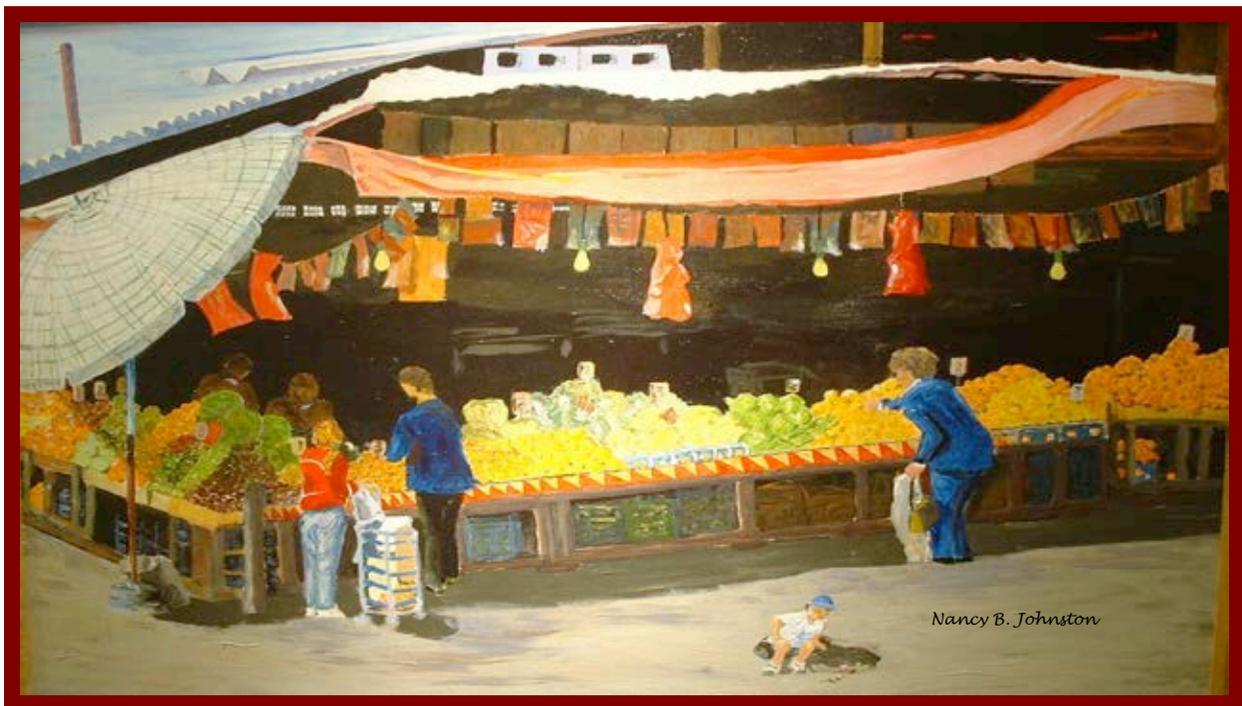


Ohio Department of Aging

## Analysis of Surveys



## **SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM**

**January 7, 2004**

## ***Executive Summary***

### **Background**

As part of a grant award from the Administration on Aging (AoA), the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) used a performance outcomes measures approach to develop two survey instruments, the Consumer Assessment and Farmer Assessment, to help evaluate outcome performance of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). The Consumer Assessment Survey was mailed to a random sample of 2,862 seniors from the 13 counties in Ohio that participated in the 2003 SFMNP. All 151 farmers who enrolled in the SFMNP were asked to complete the Farmer Assessment Survey.

- A total of 2,862 Consumer Assessment surveys were sent out. One thousand five hundred and eight (1,508) were processed yielding a response rate of 53%.
- Ninety-six (96) of the 151 farmers participating in the SFMNP completed the Farmer Assessment Survey for a response rate of 64%.
- The completed surveys were scanned and the results read with Remark Office Optical Mark Recognition software.

### ***Consumer Assessment Survey***

**Desired Outcomes from the SFMNP**– (1) Serve the economically disadvantaged older adults (2) Increase produce consumption in order to improve nutritional health (3) Manage an effective SFMNP.

### **Significant Survey Findings**

- Survey respondents are characterized as 75% women; 32% minorities; 70% as living in their own dwelling; and, 93% of those living alone having incomes of less than \$17,000.
- Almost 76% of the consumers consumed 3 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, representing a 43% increase because of the SFMNP.
- Nearly 77% ate more fruits and vegetables this summer than usual due to the SFMNP.
- About 93% indicated the best thing about the SFMNP was the “fresh produce”; 94% would recommend the program to a friend; and, over 50% said they went back to the farmers' markets to shop even without coupons.
- Over 77% said it was “easy” to sign up for the program, and 84% said the directions were clearly explained.
- Of the 1508 surveys that were processed, 451 consumers provided specific comments for improving the program. A number expressed concerns over the coupon distribution process; many recommended more coupons be made available; some were concerned over high prices for the produce; and, a lot expressed thanks for the program.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Coupon Distribution Problem	65
Expressed Need for Additional Coupons	60

Expressed Concern Over High Prices	43
Expressed Thanks for the SFMNP	43

### ***Farmer Assessment***

**Desired Outcomes from the SFMNP** – (1) Provide a direct positive economic impact to farmers (2) develop additional farm market or farm support opportunities (3) Manage an effective SFMNP.

