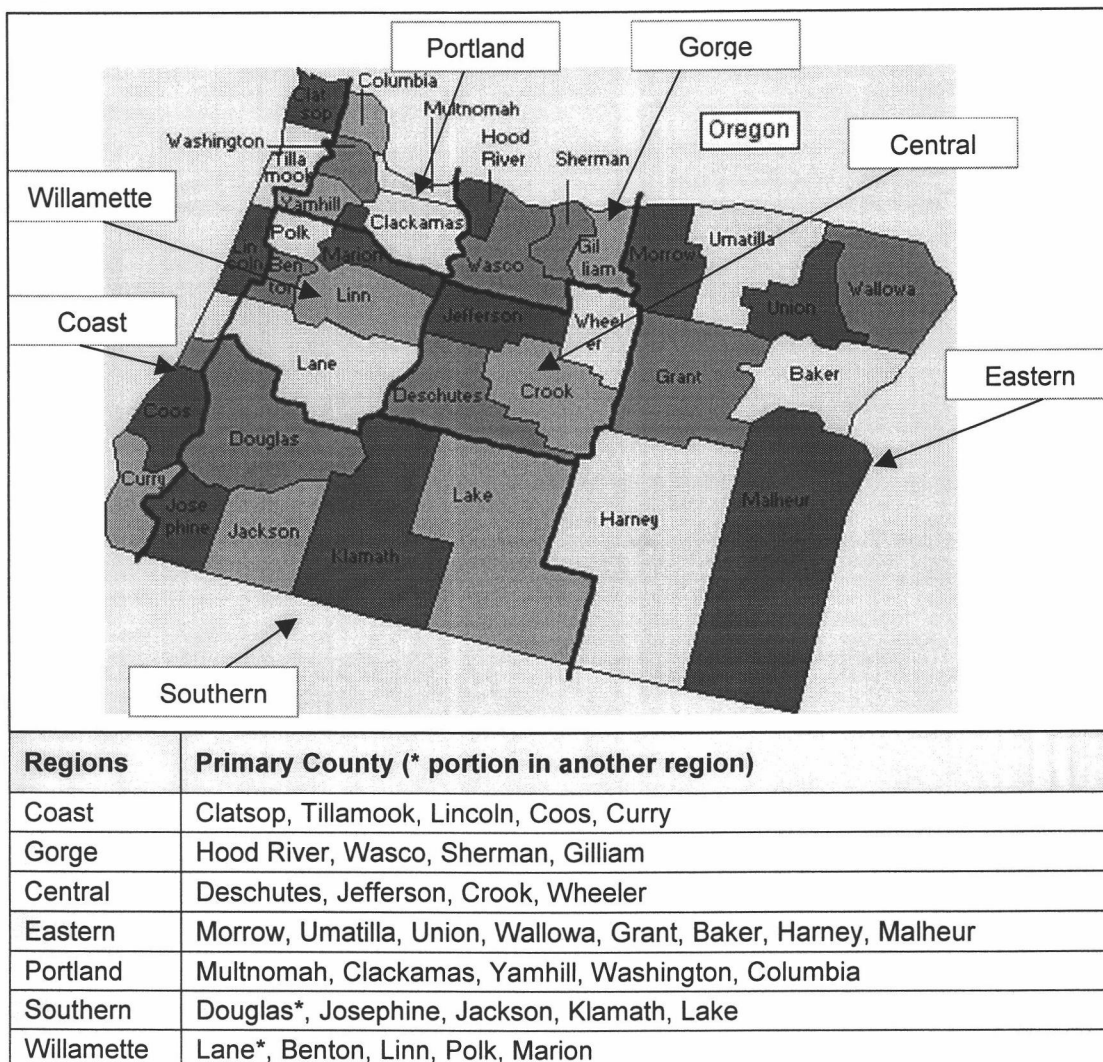
In order to evaluate the success of the program at achieving its three objectives, the goal of this research phase was to interview a maximum number of participating seniors and farmers. It was expected that participants would provide more salient responses to interview questions if the interviews occurred within the market where the coupons were transacted (Blankenship and Breen 1997; Bernard 2000). Farmers' markets concentrated shoppers and vendors within a specific time and space compared to roadside stands, many of which were open six to seven days a week for eight hours or more. In addition, market dynamics allowed me to fully utilize my time by interviewing coupon-users while they were shopping and farmers when no coupon users were available.

Oregon Counties and Regions

It was necessary to delineate regions larger than counties in order to capture not only ecological differences, but also socio-economic differences. In addition, data reporting on markets, coupon redemption and distribution were often meaningless unless on a regional level. In too many cases, markets were located on or near county borders, where customers and identity trespass county borders. Construction of regions is based primarily on the Oregon Farmers' Market 2002 brochure produced by Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA),¹² and supported by the Oregon Blue Book 2001-2002 that makes reference to growing regions (Bradbury 2001). Similar to the brochure map, regions defined by this study follow county borders with two exceptions (Figure 4-1), and regional names are adapted from the Oregon Farmers' Market 2002 brochure.

¹² The Oregon region map on the Oregon Farmers' Market 2003 brochure differs slightly from 2002.

Figure 4-1: Oregon counties and regions



(Map is adapted from online version of the Oregon Blue Book 2001-2002 (Bradbury 2001). Regions adapted from Oregon Farmers' Market 2002 Brochure (ODA 2002).)

Data reporting follows the regions as portrayed on Figure 4-1, with one exception. The map suggests that the northern portion of Marion County was within the Portland region and not in the Willamette region. However, the listing of farmers' markets did not reflect this. All stakeholder data in Marion County will be reported for the Willamette region. Two other counties, Douglas and Lane, have their western sections in the Coast region, and all stakeholder data accounts for this division unless otherwise note. The Gorge and Central regions are combined in all reports on redemption results in order to

maintain data privacy, as there were too few markets in both these regions. Regions appear on graphs in alphabetical order, unless noted otherwise, with Oregon listed last (Gorge, Central, Coastal, Eastern, Portland, Southern, Willamette).

Market Visits

A number of factors determined which markets were visited. Coupon redemption rates would have identified markets that were receiving a higher number of seniors, but results were not available until after the program was completed. Research travel constraints limited market visits to within a five-hour drive. In addition, many farmers' markets occur on a Saturday morning further limiting access to markets within the time frame.

I prioritized market visits to farmers' markets serving higher concentrations of low-income seniors, markets established within the last three years, and/or markets perceived as struggling. Moreover, I wanted to learn if the program benefited the development of farmers' markets by strengthening new markets or those located in areas with less affluence. In addition, I visited farmers' markets in most regions to further capture the local differences and issues facing farmers' markets around Oregon (Figure 4-1). At the start of the study, I contacted all farmers' markets by either an introductory email or postcard notifying them of the study. Before visiting a market, I telephoned market managers. I learned that two farmers' markets had closed a month early and two markets were closing a week earlier than planned. Due to changing schedules, markets closing earlier than expect and the limited program period, I informed market managers about the study over the telephone, and they provided a preliminary verbal agreement to participate in the study until we met in person to sign the consent form. Arrangements were made to meet the market manager at the market, who then introduced me to farmers.

I visited 14 farmers' markets during the 2001 SFMNP season either to interview stakeholders or observe the markets dynamics. I visited at least one farmers' market in each region, except for Eastern Oregon. Table 4-2 summarizes ethnographic research conducted within each region; the number of farmers' markets visited, interviews

conducted and the number of farmers' markets. The last column represents the markets that were not visited, but where I conducted semi-structured interviews with market managers by telephone or email during both phases of research.

Table 4-2: Summary of research of farmers' markets per region

Regions	SFMNP FMs	Visited	Market interviews	Interviewed MM only
Gorge/Central	2	2	1	0
Eastern	2	0	1	1
Coast	10	1	1	2
Portland	19	3	3	0
Southern	7	3	2	0
Willamette	14	5	3	0

The study balanced the goal to maximize the number of interviews with farmers and seniors at farmers' markets with the goal to assess the impact of the program on struggling markets. A number of these markets had very few participating vendors and shoppers using SFMNP coupons. Struggling markets generally had relatively few vendors, and the number typically decreased at the end of the growing season. As farmers' volumes decrease, market managers noted, they stopped selling at the struggling market and focused their sales efforts at more established farmers' markets.

Convenience Interviews

Convenience interviews were designed to be simple and promote a more comfortable interview process for the interviewee (Bernard 2000:240). Sharing similarities with mall-intercept interviewing and street-intercept interviewing (Bernard 2000:157), convenience interviews occur between the researcher and interviewee without prior arrangements. The interviewees are targeted based upon a behavior or appearance. Within the farmers' markets, I approached seniors who I saw using or holding the blue SFMNP coupons, and I directed my farmer interviews to all qualifying farmers at the market and some who did not participate. The convenience interview method stresses the advantage of interviewing where the interview topic is most relevant, for example, at the farmers' market where coupon-recipients spend their coupons.

This method is less costly than other methods because the target population is concentrated in a particular space and time, wasting little of the investigator's time (Blankenship and Breen 1997). In the case of farmers' markets, the characteristics of the two interview populations complement each other. Coupon-users are at the market for a brief time. In addition, their "visibility" is largely dependent upon how quickly coupons are put out of sight, limiting the chance that the researcher witnesses their use. When coupon-users are not around, this "down time" can be used to interview vendors who may have few or no customers at the time.

Convenience interviews ranged from one-sentence replies up to 30 minutes in length depending upon rapport between the researcher and the interviewee, the interviewee's ability to stand for a period of time, or external pressures on his/her time (Blankenship and Breen 1997). I began the interview process by approaching the interviewee to explain the study and request their participation as an interviewee. Once they agreed to continue, I informed the interviewee of their rights as human subjects and right to confidentiality. The short interview began once the interviewee signed the Consent Form and they received contact information about the study.

This interview method was advantageous to providing a wide-variety of responses drawing upon the significance of the market to the individual. It also allowed more coupon-users to contribute to the study, whether they had five or 30 minutes to give to the interview (Blankenship and Breen 1997). Table 4-3 summarizes the number of interviews per agricultural region for the three main stakeholder groups.

Table 4-3: Convenience interviews per region

ODA Region	Farmers	Seniors	Market Managers
Gorge/Central	7	5	2
Eastern	0	0	1
Coast	2	6	3
Portland	17	6	4
Southern	20	10	3
Willamette	15	7	7
TOTAL	61	34	19

A disadvantage of the convenience interview method is that there was no opportunity to interview a senior a second time. Several studies on food access have identified some issues that only can be resolved by sustained contact with senior respondents (Wolfe et al 1996). Moreover, seniors using the coupons tended to arrive at the market early if not before the market opened, limiting the total number of potential convenience interviews with coupon-users.

In most instances, farmers were interviewed once, with limited opportunity for follow-up interviews during the market visit or at a future time. A handful of farmers were interviewed twice as they were present at two or more of the markets I visited. At some markets, there were few customers and few farmers and it was possible to get more in-depth interviews or spread out the interview over the length of the market.

I engaged in semi-structured interviews with market managers at the farmers market when possible and typically there were several contacts during the research period. Similar to farmers, market managers could be more or less available for on-site interviewing depending upon the rhythms of the market, and their workload, but most were too busy during the market other than to answer brief questions. A handful of market managers were contacted several times during the periods of research and during my internship with the WIC office.

All convenience interviews began with an open-ended question, which helped to build comfort with the face-to-face interview, which Bernard (2000:240) notes, can be more threatening form of questioning for the respondent. I asked both farmers and seniors, "How is the program working for you," enabling them to remark on the issues most salient to their experience with SFMNP. I probed responses for clarification, as mentioned above, to provide further context of their program participation and to identify factors that inhibit full benefit from the program. Among coupon-users, I probed to learn how they were using the coupons, how often they shopped at the market, how they got to market, and what kinds of problems they had faced. With a handful of seniors it was possible to extend the conversation beyond questions about the coupon program, giving me the opportunity to ask about their food management strategies. Among farmers, I

probed to learn how SFMNP coupons had an impact on sales and the market's customer base.

Starting the convenience interview with a broad open-ended question allowed for a diversity of perspectives, which was particularly important due to very limited previous research on the coupon program. In addition, most farmers' markets were lively centers of commerce and socialization, and there was a significant risk of an interview being interrupted or shortened by the senior, another person, or some nearby commotion. Given limited time and opportunity, the interviewee's responses guided the questions asked, and I did not ask questions about topics they did not themselves raise. Therefore statements from convenience interviews have qualitative value but little quantitative value and portray a landscape of responses and actions associated with SFMNP.

Ethnic diversity was significant in some markets, with large populations of immigrants with limited English skills. On some occasions I worked with some seniors and farmers to understand what they were saying, but in all cases, I needed someone to help with interviewing. There were two seniors and two farmers I could not interview due to the language barrier.

In most instances the coupon-user was the senior who received the coupons, but in a number of circumstances family, friends, or a caregiver accompanied them. Companions remained with the senior throughout the convenience interview. Table 4-4 summarizes the variety of convenience interviews with coupon-users. When I approached a group of people shopping with coupons, I largely addressed the senior but remained responsive to the companion(s). There were also a number of coupon-users who were shopping without the senior who had received coupons.

Table 4-4: Characterization of convenience interviews with coupon-users

Coupon-user categories	Number of interviews
Seniors shopping by themselves	12
Seniors with other seniors (couple/friend)	6
Seniors with family	11
Seniors with caregivers	1
Family shopping on behalf of senior	4

Ethnographic Analysis

Notes were handwritten throughout convenience interviews and semi-structured interviews. No interview was recorded by audio- or videotape. In addition to these field notes, stakeholder's responses to open-ended questions on the WIC Program year-end surveys and text from the senior letters were typed up and each interview separated by stakeholder group. Each entry was kept whole, and all interviews were reviewed in a grounded theory approach (Bernard 2000: 444) for emerging macrothemes (Bernard 2000:446) using *in vivo* coding when possible to categorize themes (Bernard 2000: 444). Each entry was divided into meaningful units reflecting one of these themes and then coded further for variations on the theme (Bernard 2000: 446; Wolfe et al. 1996). The respondent's code remained with each unit throughout the process. Macrothemes and microthemes related to political ecology theory were then triangulated with findings from the ethnohistorical research and analysis (below). Statements presented in this study are not the exact speech of the respondents, but leave out conversational fillers, fragments, false starts and pauses (Bernard 2000: 456) and are used to highlight the themes presented.

Quotes from participating seniors are derived from two sources; interviews and letters sent to either SPDS or to the SFMNP coordinator. Farmer and market manager quotes are derived from interviews at farmers' markets and respective WIC year-end surveys. The sources of most comments came from several open-ended questions, but could also include comments written next to close-ended questions. See Appendix F for list of survey questions included in this study.

Ethnohistorical Research and Analysis

As mentioned previously, there were several data sources (Table 4-1) for the primary stakeholders to triangulate results from the ethnographic research phase. My internship with the WIC Program provided an inside perspective on the administration of the 2001 SFMNP program. While in 2002 SFMNP management changed, the program's delivery changed little: the program operated similar to 2001, but the benefit reward for

seniors had decreased to \$80 worth of coupons and there were more new farmers' markets, and more roadside stands participating in the 2002 program.

SPDS and WIC Office provided copies of newspaper articles, and I discovered another 10 through my own research. A total of 80 articles were catalogued according to characteristics such as length, location of publication, circulation (2000-2001 Bluebook), frequency of publication, the title of the article, the date of publication, and whether the article recruited seniors or farmers or both for participation in the SFMNP. At least one newspaper article was published in every region where an authorized SFMNP market was located.

At the end of the 2001 SFMNP season, SPDS shared their mailing lists under the strict provision that data privacy was maintained. These included the pre-season program invitation mailing list with nearly 22,000 addresses, and the coupon packet mailing lists constructed throughout the season. On this last list, SPDS sent 12 lists of names and addresses to me, of which nine had a date associated with them. According to SPDS, the date represented the day when the mailing list was sent as a batch job where coupon packets were put together and mailed out to seniors. Differing fields for each mailing list (13 total) created a cataloguing nightmare. Analysis included categorizing both mailing lists, such as the town, county and region each senior resided, and tallying the results. In addition, the mailing list was analyzed for incidences where an individual or household received more than one set of coupons.

With the permission of the WIC Program, I analyzed 2001 redemption data similarly to the senior mailing lists. Archived program materials from 2001 season were helpful in that during the season I had received a number of market lists that did not agree with each other. For the analysis on markets, I used the reports found in a large three-ring binder created by the 2001 SFMNP Coordinator, which contained quarterly reports, emails, publicity releases, and final lists of participating roadside stands and market managers. This binder also provided invaluable insight, not reported in earlier interviews, into how the program operated during the 2001 season.

RESULTS

This chapter follows the chronological development and progress of Oregon's 2001 Senior Farmers' Market Program, and moves from macro-level to regional and micro-level landscapes.

Evolution of National Program

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program was established during the last days of the Clinton administration. This program gave states and tribal agencies USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds solely to provide low-income seniors with fresh produce. Funds could not be used for administration of the program. Although this pilot program had the same objectives as the twelve-year old WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, SFMNP had more flexibility for states and tribes to develop programs best suited to their needs and resources. States and tribes could decide how to distribute funds and food and select criteria for senior and farmer participation. As a result, some state programs mirrored the WIC-FMNP program by distributing coupons to qualified seniors, while other states paid local farmers to distribute produce to senior centers. Each SFMNP was designed to operate between May 1 and October 31 and to meet the program's three objectives:

- To improve the nutritional intake of low-income seniors by providing resources in the form of fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs;
- To support farmers selling direct to consumers by increasing domestic consumption of local produce; and,
- To support the development of direct-marketing outlets for farmers, such as farmers' markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs

While program operations varied by state, the types of food that could be purchased were strictly defined: only fresh produce and cut herbs and not on any non-agricultural nor added-valued/processed foods. These exclusions include a number of items widely grown and/or produced in Oregon, such as milk, honey, cheese, dried fruit,

eggs, raw nuts and seeds, fish, meats, potted plants, seeds, cut flowers, and crafts (Oregon WIC Program 2001, “farmers guide”)¹³.

In 2000, Gus Schumacher, president of the CCC and Undersecretary of Farmer and Foreign Agriculture Services (USDA), and his colleague, John Winski, developed and promoted legislation for the Senior Farmer Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP).¹⁴ Schumacher reported that he and Winski “examined the CCC statute and determined that we could provide funds under that statute to promote the increase in utilization of horticultural products as well as corn, wheat, rice, etc.”¹⁵ Agriculture Secretary Glickman and the Clinton White House approved the pilot program, and “Congressman John Balducci inserted the \$15 million in mandatory funding in the Farm Bill” in the fall of 2001. The legislation survived in the Farm Bill and the bill was passed (Schumacher 2002).

In the month between the RFP announcement and the application deadline, the Oregon Hunger Relief Taskforce was able to develop and write a SFMNP proposal for \$1.5 million. In spring of 2001, Oregon received the full amount of the request. The states of Oregon and New York received significantly more than any other participating state or tribal government.

Development and Design of Oregon’s SFMNP

The Oregon Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program was largely modeled after Oregon’s WIC-FMNP, and shared the same purchasing regulations, reimbursement procedures, and ran within the same time period, from June 1 to October 31, 2001. However, there were two major differences for SFMNP coupon-recipients: 1) Seniors received \$100 worth of coupons instead of \$20 that Oregon WIC-FMNP clients received, 2) Seniors could spend them at authorized roadside stands as well as farmers’ markets. In

¹³ Many of the details of Oregon’s 2001 SFMNP are based upon a binder created by the 2001 SFMNP coordinator. It contained extensive documentation on the development and progress of the program and included a number of program materials.

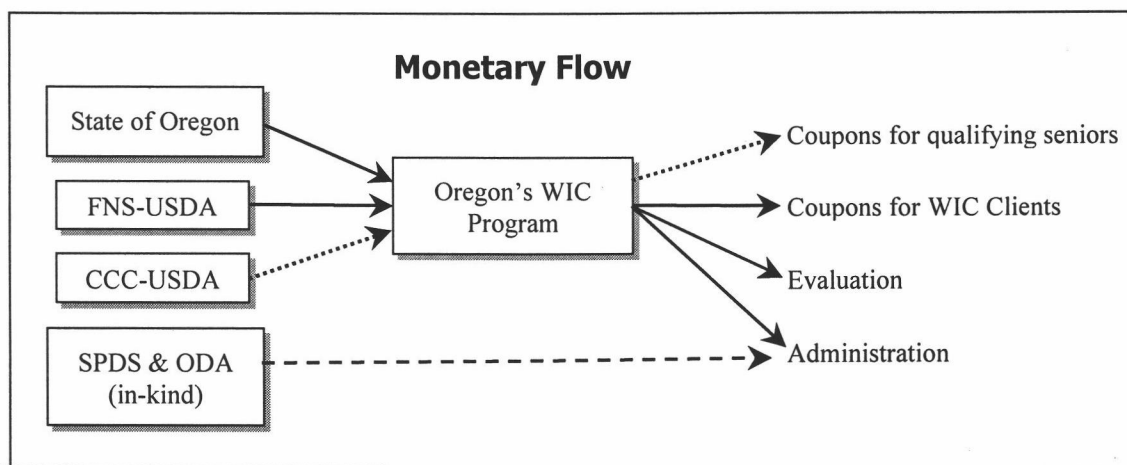
¹⁴ Gus Schumacher was the Massachusetts Commissioner of Agriculture in 1988 (Schumacher 2002).

¹⁵ See Appendix A:2. Funds from the CCC are to be used to increase the domestic consumption of agricultural by expanding the market base and developing new or additional markets.

addition, 200 seniors participated in a CSA program¹⁶ in Lane County and thus did not receive coupons.

Funding for both the WIC and the senior coupon programs originated from two distinct agencies within USDA, and each had specific restrictions on how the money was to be spent. For the WIC-FMNP, each participating state had to contribute a minimum 30 percent match for federal funds. In addition, the state and federal WIC-FMNP funds were collectively used for program administration – including costs of program materials, coupon distribution, educational training, coupon reimbursement, and a year-end evaluation – as well as coupon distribution to WIC clients (Figure 5-1). The SFMNP funds did not require matching state funds, but federal funds were available exclusively for the purchase of local produce and could not be used for program administration. In 2001, funding for SFMNP (\$1.5 million) coupons could be three times that received for WIC-FMNP coupons (\$500,000) if all coupons were claimed and spent.

Figure 5-1: Monetary flow of FMNPs



¹⁶ Data privacy issues complicated CSA efforts to recruit seniors for the program. OFB helped negotiate the conflicting needs of the farm to recruit seniors in proximity to pre-existing drop-off sites and SPDS to maintain the privacy of seniors eligible to participate in the program. By the end of the season nearly 200 seniors were signed onto the CSA program. The smallest share was over \$200 so that the cost per senior was slightly more than \$100. Two seniors were signed up for every "half-share" (the smallest amount possible), and each senior picked up their CSA box every other week. CSA staff noted that the greatest difficulty with this arrangement is that a fair number of seniors would forget which week to pick up the box. SPDS staff reported that a number of seniors complained that wanted to be able to choose and have a greater variety of produce available to them. However, CSA staff said that the experience was positive for a number of seniors who liked the mix of products, and felt that the most positive response came from those who were able to come to the farm. The CSA expressed interest in continuing the program the second season, and contacted eligible seniors who then chose between CSA membership or SFMNP coupons.

Roles of SFMNP Partners

Three state agencies and one statewide non-profit organization administered Oregon's 2001 SFMNP (Table 5-1). The Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force continued to provide support through member organizations like the Oregon Food Bank (OFB). The WIC Program folded in reimbursement responsibilities of SFMNP for both farmers' markets and roadside stands with its WIC-FMNP responsibilities and provided support

Table 5-1: Responsibilities for SFMNP

WIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Recruit Farmers' Markets ⇒ Distribute program materials to markets ⇒ Reimburse coupons, handle inquiries ⇒ Conduct farmer and market manager evaluations
ODA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Recruit Roadside Stands ⇒ Print market signs ⇒ Create and print list of authorized participating markets for seniors
SPDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Recruit seniors, handle inquiries ⇒ Print coupons ⇒ Distribute coupons and program materials ⇒ Notify SPDS and AAA branches of SFMNP
OFB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Promote SFMNP through its network to seniors ⇒ Recruit CSA farm

and program materials for both coupon programs to farmers' markets. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) recruited roadside stands, managed their contracts, and provided program materials and support. ODA created and printed the statewide market list and the large, laminated SFMNP signs for all farmers. The Division of Senior and People with Disabilities Services (SPDS)¹⁷ was responsible for recruiting seniors to participate in the program, printing and mailing of program materials (including coupons), and providing support to seniors. All correspondence with seniors went through the SPDS central branch. With discretionary funds, the Oregon Department of

¹⁷ During the 2001 program, it was known as "Senior & Disabled Services Department" (SDSD or SDS), and the name change came early in 2002.

Health Services hired a SFMNP program coordinator for the WIC Program to facilitate the development and implementation of the 2001 SFMNP pilot program.

Factors Affecting State Implementation

Several factors affected the implementation of the SFMNP at the state level. First, was the agencies' prior experience in working together through the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force. This experience contributed to the agencies' ability to design a program and write the application within a month's timeline. The Oregon Food Bank was also instrumental in developing the CSA pilot program and in raising awareness about the program through its network of agencies. Additionally, for the last six years, the WIC-FMNP brought together in a working relationship the two main state agencies involved with SFMNP (ODA and WIC Program) and the Oregon Farmers' Market Association (OFMA).

