

# What's Growing On? A Look at Small Producers in Oklahoma

Results from the  
Oklahoma Farmers  
Market Manager &  
Producer Surveys

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# Presentation Overview

## PRODUCER/MARKET MANAGER SURVEYS

Who We Are

Purpose

## SMALL SCALE/SPECIALTY CROP GROWERS IN OKLAHOMA

Our Survey Demographics

Trends in Agriculture-New Kind of Farmer?

## FINANCIAL VIABILITY/SALES OUTLETS

On & Off Farm Revenue

Closer Look at Farmers Markets

## FUTURE OF SMALL FARMERS/SPECIALTY CROP GROWERS

Producers/Market Managers Needs

Market Growth Capacity



# ONIE PROJECT + FARMERS MARKETS

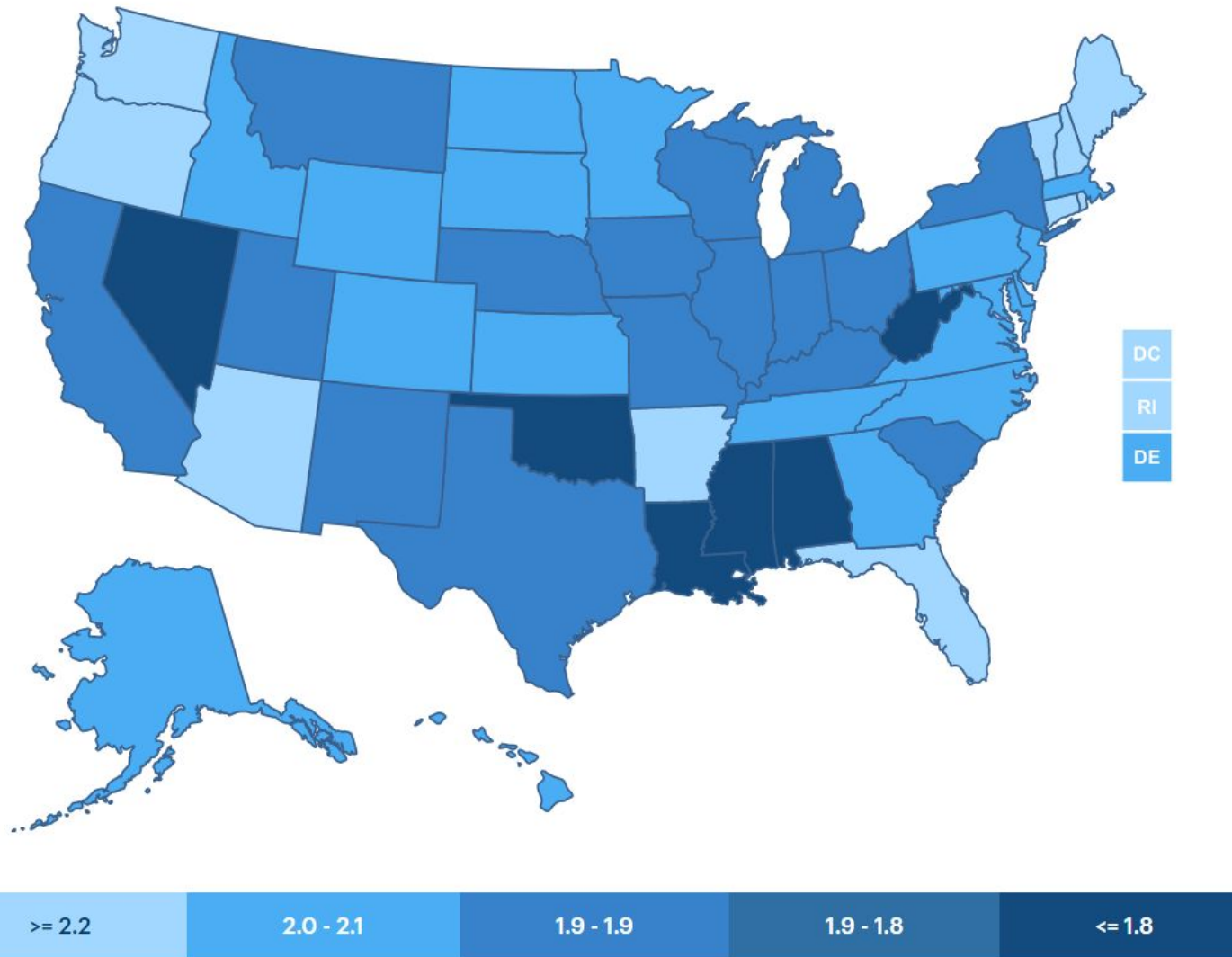
- ❑ SNAP at Farmers Markets
- ❑ Farmers Markets Promotion
- ❑ Farmers Market Conference





# Vegetable Outlook in Oklahoma

Mean number of vegetables consumed per day by adults



Source: CDC,  
BRFSS





# Purpose of Surveys

- WHO ARE OUR PRODUCERS?
  - **Purposeful Sample**
  - **Collect Producer Demographics**
  - **More Detail than Ag Census**
- HOW CAN WE SUPPORT THEM?
  - **Who are our small scale/specialty crop growers?**
  - **What are their needs & challenges?**
  - **How can we help?**

