

WHY BUY SUSTAINABLY RAISED ANIMAL PRODUCTS?

A STUDY OF CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS AND PRODUCER MARKETING

By

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Abstract

Throughout the twentieth century, conventional agriculture has depleted natural resources, left once flourishing rural communities in disarray, and filled our grocery store shelves with unnatural, “cheap” products. However, a recent turn toward sustainable agriculture among some producers has created niche products that are gaining some popularity in the market. This thesis analyzes why some consumers choose to purchase sustainable agriculture products, exploring the demographic, ethical, and economic factors involved in their choices. Customers of Burgundy Pasture Beef and Truth Hill Farm were interviewed on site at the Burgundy Local storefront in Fort Worth and the Collin County Farmers Market. By analyzing why these individuals chose to purchase sustainably raised animal products, I hope to help sustainable producers more effectively market their products to new customers.

Consistent with previous research on this topic, I found that the people who choose to purchase these sustainably raised livestock products are mainly white and upper-middle class. They said they selected these particular products and producers based mainly on health concerns and ethical concerns related to environmental preservation and animal welfare. Based on the information gathered from participants at both locations it is apparent that the consumers of these products represent a very small portion of the American population. Producers could broaden their outreach and impact on the market by reaching out to lower income consumers that are often in the most need of better nutrition. Marketing sustainably raised animal products through alternative health and exercise providers such as naturopaths and yoga instructors may also be a way for these producers to reach new customers.

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When I was a young girl, the most valuable item in our house, according to me, was your leather-bound management plan from your completion of the TCU Ranch Management program. My greatest pride came from showing people your hard work and your intelligence, and telling them that your plan was so perfect that it still serves as an example to other students over 25 years later. Though my path in education has had its fair share of changes and switchbacks, my ultimate goals have remained the same: to make you and mama proud and to have something of my own to put next to that management plan. It is my greatest honor to present this thesis to you in hopes that it encompasses the values you worked tirelessly to instill in me. When I look at you I see a perfect reflection of all my joy, my pride, and my passions. Thank you for teaching me to change the world.

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Introduction

My family assured me when I was growing up that being from an agricultural background was something you would never be able to forget or abandon, and even though I've spent the last four years living in the city, they were right. This project is a reflection of the lasting impressions that rural America and agrarian practices have left on my adult life, and furthermore it is a hopeful projection of the progress that sustainable farmers have made in the current agricultural climate. Moreover, this study aims to strengthen the connection between producers and consumers of such products and encourage the growth of sustainable agriculture in part by helping educate consumers about the ethical, environmental, and health benefits of sustainable agriculture.

I was raised in a rural setting on a sustainable ranch and because of that I originally was drawn to researching the producers of natural, organic, and holistic livestock products. But I soon discovered that my true passion lay in bridging the gap between producer and consumer that contemporary American agriculture has created. While those who raise animals sustainably are becoming trailblazers in their communities, consumers are also vital in the distribution of knowledge and understanding that is needed to create a viable market for these niche products. By analyzing why some individuals choose to purchase sustainably raised animal products, I hope to help sustainable producers more effectively market their products to new customers.

This thesis will begin with a comprehensive look at the recent histories of both conventional and sustainable agriculture in the U.S. to set the stage against which to interpret the results of my interview research. Following that historical analysis readers will be introduced to the methods I used to conduct interview-based research among

consumers who purchased products from Burgundy Pasture Beef's Burgundy Local store in Fort Worth and from Truth Hill Farm's booth at the Collin County Farmers Market. The results will then be presented in terms of the demographics of the customers, their perceptions of what "sustainable agriculture" means, and why they chose to purchase sustainably raised animal products. I then discuss the implications of my research findings for producers. Finally, I conclude with my personal reflections on how producers of these sustainably raised animal products can broaden their markets. In doing so, they can help make American agriculture more sustainable and consumers healthier.

Conventional versus Sustainable Animal Agriculture in the U.S.

Where I was raised there was always a chicken clucking nearby, a pig rustling in a self-made straw bed, and a cow peeking through tall clover at you with glossy eyes. Where I was raised the grass was green and I knew that was because the soil was the right color of brown, and the soil was brown because my father's cracked hands worked tirelessly to keep it that way. When I left for college I soon realized that I had been raised in a picture from a magazine and that most people thought families like mine were left behind in a long-ago agrarian past. Though my family and our livelihood in sustainable agriculture are unique, there are families across the United States who also raise food sustainably. More and more consumers are seeking out sustainably raised animal products as they learn about the problems with the current industrial agriculture system and the benefits of sustainable farming for people, animals, and the planet.

Historically, small farms like my family's and close-knit rural communities sustained our country's agricultural sector. However, since the 1940s, the agricultural landscape in the United States has changed in a way that has left small farms struggling to compete against large industrial operations that mass-produce animal commodities to line the shelves of our grocery stores (Lyson 2-3). While these industrial farms produce large quantities of animal products cheaply due to economies of scale and externalized costs, "cheap" meat actually comes at a high cost to producers, consumers, animals, and the environment.

Luckily, there is an alternative to conventional animal agriculture that is more socially, economically, and environmentally viable. This alternative is known as sustainable livestock production. While conventional farming focuses on centralized management, specialization, and standardized production, sustainable agriculturists instead work to utilize varied and diverse farming practices that value natural processes

and work with the land to ensure livestock is provided with the best quality life, which will in turn create the highest quality and healthiest products (Neher 49).

In this section I will first describe the current conventional model of animal agriculture in the U.S., and the problems it often causes for animal welfare, environmental quality, human health, and producers' way of life. I will then discuss an alternative model that is becoming increasingly popular today: sustainable animal agriculture. Drawing on both traditional and innovative practices, sustainable agriculture uses animals in ways that are more humane, better for the environment and human health, and that allow producers to farm in a manner that is more aligned with their ethical values, and that is also economically viable for them.

Current Conventional Agriculture Models

Since the troubling economic times of the Great Depression when it became more cost effective to bring animals to their feed rather than bring their feed to them, the success of the U.S. agriculture industry has been marked by its ability to produce these livestock products at low costs. These low production costs, in turn, have allowed consumers to purchase meats, eggs, and dairy products at relatively cheap grocery store prices.

Industrial agriculture overall can be described as a system that works to mass-produce livestock in a way that reduces costs. To take advantage of economies of scale and control all aspects of production, animals are raised in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), which are also colloquially known as "factory farms." These

factory farms provide the greatest output of “animal product” in the least expensive and most efficient way possible (McLeod-Kilmurray 72).

Cattle are one of the many species who have been subjected to these CAFOs in the form of feedlots. Cattle feedlots are used to “finish” an animal with a fast-paced and high-energy diet that is consistent with the competitive nature and razor-thin profit margins of the beef industry, and are used to increase slaughter weights as quickly as possible (Kellems and Church 361-2). These cattle feedlots consist of vast, dry landscapes of pens filled with cattle packed closely together, simply waiting for their next meal. Cattle diets in feedlots are lower in grasses and higher in grains in the last three to five months of the animal’s life, which does produce a faster growing animal.

But these faster growth rates come at a high cost to the animals’ welfare and to the environment. Because cattle in feedlots are given neither freedom of motion nor natural environments, they become susceptible to a host of diseases and health problems such as increased rumen acidity, higher concentrations of pathogens in the rumen, and metabolic diseases such as acidosis (Barnes 31-2). Furthermore, due to the inefficiency with which cattle convert their energy in these industrial settings, the feedlots have also become massive consumers of fossil fuels through fertilizers and pesticides which are applied heavily to the crops that are fed to cattle (Horrihan et al. 445). In 2011 American farmers used more than 22 million tons of fertilizers, mainly nitrogen, on our soils and in the year 2007 more than 877 million pounds of pesticides were applied to United States crops (USDA ERS- Chemical Inputs).