### **Significant Findings**

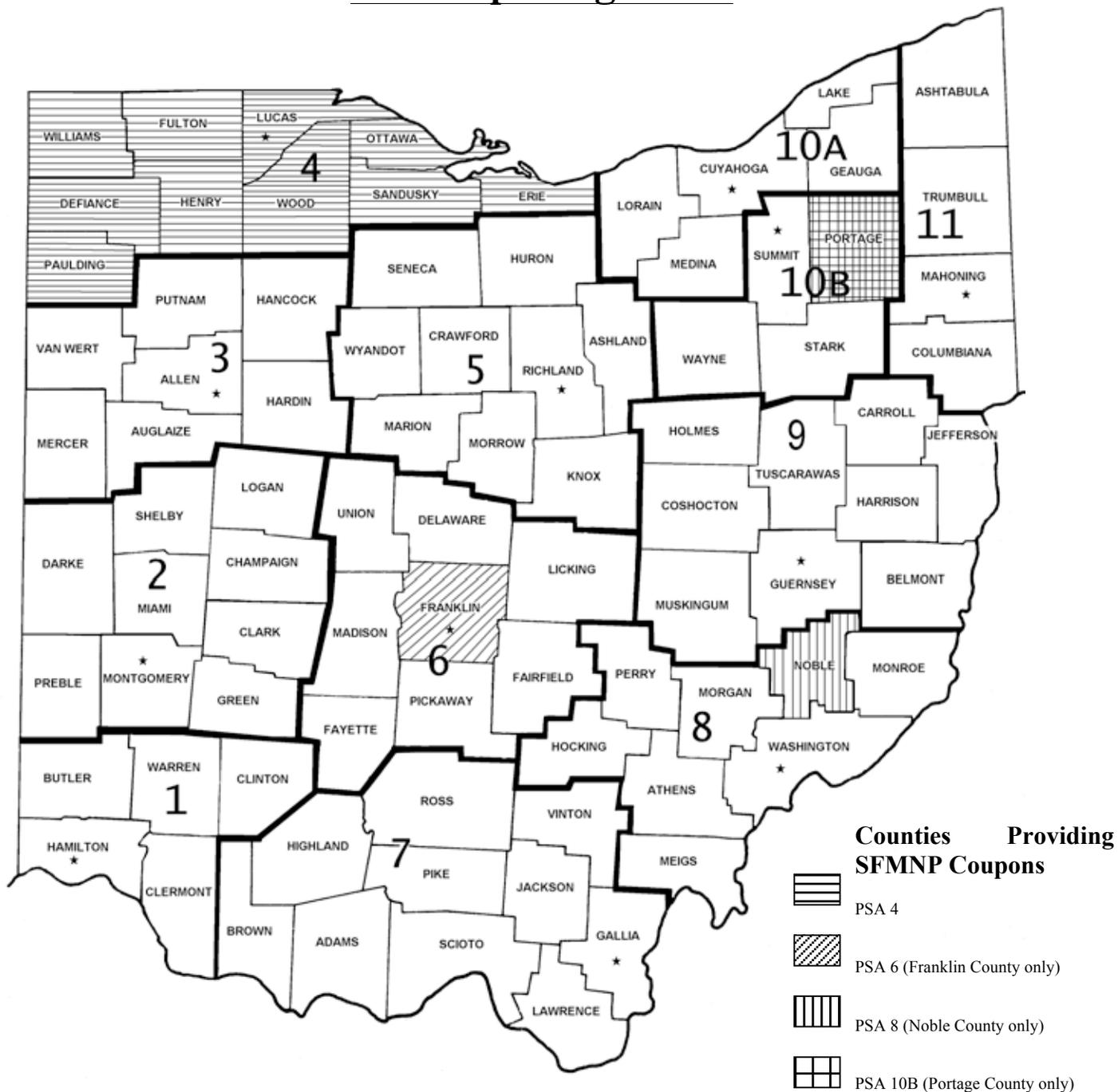
- Almost 89% of the farmers said participation in the SFMNP has increased number of seniors who come to their market; 73% said that market sales have increased.
- Over 50% of the farmers said seniors continue to shop at their markets even without coupons.
- More than 30% of the farmers have increased their produce production; over 34% are growing a wider variety of produce as a direct result of the SFMNP; and, over 31% are doing more with nutrition education with farmers' market customers.
- Almost 96% of the farmers said they received adequate training for their SFMNP participation requirements.
- Suggestions for improving the SFMNP included: improved coupon distribution to avoid long lines; coupons need to carry over from month to month to avoid rush for spending coupons at the end of each month; making smaller denominations for the coupons; program be delayed and begin in July because of limited kinds of produce available earlier; and, earlier sign up for farmers to enable the farmers to better prepare for the upcoming season.



***Fresh Produce Consumption by Ohio's Seniors has Increased Dramatically Because of the SFMNP.***

# Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

## Participating AAAs



## **Introduction and Purpose**

Federal agencies have been given a clear mandate by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) to demonstrate using performance outcomes how their programs improve the lives of our citizens. In addition to this legislative mandate, government programs in general, in this time of economic uncertainty and tight fiscal constraints, are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their effectiveness. Add to this the desire on the part of public officials to make sure they are serving as many people as possible with the highest quality service, and the result is a strong mission to create and adhere to outcome measures that demonstrate results, impacts or accomplishments of all service programs.

In 2001, Ohio expended \$1,675,490 from federal funding appropriated to the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. This program, administered by the US Department of Agriculture, is for the purpose of providing locally grown fresh farm produce for economically disadvantaged older adults. Recognizing the potential value and importance of this program for Ohio's aging population, the Ohio Department of Aging applied for and received subsequent grants in program years 2002 and 2003. Total expenditures for 2002 were \$1,309,052. The same amount was expended in 2003.

With an increased appreciation of the importance of outcomes measures as a means of evaluating program performance, ODA included in its 2003 grant application to USDA a proposal to develop survey tools to be used in measuring outcome performance from the SFMNP in Ohio. This same initiative was also a part of a Performance Outcomes Measures Project (POMP) grant awarded to (ODA) by the federal Administration on Aging (AoA).

To begin the process of program evaluation, ODA developed Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) outcomes measurement surveys for both consumers of the SFMNP and the farmers who provide the produce. The purpose of this report is to analyze the data and provide the results of these two surveys conducted during the 2003 program year. Results of these surveys will be provided to USDA and AoA. The results will also be made available to legislators and the general public in order that they may become better informed as to the benefits being provided by the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

## **Survey Design and Technological Resources Applied**

In order to design surveys that would effectively determine outcomes measures from the SFMNP for both "consumers" and "farmers", we reviewed a number of survey instruments that were developed as part of AoA's Performance Outcomes Measures Project. These instruments included Caregiver Support, Transportation, Information and Assistance, and Case Management among others. Staff personnel from ODA's Planning, Development and Evaluation Division (PDE) who have had several years experience developing and conducting surveys were also consulted. These efforts culminated in the preparation of two survey instruments, the "Consumer Assessment Survey" and the "Farmer Assessment Survey".

### *Consumer Assessment Survey*

The earliest version of the "Consumer Assessment Survey" was prepared during February, 2003. This instrument was revised several times through input provided by PDE staff. Copies of the survey were also provided to staff members from the four AAAs that are currently participating in SFMNP. Based upon the recommendations that were received, the survey was finally completed and prepared for mailing in late August, 2003.