\*Data Collection Methods

# Producers- Demographics

## Gender

**57%** female

## Growing practices

**77%** organic, certified organic (28%); organic/sustainable practices, not certified (49%)

## Producer experience

**71%** beginning farmers (10 years or less according to USDA)

## Acres farmed

**68%** farm on less than 5 acres

**77%** grow on less than 10 acres, probably more (wording)

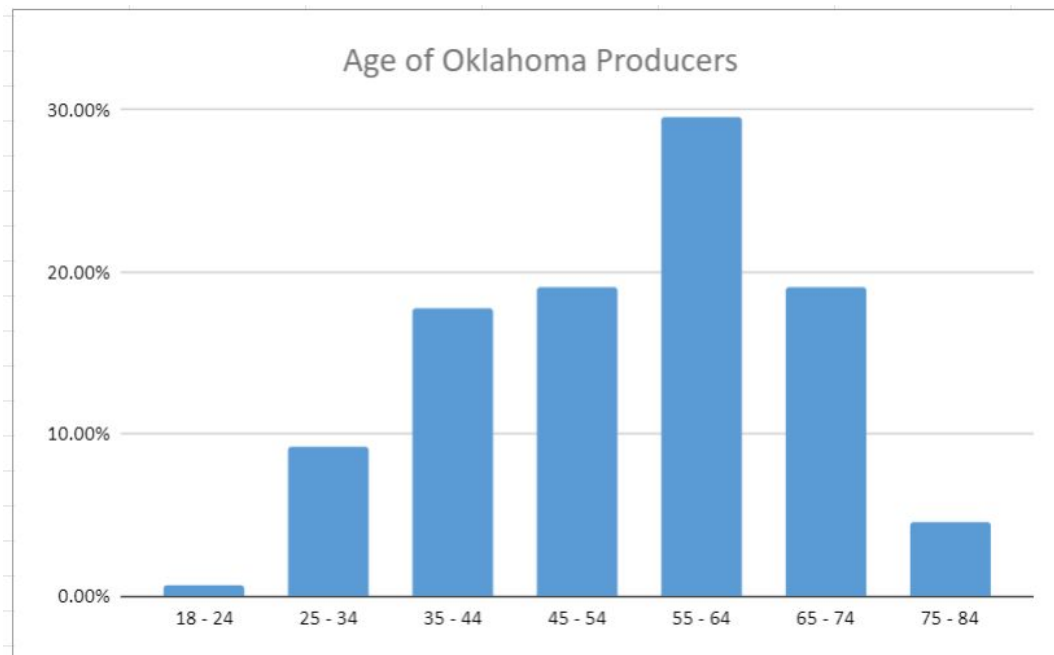
**59%** would expand acres farmed

## Product diversity

**72%** sell multiple products\*

\*Products: produce, plants, meats, value-added products, dairy, baked goods & non-food items

**n=179**



**94%** Grow Produce!



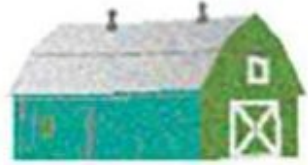
# Who are Our Producers?

- Many Female
- Many Beginning Farmers
- Many Micro or Small Scale Farms (in size & income)
- Many Grow Veggies/Diversified
- Many Organic/Sustainable growers

How does this compare to National Trends?



# Number of Small Farms in US



## Number of Small Farms (less than 100 Acres Harvested)

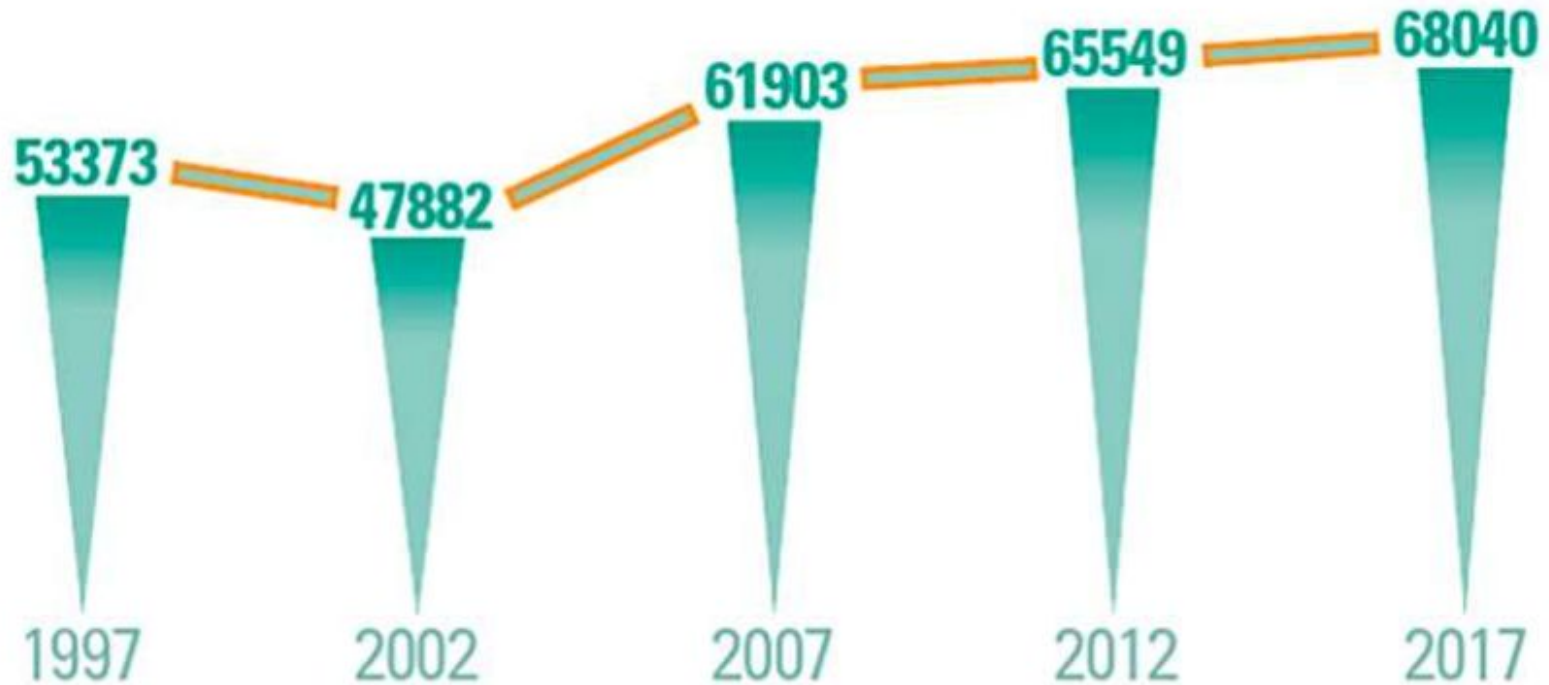
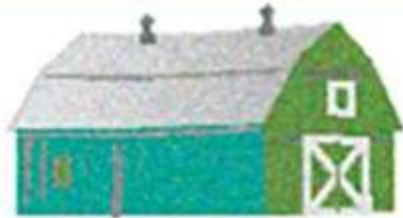


