Small Farm Futures
Workshop
Presentation of Findings and Participatory Research Design

January 9, 2018
DeKalb, IL

Hosted by
Emily McKee, PhD
Northern Illinois University

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Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program
NIU Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability, and Energy
NIU Department of Anthropology

Report compiled with assistance from
Jessica Farace & Taylor Krug
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Workshop Purpose

Illinois’s food systems have great need for small-scale, diversified, and sustainable farming. Yet farmers producing food at small scales and for direct sales are facing considerable challenges. As an environmental anthropologist, I have been examining these challenges in collaboration with farmers in northern Illinois since 2016. During this work, I have found increasing anxiety about declining CSA numbers and farmers market sales. As one experienced farmer described the situation at a workshop for beginning farmers, there is “a major tectonic disruption going on in the food industry.”

On January 9, 2018, the Small Farm Futures workshop took place on the campus of Northern Illinois University. The goals were two-fold. First, I aimed to share the findings of my research thus far on the opportunities and obstacles facing diversified and sustainable farming in northern Illinois in a way that promoted further dialogue about these findings. This led to the second goal, to engage in participatory research design with diversified farmers and others invested in creating prosperous local food systems in Illinois.

This workshop was a strategic effort to bring the voices of small-scale food producers more directly into the design of agriculture research. The heart of the workshop centered on this question: How can further applied social science research address the farming challenges that small-scale producers see as being highest priority?

The workshop took inspiration from a January 2016 gathering of farmers and local food advocates at Starved Rock State Park, hosted by the Angelic Organics Learning Center. At that summit, participants identified key shared challenges for direct market farms and began discussing solutions. The workshop at NIU drew on this past work and moved towards a targeted goal: to cooperatively develop a prioritized list of specific research questions for which qualitative and mixed methods are well suited.

This report includes the information presented and discussions held at the workshop, and it highlights the priority challenges and potential research directions identified by participants. Participants have agreed to share their contact information, and I encourage any readers who are interested in collaborating on research—whether as fellow academics, food producers, or other participants in local food systems—to contact me.

Thank you for reading.

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Workshop Events

Introductions
As participants arrived in the morning, they were invited to write and display their completions of the statement, “My vision of a successful farm business is...” Here are some of their responses:

- Fun and Profit
- Profitable, sustainable, long term, regenerative
- One where a farmer can stay put
- Setting goals and meeting them; Having a positive impact
- Providing healthy food to ALL
- One that sustains my family
- Support the family without the NEED for any off-farm work
- Appropriately scaled, sustainable; I want a farm that is large enough to sustain itself yet purchases enough capital investment to maximize efficiency
- Long term financial stability

Participants then sat together for introductions. The fifteen participants included farmers with more than 20 years of experience and those in business for only 3 years. There were farmers focusing on one or multiple areas of production, including vegetables, livestock for meat, dairy cows, and fruit orchards. Both non-profit and for-profit farms were represented, and business models included CSA-focused, wholesale-focused, u-pick, and mixed sales models. In addition to experience as producers, several participants held experience in small-farm delivery service, farmers market management, store ownership, farm tourism, and farmer training and advocacy.
Engaged Farming Research: Presentations of Qualitative Social Science Cases

One aim of the workshop was to provide participants with an overview of how the social sciences can be applied to diversified farming and local food systems. At the workshop, we profiled a sampling of mixed-methods social science research projects from the United States, with a particular focus on the Midwest, and discussed the research questions and methods used. Research designs included quantitative and open-ended surveys, card-sorting and listing, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. In addition to demonstrating different research designs, the profiled projects included a variety of producer-researcher collaborations that led to practically relevant information and collaborative problem solving.

Building a Future with Farmers – National Young Farmers Coalition

An online survey of 3,517 current, former, and aspiring U.S. farmers under 40 years of age was conducted in 2017 to gain an accurate snapshot of the nation’s young farmers and identify common challenges they face. Select descriptive findings include that women predominated (60% of respondents), most beginning farmers did not grow up on a farm (75%) and were highly educated (69% with post-high school degrees). The top challenges identified were access to land, student loan debt, difficulty retaining labor, and unaffordable health insurance.


Farmer Well-Being – National Farm Medicine Center, Kathrine Barnes and Casper Bendixsen

The Center’s multiple projects focus on the health and wellbeing of farmers and their communities. In one study, a card-sorting task was used to identify actors who were trusted by farmers and would be good conduits for safety training. Local firefighters were most highly trusted. The Center created a “train-the-trainers” model of farm safety education in collaboration with area firefighters and have begun running training sessions. A second project focuses on beginning farmers and ranchers, who are likely to have young children on farms. Researchers conduct participant observation and semi-structured interviews to learn about farmer concerns and safety resource needs.

http://www.marshfieldresearch.org/nfmc, nfmcsh@mcrf.mfldclin.edu

Assessing the Impact of Community Garden Design on Local Food Security – Courtney M. Gallaher and Kristen Borre

Researchers conducted a case study of one donation-model community garden organization, DeKalb County Community Gardens, to begin assessing how effectively community garden projects can impact the core issues of food security and food sovereignty in a region. Methods included participant observation at gardens and the food pantries they serve and a quantitative survey and semi-structured interviews with food pantry patrons. Analysis is ongoing. Thus far, researchers have identified food procurement patterns and coping strategies for food insecurity,
patron attitudes toward community gardens, and a comparison of desired versus available fresh vegetables at pantries.

