

Food For Thought Summer Farm Research

Knox county Roadside Stands

1.0 Summary of findings

In the summer of 2006, two Kenyon College students, Mariana Templin and Liesel Schmidt, scoured the county for farmers selling food directly to the consumer. These small operations are set up around Knox County and can be recognized by their often hand-painted signs directing passersby to homes selling fruit, vegetables, meat, and eggs. The purpose of this research was to discover the nature of these small-scale businesses: how prevalent they are, what they are selling, and who their customers are.

1.1 How prevalent are roadside sellers?

On our travels, we found fifty roadside sellers. However, this number will fluctuate with the seasons, as different households sell different products at different times of the year.

1.2 What is being sold?

Products sold ranged from eggs to strawberries to bison meat. Many of the sellers tend gardens for their own households and sell the surplus to neighbors and passersby. The type of produce sold changes drastically as the growing season progresses and more and more sellers appear later in the season.

1.3 Who are the customers of roadside sellers?

Many roadside sellers have regular customers, usually their neighbors. This is particularly common for foods such as eggs, which are a staple in many homes and are regularly available. Roadside sellers also set up signs to attract passersby. Some roadside sellers do not restrict their business to out-of-home sales, and also sell to farmers' markets or small stores and restaurants.

1.4 How did roadside sellers begin selling?

Many sellers began selling after they witnessed the success of their neighbors. This means that there are some neighborhoods in which there are many sellers and others where there are no sellers.

1.5 How large-scale is this type of business?

This type of business is very small-scale. Many just sell the surplus of their own gardens. However, many farmers stated that they would consider increasing sales if business improved.

1.6 How many farmers would be interested in listing their farms in *Homegrown*?

Of the fifty sellers we spoke with, twenty-five were interested in listing their operations in *Homegrown*. Most of those that were not interested cited reservations based on the extremely limited volume of their sales.