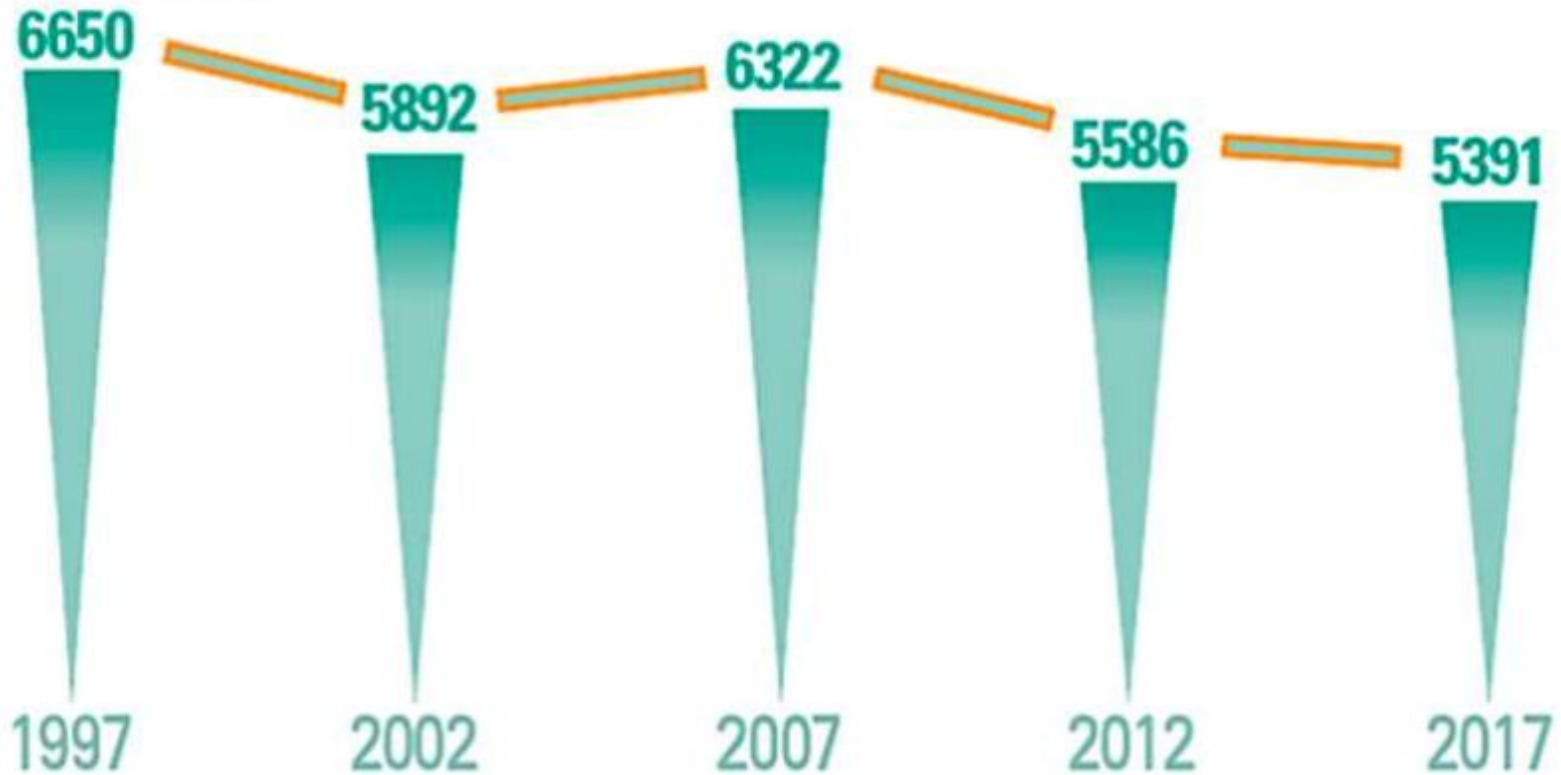
Chart Developed by Carol Miller using 2017  
Census of Ag



# Number of Mid Size Farms in US



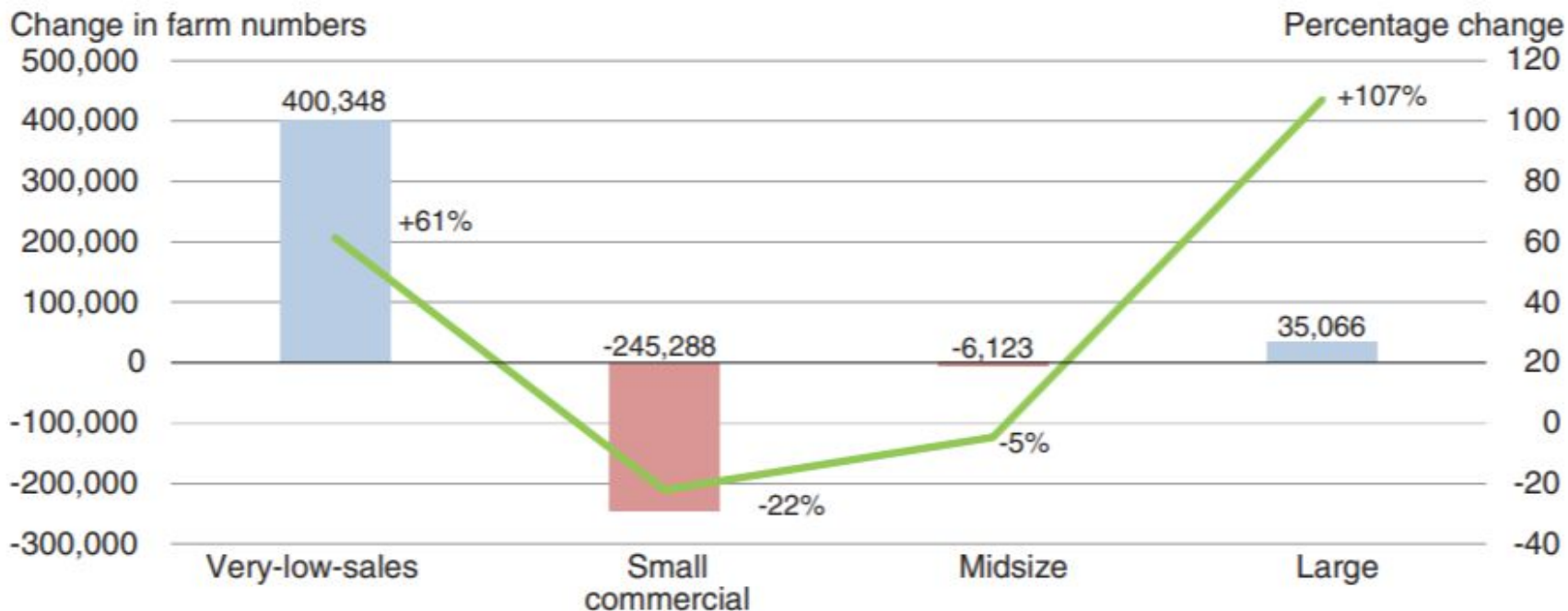
## Number of Medium Farms (100 to 1,000 Acres Harvested)



# Mid-Size Farms, Disappearing?

## Change in farm numbers by size category<sup>1</sup> from 1992 to 2012

*Midsize farm numbers decreased by about 6,000 during this period.*



<sup>1</sup>We define a very-low-sales farm as having less than \$10,000 in GCFI, a small commercial farm as having between \$10,000 and \$350,000 in GCFI, and a large farm as having \$1 million or more in GCFI.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations based on the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1992 and 2012 Census of Agriculture.