The final version of the survey includes twenty-seven (27) questions that have been designed to obtain information for helping to determine outcomes of the SFMNP. Five (5) of the twenty-seven (27) questions were developed by the National Association of Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) and are considered as "core" questions for purposes of this survey. These questions were included to allow for comparison of results from surveys conducted by NAFMNP. The questions, as numbered in our survey, are:

- 1. Is this the first year you received Senior Farmers' Market coupons?
- 11. How did the quality of fruits and vegetables at the farmers market compare to the quality at your grocery store?
- 14. Because of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, I or my family... yes, no, or not sure to the following:
  - went to a farmers market for the first time.
  - ate more fresh fruits and vegetables this summer than usual.
  - plan to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round.
  - learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables.
  - will continue to shop at farmers markets, even without coupons to spend there.
  - learned a new way to store fresh fruits or vegetables to keep them from spoiling.
  - bought a fresh fruit or vegetable that I had never tried before.
- 16. While you were at the farmers market, did you spend any money in addition to your Senior Farmers' Market coupons?
- 17. After you spent all of your Senior Farmers' Market coupons, did you go back to shop at the market?

The outcomes from our survey were (1) demographics of the population served (are we serving those who are economically disadvantaged and what is the composition of the population being served?); (2) nutritional value (is there an increase in the number of fruits and vegetables being consumed as a direct result of the SFMNP and does participation in the program improve the participants desire to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables?); (3) consumer assessment (from the consumers' perspective, is the program being managed effectively such that consumers will want to continue participating in the program and thus take advantage of what it has to offer in terms of nutritional value, nutritional education and nutritional appreciation?)

### *Farmer Assessment Survey*

The "Farmer Assessment Survey" was prepared concurrently with the "Consumer Assessment Survey", and went through several revisions before the final version was prepared, including review by staff members from the participating AAAs. This survey instrument contains seventeen (17) questions, including five (5)"core" questions that were also developed by the NAFMNP. These questions were also included to allow for comparison of results from surveys conducted by NAFMNP. The questions, as numbered in our survey, are:

- 1. Was this your first year participating in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?
- 11. Does participating in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program increase your market sales?
- 13. Do senior coupon customers continue to shop at the farm market, even without coupons?
- 15. Did the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program change your farming or marketing practices in any of the following ways?  
yes, no, or not sure to the following:
  - I became more active in the organization or operation of a farmers market
  - I am increasing my fruit and/or vegetable production
  - I am growing a wider variety of fruits and/or vegetables to sell at farmers markets
  - I increased the number of hours and/or days that I sell at farmers markets
  - I changed my display signs to make it easier to identify food types or prices
  - I am doing more nutrition education with farmers' market customers (e.g., recipes, product samples, advice on how to select, store or prepare fresh produce)
  - Other
- 17. Would you recommend this coupon program to other farmers in your area?

From an outcomes perspective, we attempted to obtain the farmers views on (1) if the program were having a positive economic impact (a positive economic impact is a desired outcome – questions regarding increase in market sales and continued consumer purchases beyond coupons were posed to help measure economic impact and determine if provision of coupons serve as a catalyst for expanded sales). We also wanted to know, again from the farmers perspective, (2) how well the program is being implemented (questions relating to effective implementation were proposed in order to help determine the positive or negative outcome of whether farmers would want to continue their participation). (3) Also, by using "open-ended questions", we hoped to gain the farmers overall assessment of the program, including recommendations for improvement.

### ***Sampling Size***

Each of the four AAAs participating in the SFMNP was asked to provide lists of consumers and farmers. Based upon this information, which is summarized in the table that follows, we were able to establish our overall consumers' population at 18,345 and farmers (providers) at 151. Using a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5%, we were able to determine, based on the total population from each of the AAAs, sample sizes predicated on various response rates. The rates we selected for review purposes were: 80%, 50%, and 25%. From past experience with mail surveys, we decided to use the 25% response rate in order to assure that we would receive an adequate number of completed surveys to protect our 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval. Once the sample size at the 25% response rate was determined for each of the AAAs, we were able to proceed with our random sample.

One additional consideration was if an incentive could be provided to the consumers in order to encourage completion of the surveys. Therefore, in half of the total number of surveys to be sent for each AAA, we included a refrigerator magnet as a gift. We wanted to determine if providing a gift, as part of our request to complete the survey, would be a sufficient incentive to provide us with a greater response rate.

An even number of surveys was sent to each of the AAAs so that one half would receive the refrigerator magnet and one half would not. As noted in the following table, we sent consumer surveys to 1,072 consumers in AAA 6, and 80 in AAA 8 (Noble County). We chose 80 rather than 76, which would have been the correct sample size, because of the small total number in the population. With regard to AAA 10B (Portage County), we sent 266 surveys, rather than 265 that is listed as the sample size. We also provided AAA 4 with 1444 surveys to be sent to their randomly selected consumers rather than the established sample size of 1443.

Since the total number of farmers participating in the SFMNP is only 151, each of the farmers was sent a "Farmer Assessment Survey" and asked to complete it.

(Table 1)

## **Sampling Size Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program**

Below is a listing of the AAAs in Ohio that participated in the SFMNP. Also provided is a breakdown by AAA of the total number of consumers and farmers who participated in the program. In addition, sampling totals, based on frequency of response of the sample size is provided for varying response rates.

The following are based on a Confidence Level of 95% and Confidence Interval of 5%.

## Consumer Assessment Survey

AAA	Total Consumers	Sample Size at 80% Response Rate	Sample Size at 50% Response Rate	Sample Size at 25% Response Rate
10B	317	194	227	265
4	14,697	484	759	1443
6	3,251	433	642	1072
8	80	69	73	76
	18345	1180	1701	2860

## Farmer Assessment Survey

AAA	Total Farmers	Sample Size at 80% Response Rate	Sample Size at 50% Response Rate	Sample Size at 25% Response Rate
10B	6	6	6	6
4	111	91	98	104
6	33	31	32	32
8	1	1	1	1
Totals	151	129	137	143

- Surveys will be sent to all of the farmers who participated in the SFMNP.

## Significant Results

### **Consumer Assessment Survey**

#### *Survey Processing*

Table 2 provides an overall summary of the survey processing, including the polled sample for the Consumer Assessment Survey and the Farmer Assessment Survey. The table also shows the

number of surveys processed, the response rates and the number and percentages of the surveys that were returned unopened.

**(Table 2)**

Surveys	Entire Population	Sample Polled	Surveys Processed	Response Rate	Surveys Returned to ODA
Consumer Assessments*	18,345	2,862	1,508	53%	121 (4%)
Farmer Assessments**	151	151	96	64%	3 (2%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>18,496</b>	<b>3,013</b>	<b>1,604</b>		

\*A total of 18,345 consumers participated in the program. The sample size was determined based on a 25 percent response rate.

\*\*All farmers were polled since the sample size (143) would have been close to the total population (151).

## *Demographics*

### **Population**

From our consumer counts and U.S. Census information, we determined that the SFMNP in Ohio is only serving 18,345 consumers compared to the over 323,000 seniors age 60 years and over (a little over 5.5%) who reside in the AAAs and within the counties included in the SFMNP. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the total number of seniors age 60 years and over per each of the four AAAs participating in the SFMNP. The table also provides the total number of seniors served in each of the AAAs.