Location of these agencies also factored into the program's implementation. WIC, ODA, OFB and two OFMA Board directors were located in the Portland Metro Area. The Division of Senior and People with Disabilities (SPDS) had no prior experience with FMNP nor ODA and WIC and was located an hour away in Salem. Meetings were usually held in Portland, and most communication occurred through email and telephone.

A third factor in the implementation of the program was that those who wrote the SFMNP proposal (the application for the RFP) were not directly involved in implementing the program. Consequently, all but one of the state employees directly involved with the development and implementation of SFMNP were new to FMNP and none had prior experience in working with roadside stands. Moreover, SFMNP administration staff was responsible for developing the program within a matter of months on top of their regular duties.

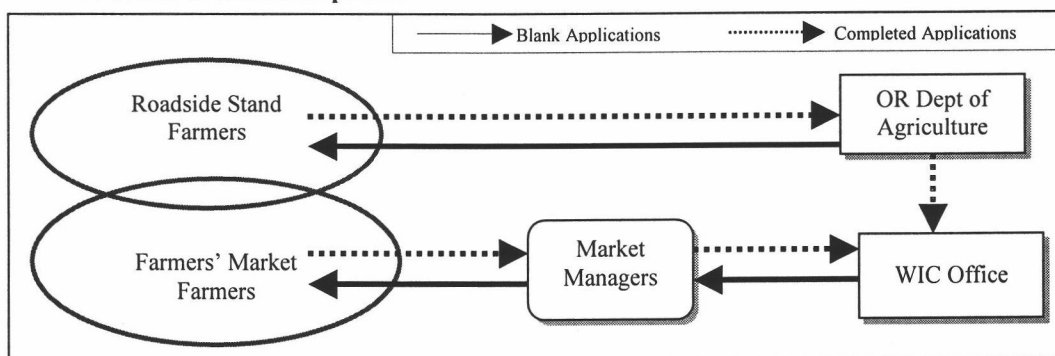
A final factor that impacted the implementation of the program was the lack of a formalized relationship and communication channel between the participating agencies and the new SFMNP participants. Many participating seniors were not familiar with the concept of FMNP and – unlike participants in the WIC program – did not get an

introduction to the program from a case worker. Instead, seniors relied on program materials, newspaper articles, farmers at the markets, and market managers for their information. Roadside stands, similarly, did not have an internal group or a formal mechanism for communication with ODA. As a result, roadside stand recruitment and participation was a unique challenge within the program as it was heavily reliant on contact from ODA staff.

Recruiting Farmers' Markets and Roadside Stands

The WIC Program and ODA were jointly responsible for recruiting farmers for the program. The WIC office worked closely with ODA to divide responsibilities for markets and create a seamless system for each farmer. The WIC Program maintained responsibility for farmers' markets, while ODA covered most of the responsibilities associated with roadside stands (with the exception of coupon reimbursement). In order to become an authorized SFMNP market, market managers and farmers at both farmers' markets and roadside stands were required to sign and return a contract agreeing to their responsibilities within SFMNP. However, the recruitment process differed between these two market venues. Figure 5-2 shows the flow of contracts among SFMNP participants; this flow will be described further in the following paragraphs.

Figure 5-2: Farmer recruitment process



The WIC Program's recruitment efforts benefited from the success of the Oregon Farmers' Market Association (OFMA) in improving farmers' markets around the state. In 2001, many OFMA board members were market managers of successful farmers' markets and were readily available to support other market managers. In addition,

OFMA had an email discussion list that was an invaluable tool for timely discussions about the coupon programs and for clarifying rules and procedures. Most market managers (or someone on their behalf) subscribed to OFMA's listserv, wherein they shared experiences and suggestions and encouraged each other to advocate for SFMNP at local senior centers and service agencies.

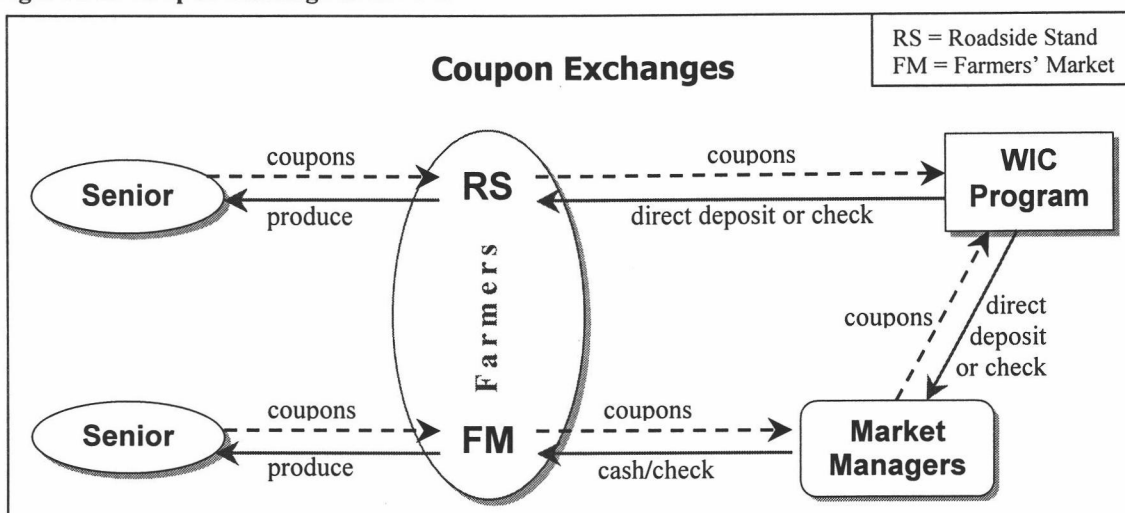
The WIC Program originally authorized participation only to farmers' markets that had at least five produce farmers and that had operated for one year. They believed these markets would ensure the WIC clients access to more stable markets with an adequate selection in order to spend all their coupons. However, due to the state's large SFMNP award and the non-targeted distribution of the coupons statewide, seven otherwise ineligible farmers' markets were authorized to accept both WIC and Senior FMNP coupons. In the case of a handful of small farmers' markets, there were only one or two farmers who sold a wide variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the season. Yet, these markets included farmers who exclusively grew one or two varieties of berries or tree fruits that were sold only for a limited number of weeks during the market season. All farmers' markets benefited from the temporary increase in berry/fruit farmers to improve the variety and selection of produce available and from the increase in customers who seek these fruits. The WIC program authorized farmers' markets utilizing short-term farmers to reach their five-farmer quota as long as a couple farmers provided volume and selection throughout the season.

The WIC Program also relaxed their standard requiring farmers' markets to operate for at least a year before they could participate in the coupon program. This standard provided new farmer's markets one season to develop their operations without the added pressure of administering the WIC-FMNP. With the relaxation of the one-year standard, WIC clients living near these new farmers' markets were eligible for coupons a year earlier, and new markets had immediate support from both WIC and Senior FMNP coupon-users.

While coupon purchases occurred on a farmer level, reimbursement occurred on a market level and market managers signed a contract to accept responsibility for collecting and reimbursing farmers for their FMNP coupons and farmers contractually obligated to

adhere to purchasing regulations. Each participating farmer signed a contract in the beginning of the season provided by the market manager (Figure 5-3). With few exceptions, all eligible farmers participated in the program. One farming couple chose not to participate in the program stating, “We sell mostly flowers and some veggies, but it’s not worth being in the program. We sell out of produce anyway.”

Figure 5-3: Coupon exchange in SFMNP



Before SFMNP, there was no comprehensive list of roadside stands in Oregon. There were a number of local publications and regional Farm-Direct directories¹⁸ that included roadside stands, but there was no one mechanism for identifying farmers who sold their produce through roadside stands. The wide variety of roadside stands made identification difficult through various licenses that roadside stands needed to have. ODA employed three techniques to get a list of potential roadside stands: (1) asked extension agents around the state for referrals, (2) referred to regional directories, and (3) released a series of articles in state newspapers from March to August to recruit farmers.¹⁹ ODA then mailed farmers information about the program and a contract for the farmer to sign, thus agreeing to abide by the rules of the program. Upon return of the contract, ODA provided WIC with the necessary federal tax and reimbursement

¹⁸ FDM directories is a general term to any directory of any combination of farm-direct enterprises, such as roadside stands, farmers' markets, CSAs, and U-Picks.

¹⁹ Most of these newspaper articles also recruited seniors.

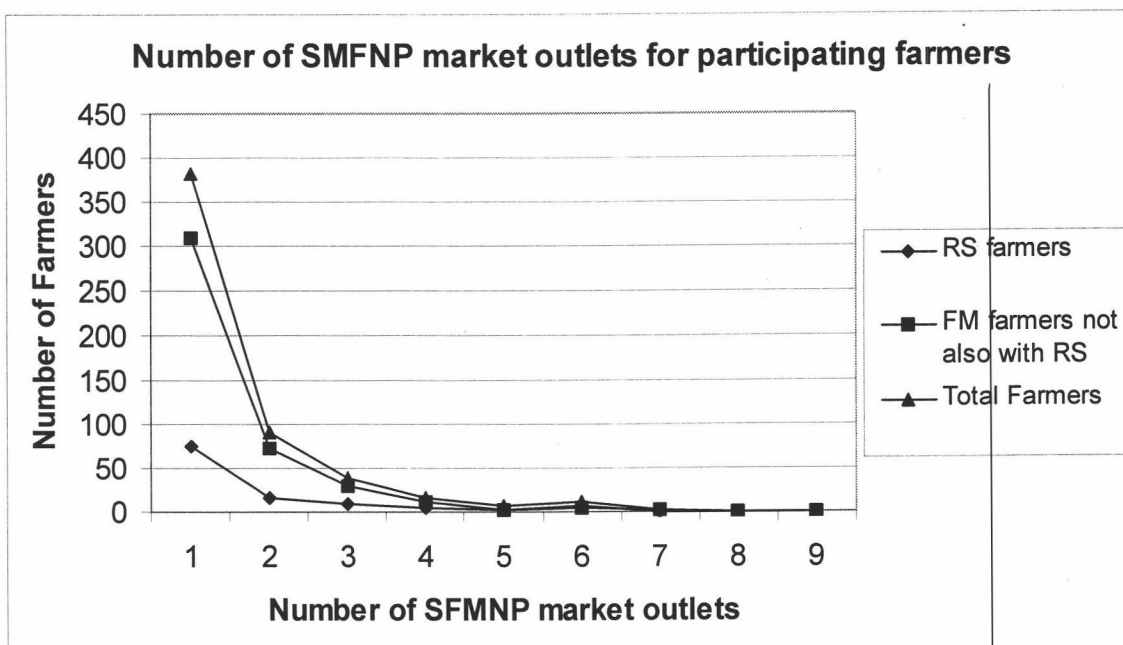
information for each roadside stand. ODA continued to provide support to roadside stands in answering questions about program operation, but WIC handled all reimbursement questions (Figure 5-2). The turn-around time was fast for some roadside stands, as a farmers' market vendor noted that roadside stands in her area had only a two-week period in which to fill out and return the contract in the spring -- a particularly busy time of the year.

WIC office sent out program materials to farmers' markets and roadside stands after receiving a signed contract. Program materials included instructions on using the coupons, a description of products eligible for purchase, an explanation of coupon reimbursement, and market signs. Each farmer was required to post the FMNP and SFMNP market signs at their booth in a visible spot. The SFMNP signs were ledger-sized, and laminated, stating: "Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupons Welcome Here." The 2001 WIC FMNP signs were also ledger-sized and laminated (an improvement over the letter-sized, regular paper of previous years).²⁰ Farmers liked the improved signs, because they lasted longer, were more durable and thus less likely to be destroyed in bad weather or during the set up and breakdown of the booth. Moreover, coupons and signs were color-coded: the SFMNP materials in light blue and WIC-FMNP in yellow. Farmers also liked the color-coding of coupons with the signs, remarking that they believed it was helpful for those with language barriers (i.e. English as a second language, poor reading skills).

At the end of the season, SFMNP had 583 farmers participating, where 82% participated in farmers' markets only, 12% participated only through their roadside stand, and 6% farmers sold in both farmers' markets and their own roadside stand. Most farmers selling in farmers' markets sold in one market, but a good number sold in a second market, either their roadside stand or a second market (Figure 5-4). It is important to note that this number is a conservative estimate, as data is derived from applications where farmers listed the markets they planned to participate in. Some listed the farmers' market organization only, and did not specify the number of markets.

²⁰ With severe state budget cuts and still no money for administration, 2003 SFMNP signs were reduced to 8 x 11.5, while the WIC signs remained large in comparison.

Figure 5-4: Number of SFMNP market outlets for participating farmers



Recruiting Seniors and Distributing Coupons

The program administrators believed that they could recruit 15,000 seniors through the mail to participate in SFMNP. They constructed a mailing list of qualifying seniors from agencies that provided food stamps or Medicaid services to seniors.²¹ In April/May 2001, SPDS mailed approximately 22,000 “invitation postcards” to Oregon’s seniors, based on the following four criteria:

- 65 years and older
- Living independently
- Received an annual income at 135% or less of the National Poverty Level
- Received services through the Older Americans Act or SDSD (Oregon WIC Program 2001: “Farmers Guide”). Later in the season, services were defined as receiving food stamps or Medicaid

SPDS distributed coupons on a first-come, first-serve basis. The first 15,000 seniors who returned the reply postcard attached to the “invitation postcard” would be

²¹ under contract with SPDS

mailed a coupon packet containing \$100 worth of coupons,²² nutrition education, and a list of participating farmers' markets and roadside stands organized by county. There was no cover letter or instructional brochure in 2001 in order to save money in printing and shipping.²³ Initially, fewer than 9,000 seniors requested coupons before the season's start, requiring SPDS to continue recruiting seniors throughout the season. The program was further complicated when coupons were mailed out late due to delays in processing seniors and farmers. A state work freeze exacerbated the situation, preventing coupons from being mailed until the end of June, a month later than intended.

According to federal regulations, coupons could be distributed no earlier than May 1 and no later than September 30, with the majority to be distributed by August 1, 2001 (Oregon WIC Program 2001: "SFMNP Coupon distribution & Accountability"). As mentioned, with only 60 percent of coupons mailed at the start of the coupon season SPDS continued to screen individuals. By July 85% of coupons were mailed, with another 10 percent in August.²⁴ In order to send out all the available coupons, newspaper articles and OFB's communication network encouraged seniors who satisfied the age and income requirements to call SPDS and request SFMNP coupons. SPDS handled hundreds of phone calls and continued to mail out coupon packets through October. In the third quarterly report to USDA (October 31, 2001), the SFMNP coordinator reported that 12,478 seniors received coupon packets, and the remaining coupons were mailed to the first 2,522 on the list in order to distribute the full amount of the grant.

The overall participation rate, the percentage of seniors invited to participate in the program who received coupons, was 57% for the state of Oregon, while the desired rate was roughly 68%.²⁵ The regional participation rates (Table 5-2) reflect the number

²² While these are in fact vouchers, the term "coupon" was used predominantly at both the administrative level and within the farmers' markets by farmers and seniors. All outreach materials for the program also refers to these as coupons. In some states, they are referred to as "checks." They appear and operate like \$2 checks and can be redeemed through local banks.

²³ Per interview with SPDS staff

²⁴ SPDS constructed a dozen databases, apparently hand-typing in the addresses from the returned postcards and from phone calls. The databases SPDS shared with me were shy 100 people from the official client total of 12,478 and no mailing date was included for 1,000 people.

²⁵ A 68% response rate represents 15,000 participants, the maximum number of participants, thus avoiding ongoing senior recruitment and permitting a one-time mailing of coupons before the program started.

of authorized markets in each region, with the lower participation rates in areas with few markets and large distances. The Portland region is the exception to this trend, and on the surface is the most surprising because in addition to having the highest density of markets, it also had the highest number of participating seniors (39%) in Oregon.

Table 5-2: Summary of senior participation per region

Regions	SFMNP Seniors*	Invited Seniors⁺	Participation rate⁺⁺
Gorge/Central	551	1,127	49%
Coastal	1,300	2,232	58%
Eastern	691	1,480	47%
Portland	4,850	8,953	54%
Southern	1,982	3,792	52%
Willamette	3,017	4,051	74%
Oregon	12,391	21,635	57%

*SFMNP Seniors is the number of seniors who received coupons. ⁺Invited Seniors⁺ is the number of seniors who were sent an invitational postcard. ⁺⁺Participation rate is the share of seniors who participated in SFMNP from the number who were invited to participate. Total number of SFMNP seniors above is derived from data provided by SPDS. The official number is 12,600.

Program guidelines restricted one coupon packet per qualifying household, yet 8.5 percent of the coupons appeared to be sent in error to seniors who had already received a coupon packet. SPDS databases revealed that about 2,000 coupons were mailed either to a second person in the household or to the same person more than once.²⁶ These discrepancies were likely a result of the overwhelming number of telephone calls SPDS received from seniors requesting coupons, and the need to include these individuals in order to distribute all the coupons. Qualifying individuals were added to a mailing list, and every two to three weeks a batch of coupon packets were mailed out. There were instances of coupons incorrectly being sent to seniors who were in institutional living. In an interview, a senior in the Willamette region exclaimed, "Thank goodness someone is here for me to tell this to!" She reported that a nearby foster-care home requested coupons for their seniors and used the coupons to buy produce.

The program regulations stated that unclaimed coupons could be sent to those who damaged or lost their coupons. While coupons were undoubtedly lost, there was no

²⁶ does not include those who were intentionally mailed a second coupon packet

record of WIC sending a second replacement packet. Coupons returned by a participant were allowed to be re-issued to another senior participant, along with the full packet of instructional and education materials. Seniors and senior advocates in Greater Oregon reported that seniors returned their coupons to both SPDS and WIC offices, but there was no record in the archives of the number returned.

Accessing the Market

Oregon's relatively high SFMNP redemption rate²⁷ suggests that most seniors were able to purchase produce with the coupons. Several categories of SFMNP seniors emerged in the convenience interviews with varying degrees of experience with the market. The program introduced a significant number of seniors to farmers' markets and some roadside stands for the first time, exposing them to the region's seasonal bounty. A number of seniors were already regular customers of the farmers market before participating in the program. These seniors knew what to expect from the market, what they wanted and how they would use the produce they bought. Lastly, a large number of seniors were now able to return to the farmers' market after many years with insufficient money to shop there. A senior who wrote to SPDS shared her emotional response at receiving the SFMNP coupons:

"When I got up in the morning I thought about the farmers market, but knew that I couldn't go! ...Coupons came later in the day... I first held on to the coupons and cried. BUT for a change, they were tears of gratefulness and joy." (Letter #16, July 2001)

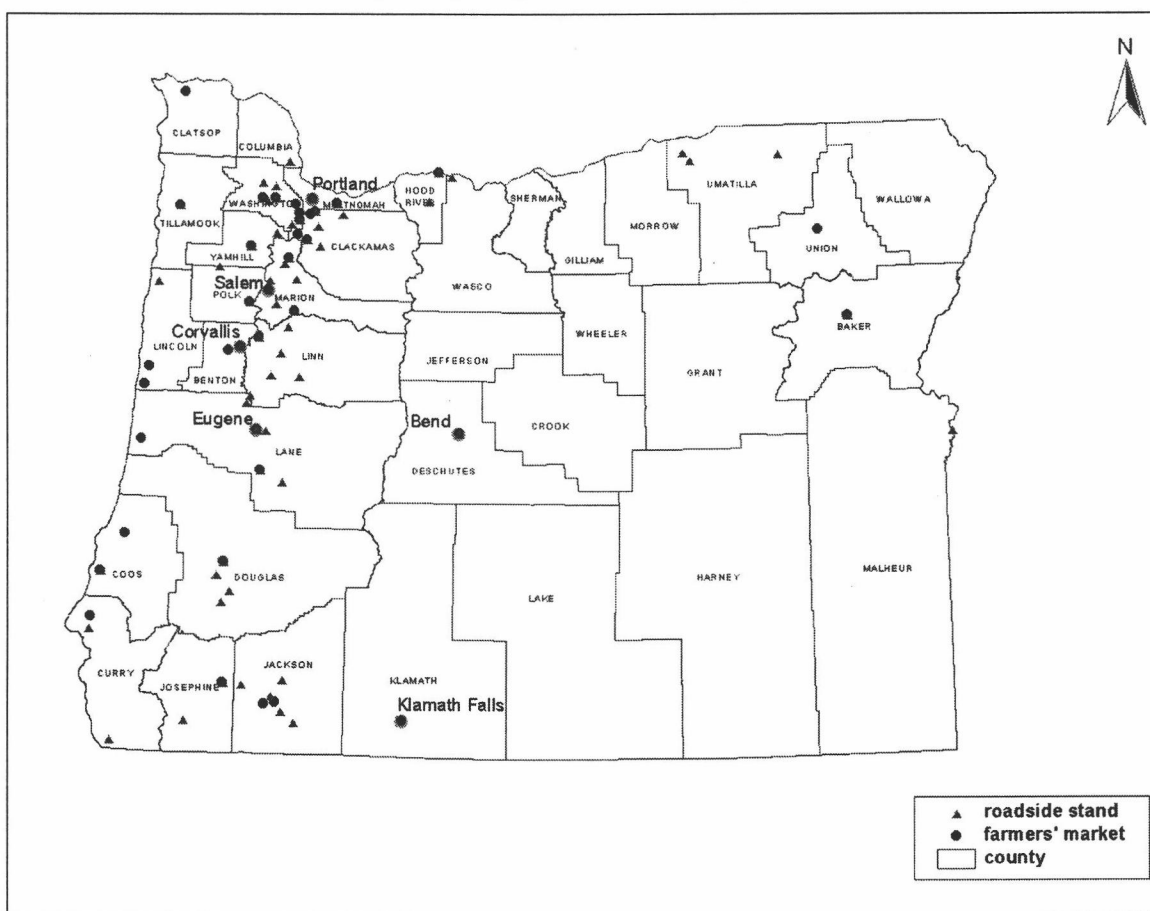
Seniors received resources to spend at farmers' markets and roadside stands, and purchasing was the first step in building a social relationship with their local farmer and to feel as though they belonged at the market. However, seniors faced mobility and transportation issues they needed to overcome in order to get to market. This section focuses on these mobility issues, first by looking at the distribution of seniors and markets, and second by examining some of the issues seniors faced in getting to market.

²⁷ Redemption rate is the term used by program administrators, referring to the percentage of coupons distributed that were redeemed (coupons received by farmers and reimbursed by WIC).

Distribution of Seniors and Vendors

The majority of markets lie within the Willamette and Portland regions (Figure 5-5). Roadside stands played an important role for providing market access to seniors in the Gorge/Central, Eastern, and Southern regions. The Oregon Coast was served primarily by farmers' markets. Approximately half of participating seniors lived in urban areas, and roughly three-fourths lived along the I-5 corridor. The map below shows the locations of the roadside stands and farmers' markets throughout Oregon. SFMNP participation is further delineated by region, including the number of roadside stands, farmers' markets, and seniors participating in SFMNP. Table 5-3 lists final results of Oregon's 2001 SFMNP and shows the regional population differences through land area and the number of metropolitan regions (US Census 2000) for SFMNP participants.

Figure 5-5: Location of markets participating in SFMNP in Oregon



(GIS map constructed from locations of farmers' markets and roadside stands (towns) as appears on final roster in 2001 SFMNP binder. Each symbol represents one market outlet)

Table 5-3: Summary of Oregon's 2001 final SFMNP participation by region

ODA Geographic Region	Roadside Stands	Farmers' Markets	Total Outlets	Land Area, sq. mile	# MSAs	SFMNP Seniors
Gorge/Central	4	2	6	11,542	1	551
Coast	6	9	15	9,228	0	1,300
Eastern	7	2	9	38,242	0	691
Portland	33	18	51	4,476	1	4,850
Southern	18	7	25	24,007	1	1,982
Willamette	45	16	61	9,535	3	3,017
TOTAL	113	54	167	97,030	5	12,391

Sources: (ODA 2002), SPDS, WIC and (Bradbury 2001).

Along with their SFMNP coupons, seniors received a list of authorized markets that could accept the coupons, yet there were still some problems with seniors trying to spend them elsewhere. Several unauthorized produce stands in greater Oregon not only received but also accepted SFMNP coupons despite a warning on the coupons that only authorized markets will be reimbursed ("only good...at participating roadside stands"). In addition, a farmers' market manager reported that a store whose name was "Farmers Market" got "all sorts of people coming in to redeem them." Also, two produce stands were originally authorized, but then were removed from the official list once it was discovered that they did not grow any produce that they sold. This inconsistency created frustration among the seniors and produce stand operators. Most complaints revolved around produce stands that were not authorized, or were de-authorized, particularly in areas where there were no authorized roadside stands or farmers' markets. It should be noted that this issue was addressed in part, by working with markets to get them authorized. By the 2002 season, Eastern and Central regions added three new farmers' markets and several more roadside stands.