# National Trends- Organic Produce

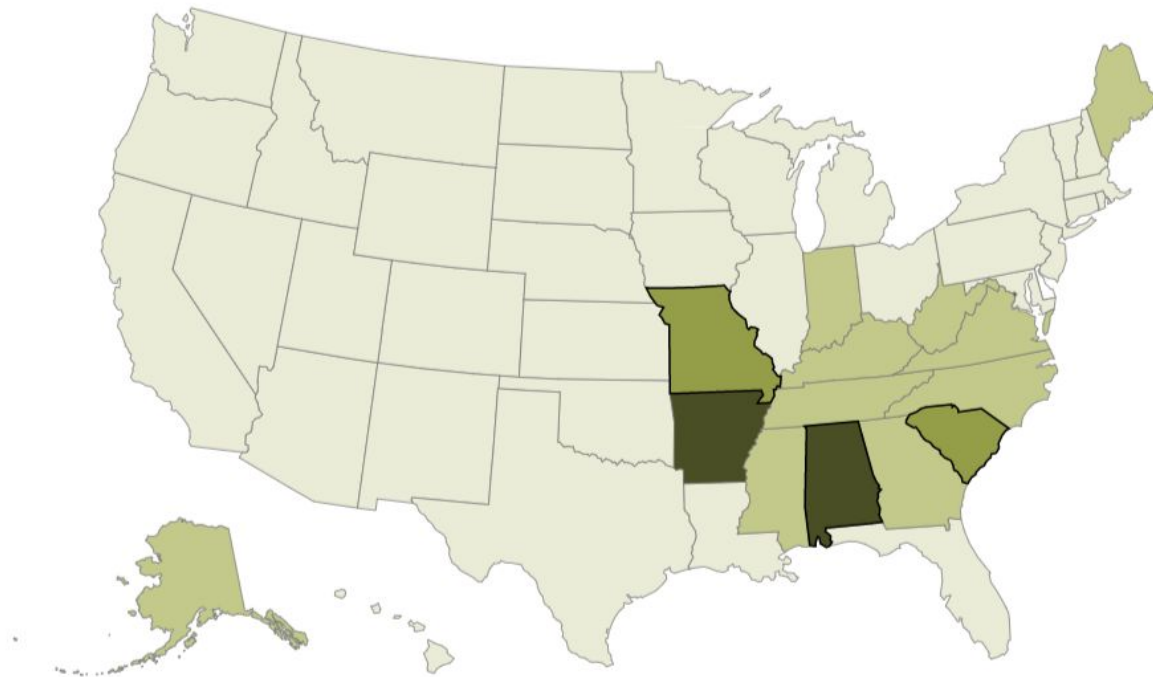
Alabama, South Carolina and Missouri all saw increases of more than 200% since 2011. And several other Southern states saw their certified organic farm count more than double in those five years.

*% change of certified organic farms from 2011 to 2016*

**14,000**  
certified organic  
farms in the  
country 2016

**56%**  
**increase**  
since 2011

Source: Pew  
Research Center



□ Neg. or 0%    ■ 1-99    ■ 100-199    ■ 200-299    ■ 300+



# National Trends-Local/Organic

“...the number of beginning farmers, organic farms, and local food sales continue to climb – a bright spot in an otherwise bleak farming outlook marked by continued shrinking of the “ag of the middle” and decreased farm profitability.”

-National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition



# National Trends- # of Small Farms

The census...found a sharp up-tick in the number of micro-farms, those with sales of less than \$1,000—from 580,000 to close to 700,000. Farms that small are not chiefly commercial enterprises. They typically feed their owners, and perhaps contribute on a very small scale to local markets.

While this year's survey made a greater effort to count small farms, I don't think it's just a statistical anomaly that smaller farms have increased in number." He said much of the growth was likely the result of efforts to promote organic farming and improve per-acre productivity.

Indeed, the sector with the largest growth in percentage and absolute terms was farms with less than 50 acres.

-Former U.S Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack





# National Trends- Female Farmers

## THE FUTURE IS FEMALE FARMERS

Over the last five years, the number of male farmers fell, while the number of women rose: Female producers now make up 36 percent of farmers, a 27 percent increase from 2012. Now, 56 percent of farms have at least one female producer, although only 38 percent have a female primary producer, the person who makes the most decisions on the farm.

-Emily Moon, Pacific Standard Reporter on 2017 Census of Agriculture

“Women tend to farm on smaller pieces of land, grow diverse crops, favor sustainable practices, and prioritize food over commodity crops.”

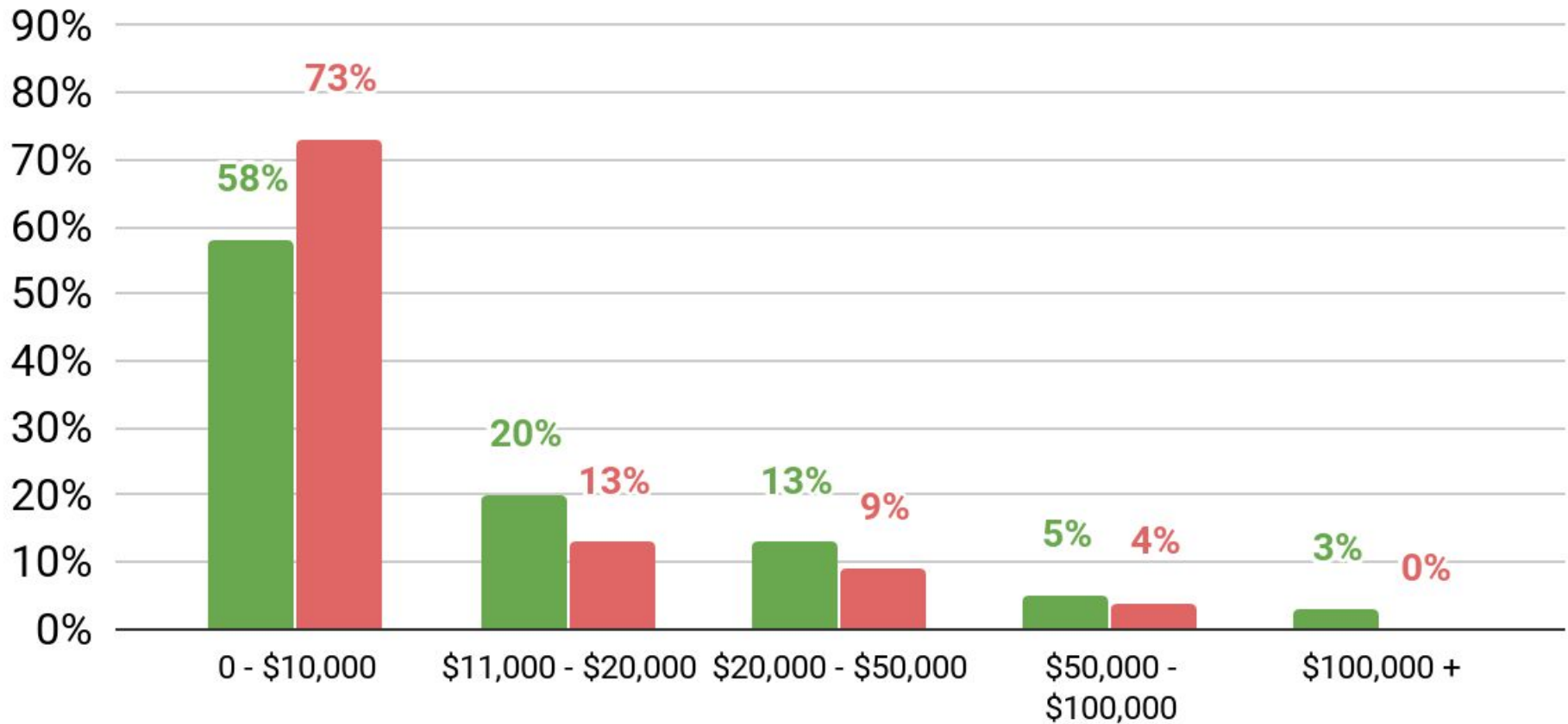
-The Rise of Women Farmers & Sustainable Agriculture



