The Struggles of Farming During a Pandemic

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CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND
• COVID-19 pandemic has infected more than 7.5 million people and taken over 266,000 lives in the U.S. alone.
• The pandemic is significantly impacting the agricultural community. Therefore, we need to restructure our food systems to incorporate local farms more.

Total Number of COVID-19 Cases in the US

Research Questions: How have U.S. farmers had to change their techniques of selling products and their livelihoods been altered since the outbreak of COVID-19?

INTERNSHIP
• I was a market research intern with Barn2Door.
  • My responsibilities revolved around lead list building and promotions through ads and email streams.
  • My internship gave insight into firsthand experiences of farms in the U.S. and their pandemic experiences.

METHODS
• I surveyed farms in Washington, Illinois, and New Jersey.
• I did a literature review to research the overall effects COVID-19 has had on the food systems.

RESULTS
FARMING OPERATIONS
Sales/Revenue
- Small Farms (1-10 acres)
- Medium-Large Farms (11-50 acres)

Percentage %

Increased
Decreased
No Change

PRODUCER-CONSUMER INTERACTIONS
Size of Customer Base
- Small Farms (1-10 acres)
- Medium-Large Farms (11-50 acres)

Percentage %

Increased
Decreased
No Change

TECHNOLOGY
Views and Usage of Technology
- 18-40 y/o
- 41-60 y/o
- 60-70+ y/o

Percentage %

Positive and/or Expanded
Negative Outlook and/or No Digital Presence
No Change

RESULTS SUMMARY
Farming Operations (Figure 2):
• Farms that don’t diversify products had difficulty adjusting to loss in selling methods.

Producer-Consumer Interactions (Figure 3):
• Decrease in size attributed to market/institution closures. Increase attributed to local food systems.
• Strengthening relationships attributed to customer loyalty.

Technology (Figure 4):
• Farmers have looked to technology as an alternate selling technique and for organization purposes.

IMPLICATIONS
• The food systems need to be restructured to be more about public health to combat food insecurities.
• Farms need to have a plan B and a strong community around them.
• Communities should become more reliant on their local farms as it promotes and supports local economies.

Farmer Grievance: “I wish cities... were more understanding of how crucial farmers markets are and how they can be run safer than grocery stores.”

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