Problems with distribution were most pronounced outside the Willamette region. Several interviews with seniors outside of the Willamette region indicated that, although roadside stands were a popular source of Oregon produce, many seniors had difficulty finding a convenient, eligible stand.²⁸ In one region, SFMNP seniors were not able to purchase produce from their regular produce farmer, but needed to drive 40 miles round-

²⁸ There is no research nor estimate of the role of produce stands in distributing locally-grown produce.

trip to the nearest authorized market to use their coupons. Unfortunately, there were reports of seniors who were unable or unwilling to travel those distances. Seniors noted that they were also frustrated because one of the roadside stands in their community was briefly authorized to accept coupons (or they were accepting the coupons without being authorized) until it was discovered that they did not grow any of their own produce. A senior advocate in the Central region had many seniors who were "throwing them down," returning coupons to their local senior service center. Non-targeted distribution, insufficient information prior to requesting coupons, and an unclear understanding of which markets would participate led to a set of expectations among seniors that could not be fulfilled. Because their produce stand was already accessible, rural seniors and caregivers wanted these produce stands to also be authorized to accept coupons. One caregiver wrote in July 2001:

"I'm a [caregiver] writing on behalf of [a senior] who received the coupons. I took her to [a produce stand] yesterday, but they said that the coupons were no good because none of the produce was grown by [the produce stand].... This does not make sense...very little produce is grown in this area, just homeowners in small gardens... please reconsider letting elderly use [coupons at the produce stand]. Elderly can't afford the price for produce....I know how they eat and live." (Letter #36)

Transportation

Because SFMNP coupon distribution was not targeted to seniors who lived near known markets, ODA and WIC tried to recruit markets throughout Oregon. Transportation was an essential factor in determining whether or not seniors would be able to spend their coupons and to some extent, what they would buy. Many seniors were not within walking distance of markets or had difficulties in walking. These seniors needed some means to get to and around the market in order to receive the nutritional and social benefits from their coupons, such as driving their own car, getting a ride from someone, or using public transit.

Since the beginning of the program, administrators and advocates expected lack of access to transportation to be a major barrier in coupon redemption. As a result, some market managers contacted senior centers and churches to encourage them to assist with

transportation to the farmers' market. However, this issue came to the fore again during fieldwork when an Oregonian article released on October 10, 2001 reported that about a million dollars worth of SFMNP coupons had not been redeemed, and suggested that transportation difficulties were the main reason (Mendelsohn 2001). At the time, staff had heard several complaints about transportation barriers in areas where there were few or no market venues for seniors, such as along the Coast, Central, and Eastern regions.

As mentioned, market managers tried to address the transportation issue even before the coupons were distributed. In year-end surveys, farmers contributed additional suggestions to improve transportation options to help SFMNP seniors access the markets. Farmers reported that the families and caregivers were important resources for participating seniors in bringing them to the market and helping them around the market. Several farmers also noted some seniors had transportation help from senior centers and faith-based organizations. Farmers suggested a number of solutions to the transportation "crisis", ranging from a "transportation hotline", suggesting car-pooling to seniors, and a "once-a-month free shuttle bus drive" to the market. One farmer suggested, "...[C]all senior centers, case managers, [and] social workers to let them know the program exists and ask them to help arrange transportation to the farm. Church groups may be able to help with transportation to the farm and farmers' market" (RSES).

Farmers, program advocates and administrators felt that the lack of or inadequate public transportation was a significant reason SFMNP seniors were not spending their coupons. However, only 15 percent of letters from and interviews with seniors mentioned transportation as a significant barrier. They noted that private forms of transportation could prove challenging for some seniors, such as having an unreliable car or relying on family or friends. A daughter translated for her mother, "We don't have a car, so we don't come every week" (Gorge/Central FM). Other seniors reported that poor transportation options meant infrequent trips to the market. One senior wrote that she did not request coupons because she did not have public transportation to get to her local farmers' market, "When I first moved here eight years ago I had a car and never missed a Saturday at the market. I have not been able to go for almost five years now" (Southern region). However, public transportation worked well for one market, as the city offered

free bus service for seniors on market day. One senior wrote that she “no longer drives”, and so she shops “exclusively” at that downtown market.

Seniors’ support networks, both formal and informal, played a vital role in bringing seniors to the markets. Farmers noted that family, friends, or caregivers accompanied many seniors to the market. In addition, half of all coupon-users interviewed were accompanied (typically by family members), and 35 percent of seniors indicated that they would not have been able to get to or around the market without their companion(s).

“I can’t drive, my family takes me (she points to her daughter and granddaughter), it’s good to get out but I can’t always, and then it’s a problem to use the coupons. If I’m alone then I would like to use them in supermarkets.” (participating senior in a Mid-Valley FM)

Seniors in rural areas had complained of transportation difficulties or that the nearest authorized markets were far away – whether they drove, managed a ride, or relied on a public transit system that they found disagreeable. This issue was important east of the Cascades, as a senior advocate noted that getting to the market could take a significant portion of one’s day whether one drove or used Dial-A-Ride. They noted that the Dial-A-Ride bus dropped seniors off at the market and returned three hours later, which was not suitable for seniors when markets operate in the early evening.

Customers and Sales: Impact on Markets

According to interview and survey responses, farmers and market managers saw an increase in customers and sales during the 2001 season and credited much of this increase to the SFMNP. Overall, they enjoyed the new customers resulting from the coupon program and liked the diversification of their customer base. At the same time, farmers needed more information about the program to maintain or create good customer relations. Increased coupon sales also meant adjusting to reimbursement delays and increased need to educate a customer base that did not necessarily understand their business.

New Customers

The increase in new customers (seniors, companion shoppers, or proxy shoppers) from the coupon programs meant increased exposure of the farmers' markets beyond coupon-recipients. The coupon program improved the role of the market in the community to provide fresh produce because income was no longer a barrier to shopping. Companion shoppers, such as caregivers, family members, and friends, also had a large impact on the market both in sales and by enabling it to function as a social space for these groups. Several market managers felt it was valuable and "good" to draw those "who otherwise wouldn't have shopped at the farmers' market". Survey results and interviews revealed that farmers and managers were especially happy to see the SFMNP seniors at the market.

Several market managers noted that the senior coupon program brought out more low-income seniors and increased participation by people of various abilities.

"We get a lot more people and sales for people shopping for shut-ins. Seen people with wheelchairs for the first time. Since 1986 I've been selling here, there's new faces here that I've never seen before" (participating farmer in a Willamette region FM)

In addition, the program brought out persons of various ethnicities that had not been coming to the market before. Two market managers noted that Russian and Latino populations were coming to the market as they had never before. One market manager remarked that the low-income, urban area where the farmers' market was located contained many low-income seniors who had immigrated to the United States, and SFMNP coupons allowed them to participate in the market as they originally did in their home country.

In essence, the coupon program was another form of advertisement for farmers' markets and roadside stands. Raising public awareness of these markets was the first hurdle for increasing the customer base. Several farmers remarked that publicity was very necessary for the success of farmers' markets, and that the costs of advertising added up quickly. In addition to publicizing SFMNP, press releases in newspapers and radio raised awareness of farmers' markets and roadside stands in the general public. Analysis of newspaper articles revealed that ten percent of newspaper articles also

provided information about specific local markets. The public also had access to the list of participating farmers' markets and roadside stands online on ODA's website.²⁹ A farmer in Southern farmers' market remarked, "People didn't know that the farmers' market was here. Seniors didn't know – the coupons are another form of advertisement... Newspapers, PSAs³⁰, none of it is free".

The newspaper was an important advertising tool for promoting the program at a Coast region farmers' market which was authorized a month after the coupon season started. The local paper published a large article with colorful photographs, announcing that the market was now able to accept coupons. The market manager reported the market was inundated by a "flood of seniors" the following market date. A vendor selling popcorn remarked that during the height of the summer people waited in long lines, as many as fifty people deep, in order to use their coupons.

The creation of a new customer base was instrumental to achieving SFMNP's third program objective: the development of local FDM. Historically, this objective has been measured by the percent of coupons redeemed and the percent of coupon-recipients who spend their own money at farmers' markets (Alexander 1996; Balsam 1994; Anliker et al. 1992). The year-end surveys and interviews contained a wide range of comments about this topic, though it was difficult to correlate their observations due to the variety of markets and characteristics contributing to redemption at the season's end. These characteristics are related to product availability and what the SFMNP senior is willing to purchase, such as what produce items are available, produce diversity and volume, and whether the coupon benefit was large enough so that seniors did not need to spend their own money. In addition, if the market closed before the coupon season ended, the senior may be left without a market they could access to spend the rest of their coupons. Alternatively, if the market ended past the deadline for the coupons, the senior may have coupons left because they did not realize that the coupon deadline was before the market's end date. Overall, roadside stand comments suggested that new seniors were not spending their own money, but there were many caveats due to market circumstances.

²⁹ http://www.oda.state.or.us/admd/sr_mkt/index.html, 9/10/03

³⁰ PSA is a common term for a "public service announcement," transmitted on radio and television.

In addition, farmers' interview comments communicated pride about the quality of their produce and that seniors were like other customers returning to a good product. As a farmer in the Willamette region stated, "If you're doing something right they'll like the food and they come back – guaranteed". A farmer in the Southern region noted, " We've had new customers that couldn't splurge on [the produce] before. Hard to tell if they'd come back, but they have a different attitude toward the food".

Improved Sales

Market managers, in year-end surveys and interviews, reported that the WIC-FMNP and SFMNP programs accounted for increased sales. Overall, the small, new, or struggling markets found the coupons contributed to a significant portion of sales: "Very important part of our small market...more than half were seniors", "We are a small market and probably one half of our customers were brought in because of the senior program. It had a major effect on our produce farmers." According to estimates in market manager surveys, the increases in sales ranged from 20 to 30 percent to over 250 percent. Even if the coupon sales were not a large portion of overall sales, they were an important additional income to the market.

Increased attendance at the markets, including those accompanying the seniors, meant that the program helped other farmers at farmers' markets by attracting customers that shopped with other non-participating farmers. One farmer noted, "Great program! Even though coupons sales were about 10% of gross receipts, the program did increase our non-coupons sales because family members also purchased produce." A non-participating farmer remarked, "I love this program. It's the neatest thing for the seniors, even if we don't get the coupons. It helped our business." (Coastal FM).

The coupon program also helped struggling markets retain farmers. One farmer remarked that the increase in sales from coupons made selling at the farmers' market cost-effective, "My first year here was bare minimum. We couldn't afford to lose more money..." (Gorge/Central FM). Increased sales at farmers' markets made it possible for this farmer to remain in a relatively small and new farmers' market where the farmer estimated up to 50 percent of sales were with coupons, "It wouldn't have been worth it to

sell here without the coupons. It provided a base for the market to grow from.” This farmer reported that their SFMNP sales in more established Portland markets ranged between 1 percent and 5 percent of total produce sales.

Increased Market Demand for Limited Produce

The senior coupon program was announced to farmers’ markets relatively late in the 2001 production season, and few farmers had the ability to substantially increase their production to meet the four-fold increase in coupons on such late notice. Even if farmers had the resources to increase production for 2001, few had sufficient advance warning about the program to do so. Thus, while nearly all markets turned in some senior coupons, those farmers’ markets located near relatively large populations of SFMNP seniors had substantially increased market demand for the limited number of fruits and vegetables grown that season. This demand had an impact on farmers’ markets in two respects: markets sold out earlier than they wanted, and others bent their rules to accept farmers who would not otherwise meet the market’s criteria.

According to survey data, one third or more of farmers were able to respond to increased demand for produce during the season, growing a greater variety of produce and increasing production (Table 5-4). The highest percentage of farmers reported that they had increased production for the 2001, however, this was not enough to prevent some markets from ending their “produce” season earlier than expected. As one manager noted, simply because there was substantially higher demand than the previous year and farmers sold out their fall harvest (“keepers”) sooner. Other markets sold out earlier during the market day, so that shoppers and coupon-users would have to come sooner in order to buy produce. “Sometimes we closed early because farmers would run out of food for sale. But customers started to come early for the best selection” (market manager at Coastal FM). Selling out early was not a good thing for markets as they want to make sure that someone coming in the last hour of the market had a similar choice to a customer who arrived at the beginning of the market.

Table 5-4: Farmer year-end survey results, farming practices

	Change in production practices	FM Farmers	RS Farmers
Changes within the season	Increased my fruit and/or vegetable production	41%	46%
	Grew a wider variety of produce to sell at market	29%	18%
Changes for next season	Plan to increase production next year	43%	39%
	Plan to increase variety next year	27%	28%

In several small farmers' markets in areas with large numbers of SFMNP seniors, the demand for produce created similar problems to an extent that they accepted farmers that they would not have otherwise. Many markets in Oregon had criteria that farmers needed to meet in order to sell there, usually that a large share of produce they sell is produce they grew. Some markets were more stringent than others, for example, requiring farmers to sell only organic produce or only produce grown by the farmer. However, in order to meet the demand by an influx of lower-income customers, these smaller markets allowed farmers who could provide produce at an acceptable price and in sufficient volume. This change did not occur without tension between the new farmers and the established farmers, and there was often suspicion of the new farmer reselling produce.³¹

Concern over Uneven Benefit from Program

Several roadside stand farmers stated that they believed the program should be used only to support local agriculture and not to purchase non-local produce.

"If you allow commercial type of fruit stand businesses to accept senior citizen coupons, like the fruit stands that do not raise their own produce, but buy their produce from places like Yakima, Washington, California, and Mexico, it will ruin the intent of the program. You might as well let them take their coupons to Safeway." (RSVS³²)

³¹ This has been a concern in some markets in years prior to SFMNP.

³² RSVS means comment came from WIC's year-end survey for roadside stands.

A number of vendors believed that some participating roadside stands were not abiding by the programs rules for local produce and wanted markets to be monitored to ensure that all farmers were accepting coupons only for produce that was locally grown.

“By law I have to sell what I grow. Other participating stands in my area buy potatoes, lettuce, etc. from the same distributor for Safeway. Because they have “farm” in their name, they turn around and sell these products via coupons as if they grew them. I think the parameter of what you can sell should be limited to what you produce. Otherwise the goal of helping direct farm sales is defeated if I'm forced to carry lettuce from California, potatoes from Idaho, and asparagus from the Columbia Basin.” (RSVS)

However, farmers did not seem to mind “legitimate competition,”(RSVS) in fact, several recommended other farmers into the program for the next season and provided suggestions for where to start advertising for roadside stands. Like noted in the above quote, several roadside stands objected to the participation of roadside stands that were successful, full-service “Grocery-Store-situated-in-the-country,” feeling that the program should support smaller-scale farmers who needed the extra business from the coupons.

FMNP Enhanced Community-Building

Generally, farmers’ market farmers saw their market as common ground for the community to buy wholesome food for the household as well as to a social space for families and friends. The coupons encouraged seniors and families to shop together at the market, and farmers and market managers were pleased to see the market provide a space for families to come together. One farmers’ market farmer noted that they noticed a higher incidence of families bringing their elders including those who had not received coupons.

The FMNP coupon program enhanced the community-building role of farmers’ markets.

“Just keep it up. It is tremendously beneficial to our community – [it] increased local economic activity, increased community

participation in wholesome activity – especially our diverse cultures.” (MMS).³³

The farmers’ market, then, had value beyond being a means of marketing one’s goods. The market also provided a place for everyone to find nutritional and spiritual nourishment.

Market Experience: Shopping with SFMNP Coupons at Farmers’ Market

The “rubber hit the road” at the farmers’ markets and roadside stands where, brought together through the program, seniors exchanged coupons for produce from farmers in 167 farmers’ markets and roadside stands across Oregon. Seniors appeared to be ready customers for farmers – often having prior experience with homegrown or locally grown produce, appreciative of the produce, and having the food skills, knowledge, and desire to eat fresh produce. However, at times seniors’ expectations did not correlate with the realities of FDM, often leading to frustration with the program and farmers.

Most FM farmers and market managers had experience with the WIC FMNP in previous years and needed little education on how the SFMNP operated. Additionally, both the WIC and Senior FMNP had similar rules and limitations for both coupon-recipients, making the two programs nearly seamless. On the other hand, roadside stand farmers and seniors had never participated in an FMNP program, and both populations required more information and education about the program and each other.

The benefits of the coupon program for both farmers and seniors were realized at the market level. Seniors purchased fresh produce in a quantity and quality they had not been able to afford, and farmers had increased sales from new seniors and seniors able to buy more produce. Seniors appreciated many aspects of the program and the farmers’

³³ MMS refers to WIC’s year-end survey for managers of farmers’ markets and distributed one per manager (vs one per market).

markets,³⁴ and their appreciation was reflected back by participating farmers and other vendors in the farmers' markets. Farmers appreciated the synergy of program, farmer, and market in helping low-income seniors, and providing a variety of benefits to SFMNP seniors while at the same time providing farmers with needed additional sales. However, neither the seniors nor the farmers were homogeneous populations, and there were subgroups with different program experiences and perspectives. This section first discusses senior perspectives and then farmer perspectives on the benefits and suggested improvements on the program. Afterwards, this section examines the impact of coupons upon the buyer-seller relationship, and tensions and frustrations among some seniors and farmers in the shopping experience.

How Seniors Benefited from Program

Nearly all coupon-users at the farmers' markets expressed gratitude for the coupon program, such as "This program is a blessing for a lot of people" and "it's a blessing to have the coupons." Seniors said that they were thrilled to have the coupons, as they were an "enormous" help, and "one of the best things that has happened in a long time" (Letter #23, November 2001). Gratitude for increased fresh produce was widespread and frequent, "I just finished a lovely dinner of green beans, potatoes, okra, cucumbers and a fresh peach. I haven't been able to afford these for a few years." (Letter #14, July 2001). Seniors appreciated the opportunity to purchase a greater variety of produce than they would otherwise be able to afford.

Stretching Their Dollars

A large portion of seniors in interviews and letters, stated that they would not have been able to afford fresh produce at either the farmers' market or at grocery stores without the SFMNP coupons. Seniors remarked that coupons were a "real saver," "huge aid and blessing to us," and enabled seniors to "stretch" their food budgets further. Several coupon-users noted in Oregon "a lot of seniors don't have" resources for fresh

³⁴ One might expect letters to complain about the program, but interesting only 5 out of 43 letters from seniors reported any problems with the program. Most were simply letters of appreciation for aspects of the program.

produce and they didn't eat fresh produce before receiving the coupons. Seniors reported that when they cut their food budget, they do with less food and "just stay home."

A couple of seniors noted that the coupons were an important part of their income. One senior wrote that the coupons increased her food-assistance by 50 percent over a five-month period on average, and together these funds increased her total monthly income by 10 percent during the same period. Most seniors reported living on a limited income and that rising costs had left little for purchasing food. One senior remarked, "It's tough on a fixed income – you go without unless it's a very good deal. Without coupons, I don't buy from either the grocery store or farmers' market" (Coastal FM). One coupon-user, the son of a participating senior, was more specific about how increases in the cost of living put pressure on his mother's limited income, "She's on Medicare, no food stamps, no social security, just living on savings, but she's in a bind now with housing costs going up" (Coastal FM).

Several seniors reported that they ate fresh produce before the coupons, but the program allowed them to purchase more of the high quality produce found at farmers' markets. While some could not afford the prices at the farmers' market without the coupons, they preferred to shop there for the atmosphere and the quality of the produce: "we have two good supermarkets, but produce at the farmers' market is...really superior - so clean, so varied in choice and so appetizing" (Letter #13, July 2001). Several noted that they used to have gardens, which were important sources of fresh produce, but because of failing health were no longer able to garden. They appreciated the freshness and "homegrown" quality of the produce at the farmers' market, and just enjoyed eating fresh fruits and vegetables: "I've never had such great food all summer long" (Letter #19, September 2001).

Improving Health and Diet

Recognition of the nutritional value of fresh produce was not as strong as the sheer enjoyment of eating. However, several seniors noted the importance of fruits and vegetables in maintaining or even improving their health. Coupons were appreciated by those suffering from diabetes (15 percent of interviews) because of the "special foods"

the disease requires. Another senior wrote, "I plan on juicing. For years I've been drinking too much soda" (Letter #42, July 2001).

Several seniors were grateful for the benefit as it enabled them to try new produce for the first time: "I've tried vegetables I've never eaten before, such as fennel and leeks" (Letter #33, October 2001). A number of seniors receiving coupons had immigrated from Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia and were seeing produce varieties for the first time. Other seniors were excited to get certain items they had not been able to enjoy in a long time and expressed nostalgia for them, as one senior remarked, "Found figs! Wow! ...I'm real grateful for the coupons. I couldn't afford grapes before, and I had to pass them by before" (participating senior at a Southern FM).

Socialization and Family

The coupons were also an incentive for seniors with limited mobility and transportation to get to the farmers' market regardless of challenges they faced. Once there, they could shop, talk with farmers, and generally socialize with others. Several seniors remarked that they enjoyed the challenge of getting to and around the market, requiring ingenuity and perseverance to overcome mobility limitations. While the produce was the reward for getting to the market, one senior reported that the emotional benefit and feeling of achievement was equally important. I often witnessed seniors moving through the market with walkers and appearing very fragile. While many had family or caretakers with them, they moved under their own power. One senior, in particular, caught my attention:

She's been slowly looping about the market, pushing an old wheelchair that carries her laundry baskets of food, and where she has hooked her oxygen tank. She later tells me, "It's been fun to create this set-up (pointing to the wheelchair), otherwise it's "ingesting and inhaling"" (participating senior in a Southern FM)

Using the coupons became an exercise in self-actualization in other means. Several seniors reported that the coupon benefit returned to them some degree of agency that had been lost in recent years. Seniors now had the resources to choose products that they wanted and an incentive to participate in the market. A senior in the Coast region remarked, "We don't get out much anymore, [spending the coupons] helps for me to just

feel like me.” Another senior put the issue of choice in context of the entire market experience:

“You can always find what you love shopping at the farmers market. We come here every week. I bought some of everything – looking at everything. Bought some popcorn a couple of times. It’s a neat thing for old people. I just love the experience. You can make a choice – you know what’s going to be at a store – but there’s everything at the booth, and they are all so friendly. (participating senior in Coastal FM)

The majority of those interviewed had family accompany them to the farmers’ market. Several of these noted that they came to the farmers’ market each year with their adult children, stating that the farmers’ market “is a regular family event” and “part of our heritage,” and they looked forward to sharing the produce with family members. In addition, seniors and farmers noted that informal and formal support networks were invaluable for ensuring seniors eat a nutritional diet, providing transportation, and possibly maximizing the use of the coupons through preserving and storing. A caregiver related the experience of a senior for whom she cared, and how her nutritional intake and support network were enhanced through participation:

“I take care of another senior, and it was a welcome service! Her daughter spent them all in Eugene in one big shopping trip. She bought tomatoes for canning, cabbage for sauerkraut, peaches for canning – it was a family event. The whole family lives in a duplex, daughter and her family on one side, and her mother on the other...She was eating well before the coupons. (caregiver at a Coastal FM)

As noted by several farmers, the presence of family enhanced seniors’ enjoyment of their farmers’ market experiences, particularly for those who had recently immigrated to the United States and did not speak English. In these cases, family was important for transportation and as translators.

Appreciation of Farmers

Since so much of the program’s publicity centered on its benefit to seniors, it was not a surprise when only a few coupon-users acknowledged the economic benefit to farmers. Many seniors vocalized their appreciation of the farmers (discussed later), but

the financial benefit of the program to farmers was scarcely mentioned in materials given to seniors, and seldom in the newspaper articles recruiting seniors. When the farmers were mentioned, it was brief and rarely explained why local farmers needed financial assistance. Among the letters and the interviews, only two seniors remarked that the program also helped farmers, and this made them approve of the program even more.

Farmers, SFMNP, and Social Good

This section examines the perspectives of farmers about SFMNP and its various benefits to both seniors and farmers. Most perspectives derive from farmers' markets, but the year-end survey to roadside stands provides some insightful comments. These two venues seem to share a number of key issues, yet also faced some different issues. It is also important to remember that while all persons selling produce are called farmers in this study, some of the vendors at farmers' markets were individuals hired by the farmer to sell for them. In order to avoid any confusion, all vendors are called farmers.

Overall, farmers noted many of the benefits that seniors enjoyed from participating in SFMNP and reflected an appreciation for being able to participate in a program that delivered such results. Moreover, farmers demonstrated appreciation for the program because of how it achieved these results: enhancing farmers' markets role within their community and utilizing a market-based approach with no middlemen between the grower and the SFMNP senior. Farmers also provided suggestions for improving the program for both seniors and farmers, revealing a range of perspectives related to public policy.

Seniors Were Deserving

Most farmers felt strongly that seniors were most deserving of this program, emerging as a strong theme in all sources. As one farmer wrote, "We like to help our seniors, who have helped our country become what it is, and now may need a little help themselves" (FMFS).³⁵ Repeatedly, the farmers made note of instances where they

³⁵ FMFS refers to WIC's year-end survey for participating farmers at farmers' markets.

helped seniors. In addition, I witnessed several instances of farmers helping seniors who had difficulties with mobility or assisting them in maximizing the coupon's value.

Many noted that they liked the program because it enabled seniors to get fresh produce they could “not otherwise afford” or “to buy more than they normally would”. Farmers felt that “a lot of [the seniors] need it,” and they remarked that they often heard from seniors that they had not eaten so well in years. They commented on how happy the seniors appeared to be because they could access quality, fresh produce. Seniors' low incomes were a concern for a number of farmers and as one farmer wrote about the program, “It helps seniors stretch their meager retirement funds to get good nutritious foods” (Letter #50, n.d.).

Farmers appreciated that seniors were able to choose between farmers' markets and roadside stands. They also appreciated that seniors were given the resources to choose the kind and amount of produce items they bought, enabling them to buy a “gift of memory and nostalgia” (FMFS) – an item that they normally had not been able to afford that brought them special joy. Similarly, farmers liked that seniors were able to purchase quality produce, be it locally grown or organic, and that seniors had the choice to buy either small portions or buy in bulk. Some farmers remarked that they liked to see the seniors share their benefit with others, “It's fun to watch them being able to buy for kids” (participating farmer in a Portland region FM). This sentiment was not shared by all farmers and discussed later in the paper.

