12-4-2014

Farmers Markets in Urban US Counties: The Relationship Between Income, Obesity, and Access

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Recommended Citation
http://scholarexchange.furman.edu/ees-presentations/7

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Abstract/Introduction

In the last decade there has been a convergence of factors that have contributed to an increased in food insecurity and obesity among urban populations in the United States. This has led to the rise of local food systems and the development of local food policy. Farmers markets are often used as a tool to decrease obesity and increase access to healthy food. However, there is limited evidence in how these farmers markets are used to disperse individuals to increase healthy food intake. This study of farmers markets' use of healthy food and the obesity rates in the counties are analyzed to observe any relation between the two. The results of this study can be used to determine how effective farmers markets are in low income communities.

Methodology

I pulled farmers market data from the USDA Nationwide Farmers Markets Directory, which is a comprehensive database of farmers markets in the United States. To avoid bias, the sample was also limited to the study by Jilcott 2010. The study performed trends for farmers markets in urban areas. The study begins with an analysis of the characteristics of farmers markets in the United States. This includes a description of the types of markets, their locations, and the number of participants attending.

Results and Discussion

As expected, the results in Figure 2 reflect a selection of the 120 most urbanized counties which naturally tend to fall along the central part of the United States. The results of this study show that the number of farmers markets per 100,000 square mile population (highlighted in blue) are generally found along the central part of the United States. The results of this study also show that farmers markets can be used to combat obesity and improve access to healthy food.

Conclusion

In analyzing nationwide trends in income, obesity, and access to farmers markets, it becomes evident that those urban areas that may not follow the nationwide trend of low access to farmers markets accompanied by low income and high obesity. As exemplified by Virginia, high access to farmers markets has the potential to alleviate many of the health issues associated with obesity.

Future Research

The results of this study also show that farmers markets can be used to combat obesity and improve access to healthy food. As exemplified by Virginia, high access to farmers markets has the potential to alleviate many of the health issues associated with obesity.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.