Unlike cattle, who spend only part of their lives in an intensive feeding program, poultry are animal others who have been industrialized so heavily that most will never

see the sun or natural life. In general, the goals of growing poultry in contemporary agriculture are to transform inedible materials into edible products for the birds in an economical fashion, which has led to the majority of avian livestock breeds being raised in confinement to optimize productivity (Kellems and Church 291). Over 90% of the world's laying chickens live in "battery" cages that limit their mobility and subject hens to a life of strictly monitored light, food, water, and antibiotic dosages to prevent disease in unsanitary conditions (DeMello 134). To reduce their ability to attack one another due to their stress and overcrowding, hens in these battery cage conditions are "debeaked" without anesthesia (DeMello 133-4). Hens serve their purpose in these battery cages and are subject to questionable practices such as "forced molting" to speed up egg production through starvation (McLeod-Kilmurray 73-4). Though this system of poultry production is able to raise mass amounts of eggs and meat to distribute cheaply to consumers, the environments are very obviously unhealthy and cruel to the animals who are kept there.

Problems with Conventional Agriculture

It is easy to ignore the detrimental effects of our addiction to inexpensive conventionally raised livestock products due to the distance between consumers and where their food actually comes from. Wendell Berry states that our participation in industrial agriculture has made us unaware of our own agrarian heritage and the "habitats of our meals," and this system has made it virtually impossible to know the economic and ecological impact of our foods (Berry 2001, 64-65). We may not see directly how our meals are produced, but the impacts of conventional agriculture have nonetheless become quite serious for animal welfare, environmental quality, human health, and producers' way of life.

The factory farming system heavily impacts animal welfare. As mentioned before beef cattle are fed intensive diets of grains rather than grasses at feedlots. Though they are physically able to consume such products, these grains, particularly corn, are not within the natural diet of the species, and can cause adverse effects such as ulcers and acidosis (Barnes 32; McGarva).

Feedlots and CAFOs compromise animal health and well-being by forcing animals to live in close quarters with one another in often unsanitary environments. These close quarters, in turn, have led to the use of intensive antibiotics and/or hormones to reduce diseases and infections from injury and encourage faster growth in these unnatural conditions, which creates concern in the human community in the form of secondhand consumption of these hormones or antibiotics (Bowler 206). Moreover, parasites and bacteria found in ruminants often develop a resistance to antibiotics over time; with limited mobility and close quarters, livestock in industrial settings are continually subject to these parasites and bacteria which thrive in unsanitary and stagnant environments (Barnes 32-4).

Alongside the detrimental effects that feedlots and CAFOs have on animal welfare, the actual returns on chemically intensive agriculture models are becoming very few and far between. As industrial agriculture relies more and more heavily on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to maintain fast growing production standards, our soils are becoming lifeless and infertile, which leaves our lands unable to support the microorganisms needed to sustain plant life (Wirzba 14-15).

Furthermore, CAFOs and other industrial animal processing systems breed distrust between producers and consumers because the industrial system has hidden

everything it does to animals throughout their lives (Salatin 323-4). Rather than allowing people to see how animals are being raised so they may make educated decisions about what they choose to eat and how they feel the animals they eat should be raised and processed, the system of industrial agriculture prefers to leave consumers blind so that it may continue its inhumane practices for as long as possible. Moreover, this system of industrial agriculture allows consumers to comfortably remain separated from what is happening to their food while it is being produced, which has disconnected consumers from the animals who will be their food.

Industrial “mega farms” not only put animals in unnatural living conditions but they also require vast amounts of resources such as water and nonrenewable fossil fuels to keep animals, machinery, and feed in constant production. Reliance on these cheap fossil fuels results in inefficient and destructive practices that are quickly running through nonrenewable resources at rates that cannot be sustained (Wirzba 13-14). On the one hand, this system of industrial agriculture is extremely efficient: it has allowed just one American farmer to feed himself and more than fifty other people (Berry 1977, 33). On the other hand, this system has also degraded the environment and undermined human morality and public knowledge regarding our agricultural processes, leaving the farmer and the land he or she farms to be victimized by corporations, university specialists, and government agencies (Berry 1977, 33). Environmental standards will continue to decline to make room for more “progress” and rural areas will essentially disappear along with riparian areas and other natural environments to make room for new machines and new, inexpensive labor (Kirschenmann 108-10).

Human health, as well as animal health, is adversely affected by industrial farming due to high-fat diets, *Salmonella* poisoning, and the creation of antibiotic resistance. Meat-heavy diets are becoming more and more accessible worldwide through the increasing availability of low-cost, industrially produced meats. Since the start of the 19th century, meat consumption has drastically increased and half of the increase has happened in the last 25 years, a trend that is projected to continue as developing countries grow (Galloway et al. 622-23). These new high-meat diets, combined with the ready availability of cheap fast foods, are contributing to a rise in obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and even certain types of cancers through high fat concentrations and low nutrition values (Winne 112-13). Conventionally raised animals are also subject to parasites and other diseases such as those caused by *Salmonella*, and the mass slaughter and processing that are used in the industrial system can cause widespread contamination of products that humans are consuming. For example, there are only about 1,100 federally inspected slaughterhouses in the United States, and those facilities process 99% of the meat that is eaten in the U.S., a situation that can easily lead to mass contamination (Van Overbeke et al. 196-8). Furthermore, the total number of certified USDA inspectors in the United States is less than in the 1970s, while one slaughterhouse can process over 4,000 head of cattle in one day leading to a lack of quality control and proper procedural measures needed to prevent contaminated meat from entering the market (Schlosser 176-8). Along with overconsumption of these high-fat animal products and possible exposure to illness from contamination, the intensive use of antibiotics in factory farming has been linked to the resistance to such antibiotics in humans; this, in turn, may compromise our own medical options for fighting illness (Horrigan et al. 445).

Consumers of conventional agriculture products face health consequences, but producers of these conventional products are faced with a deterioration of their own families' well-being and rights. As the shift from family owned and operated farms to the corporate industrial system has taken over American agriculture, farmers in our country have become, often unknowingly, victims of a dangerous monopoly that seeks to produce and capitalize on livestock production (Lauck 210). Where farmers once owned and controlled their crops and livestock, the industrial system has created an environment where agriculturists are "virtually hired hands of the corporation" (Lauck 209). With the integration of contracts created by corporations to regulate the processes of production on America's farms, farmers and ranchers have been left unable to control their own operations and consequently unable to maintain the traditional agricultural lifestyle that was once the backbone of America (Lauck 209).

As more Americans learn about these alarming effects and consequences of conventional agriculture, many producers and consumers are becoming convinced that this system of low input industrial agriculture cannot sustain itself. Luckily, we have another option: returning to older systems of sustainable animal agriculture, but modified to take into account contemporary needs and to take advantage of modern technologies.

The Philosophy of Sustainable Agriculture

"Sustainable agriculture" was a term coined in the 1970s to describe agriculture that differed from the conventional model. It includes farming types that are variously described as organic, natural, and agrarian. Sustainable agriculture can be defined as being both environmentally and economically sound, relying primarily on renewable resources, and using non-renewables in a way that shares them equitably with future

generations (Daly 63-4). Another distinguishing feature of those who practice sustainable agriculture is their adherence to certain ethics that acknowledge animal worth and well-being; respect the Earth and its natural processes; and appreciate locally adapted, small-scale agricultural practices (Bowler 209). Sustainable agriculture enhances environmental quality, contributes to the well-being of farm households across the United States, and strengthens local communities through nurturing small businesses and interrelationships among different occupations, ages, and social classes (Lyson 78-8). Sustainable agriculture is a form of farming and animal consumption that seeks to make the body of Creation whole once again by connecting people, nonhuman animals, and our environment; by mending the fragmented pieces that have been created by overspecialization and industrialization (Berry 1977, 103).