Nutritional Benefits Recognized

Many farmers liked the program because it improved the nutrition of participating seniors. This objective of the program was widely identified through publicity and program materials, and undoubtedly, some of the farmers wanted to communicate that the program achieved it. Comments noted that the program introduced seniors to fresh, nutritious produce and consequently nutrition improved: “seniors were pleased that their nutrition improved” (FMFS); “It introduces more fresh fruit, veggies varieties to people with a limited variety in their diet” (FMFS); “Exposure of more seniors to food that helps

ensure that they can build stronger bodies” (FMFS); “We want everybody to eat fruit – helps agriculture and helps the consumer” (participating farmer in Gorge/Central FM).

Seniors Had Opportunity to Socialize

The program enabled the farmers’ market to be an opportunity for seniors to get out and interact with other people. Farmers either recognized the benefit as one to seniors, or as a benefit to the market, but these sentiments were fairly hard to distinguish from each other in conversation and might be simultaneously recognized. A number of farmers’ market farmers recognized that as one grows older there is a strong risk of isolation, and that mental and physical health are highly linked to interacting with others as part of a community. Farmers liked that the coupon benefit enabled seniors to join in the market experience as a social event, where they could interact with other shoppers and the farmers. Comments about seniors’ socialization at the market suggested that farmers were touched by being a part of something that provided this community service to the seniors; they actually saw the benefits to the seniors themselves, noting that the “seniors were happy to be given the opportunity to come to the market” (FMFS), and “the farmers’ market became a social function for seniors” (FMFS).

Equally important was the opportunity farmers had to socialize with the seniors. A number of farmers noted that they had built friendships with seniors. While a personal benefit to the farmer, the new friendships added to the overall perspective that the program provided a social good because it enabled new relationships to form thereby increasing seniors’ socialization and farmers’ market role in community building. Several noted in the surveys that they shared stories and recipes and growing tips with seniors. One farmers’ market farmer noted that one of the seniors came to help pick from their garden (Southern FM), and another said, “I like meeting older people” (FMFS). In the field, farmers’ personal attachment to the some seniors was apparent in the way the farmers spoke of the seniors they had met as a result of the coupon program.

“The Russian ladies like the tomatoes and prune plums. They will hit me up and try to bargain with me. They come all the time and I give them a deal. (the farmer is smiling) They don’t waste them,

and they sure appreciate them. (participating farmer in Portland region FM)

Implementation

Farmers liked the program because it was a market-based solution. Having a market-based program that supported two different populations was appealing to many farmers, including nonparticipating farmers. The program received high praise since it was fairly straightforward and there was no middleman between the two populations. Farmers thought this program was particularly good because it simultaneously addressed the nutritional and social needs of seniors and supported farmers growing and selling their produce directly to consumers.

Farmers who were not eligible to participate in the program were supportive of the program. More than one flower farmer noted that it was “good to see” seniors get quality produce, and that even though they had little income, the benefit enabled them to buy a small bouquet of flowers to brighten their homes. Farmers selling basic food items that were ineligible for purchase noted that they provided discounted prices for seniors with coupons, such as dollar off the price of a dozen eggs or selling ‘Kettle Korn’ for 50 cents instead of a dollar.

Seniors Were Good Customers

Farmers overwhelmingly remarked on a variety of aspects that made seniors excellent customers, ranging from appreciation of the program to appreciation of the farmers’ market farmer and appreciation of the product. There was a clear sense of protectiveness from farmers over the seniors that may be the result of the general appreciation seniors had for the program, the farmers, and the fruits of their labors. In the field, farmers shared stories about seniors who had made an impression on the farmer. Most striking, were stories of when farmers formed strong relationships with the seniors and what they shared outside of the market environment.

Farmers spoke consistently of how the SFMNP seniors made good program participants and good customers. Overall, it was the seniors’ appreciation of the program and all its benefits that led farmers to embrace the program and the seniors. Farmers

noted that they liked that seniors valued and appreciated the coupon benefit and the program, “seniors much appreciated produce and program” (FMFS), “seniors expressed their appreciation for the coupons” (RSEV), and “seniors were careful not to waste any of their buying power” (FMFS). They liked other aspects of seniors as customers and program participants.

Through words and body language, farmers indicated that they enjoyed the seniors as customers because they appreciated the product that they sold. There were four ways in which seniors could demonstrate this appreciation. First and foremost, as noted previously, seniors liked the produce because it was fresh and locally grown – they appreciated the quality of the product. As one farmer noted, they liked “meeting seniors who really appreciated a quality product” (FMFS). They enjoyed the reactions of the seniors who purchased their food, and they appreciated that they kept coming back for more, “Seniors are thrilled to go home with fresh fruit and vegetables” (FMFS), and “Lots of people who come back after using coupons can’t buy as much, but they are looking for food that is “alive” and “fresh”. Can’t get at grocery store” (participating farmer in a Coastal FM).

Secondly, seniors knew how to choose, preserve, and store produce. This knowledge appeared to be one of the farmers’ truest signs of appreciation. Many farmers noted that the seniors “appreciated getting fresh produce” or used other descriptors such as “quality food” or “quality product.” Farmers valued not only seniors’ food knowledge and skills, but also their ability to bring these skills to bear in knowing how to cook, shop, and preserve; “they are well educated as to what to do with different varieties of produce” (FMFS), and “seniors know how to cook and preserve for the future” (FMFS). There was profound appreciation from some farmers of seniors’ predisposition toward making the most of their coupons by buying items for winter storage, canning, or freezing.

“Though our senior customers were very knowledgeable about produce, we often heard them say “we’re going home to put this (produce) up”. Not only did the senior nutrition program provide great nutrition during the summer months, but due to the senior’s

efforts at food preservation, they had good food through the winter months.” (RSVS)

Preservation appeared to be important to farmers, as an indication that they valued the product and the coupon benefit in order to make it last as long as possible. In addition, a number of farmers commented on the seniors’ prior connection to agriculture and fresh produce in their lives. Some described stories of seniors who had a background in agriculture, had gardens, or used to gather blackberries or mushrooms, “These folks know fresh produce, and remember how to shop and eat from their childhood.” (participating farmer in Gorge/Central FM).

A third way that seniors showed appreciation of the product was by savvy shopping – coming in early to get the best produce, or selecting an item that will last, “Seniors tend to be selective and are looking for stuff to last more than anything. They know what they are looking for – a quality item” (participating vendors in Willamette region FM).

Fourth, farmers liked when seniors (and other customers) try something new, whether it’s a new produce item or a new variety;

“They’re amazed with what’s out here, and some may try something new, “What’s that”. I’ve got 12 kinds of tomatoes and people are mainly oblivious, you’ve got to push it out and make it obvious. (participating vendors in Willamette region FM)

Seniors’ Appreciation of the Market

Lastly, farmers enjoyed the seniors as customers because, “seniors appear to love coming to market” (FMFS). Most farmers noted that seniors seemed to enjoy themselves most when they came with other people, such as friends or family. Some farmers were adamant that they appreciated that the coupon benefit enabled seniors and families to come to the market and share the produce that they bought together.

“What a joy! The best program the government ever did. Picture little old ladies with scarves over their heads like babooshkas. Four women who don’t drive. The church took them here after services. They knew how to pick raspberries. One bought a flat,

she said that she wanted to make “jam for my grandbabies”.
(participating farmer in Portland region FM)

By appreciating the farmer, their product and the market they created, seniors honored the farmers and their work, which was, in turn, much appreciated by the farmers. Farmers overwhelmingly noted that they liked the seniors as customers, and while there were tensions with some seniors, the majority of experiences were positive. Any drawbacks with seniors as customers could be overcome and that the program was a success for both the seniors and to a number of farmers, this meant that the program was a success for them.

Farmer Perspectives and Suggestions for Program

After a year of program operation, farmers identified several concerns and issues with the SFMNP. In addition, they also were in a unique position to provide advice on improving future implementation of the program.

Issues and Concerns

One issue several farmers raised with the coupon program was the determination of which products were eligible and ineligible for purchase. Several farmers disapproved of coupons spent on inedible, but still eligible, items such as carving pumpkins and decorative gourds. In general, farmers perceived the coupons as a nutritional aid for seniors, and as such they should be used accordingly. Seniors often asked market managers and farmers for more food items to be eligible for purchase, such as honey and eggs. Many seniors and farmers did not understand why these “low-processed” foods could not be eligible. However, most farmers recognized that it would be difficult to let some processed goods be purchased without letting others as well to the detriment of the seniors. A market manager wrote that the restrictions made sense, “or we’d have seniors living on jam sandwiches again” (MMS). Many farmers mentioned issues related to ineligible items, either wanting the program to accept some or all ineligible food items or to maintain the current criteria.

By the way farmers spoke of seniors and shared stories of seniors, many farmers appeared to not mind and some appeared even favorable of seniors who shared produce with others in need or with their support network. However, a farmer in the Willamette region expressed another viewpoint, stating that they felt the coupon benefit should be solely for the participating senior, “seniors are buying more than they could possibly use for themselves. It’s not fair if they share with others.”

Improving the Program

Farmers identified several ways in which the SFMNP could be improved. Foremost, farmers were interested in improving redemption rates – tied to the perception that seniors were not spending all their coupons. It is important to remember that the timing of the research largely coincided with a newspaper article that stated that the majority of coupons had not been spent although the end of the coupon season was little more than two weeks away. Farmers were frustrated by this and wanted the program to be successful and the program funds to be utilized.

Most farmers suggested extending the coupon season on either (or both) ends. Several farmers noted that the coupon season should start in May when their markets started and when several desirable cool weather crops were available, such as asparagus and snow peas. A few farmers suggested that the coupon season extend through November because their market was still active then. Other suggestions for improving coupon redemption included more advertising through newspapers; radio PSAs; and newsletters of senior centers, churches, and communities that emphasized where seniors can spend coupons, what food is ripe and available, and the deadline for spending the coupons.

Another set of suggestions was related to coupon distribution. Many farmers said that they wanted less money to go to each senior either because seniors were not able to spend the total amount, or because they wanted more seniors to participate in the program. However, several farmers felt that senior’s deserved \$100 if not more, and that such an amount was important for bringing the seniors to the market. One farmer wrote,

“Seniors had enough dollars worth of coupons to make it worth their coming to the market more than once” (FMFS).

In general, farmers suggested no less than \$50 per senior; however, one farmer felt that they should get \$20 like the WIC clients for “it seems unfair that seniors get \$100 while the kids [WIC] get \$20, the young can better use it.” (Willamette region FM). While another farmer spoke for several other farmers when he suggested more coupon money should go to the WIC coupon program, “Seniors may get \$100, but they know how to spend it. I wish WIC got more” (Willamette region FM). Farmers felt that not only should seniors receive \$100 worth of coupons, but also that WIC clients should get more coupons as they feed more people.

Farmers also commented on the coupon distribution strategy. Several farmers suggested that coupons should be distributed monthly in order to encourage seniors to spend them earlier in the season. Several other farmers felt that coupon distribution should be targeted to those seniors who live near an authorized market, or to those that did not have refrigeration or cooking facilities, such as retirement homes.

A third suggestion for improving SFMNP was to increase the range of eligible items. There was consensus among many farmers that eggs, honey, and nuts should be eligible items. These products are high in nutrients, and farmers consider them beneficial to seniors along with fresh produce. They are also relatively low in value-added, with honey having the highest amount of labor. Farmers also asked for dried fruit and meat items that they felt were important components of senior’s diet but hard to come by with a limited income. Other items farmers suggested made eligible included cider, jams, canned vegetables/fruits, and potted vegetable plants, such as tomatoes and herbs.

These farmers, ineligible for participation, noted the historical connections that “lots of seniors” have with their products, namely eggs and honey. Another farmer noted that plant starts could help seniors get more for their money, “many seniors were disappointed that they couldn’t use their coupons to buy plant starts that would ultimately produce foods; i.e. tomatoes, peppers – coupons should be used this way, particularly when you consider that gardening is considered to be therapeutic” (FMFS)

Purchasing Behaviors

Coupon Restrictions

Rules and restrictions placed upon the use of the coupons changed the dynamics of seniors' shopping at the market and the interaction between farmers and seniors. The two main purchasing restrictions placed on the coupons were that the coupons must be used for (1) the purchase of fresh produce (2) grown by the farmer. Yet seniors purchased items in markets that did not exclusively sell these types of produce. In addition, seniors could not receive change on the value of the coupon, leaving them with one of three possible shopping behaviors when buying produce: (1) accept the loss if total fell under a multiple of \$2, (2) make the purchase equal a multiple of \$2, or (3) pay the difference in cash (less than \$2).

Coupons

The coupon size and design appeared to work well for most seniors and farmers interviewed. However, some farmers identified several problems. Some farmers reported that while the coupons were in a pad (similar to a notepad where the pages were glued together at one end), they tended to stick together and were difficult for the seniors to handle. Farmers reported that they needed to count and tear off the coupons for the seniors. One farmer noted, "Sometimes I have to take the coupons from them to help them." (Southern FM). Another problem farmers identified was the coupon's increase in size from the dollar-sized WIC-FMNP coupons of the previous year. Bigger than a dollar bill, they did not fit in a cashbox slot and often were thrown into a pile at the bottom of the cashbox. Lastly, two dates were printed on the coupons: the last day to redeem the coupons was printed in large font, and the last day for farmers to mail in the coupons for reimbursement was printed in small font in the lower left hand corner. However, farmers noted that some seniors were confused about the second date and thought they could continue to spend them.

Farmers' recommendations for coupon denomination appeared to be related to the variety and price of what they sold and what seniors brought to checkout. Most farmers

liked that they were in two-dollar increments, as a farmer noted, “The \$2 amount is good. They will buy a certain amount, yet small enough that they retain the ability to choose, particularly for smaller farmers” (Southern FM). A farmer noted that she sold only a few items in bulk, and a \$2 amount was more than a senior could eat, “sometimes the seniors hardly need the \$2.00 minimum” (FMFS). One farmer noted that sometimes seniors overpaid them, “They sometimes want to give me too many as they’ll see a coupon as a dollar bill” (Southern FM).³⁶ Other farmers suggested increments of four dollars as they were receiving many coupons from seniors who were buying a number of items, and they wanted to reduce their coupon-processing time and labor.

Farmers noted that the majority of seniors sought to get the full value of their \$2 coupons and therefore required more time to select and pay for produce. Depending upon their mobility and facility with calculating the cost of their purchase, seniors appeared to take longer than other customers. The real frustration for farmers, however, was during checkout, when seniors discovered that they needed to either add or subtract items to get the full value of their coupons. In some instances, seniors returned to the produce displays to select another item. Some farmers remarked that the \$2 coupons could be confusing to seniors.

“We like the program...Seniors get a lot more than before.... People forget that the coupons are worth \$2 and think they are \$1....It’s kind of a hassle to have them stand here and calculate what it is, we have to go out and get more and round off. Then when the seniors count out the coupons, there’s a back-up (of customers)” (participating farmer in Portland region FM).

In general, farmers felt that seniors spent more time than other customers in adding up the value of their purchase so it totaled a multiple of \$2; “It’s been difficult – getting their change’s worth can be a time-consuming situation” (Gorge/Central FM). A number of farmers noted that it can feel like a problem, but valued the program more. As a farmer remarked, “The seniors take longer, they don’t move as quickly, but we love talking with the seniors.” (Portland region FM). In busy markets, farmers were acutely

³⁶ There also appeared to be similar periodic confusion with the invoices that were mailed in with the coupons

aware of this, as others needed to wait longer in line when they cashed-out an SFMNP senior. Spending the full value of the coupons required extra time for a senior at checkout and at times required physical assistance from the farmer, “I have to give the seniors time to count them out right.... Sometimes they’ll hand the coupons to me to count out” (Willamette region FM). Several farmers commented that family and caregivers were welcome companions to the seniors to help with the shopping experience, noting that they were important for carrying goods and helping seniors calculate their purchases. “Elderly customers tended to take a long time to select produce; caregivers did a better job of shopping” (FMFS).

Farmers adopted different techniques to ease seniors through the checkout process and, in some cases, became stronger advocates of getting the full value of the coupon than some SFMNP customers. For farmers who did not use a scale, the checking-out process was easier for some seniors, as a farmer reported, “I see the seniors pass up places that sell by the pound. I sell with prices that are easy to add up...” (Southern FM). Farmers selling by weight rather than per unit especially mentioned the difficulty and extra time required for seniors to calculate the value of their goods in order to maximize the value of the coupons. Often they helped seniors by adding or subtracting items during checkout to get the total to exactly \$2. Several farmers echoed this farmer, “If price doesn’t meet \$2, then either I knock down the price, or suggest that they buy more. \$2 is not a big deal, it’s flexible” (Willamette region FM). If a senior’s purchase totaled under a two-dollar multiple, nearly all farmers remarked that they would “throw in” extra produce to make up the difference, “You’ll be weighing the produce, and it’ll be \$5, then they’ll get a couple extra onions” (Gorge/Central FM). Sometimes farmers helped seniors spend the full value of their coupons even when a senior did not try to reach a \$2 multiple. I overheard a farmer during checkout say to the senior, whose total had come to \$6.80, “you need to bring it up...try these apples, they’ll keep in the fridge” (Coastal FM).

Farmers in the farmers markets were at an advantage because they had already adjusted their pricing in response to the WIC-FMNP. A farmer noted, “No problems

with \$2...I'm used to WIC and setting prices for the \$2 increments. It's about finding a way to make a sale" (Southern FM). Nonetheless, in anticipating that the purchasing restrictions may cause some problems for seniors, SFMNP administrators encouraged farmers at the start of the program to help senior customers fill their purchase to \$2 or have items that are pre-bagged and weighed to simplify the process (Oregon WIC Program 2001: "Farmers Guide").

Items purchased

Although seniors appeared to purchase a variety of items, farmers noted a general tendency to purchase fruit, suggesting that seniors were using their coupon resource to buy foods least accessible to them (Leibtag and Kaufman 2003). Some farmers commented seniors looked for basic food items at the farmers' market and roadside stands and avoided some stands that offered unique varieties of produce, "I don't get many seniors; they are looking for tomatoes and potatoes" (Southern FM). Yet others noted that seniors did try new items, although that versatility may have been more a matter of salesmanship than disposition (or bragging by the farmer).

Seniors are more versatile than people think. They've bought squash, salad, tomatoes, and onions, especially Walla Walla sweet onions. Like leeks, kale, chard and a fair amount of herbs. I sell a good variety. I'm a gourmet chef. I can sell what they haven't tried. (participating farmer in Southern FM)

Farmers remarked on the amounts that seniors bought and their spending patterns through the season. Some seniors bought large volumes of produce, often for preserving. Others bought in small quantities for the week. One farmer noted, "Every senior says it's wonderful. Some spend their coupons on little luxuries, others on staples, some buy in quantity for processing," later adding, "They don't overbuy. If they got a lot in a short period of time, then they use the coupons for things that will keep or process. Depends on their ability to process" (Willamette region FM).

Thriftiness

Many farmers commented that SFMNP seniors shopped from the farmers who had the lowest prices, noting that seniors “don’t spend out of pocket.” Lower-priced farmers recognized that they were popular with seniors because their prices were lower than the other farmers. Farmers with higher prices, such as niche farmers, noticed a range of reactions from seniors about their prices and products. Of the farmers interviewed, most did not feel like they needed to change their prices and just withstood any complaints or negative comments about their prices. One farmer summed up the kinds of shopping behaviors participating seniors brought to her booth,

“Can’t tell looking at them, you follow the pattern you had before. If they were thrifty before, then they’ll be thrifty with coupons. If not, then it’s fun money and they use it to treat themselves. There are different kinds of spenders.” (Willamette region FM)

A couple farmers noted that seniors were sensitive to prices, more so than their WIC counterparts. WIC clients tended to be “less thrifty”, not paying as much attention to cost and getting the best buy. Seniors, on the other hand have needed to maximize their resources both in their youth and in the later years, and, while they may prefer their produce to be grown in certain ways (i.e. low-pesticide or organic), price remains the over-riding concern. A farmer in the Gorge/Central region commented, “Their income is so low, they’ve figured out how to get biggest bang for the buck. They are ruling out organic.”

Another farmer explained that complaints about high prices result, in part, from a lack of knowledge of the differences in cost between large- and small-scale production. In addition, seniors have an expectation of prices born of a different era, before the global food-system became dominant:

“We could use some education about prices being “too high.” All we need we pick by hand, versus machine and there’s lots of work on farms....People are already educated because of organic, but need to understand that small-scale is done by hand. ...At the Portland market, seniors are used to paying yesteryear’s prices. We have no complaints about prices from WIC clients.”
(participating farmer in a Gorge/Central FM)

Several farmers noted that some seniors bargained over price. Although I have only heard this observation in conjunction with seniors who were born in another country, survey comments did not mention it. One farmer really liked it when her Russian seniors bargained with her, while another farmer wrote on her survey that she did not like it when seniors tried to bargain.

Storing and Preserving

SFMNP seniors arrived with different skill sets and knowledge about produce. A farmer reported, “We get all different kinds of people and some are in touch with food. These people can buy, for example, several boxes of tomatoes for canning” (Southern FM). Whereas some seniors did not exhibit such knowledge, as another farmer remarked, “We’re surprised we haven’t seen people load up on things that keep” (Gorge/Central FM). Roughly 20 percent of seniors mentioned that they purchased items for preserving or “keeping”, in effect extending the coupon season beyond the end-date of October 31. Many coupon-users noted that they froze vegetables, and several said that they canned or did both, buying produce in bulk or freezing remaining items at the end of the week. Freezing appeared to be the most popular method of preserving foods, but several seniors noted that they did not have much space for freezing. Some seniors were aware of foods that were keepers and items that could be frozen, and others learned some options from farmers.

One Oregon coast senior noted that buying in bulk and preserving the produce was the only affordable option, “I can my own stuff, otherwise I couldn’t afford it. I buy in bulk and in season”. The lack of facilities, equipment, and storage space deterred several seniors from preserving or storing produce items. Several seniors related stories of how members of their support network (typically family) helped them by either doing the preserving as a family activity or providing canning equipment.

Sharing Food

Sharing produce with others was often reported by female seniors, who said they were looking forward to sharing their bounty with members of their families, neighbors, and friends. Adult children who brought seniors to the markets were often recipients of their parent's generosity, and on several occasions it was clear that the adult children were having financial difficulty and would benefit nutritionally from such a gift. During interviews, seniors smiled and seemed joyful in being able to give something to their families – several talked about making pies or jam for their grandchildren – including those absent at the market. Other non-participating seniors were also recipients of the gifts of produce from SFMNP seniors. A senior reported that she would share her “blessing” with other seniors as part of larger continual cycle of food-sharing,

“I’d like to buy honey and give it away for Christmas. I like to make salsa. I can it and then share itI live in a senior housing trailer park and we share with each other in there.... Sometimes my neighbor gives me food” (participating senior in a Southern FM).

Another senior supplemented the Elderly Nutrition Program with her SFMNP coupons in an effort to share her good fortune with others who needed the benefit as well.

“I want to tell you...how we here in facility where I live have made use of this food gift...I spent a third of coupons with a representative of the local senior nutrition site and they bought for noonday lunch and for Meals on Wheels.” (Letter #13, July 2001)

Buying Organic

Some seniors said they appreciated being able to buy organic or “no spray” produce, but overall seniors did not generally buy organic produce. Farmers also noted that some seniors will seek out organic, but the majority did not. “Coupons don’t make much difference to me, because I sell about 99% organic, and the senior must be aware of organic in order to spend more money for organic” (participating farmer in Willamette region FM). Another farmer echoed the observation that more seniors are interested in price, but some are coming to the market to purchase organic.

“Seniors like taste, but they buy cheaper foods and few are into organic.... If they try it they are amazed at the taste and the texture. I don’t get a lot of coupons. They don’t care if the produce is organic. They’re interested because they’ve never seen these colors before. The big dealers are getting all the coupons because they are cheaper” (Portland region FM).

Ineligible Items

Eligibility restrictions created tensions between seniors and those farmers who sold ineligible items when either one did not have a clear understanding of what was eligible for purchase. Tension was further heightened when farmers bent the rules and sold ineligible items, thus giving a senior the impression either (1) the rules were easily bent, or (2) some items were in fact eligible when they were not. In two known cases, vendors felt that some participating roadside stands were not abiding by the program’s rules and were selling produce bought wholesale or selling ineligible items. This rule breaking caused tension between farmers and seniors – as they came to expect that they could buy baked goods – and between different farmers – as their actions defeated the goal of strengthening local agriculture.

Uninformed Seniors and the Need for Education

Two kinds of senior shoppers emerged during the program: informed seniors (seniors who had a strong sense of the seasons of local produce, the kinds of varieties grown in their region, and how to use them) and less informed seniors. Several seniors remarked on their historical connection to agriculture in Oregon or elsewhere. Seniors who knew their region’s agricultural bounty had lived there since mid-life and regularly sought out local produce regardless of the coupon benefit. One senior in a Southern remarked:

“[A nearby participating roadside stand] had strawberries from California! I was born and raised here and you can’t fool me! I’ve picked it, held it, and harvested it. The [owner of the produce stand she usually shops at] is honest with his signs. Bullcrap that a California tomato is better – I *know*. If they’re going to sell California, I can go to the store and buy it cheaper.”

Other seniors did not have a clear idea of either seasonality or regionality and expected produce items, like tropical fruits, to be available. Program administrators reported getting complaints from seniors frustrated that they could not buy bananas, oranges, and other produce items ineligible for purchase. Either the program was not described well enough to participating seniors, or a portion of these seniors did not understand what was grown in their area or when it was available. One manager noted in the survey that when confronted with a frustrated senior, he/she used this “as an educational opportunity...we don’t grow oranges here...on the coast we have a very short season for the ripening of, for example, corn, tomatoes, etc.” However, the realities of regional production and marketing direct to consumers (aka FDM) came in strong conflict with the hopes and needs of the seniors who received the coupons.