**Marketing Campaign – Routes to Farm, Peg Sheaffer**

Angelic Organics Learning Center coordinates the Routes to Farm project, in collaboration with other organizations that work with non-commodity and specialty crop producers serving the Chicago area. As part of this collaboration, a summit was held in January 2017, at which a key area of concern was the decline in direct food sales through CSA and farmers markets. Consultants have been hired to do customer research and develop a strategic marketing plan for direct-marketed local food.

https://routes2farm.org/

**Consumer Preferences and Attitudes on CSA – FairShare Coalition**

Based in the Madison area of Wisconsin, FairShare Coalition was concerned about slowing CSA sales and uncertainty about current consumer preferences and effective marketing strategies. The group conducted an online survey of current and former CSA customers as well as those who had not tried the CSA model before. Survey respondents were reached through partner farms, a random email sample, and social media announcements. The 3083 respondents indicated that consumers’ primary reasons for avoiding CSA participation were food waste and the farmer (rather than customer) selecting produce. Popular CSA membership modifications included early-bird sign-up discounts, returning member discounts, box rescheduling, and smaller share sizes. The survey also found mobility to be common, with most respondents having switched farms at least once.

https://www.csacoalition.org/

**CSA and Alternative Farming in California’s Central Valley – Ryan Galt and Community Alliance with Family Farmers**

Researchers have conducted a number of studies over at least the past eight years. Two were highlighted at the workshop. One qualitatively rich study examined how farmers engage in a moral economy of alternative agriculture, often by engaging in economic self-exploitation to maintain their farms. A second study used survey data to identify demographic characteristics, motivations and preferences of current and former CSA members in one region of California and correlated CSA farm retention rates with farm practices & member preferences.


Opportunities and Obstacles: Ethnographic Investigation of New and Veteran Farmers’ Experiences – Emily McKee

For two and a half years, Emily McKee has been working with “alternative” farmers at different career stages to learn about opportunities and obstacles that shape farmers’ sense of success and continuity in the field versus their departure from the field. For the sake of this study, “alternative” contrasts with conventional large-scale commodity crop farming; it includes approaches that limit chemical inputs and/or prioritize biodiversity, as well as small-scale conventional farming. Through semi-structured interviews and participant observation, McKee explored how variables such as number of years in farming, family farming history, gender, and participation in different production sectors and marketing approaches shape farming success; the study also examined commonalities across these variables. (See Appendix B for more information on common social science research methods noted in this section.)

Drawing on a survey of northern Illinois alternative farmers completed with student researcher Emily Knetsch in 2014-2015, McKee developed criteria for recruiting participants (purposive sampling). Interviews were conducted with twenty farmers who represented a diverse sampling across the following criteria: men and women; new, veteran, and former farmers; farmers of a variety of different ages; those producing one or some combination of vegetables, grain, fruit, meat, milk, and eggs; and those engaged in marketing strategies that included farmers markets, CSA, u-pick, restaurants, and wholesale. These interviews sought information on farmers’ motivations for starting businesses, the advantages some farmers have, the challenges some face, and the coping strategies farmers use to face these challenges. Participant observation spanned four different farms, with McKee and a graduate research assistant each working with two farms, for one to two months on each. Again, farms were chosen to include a variety of career stages, products, and marketing models. In addition, participant observation at various farmer trainings and field days helped to identify the motivations, advantages, challenges and coping strategies most prevalent in these forms of beginning farmer education. Research was sensitive to both individual and structural advantages and challenges. Finally, McKee attended to these themes in the books, podcasts, and films that farmers in the study noted as being significant to their farming practices. Analysis of interviews and observation notes continues, in particular focusing on how different farmer motivations may shape experiences of similar challenges, on more niche-specific analysis of challenges and coping strategies, and on interactions between structural and individual challenges and advantages.

At the workshop, McKee presented selected findings about challenges, coping strategies, and advantages. Regarding significant challenges, not surprisingly, several commonly identified issues in other economic, sociological, and anthropological studies were also common here. In particular, access to land, the capital required to initiate operations, finding and maintaining the right labor force, and dealing with the uncertainties of pests and weather were all common problems. However, a number of less widely discussed challenges were also equally important for many farmers. Some of these were niche-specific issues such as dealing with organic certification, CSA marketing, and obtaining equipment suited to small-scale and diversified farming. Other challenges varied in their details across niches but were widely experienced.

Of particular note, many farmers felt constrained by a lack of specialized knowledge. To some extent, farmers lacked expertise in raising specific crops or livestock. However, farmers generally accepted the need to enhance production knowledge by trial and error as par for the course. Instead, farmers found particularly troublesome all the sets of knowledge and skills they needed outside their fields, such as marketing, business management, and customer engagement.
These skill gaps were particularly burdensome for many farmers because they felt disconnected from the fieldwork that had drawn them to the profession.

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**Challenges**

- **Land access**
  - Finding it, affording it
  - Misfit between farm business and residential needs
- **Capital Required**
  - Lack of start-up funding; difficulty with loans/grants
  - Low monetary profits, high Risk
- **Labor**
  - Physical toll
  - Hiring: Finding the right fit, affording it, management
  - Managing Off- and on-farm work
- **Pests & Weather**
- **Niche-specific**
  - Organic: transition period, contamination, paperwork/tracking, expense
  - CSA: Labor intensive, variety needed
  - Restaurant: Low prices
- **Equipment**
  - Not available for niche/scale
  - Equipment failures
- **Lacking Specialized Knowledge**
  - Growing crops/raising animals; accounting; marketing; employee management
  - Often no/little farm experience – metis and techne
- **Competition w/ other fresh food venues**
- **Changing/Lack of Demand**
  - Volatile & unclear
  - Raw vs. prepped food
  - CSA: Member demands; declining interest
  - Transactional; different values
- **Marketing - time and knowledge needed**
- **Emotional Toll**
  - Discouragement, stress, family strife
  - Gender- and scale-specific
- **Family**
  - Sacrifice personal life, marital splits
  - Child and parent demands, gendered expectations
- **Limitations of place**
  - Soil, markets, neighbors, facilities

*Slide A: Summarized listing of small-scale farming challenges*

Another key challenge, which speaks to the intertwining of motivations and challenges, was a disconnection that many farmers felt between the farmer-eater relationships they sought to build and what customers appeared to want. “I would say probably ten to twenty percent of our customer base became our community, and the rest weren’t,” stated Mallory, a former farmer.1 “It was more transactional. And that didn’t satisfy me.” This disconnection, which only becomes a challenge if the farmer in question is motivated by certain non-instrumental desires, like “building community,” was one major reason Mallory decided to close her business. Similarly, other farmers spoke of the difficulty of finding “the right” customers, those who “support the movement,” and with whom “you fit.”