Referring to these forms of agriculture as “agrarian,” Wendell Berry poetically describes this approach as, “a loyalty, and a passion... a way of thought based on the land” (Berry 2001, 67). These practices measure success and failure through the health and vitality of the land, nonhuman animals, and the human community rather than just in terms of income and economic growth (Wirzba 4). Though sustainable agriculture is not a norm in today’s agricultural community, consumers are becoming more aware of what they put on their plates and in their bodies. As this shift continues, diversified and natural processes of raising livestock animals may be taking us in a direction towards knowing our agrarian pasts that Wendell Berry has called our attention to. In a Judaeo-Christian perspective (which is shared by a majority of livestock producers and consumers in the United States), proper and sustainable stewardship works with nature to ensure that our

God-given dominion¹ over the soil and our environment does not end with our poisoning it or covering it with concrete (Ikerd 112-13).

Benefits of Sustainable Agriculture

By embracing natural processes and the natural tendencies of animal others, the sustainable farming model steers us away from the confinement model of factory farms and puts livestock back into their desired habitats. Grass-fed cattle are often raised in a rotational way that allows them to graze freely each day on new, clean grasses. This provides a healthy diet, prevents disease without the use of antibiotic intervention, and encourages normal social interactions between animals as they grow (Barnes 31-2). As explained above, conventional feedlot operations are not energy efficient; therefore, grass-fed sustainable beef production can be more cost effective for the producer by using about half the fossil fuel inputs of grain-fed beef (Barnes 31). Also, these sustainable farms and ranches encourage harmony with the environment by using diversified animal production and conservation techniques that recognize the need for clean water, soil, and feed for their livestock.

While industrial practices expose livestock animals to a never-ending array of antibiotics and vaccinations to avoid costly disease outbreaks, these unsanitary and unhealthy conditions are eliminated by the natural processes and environments used in sustainable agriculture (Logsdon 164-66). Pasture raised chickens and cattle are not exposed to chemicals or pesticides since the feed that they are consuming is part of a

¹ Genesis 1:28: “God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

natural diet. Moreover, because pasture raised animals are living a more natural life, there is much less need to provide them with vaccinations and antibiotics (which can be detrimental to human health, as explained above). Nutritional studies have also shown that grass-fed livestock products contain more healthy fats (rather than saturated fats), which can bring anti-inflammatory and anticancer benefits for human consumers (Barnes 31-2).

Wendell Berry argues that one of the key differences between agrarian and industrial animal agriculture is the respect and husbandry shown to animals and the land in the agrarian model. Sustainable agriculture works to ensure not only the continued availability of livestock products for consumers around the world today, but that there will be the resources to continue agriculture into the future. In the early 1990s, Tom Frantzen highlighted that small farmers and sustainable agriculturists work only through good water use, efficient use of different renewable energies such as solar, and the encouragement of biodiversity amongst plants, animals, and microorganisms (Bird and Ikerd 94). This showcases the complex system that this agrarian movement works within to ensure that more than just the cost is considered when raising animals for consumption (Bird and Ikerd 94-5).

Sustainable Farming and Producers

As industrial agriculture changed the way livestock animals were being produced and consumed, it also changed the way producers live. The agriculture industry was once driven by generations handing down the knowledge of how to maintain a farm or ranch in a way that would give back to the global community and the family. The industrial system today no longer fosters human relationships and instead specialization and

separation quite literally tear people apart, locally and globally (Ikerd 37). In today's industrial system there can be ranchers growing beef cattle, grain-fed, who are literally starving because they can't kill their profits even if they wanted to due to federal law and corporate contract regulations (Salatin xiii). Though industrial agriculture has created a system of middlemen and crippling legislative measures, the sustainable agrarian movement works to bring back the way of thriving small farms and restore the dignity of producers across the United States.

Unlike industrial agriculture, small family farms cannot be reduced to dollars and percentages because a true family farm encompasses a family and a farm that are both crucial parts of the same whole (Ikerd 36-7). A family and the well-being of the people producing food are one of the most defining features of this new agrarian model, simply because giving back to the land and the community cannot happen until a family can sustain its own happiness. The new model presented by sustainable agriculture encourages not only a diverse style of farming; it also encourages a higher quality of life for the farmer and their family (Ikerd 40-1). Sustainable agriculture is a type of farming that puts peace and harmony back into the land and also back into the hearts of those who till the land and eat the crops. Industrial agriculture cannot be sustainable for farmers or for the world because it has turned farming into a war zone that encourages aggressive, competitive monocultures that undermine the compassionate relationships between all living organisms that encourage growth and diversity (Shiva 122-5).

The aggressive and subsidized standards of the contemporary agriculture model have been changing the ways consumers buy livestock products. To capture "economies of scale," there has been a shift from community-based civic agriculture led by many

small family farmers to a system dominated by a few industrial-scale producers, large wholesalers, large retailers, and a mass market (Lyson 75). As many consumers find themselves living in food deserts with little or no access to fresh produce or alternative products like organic or grass-fed meats when supermarkets pull up their roots and move to more economically stable suburban areas, they are faced with many of the same struggles as agriculturists in the form of lost human rights and injustice at the hands of industrial agriculture and corporation driven food systems (Winne 86). Small-scale agriculture and locally driven markets, such as farmer's markets, that are encouraged in sustainable livestock production work to reestablish relationships between the people growing the food and the people eating it (Winne 46-8). Sustainable agriculturists across the country are becoming social advocates and often carry large parts of community fabric on their shoulders as they become more visible and work side by side with communities to give consumers new access and new peace of mind when grocery shopping (Winne 46).

Methods

For this project I conducted on-site, anonymous interviews with regular customers of both Burgundy Pasture Beef and Truth Hill Farm. Interviews were conducted at the Burgundy Local storefront in Fort Worth, Texas and at the Collin County Farmers Market in Plano, Texas, while regular customers of both producers were doing their weekly purchases and pickups. During each of my visits to the different locations I situated myself in a visible area and then approached customers individually either as they browsed products or as they checked out. When inviting consumers to participate I introduced myself as a TCU student who is working on a thesis regarding sustainable agriculture and asked them to participate in a short survey (see Appendix).

I selected these particular farms to work with because each markets their products directly to consumers in two different settings: through a conventional storefront and at a



Figure 1. - The Taggart Family

Photo courtesy of www.burgundypasturebeef.com

Burgundy Ranch, Burgundy Pasture Beef store in Grandview, and the newest addition, Burgundy Local in Fort Worth, Texas (Figure 1). Selling grass-fed beef both fresh and frozen, Burgundy Pasture Beef markets a variety of meat cuts for their consumers, and provides full meat cases filled with everything from hamburger to New York strip steaks.

farmer's market. Burgundy Pasture Beef is a local, grass-fed ranching and butcher facility located in Grandview, Texas. John and Wendy Taggart are the owners and operators of the original

I also chose to work with the Taggarts because of their personal connection to Texas Christian University: John Taggart graduated from the TCU Ranch Management Program and both he and Wendy Taggart are strong supporters of the Ranch Management Program's outreach in sustainable development. The Taggarts were very interested in getting to know their customers on a new level through my research and they supported my development as a researcher by being personally present to host my research on several occasions.