Several farmers felt that seniors needed more education as to the items eligible and ineligible for purchase. However, a few noted that some seniors tried to see what they could get away with regardless of whether or not they understood the rules. A fresh pasta vendor reported, “People will always try to get away with it. I just tell them no” (nonparticipating farmer in Portland region FM). A number of farmers who sold a mix of eligible and ineligible items complained of needing to police their customers – creating a problem when there was a line of customers waiting to pay. One farmer who sold baked goods, jams, and honey in addition to fresh produce, reported,

“We have to police and we do a lot of educating about what is eligible and what’s not.... It’s awful, they’ll have six jams and all, and I’ll have to tell them no. They think I’m pulling their leg...It’s policing...I’ve educated five people today” (Willamette region FM).

Price-Shopping vs Niche Marketing

Price and quality were two highly linked concepts: seniors wanted to pay what they felt the produce was worth. Yet definitions of quality shifted from senior to senior as they weighed factors of quality according to their own set of values and experiences, such as taste, appearance, freshness, “home-grown” or locally grown. Definitions of quality also included characteristics of the producers, such as produce from a farm individually owned and operated. Yet 30 percent of interviews and letters mentioned,

without prompting, cost as a factor in their consumption of produce – even with the coupons. In general, SFMNP seniors felt that produce prices at farmers' markets was relatively high.

Similar to findings in the Massachusetts' coupon program (Hollonbeck and Ohls 1984), many Oregonian SFMNP seniors demonstrated some sensitivity to prices at the markets. Ten percent of coupon-users interviewed described themselves as "price-shoppers" – highly conscious of prices, with the lowest price taking first priority in making a purchasing decision. Another 30 percent of coupon-user interviews included observations about prices of produce whether at grocery stores, farmers' market, or roadside stands. One senior in Southern FM explained that as a "price-shopper" she chose the lower priced produce item over one of a higher quality; "Before the coupons I didn't buy as much [produce] – I'm a price-shopper – I buy from the stores where it's cheaper, but not as fresh. Here at the market, there's good quality."

Perceptions of higher prices at farmers' markets upset several seniors, who felt that farmers were taking advantage of both the program and seniors. One senior couple stated that they felt that farmers had raised prices because of the increased demand with the coupon program. They did not understand why prices were higher than in the grocery store, because the produce "doesn't have to come as far." They added, "Coupons should be for the store....It's cheaper at the store...farmers here are ripping us off....the Feds and the State are getting ripped off. It's not the best buy for the money" (Southern FM).³⁷

In a farmers' market on the Oregon Coast, several seniors stated that they refused to pay what they perceived to be higher prices, even though they had "free money" (i.e. the coupons). It was the principle of "not paying higher prices" and supporting behavior they deemed "not right." One senior remarked, "I went to the [nearby roadside stand], but the prices were higher. [My husband] walked in and then right out" (Coastal FM). Another senior remarked that high prices were wrong, particularly if they were for produce not grown in Oregon.

³⁷ Perceptions about price are result of a number of factors and is discussed further in the Discussion. There is no data on regional and seasonal price differences among farmers' markets.

“I hate to pay high prices here. I couldn’t pay, even if it’s free...Two apples were \$1.20. They’re from a tree, that’s no excuse....come on...it’s the idea of it. Don’t try to rip off the people with the coupons. At [nearby roadside stand], she had “Red Delicious” apples – come on! I doubt that they’re from Oregon. ...Here at the farmers’ market I am trying – I got a box of baker tomatoes – two pounds for a dollar, and five small red potatoes for \$1. [At my local produce stand], it is so much cheaper because he brings in other Oregon farmers. One dollar for a big head of cauliflower. Huge boxes of stuff. He’s got it all and it’s seven days a week. It’s not right for the program when the prices are too high.” (Coastal FM)

Despite perceptions of prices higher than at their grocery store, several seniors felt that it was worth shopping with coupons because of the farmers’ market’s attributes: a festive atmosphere, friendly farmers, and ability to access organic produce. A senior in the Southern region noted that while prices may be high, “you can’t beat this place, there’s good people.” A high quality of produce, selection and freshness are other factors that outweighed price considerations. However, satisfaction with these factors appeared to vary between customers and depend upon the market’s ability to meet their needs and/or expectations by providing sought-after or desirable produce items. One senior noted that the market he attended did not have a good selection because it did not have the two items he was looking for and had food items that he could not digest. Another senior noted the difference in quality between farmers at one farmers’ market,

“That farmer keeps telling everyone her stuff is organically grown. Normally there’s another farmer here. His produce is cheaper, but you got to eat his tomatoes like mad or they’d go bad. Hers are better.” (Coastal FM)

Reimbursement of Farmers and Markets

The reimbursement process to farmers was ongoing throughout the season. Each farmer was required to write his/her farmer number³⁸ in a small box in the upper left-hand corner of the coupon. Farmers typically did this ongoing administrative task at

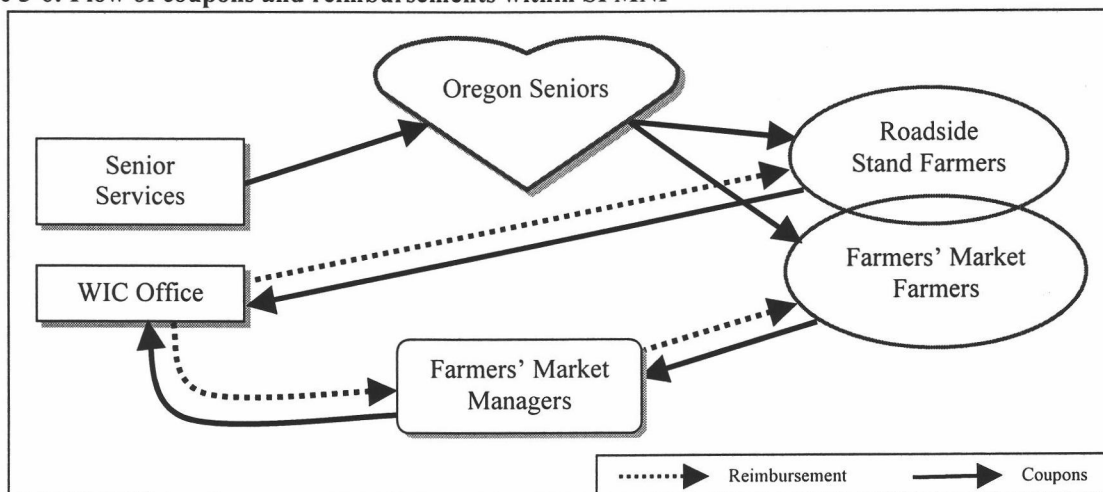
³⁸ Forty farmers selling at both farmers’ markets and their roadside stand had signed two contracts and thus had two different farmers numbers.

quiet moments during the day or at the end of the market. The coupon was invalidated from future use once the farmer number was written in the box. The number was useful to at least one market manager in tracking and verifying weekly reimbursements per farmer.

Reimbursement Process

The flow of coupons and reimbursements (Figure 5-6) demonstrates how SFMNP funds were distributed among participants. Starting with seniors, SFMNP funds then flowed to farmers at two market venues. From this point, the reimbursement process differs between the two. Roadside stands sent coupons directly to the WIC Program, whereas FM farmers gave coupons to market managers, who then sent them to the WIC Program. Market Managers paid farmers for their coupons either the same day or after they received payment. The following paragraphs describe the strategies farmers and market managers used in response to changes in payment process and delays in processing coupons.

Figure 5-6: Flow of coupons and reimbursements within SFMNP



Initially, the WIC office did not establish a reimbursement protocol because farmers' markets sent in coupons on a regular basis, primarily within days of the market. In contrast, most roadside stands operated most days of the week, and some operated for a couple months and others for the majority of the year. There was no overall reimbursement pattern among roadside stands in either the amount of coupons mailed to

the WIC office or the frequency of these mailings. Many individual patterns in mailing in coupons and requests for reimbursement arose in the absence of any guidance. Roadside stands that received thousands of coupons during the season tended to mail in coupons on a regular basis, sending in a certain number of coupons at a time (i.e. every 200) or on a regular schedule (i.e. every week). However, roadside stands that received less than \$1,000 for the season showed no overall pattern for mailing in coupons. For example, one market sent them all in at the end of the season, and several markets mailed coupons daily whether they had two or 20. The coordinator noted that the roadside stands that sent in a few at a time on a daily (or near daily) basis created a burden for the WIC Office as every invoice required a minimum of time, labor, and money to process and further exacerbated the overall back-up in coupon counting. It was impossible to predict when and how many coupons would arrive and limited the ability of the WIC Program staff to anticipate needs for staff and space.³⁹

Reimbursing the markets

Twenty percent of market managers who responded to the WIC Year-End Survey had problems when reimbursements were delayed over 14 days, and several markets reported that the time lag increased to nearly two months during the season. The number of coupons coming in was more than staff could physically count in a timely manner. Delays in reimbursement meant decreased funds for weekly advertising or publicity for end of season events (i.e. harvest festivals). Though the delays did not hurt every market, there were some that were hurt when the reimbursement process took weeks or months, "Our market budget cannot support writing thousands of dollars in checks and then not getting paid. It was pretty scary for our cash flow" (MMS).

The WIC Program sent reimbursements through direct deposit to most roadside stands and farmers' market associations, and they mailed several a check. There was no consistent system for tracking payment to markets and several markets had two or three accounts. This inconsistency contributed to the confusion and frustration for both

³⁹ In 2002, WIC staff sent an invoice for each week and recommended in the program materials to roadside stands that they send in their coupons on a weekly basis.

administrators and markets when questions arose about a reimbursement. Accounts could be listed by farmer's name, name of the farm, or other business accounts. Adding to the problem, the accounts department that processed direct deposits and reimbursement checks lost several staff members right before the program started, and new people were handling the SFMNP account.

Reimbursing farmers

Farmers typically counted their coupons with the market manager at the end of the market and then received either cash or a receipt (and a check a week later). With the sheer increase in the number of coupons spent at the market, the "cashing out" took longer. With more coupons to process, it took farmers more time to write in their farmer code and longer to process them with the market manager. At some markets farmers needed to wait in lines to exchange the coupons with the market manager. At other markets, the market manager went to farmers to redeem coupons starting a half-hour before the end of the market. In this case, the farmer could decide to wait until after the market was over or carry over any new coupons over until the next week for reimbursement. However, most farmers noted that the process of handling the coupons and getting reimbursement worked well for them, particularly when they were reimbursed with cash at the end of the farmers' market.

Farmers provided suggestions for decreasing the time needed to mark the coupons with their farmer number. For some roadside stands that could accept debit/credit cards,⁴⁰ they suggested that seniors be given an EBT card instead of paper. A farmer at a Portland region farmers' market suggested making the coupons similar to checks whereby they can be deposited directly at the bank.⁴¹

"I'd like the program to be like in Washington, where you can just take the coupons directly to the bank. In Washington, the bank recognizes the coupons as cash and you can deposit and get cash back right away. There's too much bureaucracy here. It's extra work for the [market

⁴⁰ Incidentally, OFB is working with OFMA to enable every Farmers' Market to accept Oregon Trail Card (food stamps). The Eugene Farmers' Market established a system to accept not only EBT, but credit cards as well.

⁴¹ At the time, WIC did not have the funds nor labor to establish such a system.

manager] with the same pay... In [another FM] it is worse – we wait one week to be paid. I have weekly bills and don't like waiting.”
(participating farmer in a Portland region FM)

For those receiving hundreds of coupons at a time, this paperwork was “a large hassle for such a busy time of the year” (RSVS). Several farmers asked about alternatives to putting the farmer number on each coupon, or wondered if they might receive the same number the next year to justify purchasing a stamp.

Market managers, understandably, noted an increased amount of time to count all the coupons with the farmers at the end of the market, and some managers counted them again before mailing them in. Another manager counted coupons at the market, gave the farmer a receipt, and then paid the farmer a week later with a check. In response to the increased administrative work on the part of market managers, a market manager changed their processing technique to have it go faster at the market by having farmers turn in coupons in their own envelope, and then the market manager counted them at home to verify the amount.

In interviews, all market managers said they preferred to pay farmers the same day as the market. Three-fourths of the market managers responding to the WIC year-end survey paid their farmers the same day. Several market managers interviewed reported that they brought between \$400 and \$700 in cash in addition to the money they collected from stall fees in order to reimburse farmers for their FMNP coupons. One manager reported that quick reimbursement was very important, feeling that the program would not happen without the farmers and there was no reason why they should be “penalized” by having to wait a week for the money. Another market manager noted in the survey that “all the farmers love us for cashing them out” the same day (Portland region FM). However paying farmers cash could put a market in jeopardy if the state's reimbursement was delayed; in fact, one market manager reported that the city once provided extra funds to back the market so it could continue to pay farmers in cash.

A fifth of market managers paid farmers a week later, yet not all changed payment protocol because of SFMNP: one market was new, and two others reported this payment strategy was used the previous year. However, several farmers' markets had to

change from paying farmers the same day in cash to paying a week later by check because the number FMNP coupons received were more than they could reasonably reimburse without first being reimbursed by the WIC program.

As a result of delayed reimbursements, some farmers' market farmers reported that they were taking their coupons redeemed in one market and getting reimbursement from other markets where they were paid the same day. A handful of farmers noted that – while they wanted to get paid the same day – they understood the situation and were willing to wait a week for reimbursement. Only one farmer stated that a delayed reimbursement would have created a hardship for him. Some roadside stand farmers utilized farmers' markets to handle the reimbursement process for them thus avoiding the cost and labor of mailing coupons and tracking payments. Two market managers reported that they were helping some farmers who had roadside stands by reimbursing the coupons redeemed at the roadside stands through the farmers' market in order to help the farmer get faster payment.

A number of farmers were frustrated with the delays and increased burden coupon counting had on their market and their market managers, particularly since they did not receive any compensation for the added labor hours for processing coupons. A farmer said that delays in reimbursing farmers' markets impacted them at the market, "We'd like to get paid in a timely fashion so that the farmers' market is not over drafted. I was asked not to cash coupons for an extra week. It's hard with a small market." (participating farmer in a Gorge/Central FM).

Redemption Results

As noted in the literature review, redemption rate is not the sole indicator of program success, yet on a macro-level they redemption information is useful for broad analysis of distribution of economic benefit among market outlets and economic impact within Oregon. However, micro-level analysis of economic benefit to farmers or within an agricultural region is very difficult as data was only available for where coupons were sent (towns), and who sent in coupons for reimbursement (markets and market organizations). As mentioned, there was no ability to track coupons between senior and

the WIC office, and coupons were easily exchanged between persons, between markets, and between regions. Coupon-users did not necessarily shop at local markets, and reports of coupon exchange between markets made analysis of local redemption rates less reliable.

Equally hard to gauge was the extent of the financial impact of SFMNP coupons for each market or farmers in farmers' market. First, redemption results are based on reimbursement totals to farmers' market organizations, which can represent two or more markets. In these cases, market analysis requires that the market manager track redemption per market. Secondly, the value of coupons redeemed through markets may not benefit farmers and markets uniformly; some smaller markets can significantly benefit from a small number of coupons, while larger markets may have little benefit from a larger number. For some small markets or small-scale farmers, a relatively few coupons could be the difference in making the market profitable for the farmer (Patchel 2001), and enabling the market to retain a cornerstone vendor. One market manager reported her suspicion that the SFMNP enabled a farmer to stop selling at farmers' markets and to concentrate on their roadside stand operation. Other farmers felt they did not receive any financial benefit from the program despite a large number of SFMNP sales as they expected to sell out regardless of the program. Lastly, redemption numbers are particularly hard to analyze because of considerable switching among farmers between where they received the coupons and where they were redeemed both between farmers' markets and roadside stands and between agricultural regions.

Results for farmers' markets and roadside stands

About \$1.25 million in coupons were sent to participating seniors in Oregon, and 72 percent were redeemed at roadside stands and farmers' markets.⁴² In the later half of the program, there was administrators believed that roadside stands had received roughly 75 percent of Oregon's SFMNP coupons. A month after the program ended, redemption

⁴² The third quarterly report to USDA reported that the remainder of the programs funds was distributed by sending the rest of the coupons to the first people on the first mailing list. However there was no evidence of this mailing in the data provided by SPDS nor in the final official numbers released by the WIC Program. This study's findings result from the available data.

results revealed that roadside stands received only 66 percent of redeemed coupons (Table 5-5).

Table 5-5: Total income per market type

	Roadside Stands	Farmers' Markets
Total Income	\$572,880	\$293,907
Average per outlet	\$5,070	\$6,680
Standard Deviation	\$9,874	\$7,107
Median Income	\$1,318	\$4,047

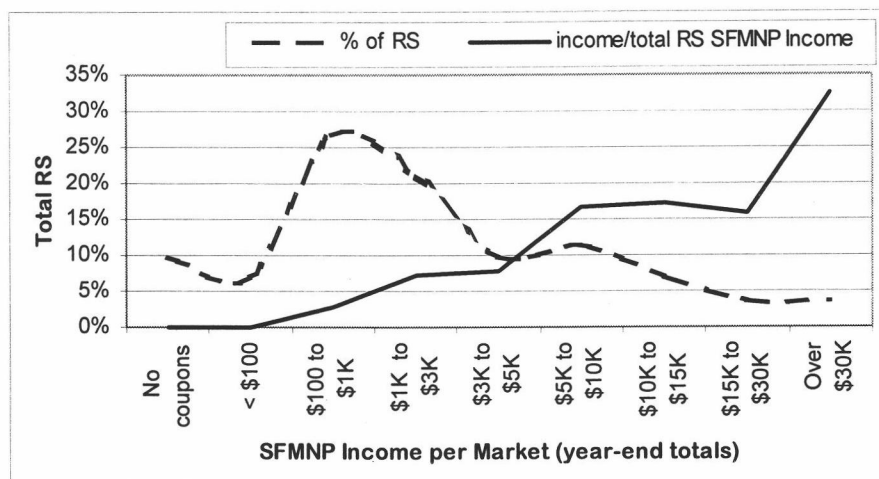
Distribution of coupons among market venues showed that several markets received few or no coupons, while others received several thousand or even tens of thousands of coupons. Benefits appeared to be more evenly spread among farmers' markets than between roadside stands, which had more markets falling at either end of a wider range of market redemption results. In an unpublished study of Oregon's farmers' markets, a significant number of markets reported in the spring of 2002 that the WIC and Senior coupon programs were important to their market (Stephenson, Lev and Brewer 2003). The standard deviation (Table 5-5) is larger than the market average or the median redemption for the markets and shows a significant difference between markets; many markets had relatively small reimbursement totals and a few markets received the bulk of coupons.

Among roadside stands there was a large range of redemption amounts. Four of 113 roadside stands, located within the Portland and Willamette regions, took in a third of all coupons redeemed through roadside stands (average redemption of \$46,000) and 22 percent of all SFMNP coupons (Figure 5-7). Sixteen roadside stands (13%) redeemed over \$10,000 in coupons, while 13 roadside stands (12%) redeemed between \$5,000 and \$10,000 in coupons. Among the roadside stands that received the fewest coupons, 38 roadside stands (34%) made between \$2 and \$1,000 and another 24 (21%) received between \$1,000 and \$3,000 worth of coupons. Eleven roadside stands did not send any coupons in for redemption. In one case, a farmer reported that coupons were released after strawberry season, which was their only crop. Another roadside stand found it

easier to redeem their roadside stand coupons through the farmers' markets they attended, rather than turn in the coupons themselves.

Eight roadside stands did not return to the program in 2002. These eight stands had the following characteristics. One noted in the year-end survey that the farm would not operate in 2002. Two others received over \$6,000 in coupons at their stand and did not appear to be selling in farmers' markets in 2001. Three of the roadside stands redeemed no coupons and two received less than \$100. Half of the roadside stands also sold through farmers' markets.

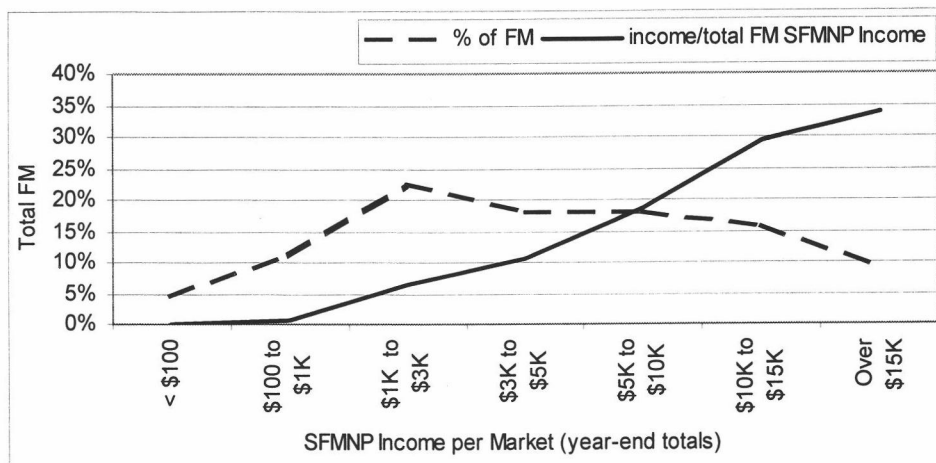
Figure 5-7: Redemption results for roadside stands, 2001



Farmers' markets had a smaller range of redemption results per market than roadside stands and with fewer markets at the extremes. Every farmers' market organization redeemed SFMNP coupons, and their redemption results resemble more of a bell curve than those for roadside stands (Figure 5-8). None of the organizations exceeded \$30,000 in SFMNP revenue. Eleven FM organizations (25%) were reimbursed for \$10,000 or more in SFMNP coupons during the season, while only seven farmers' markets (16%) made less than \$1,000 in SFMNP revenue. The top four farmers' markets organizations accounted for a third of SFMNP coupons redeemed through farmers' markets (similar to roadside stands) or about 10 percent of all SFMNP coupons. Both farmers' markets and roadside stands had a few markets that received the bulk of SFMNP

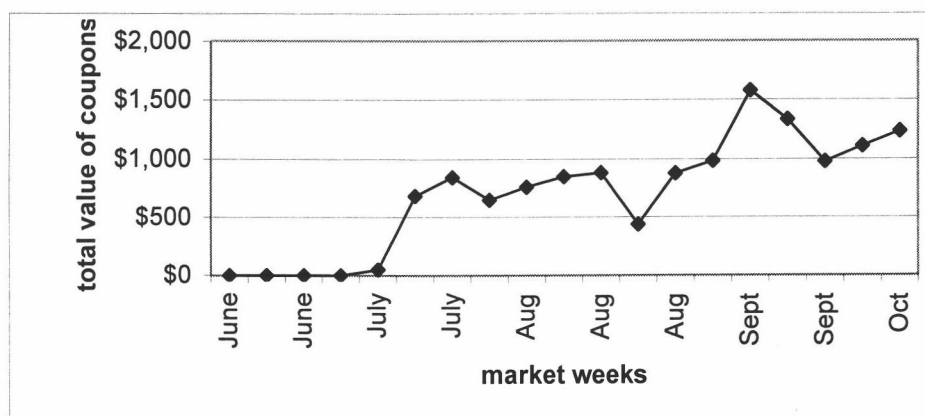
coupons, however, the range of redemption values was greater among roadside stands than farmers' markets.

Figure 5-8: Redemption results for farmers' markets, 2001



Cumulative totals mask the variation in SFMNP sales from week to week during the season. Figure 5-9 demonstrates the seasonal variation in coupon redemption (by total value of coupons received) in a farmers' market where a significant share of sales consisted of coupons. The graph shows a general increase in redemption toward the end of the season, but that there were spikes and dips throughout the season. Interestingly the average SFMNP sales per vendor appears to match trend in total SFMNP sales for the market, however it is impossible to know if total senior sales are dependent upon the number of vendors or the presence of specific vendors at the market.

Figure 5-9: Redemption of SFMNP coupons during 2001 season.



Regional Redemption rates

Switching of coupons between market venues or between regions need to be accounted within regional redemption rates. If there was no regional differences, one might expect all regions to have a rate similar to the Oregon rate of 72%. However, as table 5-6 demonstrates, there appears to be considerable regional variation in the rate. Some of this variability can be accounted by reports of farmers receiving coupons at one market and having another market reimburse the coupons, and reports of seniors unable to access markets in Southern and Central regions.

Table 5-6: Regional redemption results

Regions	SFMNP seniors	SFMNP Senior Rate	Regional Total Redemption	No. of SFMNP outlets	Market Average Redemption	Regional Redemption Rate
Gorge/Central	551	49%	\$26,226	6	\$4,371	48%
Coastal	1,300	58%	\$50,446	16	\$3,153	39%
Eastern	691	47%	\$52,200	9	\$5,800	76%
Portland	4,850	54%	\$357,421	49	\$7,294	74%
Southern	1,982	52%	\$136,306	25	\$5,452	69%
Willamette	3,017	74%	\$244,188	64	\$3,815	81%
Oregon	12,391	57%	\$866,787	169	\$5,129	70%

Terms in Table (5-10) are defined as follows. SFMNP Senior Rate is the share of seniors receiving coupons (“SFMNP Seniors”) from those invited to participate in SFMNP (“Invited Seniors” see Table 5-2). The Regional Total Redemption is the dollar value of coupons received in all markets with the region (Please note that the official value of SFMNP coupons redeemed was \$920,081⁴³, or \$23,794 more than the total of accounts released to me by the WIC Program). In addition, the official number of seniors participating is 12,600. Together, these discrepancies account for the difference in the official Oregon Redemption rate (72%) and the one reported (70%). In addition, the reported rate does not include participation of seniors through the CSA, while it is likely that the official numbers do.