In addition to individual challenges, study data highlight the importance of attending to accumulating challenges that interact with and shape one another. For example, long work hours and the interweaving of home and work life placed strain on some marriages, exacerbating other common challenges, like high capital investment demands, low and unpredictable profits, and unpredictable consumer demand. Farmers also acutely felt certain compounding risks, facing not only the uncertainties of price variability and attracting customers that confront any small business, but also their vulnerability to unpredictable weather and pests. As one farmer expressed her frustration, “We are one of the only areas of the economy where we have to deal in such a strong way with nature, and we are the buffer between everybody else and nature, and it’s painful, and we get pinched.” The timing of when challenges arise is also highly significant. For example, two families in the study went through foreclosure. One family stopped farming, but a local church offered the other family free temporary land use, which allowed them to continue farming until they gained long-term access to land.

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1 To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms are used to identify research participants.
Coping strategies employed by farmers were even more varied than the challenges they faced. Slide B provides an overview of this variety. Some coping strategies proved to be useful across business styles and products. Two notable common trends were highlighted. First, all farmers with whom McKee spoke were consciously crafting some sort of specialization to secure a market niche. Farmers were driven both by a concern for profit and to avoid competition with friends and mentors. Some focused on niche products, growing heirloom varieties of peppers and tomatoes or locally adapted grains, while others distinguished themselves through distribution methods, such as offering a year-long CSA subscription. However, many farmers had difficulty finding the right balance of specialization and broad reach. “Part of the problem with [finding a niche],” explained one beginning farmer, “is, if we grow stuff nobody else grows, a lot of people don’t eat it. Like, a lot of people, Americans,… they’re not big [on] ‘Oh, let’s go try new food!’”

**Slide B: Summarized listing of small-scale farmers’ coping strategies**

- **Land Access**
  - Mortgage to the hilt, Rent
  - Shift to intensive, indoor operation
- **Lack capital**
  - Making-do, bricolage
  - More sweat; demand more of body
  - Prudent spending VS. Take on debt
  - Family, government, bank loans; grants
  - Off-farm job
- **Labor**
  - Just do it yourself; and learn new skills
  - Mechanize more
  - Volunteers, WWOOFers, worker-shares
  - Simplify; reduce diversification
- **Pests and weather**
  - Diverse field sites, tech fixes
  - Mindset: dive in, love learning, adapt
- **Niche-Specific**
  - Organic: Develop accounting skills
    - No Organic - Open-farm policy
    - Go ONG instead
  - CSA: Switch CSA model
    - diversify and shift away
- **Equipment**
  - Customize equipment, borrow neighbors
- **Lack knowledge**
  - Hard knocks; make mistakes and learn
  - Seek out mentors, intern/volunteer; follow neighbors’ lead
  - Conferences; training programs (e.g., New Farm Beginning, ATRA)
  - Look online (but unreliable)
- **Competition from other food providers**
  - Work harder to match features – e.g., home delivery
  - Use online platform – e.g., Farm Match
  - Sidestep, find niche
- **Marketing**
  - Create a niche
  - Develop multi-talents
  - Educate consumers: How to cook, Non-monetary values of food
  - Tech: online marketing; social media outreach
  - Offer flexible CSA plans
  - Draw on family connections, e.g., chef
- **Emotional toll**
  - Filter for high-paying buyers and FMs
  - Build relationships w/ others “in the movement”
- **Location limitations**
  - Change growing practices (e.g., Shift crop risk)
  - Long drives
- **Reconfigure business or close**

A second key trend was that farmers attempted to cope with knowledge and skill gaps by becoming masters of all trades—not only adept growers, but also marketing gurus and social media experts, political advocates for small-farm friendly policies and educators about cooking and local food systems. Often lacking the financial means to hire experts in these other fields, farmers took it upon themselves to learn new skills far beyond food production (McKee 2018).

While some coping strategies were widely shared, farmers also undertook divergent approaches to other challenges, sometimes reflecting ideological disagreements. For example, farmers coped with the common challenge of a lack of capital for equipment by using diametrically opposed strategies. Some invested heavily and went into debt early in their careers so as to buy the best equipment and begin the farming operation with the most efficient production possible. They felt this was necessary to be competitive. Others insisted that this approach was a recipe for disaster, given the thin and unpredictable profit margins of food production. These farmers were highly debt-averse and were dedicated instead to frugal make-do with inexpensive, borrowed, and used equipment until profits allowed for larger purchases.
Advantages differ from coping strategies in that they are opportunities and resources some farmers have at their disposal not through any concerted action by the farmers (e.g., inheriting family land, receiving windfall gifts, landing next to a neighbor who happens to be a great mentor). Some of these advantages were, in fact, fully beneficial to farmers. However, ethnographic investigation of advantages also reveals that some are not so straightforward. Some proved to be double-edged swords, bearing often unexpected associated challenges. For example, several farmers who gained access to land from parents’ farms noted the difficulties of being beholden to the older generation and a certain path dependency that made it difficult for them to incorporate innovative crops, equipment, and growing techniques. Other farmers who held the seeming advantage of farming organically in a region with little organic competition noted the lack of infrastructure, specialized supplies, and local advice that also attends their pioneer status.

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**Slide C: Summarized listing of advantages enjoyed by some small-scale farmers**

- **Land Access / Location**
  - Parents’ land in perfect location; bought before population boom
  - Great soil
- **Capital**
  - Lucrative first career/Family $ → start w/ less debt
  - Premium organic price
  - Talented grant-writer
  - Windfall gifts (starter herd, tractor, etc.)
- **Labor**
  - Lucky to find good worker who cares
  - Family members help for free
  - My physical strength
- **Marketing**
  - Organic scarcity (barriers to entry)
  - Through family (e.g., restaurant business)
- **Cooperative fellow farmers**
  - Neighbors in same niche; share equip, help in pinch
  - Mentors: inspiration and advice
- **Knowledge/Experience**
  - Raised on farm, intuitive knowledge; parents to guide
  - First career skills help farming (accountant, mechanic)
  - Free advice (mentors, inspectors, etc.)
- **Age**
  - Government programs to help young farmers
- **Gender**
  - Men: actual and expected physical strength
  - Woman-owned business - loans, aid
  - Gender dynamics in face-to-face marketing
- **Demeanor**
  - Patient by nature
  - Love a challenge/Stubborn personality
  - Love learning, problem-solving

Conversely, farmers in this study also demonstrate ways in which initial hardship forged long-term benefits. One farmer who had little money for inputs like soil amendments struggled initially with crop loss but saved seed and found that he had developed harder varieties able to withstand weather shocks to which his neighbors’ crops succumbed. Likewise, though many farmers expressed frustration about the costs and paperwork necessary for organic certification, some noted that these barriers hold competition in check because “it deters all these people who are horrible stewards of the land [from getting] into it because they’re not willing to do that.”