Truth Hill Farm is a holistic and diversified farm located in Farmersville, Texas. Truth Hill Farm is also a family operation headed by Terry and Christy Pillard, and the family owned and operated farm chooses to reach their consumers through farmer's markets across the DFW area (Figure 2). Choosing Truth



Figure 2. - Terry Pillard
Photo courtesy of www.friscofarmersmarket.com

Hill Farm as a participant in this research project came about somewhat by accident when the previous candidate suffered a loss through natural disaster (Rehoboth Ranch). Though my partnership with Truth Hill Farm was not planned in as much detail as with Burgundy Pasture Beef, these producers were just as eager and enthusiastic to have me visit their booth at the Collin County Farmer's Market in Plano where they specialize in providing their consumers with weekly supplies of free-range chicken, pork, and grass-fed beef.

Both producers were very supportive of my project, and often took it upon themselves to ask their customers to take part in my survey while I was on-site. In the case of Truth Hill Farm, the farmers sent out an email prior to my first visit to encourage participation when consumers came to pick up their orders at the farmer's market.

Very few consumers took it upon themselves to approach me directly, unless they had heard about me via email; therefore the method that I used in approaching them to introduce myself worked best in finding new participants. To ensure the anonymity of each participant the names and dates of each interview were not recorded; instead, the interview location was the only indication of which producer the consumer was buying from during their visit. Each of my participants was invited to answer each question in as much detail, or lack thereof, as they saw fit. I found they often had just as many questions for me as I had for them!

Results and Discussion

Over the course of several months I interviewed customers of Truth Hill Farms at the Collin County Farmers Market and shoppers at the Burgundy Local storefront in Fort Worth. My interviews were done anonymously and consisted of a series of questions concerning the purchasing of sustainably raised livestock products from Truth Hill Farm and Burgundy Pasture Beef (see Appendix for a list of the interview questions). In this section I will report and discuss these interview data.

I will begin by highlighting the demographics of my participants including their gender, age, ethnicity, and household income. These demographics will be followed by

an overview of participants' perceptions of what "sustainable agriculture" meant depending on which producer they were buying products from. After discussing what consumers believe "sustainable agriculture" is I will explore *why* consumers are choosing such products for themselves and their families. Next I will consider how participants perceive location and how they choose where to buy or what to buy from these niche markets. Furthermore, the discussion of location will be followed by an analysis of how price is affecting the purchases of participants. Finally, I will share recommendations for producers that were made directly by consumers or that are derived from common experiences across my respondents.

Demographic Analysis of Participants

As shown in Figure 3, most of the participants that were surveyed at the Burgundy Pasture Beef storefront were women. Of the nineteen respondents, thirteen were women and only six were men. At Truth Hill Farm's stand the majority of respondents were also female, and the percentages are very similar to those at Burgundy Local. At this location there were twenty surveys completed, and of those, thirteen were female, six were male, and one participant chose to abstain from answering.

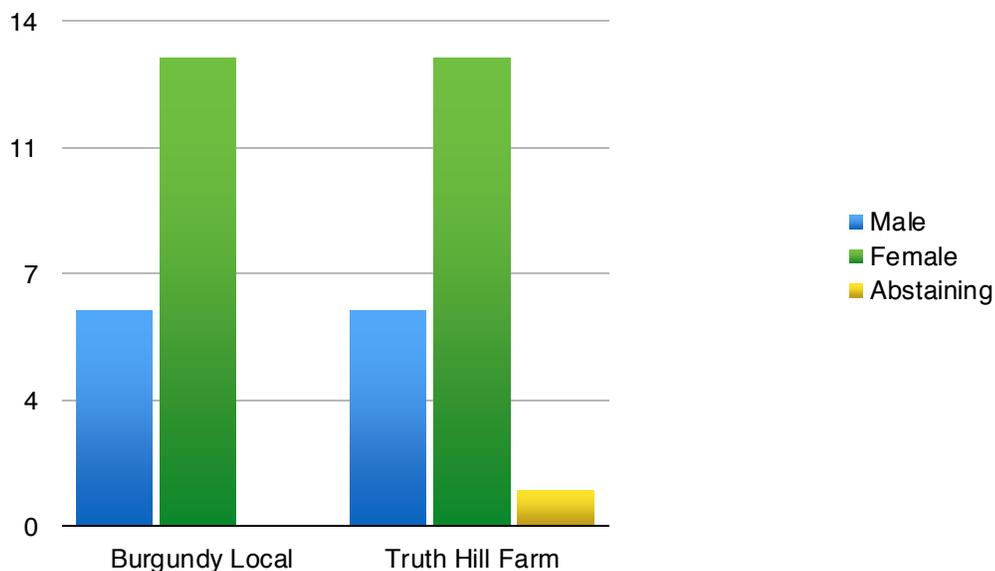


Figure 3. Gender

Figure 4 shows the range of ages that were represented by my participants. Of the nineteen Burgundy Local participants, a third were 51-60 years old (6/18), and of the twenty Truth Hill Farm respondents, nearly half were 31-40 years old (8/19). This graph shows a difference in consumers for the different locations, where the storefront atmosphere that Burgundy Local has created attracts older consumers and the farmer's market where Truth Hill Farm provides its products is more likely to attract a relatively younger demographic. Nearly all the participants shopping at these locations were middle- to older-aged; only four of 37 were under the age of 30. The average age of the 39 participants was 42. Of the 39 total participants there were two who chose to abstain from answering this question, one from each location.

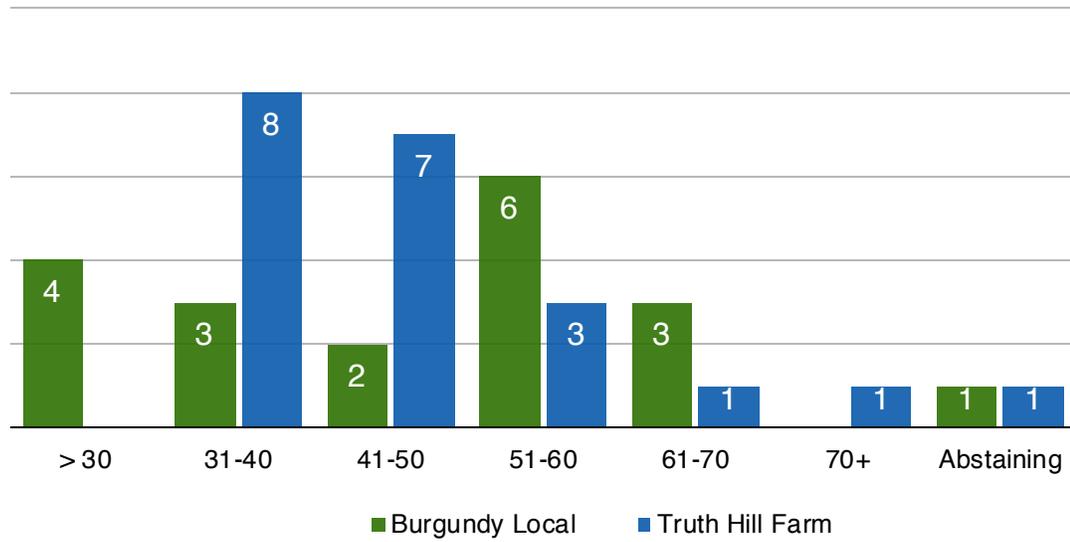


Figure 4. Age of Participants

In terms of ethnic diversity at the Burgundy Local storefront shown in Figure 5, it is apparent that the White/Caucasian demographic is heavily represented. Of the nineteen respondents at this location, fifteen said they were white, one said African-American, one said Hispanic, and two chose to abstain.

