

The Role of Collaborative Community Supported Agriculture (cCSA): Lessons from Iowa

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Project Overview

- 2005 study on community benefits of formally organized, multi-producer CSA
 - Funded by Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
 - In partnership with the Iowa Network for Community Agriculture (INCA) and central Iowa producers
 - Preliminary results of formally organized, multi-producer CSAs in Iowa

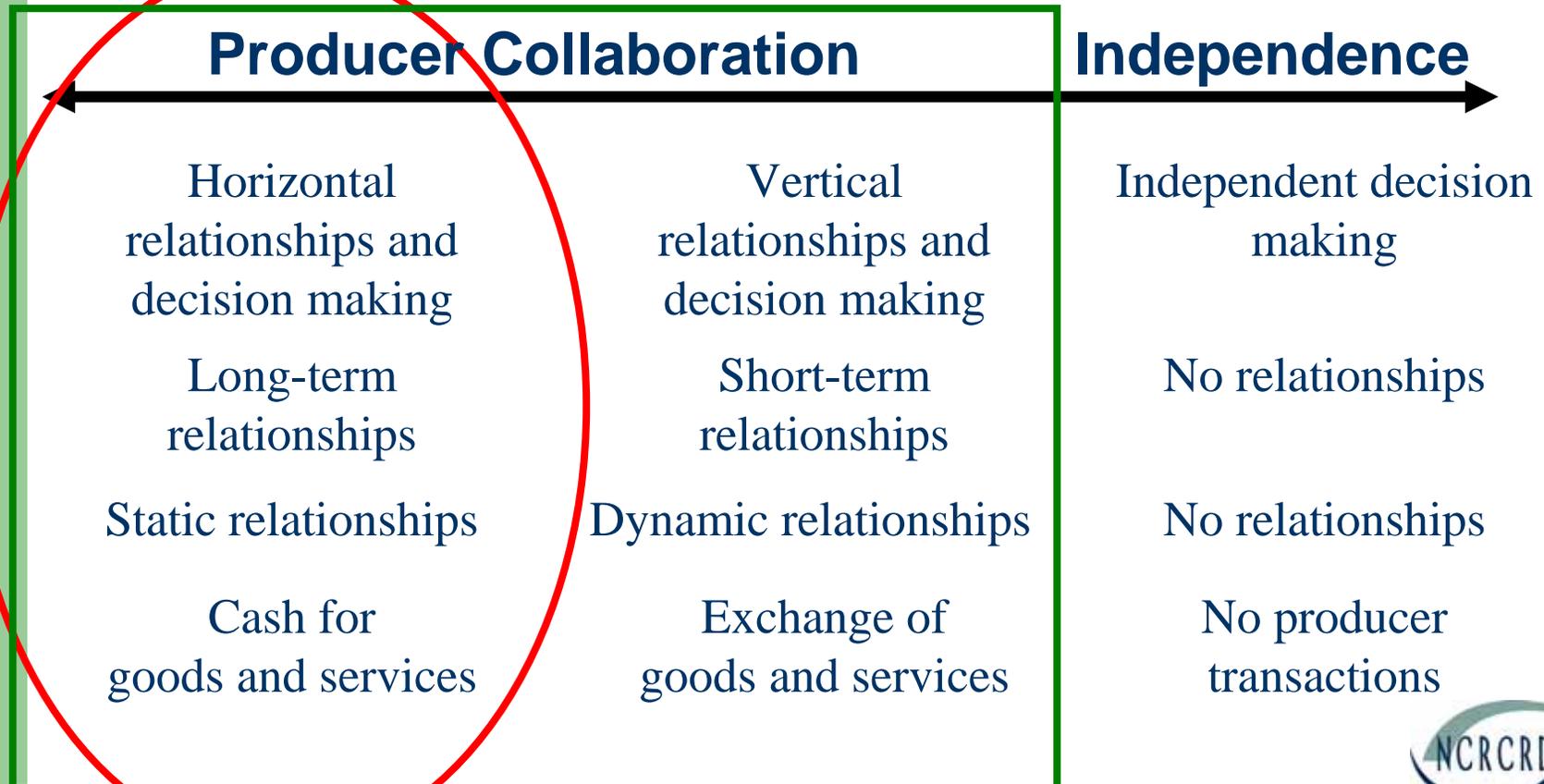


What Is Collaborative CSA?