Finally, while most of the presented research findings focused on the farm as the unit of analysis, the study also attended to how farms fit into larger economic, political, and social networks. Some examples of this broader view were presented at the workshop in terms of farmers’ desires for change beyond the farm. Well aware that their success is dependent on these wider networks, farmers identified a variety of needed shifts and reforms. Several were particularly commonly expressed. Most farmers stated that consumers must change their expectations for cheap food. Many also expressed dissatisfaction with current subsidy schemes, wanting instead for the U.S. government either to subsidize local food producers and farmers markets more or remove food producer subsidies altogether so that there would be more even
competition across scales of production. A number of farmers wanted more investment in alternative agriculture higher education and research and development geared toward vegetable production and small-scale farming. Also widely called for was assistance for beginning farmers who lack access to land through family farms and generally also lack collateral for loans.

**Pilot Study: Rockford Local Food Buying**

Throughout this ethnographic research, farmers expressed that one of their greatest frustrations was confusion about market demand for their produce. They feared that consumer spending on directly marketed local food was declining, and they wanted more information about current demands for local food. In response, McKee formulated a pilot study that aimed to identify shopping patterns among people who expressed different levels of interest in eating locally. The study combined survey data, social network analysis, and qualitative interviews to examine where shoppers actually spend their food dollars and how they make their choices.

Rockford, a nearby midsize city was chosen for the pilot study. With colleagues Eric Zeemering and Aaron Deslatte, McKee built plans for social network analysis into a survey. The survey was then administered in person to 282 shoppers at nineteen food-buying venues in the Rockford area, with the help of two undergraduate research assistants. A variety of shopping venues were targeted: on-farm sales, farmers markets, specialty grocers (natural/local) and other grocers (of three sizes: small independent, regional, and large chain). Surveys asked respondents to list the places from which they buy their food and rank them in terms of how much money they spend in each locale, on average, per year. Respondents were then asked to rank how important local food is for them, among the many factors they weigh in buying food, to identify up to two other more important factors, and to report any food they raise themselves and the proportion of their yearly diet that this constitutes.

McKee conducted follow-up interviews by phone with twenty survey respondents. These interviews gathered further information about respondents’ buying priorities, their experiences in and motivations for raising their own food (if any), their attraction to certain food venues, their perceptions of local farms, any obstacles they see to buying local food, and their experience with and perceptions of CSA memberships and meal-kit services.

Through the surveys, respondents identified 96 different food venues. In order to have mapped out a complete network of the Rockford area, data would need to have been gathered from each venue identified as a point of purchase by any survey respondent. Due to limited survey administration personnel and, more importantly, refusal by some venues to allow surveying of their shoppers, it was not possible to map a complete network. Instead, two shopping group network graphs were created, one comprised of shoppers who ranked the buying of local food as “highest” or “higher” priority (“local”) and one comprised of shoppers who ranked buying local food as “equal among factors” or lower (“non-local”) (See Figures 1 and 2).

While comparative analysis of “local” and “non-local” shopping patterns is ongoing, survey and interview data suggest several noteworthy trends. An interest in buying locally appears not to be a strong enough motivation to prompt shoppers to change their behaviors. Shoppers across both “local” and “non-local” groups frequented a diverse array of food venues that included both direct marketing venues (e.g., farmers markets and produce stands) and large chain grocers. Meanwhile, interviewees across both groups noted that a significant barrier to buying local food is the need to go to many different venues to complete their shopping. Many farmers markets have limited variety, they stated, and even a large and diverse farmers market or farm stand does not carry the variety of foods found in a grocery store. The survey data suggest
that this barrier was important both in perception and practice. Data showed that “local” Rockford shoppers, as a group, visited a more diverse set of food venues than did the “non-local” group, but individual “local” shoppers did not shop at more places than did “non-local” shoppers.

However, this seeming lack of connection between local interest and local practice may actually be shaped by widespread confusion about the term “local.” When interviewees were asked to define “local,” their responses varied from food grown “within the 20-mile radius of my house” to food from “Illinois and the states kind of around us.” Even more strikingly, although surveys asked respondents to rank how important “locally raised food” was for them, some respondents referred during subsequent interviews not to where the food was grown, but to where it was sold. Definitions included, “food from a store that is near your house” and food from “stores under a twenty-minute drive,” even if originally grown overseas. Thus, different shoppers refer to vastly different concepts when asserting an interest in “local” food.

The set of twenty interview responses also provided several additional patterns that suggest promising avenues for additional study. First, among this small sample, meal-kit services do not present the strong competition that farmers fear. In fact, not a single interviewee spoke positively of meal-kit services, and thirteen of the fourteen interviewees asked directly about them reported that they would not want to try such a service. Second, while interviewees held widely favorable views of a CSA model of food buying and expressed some degree of interest in participating, the term “CSA,” itself, was not familiar to many. This suggests that some form of marketing or re-labeling of the model could attract more participation. Third, despite widespread perceptions among farmers that consumers’ expectations for low-cost food present a marketing barrier; very few interviewees noted this as a personal barrier to buying more of their food locally. More commonly noted barriers were the inconvenience of shopping at many locales, the time necessary to prepare and cook raw foods, and the limited variety of produce at different times of the year.

Figure 1: Network graph for "local" shoppers. Graph produced by Eric Zeemering.
Figure 2: Network graph for "non-local" shoppers. Graph produced by Eric Zeemering.
Prioritizing Challenges and Unmet Opportunities

Following the morning’s presentations and a break for lunch, research participants dug into the tasks of participatory research design. The goal, by the end of the afternoon, was to develop a priority-ranked set of research questions, with some tentative proposals regarding avenues of research to answer these questions. The initial group goal was to agree upon a list of four highest-priority challenges or unmet opportunities facing diversified farmers in northern Illinois.