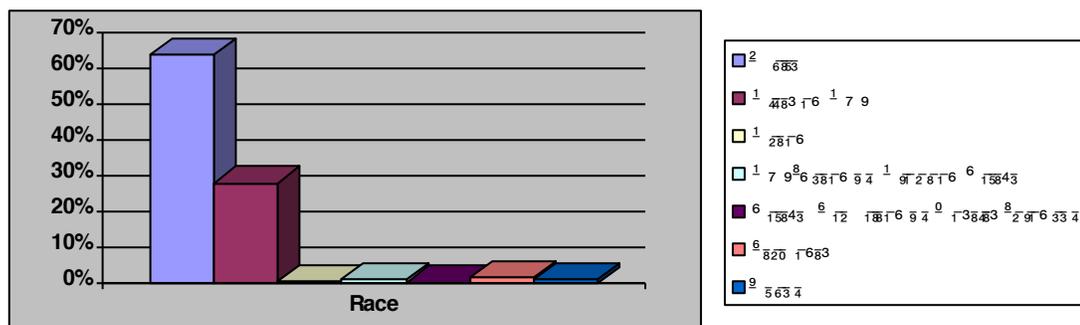
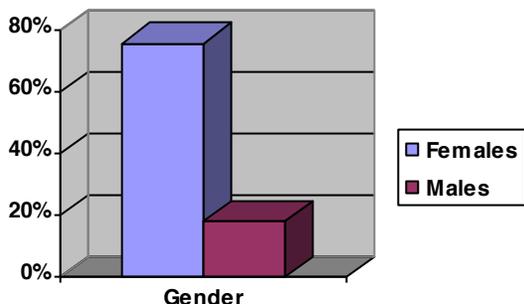
**(Table 3)**

AAA	Total Number of Seniors 60 Years and Over	Total Number Served by the SFMNP	Percent (%) Served
10 B (Portage County Only)	22,396	317	1.4 %
4 (10 County Area)	159,556	14,697	9.2%
6 (Franklin County Only)	138,651	3,251	2.3%
8 (Noble County Only)	2,451	80	3.3%

### **Race & Gender**

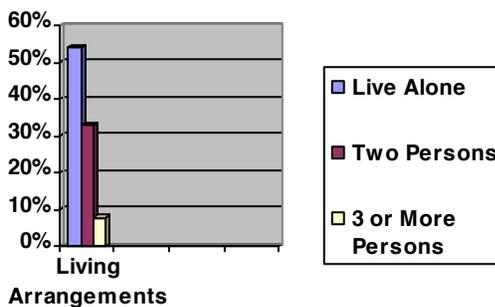
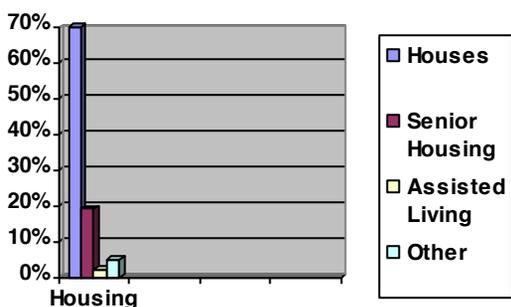
Over three fourths of the respondents to our survey were females. More than 64% of the respondents indicated they were White or Caucasian, with 28% Black or African American, six

tenths of one percent (0.6%) Asian, 0.86% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.13% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 1.46% Hispanic, and 1.13% listed “Other”.



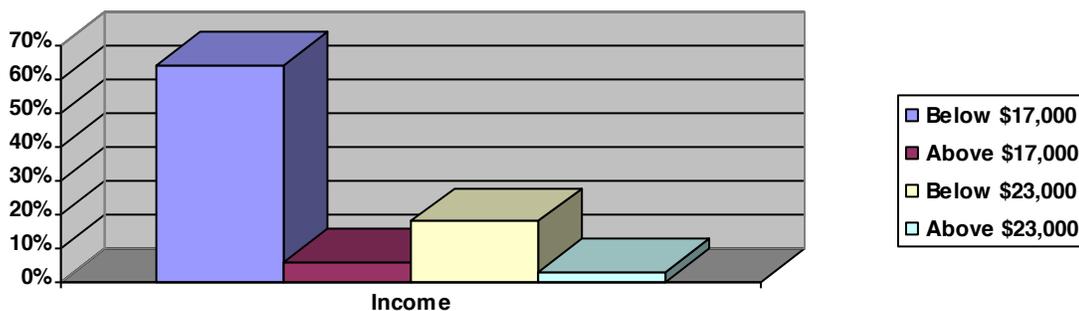
### Living Arrangements

In terms of living arrangements, we found that almost 70% of the consumers live in houses, 19% in Senior Housing, more than 2% in Assisted Living, and almost 5% listing “Other” as their category for living arrangement. With regard to the number of people currently living in their households, almost 54% indicated they were living alone, 33% listed two persons, and over 8% indicated 3 or more people living in their households. (4.84% represent missing responses).



### Income

Regarding total income, almost 64% listed an amount less than \$17,000 per year and almost 6% showed an income above \$17,000. Almost 18% indicated their income was below \$23,000, and about 3 and ½% listed an income above \$23,000. We ran a cross tabulation of income versus the number of people currently living in the household. More than 93% of the respondents who indicated that they live alone showed a total income of below \$17,000, a little over 6% listed above \$17,000 and about three tenths (3/10) of one percent (0.3%) recorded income above \$23,000. Respondents who listed a household number of two or more showed: almost 38% below \$17,000; 6% above \$17,000; 47% below \$23,000; and 9% above \$23,000.



### Nutrition

Another purpose of our survey was to garner information about the SFMNP impact on nutrition. We were also looking at some comparisons. We asked the consumers to compare quality of fruits and vegetables at the Farmers’ Market to the quality at their grocery store. Almost 60% said the quality is better at the Farmers’ Market, 34% said “It’s About the Same”, a little more than 1% said the quality is Worse at the Farmers’ Market, and just over 2% of the respondents said that they have not yet been to a Farmers’ Market.. (2.72% represent missing responses).