- Almost all for-profit CSA is collaborative
- For our study, we focused on:
 - CSA in which multiple producers collaborate to provide food or fiber products to members of a CSA for which no single producer (or producer family) has sole responsibility



What Is Collaborative CSA?



Why Study Collaborative CSA?

- cCSA is a rare expression of alternative food institutions
 - Within the North Central Region, Iowa has the highest number of cCSAs
 - Iowa (4)
 - Kansas, Michigan (2)
 - Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri (1)
 - Unique contributions to rural development

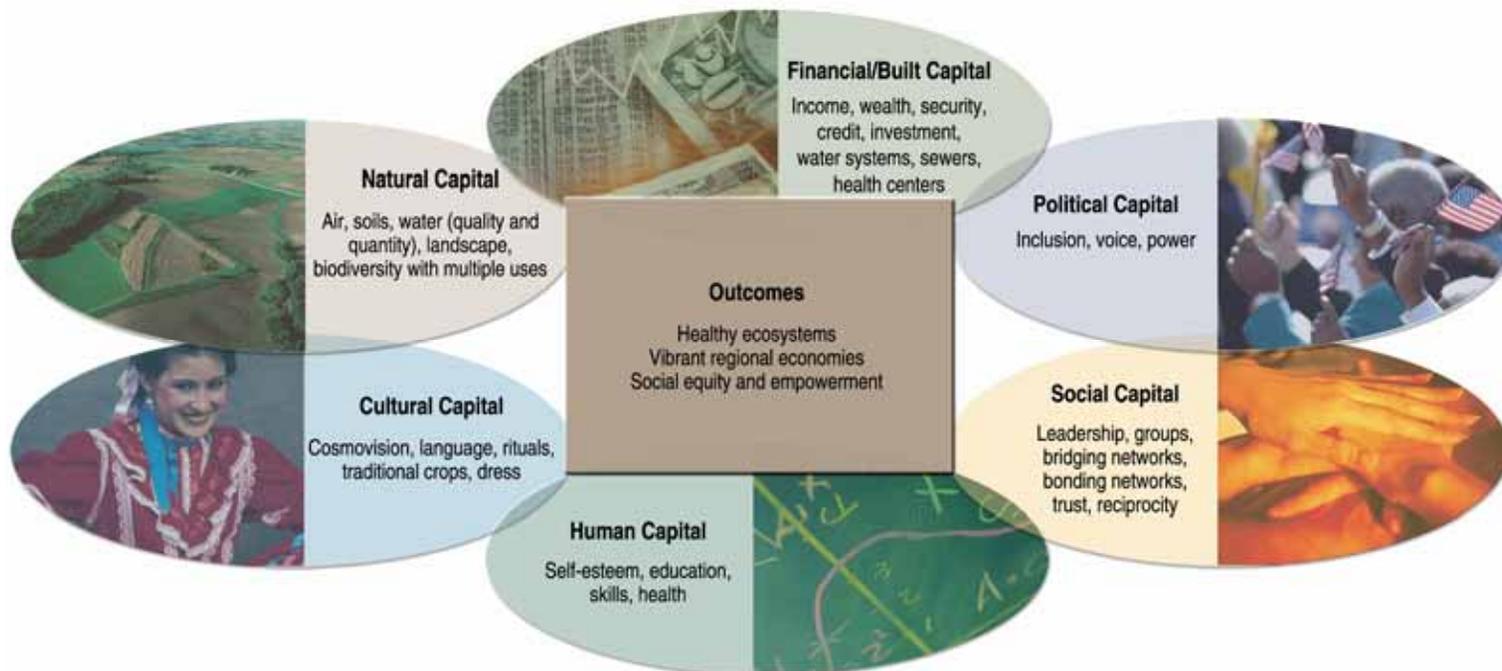


Research Objectives

- Define the role of collaborative CSA in Iowa as a business incubator
- Define other roles of collaborative CSA
- Identify characteristics of CSA that appeal to members
- Determine participation of CSA members in local food systems