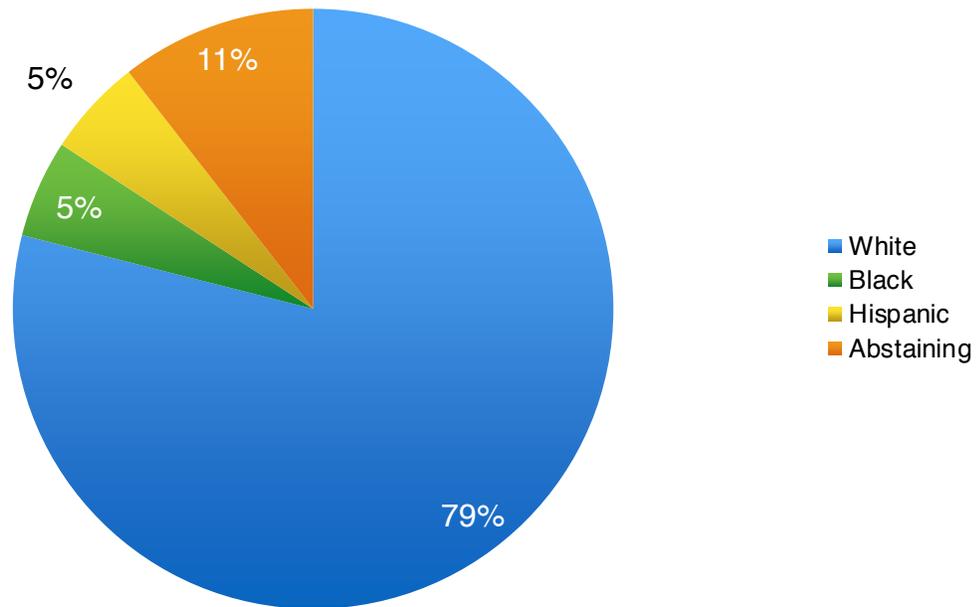


Figure 5. Ethnicity of Customers of Burgundy Local

Similar to Burgundy Local customers, nearly all the customers of Truth Hill Farm were White/Caucasian (see Figure 6). At this location there were twenty respondents, and of those seventeen said they were white, two said Asian, one chose to abstain, and no participants were African-American or Hispanic.

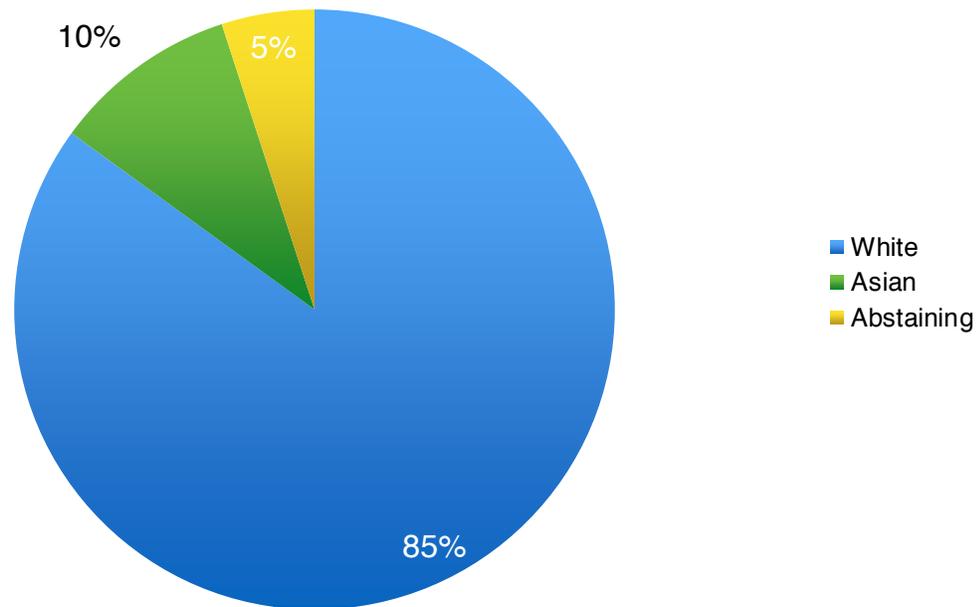


Figure 6. Ethnicity of Customers of Truth Hill Farm

The demographic question that (unsurprisingly) resulted in the most abstaining responses was that of income level, which can be seen in Figure 7. Of the 39 respondents, twelve chose to abstain from this question, which makes them the second largest group on this chart. Of those who did respond, most customers of both Burgundy Local and Truth Hill Farm fell in the \$100,000-200,000 per year income bracket (14/39 respondents = 35%). Though there are other income brackets represented that range from two students (very low income) to upwards of \$500,000 per year, the chart very obviously shows that the consumers of both locations are mostly considered middle-upper or upper-class.

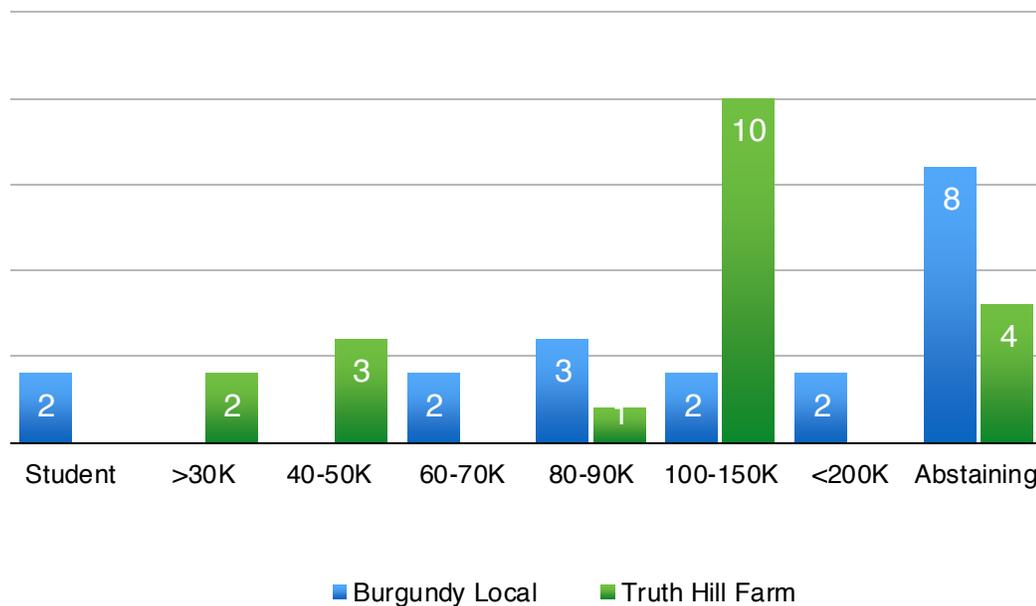


Figure 7. Income Level

Consumer Perceptions of What “Sustainable Agriculture” Means

When surveying my participants one of the more detailed questions that I asked them was, “In your opinion, what does ‘sustainability’ mean? What makes a livestock product sustainable?” Though many of the participants had a clear idea of what “sustainable” meant to them, their answers were also mainly focused on agricultural sustainability, rather than a more widespread or comprehensive view of sustainability. These respondents seemed most interested in sustainability as land stewardship, animal welfare, and ethically sound food production.

Burgundy Local

One of the more common explanations given for sustainability was an answer that took an “environmental stewardship” approach. Seven of the nineteen participants (36%) at Burgundy Local noted that sustainability focuses on taking care of the environment and preserving natural resources. One participant even answered in a way that referenced the importance of soil management and care, saying that sustainability means, “we aren’t going to exhaust the soil when growing our foods.”

Another response that was given by five of the nineteen (26%) participants was that sustainability was about caring for animal welfare and farming responsibly/honestly. In this group there was some crossover between environmental stewardship and natural diets, but the main focus seemed to be on the honesty and transparency of sustainable products. One respondent answered by saying that, “sustainable products are honest and we can know them at a closer face value compared to other products.”

More specifically, three respondents focused even more on agricultural/livestock sustainability by saying that sustainability means locally grown and distributed. These survey answers were brief and to the point, but they show that these customers are considering things that are grown locally and naturally as their desired form of sustainability in their community. Also, these responses often connected local products with natural diets and natural growth processes for livestock products, which shows that these participants felt that local can be synonymous with natural in this case.