### Servings

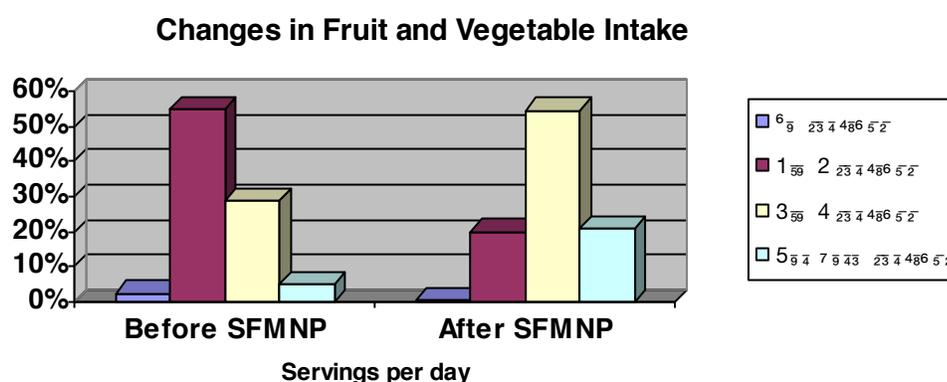
Our consumers were asked how many servings of fruits and vegetables they ate per day prior to participating in the SFMNP. The choices provided in our survey were: None, 1-2, 3-4, and 5 or More. We then asked how many servings per day were eaten after participating in the SFMNP. We believe these results are significant. Here is what we found:

### Servings Eaten Per Day

(Table 4)

# of Servings	Before SFMNP	After SFMNP	% of Change
None	2.5%	0.60%	(-) 1.90%
1-2	55.17%	20.03%	(-) 35.14%
3-4	29.05%	54.64%	<b>25.59%</b>
5 or More	5.11%	20.89%	<b>15.78%</b>

(8.22% represent missing responses from the before SFMNP and 3.85% represent missing responses after SFMNP).



The obvious significance is the increase in the number of servings per day at both 3 to 4 per day and 5 or more per day, as a result of participating in the SFMNP.

As previously noted, our survey included a number of “core questions” that were developed by the National Association of Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP). One of the most interesting of these Core Questions focused on specific outcomes for those who participated in the SFMNP. Here is a table that we put together to show the results:

**Question: “Because of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, I or my family .....**

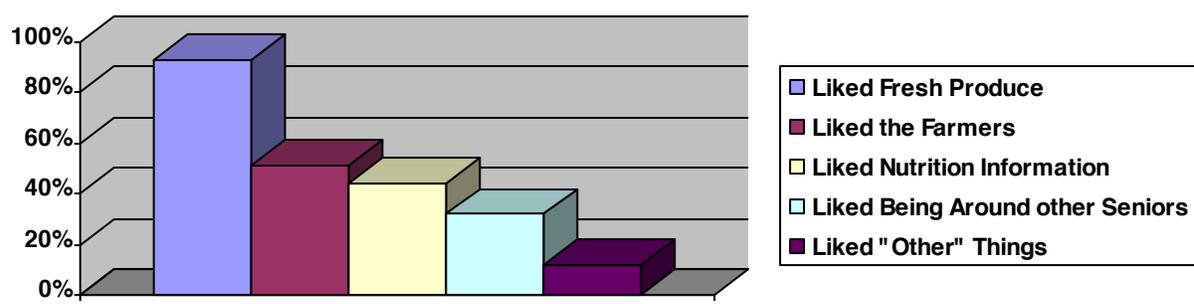
(Table 5)

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Missing
Farmers’ Mkt. for 1 <sup>st</sup> time	28.71%	48.94%	2.72%	19.63%
Ate more F&V’s than usual	76.66%	10.15%	4.91%	8.29%
Plan to eat more F&V’s year round	68.44%	5.84%	15.78%	9.95%
Learned new way to prepare or cook F&V’s	43.04%	31.23%	8.89%	16.84%
Will shop SF markets without coupons	56.63%	10.54%	22.21%	10.61%
Learned new way to store F&V’s from spoiling	45.49%	32.43%	8.29%	13.79%
Bought fresh F&V’s that hadn’t tried before	36.54%	47.35%	3.85%	12.27%

### Consumer Assessment

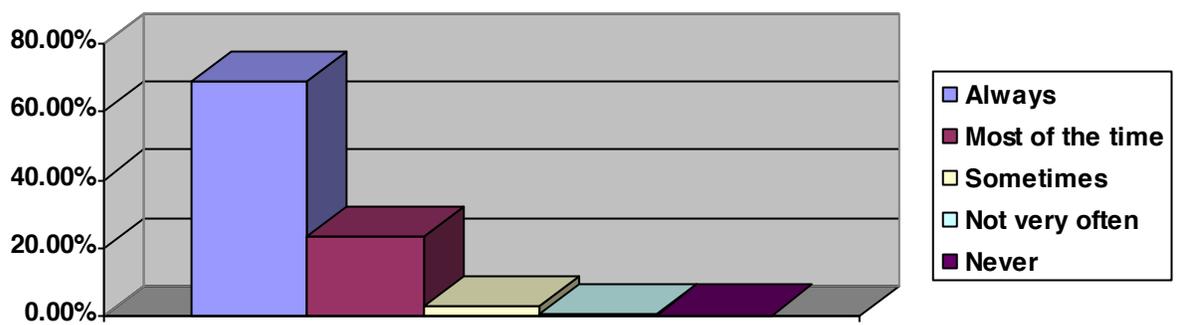
Consumers were asked what they liked about participating in SFMNP: Fresh Produce, The Farmers, Nutrition Information, Opportunity to be around other Seniors, or “Other”. They were asked to “Fill in all that Apply”. An overwhelming 93% responded yes to Fresh Produce, while 51% said they liked the Farmers. Forty-four percent (44%) checked that they liked the fact that they can get Nutrition Information, 32% said they liked the opportunity to be around Other Seniors, and 12 % listed “Other”.

**What Consumers Liked About Farmers' Markets**



The consumers were asked “Would you say the farmers are friendly to you while shopping for your produce?”

**Were Farmers Friendly ?**



Nearly 70% of the consumers indicated that the farmers were “Always” friendly when they shopped at the Senior Farmers’ Markets. More than 23% said they were friendly “Most of the

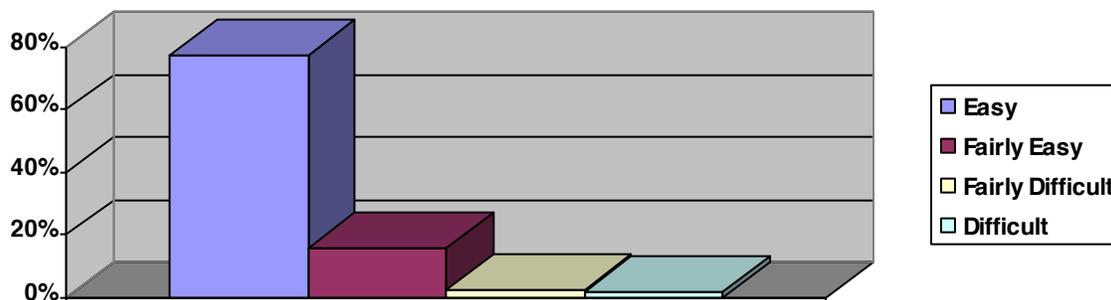
time”, a little over 3% said “Sometimes”, less than ½ of 1% said “Not very often” and a little over ¼ of 1% of the consumers said that the farmers were “Never” friendly.

