



The current research is committed to providing insight into the area of Food Security and the role of Mobile Market Programs in providing improved access to healthy, affordable, and local foods to the community. By providing access to healthier food and nutrition education, we suggest that families will have the necessary tools to provide an avenue for healthier lives

Kentucky State University Food Security Initiative

Who cares and why?

The Kentucky State University *Food Security Initiative* seeks to increase sustainable agricultural practices in Jefferson County and surrounding areas while also meeting an important nutrition need for lower income individuals within the target population. In 2011, Louisville residents spent \$2 billion on food, approximately \$1.2 billion on food at home and \$800 million on food away from home. Total demand for local foods in Louisville is \$258 million among consumers and \$353 million among commercial buyers. The term “food desert” is used to “describe neighborhoods with limited food retail” (Raja, 2008). Louisville, especially the western portion, is considered to be a food desert where there is only one full-service grocery retailer per 25,000 residents. While there have been significant strides in combatting this problem, including CSA’s and Farmer’s Market development, the need is still great. While food security is a local crisis, this project will help improve our knowledge concerning national food security crises as well.



The proposed *Food Security Initiative* is one significant step in meeting the needs of Louisville’s most vulnerable. In addition, this initiative could serve as a model for other communities to help meet food security needs. This project will answer three very important questions:

1. **Question 1:** Which nutritious foods, either locally grown or made, can be marketable within food desert areas?
2. **Question 2:** Can a mobile market program significantly improve the diet and health of local employees such as transit employees, local businesses, and general patrons of the program?
3. **Question 3:** Is it possible for a mobile market program to be financially sustainable as a private business and a motivator for locally grown, purchased, and consumed foods?



What has the project done so far?



On October 23, 2014 Kentucky State University (KSU) officially unveiled the Thorobred Nutrition Kitchen, a 24-foot mobile commercial kitchen. In partnership with Louisville Metro, Farm Credit Mid-America, and YouthBuild Louisville, KSU officially began the process of determining how mobile market programs can improve the access to healthy foods for communities in the metro area.

During the pilot season, KSU submitted a survey to determine appropriate times and days to operate the program, types of produce to provide patrons, and the demographic of families participating in the program. In addition, we have identified local farmers we will be partnering with in the 2015 season as well as other partnering communities who have invited us to locate the unit in their neighborhood. Finally, we are working on processes to provide nutrition and fitness courses and partnering with our Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to implement many evaluation tools to measure the educational effectiveness.

Impact Statement

Currently there is very little information available regarding the effectiveness of mobile market programming to improve food security challenges. Through this initiative we have demonstrated that there is a need for greater access to healthy foods. It is our goal to not only demonstrate that mobile markets can be a viable tool to mediate food security, but it can also improve nutrition education and health if implemented effectively.

What research is needed?

There is currently very little information available regarding the effectiveness of mobile market programming to improve food security challenges. Over the course of our longitudinal study, we will be looking into anthropometric measurements of participants, further fine-tune the business model, and assess the education regarding nutrition and fitness. We expect that it will take at least three years to gain a significant picture of the impact of the program on food security.

Additional Links: <http://www.umes.edu/ard/Default.aspx?id=46285>

University and Year: Kentucky State University, 2014

Want to know more?

Kristopher R. Grimes, PhD
kristopher.grimes@kysu.edu
(502) 597-5070

This project was supported by USDA Evans-Allen funds and Capacity Building Grant funds