One group of four participants chose to answer honestly by saying that they didn’t really know what “sustainable” meant in general or in regards to livestock products. Often these participants were more focused on health and taste rather than the sustainability of the products that they were buying. “I hadn’t ever really stopped to think

about it,” said one participant. Most of these unsure responses were in regards to the livestock portion of the question, but this group also answered the general sustainability question in a very vague way that alluded to natural processes or not depleting resources.

Truth Hill Farm

At the Collin County Farmers Market where I surveyed people purchasing products from Truth Hill Farm the responses to my sustainability questions were more in depth than at Burgundy Local but less diverse. The answers from this group of participants were more closely linked to one another, demonstrating a common mindset shared by the people visiting this location. Also, the answers given by this group were much more detailed and cited many types of sustainable practices. Though these answers gave the impression of more thoughtful and conscious buyers than those I interviewed at Burgundy Local, these participants also chose to focus more on the livestock/agriculture area of sustainability when asked for their definitions.

One group of responses can be distinguished as focusing on animal welfare and health as the main factors in sustainable production. These respondents (nine of twenty total interviews, or 45%) were concerned mainly with what animals are fed and how they are raised, and they defined sustainability as a mode of agriculture that worked with natural processes and natural diets to ensure quality of products. One respondent exclaimed passionately that, “it’s NOT sustainable to give animals drugs.”

Another commonality in this group of responses was the focus on small operations and their role in defining sustainable, though the reference towards local was

not made as it was in the Burgundy Pasture Beef responses. This group was very clear that both animal welfare and environmental quality are linked to smaller production and a change in our demands so that, “my children and grandchildren will have the resources left for healthy and natural foods.”

The second group of participants that provided similar responses were those who showed a very deep understanding of agricultural practices and animal production. Of the twenty surveys, these eleven responses, accounting for 55%, often cited practices such as rotational grazing, holistic management, and model operations such as Polyface Farms (see Salatin). Through such responses these consumers demonstrated that they were well informed about what was best for the environment and therefore they chose this type of product very thoughtfully based on their understanding of sustainable production. Moreover, these respondents also ranked their ethical concerns regarding the environment and treatment of animals as one of the most important factors in why they chose to buy sustainable livestock products.

Overall, this group of responses is very different from the Burgundy Local responses because these consumers show a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable products. These twenty responses were broken into two categories, but the majority of respondents answered with all-encompassing responses that simply chose to focus on the one area that was most important to them personally such as animal welfare or sound agriculture practices. While the Burgundy Pasture Beef customers were knowledgeable in what they were seeking and the health benefits of those products, the consumers of Truth Hill Farm products were much more willing to give deep and complex explanations of what “sustainable” meant to them and their families. Also, none

of the consumers at Truth Hill Farm's stand were unsure of their understanding of sustainability, unlike those at Burgundy Local. I feel that this difference can likely be accounted for by the fact that Burgundy Local is a neighborhood store that is convenient to all kinds of shoppers, not necessarily those who thoughtfully sought out a farmer's market environment like the consumers at the Truth Hill Farm stand.

Why Consumers Chose to Purchase Sustainably Raised Animal Products

Consumers who shopped at Burgundy Local and Truth Hill Farm's booth at the Collin County Farmers Market had very different interpretations of sustainability and sustainable livestock products. However, their reasons for choosing these products were remarkably similar; therefore, their responses will be combined in this section. When analyzing the responses to the question, "How did you first learn about sustainable agriculture?" there were four clear-cut categories that distinguished why consumers chose these products over the conventional option: health issues or dietary needs, word of mouth, rural upbringing or experience with natural agriculture, and ethical concerns.

Heath Issues/Dietary Needs

The largest group of responses by participants regarding this question were the fifteen of thirty-nine respondents (38%) who chose sustainable/natural products due to their dietary and health needs. Often these participants noted that they had been referred to these products by health care professionals ranging from chiropractors to nutritionists. Also, these respondents had an array of health issues and diseases with which they

believed naturally raised livestock products were helping, such as Crohn's Disease, children with special needs, and even brain tumors.

One of the main dietary needs that was referenced by consumers was the Paleo Diet and the desire for grass-fed beef (the Paleo Diet can be characterized as a diet consisting of mainly meats, fish, fruits, and vegetables with no dairy, grains, or processed foods). These participants more often said that their health and diet was more pertinent to their purchasing rather than ethical or environmental concerns. Overall, the number of responses that used health as a reason for seeking out sustainable livestock products demonstrates that certain health care providers are recognizing the need for natural products more and more.

Word of Mouth

The second largest group of responses was the eleven of thirty-nine participants (28%) who simply cited word of mouth and more visibility as the reason their interest was piqued by these producers and natural agriculture. Several participants credited friends and family members with getting them interested in doing research about sustainable agriculture, and others noted that the newer presence of "organic" or "all natural" products in the grocery store had led them to do more research. This group of consumers demonstrates the power of word of mouth advertisement because regardless of the depth of their knowledge of natural processes or agriculture in general, these consumers chose to begin purchasing these products because someone told them it was worthwhile and beneficial.

Rural Upbringing/Familiarity with Natural Agriculture

One of the smaller response groups were the nine of thirty-nine consumers (23%) who sought out sustainable products due to their personal connection to rural areas or to natural agricultural processes that don't use confined feeding techniques or the use of chemicals/hormones to expedite production. The responses from these consumers were particularly brief in saying, "I grew up with it," or "I grew up close to an agriculture community," and this gave the impression that they felt their upbringing led them to these products, which felt natural to them, even though they were now living in an urban area.

Ethical and Environmental Concerns

Another smaller group of four respondents (10%) highlighted their ethical concerns regarding environmental preservation and mass agriculture as the reason they chose to purchase local and sustainable products. These participants also noted that knowing who is producing their food is very important to them because of their desire to buy "honest" products. This group of responses often mentioned health concerns as another factor in their reasoning and described the usage of chemicals, GMOs, and the use of artificial hormones as ethically wrong and detrimental to the environment. One participant stated that his relationship with sustainable agriculture was, "an evolution from thinking environmentally and ecologically which led to staying away from GMOs, chemicals, and hormones in food."

Location Matters: Convenience vs. Connection to Producers

Participants in my surveys were also asked if they chose to buy sustainable products from more than one venue or if they exclusively purchased from one producer. Responses were mixed, but most often gave the “multiple” answer. Thirty-one of the thirty-nine respondents (79%) answered that they go to multiple venues to purchase their sustainable or natural products including other specialty stores, Central Market, Whole Foods, or other farms in the area.

Very few participants, only eight (20%), answered that they exclusively bought livestock products from one producer, but those who did noted that they had to go to other venues to find their produce choices. Of those who were exclusively buying from either Burgundy Local or Truth Hill Farm the majority noted that knowing the producer face to face was very important in their purchasing of such products, and knowing the origin of their livestock products was also key to their dedication to the producer.

Participants at both locations were also asked how important it was for them to purchase these products directly from the producer. The majority, twenty-six of thirty-nine (66%), of respondents answered that buying directly from the producer was very important to them and that option was key in their decision to buy from such locations. The reasoning behind most of these responses was that knowing the producer allows them to know exactly where their food is coming from as well as providing support for a local producer that they know on a face-to-face level. “Knowing the producers is becoming more important to know the products are actually natural,” said one respondent.