Participants were first presented with a list of seventeen such items that Emily McKee developed by gleaning the topics of working groups in the 2017 Routes to Farm Summit (https://routes2farm.org/about/summit/) that generated the most interest and discussion, as well as the highest-interest challenges identified in her research:

1. Sales for many individual farms and farmers markets are dropping off.
2. Risk & uncertainty of direct marketing – I don’t know what these markets are doing and how to plan my business.
3. Don’t know what the optimum # of farms would be, how to know when the market is oversaturated.
4. Don’t know the optimum # of farmers markets, how to know when the area is oversaturated.
5. Farm-focused organizations exist, but they are unsure what farmers most need from them.
6. Lack of customer base in small, rural communities
7. Small, diversified farms lack a voice within Farm Bureau
8. Fear that greenwashing and misuse of “local” erodes the value of our produce
9. Don’t know how to reach new customers (who haven’t shopped locally/organically before).
10. Existing marketing doesn’t reach many places/people (e.g., school kids) that need good food.
11. Confusion/lack of knowledge for beginning farmers about how to begin marketing.
12. We believe creating strong relationships with customers is crucial, but we are unsure how to do it well.
13. CSA providers and customers have varied, sometimes conflicting expectations of CSA.
14. Confusion about current consumer tastes: fears that people want less raw food and more pre-made food; hopes that the next generation will want raw/local/organic.
15. We suspect that cooperatively marketing our produce would help, but we don’t know what model would be successful. Food hub uncertainty. Difficult to establish farm-centered cooperatives.
16. Many farmers struggling to earn a living wage.
17. Lack of information about which farms are financially successful, what characteristics they share.

Workshop participants then added three more challenges to the list:
18. Prices are too low, leaving little to no profit margin.
19. Finding and keeping skilled labor.
20. Transporting products to markets is inefficient and costly.

Next, to facilitate the collaborative work of deciding upon the highest-priority challenges to address with research, these twenty items were divided up and allocated to four workstations. In small teams, workshop participants rotated through these stations to discuss each challenge. They used a provided worksheet to evaluate and prioritize the challenges (“A: Prioritizing Challenges/Unmet Opportunities”).
### A. Prioritizing Challenges / Unmet Opportunities

<table>
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<th>Challenge/Problem</th>
<th>Importance for all farmers</th>
<th>Importance for niche in IL</th>
<th>Importance for eaters/consumers</th>
<th>Importance for other stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Sales of many individual farms and farmers’ markets are dropping off.</td>
<td>- very important</td>
<td>- Many different types of producers</td>
<td>- Do they even care? If they did would sales decline?</td>
<td>- Yes, to delivery businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Risk &amp; Uncertainty of direct marketing—I don’t know what these markets are doing and how I can plan my business.</td>
<td>- Very!</td>
<td>- Talking through with other producers need a forum for discussing markets</td>
<td>- Not concerned</td>
<td>- Consumers who already buy from us are concerned, but those who don’t yet buy from local farms don’t know what they’re missing!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Don’t know what an optimum number of farms would be and how to know when the market is oversaturated &amp; 4) Don’t know optimum number of farmers markets</td>
<td>- Not sure how to get at this question. Doesn’t seem like the number would be very static because of the market.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Find and keep good skilled labor</td>
<td>- Yes, important!</td>
<td>- Particularly affects this niche</td>
<td>- Not concerned</td>
<td>- Regulators, Coworkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Lack appreciation for cost of food/lack of willingness to pay more for food.</td>
<td>- David: This is not something we can change. Farmers need to face reality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Group decided that the first 4 challenges are very tied together and could be addressed collectively in a research project.

### Figure 3: East Group’s Challenges worksheet

---

### A. Prioritizing Challenges / Unmet Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge/Problem</th>
<th>Importance for all farmers</th>
<th>Importance for niche in IL</th>
<th>Importance for eaters/consumers</th>
<th>Importance for other stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5) Farm: focus organization exist, but don’t know exactly what farmers most need from them</td>
<td>- High, more marketing channels and all the other media and other skills we need</td>
<td>- High - Bias in the organization with no focus on the organic farm</td>
<td>- Low - killing the soils (need a website that would list the health effects of eating organic produce)</td>
<td>- Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Lack of customer base in small rural communities</td>
<td>- Low</td>
<td>- Farmers in rural areas would be a priority</td>
<td>- Important of the eater</td>
<td>- No (Low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Small, diversified farms lack a voice within Farm Bureau</td>
<td>- Low</td>
<td>- High</td>
<td>- Medium</td>
<td>- Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Fear that greenwashing and misuse of “local” erodes the value of our produce</td>
<td>- High</td>
<td>- High</td>
<td>- High</td>
<td>- High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Price too low to make profit, thin margins</td>
<td>- High</td>
<td>- High</td>
<td>- High</td>
<td>- High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4: South Group’s Challenges worksheet*
### A: Prioritizing Challenges / Unmet Opportunities

#### Group: West

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge/Problem</th>
<th>Importance for all farmers</th>
<th>Importance for niche in IL</th>
<th>Importance for eaters/consumers</th>
<th>Importance for other stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9) Don’t know how to reach new customers (those who haven’t shopped for local/organic before)</td>
<td>- Not necessarily</td>
<td>- Yes, CSA farmers</td>
<td>- Inconvenient</td>
<td>- Yes, CSA members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Issue for many farmers</td>
<td>- Big challenge for new farmers</td>
<td>- Not necessity</td>
<td>- Neighbors may be affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (not all)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance Rank:</strong> 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Existing ways of marketing our food don’t reach many towns and populations (e.g., school kids) that need good food.</td>
<td>- No</td>
<td>- Yes, non-profits &amp; communities</td>
<td>- Schools</td>
<td>- Yes, funding for initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Important to subset of farms</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank:</strong> 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Confusion/lack of knowledge for beginning farmers about how to begin marketing</td>
<td>- No but most need help</td>
<td>- Yes (very important)</td>
<td>- Need to get started</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Marketing is more difficult than production</td>
<td>- How to guide?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank:</strong> 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) We believe that creating strong relationships with customers is crucial, but we don’t know how to do that well.</td>
<td>- Yes, for many but not all</td>
<td>- Yes, really important for CSA farms</td>
<td>- Yes, for some</td>
<td>- Probably not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank:</strong> 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Inefficient/ costly transport</td>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank:</strong> 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5: West Group’s Challenges worksheet**