We concluded this section of our survey by asking consumers if they had any suggestions for improving the SFMNP. While almost 71% of the respondents said that they had no suggestions, almost 29% indicated that they had suggestions. (0.13% represent missing responses). Finally, we asked if the consumers would recommend the SFMNP to a friend. More than 94% said yes, with less than ½ of 1% indicating that they would not. (5.24% represent missing responses).

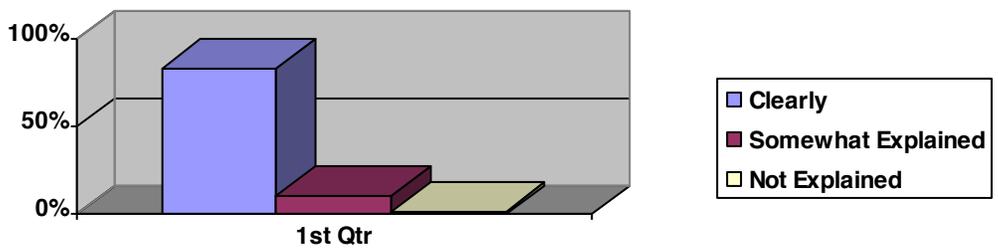
### Program Implementation

From the perspective of program administration, consumers were asked “How difficult was it to sign up for the SFMNP?” Over 77% said it was Easy, a little over 16% said it was Fairly Easy, about 2.5% said it was Fairly Difficult, and 2% said it was Difficult. (1.92% represent missing responses). Consumers were also asked “Were the directions for participating in SFMNP clearly explained...?”. More than 84% indicated that the directions were Clearly Explained, 11% said Somewhat Explained, and 2% said Not Explained clearly. (2.85% represent missing responses). When asked how the consumers found out about SFMNP, 38% listed Senior Centers, 32% said Friend or Family, 8% said Newspaper, 5% said Area Agency on Aging, a little over 3% said Other, and 0.4% said Farmer. (There were 13.86% missing responses to this question).

How Difficult was it to sign up for the SFMNP ?



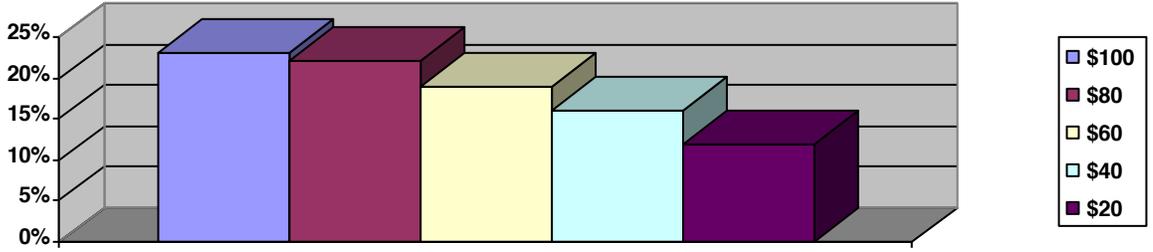
### Were the Directions for Participating in the SFMNP Clearly Explained to You ?



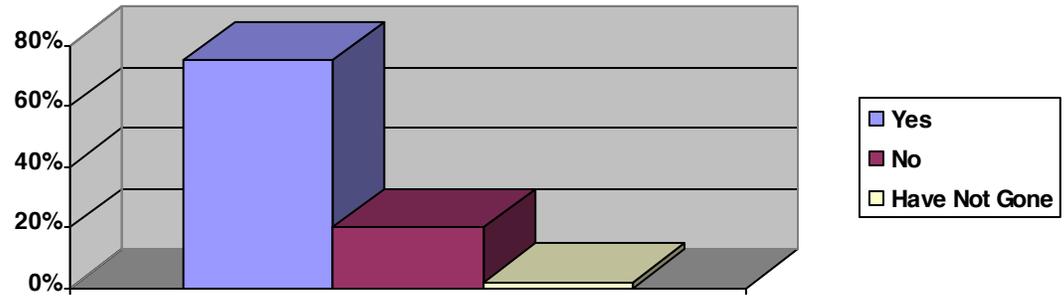
### Coupons

We asked the consumers “What is a sufficient total amount of coupons per season to meet your needs? Based on the choices offered, more than 23% said \$100, over 22% said \$80, almost 19% said \$60, over 16% said \$40, and more than 12% said \$20. We also asked if the consumers spent any money in addition to the coupons. More than 75% said yes they did, and only 20% said no, with about 2% indicating that they have not gone to the Senior Farmers’ Market yet. (2.92% represent missing responses). Along with these same types of questions, we asked if the consumers went back to shop at the Farmers’ Market even after they had spent all of their coupons. More than 50% indicated that they have gone back to shop even without coupons, a little over 36% said they had not, and a little over 7% indicated that they still had coupons left over. (6.03% represent missing responses).

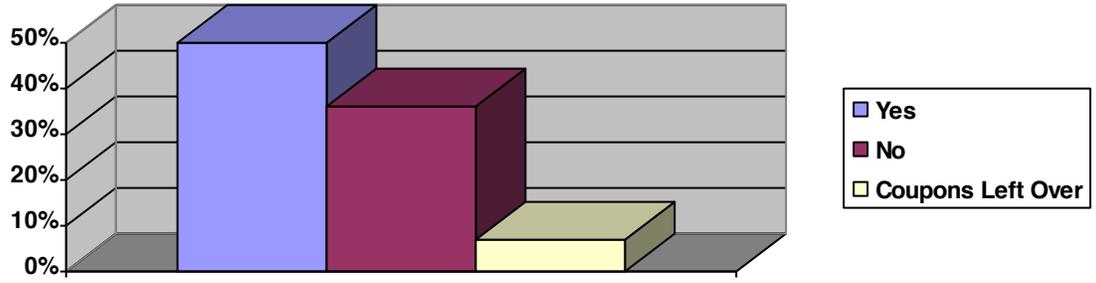
### What is Sufficient Total Amount of Coupons Per Season ?