The other thirteen respondents can be split into two smaller groups that represent an emphasis on convenience over relationships and also mixed feelings. For example, these respondents might like the idea of buying direct, but don't see it as a vital piece of their consumer experience. Of the respondents that answered with "no," their main reason for saying so was that convenience was much more important to them. One Burgundy Local shopper said, "as long as it's natural, it doesn't matter who's growing it." Also, these consumers felt that buying from places like co-ops or groceries is just as viable an option as buying from smaller shops like Burgundy Local or Truth Hill Farm's booth at the farmer's market.

The group of participants that represented the "mixed" take on this question were those who said they enjoyed being able to know the producer but did not feel that was the most vital part of their reasoning for choosing these products. Most of these participants felt that buying direct from the producer was just a bonus that was added to the fact that they were receiving a quality product.

Overall, this set of questions reveals that most consumers are not able to exclusively buy from one producer due to their location or desire for multiple types of product. Though this is the majority at this point, there are a number of participants that are exclusively using one location and they note that knowing the producer was crucial to that decision. While most consumers note that buying directly from producers is very important to them, some believe that this is not necessary when purchasing sustainable products. Therefore, convenience is still a key motivator for many consumers and the producer does not need to be present for these consumers to feel they are receiving

quality products that they can trust. Moreover, knowing the producer is more of a bonus that adds to an experience, rather than a deciding factor, for many consumers.

Consumer Perceptions of Price vs. Value in Sustainably Raised Animal Products

To analyze the effects that price has on consumer perceptions of sustainable agriculture, participants were asked if they felt these natural products were more expensive than conventionally raised products. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the people surveyed did feel that these products cost more than conventional products, but they also noted that they were paying for quality and understood that was why these products were more expensive. Overall, participants responded that they believed the reasons for these increased prices were factors such as more careful production, niche markets, and the lack of economies of scale. Because of the labor and extra effort that these consumers felt the producers are putting in, the majority, twenty-eight of the thirty-nine respondents, expressed in their responses that they knew they were paying more, but they were willing to do so because of the quality and benefits of the product they are getting.

Though the majority of respondents felt that these products from Burgundy Local and Truth Hill Farms were more expensive than grocery store products, there was a small group of participants who believed the opposite. One respondent noted that through research they found out that because of market variables such as droughts and cattle shortages around the country, Truth Hill Farm livestock products were actually more economically sound than the conventional alternative. Another perspective on this question was that the price may be more upfront, but the long-term effects of purchasing

these products balanced out for consumers due to the health improvements and reduced medical costs that their families have experienced. Also, there were several responses that noted these smaller operations were less expensive than larger outlets like Whole Foods and Central Market, which impacted their choice to purchase closer to the producer.

When asked about how price affected the products that participants were buying a majority (56%) of respondents said that price had no effect on their choice to purchase these products. These respondents were secure in the fact that the quality was worth the price and they were not bothered by having to possibly pay more by shopping in these niche markets. Interestingly, this group of participants included a large number of respondents who chose to abstain from answering the income level question asked in the demographics area of the survey. Of the twenty-two respondents who said price did not affect their purchasing, ten (45%) choose not to answer the question regarding their household income. For those who did respond to the income question, the vast majority (all but two) had a household income above \$100,000/yearly, which shows that these consumers are in an income bracket that gives them more financial freedom to pay more for quality products.

Of the eleven total respondents (28%) who acknowledged that price affected what they were buying from sustainable producers, the main consensus was that price affects the quantity of products bought or the quality of the meat cuts that were purchased. The most common response from this group of participants was that the cuts of meats they chose to buy showed how price has affected their eating habits. Instead of buying less of a higher quality cut they are choosing to settle for a lesser quality cut to add more product to their purchase. On the other hand, some consumers stated that they

were limiting their intake to be able to purchase these products and they are eating less livestock products so they could afford to maintain a quality diet. Also, a small group of participants responded that price affected where they bought products and they are often searching for the best price when thinking about what to buy in the niche market of sustainable products.

Discussion: Recommendations for Producers

To conclude this analysis of survey responses, I will first discuss the negative experiences that consumers have had with sustainable agriculture to help highlight where improvements could be made. Then I will discuss both consumer suggestions for the advancement of sustainable agriculture and my own personal suggestions based on the research I have completed.

Negative Experiences

One of the final questions that participants were asked during this survey was if they had ever had a negative experience with natural/sustainable products or their producers. While the response to this question was most commonly a very certain “no,” ten of thirty-nine responses (26%) discussed problems that should be acknowledged as significant consumer concerns.

The most common “negative” experience for these respondents was that sometimes the quality of these natural products was erratic and they were not always

available when the consumers wanted to purchase them. Though these respondents were often hesitant to label this a negative experience they did feel it was an aspect of their shopping experience that wasn't always positive. While this was a concern, most consumers answered "availability is sometimes an issue," and then quickly brushed it off as a necessary sacrifice for "fresh and local products that can be trusted," as one respondent put it.

Another small group of participants responded by saying their negative experience wasn't with producers of sustainable agriculture but with those who were producing conventionally yet claiming to be natural, local, or organic. These experiences have created an environment where these consumers feel they have to be that much more cautious and inquisitive when purchasing from sustainable producers because they believe it is easy to lie about the quality or integrity of a product. Again, these participants did not believe that the producers they were buying from at these locations were untrustworthy, but the climate of agriculture today had led them to be very selective and cautious, which in turn led them to small producers like Truth Hill Farm and Burgundy Pasture Beef.

Consumer Suggestions and Feedback

The final question asked for this survey was "What do you think is the best way for producers to attract more consumers, like yourself, to natural and sustainable agriculture products?" The responses centered on education, community involvement, word of mouth, and marketing. Respondents had a fairly equal consensus on this question

and they believed that while sustainable producers were becoming more visible, more education and involvement with the community would encourage more people to be a part of this niche market. Several respondents excitedly answered by saying, “more neighborhood stores like this!” when referencing Burgundy Local. Another common response was that word of mouth would champion these markets and even though marketing by the producers played a key role in attracting new customers, the current customers could also do their part by sharing their positive experiences with those who have not yet discovered natural products. Though the majority of my respondents had relatively high income levels, there were three participants who stated they felt it would be beneficial for sustainable producers to become more accessible to lower income families through education and promoting affordable prices/products.

Overall, the consumers at Burgundy Local and Truth Hill Farm’s booth at the Collin County Farmer’s Market were satisfied with their experiences and they believed that sustainable products are well worth their investment. Moreover, these surveys show that the main consumers of these natural and sustainable products were not all that diverse yet and expanding availability and education could help expand these markets. While these products may be more expensive than conventional products, the responses by these consumers show that through education they have sided with a “quality over quantity” attitude because of the long term benefits of eating healthier livestock products.

Researcher Thoughts and Suggestions

After spending several months poring over these surveys and related research by others, I believe that despite the niche status of sustainable agriculture the benefits of these farming methods are becoming much more widely recognized. Overall, I would say that I feel pleased that so many of the people whom I surveyed complimented the community visibility of markets like Burgundy Local and that such markets are the best way to reach more consumers. Though sustainable agriculture may not be the norm in our country at this time, I believe that if more and more small storefronts or farmer's markets continue to pop up in urban areas across the country we will begin to see a true shift in consumer perceptions of the foods they choose to buy for their families.

In my research it became very apparent that the middle-aged and upper-class citizens of urban communities were fairly well versed in shopping sustainably, whether it be for health, ethical, or other reasons. While many of these consumers were directed towards sustainable products by a health care professional such as a nutritionist, chiropractor, or even yoga instructor, I believe that if producers marketed directly to those health care providers they could potentially reach more consumers who are in need of information and education about the sustainable, natural agriculture movement.