### Group: North

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge/Problem</th>
<th>Importance for all farmers</th>
<th>Importance for niche in IL</th>
<th>Importance for eaters/consumers</th>
<th>Importance for other stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13) CSA providers &amp; customers have varied, sometimes conflicting expectations of CSA</td>
<td>- Farmers offer a “contract”</td>
<td>- Social media</td>
<td>- Consumer needs to be open about what veggies they want to see</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be honest without being too honest</td>
<td>- Emphasize quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adapt your CSA approach to what customers want</td>
<td>- Offer recipes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority:</strong> Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) Confusion about current consumer tastes: fears that people want less raw food and more pre-made food, hopes that next generation will want raw/locally grown food</td>
<td>- Cooperative model offer recipes</td>
<td>- Answer the survey when the farmer asks what you want</td>
<td>- Meal kits swoop in and take other output</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority:</strong> High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) We suspect that cooperatively marketing our produce would help, but don’t know what model would be successful. Food hub uncertainty. Difficult to establish farm-centered cooperative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority:</strong> High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Many farmers struggling to earn a living wage</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority:</strong> High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) Lack of information about which farms are financially successful and what characteristics they share</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority:</strong> Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6: North Group’s Challenges worksheet**
Reporting back to the larger group, teams shared the challenges they marked as top priority. This resulted in nine items:

2) Uncertain direct markets  
5) Farm-focused organizations  
8) Misuse of “local” label  
11) Marketing for beginning farmers  
14) Current consumer tastes  
15) Cooperative marketing  
16) Living wage  
18) Low prices and thin margins  
20) Transportation

Through a brief discussion focusing on which problems affected a large proportion of diversified farmers and most urgently needed to be addressed, the group quickly agreed upon a list of four highest priority challenges. These were as follows:

2) Uncertain direct markets  
14) Current consumer tastes  
15) Cooperative marketing  
20) Transportation
Developing Research Questions and Designs

With the four highest priority challenges identified, workshop participants turned to research design. While complete research design was not feasible within the timeframe of the workshop, participants aimed to identify specific research questions that would address each challenge and for which mixed-methods social science research would be well-suited. To facilitate this process, the workshop included a brief comparison of qualitative and quantitative research and discussion of qualitative methods (see handouts, Appendix B). Participants were also asked to draw on the examples of social science research presented during the morning session.

Once again, four workstations were established, and groups of participants took turns working at each and rotating. One highest priority challenge was listed at each workstation. During the first several rotations, teams brainstormed potential research questions and research design elements for each challenge. In the last two rounds, teams focused on consolidating the ideas generated by previous groups regarding research plans and then on evaluating the value of each potential research direction.

Finally, workshop participants reconvened and teams shared the final sets of potential research questions and their evaluations of the merits and feasibility of each. In addressing the uncertainty of direct markets for food (Challenge #2, Figure 7), participants identified two research directions as being of most interest. The first option was to identify direct market farmers who are successful, even in this difficult market, and learn what they are doing that may be distinctive. The team suggested conducting a survey of farmers, reaching out through existing farmer-to-farmer networks, to learn which farms are growing their profits or at least holding steady. Then, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods could be used to analyze successful farms’ financial practices, marketing strategies and channels, etc. Ethnographic methods would be particularly useful in identifying advantages and practices that are not part of farmers’ conscious strategies but may still be influential for business success.

The second proposed approach to this challenge was to learn about consumer demand for local foods through a consumer survey and follow-up interviews. “What,” these food producers wished to ask, “is consumer demand for local food, and how is it changing?” What are consumers’ explanations for why they do or do not choose to buy from local producers? In addition to a direct survey, workshop participants were interested to learn how these consumer practices have changed, particularly in the past three years, when they have noticed sharp declines in their own food sales. Noted the team’s presenter:

I mean I think the conundrum we’ve talked about is we know the market is growing, we know all the big companies are scrambling to get local, to get organic products, to get a simpler ingredient list in their products. So that trend is really changing the food industry. But why are the small farmers who are really already in that market suffering?

It was noted that studies such as those in California by Ryan Galt and CAFF have captured some of these data over a number of years. However, participants saw value in gathering region-specific consumer preference data, hypothesizing that there may be significant differences between trends in the Midwest and the West Coast.

Not surprisingly, this second research direction overlapped significantly with proposals to address confusion about current consumer tastes (Challenge #14, Figure 8). However, workshop participants proposed taking a more demographic approach to addressing this specific challenge. With an eye to developing more effective marketing tactics, they wanted to gain a detailed profile of who exactly is buying local food, as described by characteristics like age, ethnicity,
etc. It was suggested that regionally specific demographic analyses could be applied to existing U.S. Department of Agriculture data sets. The team also proposed surveys that could glean information about where food trends are coming from and who is creating them, “so a farmer can easily anticipate his or her next move.” Finally, participants wanted to learn how buying practices change over time (along demographic lines), but proposed a much longer (30-year) time span that the previous team.

Regarding the challenge—and unmet opportunities—of cooperative marketing, workshop participants focused research avenues on the potentials and pitfalls of food hubs (Challenge #15, Figure 9). They wanted to know, first, what benefits food hubs may hold for farmers and, second, whether food hubs exacerbate competition among existing food providers. To answer these questions, participants proposed answering several preliminary questions: (1) How are different models of food hubs actually run (e.g., not-for-profit, for-profit, etc.) and how are farmers involved in decision making in these various models? (2) What are the track records of existing food hubs in nearby regions, and what factors have shaped their success or failure? Descriptive case studies would be needed to investigate membership and operations within different models of food hubs. To learn more about track records and benefits to farmers, workshop participants also proposed comparative financial analysis of product pricing and hub revenues.