Research Framework

- Community Capitals (Flora and Flora, 2004)



Research Methods

- Respondents
 - Coordinators of 3 Iowa cCSAs
 - Interviews
 - Current and former producers and members
 - Surveys
- Preliminary response rates (2 of 3 cCSAs completed)
 - Producers (79%)
 - Members (57%)

cCSA Producer Profile

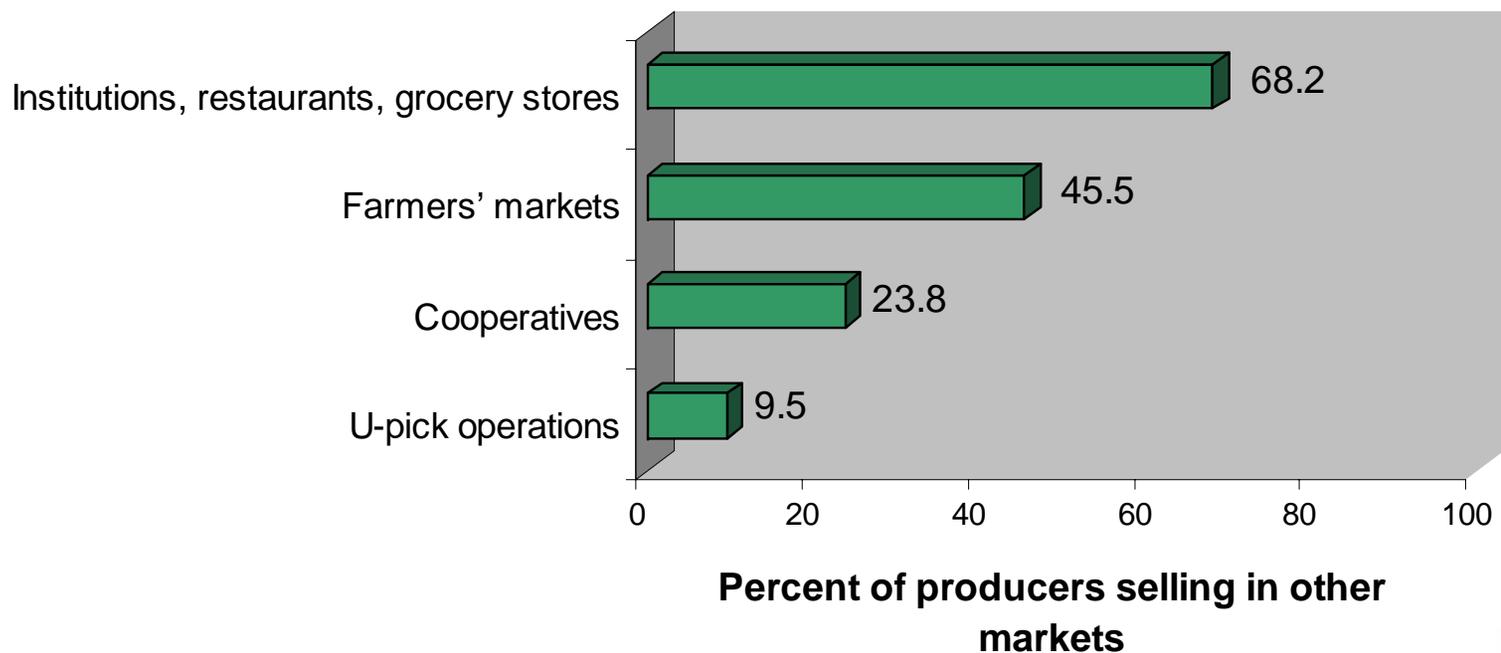


- 23 producers (57% current, 43% former)