⁴³ Official release lists agency totals (counties), of which 3 were odd-numbered, which would not be possible because coupons were increments of \$2. In addition, there was an unfamiliar agency listed, which received SFMNP dollars nearly \$5,000 more than found for the CSA.

The Market Average Redemption is the value of SFMNP coupons per market on average. Lastly, the Regional Redemption Rate is the share of actual value of coupons redeemed from the value of coupons held by SFMNP seniors per region. This last is an indicator of how many coupons were redeemed of those distributed within a region based upon the assumption that coupons would be redeemed in the same region where they were distributed. However, these regional redemption rates are impacted by farmers reimbursement strategies and likely by coupon-users spending coupons in other regions. Nonetheless, there are some interesting outcomes from this type of analysis.

The Gorge/Central region had some interesting “subregion” results (not shown). When combined, these two “subregions” had a market average redemption comparable to the state average and both had senior participation rates for SFMNP.⁴⁴ Separately, the results are quite different. The Gorge had far fewer number of SFMNP seniors than the Central region, resulting in a market average redemption that was four times larger in the Central region than the that of the Gorge. However, when the Central region had one of the poorest regional redemption rates (37%), while the Gorge had the greatest with a rate of 122% suggesting that the Gorge attracted seniors from other regions, probably from the Portland region.

The Central region redemption rate supports the ethnographic evidence that seniors had significant transportation barriers preventing them from using their coupons. In addition to few markets in the region, the market manager noted that she encouraged her vendors to redeem their FM coupons through the FM, and she felt that the redemption amount is fairly accurate for that market. The Coast region had a similarly poor redemption rate, however, a market manager stated that she encouraged her farmers to redeem “at least some” of their coupons at the market, but felt that most coupons were redeemed elsewhere. One farmer can have a significant impact on regional redemption rates, as demonstrated when a conservative, yet rough, estimate of the value of coupons a farmer stated receiving in a coastal market and having reimbursed through a Willamette market. Based upon this estimate, we find that the Coast regional redemption rate rises and Willamette’s fall by several percentage points (to 45% and 84% respectively).

⁴⁴ share of seniors who participated in SFMNP who were invited by postcard

Regardless of reimbursement strategies, higher redemption rates are expected for the Willamette and Portland regions since they have more markets and the highest population density and thus more people in closer proximity to provide support to seniors whether it is transportation or utilization.

Another interesting outcome from region redemption rates is in the Eastern region, where we might expect transportation problems (few markets, low population density) similar to the Central region. There were relatively few complaints from the Eastern region and the rate is twice that of Central and similar to the Oregon rate. The regions had similar senior participation rates.

Total Economic Impact of Oregon's SFMNP

The redeemed SFMNP funds nearly doubled the average annual increase in farm-directing marketing in Oregon,⁴⁵ and essentially doubling demand from the prior year. However, the program had a greater impact at the local level, since a portion of the SFMNP funds Oregon farmers received were spent again with local businesses for supplies, labor, and discretionary purchases. This spending resulted had an economic impact beyond just those farmers who received the SFMNP funds. These “multiplier effects” can be estimated through IMPLAN (a database and software used for calculating the multiplier effects) in order to determine the total economic impact of SFMNP in terms of total sales, jobs added, and total income (Weber 2002; Waters, Weber and Holland 1999). The total coupon value redeemed was \$916,000 (Menor 2002). By estimating total impact on vegetable sector, this amount had a total effect of \$1,678,000 in sales (includes SFMNP sales), and had the potential to create 19 jobs with \$844,000 in income. Weber (2002) noted that “income” was “value added” – income plus indirect business taxes and other taxes.

Market managers and farmers repeatedly stated that increased sales from SFMNP coupons strengthened vulnerable farmers’ markets and helped many farmers earn a better income in 2001. In an unpublished study conducted in spring 2002 (Stephenson, Lev and Brewer 2003), 64 percent of 51 markets interviewed noted that WIC-FMNP and SFMNP

⁴⁵ Based on the Census of Agriculture results for 1992 and 1997.

programs impacted their market. A farmer described the impact of SFMNP on his farming business.

“It’s been a wonderful boon for us. It’s additional money and it has made farming viable for us. It’s also extremely important for the small farmers markets like us. We’ve taken in \$4000 at the Farmers Market and our farm stand combined. It’s allowed me to buy a front-end loader for my tractor. (Gorge/Central FM)

DISCUSSION

"Life resists a simple, one-sentence definition because it is associated with numerous emergent properties" (Campbell:4)

This research presents the first detailed examination of the SFMNP and, importantly, the first review of how the SFMNP operated at the market level. Indeed, neither SFMNP nor WIC-FMNP studies have been within the market. All previous studies have been largely based on evaluation survey results and interviews with coupon-recipients *outside* of the market. However, it is precisely this limited research base that makes an anthropological study of SFMNP instructive for writing and implementing policy that results in a program that achieves its objectives. SFMNP is a market-based program with community food security principles at its foundation. Yet, how well the program increases nutritional intake of those at risk and supports local agriculture must be determined at a community level. It is the attitudes, values, and beliefs that these stakeholders bring into the program and share with each other that will determine a program's success. If the program design thwarts good interaction between participating seniors and farmers, then it cannot achieve its objectives.

Although modeled after the WIC program, seniors' experiences were different from WIC clients primarily due to the large coupon benefit and the absence of a caseworker. For seniors, SFMNP functioned as a nutritional enhancement program, providing resources to seniors to purchase fresh produce in order to improve their nutrition. Resources were sufficient for some seniors to eat healthy produce throughout the season and to preserve produce for the winter months.⁴⁶ Gabor and associates (2002) reported that low-income seniors valued their food stamps because they could buy healthier foods with them, and SFMNP seniors had a similar appreciation of their SFMNP coupons.

⁴⁶ Conversely, the WIC-FMNP was an educational program about nutrition and shopping at farmers' markets. WIC clients received in-person education about shopping at the farmers' market and \$20 worth of coupons for the entire season to feed their families, yet farmers often noted that WIC families easily spent their benefit in one or two visits.

This chapter examines the array of benefits the program provided participating seniors and farmers as well as areas of conflict between the program and its beneficiaries. In addition, the benefits and challenges of the program are placed within the context of community food security. Lastly, the chapter examines the impact of SFMNP upon the cultural, political and economic landscape of Oregon.

SFMNP Benefits

Choice

Operationally, SFMNP worked well for many seniors and many were rewarded with more than an improved diet. Seniors' enjoyed an element of choice through participation in SFMNP. Lindsay Patchel (2001), University of Vermont Extension, noted from her experience with SFMNP that choice is important as we age, since we have less of it as we grow older: we lose our physical abilities and financial resources, essentially become less able to take care of ourselves and are increasingly reliant on others. The program benefit appeared to catalyze a reversal of this trend by providing choice and incentive for seniors to participate in the program, thus enhancing their nutrition and reducing isolation.

All qualifying seniors had the opportunity to participate in the program⁴⁷ and then choose which market they visited. Simply by having the coupon benefit seniors had a choice, for some the first time in years, to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, seniors had sufficient funds to choose what they wanted, whether it was organic or not, in large or small volume, something familiar or something novel. Sharing the benefit with others and getting to the market provided some measure of dignity to a group of participating seniors.⁴⁸ One of the strongest testimonies of the program was from the seniors themselves who took pride in getting themselves to and participating in

⁴⁷ Only a percentage of WIC clients receive coupons in any given year, for there are not enough WIC-FMNP funds to cover every WIC client. The WIC program targets distribution to WIC branches based upon the number of clients who live near a farmers' market and branch support for the program.

⁴⁸ This might explain the level of frustration that occurred when a senior was not able to spend the coupons either because there was no market venue within their vicinity or because they had a bad experience with roadside stand.

the market despite physical and transportation limitations. Without the coupons, there was less incentive to do this journey as lack of resources and physical impairments made it untenable. For some seniors the benefit was sufficient to allow them to share produce with others who may have needed it or who provided assistance. It was a significant resource to be shared with others in one's support network. Some seniors even went a step farther by making a meal or some sweets from the produce that they then shared with those who had helped them.

Food Insecurity

This research yielded several ways in which seniors made use of their coupons to reduce food insecurity. They used their food knowledge and skills to preserve produce into the winter months so that they could continue to consume fruits and vegetables after the growing season. Seniors drew upon existing support networks to help in shopping and preserving, and strengthened them through gift of food. In some instances, seniors expanded their support network by forming friendships with the farmers they shopped from and, in some instances, received extra produce from them. Only a few seniors mentioned accessing other food-assistance programs, such as food stamps and food pantries.

User acceptability of coupons

Administrators remarked that SFMNP seniors appeared to not attach any stigma to the use of SFMNP coupons.⁴⁹ Farmers and market managers reported that seniors seemed comfortable using them and non-participating seniors asked how they could receive them. Gabor et al (2002) reported that elderly recipients were particularly sensitive to negative perceptions by family, friends, and community members of those using food stamps. While it may be that the program was too novel to have developed a stigma, several aspects of the program may have contributed its acceptance. Many seniors remarked that the farmers were friendly and made them feel welcome. This is of particular importance as studies on the non-participation of seniors in FSP suggest that

⁴⁹ This delighted administrators, as stigma is perceived as a barrier for WIC clients in spending their FMNP coupons. However, further research is recommended to determine whether WIC clients do associate stigma with the coupons as farmers had different perspectives on this issue.

seniors are humiliated or deterred from applying for food stamps due to unfriendly office experiences (Gabor et al. 2002; McConnell and Ponza 1999). A second explanation for the lack of stigma of SFMNP coupons is found in the comparison with ENP. Studies found that seniors accepted the services of ENP, because they were intended only for seniors and this created a sense of entitlement (Gabor et al 2002). A similar situation existed for SFMNP. Third, some seniors may have understood that by spending coupons they were helping local farmers. Butler and DePoy (1996) reported that rural seniors (and presumably seniors from rural backgrounds) found assistance more acceptable when they were able to return help they received such as by volunteering at the food pantry. Lastly, the application process may have made a favorable perception of the program as it was easier and less intrusive than applying for food stamps, required little effort, and seniors knew they would receive a large amount of coupons, and this would not reduce their food stamp benefits.

New customers for farmers' markets

The coupon program helped to create a new customer base by exposing SFMNP seniors and their support networks, which included proxy shoppers and those who accompanied seniors to the markets, to the farmers' market experience. The coupon program also diversified the markets' customer base by providing resources to those who could not otherwise participate in markets because of limited income. For some markets, it increased the ethnic diversity among customers, and for other markets it expanded the range of ages and abilities at the market. These two contributions helped farmers' markets achieve their goals of becoming more of a community commons and a community event.

Financial benefits

For some of the smaller, struggling markets in both rural and urban areas, SFMNP made a significant positive impact on farmers' sales and accounted for a majority of sales in some low-income areas. Farmers in these struggling markets had enough sales with SFMNP to make it cost effective to sell at these markets. Able to retain farmers, these markets were then able to maintain sufficient volume and variety

and continue to provide access to produce for the rest of the community – SFMNP seniors and other residents alike. There was a mixed outcome for some markets when increased demand from SFMNP seniors meant that farmers sold out regularly, providing financial benefit to individual farmers but causing detriment to the overall market because selection and volume could not be maintained throughout the market day or season. This problem was likely limited to the first year as farmers could plant more crops and more farmers could be recruited for the second season.

Most farmers benefited financially, but only a relatively few farmers earned the majority of SFMNP funds. This was a concern stated in 1992 by Lilja (FNS) about the WIC-FMNP demonstration project, and again by several roadside stand farmers in 2001 with SFMNP. Two farmers' market managers also noted that only a few farmers received the bulk of SFMNP at their market. However, many "smaller" farmers interviewed appreciated the increase in sales they received from the coupons, and that these sales were important to them. This issue requires further research and analysis to determine how SFMNP has a financial impact on the local agriculture landscape in Oregon. Yet, it is likely that the financial consequences of the program will be difficult to separate from the social benefits the farmers enjoyed and the social good they felt they performed.

Social Good

Social good is at once a shared value and an activity. It is a concept used in business literature and loosely in development literature with subtle differences between the two. In both fields, social good is an intangible entity valued by society, and is defined by the cultural context in which it exists. Social Good is a performed activity, where the goods of society are redistributed to directly benefit a needy population with a consequential benefit to the greater society. It is defined by the cultural context in which it exists and can change with the norms and values of society. Social good is an intentional activity that requires resources to conduct, perform, or foster a social good, which would not occur otherwise.

In development literature social good is a pre-existing value expressed through an activity, such as improving environmental health or raising literacy rates. As an entity, it is often used in the plural (i.e. social goods) in philosophic arguments about distribution and justice in domestic or global contexts (Rengger 1999). Within business literature the concept encapsulates the improvement of society and quality of life as an outcome achieved through economic exchange (Hood 1996). While social good is a perception of participants of doing the right thing, those creating a social good do so without the intention of personal gain and the social good consists of the “commitment and the social relations that surround it.” (Spash 1995: 281)

Many farmers in farmers markets felt that they were providing some kind of “good” through the program, yet each farmer had their own perspective on what kind of “good” was occurring. Some farmers noted that the program improved seniors’ diets. Others recognized the social benefit that shopping at a farmers’ market provided to seniors, their families or caregivers, and to the market commons. Other farmers felt that it was good for seniors to have the resources to participate in the farmers’ market after years of not attending. Collectively, these perspectives contributed to a general sense that farmers were providing a good to the community by participating in the program. Moreover, comments about seniors as a deserving population suggest that they perceived that the program was righting a “wrong” by providing seniors resources and setting a “right” by providing seniors the ability to purchase important nutritional food, amplifying farmers’ markets, and improving farmers’ sales. This social good was accomplished via economic exchange, enabling seniors to be customers and thus enjoy the benefits and prestige of participating in a market economy and not the negative connotations of receiving a “hand-out.”

Farmers’ appreciation of seniors may be derived in part from seniors empathizing with them. Many farmers mentioned that seniors shared their prior experience with growing, their ties to agriculture, or rural life. Farming is typically a chosen lifestyle, but one that can be difficult. Farmers may have felt more strongly about senior customers because younger, urbanized customers do not have any farming background nor do they understand the physical energy, labor, and risk associated with

growing produce and selling direct. Such an affinity would contribute to the special connection that farmers expressed, their overall appreciation of the seniors, and their perception of performing a social good.

SFMNP Challenges

SFMNP's rules and regulations created conflict for some seniors and farmers, primarily because the volume and diversity of locally grown produce was limited in some markets. These areas of contention and strategies used in managing SFMNP-related difficulties provide learning opportunities for improving the program and recognizing different worldviews of the program's stakeholders. There were several issues wherein senior and farmer worldviews conflicted causing tension and frustration. Fieldwork data suggest that the lack of communication or understanding about the other was typically the source of tension, however, this finding was unexpected. There was a strong disconnect between a number of seniors and their regional food system, even while administrators, advocates and this researcher believed that seniors' experiences and values meant that they would have a stronger connection to locally grown produce and eating regional produce within season.

Prices

Seniors who came to a farmers' market *as a result* of the program may have different expectations for the farmers' market based on earlier life experiences rather than on current practices. Prior to refrigeration and long-distance shopping, produce was largely local and sold directly in farmers' markets, roadside stands or truck farming, or by produce stands. Earlier farmers' markets were the main source for produce and prices were typically lower than other sources. However, in contemporary farmers' markets, farmers are encouraged to ask for food prices based upon labor and other costs of production and to account for niche marketing values. The result is a price reflecting the true cost of production, which may be higher than prices in the grocery store. Such price differences will be exaggerated when specialized and fairly rare varieties of common produce items are offered at the market. Lack of education about the current agricultural

market system, and expectations based on earlier life experiences, may contribute to the frustrations over prices in farmers' markets experienced by a number of participating seniors.

Price-conscious SFMNP seniors were upset over produce prices at the farmers' markets,⁵⁰ which resulted in a negative perception of the farmers and an unwillingness to redeem coupons. Seniors sought the lowest price, and as price-shoppers they tried to optimize their scant disposable income. The elderly are often warned about people taking advantage of their kindness and generosity and robbing them of their money. Not being aware of the position of local agriculture in the global food system and having an expectation of prices below that of grocery stores appeared to lead some seniors into feeling that farmers were taking advantage of both them and the program.

Those seniors who were comfortable shopping at the market did not have strong reactions to prices because of one or more reasons: they understood that SFMNP benefited their local farmers and communities, they had the food skills and knowledge to utilize regional produce in season, and they were able to buy items at reduced prices such as in bulk or seconds, and appreciated the quality of the produce.

Food prices are an area of contention between those who advocate for low prices and those advocating for food prices that reflect the total cost of production and distribution. Farmers' markets and roadside stands often are placed in the middle as direct-marketing is a desired means of providing access in areas where produce is unavailable or of poor quality. These areas are typically where residents have limited food budget and desire low food prices as they may have little money available for food purchases, beyond staples.

“There exists a fundamental tension between farmers' obtaining a fair price for their product and low income consumers' ability to pay such a

⁵⁰ It is difficult to ascertain if prices were higher from the previous year or whether seniors were seeing more higher-priced specialty produce items or rare varieties, a trademark of FDM. Farmers' markets have become known as sources of specialty gourmet produce items (such as organically-grown or heirloom varieties) and as such they will likely be priced higher than other produce items. Price is also a function of quantity; larger volumes often have lower prices per pound. Buying in bulk or seconds (produce that often has blemishes or unattractive appearance) brings the price down per unit. Similarly, one can usually buy a smaller amount of an item thus making the total purchase less than one could at the grocery store that sells in pre-established amounts.

price. Small family farmers, the backbone of farmers' markets, in recent years have faced escalating production costs but small increases in the prices they receive for their products. They generally can not afford to compete with the lowest cost supermarkets, which commonly set exceptionally low prices on produce as a loss leader to attract customers" (Fisher 1999:37).

This tension extends to FDM farmers who are selling quality produce, and within a market economy, should be able to charge accordingly, particularly as they cover the additional costs of preparing, transporting and selling the produce. Often small-scale farmers who want to be full-time farmers (Griffin and Frongillo 2003) need higher prices, and typically add value though growing unique varieties or using ecological production practices. Although SFMNP provided seniors with a significant number of coupons, this did not ease seniors' sensitivity toward high food prices at farmers' market. Instead, Oregon's SFMNP revealed that the tension between fair price and high cost is also cultural in addition to a matter of having sufficient income, for it existed even when seniors received a large value of coupons.

Purchasing Restrictions

Another area of tension occurred as farmers who sold added-value produce needed to enforce the purchasing regulations with their FMNP customers who either did not realize or attempted to purchase ineligible items with their coupons. This problem was most pronounced among farmers with a mixed product line, who had to tell a FMNP customer which products were eligible for purchase. As a result, their ability to build good customer relations with these new shoppers suffered. Moreover, this situation penalizes farmers who diversified their product line by adding value to their produce. SFMNP purchasing regulations conflict with the principles of both CFS and Sustainable agriculture, which promote the development of marketing opportunities, which enable farmers to capture more of the food dollar by venturing into added-value enterprise.

Lack of Information

The farmers' ability to foster good customer relations were challenged by the seniors' lack of information and education about farm-direct marketing and the goals of the program, and resulted in some seniors becoming frustrated with the program.

Without an understanding of how prices were determined, some seniors became angry with farmers for having higher prices. In addition, some seniors arrived at roadside stands expecting a variety of goods, and found only one or two specialty items. Farmers with a mixed product line and nonparticipating farmers were placed in a position of policing what customers tried to buy, partly because the program's goals and restrictions were not explained. The lack of information has the potential to give seniors (and their support network) a poor perception of FDM and thus can hurt further development of local agriculture.

The program was primarily promoted to seniors as an opportunity to acquire fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers and not as a program that also helped farmers. The coupon packet included nutritional information and a list of participating markets, but no other explanation of the program. While some newspapers mentioned the financial benefit to farmers more often they stressed the nutritional benefit to seniors. Thus it was no surprise that seniors rarely commented on the benefit to farmers, and in fact, why some seniors believed the program would be of better service if coupons could be spent at grocery stores and produce stands. Indeed with more information about the program's objectives, seniors may have had some warning prior to requesting the coupons that produce stands that they believed should have been eligible would not be authorized to participate in the program.

Education of seniors is also important in the public's perception of the program. Representing "the government," the program had an incentive to provide educational outreach to seniors so that they do not unwittingly create problems for produce stands and themselves by trying to spend coupons there. When the program does not adequately train seniors where the coupons may be used, it can cause strain on the produce stand that unwittingly accepts SFMNP coupons from long-time senior shoppers. Complaints from seniors and produce stands were revealed in the archival search, yet data privacy restrictions prevented discovering why produce stands accepted coupons and why seniors tried to spend them there.

Coupons and Venues

It is possible that, in addition to the trust between senior customers and produce stands, further misunderstandings arose from the use of the term “coupons” rather than vouchers. The term “coupon” has been used widely in farmers’ markets and WIC for years, but it was also used widely outside of these arenas. This term would be misleading to seniors and produce stand farmers who had no experience with the program and expected SFMNP coupons to operate like other coupons. With any other food coupon, the buyer (i.e. the senior) expects to be able to use the coupon at any store, and the store expects to be reimbursed for the coupon by the issuing party. Seniors have built relationships with their local produce stands, and it is possible that neither party questioned whether the coupons could be used there. The customer gave it to the stand, the stand accepted them, and it worked well until the produce stands found out they would not be reimbursed for them.

Unanticipated expenses

Unanticipated time and labor needed to process coupons in the WIC office resulted in reimbursement delays that could have been avoided if the program had provided some administrative funds for such instances, particularly as it was a pilot program. The WIC office needed money for hiring people to assist with the coupon processing and for enabling staff to work proactively on problems. Instead, overworked staff resulted in delayed reimbursements, more reimbursement problems, and reduced ability to create a more effective process.

These results led, commented some market managers, to a perception that farmers should be grateful for the program. Market managers largely shielded their farmers from this perception by finding the resources to cash-out farmers at the end of market or to pay them within a week by check. Market managers remarked that keeping their farmers happy were the first priority and that the program could not operate without their participation and enthusiasm. Roadside stands experienced the brunt of the payment delays, unless they cashed out through a farmers’ market. Fortunately, for the second year of SFMNP, the WIC office bought a machine to aid in counting coupons, which

greatly decreased the time needed for processing. If not for this machine, tension and ill-ease deriving from delayed payments for WIC and Senior FMNP coupons may have resulted in negative perceptions of state and federal government and threatened future work between market managers and SFMNP administrators.

Access

Many factors impacted seniors' ability to use the coupons, such as lack of education and food insecurity factors. On the surface, transportation and market location appeared to be the primary food insecurity factors preventing use or complete use of coupons, but this issue requires further examination. At least two thirds of coupons were spent at roadside stands. This suggests that transportation and market location were not widespread difficulties, although a significant number of seniors may have had difficulty accessing farmers' markets. The redemption rate was greatly improved from 72% in 2001 to 91% in 2002. This improvement could be due to the working out of operational bugs, and a higher response from invitational postcards,⁵¹ which meant that all participating seniors had coupons for the entire length of the season having received them at the start of the program season. Other contributing factors could be due to the seniors themselves: those who self-selected themselves out of the program because they could not use the coupons, or those seniors who had time to establish more supportive networks for gaining access to markets.

Considering the expected transportation difficulties for seniors, the question remained for many farmers why roadside stands received two-thirds of all SFMNP coupons. However, the key factor in this may be the different accessibility of farmers' markets and roadside stands. While most roadside stands are not on public transit routes, they have extended hours, open most days a week, easy to drive up to and park, thus making roadside stands more accessible to those who would drive seniors to the market or shop on their behalf. In terms of accessibility, Anliker et al (1992) and Alexander (1996) found that limited operating hours was a significant barrier to coupon redemption

⁵¹ More postcards were returned than there were available coupons

at farmers' markets. Thus, roadside stands may have been more accessible than centrally located farmers' markets for those who drove.

Agricultural regions appeared to have different responses to SFMNP in reaction to the accessibility of markets, what items were available, and how many SFMNP seniors lived in the area. One farmer noted that he received more SFMNP coupons in Southern and Coastal region markets, and that these markets experienced a higher share of FMNP sales than more northern markets of the Mid-Willamette Valley. In Central and Eastern regions, the paucity of markets contributed to the perception of an acute transportation problem for seniors around the state. However, there appeared to be no regional differences in the farmer-senior interaction. Each region seemed to have their share of "price-shoppers" and seniors who appreciated the farmers, produce and market.

Political Ecology of SFMNP

"Romer's Lesson... is that an innovation that evolves to *maintain* a system can play a major role in *changing* that system" (Kottak 1999:33).

Oregon's SFMNP was the first program to unite these farmer and senior populations. Some SFMNP seniors shopped at farmers' markets and roadside stands prior to the program, yet a large group of seniors had not. The program also enabled a group of seniors to return to shopping at the farmers' market because they now had sufficient resources to participate in the market. Moreover, it was the first program to unify the local agricultural community and the senior community, and uniquely utilized both communities to deliver benefits to each other through a market system. Seniors spent their coupons with farmers, giving farmers a needed boost in sales. Farmers exchanged produce with the coupons, providing seniors with much needed food items to improve their health and well-being.