### Spent Extra \$ Beyond the Coupons



### Went Back To Shop Even Without Coupons



## *Farmer Assessment Survey*

**Economic Impact** – Farmers were asked a series of questions designed to determine, at least from their own perspective, whether participation in the SFMNP is providing a positive economic impact on their operation. Almost 89% of those who responded to our survey said that participation in the SFMNP has increased the number of seniors who come to their market. More than 73% indicated that their market sales have increased. Significant from the perspective of a government “intervention program”, over half of the farmers who responded to our survey said seniors continue to shop at their markets even without coupons. As a result of the SFMNP, more than 30% of the respondents have increased their fruit and vegetable production; more than 34% are now growing a wider variety of fruits and vegetables to sell; and over 31% are doing more with nutrition education with farmers market customers.

**Program Implementation** – More than 57% of the farmers who responded to our survey said it was “easy” to qualify for the program, while almost 39% said it was “not very difficult”. Over 2% indicated that it was “somewhat difficult” to qualify and none said that it was “very difficult”. Ninety-six percent (96%) said yes when asked if they received adequate training regarding their participation requirements for this new program. In terms of what would be best for business, 96% of the respondents said yes to “seniors come to farmers markets or roadside

stands”, ninety-two percent (92%) said no to farmers coming to senior centers or meal sites; ninety-five percent (95%) said no to farmers coming to senior housing with produce; and ninety-three percent (93%) said no to farmers preparing \$5 bags of produce.

***Consumer Core Questions Comparisons: Ohio’s WIC Program vs. Ohio’s SFMNP***

(Table 6)

	<b>Ohio’s WIC Program</b>	<b>Ohio’s SFMNP</b>
2002 was the first year they received FMNP	44%	23%
They had never been to a farmers’ market before taking part in FMNP	44%	29%
Produce quality at markets was as good or better than at their local grocery stores	94%	94%
They learned a new way to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables	54%	43%
They learned a new way to store produce to prevent spoilage	46%	45%
They bought a fruit or vegetable that they had never tried before	44%	37%
They ate more fresh produce last summer than usual	76%	77%
They spent money at the market in addition to their FMNP coupons	62%	75%
They will continue to shop at farmers’ markets, even without coupons	77%	57%
They plan to eat more fresh produce all year round	84%	68%

## ***Farmer Core Questions: Ohio's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program***

(Table 7)

	Ohio's Farmer Assessment
2002 was the first year they took part in FMNP	6%
FMNP increased their farmers' market sales	73%
FMNP customers continue to shop at the markets, even after they run out of coupons	51%
They would recommend the FMNP to other farmers in their area	78%
FMNP changed their farming or marketing practices in one or more of the following ways	
They got more active in farmers' market organization or operation	9%
They are increasing fruit or vegetable production	30%
They are growing a wider variety of fruits or vegetables to sell at farmers' markets	34%
They increased the number of hours and/or days that they sell at farmers' markets	8%
They improved their display signs to help market shoppers identify food types or prices	52%
They offer more nutrition education to market customers, e.g. recipes, product samples, advice on how to select, prepare or store fresh produce	31%

## **Conclusions**

### ***Refrigerator Magnet (Incentive)***

We concluded based on the completed surveys that were returned there is no apparent incentive in providing a refrigerator magnet as a gift in order to increase the rate of return. Of the 1,508 surveys that were processed, 729 were from individuals who had received the refrigerator magnet as a gift for completing the survey. We received an additional 779 completed surveys from individuals who had not received a gift.

## ***Consumer Assessment Survey***

In terms of outcomes performance, and as previously noted, we wanted to determine if the SFMNP were serving economically disadvantaged seniors. We also wanted to determine if there were an increase in the number of fruits and vegetables being consumed as a direct result of participating in the SFMNP. Moreover, we wanted to determine if participation in the SFMNP spurred a desire on the part of consumers to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Effective program administration of the SFMNP was an additional outcome we wanted to determine based on the results of the surveys.

### **Reaching the Economically Disadvantaged**

Results from the completed surveys show almost 70% of the respondents listed their total annual income below \$17,000. However, a closer look at the results reveals more than 93% of the respondents who live alone have an income of less than \$17,000. Moreover, 38% of the respondents who listed two or more people living in their household also showed a total income level of less than \$17,000; 47 % showed an income of \$23,000 or less. Despite these numbers, it should be recognized that not all respondents answered the income questions. Of the total 1508 completed surveys that were processed, only 1353 provided responses. This leaves 155 respondents who did not answer the income questions. Notwithstanding this caveat, it appears from the analysis that our target population, those with one person incomes of \$17,000 and less, and those with two or more person incomes of \$23,000 and less, is being reached, and the desired outcome is being accomplished. (Eligibility requirements of \$17,000 or less for a one-person household and \$23,000 for a two-person household are in effect.) We also appear to be serving a population represented by over 75% females and 32% minorities.

### **Nutritional Value**

Perhaps the most significant finding from our survey results is the noticeable increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables. Prior to participating in the SFMNP, 34% of the respondents reported consuming three (3) or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. After participating in the SFMNP, almost 76% reported consuming three (3) or more servings per day. This represents a 43% increase and a strong indicator that the desired outcome of increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables is being achieved. Moreover, 77% of the respondents indicated that because of the SFMNP they ate more fresh fruits and vegetables this summer than usual; 68% said they plan to eat more fruits and vegetables year round; 57% advised they will shop at the senior farmers' markets even without coupons; more than 75% said they spent money in addition to coupons; 45% said they learned a new way to store fruits and vegetables to keep them from spoiling; and 43% have learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables. These indicators suggest the desire by the consumers to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, the second part of the performance outcome relating to nutritional value is being achieved.

## Program Assessment

The outcome we were looking for was effective program management. We wanted to determine if consumer satisfaction were sufficient to warrant continued participation in the SFMNP in order to take advantage of the program's nutritional value. Also, from the consumers' perspective, we wanted to determine what potential problems with the program consumers were experiencing so that we could make recommendations for correcting such problems in the future.

Overall results from the "consumer satisfaction" questions were quite positive. Ninety-three percent (93%) said yes to "fresh produce" when asked what they liked about participating in the SFMNP, and nearly 70% said the farmers were "Always Friendly". Significantly, more than 94% said yes when asked if they would recommend SFMNP to a friend.

More than 77% of the consumers said yes to "Easy" when asked how difficult it was to sign up for the program. Sixteen percent (16%) noted that it was "Fairly Easy" to sign up. More than 84% of the consumers said that the directions for signing up for the program were "Clearly Explained" and only 11% said "Somewhat Explained". These responses do suggest that the SFMNP is being administered effectively. However, more work needs to be done in future surveys to determine if there are ways we can improve the process.