I would also encourage sustainable producers to seriously consider the demographics of their consumers. Many producers of sustainable agriculture, I fear, neglect lower-income communities because there is a misconception that their products will not be well received when countless studies have shown otherwise. Moreover, if sustainable agriculturists truly wish to better the health and well-being of their consumers while also advancing their own businesses it seems necessary to reach out to new groups

that may not know about the benefits and long term effects of eating sustainable or natural products. Considering that producers often lack the finances or time to canvas communities or be constantly educating new consumers, reaching out to health care professionals, local community members, religious leaders, and even local government officials can be a way of benefitting both producers and consumers.

Conclusion

Wendell Berry has said, “the fundamental difference between industrialism and agrarianism is this: Whereas industrialism is a way of thought based on monetary capital and technology, agrarianism is a way of thought based on land” (Berry 2001, 67).

Though conventional agriculture has created a system that can cheaply produce mass amounts of livestock products for the market, sustainable agriculture based on an agrarian model is now working to restore the damage that the industrial model has also been allowed to create. Production-based agriculture remains the norm throughout the Western world, but there is hope that by implementing more sustainable practices, we can curb the worst of the environmental and animal injustices found in the industrial system (Bowler 211).

Through my research with customers of Burgundy Pasture Beef and Truth Hill Farm I have found that typical customers of these sustainable producers are upper-middle to upper-class, middle-aged, and knowledgeable about some of the problems with conventional livestock products. These consumers of sustainable animal products represent a very small portion of our population, but their motivations, such as concerns over their family’s health and the environment more generally, demonstrate a shift in thinking regarding our food.

Over the course of several months I had the privilege of interviewing some of the most forward-thinking consumers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. But unfortunately I also learned that low-income consumers encounter greater difficulties in learning about and affordably accessing sustainable livestock products. If sustainable agriculture focuses on respecting the land and respecting the animals we raise, it seems not too far of a stretch to

also respect those who might choose to purchase sustainably raised animal products if they had the information needed to make such a decision. For example, African-American food justice activist LaDonna Redmond has said that if African-Americans knew the benefits of sustainably raised food, many of them would be willing to pay higher prices for it than for conventional food (Washington and Sommer). Hence, my research shows us that producing sustainable agricultural products is beneficial to producer, consumer, and the environment, but there is still work to be done if this currently niche market is to break through into the mainstream.

I conducted this research project to provide insight into how producers of sustainable agriculture can broaden their customer base and how they can best market their products to new customers. With that research question in mind and my participants words running around my head, I believe that sustainable producers' future success will lie in their ability to connect with consumers. Nearly all my respondents noted that knowing their farmers and seeing the faces of the people who produce their family's food was very valuable in their decision to support these smaller farmers and ranchers. Furthermore, many of my respondents believed that producers could best find and retain new consumers through increased visibility in the community and consumer education. My interpretation of these responses is that consumers of sustainable agriculture value the face-to-face aspect of smaller-scale agriculture, and that transparent, honest dimension will be the thing that can push agrarian practices into the mainstream markets. While this direct face-to-face interaction may not be completely possible in the mass market, the concept of allowing the producer to put their face or brand on their product and then allowing consumers access to information about their food choices is more than

fathomable since large scale groceries like World Market have been using this model for quite some time.

While this vision of producers out in the community, educating new consumers about the benefits of their sustainable products, is a beautiful one, it is a bit unrealistic in the sense that producers are obviously busy with producing. Small-scale farmers have neither the time nor the monetary resources to mass market to an urban community, and if sustainable agriculture is to fully honor a holistic management approach, producers should not be overloaded or under-supported in their work.

Therefore the answer to helping sustainable producers reach more consumers rests in community cooperation through the help of health care professionals, local government officials, and community leaders. These new trends in agriculture are not simply ways of producing food, this is *community* agriculture that “encourages entrepreneurship, and strengthens community identity,” by bringing together production and consumption into the same realm where all community members play a vital role (Lyson 1-3). When a community comes together across all areas of production, consumption, and government all those involved in such areas benefit through the support and pride that is taken in preserving all aspects of the systems that are valuing people and their place in the community.

If sustainable agriculture is to enter the mainstream and succeed in preserving community, environment, and lifestyle, we must acknowledge the importance of a connection between all those who contribute to our food choices. Producers, health care professionals, community leaders, spiritual leaders, educators, and retailers are all part of a network that sustainable agriculturists can align with to reach out into communities to

establish their place and their home in the contemporary marketplace. As my respondents have shown, producers like Burgundy Pasture Beef and Truth Hill Farm are already succeeding in creating an open, honest, and knowledge based shopping experience that values the consumer as much as it values the land and livestock being used, which I believe is the most important part in creating an agriculture system that values the three pronged approach to sustainability of People, Planet, and Profit.

* * *

As this research project was winding down I found myself in the office of a prominent ranch manager. With years of wisdom that exceeded the years of my own life, he sat me down and began to question my motives in researching sustainable agriculture and furthermore, my motives for supporting it. Feeling much like a cornered mouse, I reeled backwards in my explanations as he proceeded to educate me about why he strongly supports the conventional agriculture model, ranging from questions about how the world was to be fed in the future, how people could economically support niche markets, and most of all, how or why producers should change their production models after so many years of hard work and dedication to trying to feed the world, feed their livestock, and feed their families. While half of me was prepared for these arguments, the other half was left discouraged and rattled as I tried to reconcile his knowledge with my knowledge and my vision for a more sustainable future for animal agriculture.

I left that office and immediately called the guy who started it all--my father. "He's right, Lydia," he said, "conventional agriculture will feed the world. But, it won't be able to do it for very long."

As we discussed all the points that had left me sitting wondering if I had written an entire thesis about something that would never work, he said the thing that I know will forever solidify my faith and belief in the future of small-scale, local, sustainable agriculture. He calmly asked, “Did you ask him how many consumers he’s talked to face-to-face with in all his years of conventional animal production?” and continued with, “Our family used to think the same way, and we used to view the consumer as uneducated, unrealistic, and unreasonable. But then I stood behind the counter of our store and I listened to the people buying the food I had grown. . . . That’s all it took.”

Appendix:

Informed Consent and Interview Questionnaire-

[Below is a brief script that I will read to consumers when I ask them to participate in my survey.]

‘Hello! For my Honors Thesis at TCU I’m surveying folks to ask why they choose to purchase sustainable livestock products rather than conventional ones. Through these surveys I hope to learn why consumers of sustainable livestock products choose to purchase such products instead of conventional products. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer any specific questions if you don’t want to. All information from the survey will be kept anonymous and no personal information will be collected. Would you be willing to participate in this survey? It will probably take about 20 minutes.’

Q: How did you first learn about sustainable agriculture and the producer(s) you choose to buy from?

Q: How do you decide what producers or venues to purchase from?

Q: Do you buy sustainable foods from just one source or from several different stores/producers?

Q: Is it important for you to purchase foods directly from the producer? Why or why not?

Q: In your opinion, what does “sustainability” mean? What makes a livestock product sustainable?

Q: Have you found natural, organic, and sustainable products to be significantly more expensive than conventional products? If so, why do you feel sustainable products cost more?

Q: How does price affect the products you choose to buy and/or the places from which you choose to buy them?

Q: Have you had any negative experiences with sustainable products or their producers? If so, please explain in as much detail as you prefer.

Q: What do you think is the best way for producers to attract more consumers, like yourself, to natural and sustainable agricultural products? What do you think would draw more people to purchase sustainable agricultural products?

Q: Please rank your TOP 3 considerations in order of importance to you when buying food for your household:

- Locally Grown**
- Environmental Preservation**
- Taste**
- Health**
- Religious Beliefs**
- Ethical Concerns**
- Price**
- Other (please specify)**

Demographic Questions

[researcher will preface these questions by explaining that answering them is completely voluntary, and that the respondent may choose to answer all, any, or none without penalty]

- Age**
- Gender**
- Ethnicity**
- Income Level (for household)**

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