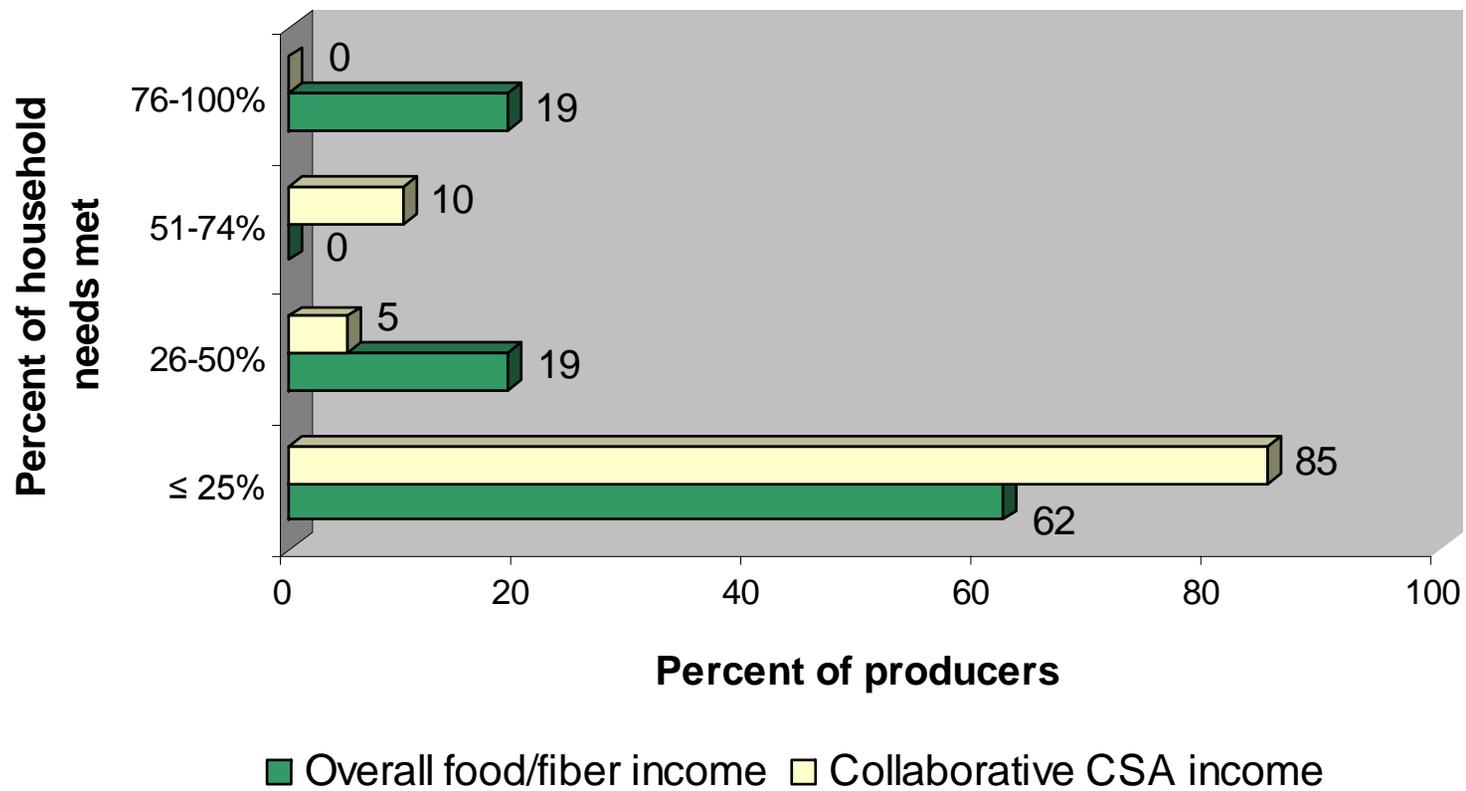
Demographic characteristic	2005 cCSA study	2002 Upper Midwest study <small>(Tegtmeier and Duffy, 2005)</small>	2002 USDA Census of Agriculture
<i>Female</i>	57%	53%	36%
<i>Average age</i>	43.8	45.4	55.3