# Producer Survey Income

## Estimated gross income from farm produce (annually)

■ Sells at FM   ■ Does not sell at FM



# Farm Size According to USDA

<b>Farm Type</b>	<b>Annual Gross Income</b>
Very Low Sales Farms	\$0- \$10,000
Small Commercial Farms	\$10,000- \$350,000
Mid-Size Farms	\$350,000- \$1 Million
Large Commercial Farms	\$1 Million +



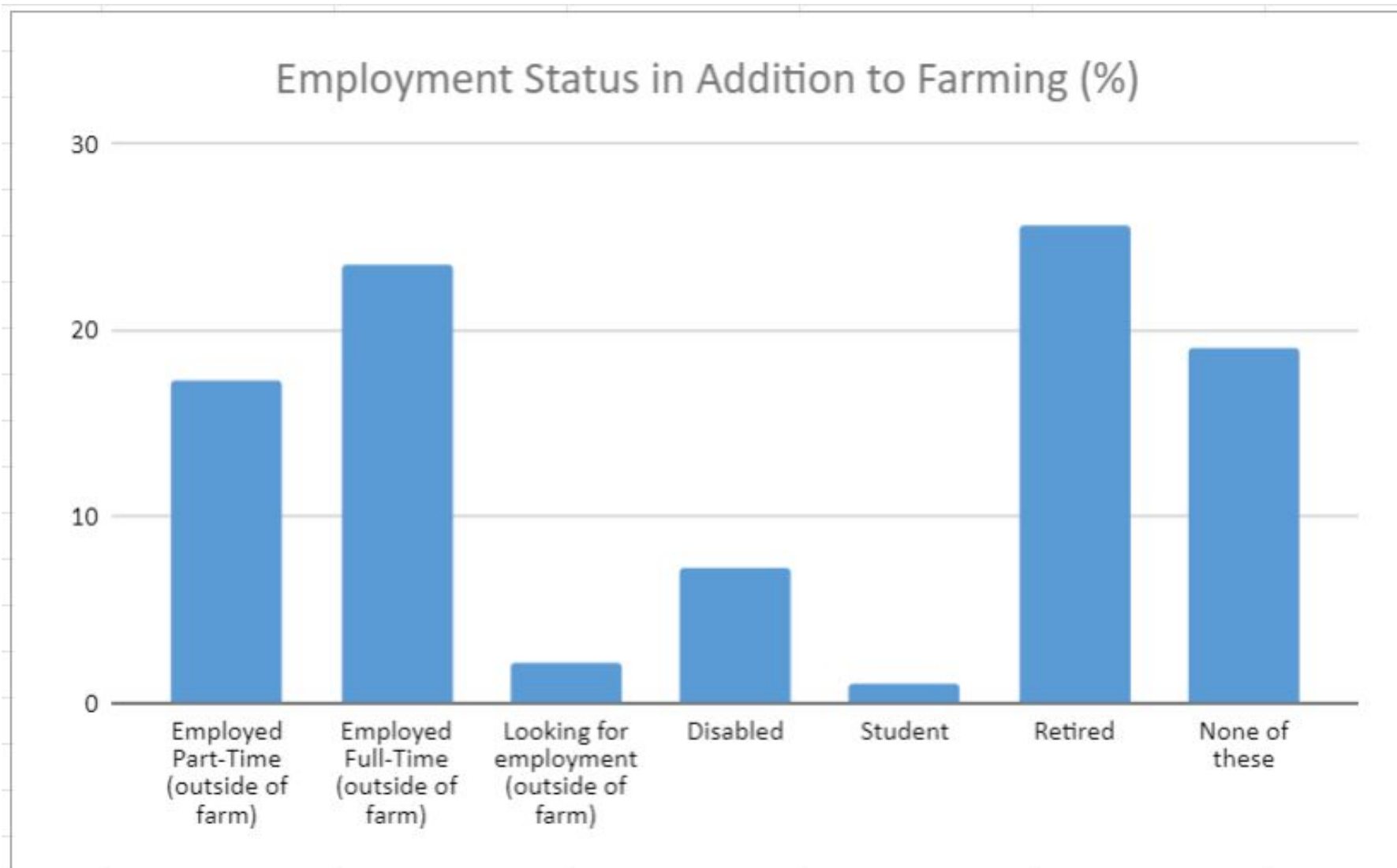
# Ag Census, All Farm Types in OK 2017

## Farms by Value of Sales

	Number	Percent of Total <sup>a</sup>
Less than \$2,500	639	58
\$2,500 to \$4,999	138	13
\$5,000 to \$9,999	131	12
\$10,000 to \$24,999	67	6
\$25,000 to \$49,999	67	6
\$50,000 to \$99,999	27	2
\$100,000 or more	34	3

