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Fresno Fresh Access

Community Food Assessment Report

2003-2005

Key factors in food availability, accessibility, affordability and quality in Fresno County.

The Fresno Community Food Assessment has trained over 80 local neighborhood leaders, conducted over 850 survey-assessments of consumers and 131 retail store surveys, collected data by City Council and County Supervisor Districts and will inform a Food Policy Council in urban planning. The goals of the Food Policy Council are healthy food access, reduction of nutritional health disparities, and linking Fresno agriculture business to fresh food access.

Using the resource of the abundant produce of the area Fresno will provide access to affordable, culturally appropriate, healthy food to all of Fresno. This has implications for economic development around food production and distribution, developing food recovery projects locally and increasing use of local produce and increase markets for that produce.

By linking agriculture to local health solutions through adequate nutrition this report will develop the use of fresh produce at neighborhood markets, new farmers markets, mobile vending and more. The report indicates that increased use of Federal Nutrition Programs and local economic assets will increase use of local fresh produce.

The following summary indicates some of the overall results of the data compiled. The full report will be available September 30, 2005.

The Fresno Fresh Access Community Food Assessment is one of the largest Community Food Assessments conducted nationally. Published reports on the development of this assessment are available from Fresno Metro Ministry.

The Fresno Metro Ministry Fresno Fresh Access Community Food Assessment was staffed by the Hunger and Nutrition Project:

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Where do you buy most of your groceries?

This open-ended question resulted in the following clarity in the overall sample results.

64% answered that they primarily shopped at ‘Big Box stores’: Food Co, Food Maxx, Costco, Sam’s Club, etc. Only 20% named ‘Supermarkets’ and 13% said that they primarily shopped at ‘Local’ stores.

When asked *why* they shopped at the stores, **Price was the overarching determiner (47%)**, with convenience, and close to home being secondary at 26%. Issues of selection, quality, and preference aggregately totaled 25% in the overall sample.

When asked ‘**Besides stores where do you get food?**’, the significant responses were at **Fast Food (49%) and at Flea Markets (30%)**. These percentages held with the output by Low Income, No Car. Ethnically there were some differences:

Something is wrong in the system. We are farm-workers, harvesting all day produce for others, and we get home and our family doesn’t have food to eat. *Coalinga Focus Group*

- African Americans named Fast Food (44%), and Farmers Markets (32%)
 - Southeast Asians: Farmers Markets (48%) and Fast Food 30%, 9% Community Gardens, 9 % Flea Markets
 - Caucasians: Farmers Markets 37% and Fast Food 29%, with none naming Flea Markets.
 - Latinos: 45% Flea Market, and 27% Fast Food.
 - Russians utilized Farmers Markets 46% , and 37% participated in Senior Meal sites 46%
- ➔ Remarkable is that Flea Markets, Mobile Vendors, and Fast Food are frequently named as places besides grocery stores where people get food; **gardens and federal nutrition programs are little used.**

The story on **seasonability** seems to be that it is an issue, in addition to lack of access of fresh fruit and vegetables in neighborhoods. If 1/3 or more are having difficulty with both *access and season*, there are potentially **big market opportunities in neighborhoods for more fresh markets.**

A lot of liquor stores and small stores in the neighborhood are expensive. All the supermarkets are far away. *Coalinga Focus Group*

‘Transportation is the big issue.’

The big story on how people get to the grocery store and back home is that in the overall sample, 67% own their own car.

How do most people get to the store?
Sometimes I walk about 1 hour to get to the store, or I need to save money for the taxi—it is \$15, and I can’t afford it. If I take a bus, I have to wait 30 minutes during the weekdays, or 1 hour on the weekend.

However **18% depend on carpooling**. Over 6 % use public transportation, and 9% walk or bike. If people have no car, 53% need to car pool. 19% use bus or taxi, 28% walk or bike.

Respondents who earn under \$20,000, 24% must carpool. What we know about carpooling is: folks are either dependent on others to get to the market, or, they must pay (sometimes up to \$50 round trip to Fresno from out in the County). That public transportation (bus) is named as a difficulty in focus groups; and taxis often are \$15 or more. This is an important issue. In the County: Larsen, Perea, and Waterston’s Districts report the most carpooling: 16-25%.Perea’s district (urban) reports having to carpool, and 10% bus ridership.

Fresno County Data on barriers to food in neighborhoods:

- Larsen: 22% too expensive
 6% transportation
 7% lack of variety
- Anderson: 42% too expensive
 Transportation 2%
 11% lack of variety
 7% not enough organic
 6% not enough stores
- Perea: 33% too expensive
 8% transportation
 7% lack of variety
 10% not enough stores
- Case: 10% too expensive
 10% lack of variety
- Waterston: 24% too expensive
 19% lack of variety

Fresno City Data on barriers to food in neighborhoods:

- Too expensive: *Calhoun* 47%; *Westerfeld* 38%; *Dages* 36%; *Perea* 34%
- Boyagian*: 26% too expensive; 10% lack of variety
- Calhoun* 10% lack of variety
- Sterling* 7% transportation, 25% too expensive
- Dages* 9 % transportation;
- Perea*: 11% not enough stores to choose from.