cCSA Producer Profile

- 100% sell in other direct markets



cCSA Producer Profile



cCSA Member Profile



- 163 members (47% current, 53% former)

Demographic characteristic	2005 cCSA study	2000 Cone and Myhre study	Iowa, 2000 Census
Female	81%	78%	52%
Median age	44	NA	36.6*
Mean household size	2.8	NA	2.5
Households with annual income > \$70,000	51%	24%**	16%**

*Of the total, not adult, population

**Percent households with income > \$75,000



Objective 1

- Define the role of collaborative CSA in Iowa as a business incubator



Results: Objective 1



- “Did participation in collaborative CSA help you start or continue new/different farm-related enterprises?”
 - Yes 39%
 - Single proprietor CSA
 - New direct markets
 - Buying club
 - Agri-tourism venture

Objective 2

- Define other roles of collaborative CSA in informing the business decisions and actions of local agricultural entrepreneurs



Results: Objective 2



- “How has participation in collaborative CSA influenced the business decisions you have made to participate as a producer in local food systems?”
 - 57% said it had an influence
 - Of those, all said it helped them continue
 - Of those, none dropped out of local food system production

Results: Objective 2

- “How has participation in cCSA influenced the business decisions...” (continued)
 - *It made it easier and less risky. I probably would not have started growing if it was not there.*
 - *It made our farm viable by having a stable income while we honed marketing skills in other areas.*
 - *Has allowed me to focus on what I do best and yet enhance our marketability because of other products we offer.*
 - *It helped me realize I wanted to operate my own CSA in my own way.*



Results: Objective 2



- “Since participating in cCSA, have you been employed in an agriculturally related position paid by an off-farm source?”
 - 38% of producers have as
 - Program staff/researchers for sustainable agriculture nonprofits
 - Sustainable foods company owner
 - College garden manager
 - Vocational agriculture instructor
 - Food systems specialist assisting farmers and ag companies



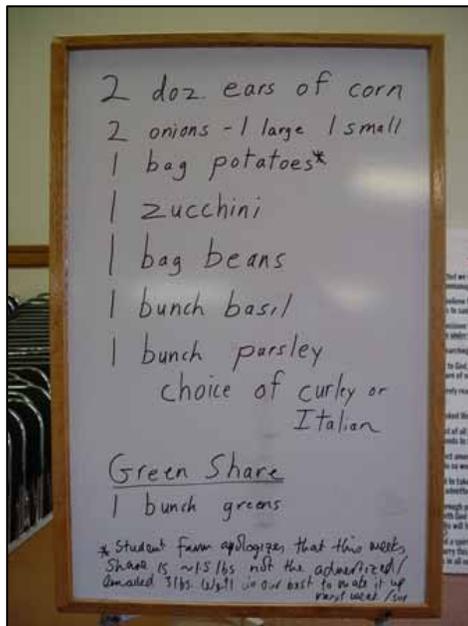
Results: Objective 2



- Agriculturally related employment (continued)
 - Of those employed, 63% credited cCSA participation for
 - Providing them access to networks that led to employment
 - Working with other producers
 - Increasing knowledge about production and marketing

