

Analysis of Social and Economic Values

Background	Questions	Methods
------------	-----------	---------

• Nationwide, Farm to Institution programs provide locally sourced foods to individuals in schools, hospitals and other organizational settings. Farm to Childcare (F2CC) is growing as a new form of initiative serving children ages 0-5 in need of nutritious food while also supporting local farmers.

• In North Carolina, where this study took place, F2CC programs are being developed to link childcare settings that serve low-income children with sources of fresh, local food. Over 250,000 children officially attend childcare, suggesting a significant and potentially untapped market for local farmers.

• While Farm to School and similar programs have received significant attention from researchers and public officials, little is known about F2CC programs. Characterizing the function of F2CC programs is imperative to develop standards and best practices. Analyzing the social situations and perspectives of the supply chain actors maintaining these relationships is also necessary in order to provide support and technical assistance for procurement activities.

1) How do childcare centers, farmers and distributors negotiate the tensions between social and financial values in the farm to childcare initiative?
 2) What are the strategies these supply chain actors use to overcome barriers?

Setting

• This study took place within the first year of a Farm to Childcare Program in Wake County, NC (Central NC) in 2015 and 2016.
 • The F2CC Program worked with cohorts of 15 childcare centers per year, providing cooking and organizational workshops, a community of practice and a cost-share based on child enrollment.

An instrumental case study design captured the experience of a single year of the F2CC Program.



Participant Observation (N=26)
 • Childcare centers, farms, food distribution centers
 • Multiple days

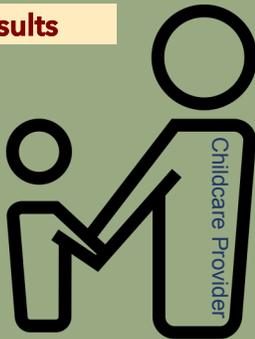


Semi-Structured Interviews (N=26)
 • Childcare professionals, farmers, distributors
 • 30 – 90 minutes



Content Analysis (N=26)
 • Childcare center's & farm's online content, including social media
 • In person handouts; ex. flyers

Results



Favor for personal relationships
 "We had a community helpers week. So we had farmers, firefighters, policemen, all the people come out."

Local procurement matches health values
 "Because it is better food, less preservatives, you know none of the additives are in it, it is just healthier for the kids and we are going to keep supporting local"

Choosing local despite economic burden
 "When you go to all fresh you have to have an extra cook. You have to have two people full time, because it's a lot of preparation, and that's what people fail to realize."

Negotiating social and market values

"When you're running any business, you got to stay true to your focus so that you can be profitable and be sustainable, right? There are a lot of people that are passionate about getting good food to children, schools, and daycares and whatnot. It's not something that I would be good at. It's not something that I have a passion about. I have a passion about farming."

Local foods as social equity
 "One thing for me is that the farmer we had was African American and the majority of the children we serve are African American too. I thought that it was very important for them to see someone that looks like them that is doing something with food."

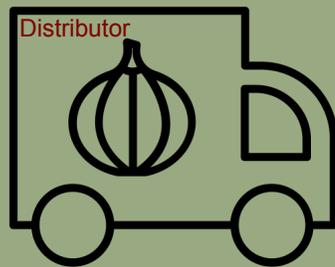
Farm as educational space
 "It's important to me for kids to be able to see me as a farmer and also be able to have produce that's fresh, that's right next door to them."

Local as social commitment
 "Buying local does not help our bottom line; but we do it because we think it's the right thing to do...but we don't just eat the price of local produce because it's local"



Social focus distorts competitive market

"So how does the [food hub] advocate for the small farmer when they have a huge mix of conventional and organic small guys? I know they do pad the pricing... They have grant money for that. But that is certainly not sustainable, you know what I mean? You're just facilitating this idea that food is cheap instead of necessarily costing."



Commitment to both ends of the supply chain
 "I don't think it's impossible to serve both the farmer and the eater in one value chain...an ideal system is one where farmers are making a living, and eaters are eating fresh local food."

Deep social commitment challenging
 "If we changed our markup a little bit and increased it, we could break even at 1.5 million but that would mean charging more for food, which a lot of the programs that we're currently working with may not be able to afford. It also takes away more dollars from the farmer."

Conclusions

- F2CC is organized and framed as a means to provide benefits to children's health and social well-being, as well as a values-based market for farmers
- Long-term success of F2CC programs may be predicated on a strong dedication and understanding of the financial needs of the entire supply chain
- F2CC program success requires intermediaries in the form of educators, distributors and technical assistance providers (ex. Cooperative Extension)
- Developing a wide scope of local food markets, from aggregated delivery to grocery stores, increases accessibility for childcare centers diverse food purchasing needs

Practical Strategies for F2CC Practitioners:

- Childcare centers make meal preparation an educational experience for children to learn how to chop and process healthy foods
- Nearby childcare centers partner up to aggregate demand from larger distributors
- Farmers sell seconds or Grade B produce (ex smaller sizes)
- Childcare centers can request local products through distribution pathways (broadliners, supermarkets) to pull them through the supply chain