In discussing research approaches to the costs and inefficiencies of transportation (Challenge #20, Figure 10), the team presenter explained that they had looked at the issue in two ways: “Do you want to get more customers to your farm, which would reduce your costs? Or do you want to be more efficient about getting your stuff to other places?” A survey of farmers, the team suggested, could gauge interest in each approach. If the former predominated, it would be useful to research additional products and experiences that farmers can offer to attract the public to their farms. Workshop participants suggested conducting a consumer survey that gauged interest in on-farm “full-diet stores” (farm stands with much more diverse offerings), buyers’ packaging standards, and other desires for on-farm features. Alternatively, if surveyed farmers were to prioritize finding ways to more efficiently move product to markets, workshop participants suggested following up with an asset survey. This survey would gather information on farms’ existing infrastructure, vehicles, and crops. A feasibility assessment could then be conducted to identify opportunities for cooperative growing and marketing of produce and/or to map farms along shared delivery routes to allow for joint trucking.

Once this presentation of potential research avenues was completed, the group was asked which options most interested them. Three clearly garnered the strongest interest:

1. Consumer demand study that finds regional trends over 3-4 years in what people are buying, from where, and why (or why not) local.
2. A holistic study of successful farmers in the area, asking what are they doing (differently), including the collection of anonymized financial data.
3. Comparative study of several cooperatives and food hubs to learn (A) how they are run, through what power structures and operational models; and (B) what benefits and costs they have borne for farmers.
### C: Evaluating Potential Research Questions - Challenge #2: Uncertain direct markets

**Risk and uncertainty of direct marketing: I don’t know what these markets are doing and how I can plan my business**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>How New</th>
<th>How Feasible</th>
<th>Research Methods Fit</th>
<th>Time needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is consumer demand for local food and how is it changing?</td>
<td>- Many might already exist, on national scale?</td>
<td>Qualitative and Qualitative research</td>
<td>Consumer Survey: Quantitative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why? Why not?</td>
<td>- But are they region-specific?</td>
<td></td>
<td>- What food are they buying, and where?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 1</td>
<td>- Could they be compiled?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative: Why are they buying at those venues? (so farmers can meet their needs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to reduce production risk by preserving, canning, freezing, and producing?</td>
<td>- Data may exist, Compile info for farms</td>
<td>Relatively simple</td>
<td>- What would entice consumers to buy directly from farmers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 3</td>
<td>- Preserving/etc. already a common practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>- How have you changed your buying habits?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are successful direct market farms doing differently?</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Difficult but feasible</td>
<td>Interview direct market farmers, then do quantitative surveys</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Offer responders a copy of the results if participate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall: What is working and what is not working, etc. (keep data anonymous)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Who is growing (in this tough market) and what are they doing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- What advantages do they have?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Who is holding steady and profitable? What are they doing differently?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- What are these strategies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Are they selling through different channels?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Research Design worksheet, Challenge 2

### C: Evaluating Potential Research Questions - Challenge #14: Current consumer tastes

**Confusion about current consumer tastes: fears that people want less raw food and more pre-made food. Hopes that next generation will want raw/local/organic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>How New</th>
<th>How Feasible</th>
<th>Research Methods Fit</th>
<th>Time needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is shaping buying practices (e.g., demographic factors, dietary restrictions)?</td>
<td>- USDA data available nationally</td>
<td>Very, through survey</td>
<td>Local demographic breakdowns with USDA data and USDA over the past years (30 years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is buying what (i.e., various demographic breakdowns of who is buying local food)?</td>
<td>- Drilling down (locally)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trying to figure out where the food trends are coming from,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Who starts food trends?)</td>
<td>- Info that is already available (nationally)</td>
<td></td>
<td>who is creating them, so the farmers can easily anticipate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are these practices changing over time?</td>
<td>Very, through survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>their next moves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who is buying what when?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Example survey questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How much cooking is done weekly and what kind of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cooking?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How often are you eating out?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Who does the cooking?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How important is the nutritional value of your food?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8: Research Design worksheet, Challenge 14
**C: Evaluating Potential Research Questions - Challenge #15: Cooperative marketing**

We suspect that cooperatively marketing our produce would help but don’t know what model would be successful. Food hub & farm cooperative opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>How New</th>
<th>How Feasible</th>
<th>Research Methods Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are food hubs run (e.g., not-for-profit, for-profit, etc.)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive study of different models, including one run by farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the benefit to the farmer (and how do pricing differentials affect them)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compare hub product pricing to farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation: Compare the success of hubs compared to the equity of hub/farmer price differentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are farmers involved in the decision-making?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-How can farmers maintain control over the hub operations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-What assurances do farmers have, to get fair pricing of the produce?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do food hubs exasperate competition?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Holistic: What impact does the opening of a food Hub have on the local scene?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Do we need more co-ops?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track records in various areas: What made food hubs a success or failure? Why have they worked in other areas and not here?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparative: Look at track records of efforts in northern Illinois and other areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive: What tips can we learn from the existing agricultural cooperatives (e.g., grain and dairies)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative: How did it affect area farmers’ revenues?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In group conversations, said research would be done using data that has been gathered by others and new data through surveys.*

**Figure 9: Research Design worksheet, Challenge 15**

---

**C: Evaluating Potential Research Questions - Challenge #20: Transportation**

Transporting products to markets is inefficient and costly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>How New</th>
<th>How Feasible</th>
<th>Research Methods Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) What are existing farm assets, and how do they shape cooperative transport options?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Asset Survey: Where are the farms? What do they have? Which farm has enough cooler space/dock/forklift to aggregate from other farms? (so a truck can go from one location)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-What assets do you have available?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Feasibility assessment: Farm cooperativity—use the same truck company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-crops?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Can truck companies bring compostable waste to the farm on their way back?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-infrastructure?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Applied project: map farms to identify shared delivery routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-vehicles?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Which is more valuable to you as a farmer, getting the consumer to the farm or getting your product to the vendor?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) How will delivery affect crop selection? (Ex: watermelon is harder to transport than leaf lettuce)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How does your current vehicle status play into logistics?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) If answer to #2 above is “consumer to farm”, what else could you offer to the public? (e.g., full-diet store)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey (Consumer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-What are the packaging standards of the buyer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-How to get the consumer to the farm?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Interest in full-diet store?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10: Research Design worksheet, Challenge 20**
## Participant Contact Information