Objective 3

- Identify characteristics of CSA that appeal to members



Results: Objective 3

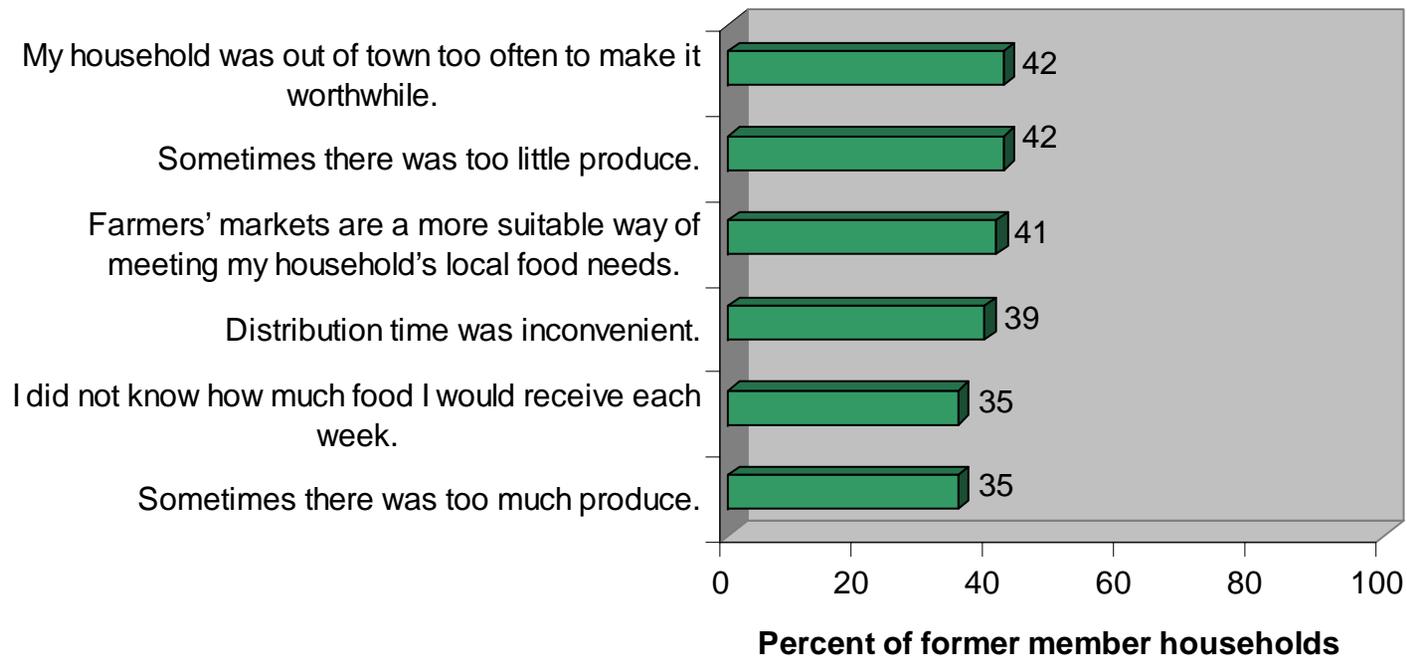
- Using the community capitals, members ranked benefits from most to least
 - Natural
 - Financial
 - Human
 - Social
 - Cultural
 - Political

Results: Objective 3

- Differences between current and former members
 - Current members more likely to experience financial and social benefits ($p < .05$)
 - Current members more likely to experience human and cultural capital benefits ($p < .10$)
 - No differences in political and natural capital benefits

Results: Objective 3

- Top reasons for attrition



Results: Objective 3

- 14% of former cCSA members have belonged to single proprietor owned CSA
- Why did you switch?
 - Moved
 - Home delivery
 - Control over quantities and types of produce received
 - More personal relationship with producer
 - *[After] consistently subsidizing the learning and growth of the CSA and its producers [...] I went shopping for [...] someone who was my person, my farmer, and whose single focus was his/her relationship with what they grew and by extension who they grew it for.*



Objective 4

- Determine participation of collaborative CSA members in other local food system markets