However, additional insight to consumer assessment of program implementation can be gained by reviewing responses to the open-ended question: "What suggestions would you make for improving the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?" (Question number 19. from the survey). The following table (Table 8) attempts to summarize the answers that were given to this question.

(Table 8)

Category	Number of Responses
Increase Number of Farmers' Markets and/or allow Grocery Stores to Participate in SFMNP	25
Expressed Need for Additional Coupons	60
Too Many Coupons	1
Make the "Sign Up" Process Easier	3
Coupon Distribution Problem	65
Expressed Thanks for the SFMNP	43
Farmers to Increase Flexibility to Better Accommodate Seniors	25
Transportation and/or Parking Issues	23
Start the Farmers' Market Later in the Summer When More Produce is Available	14
Expressed Desire to Purchase Other Items from the Farmers' Market and/or Desire to Purchase Non Local Produce	28

Recommended Greater Variety of Produce to be Sold by the Farmers	37
Expressed Concern Over High Prices	43
Expressed Dissatisfaction with Treatment By Farmers	5
Complained About Poor Quality of Produce	5
Recommendations Based on Denominations of Coupons	31
Carry Coupons Over from Month to Month	14
Send Coupons by Mail	1
Would like Personal Notification of Availability	3
Recommend Improved Notification, e.g., Newsletters for Coupon Availability & Locations & Times for Farmers Markets	16
Extend Program for Longer Period (More Months)	5
Would like Nutrition Info. On Produce	1
Too Much "Red Tape" for Farmers	1
Make Sure Program Requirements are Understood by Consumers	1
Make Sign Up & Coupon Receipt Available On Line	1
TOTAL	451

An analysis of the total number of responses per category suggests consumers are concerned over problems relating to distribution of coupons. They also want additional coupons. Moreover, while a number of respondents expressed concern over the high produce prices, several expressed their appreciation for the program.

### ***Farmer Assessment Survey***

One of the desired outcomes for the farmers is a positive economic impact as determined by an increase in the number of seniors patronizing farmers' markets, an increase in sales from the SFMNP coupons, as well as continued consumer purchases by SFMNP customers, even without coupons. An additional outcome for the farmers' is a hoped for positive assessment of how well the SFMNP is being administered.

### **Positive Economic Impact**

Almost 89% of the farmers who responded to our survey said their participation in the SFMNP has increased the number of seniors who come to their market. Over 73% indicated their market sales have also increased. Perhaps even more significant from the perspective of program success are the results that were tabulated from the question “do senior coupon customers continue to shop at the farm market, even without coupons?”. We found that over half of the farmers who responded to our survey said, “yes”. An additional impact of the SFMNP to some of the farmers is an expansion of some of their own operations. More than 30% of the respondents to our survey said they have increased their fruit and vegetable production, and over 34% report growing a wider variety of fruits and vegetables to sell. It therefore appears from these results that the SFMNP has provided a positive economic impact for the farmers who are participating in the program.

### **Program Assessment**

As previously noted, more than 57% of the farmers who responded to our survey said it was “Easy” to qualify for the program, while almost 39% said it was “Not Very Difficult”. Moreover, 96% said “yes” when asked if they received adequate training regarding their participation requirements for this new program. These results suggest that while there may need to be some improvement to facilitate farmer program qualifications, it does appear that training needs for the farmers are being adequately met.

In response to the question “Do you believe \$5 is an adequate amount per coupon for seniors?” more than 81% said “yes”. Of those who said “no”, six indicated that \$3 would be a more appropriate amount. One farmer said that “many seniors were frustrated at having to use \$5 at one farmer’s stand.” Another farmer noted that \$1 increments are “more workable”; while another said “they should be less than \$5 in any case.” Only one farmer responded that a higher amount would be more adequate. That farmer said the coupon amount should be \$7.50.

When asked for additional suggestions for “which would be best for your business”, one farmer noted that preparing \$5 bags would result in waste. This same farmer said that seniors have “trouble coming up with a full five dollars,” and that often a neighboring farmer needed “to do swapping” as seniors split coupons between the two. Here is a sampling of what the rest of the farmers said:

- Suggest returning to 2002 concept. Equal number of coupons per month June-November. Don’t split coupons between June and July.
- We have increased our sales to other farm markets—farm-to-farm sales. We do not have so many seniors come to our market but have benefited from the coupons because other markets need our produce.
- Difficult to take produce to seniors. \$5 bags may not have produce seniors want. Very choosy!

One of the Core questions from the Farmer Assessment Survey asked: “Did the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program change your farming or marketing practices in any of the following ways?” (Please refer to the list of questions on page 5 of this report). In addition to the choices provided, the farmers were given an opportunity to provide their own written response. Below are the responses that we received:

- We always had a variety of veggies.
- Seniors are still able to pick their own and bring family members along.
- I am increasing production product diversity etc. not necessarily because of the coupons.
- We did not change any prices or advertise to influence seniors. We treat all our customers the same. The only thing we do differently for seniors is to help them carry produce and use signs to identify senior coupon products.
- We only sell at our farm market and one other location. Seniors need to come to us to see the wide variety and selections available.
- Prepackaging items usually sold by the pound.
- We made prices easier to combine items to total \$5.
- Made special trip to senior housing and senior center. Although it is sometimes not worth it, I have provided fresh produce to some seniors who appreciate the extra effort.

Finally, the farmers were asked: “What suggestions would you make for improving the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program?” Of the 96 completed surveys that were returned to us, 35 included responses to this question. Below is a summary of the responses that we received:

- Some expressed interest in expanding the program.
- Concerns were expressed over the way the coupons are distributed to the consumers (long lines) and the fact that coupons expire at the end of each month. This causes a “rush” at the end of each month so the consumers may use up their coupons.
- Size and heavy stock of the coupons and procedures for filling out the back, and frequency for mailing in the coupons in were brought into question.
- Smaller denomination than \$5 for the coupons was suggested.
- Closer monitoring was recommended in order to assure that all farmers are complying with the SFMNP rules.
- It was recommended that the program begin in July rather than June, as little “Ohio grown” produce is available in June (Strawberries were mentioned).
- Some farmers suggested consumer training in order to gain a better understanding of the SFMNP rules.
- Earlier sign up for farmers was suggested to enable farmers to better prepare for the upcoming season.
- Program eligibility on the part of consumers was questioned, as one farmer noted “we have too many Cadillac drivers”.
- Some farmers report rude behavior on the part of some of the seniors.
- One farmer reported the need to provide extra help for the seniors to select items to total their coupon amount, and therefore suggested that it would be better for farmers to go to senior centers so that seniors “would be in their own element to make purchases without limitations”.