<table>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Additional Resources


IL Cottage Industry law – HB 3063, Public Act 100-0035
http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=100-0035

FairShare CSA Coalition’s research slides - https://www.csacoalition.org/

Routes to Farm website - https://routes2farm.org/

Grocery Manufacturers Association (link to sign up for daily Smart Brief):
http://www.gmaonline.org/resources/research-tools/gma-newsletters-and-updates/gma/

Galt & CAFF studies
Appendices

Appendix A: Workshop Schedule – Afternoon Session

12:30 - **Clarify purpose of research**

12:45 - **Prioritizing small farm challenges and unmet opportunities**
- Large Group: Overview of Challenges from Routes to Farm & my research
  - Add other challenges from participants’ experiences
  - Identify 20 highest priority
- **Safari: Prioritize Challenges**
  - Goal: narrow down our list to 4 highest-priority challenges.
    - For now, focus on priority of challenge more than fit for soc sci research methods — but may make notes about research methods in parking lot
  - Workshop participants divide up, go to tables. One group member will “host” that table, others will move, eventually returning to your “home” table at end.
  - 15 min.: brainstorm responses to worksheet regarding your set of challenges.
    - You can choose whether to write on worksheet, or leave notes on whiteboard/paper pad for now.
    - If your discussion reveals a challenge is not high priority, you can propose moving it off list
    - Be sure to leave behind clear notes/clues to for the next group to continue the work.
  - Host’s role will be to facilitate/harmonize diff groups’ work.
  - 10 min: Move to next station. Review 1st grp’s work. Continue evaluating/prioritizing that set of challenges. Leave notes for next group.
  - 10 min: Move to 3rd station. Review previous groups’ work. Continue evaluating/prioritizing that set of challenges. Leave notes for return group.
  - 15 min: Return to home station.
    - Compile all notes from Safari rounds; summarize in table. (We have extra blanks, if you need.)
    - Rank the challenges: highest interest, mid-level, low interest.
- **Large group discussion to decide on 4 challenges we’ll focus on**

2:00 - **Identifying research questions/approaches**
- Overview of Qualitative Social Science methods
  - see handout
- **Safari: Brainstorming research to address each challenge**
  - Goal: To address each challenge, propose specific research questions/project ideas for which qualitative/mixed methods are well-suited.
    - Final notes should: State research question – (Summarize any discussion of research methods), Include summarized evals of the research questions in provided table
  - Set-up: 4 work stations, 1 challenge/opportunity per station, 1 “host” per station
  - 20 min: brainstorm research questions/projects to address the station’s challenge. Leave notes. Move on.
  - 15 min: Review previous group's work. Continue developing questions/projects. Leave notes. Move back to first station
  - 20 min: Return to home station. Compile groups’ work from safari rounds. For final notes:
    1. Clearly state each potential research question
    2. Summarize evaluations of the potential research questions in the table provided. (We have extra blanks, if you need.)
    3. Summarize discussion of research methods, useful collaborators, & sites/populations
- Reconvene large group: Each group shares highest priority research question(s)/projects

3:40 - **Debrief and discuss next steps**
- What do you think about these high-priority questions/projects?
  - Would you want to be involved in any moving forward? If so, in what capacity?
- What are the best ways to involve you—and reach other stakeholders—moving forward?
- How else should we share the proceedings of this workshop?
Appendix B: Social Science Research Methods Handouts

Factors affecting choice of research method

- Nature of Topic
- Ethical

- Theoretical
- Practical
- Money
- Time
- Opportunity
- Skills and services of research

- Sensitive topics - unstructured interviews
- Deviant subcultures - participant observation
- Historical research - documents
- National polls and surveys
- Open-ended questionnaires
- Certain research methods - certain topics
- Conceptual model - complex statistical

- Validity
- Reliability
- Representativeness
- Positivism
- Constructivism - interpretivism

- More common
- Less common

- How and why things are happening
- Finding new variables that need attention
- Understanding motivations and reactions
- Representing claims
- Dynamics of group encounters
- Tight focus on biophysical interactions

- How much or little of something
- Empathetic understanding

https://revisesociology.com/2016/01/03/research-methods-sociology/
A brief and partial list of qualitative (and mixed-method) research techniques:

a. **Participant observation** → rapport → dialogue and mutual comprehension
   - Contextual inquiry
   - Apprenticeship approach
   - Where? With whom? How long? What tasks/practices participated in?

b. **Key consultants/informants**
   - Guides/teachers/colleagues for researcher among the group of focus

c. **Interviews** (from chitchat to formal interviews)
   - Range from highly structured question-answer to semi-structured, or unstructured conversation
   - Focus groups, random sample, key consultants?
   - Interview schedule — guiding questions
   - Recorded or not? (consider accuracy, trust issues)

d. **Free-listing categories, Card sorting**
   - Participant lists items when given a category, sorts cards into meaningful categories, etc.
   - Researcher learns cultural models, decision-making strategies, relevance

e. **Life histories**
   - Perhaps from key informant — someone willing to sit for hours and give life history
   - Longitudinal info — generational changes

f. **Genealogical method**
   - Family trees, diagram relationships
   - Helps ethnographer keep track of everyone and see social structures

g. **Archival Research**
   - Study historical documents — longitudinal information

h. **Content Analysis**
   - Of existing written/multimedia materials
   - Of interviews and/or elicited materials

i. **Surveys**
   - Census of a circumscribed site
   - Combine with interviews: Use interviews to develop questionnaire, ask follow-up questions about survey responses
   - Sample: Random or Targeted?
   - Style: multi-choice, open-ended?; in-person, internet, phone?

j. **Mapping**
   - Draw up by research participants — learn their perspectives on places, see relationships tied to places
   - Photos can be used to make visual maps of places
   - Expert led (e.g., GIS)