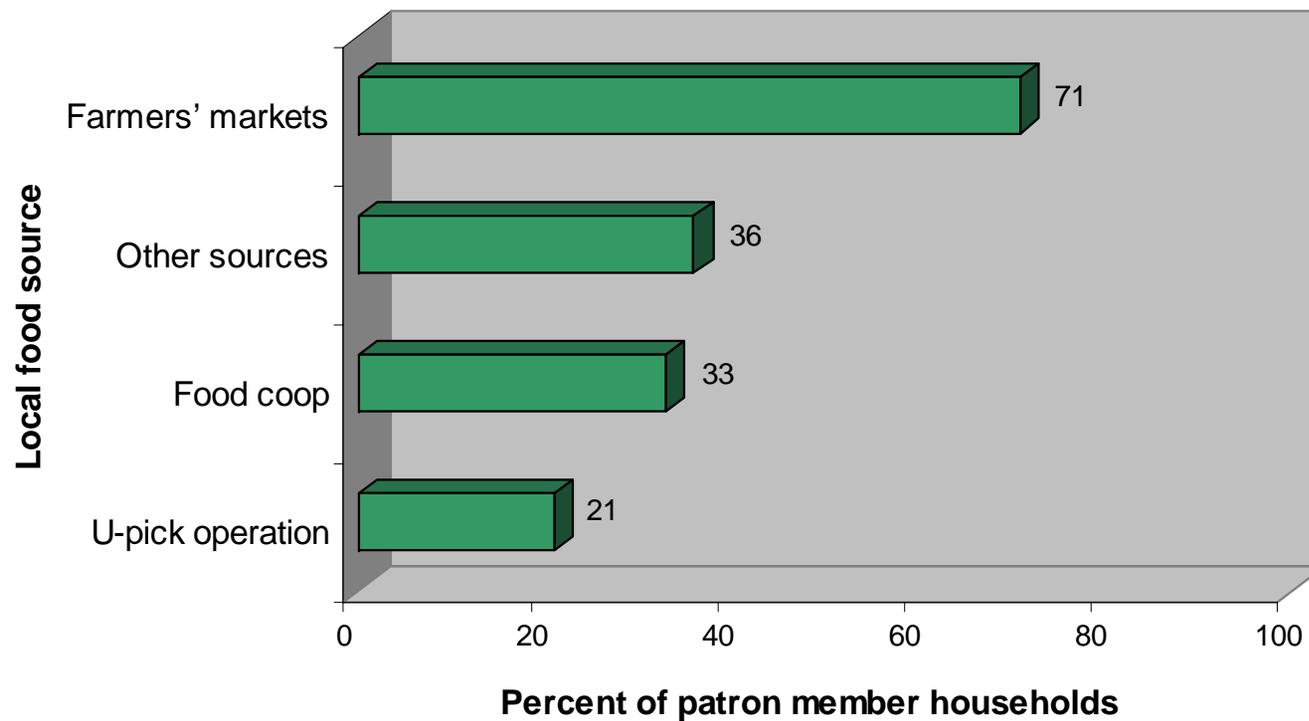


Results: Objective 4



- 85% of all cCSA members supplemented their share in the last season they were a member by buying local food from other sources

Results: Objective 4



Results: Objective 4

- Former members were more likely ($p < .10$) than current members to buy from farmers' markets



Conclusions



- Some factors that support initiation and proliferation of cCSA in Iowa
 - Culture of cooperation
 - Strong producer networks combined with public support for local food production

Conclusions



- Characteristics appealing to cCSA members
 - Choice in quantity
 - More personal knowledge of producer and products
 - Flexible delivery/pickup options
- Collaborative CSA members strongly support the broader local food system

Conclusions



- Collaborative CSA
 - incubates new and expands existing farm-based businesses
 - strengthens overall local food system participation and development
 - provides workforce development by preparing producers for off-farm careers in agriculture

Acknowledgments

- Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
- Advisory Committee
 - Iowa Network for Community Agriculture
 - Central Iowa producers, coordinators, members
- Participating coordinators, producers, members





To view surveys and read updates,
visit us online at

<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/csa/index.html>