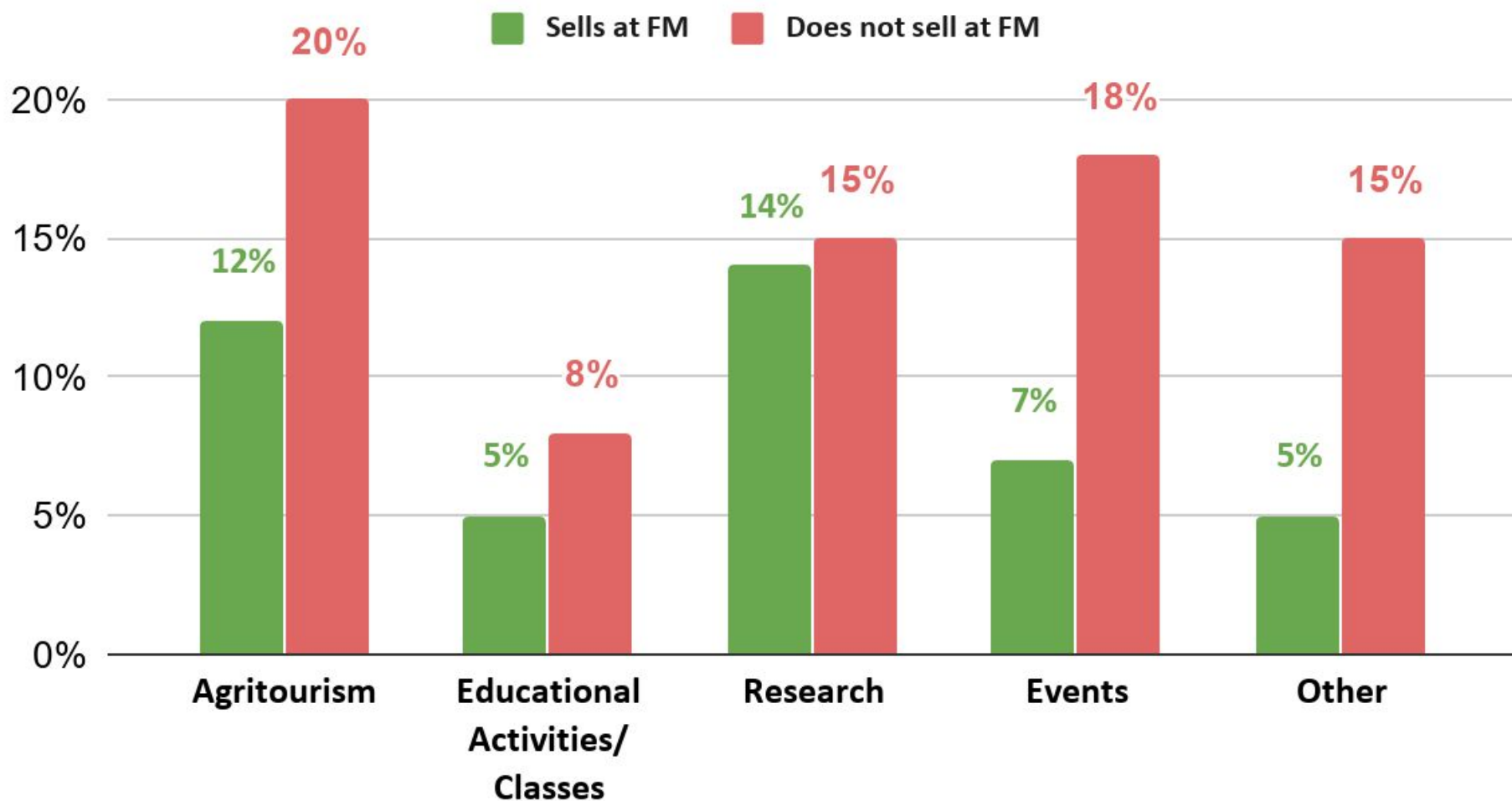


# Producers- Employment Status





## Other activities conducted on farm to generate income



# Sales Outlets for Small Scale Producers

**Farmers Markets** were by far the most highly utilized sales outlet by farmers, followed by **online sales**, **on-farm sales**, and **CSAs**

**25%** of producers earned 76-100% of their farm income from farmers markets

**44%** earned over 50% of their farm income from farmers markets

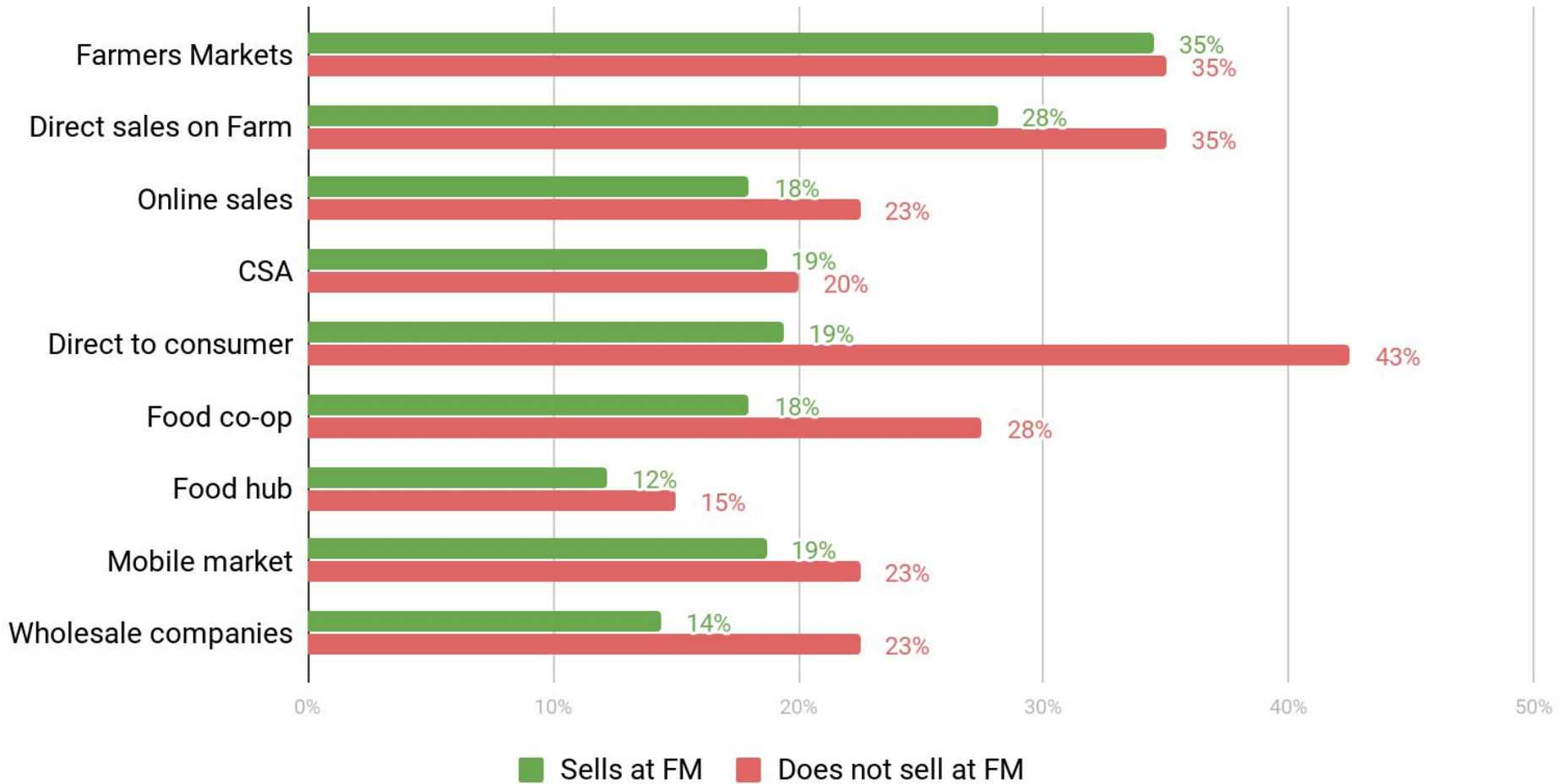
Almost **half** of producers who sell at seasonal markets would grow more produce if market season was extended