More fruits and vegetables needed in neighborhoods

Are their certain foods that are difficult to get in your neighborhood? One-fourth (23%) reported that they had difficulty getting food in their neighborhood. If they had no car, 1/3 (33%) reported difficulty getting needed foods.

Ethnically:

- o African Americans 36% reported difficulty getting foods they need; of those over 60% named meat and seafood difficult to get. 11% said fruits and vegetables were difficult to get.
- o Southeast Asians: 37% reported difficulty; naming ethnic foods (45%) difficult to get. And both meat and fruits and vegetables 17% reported hard to get in their neighborhoods.
- o Caucasians: only 25% reported it difficult to get certain foods; 25% reported organic foods and 25% fruits and vegetables hard to get in their neighborhoods.
- o Latinos: only 17% reported difficulty getting foods they needed in their neighborhood; of those 45% said that fruits and vegetables were difficult to get.
- o Russians; the highest 71% said it was difficult to get food they needed: 54% seafood; 23% meat.
- o Others reported 37% reported difficulty getting meat and fruits and vegetables, and other food items.

Overall of the 23% reporting difficulty getting foods in their neighborhood, 32% named fruits and vegetables as difficult to get.

What do you see as the main problems getting the food you want?

- 30% said that food was too expensive for their families.
- 11% named issues of quality of food.
- 6% said that Transportation was an issue
- 40% said 'no problem'.

We would like **lower prices**

We are afraid to file for food stamps because of immigration status. Qualifications for food stamps need more publicity. Make food stamps accessible to all low-income families, without regard to migratory status.

Having no car makes it hard to go to the store.

The biggest obstacle is not having enough money to buy basic food items. **90% of the people I interviewed said they had to pay the rent and utilities. The food suffers because there often isn't enough left over.**

Focus group in Southeast Fresno

Has your vision of grocery stores changed over the years since you have been in Fresno?

- Stores have closed in area - Food 4 less - Pak & Save closed - K-Mart on Shaw closed - they had a lot of fruits and vegetables
 - Cherry Flea Market - have fruits and vegetables but they were over ripe and more expensive than Food Maxx.
 - Neighborhood stores are all small, and very expensive.
 - Vons supermarket was closed and was not replaced with another market. Other areas of town have 3 supermarkets in one block.
 - Need to have more Farmers Markets in the area.
 - Seasonal local vegetables are better, but there is the **chemical use. People are not interested in eating fruits that have chemicals used on them.**
- Focus groups from Coalinga, Pinedale, and Southeast Fresno

What we found out about food access: People are

- **Buying Fresh Produce from Flea Markets**
- **Barriers to Fresh Food = Not enough money**
- **Fast Food is eaten about 1/3 of meals weekly by all surveyed**
- **Healthiest foods and Cultural food needs are not available in some neighborhoods.**
- **People are not accessing Federal Nutrition Programs, even though they are probably eligible and need healthy food for their families.**

Many people thought that the challenge in their community is as much a matter of food as it is creating a prosperous safe and secure environment, which promotes improved living and growing conditions for children and youth. The end result would be an inviting community. The response to each category is summarized by frequency of response in these categories of **550** qualitative responses to the question. **What would you like to see change in your neighborhood and community?**

We want more Inviting Communities:

- Improve Infrastructure: 44; Cleaner neighborhoods: 18;**
- Street Safety: 14. Community Safety and Security: 31**
- Improving conditions for children and youth: 13**
- I am content with the community: 61**

Better Food and grocery stores in our neighborhood: 264

Closer:	201
More F & V	65
Lower Prices	66
EBT	8
Ethnic	24
Gardens:	5

**Summary Recommendations from the Fresno Fresh Access Community Food Assessment
Urban Planning in Fresno City and County**

- **A Food Policy Council or Food and Built Environment Council that is housed in the Fresno County Department of Community Health under the Public Health Officer**
- **Expansion of study and solutions to increase:**
 - **Market choices in neighborhoods: Farm to Neighborhoods**
 - **Fresh Local food available in neighborhoods and local institutions (schools, hospitals, City and County programs**
 - **Economic Development utilizing our agriculture to solve health and good food access.**

“We hope this information gets to the right people who can make some changes.” Focus group of surveyors in Southeast Fresno

We acknowledge the funder of this Community Food Assessment: USDA Community Food Project 2003-2005. Additionally, it could not have been completed without over 60 partners and over 80 trained neighborhood volunteers. A complete record of the Community Food Assessment-Fresno Fresh Access will be posted to our website, and be available in hard copy from Fresno Metro Ministry. It will contain all data, and reports by Fresno County Board of Supervisors District and Fresno City Council Districts. A full list of recommendations from the Community Food Assessment will be published with the report. For further information, contact Edie Jessup or Jeremy Hofer at Fresno Metro Ministry.