The existence of SFMNP acknowledged that both farmers and seniors needed assistance through the participation criteria and its objectives. It acknowledged that seniors did not receive sufficient income from social security to be food secure. It acknowledged that the number and nature of market outlets were shrinking and squeezing

small-scale farmers out of the wholesale market. Lastly, SFMNP recognized that local farmers, in response, must create (or recreate) local direct-marketing ventures in order to continue operating. Yet the program's existence was a testimony that society, via government, valued greater access to social goods for these two populations. Figure 6-1 shows how the larger political ecological landscape affecting the local situations in which SFMNP farmers and seniors lived.

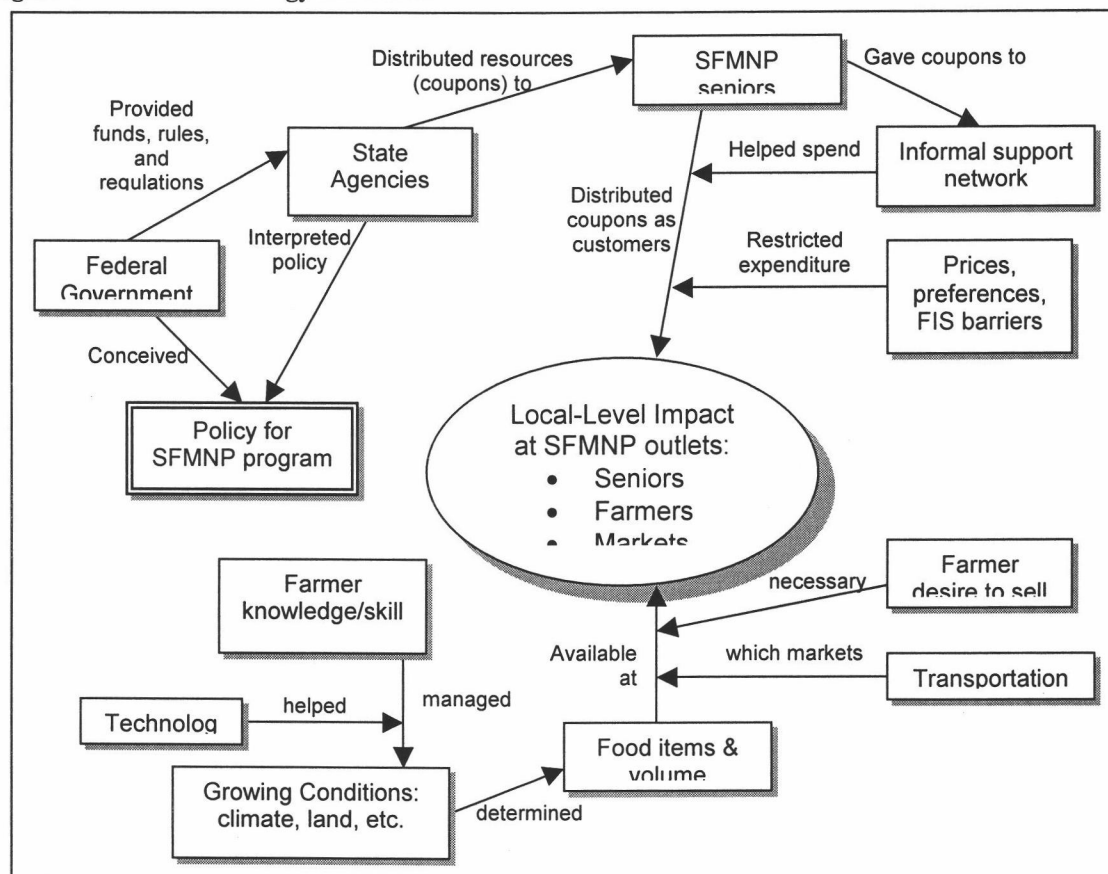
The program's impact on local markets required market managers, farmers and seniors to utilize strategies to make the program benefit them. The significant increase in customers and demand for local produce induced smaller markets to change the way they operated, and impacted other customers as a result. In the larger markets with many vendors, there was a greater likelihood that farmers could collectively respond to the increased demand, but, as noted by one large farmers' market, the markets may have still sold out earlier and had a shortened season. In the smaller, newer markets, there were fewer farmers to shift produce from one market venue to another. This shortage necessitated farmers' markets accepting produce vendors that did not reflect the spirit of their market or relaxing the market's rules of vendor participation in order to meet the demand, resulting in a potentially positive outcome for SFMNP seniors but not necessarily for local agriculture.

Many SFMNP seniors were conscious of produce prices, if not wholly interested in purchasing the lowest cost produce regardless of quality. However, the combination of "price-shopping" and significantly increased demand may have induced some farmers to resell, particularly in markets with few other vendors. By sourcing from grocery stores or wholesalers, these farmers would be able to price produce lower than the rest of the market and may have kept prices down, thus providing seniors with a more acceptable product but undercutting growth of local agriculture and principles of Farm-Direct Marketing and Community Food Security.

To date, no studies have examined the ease of using FMNP coupons and their affect on market dynamics and the buyer-seller relationship. The coupon was a unique currency – with no change given on a purchase, and seniors had \$100 worth of coupons only if they spent "to the last penny". Thus, the coupons were not as easy to use as cash

because of the effort required to maximize their benefit while getting the lowest price possible.

Figure 6-1: Political Ecology of SFMNP



Another factor impacting the buyer-seller relationship was the policing by vendors of their buyers. Unlike their WIC counterparts, seniors did not need to show an Identification Card in order to use the coupons. Several roadside stands requested some measure of control to ensure that the program operated for the low-income seniors and thwarted those who would take advantage of them. Even on a basic level, all vendors – participating and those not participating – were placed in a position of policing in order to ensure that the program's purchasing rules were followed.

Purchasing regulations and the immense number of SFMNP coupons, made these coupons a second form of currency in the farmers' market, which did not operate like cash or check because coupon reimbursement could take weeks or months. As a result,

some farmers selling at farmers' markets developed strategies to receive the quickest reimbursement. Roadside stand operators, by seeking reimbursement at farmers' markets and tying up publicity funds, appeared to decrease the ability of the market to advertise to the general public and appeal to a wider customer base.

Lastly, the sheer number of coupons in some markets resulted in some measure of dependency upon the program. The greater the share of sales, the more vulnerable local farmers could be to fluctuations in the state's ability to deliver the program and to program funds for the state. A significant percentage of farmers' surveys reported the ability to grow more produce during the season and planned to grow more for the next season. With planning for the growing season occurring months prior to the first market day, it is likely farmers will respond to the demand the coupons created in 2001 with planting more produce. Farmers need to have a stable customer base to reduce the risk of not recouping these upfront costs, and if the program's funding is significantly decreased, farmers may find that they have more produce than they sell. However, this issue requires further research to determine the flexibility of farmers to respond to fluctuations in demand at FDM venues.

Oregon's SFMNP was an important mechanism for reaching out to roadside stands, and it catalyzed the creation of the first statewide listing of roadside stands. The program also facilitated the list's expansion as more roadside stands became aware of the program and contacted the state to participate. By being a statewide program, SFMNP had the potential to connect with more roadside stands around the state and perhaps encourage other farmers to enter into direct-marketing. Indeed, the number of participating roadside stands doubled in the second year of the program as farmers were recruiting other farmers to participate. (The growth may also be the result of farmers having more time in the second season to complete and return the application). More markets meant more folks advocating for the program within their local communities and facilitating support for local seniors in participating in the program.

A statewide listing of roadside stands has the potential to develop into a statewide directory of roadside stands (one already exists for farmers' markets) for further promotion of local agriculture within the general public. Such a listing is also an

important resource for ODA in working with roadside stand farmers. In 2001, the Oregon State University Extension Service began outreach to this group when it hosted the first annual "Farm-Direct Marketing Conference" where a variety of workshops helped farmers develop and improve their FDM businesses, including roadside stands and farmers' markets.

A difference in the interpretation of the program's RFP lie at the core of contention among farmers and program administrators: is it better to buy direct from the farmer or to buy Oregon-grown produce? The SFMNP program was clear that only farmers selling at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA could qualify to receive SFMNP funds. This suggests that seniors should buy produce grown within their region, or at least within Oregon and areas adjacent to the state. However, there is considerable flexibility in how the issue of what is sold is interpreted and can have great implications for who participates and to what extent. Some farmers from roadside stands indicated in the survey that they interpreted the program's rules to limit eligible produce to only that grown by the farmer and not include resell produce. There were also reports of roadside stand that SFMNP coupon sales included Oregon-grown produce not grown by the farmer. In addition, some farmers' markets have stricter requirements for farmer-grown produce than other markets. Since the RFP did not explicitly state how this should be interpreted, it has caused misunderstanding and contention as some markets were considered for authorization and others removed from the list.

The findings in this study challenge the assumption that farmers at farmers' markets and roadside stands primarily sell their own produce at these venues. If a farmer grows a sufficient volume to sell at more than one market, they will need to hire persons to sell on their behalf. These people may be any combination of those who are farm laborers, had prior experience with the farm, or simply hired from within the community. Consequently, the vendor's familiarity with the produce and its production may be strong or weak. Secondly, FDM venues do not necessarily reflect produce grown in the region. At farmers' markets, the variety of produce is a function of the availability of farmers who will sell direct, how far they will travel to sell at the market, and the variety and timing of produce they grow. Similar to farmers' markets, roadside stands can resell

produce from neighbors or other Oregon regions and are under no contractual obligation to sell a specified percentage of produce grown by them. Lastly, some roadside stands are very profitable and do not need support provided from the program, and yet they may claim a significant amount of available coupons.

These criteria should be examined to see if they make sense for supporting local agriculture and providing SFMNP seniors with a choice of markets and selection of Oregon's diverse agriculture. Research should include whether the authorization of produce stands might better serve local agriculture by enabling seniors to shop at produce stands selling Oregon produce and that were located closer to where they lived and possibly already patronized. Moreover, the relative scarcity of roadside stands and farmers markets outside of the Willamette Valley means that participating seniors have considerably less choice available to them.

In addition, research should examine whether SFMNP market criteria serves the best interest of helping farmers sell their produce locally. For 2001, participation criteria favored farmers who had the personal characteristics or the desire to sell direct. Direct-marketing requires a personality amiable to sales; a farmer who works with customers' needs and desires, creates an inviting shopping environment, and enjoys working with people in general. If a farmer does not enjoy any of these aspects they either need to hire someone to do this for them, or they need to sell to someone who can sell their goods for them. Research on the role of produce stands in supporting Oregon growers should determine if farmers would benefit if produce stands were authorized, and if SFMNP displaced sales at local produce stands (and whether this caused some economic hardship for produce stands⁵²).

Lastly, the program's operational concept of local "agriculture" is limited to a certain kind of agricultural production: fresh fruits and vegetables. In Oregon, there are many ineligible edible products that need very little processing for sale and are valued by seniors not only for taste but also for their nutritional qualities, such as honey, eggs, and nuts. In farmers' markets, there was strong consensus that these low-processed items, in

⁵² If we assume that SFMNP seniors stopped shopping at their local produce stand and instead used the coupons to buy fruits and vegetables at one of the authorized markets.

addition to fresh fruits and vegetables, should be allowed as long as they do not require the purchase of supplies beyond packing materials. This requires further discussion among stakeholders to consider the ramification of stretching eligibility rules, yet this researcher feels that the rules should not be changed based on the following three issues:

1. Fresh produce is a key nutritional component necessary to elderly diets.
While protein is also important, produce provides the dual role of contributing vitamins and minerals with relatively few calories.
2. Keeping the purchasing regulations simple for farmers by have the same regulations for both WIC and Senior FMNPs.
3. The line between eligible and ineligible items has strong political ecological implications. Once the line is moved, it is likely to keep moving to include more and more items to include more farmers in the program, but lose its nutritional value to participating seniors.

CONCLUSION

Oregon's SFMNP has been a unique program in that it brought together several groups which had not interacted before, and it utilized a pre-established market system to distribute funds and nutrition. SFMNP worked well. There was a relatively low burden on the State of Oregon, having seniors and their support network use their resources in spending the coupons. Overall, it provided financial benefit to local agriculture. The program enhanced community food security within the state of Oregon by providing food assistance through community mechanisms. SFMNP could be improved through more informational outreach to seniors so that they appreciate their role in this social good. In time, SFMNP could continue to be beneficial to the community through expansion of the program through partnership and collaboration. This chapter evaluates the performance of the program in achieving federal objectives, discusses problems arising from program policy and regulations, and provides some policy recommendations.

Program Objectives

The program's objectives were three-fold: (1) improve the nutritional intake of low-income elderly; (2) to increase sales of fresh produce within farmers' markets, roadside stands (aka farmstands), and CSAs; (3) to support the development of these farm-direct market venues for local agriculture. This section answers the question, "did the program meet these objectives and what were there unexpected outcomes?" The research does not assess to what extent the program benefited farmers and seniors, but as there is no standard of performance, positive outcomes for the beneficiaries indicate achievement of objectives.

Seniors improved health

SFMNP seniors were a heterogeneous group as well, falling along a continuum of familiarity with farm-direct marketing and the availability of seasonal and regional produce. Nearly all seniors appreciated the program and the quality of the produce they found at the markets. The program frustrated one group of seniors, but program information and educational outreach may have prevented this. Seniors appeared to

receive an important nutritional boost to their diet, primarily because the coupons provided them with a resource to purchase them, which they did not have before the program. Seniors' food security was enhanced well past the duration of the program as seniors received a sufficient number of coupons to share with their support network and to preserve produce for winter months.

The SFMNP was an important food assistance program for seniors and their support network. It engaged psychosocial factors that encouraged seniors to be active consumers in a market setting that offered an occasion to meet others, talk with farmers, and spend time with members of their support network. This socialization and the ability to purchase produce were a good combination for encouraging seniors to increase their overall consumption of produce.

Farmers

All vendors at farmers' markets benefited from increased numbers of customers brought in by the program, namely seniors and their families, friends, and caregivers. Yet seniors and farmers were a good match as they were generally appreciative of each other. Seniors appreciated the program, the produce, the market, and the farmers. In return, the farmers also enjoyed having the seniors as customers for a variety of extrapersonal and intrapersonal reasons. Of special note, farmers liked that the product they worked hard to provide and felt immense pride in when SFMNP seniors appreciated their produce. They approved of seniors, a deserving population needing the produce, receiving coupons. Farmers also took pride that their market provided an opportunity for seniors to socialize either with them or with their companions. The numerous benefits to seniors as delivered through the farmers and the markets created the perception among farmers that they were providing a social good through the program. This outcome would not be possible if it were not for shared values, life experiences, and the reciprocal appreciation of seniors and farmers. Moreover, this perception of social good provided an incentive to farmers to work with seniors, despite frustrations in the purchasing process and reimbursement delays.

Benefits to farmers' markets

Because of the great diversity of roadside stands and farmers' markets across Oregon, SFMNP's affect on markets depended on what they sold, the length of their season, and the proximity to SFMNP seniors. While it appeared that SFMNP gave small and struggling farmers' markets a boost, the financial benefits were uneven across the state and raised concerns among some farmers that SFMNP funds were going to farmers and roadside stands that did not need them. Yet, it is important to remember that coupons were distributed on a "first-come, first-serve" basis to seniors and not by proximity to a "needy" market. Seniors were the primary beneficiaries in this arrangement. Nonetheless, the program appeared to strengthen struggling markets by creating additional demand, attracting more customers, and retaining farmers who could not afford to sell at the market otherwise. The most impressive growth in the number of farmers' markets occurred in Eastern Oregon after years of no growth. This growth was not wholly attributed to SFMNP but did increase access for seniors living in these rural communities.

Program Enhanced Community Food Security

The program contributed to community food security (CFS) on a regional basis. It raised awareness of local agriculture, roadside stands, and farmers' markets within the general public. Many newspaper articles highlighted the program and provided a positive form of advertisement. However, the strongest form of advertising was the introduction of seniors' support networks to the market, including family members, friends, and caregivers. The result was an increase among community members in buying from local farmers, and their sales increased the overall contribution of SFMNP to farmers' sales.

In addition to benefiting farmers financially and improving the nutritional intake of low-income seniors, it boosted the local economy, supported seniors' support networks, and created more relationships that resulted in shared resources of goods, knowledge, and service. The program's delivery system and the value of the coupons provided all participants with a range of unexpected benefits. The continuation of this program and steady annual funding would give participants the opportunity to further

develop support networks and relationships within the community to distribute the program's benefits.

Reexamine Program Objectives

This study questions whether the objectives of the program match the restrictions placed upon the distribution of its funds. It is clear that in some rural areas of Oregon, SFMNP seniors would be better served if allowed to purchase Oregon-grown produce from their local produce stand; however, it is not clear how this change would impact the development of local agriculture or support farmers who would sell their produce direct to consumers. The program's rules do not necessarily prevent seniors from purchasing resell produce due to the variability of participation rules among farmers' markets. Additionally, it is not clear that there was uniform adherence among roadside stands to this restriction, which apparently caused further frustration among vendors at farmers' markets and other roadside stands.

This study suggests that, by allowing produce stands to participate in areas where there are no or few authorized markets, the program would benefit rather than harm the development of local agriculture. In rural areas with smaller markets and a limited growing environment, seniors had a limited selection and volume of regional produce to choose from. Seniors could continue to buy Oregon-grown produce and have a larger selection of items than might be found at the nearest roadside stand or farmers' market. However, further research is necessary to understand the link between produce stands and the support they may provide to local agriculture. This research should also examine how farm-direct marketing contributes to the establishment of a customer base rooted in a values-based purchasing framework. Lastly, research should consider the range of Oregon-grown edible agricultural products, and how the inclusion of these would strengthen or deter the development of local agricultural economy. Large markets draw farmers from further away, attracting products perhaps not grown in the region. The inclusion of more products might help the smaller markets, but create more uneven benefits among farmers in large markets.

These issues largely arise because there is no unique vision of what comprises a healthy local agriculture. However, the experiences of the community food security movement suggest that there cannot be a universal vision, but local needs and assets will determine local versions. As this study showed, SFMNP success is also based on participants' values and perceptions, which have both regional and individual variability.

Recommendations

The program experienced difficulties because the goals of the program were not well defined to all participants. Furthermore, the lack of administrative funds meant state budget cutting in the spring of 2001 contributed to cost-cutting measures that led to a lack of instruction on how to use the coupons, where to use them, and why seniors should use them.

Unexpected costs of delivering the program also contributed to delayed coupon reimbursements. Extra funding to assist in this process may alleviate some of the worst payment delays, and thus may avoid the hardship markets and farmers faced when they did not have the funds they needed to pay farmers, bills, or publicity costs.

Funding for Education

Accessibility to markets and tension over prices were two areas where there was a lack of education and information for seniors. Seniors needed to know before they signed up for coupons where the authorized markets were located, and what kinds of produce they carried. While some seniors were familiar with their region's seasonal production of produce, others were not. Moreover, many did not understand why prices were different than the grocery store and why some products were not available. Anger over prices and distances could be significantly reduced and the redemption rate increased if seniors had understood the reasons. Educational outreach should be required in any program, but a reliable funding source would reduce the possibility of cost-cutting measures that undermine this effort.

The coupon program has a responsibility to educate SFMNP seniors about the characteristics and opportunities of FDM in order to create a new customer base with

realistic expectations of farmers' markets and roadside stands. Education is vital in keeping customer frustration to a minimum.

There was little informational outreach to seniors and WIC clients that redeeming one's coupons also benefited local farmers, yet this information has the potential to increase overall redemption by both seniors and WIC clients. Already, information on how to prepare and choose produce increases the amount of coupons redeemed by WIC clients (Winter 1998). By letting coupon-recipients know that they are helping local farmers while improving their own nutritional intake, a number of seniors may be more willing to spend their coupons if they know they are part of a solution. There could be greater compassion for farmers, their produce prices and the purchasing restrictions if seniors were more aware of how they are helping to strengthen local agriculture. Farmers' markets advocates have utilized this aspect of the program in encouraging senior centers and churches to assist seniors in accessing the markets. However, the SFMNP senior population is dispersed throughout Oregon, and program administrators have a pivotal role in bridging the divide through program materials and providing support for seniors in farmers' markets.

Senior Nutrition Toolbox

Ethnographic data suggests that the program is attractive to seniors because of several unique attributes of the program. First, the program restricts purchases to fresh produce, an essential component of seniors' diets and often least affordable. Secondly, the program enables seniors to help local farmers even while they themselves are being helped. Third, applying for coupons is relatively easy and non-intrusive. The program appeals to the values of seniors, particularly those with anti-government viewpoints, because it does not resemble a government program. The program appears to be an acceptable form of food assistance as opposed to food stamps or food pantries. A senior advocate in rural Oregon reported that SFMNP would be attractive to seniors who would not otherwise participate in a government program, because the government has a very small and unobtrusive role in delivering the program.

Previous studies of food insecurity among the elderly suggest that the delivery and characteristics of the program appeal to those seniors who would not typically apply for food stamps. SFMNP meets not only the nutritional needs of low-income seniors, but delivers these benefits through more socially acceptable means. Funds provided access to fresh produce, which are rare in food pantries or too expensive in grocery stores. In addition to the act of purchasing, seniors are more favorable toward programs that help others, suggesting that SFMNP is more accepted by seniors who are aware their participation helps local farmers. Thus SFMNP seniors become active participants in revitalizing their communities and their informal support networks, which in turn, strengthens seniors' safety net for preventing or mitigating food insecurity and ill-health. Lastly, SFMNP coupons provide seniors an opportunity for increased socialization and expansion of the information support network via friendships with farmers, which further enhances their personal food security.

Since SFMNP targets the nutritional needs of low-income seniors and appeals to seniors' value system, the program should be extended to more seniors and become part of USDA's toolbox of addressing food insecurity among seniors. If the program can continue to operate similarly, it is recommended that it be expanded to include seniors who are not enrolled in food stamps or Medicaid but meet income and age criteria. SFMNP could provide an important bridge in connecting seniors to services as they age and require more assistance. Research into the costs saved through increased produce consumption and early program participation of seniors would help determine whether the SFMNP should join the host of food programs designed to help seniors maintain good nutrition, lower medical costs, and increase quality of life. These findings suggest that the SFMNP could be a vital tool towards this social good -- the health and well-being of our nation's elderly.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Request for Participation, 2001 SFMNP

Appendix B: Glossary and Abbreviations

Appendix C: Oregon Crops

Appendix D: Community Food Security

Appendix E: Background on Elderly Nutrition Program and Food Stamps

Appendix F: WIC-FMNP Participant Surveys

Appendix A: Request for Participation, 2001 SFMNP

RFP has been modified from original for this appendix. Full RFP is available online at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a001102c.html, Commodity Credit Corporation (last accessed on 2/10/03). NOTICES: Grants and cooperative agreements; availability, etc.: Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Pilot Program, 65825–65828 [00–28201] [available in pdf and html (http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=2000_register&docid=00-28201-filed)]

65825 Federal Register / Vol. 65, No. 213 / Thursday, November 2, 2000 / Notices

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Pilot Program: Opportunity To Submit Grant Applications

AGENCY: Commodity Credit Corporation, Agriculture.

ACTION: Notice of opportunity to submit grant applications.

SUMMARY: USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation will be making grants to States and Indian tribal governments. The grants must be used to provide coupons to low-income seniors that they may exchange for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. Eligible foods are fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Ten million dollars are available for grants for the 2001 farmers' market season.

DATE: Applications must be received on or before December 1, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Applications must be sent to Diane Kriviski, Grants Management Specialist, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Grants Management Division, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. What Is the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?

A. Background

The Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Pilot Program is a new program established by USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). Under the program, CCC will make grants to States and Indian tribal governments. The grants must be used to provide low-income seniors coupons they may exchange for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. Eligible foods are fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs. The grant funds may be used only to support the costs of the foods that are provided under the program; no administrative funding is available. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will assist CCC in evaluating the grant applications.

B. Purpose

The purposes of the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Pilot Program are to (1) provide resources in the form of fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs from farmers' markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs to low-income seniors, (2) increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs, and (3) develop or aid in the development of new and additional farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.

C. Authority

Funds are being made available for this pilot program pursuant to the CCC Charter Act. Section 5(e) of the Act (15 U.S.C. 714c(e)) authorizes CCC to use its resources to "Increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic markets or by developing or aiding in the development of new and additional markets, marketing facilities, and uses for such commodities."

II. Who Is Eligible for These Grants?

All States and federally recognized Indian tribal governments are eligible for these grants. Indian tribal governments may apply directly or as part of a State application. Each State may submit only one application on behalf of all interested State agencies, local governments, and non-profit organizations in that State, and any Indian tribal governments that want to participate through the State. Each applicant State must designate a lead State agency. However, the lead State agency may make subgrants to other State agencies, Indian tribal governments, local governments, and non-profit organizations. Also, Indian tribal governments may make subgrants to local governments and non-profit organizations in the areas they serve. Interested State agencies, local governments, and non-profit organizations should contact their Governor's office or Indian tribal governments to work together on an application. States and Indian tribal governments that choose to subgrant all or part of the pilot program funds are responsible

for ensuring that the funds are spent in accordance with requirements for the pilot program.