**88%** of producers sell at 1-2 markets, **64%** sell at one market

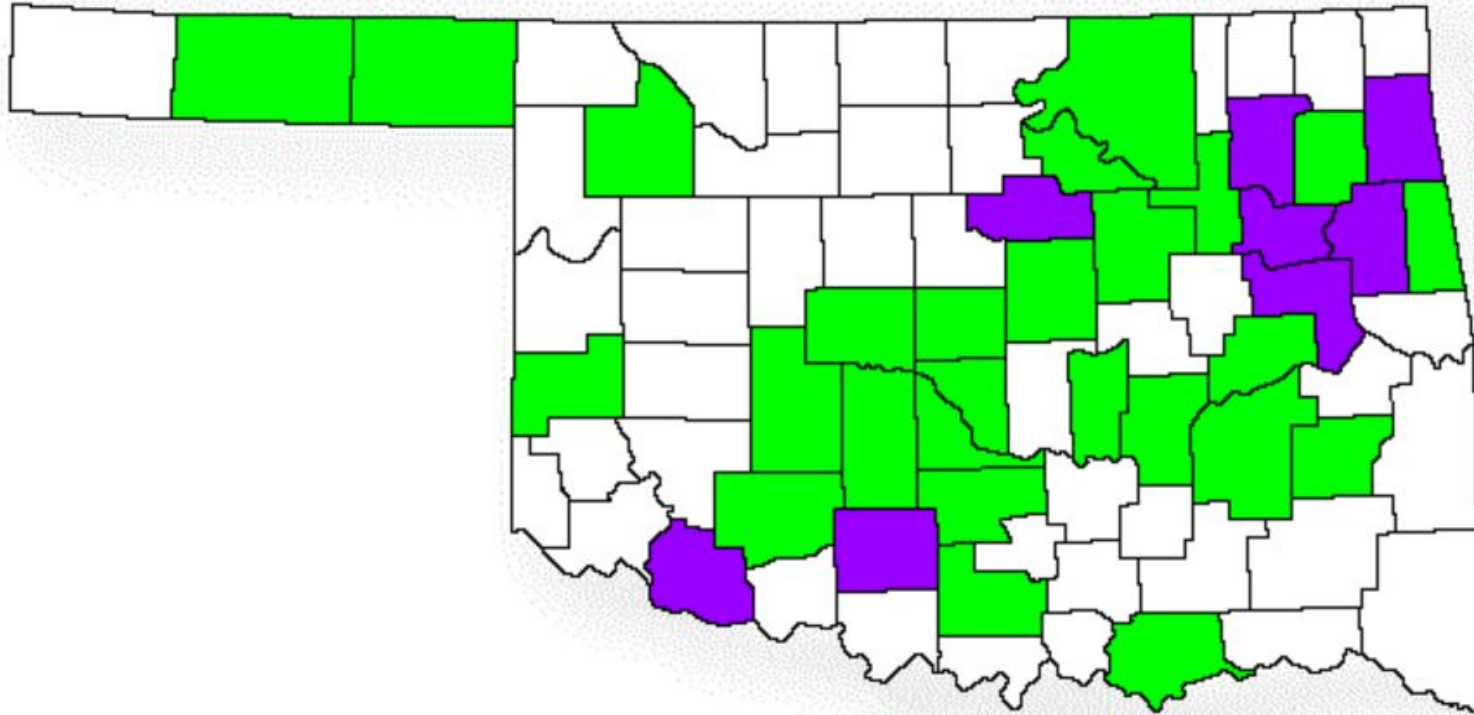
**75%** sell produce at farmers markets



# Sales outlets of interest



# Counties with Extra Produce



Do you have additional produce that you would like to sell to Farmers Markets if the market season was extended?

- Yes
- No
- Not now, but I would grow more if there were markets available to sell it at

# Takeaways...

- Farmers Markets are an extremely important sales outlet for small producers and need to be supported
- Many producers have more produce available than they are selling, and want to scale up. Larger & more accessible sales outlets for small to eventual mid-size producers are needed





# Support for Small/Specialty Crop Farmers

"However, there's more to the story, and the 'big get bigger' statement is oversimplified. There are two classes of farms emerging - production agriculture and direct-to-consumer. According to USDA, the U.S. has seen a 61 percent increase in small farms from 1992 to 2012. Not every farmer will fit into today's definition of production agriculture, and ag institutions will have to consider how they will serve both classes of farmers," explains Sciotto.

"We have to acknowledge as an industry that we are going to serve a bifurcated market. We are going to have large, sophisticated vertically-integrated operations run by high business IQ farmers and we are also going to have small, direct-to-consumer operations serving their niche."

**-Brett Sciotto**, CEO of Aimpoint Research, a global marketing research firm that has done extensive work analyzing current agricultural trends and identifying the "Farmer of the Future."



