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Researching Broome County Farmers Markets in the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Researching Broome County's Farmers' Markets in the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Faculty Mentor: Valerie Imbruce

Source Project: People, Politics and Environment

Background

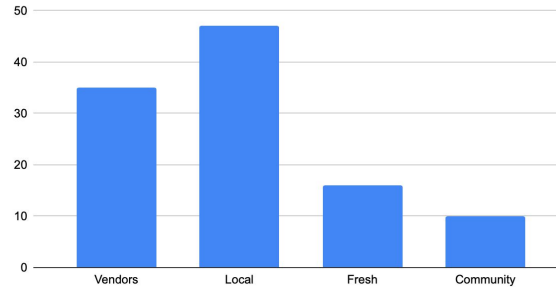
The impact of farmers' markets is very important to communities. They provide a direct connection between farmers and consumers and have been described as "food with a face" (Gillespie et al., 2021, p. 69). The markets create relationships and personal interactions. They also provide communities with locally grown food that usually has higher nutrition levels (Neithercott, 2008).

The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented many direct interactions from occurring. My research aims to understand how the role of farmers' markets during the pandemic has been affected in Broome County.

Methods

My research consists of analyzing reviews from Google and Facebook, observing interactions at a farmers' market, and interviews with local politicians and market managers. The reviews come directly from consumers and their personal takeaways from the markets highlighting the impact of farmers' markets and how the reviews have changed, if at all, during the pandemic. The interviews focus on the change that has been seen on a management level and the impact on farmers and consumers.

Common Reasons Why Consumers Patronize Farmers' Markets



The most emphasized qualities of the farmers' markets by consumers in reviews from six farmers' markets in Broome County were local, vendors, fresh, and community. While analyzing reviews from the past year, the majority of reviews remained positive and were thankful the markets remained open. Many recent reviews showed consumer's happiness with markets despite the COVID-19 precautions indicating that these precautionary measures did not hinder the experience too much. It only shows that if the markets closed, consumers would be severely disappointed.



-This is a poster set up outside the main entrance of the Broome County Regional Farmers' Market. It shows the precautions taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. -The sign encourages people not to linger which can affect the personal connections found at the markets. This would limit the time for conversations and the little interactions that make farmers' markets special.

Findings

Reviews show that consumers value locally grown food. They also remained positive throughout the pandemic about the quality of the market and food. Recent reviews often include consumers happy that the markets were able to remain open.

My interview with Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo discusses the increasing importance of locally grown and healthy food as there were food shortages during the pandemic. This leads to an overall increase of the value of farmers' markets. While at the Broome County Regional Farmers' Market, people were constantly interacting with vendors beyond purchasing food such as friendly conversations and how to prepare certain foods.

Conclusion

The farmers' markets are a place of value to both farmers and consumers. The importance of farmers' markets was not hurt, and they were valued more because of the realizations that came from the pandemic such as the value of community and local food. By remaining open, they created a sense of normalcy which encouraged more turnout. Eating local food and supporting local businesses especially during the pandemic creates a pride for consumers. Overall, the markets took COVID-19 precautions which did not hinder the experience too much. Farmers' markets in Broome County are a valued sense of community and continue to provide access to consumers for farmers.

References

- Gillespie, G., Hilehey, D., Hinrichs, C. and Feenstra, G. (2021). *Remaking the North American food system*. University of Nebraska Press. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_s_sdi=0%2C33&q=hinrichs+farmers+market&btnG
- Neithercott, T. (2008, June). Local color: whether you shop at the farmers market or in your supermarket produce aisle, the buzz right now is all about eating what's grown nearby. Turns out, local food makes good nutritional sense, too. *Diabetes Forecast*, 61(6), 35+. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A179933742/PPAG?u=bingui&id=PPAG&xid=08ed1204>