III. How Much Is Available for the Grants and When Must the Funds Be Spent?

Ten million dollars are available for the grants. Grant funds may be obligated beginning with the grant award (expected in early January 2001) through December 31, 2001. The grants will be awarded through a competitive process. We may adjust the amounts requested in the grant applications to ensure that the grants we award are funded at appropriate levels. The submission of a grant application does not guarantee funding. All program activities under the grants must be completed by December 31, 2001. The pilot program will be evaluated during and after the grant period. If it is successful, we expect to continue the program in the 2002 farmers' market season. The evaluation will also help us decide whether we need to make any changes in order to improve the program. You must cooperate with the evaluation by providing requested data and access to your records.

IV. What Are the Reporting Requirements for Grantees?

You will be required to submit quarterly financial status reports, quarterly progress reports, and a final report. The quarterly financial and progress reports are due April 30, July 31, and October 31, 2001. The final report is due March 31, 2002. The progress reports and the final report must indicate the number of outlets authorized to receive coupons (i.e. farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and/or community supported agriculture programs) by category and the number of recipients who have been issued coupons.

VI. What Is the Meaning of the Terms Used in This Request for Grant Applications?

The following definitions and conditions apply to this pilot program:

Community supported agriculture program means a program under which a farmer grows food for a group of shareholders (or subscribers) who pledge to buy a portion of the farmer's crop that season.

Coupon means a coupon, voucher, or other negotiable financial instrument by which benefits under the pilot program are transferred to pilot program recipients. Coupons must contain a date by which the recipient must use the coupon, a date by which the farmer must submit the coupon for payment, a unique and sequential serial number, a denomination, and an identifier for the redeeming farmer. The denominations of the

coupons must be sufficiently small to ensure that recipient can redeem coupons at or near their full value.

Eligible foods mean fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs for human consumption. Eligible foods may not be processed or prepared beyond their natural state except for usual harvesting and cleaning processes. Honey, maple syrup, cider, and nuts are examples of foods that are not eligible for purposes of the pilot program.

Farmer means an individual who sells produce at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs, but does not include an individual who exclusively sells produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors.

Farmers' market means an association of local farmers who assemble at a defined location for the purpose of selling their produce directly to consumers.

Federally recognized Indian tribal government means the same as that term is defined in 7 CFR 3017.3.

Locally grown means grown within the borders of the State that your project serves. If you choose, locally grown may also mean grown in areas of States adjacent to the State your project serves, as long as those areas are part of the United States.

Recipient means a person who meets the age and income eligibility limits for your project and to whom you have issued coupons.

Roadside stand means a location at which a single, individual farmer sells his/her produce directly to consumers.

State means the 50 States of the United States and the District of Columbia.

VII. What Do I Have To Include in My Grant Proposal?

Your grant application must include a grant proposal that describes in detail your plan to operate a project under the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Pilot Program. At a minimum, your grant proposal must address the following areas in sufficient detail to demonstrate your ability to meet the requirements of the pilot program and must be organized as follows:

1. General Administration Requirements

a. Purpose. Describe how your project will achieve the purposes (stated above) of the program. Include:

Proposed period of operation. Proposed age and income eligibility limits for recipients. If you propose to serve people under the age of 60 or with household incomes above 185% of the poverty income guidelines (currently \$20,813 for a two-person household), include a justification for your eligibility limit. Number of recipients you estimate you will serve during the grant period. Frequency of coupon issuance, value of coupons at each issuance to a recipient, and maximum total amount a recipient will be issued during the grant period. [[Page 65827]]

Service area. Describe any current or prior experience you have with farmers' market projects or programs. If you operated a farmers' market program for seniors during the 2000 farmers' market season, indicate the amount you spent for this program and include an assurance that you will maintain this level of funding (in addition to any pilot program funds) during the grant period.

b. Administrative capacity. Describe your administrative capacity to operate the project. Because administrative funding will not be provided under the grant, describe how you and any participating organizations will pay the administrative costs of the program. Identify the organization within the lead State agency or Indian tribal government and key staff who will direct the work of the your project and ensure all requirements of the grant agreement are met.

c. Financial management. Describe your financial management system, including how the system will provide accurate, current and complete disclosure of the financial status of the program and quarterly financial status reports.

d. Record keeping. Describe your record keeping system, including your system for maintaining separate records for funds received under this grant and records pertaining to financial operations, coupon issuance and redemption, market authorization, and participation.

2. Funding Request

Indicate the amount of funds you are requesting and how you determined that amount.

3. Recipient Certification and Benefit Delivery

a. Recipient certification and coupon issuance. Describe how you will determine the eligibility of recipients and issue coupons to recipients.

b. Coupon redemption system. Describe your coupon redemption system, including how you will ensure that coupons are redeemed only by authorized farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and/or community supported agriculture programs and only for eligible foods, how you will ensure that no cash change is issued for purchases that are in an

amount less than the value of the coupon(s), and how you will ensure that no State or local taxes will be collected on purchases of food with coupons.

c. Market management system. Describe how you will manage your markets, including your proposed criteria and procedures for authorizing farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and/or community supported agriculture programs.

d. Number of markets. Indicate in each category the number of farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and/or community supported agriculture programs you estimate you will authorize.

e. Eligible foods. List all eligible foods.

f. Coupons. Describe your proposed coupons, including the denominations.

4. Nutrition Education

Describe any nutrition education you will provide recipients.

X. How Will My Application Be Evaluated?

C. Grant Awards

We will notify grant applicants of awards as soon as possible after the applications have been reviewed. We expect to complete the review by early January 2001. CCC will provide funding for approved grant applications upon receipt of a properly executed grant agreement and subject to available funding.

Dated: October 30, 2000.

August Schumacher, Jr.,

President, Commodity Credit Corporation.

[FR Doc. **00-28201** Filed 10-30-00; 4:41 pm]

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Appendix B: Glossary and Abbreviations

Abbreviations

CCC	Commodity Credit Corporation (USDA)
CFS	Community Food Security
CSA	Community-Supported Agriculture
ENP	Elderly Nutrition Program
FDM	Farm-direct marketing
FIS	Food Insecurity
FSP	Food Stamp Program
FM	Farmers' Market
FMFS	WIC's year-end survey for participating farmers at farmers' markets
MMS	WIC's year-end survey for managers of farmers' markets (one per person).
ODA	Oregon Department of Agriculture
OFB	Oregon Food Bank
OHRT	Oregon Hunger Relief Taskforce
OFMA	Oregon Farmers Market Association
RFP	Request for Participation (announcement of funding opportunity)
RS	Roadside Stand (aka Farmstand)
RSVS	WIC's year-end survey for roadside stands
SFMNP	Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
SPDS	Senior and People with Disabilities Services Division, Oregon Department of Human Services
WIC	Women, Infants and Children Program, Oregon Health Division, Department of Human Services
WIC-FMNP	WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Glossary

Several terms in this study can have multiple meanings depending upon their context. This section identifies and defines some key terms used as throughout this paper.

Community Food Security (CFS)

This concept builds on the concepts of household or individual food security such that every member of the community will have greater food security when the community becomes more self-reliant, in control, and engaged in their food system, including the production, processing and distribution of food.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

This is a purchasing arrangement where customers buy a “share” from a farm at the beginning of the season providing the farmer with needed early income in exchange for a weekly supply of fresh produce. Some CSAs offer specialty shares, such as eggs, flowers or bread. Produce is usually offered in full or half shares that feeds about 4 and 2 people respectively. Produce can be pre-packed or buffet-style (where folks pick produce according to a “menu”) and can be delivered to the home, to a drop-off site or picked-up at the farm. In this arrangement, the customer shares the risk of production with the farmer, but the variety and diversity of production reduces the overall risk of poor production. In principle, CSA members belong to the farm and may be asked to assist in the farm operations either on the farm, supervising a drop-off site, member coordination, or some other business function.

Crop

An agricultural crop producing food for human consumption and includes, but is not limited to, bedding plants that produce food, orchard stock intended for the production of food and livestock that may be processed into food for human consumption” (from Gleaning Donation Law, Oregon Laws 2001, Chapter 222, Act HB 2718, Section 1). (states that food must be distributed to “children, homeless, unemployed, elderly or low-income individuals”)

Elderly

A general term which refers to people 60 years and older. Coupon-recipients of the SFMNP are referred to as “seniors” and were 65 years or older.

Farmer

“Farmer means an individual who sells produce at farmers’ markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs, but does not include an individual who exclusively sells produce grown by someone else...” (Schumacher 2000:65826.
Definition from the RFP for 2001 SFMNP)

For the purposes of this study, a farmer is one who grows food and sells direct to consumers primarily through roadside stands and farmers’ markets. It is acceptable for a farmer can sell produce grown “locally” in addition to the produce they grow to participate in SFMNP.

Farmers’ Market (FM)

“Farmers’ Market means an association of local farmers who assemble at a defined location for the purpose of selling their produce directly to consumers....” (Schumacher 2000:65826.
Definition from the RFP for 2001 SFMNP)

For this study, a farmers’ market is where farmers meet at a time and place once a week to sell produce or added-value food items directly to customers. Although there are several kinds of farmers’ markets operating in Oregon, this paper refers to those recognized by ODA and WIC. These farmers’ markets may have a board of directors, but must have a market manager who signs the WIC contract and agreeing to process coupons redeemed in the market. Some farmers’ market organizations manage more than one farmers’ market per week NS while the markets may appear under the organization’s name in the Oregon Farmers’ Market Brochure (ODA 2001) each market is considered one market venue for both farmers and seniors. All farmers’ markets in this study have some organizational and operational rules that farmers must follow in order to sell at the farmers’ market. Markets typically specify the percent of produce sold by the farmer that

must also be grown by the farmer. Some associations in Oregon may call themselves a “farmers’ market”, but they are not considered as such in this study because they have no board, vendor membership rules, nor market guidelines for who can participate and what can be sold.

Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

In this study, FMNP is a general term that includes both the WIC and Senior programs. In general, this term refers to programs that have two beneficiaries: farmers and a low-income population, and where low-income clients receive vouchers to spend with farmers for locally grown produce. The WIC-FMNP coupons can only be used in farmers’ markets, whereas SFMNP coupons could also be used at roadside stands. In Oregon, farmers selling through farmers’ markets participated in both programs and were reimbursed for coupons from both programs at one time. These two programs essentially ran in tandem at farmers’ markets.

Food Insecurity (FIS)

“Food insecurity is limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. The food security status of each household lies somewhere along a continuum extending from complete food security at one end to severe hunger at the other end. This continuum is divided into ranges: “(1) Food secure, (2) Food insecure without hunger, (3) Food insecure with hunger” (ERS-USDA n.d.⁵³). While there are many ways to measure the incidence and severity of food insecurity of a population, within the United States data is collected in the Food Security Supplements to the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the US Census. The most recent categories used by the CPS Food Security Supplement are (Nord et al. 2002:3):

- Food Secure - "...have assured access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life"

⁵³ ERS-USDA states that definitions of food security and food insecurity “are from the Life Sciences Research Office, S.A. Andersen, ed., “Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult to Sample Populations,” *The Journal of Nutrition*, Vol. 120, 1990, 1557S-1600S.”

- Food Insecure Without Hunger -at some time during the previous year respondent was "...uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet basic needs for all household members because they had insufficient money and other resources for food"
- Food Insecure with Hunger - "...one or more household members were hungry, at least some time during the year, because they couldn't afford enough food."

Food Security

"Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies)⁵⁴" (ERS-USDA).

Locally Grown Produce

Refers to produce grown within a specified region within which a consumer lives. Federal requirements for SFMNP allowed any produce grown in the state and areas adjacent to the border to be considered "locally grown" and available for purchase.

Market Manager

(Market Manager is a widely used term within Oregon, but in a few farmers' market the term, Market Master, is used.) The market manager is the person who oversees the operation of the market. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to; arranging stalls, organizing permits and insurance, collecting stall fees, collecting FMNP coupons and paying farmers for coupons, publicizing the market, recruiting vendors, and negotiating vendor conflicts. This person may be a volunteer or hired by the farmers' market board, and is either a member of the community or one of the vendors. This position can be full-time during the year, but is usually full-time only during the market season and a month before and after.

⁵⁴ Another version of this is "no need for recourse to emergency food sources or other extraordinary coping behaviors to meet basic food needs" (*Food Research and Action Center*, <http://www.frac.org>).

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)

This department handles all regulatory activities associated with agriculture in Oregon. It also assists in developing a strong agricultural industry within the state. The department also offers services in value-added production and export, research of farming systems at research stations across the state, and educational outreach to farm-direct marketing (aka. "farm to consumer").

Oregon Farmers Market Association (OFMA)

This is a non-profit membership organization, started in 1987, of farmers market managers around the state who seek to promote, support and develop farmers' markets for the benefit of farmers and communities. With assistance from ODA and agricultural extension staff, OFMA has helped communities start a farmers market or strengthened existing farmers markets through information sharing. They have actively participated in the development and progress of SFMNP, and have a role in developing state regulations supportive of local agriculture. (OFMA 2002)

Produce Stand (PS)

I first heard this term in the field, and it has come to mean any business that sells Oregon-grown agricultural produce, either fresh or processed. They may sell other items as well, and some of the foodstuffs may not originate in Oregon or the Northwest, but the main feature of the produce stand is to sell locally grown produce. The main difference between a produce stand and a roadside stand in this study is that produce stands do not qualify for SFMNP because the owner has not grown a portion (is it 50%?) of the produce they sell.

Roadside Stand (RS) (also known as Farmstand)

"Roadside stand means a location at which a single, individual farmer sells his/her produce directly to consumers" (Schumacher 2000: 65826. *Definition from the 2001 SFMNP RFP*)

The roadside stand is a market outlet for produce grown by one or more farmers. It is typically owned and operated by one farmer and often located on the farm property. The farmer has the responsibility for hiring staff and meeting regulations for insurance

and safety. Roadside stands differ widely. At their simplest, they are a table or open booth where a gardener leaves surplus produce out and the buyer pays on an honor system. As the roadside stand business grows, the operator will want to hire staff to be on site during open hours, and there will be a secure building and hygienic facilities. The largest roadside stands can earn hundreds of thousands of dollars through a diversified farm-direct marketing strategy often involving agri-tourism activities or u-pick in addition to the roadside stand. There are no regulations that require a roadside stand to sell only what the farmer produced, but farmers are only required to purchase an Oregon Peddlers license if they resell items, including fresh produce (Dodson 2001).

Senior and People with Disabilities Services (SPDS)

Known as Senior and Disabled Services (SDS) before the department's reorganization in late 2001, they administer state level programs assisting seniors and disabled persons in meeting their basic needs. They work in partnership with other organizations, both governmental and non-profit agencies, to provide a diversity of services to fit basic personal needs and home and utility assistance.

Vendor

This is someone who has a booth (aka "stand") and sells through the farmers market and/or roadside stand. This category includes not only farmers selling fresh and added-value produce, but those selling other food items and/or non-food items. These goods include, but are not limited to baked goods, prepared foods, flowers, meats, eggs, honey, crafts, jams, and plants.

WIC Program (WIC)

The program assists low-income women with infants, small children or who are pregnant in improving their nutrition through one-to-one casework and food vouchers. Unlike food stamps, this is not an entitlement program.

Appendix C: Oregon Crops

Oregon grows a wide range agricultural products with many varieties of berries, fruits and produce. Below is a list of most of Oregon's crops and a chart showing seasonal availability for the Portland Metro Area. Availability will vary according to region.

List of Oregon Crops

List provided by Oregon's 2001 Application to the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (Dodson 2000: 13-14).

Apricots	Kiwifruit
Asparagus	Kohlrabi
Beans (string: green, purple, white)	Lettuce
Beets	Loganberries
Blackberries	Marionberries
Blueberries	Melons
Bok Choy	Mushrooms
Boysenberries	Nectarines
Broccoli	Onions (dry, green)
Brussel Sprouts	Parsnips
Cabbage	Peaches
Cantaloupe	Pears
Carrots	Peas
Cauliflower	Peppers
Celery	Plums/Prunes
Chard	Potatoes
Cherries	Pumpkins
Corn	Radishes
Cucumber	Squash (summer and winter varieties)
Garlic	Tomatoes
Greens	Turnips
Kale	Watermelon

Crop Availability during the Season

This chart provides an approximate timeline for when produce items are available in Portland Metro area. Harvest times differ from region to region and changes in the weather, such as temperature and rainfall.

CROP	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Apples									
Apricots									
Asparagus									
Beans									
Bedding Plants									
Beets									
Blackberries									
Blueberries									
Boysenberries									
Cabbage									
Cauliflower									
Cherries									
Corn									
Christmas Trees									
Cucumbers									
Dry Onions									
Filberts									
Herb Plants									
Marionberries									
Peaches									
Pears									
Peppers									
Plums/Prunes									
Potatoes									
Pumpkins									
Raspberries									
Rhubarb									
Squash									
Strawberries									
Tomatoes									
Walnuts									
CROP	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.

(Source: http://www.tricountyfarm.org/crop_availability.asp, 6/6/03)

Appendix D: Community Food Security

“But what is CFS? Is it a new conceptual breakthrough that can help clarify the interrelationships of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and development? Or is it just food security, recast to satisfy its eclectic advocates and adherents? Or is it a new conceptual approach to social planning and well-being, or a calculated strategy to obtain additional support for existing social-welfare programs, such as community development, food assistance, or urban gardens?” (Anderson and Cook 1999:141)

Community Food Security (CFS) unites environmental concerns and social injustice concerns in the belief that through strong regional food systems all community members will be food secure as communities become more self-reliant (Gottlieb and Fisher, etc.). In the first years of the movement, advocates of Anti-Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture movements were strong proponents for conceiving and fostering community food projects around the country. The principles of these movements have historically been central to CFS, however, they should not overly define CFS as it develops as both a concept and a movement. The following five CFS principles are described below as stated in the educational materials of the Community Food Security Coalition (Andy Fisher, Urban Ecologist 1997):

The first three principles stress the right of and ability of people to express their cultural values while enabling all community members to meet their basic nutritional needs by socially acceptable means and with foods that are culturally appropriate. Within a CFS approach, greater access to fresher, more nutritious foods results in greater self-reliance of communities to provide for their food needs and respond to food, farm, and nutrition issues (Community Food Projects Act, 1998 in Anderson and Cook 1999: 144). The first principle of CFS is to meet the food needs of low-income communities through projects and activities that foster broader goals of job training, business skill development, and community revitalization. Originally promoted by the anti-hunger movement, this principle is the basic right of every member of society to a diet sufficient for an active and healthy life. In recent years, studies and reports evaluating the nutrition of food typically provided through private food assistance have found it to be highly processed; high in fats,

sugar, and salt; and low in nutritional value. Consequently, CFS currently entails the right of everyone to have access to a diet that is culturally appropriate and nutritious.

The next two principles have a community focus and promote the physical and social capital necessary to meet the community's (and its members) food needs by increasing growing, processing and retail opportunities within the community. Food is a venue for community members to not only increase their own food security, but to learn business skills and develop their own business ventures.

Fourth, CFS recognizes local agriculture as vital to a region's nutritional self-reliance, and in protecting the vitality of the land and waters that produce food. An important component of sustainable food production is a market system that values that production. A main mechanism toward CFS (and sustainable agriculture) focuses on localizing the regional food system (Kloppenburger et al 1996; Pelletier et al. 1999). Education is key to maintaining a productive resource of land and people. CFS projects include building better links between farmers and consumers allowing consumers to gain greater knowledge about their sources of food.

Fifth, protection of food production and consumer education about local food systems is typically a multiple agency effort crossing political economic boundaries, involving government, businesses, non-profits, and community-based organizations. This multi-stakeholder perspective is fundamental to CFS approach, not only for actively pursuing greater CFS within a region, but also for measuring and planning its progress. Overall, food becomes a venue for building social capital and increasing the food security of all members of society, whereby more of the society's food system occurs within the region for greater ecological stewardship.

Measuring progress and achievement of CFS is still a matter of who is measuring and why, as evidenced by the diversity of approaches to food assessments around the nation. There is no consensus "on what a food-secure community would look like and how it would function" (Anderson and Cook 1999:145), suggesting that CFS is defined in situ on a regional (counties, metro areas, state) or community level (neighborhoods, cities). Even the concept of community, embedded in the language of CFS, is not clearly defined and historically has been defined geographically – crossing economic, ethnic, and political boundaries (Anderson and Cook 1999).

Appendix E: Background on Elderly Nutrition Program and Food Stamps

Elderly Nutrition Program

The Older American's Act of 1972 established the Elderly Nutrition Program to provide prepared meals to seniors in-group settings or delivered⁵⁵. The programs reach over 3 million low-income persons 60 years or older. About 12% of the nation's elderly have a cash income under 100% of the poverty level (Ponza, Ohls and Millen 1996). The ENP programs addressed two FIS risk factors among the elderly; shopping and cooking are reduced as mobility difficulties increase, and isolation and depression lead to reduced quantity and quality of nutritional intake. They also provide human interaction and socialization possibilities for participants, either through the volunteer who delivers the meal, or with the other seniors at the congregate meal site. Some programs also provide some other services, such as nutrition services and assessment, education, recreation and counseling. Some of the meal sites also have a food pantry that seniors and others can access.

The ENP programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in conjunction with the FNS. Oregon's SPDS administers the program at the state level. Age is the only eligibility criterion. Meals are free, but participants are encouraged to donate what they can (FNS-USDA 2000a:30). FNS provides commodities or cash reimbursements for meals served to state agencies, which pass them on to organizations that serve meals through DHHS programs. (CPW 2000: 23). These programs are community-based and highly leveraged. Both programs are community-based, geared to seniors and heavily reliant on volunteers and community support for their operation (Wolfe et al. 1996). Federal funds account for 20% of the cost of the meal, including donated labor and supplies (Ponza, Ohls and Millen 1996). Because these programs are for the elderly, there is a greater sense of entitlement. Seniors appreciated the voluntary and confidential nature of payment (Wolfe et al. 1996).

Both programs require very little, if any, paperwork, and so the seniors do not have to state whether or not they are in financial need and are able to donate what they

⁵⁵ The programs are typically known as "Congregate Meals" and "Meals-on-Wheels" respectively.

can to the program. These programs are flexible enough so that seniors can access them as they please. The congregate meal sites operate on a walk-in basis. At a typical meal site the senior is greeted at the door and drops their donation there, then takes a seat at a table where they will be served. The meals-on-wheels program can start delivering meals to a senior in 24 hours or less (CPW 2000: 23). The sponsoring organization may ask that seniors have a need for at least a week for coordination purposes, but seniors can come off the program when they are no longer homebound, for instance, once they are healed from an accident. Nearly two-thirds of participants heard about the programs from friends or family, while another 10% became aware of the programs through a community-based organization or hospital (Ponza, Ohls and Millen 1996).

The quality of the meals has come under criticism for high fat, salt and cholesterol levels, but they were also found to be “nutrient-dense” providing 50% of RDA for vitamins and minerals (Ponza, Ohls and Millen 1996). However, Moran and Reed (1993) found in a study of congregate meal sites that those who are on self-imposed or prescribed diet modifications ate fewer congregate meals than those without restrictions.

Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) is an entitlement program, meaning if one's income and assets fall below 130% of poverty, one is entitled to food stamp benefits. Benefits are calculated from the expected cost of food and the ability to pay. The Thrifty Meal Plan is low-cost, considered healthy diet. It consists of three planned meals a day, and extends over several weeks. Cost is calculated as the per unit price of only the amount of food required for the meals, and thus has come under scrutiny and criticism for suggesting food amounts that do not correspond to packaging. Households are expected to pay a third of their income on food, and food stamp benefits are intended to make up the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan.

The elderly have had lower rates of FSP participation than other groups, since the program started in 1977. Between 20% and 30% of all eligible elderly participate (McConnell and Ponza 1999; FNS-UDA 2000a), as compared to the rate for all groups, which has increased from 30% to 60% by 1994 (Robertson and Summers 2000:18). While the rate of participation has risen sharply for other age groups, the elderly have

dropped slightly from 1994-2000 (Wilde and Dagata 2002). The Food Stamp Program appears to be a food resource of last resort for many elderly, and less desirable to access than the Elderly Nutrition Programs or private food assistance (McConnell and Ponza 1999; Wolfe et al. 1998). Elderly participants in FSP are twice as likely to experience food insecurity than non-participants (McConnell and Ponza 1999; Wilde and Dagata 2002), demonstrating that these individuals are some of the most needy.

Appendix F: WIC-FMNP Participant Surveys

At the end of the 2001 FMNP season, the WIC Program sent surveys to participants in the WIC-FMNP. Surveys to market managers and farmers also included questions about SFMNP. Below is a list of questions that provided data included in this study.

Table F-1: Market Manager Survey

#	Question	Response
1	“How did your market benefit from the FMNPs?”	Open-ended
4	What problems do Senior customers continuously voice?	Open-ended
5	What problems do growers continuously voice?	Open-ended
6	Payment by faxed invoice?	Yes/No
7	Direct deposit?	Yes/No
8	What was the average number of days to receive payments from the state?	<i>Possible responses: 7 days, 10 days, Longer than 14 days, Other</i>
9	When did your market pay your vendors?	<i>Possible responses: Same day as the market, 1 Week later, 2 Week later, When market received the state’s payment, Other</i>
10	Was this payment routine different from last year?	Yes/No; <i>5 respondents (25%) wrote comments next to answer</i>
11	Did the majority of your vendors agree with the method of payment?	Yes/No; <i>7 respondents (37%) wrote comments with their answer.</i>
12, 13	Do you think the programs should continue? (WIC and Senior, respectively)	Open-ended; some comments did not differentiate between the programs. These and comments specific to SFMNP were included.
14, 15	What additional suggestions do you have to improve the coupon programs in the future? (WIC and Senior, respectively)	Open-ended; some comments did not differentiate between the programs. These and comments specific to SFMNP were included