



# Maintaining a Way of Life: Trials and Tribulations of Farmers Market Families

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## Introduction

- 2013 off farm income forecasted to account for 82% of total farm income.
- Majority of small farmers and their spouses work on and off farm.
  - Direct to consumer sales up 8% from 2007 to 2012.
  - Number of farmers markets increased from 1,755 in 1994 to 8,268 in 2012.
- Number of CSA's increased from 2 in 1986 to 12,617 in 2012.

## Sustainability

- Farming practices lie within managed systems.
- This study focused on part of the social system of small scale, local farming.
  - Farmers Basic Needs:**
    - Basic need of food were met.
    - Social needs partially met by relationship they have with customers.
  - Lives Bettered Through Farming:**
    - Emotional needs fulfilled because farming is a way of life, and part of who they are.
  - Inequities:**
    - None found.

## Purpose

- Gain better understanding of:***
  - Local food and farming systems.
  - Local farmers decisions to sell at a local level.
    - Local farm families.
- Seeks to understand:***
  - Biggest challenges and rewards.
  - If farmers basic needs are met.
  - If farmers lives are bettered through farming.
- If inequity exists between farmers and the average United States household.

## Findings

- Way of Life*** – Farming is a way of life and all of the farmers were influenced as children to garden and/or farm.
- Passion and Identity*** - Farmers continue to farm because it is not only a way of life, but also a part of their identity.
  - Excess Produce*** – Three of five began selling produce because they had excess in their home food production.
  - Relationship With Customers*** – The farmers reward for selling at a local level is the relationship they have with their customers.
  - High Quality Produce*** – Growing and selling high quality produce is important to the farmers and customers.
    - Large Variety of Crops*** – Farmers grow and sell a large variety of crops.
    - Competition*** – One of their biggest challenges at the farmers market.
    - Weather*** – A big challenge for the farmers.
- Off Farm Income*** – For the Caucasian farmers, most of their income was from off farm.
  - Off Farm Jobs*** – Four of five farmers had off farm jobs.

## Methods

- Data Collection
  - ~Structured Interview Method
  - ~One on One Interview
    - Data Analysis
- ~Constant Comparative Method
  - Evaluation Criteria
- ~Data is confirmable, dependable, transferable, and credible
  - Participants
- ~Three Caucasian Farm Families
- ~Two Hmong Farm Families

## Conclusions

- Farming was imprinted on the farmers at a young age and thus became a part of their identities.
- Farmers build trust with their customers by providing high, and a large variety of produce.
- The relationship with their customers is one of the things they enjoy most about selling locally.
  - In all but one family either one or both spouses worked off farm.
  - A majority of the farmers and their spouses had college degrees.