# Needs of Producers/Ways to Support

## Identified Needs - Funding

### Grants

- Small or urban-farm focused
- Farmers market expansion (references to the former OKGrown grants)
- Innovative farm practices
- Subsidizing
  - Equipment cost
  - Hoop houses & plasticulture
  - Bees & pollination crops
  - Farm expansion

### Financing/Loans

- Small or urban farm
- Low-interest rates
- Farm expansion
- Explanation of FSA loans
- Specialized loan officers for small or urban farms



# Needs of Producers- Continued

## Identified Needs - Services

### Advocacy

- Small or urban farm focused
- Raise awareness of economic, health & social benefits of local food & small farms
- Financial support
- Expansion of sourcing locally
- Increase the diversity of producers
- Taxing impact
- Environment issues (waterway, soil, air pollution)

### Licensing

- Central point for all farm-related licenses
- Fewer rules for baked goods & value-added products
- Easing/streamlining of regulatory process
  - Meat, poultry, eggs
- Access to compliance trainings



# Needs of Producers- Continued

## Identified Needs - Services (continued)

### Technical Assistance

- More conferences & trainings
- Growing practices
- Selling online & store front
- Grant writing
- Permaculture & remediative farming
- Regulations & taxes

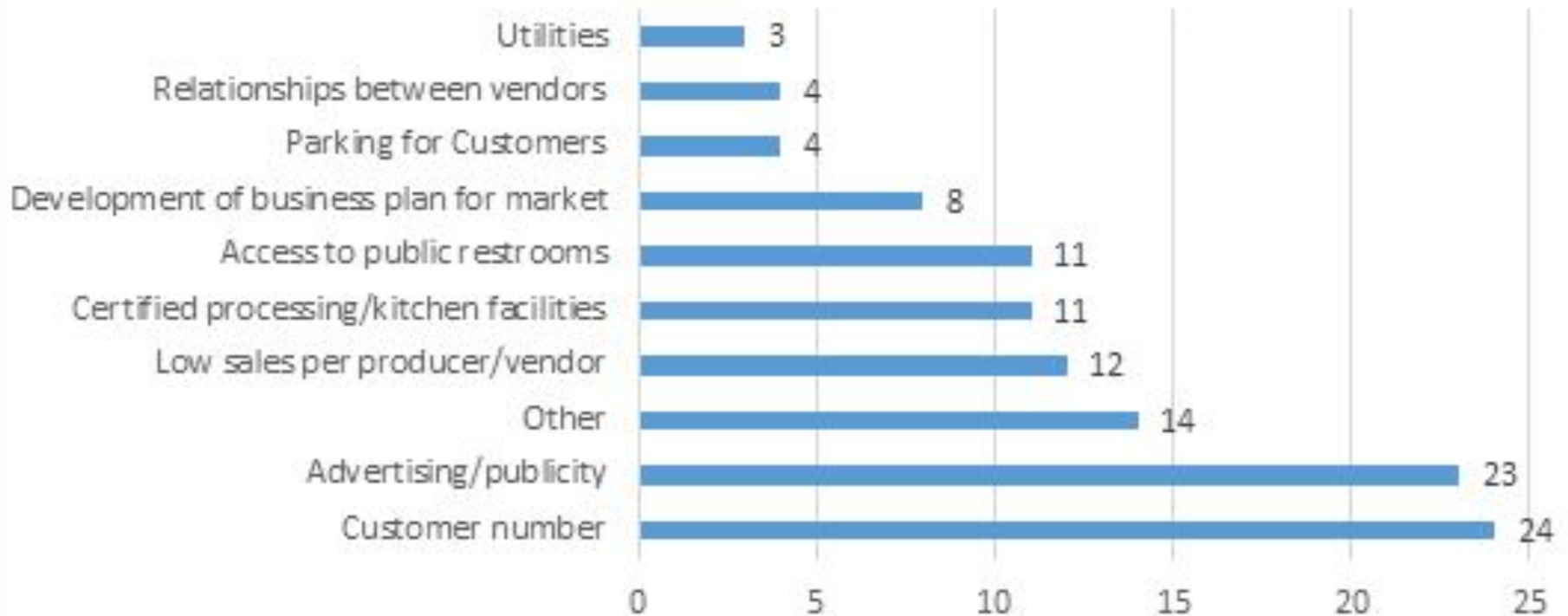
### Marketing

- General marketing support
  - Multiple advertising strategies
- Support for farmers markets
  - Advertising for individual markets
- Social media trainings
- Strategies to increase customer base
- Strategies to recruit buyers
  - Wholesale vendors, institutions, grocery stores, restaurants



# Farmers Markets Needs

Areas in greatest need of improvement at your market  
(n=44)



Results from ONIE's Farmers Market Manager Survey



# Farmers Market Needs-Infrastructure

**25%** of all who responded want more grant opportunities!

## Grants

- Pay employees
- Improve Market Infrastructure & Equipment
- Advertising

## Infrastructure & Equipment

- Land/space to build permanent facility
- Money for repairs to existing facility
- Kitchen
- Bathroom
- Tables & Chairs
- Signage, Bags, TP!
- Transportation





# Farmers Market Needs-Advocacy

## New Policies

- Using city owned lots for market space
- Incentive programs for small to mid-size producers
- Reducing barriers for young & beginning farmers

## Changes in Regulations

- Not taxing prepared foods
- Less separate licensing to sell multiple products (starter plants, eggs, honey, etc.)
- Less fees and regulations for vendors using commercial kitchens so they can compete with home bakery act vendors



# Farmers Market Needs-Services

## Marketing

- Marketing Materials & Signage
- Advertising Market
- Training in Marketing
- Community Connections & Event Promotion
- Networking Opportunities

## Technical Assistance & Trainings

- Conferences & Networking Opportunities
- Producer Recruitment Strategies
- Market Start Up & Management (board development, time management, etc)
- Market Liability
- Growing restrictions & Market Regulations



# Farmers Market Needs

## Public Education

- Importance of Local Food
- Agritourism
- Crop Research & Development
- SNAP & Seniors Programs

## Other

- Sales Tracking Technology
- Evaluation Tools for Market Managers



# Summary

Many overlapping needs for financial support, access to services, and incentive programs to build a viable pathway for small and mid-sized farms to succeed and for farmers markets to be a reliable outlet for sales.

Despite many changing hurdles, family farms continue to persevere which is a testament to their resilience, passion, and dedication. We need to acknowledge and capitalize on this resource by ensuring developmental pathways and infrastructure necessary for family farms to grow and thrive, which in turn, positively impact the health, economy, and the communities they serve.



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# Acknowledgements

Dr. Karla Finnell, Assistant Professor OU Hudson College of Public Health, ONIE Project  
Principal Investigator: Needs assessment

Jenna Moore, ONIE Project Research Coordinator: Survey Development

James Arati, Business Development Coordinator & Advisor OSU Extension & OKSBDC:  
Survey Development & Distribution

Tandy Kidd, Market Development Coordinator: Survey Distribution

