

Community Food Resilience: The Linton Farmers Market

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Table of Contents:

Executive Summary.....2

Introduction.....3

Background, Demographics, and Food Access in Linton.....4

The Linton Farmers Market.....8

Vendor Tool Kit.....11

Impact.....13
Social, Health, Food Assistance, Economic Development, Government Structure and Policies

Recommendations and Conclusions.....21

Bibliography.....23

Executive Summary

The main objective of this report is to examine the resilience of the Linton Farmers Market and its role in the Greene County Food System. The report first introduces the Community of Linton, including its history of the market, demographics, geography, and unique attractions. GIS data demonstrates how the Linton Farmers Market is the primary provider of fresh and healthy foods that are also locally sourced, and one of the only purely local outlets of the food system. Next, data collection methods are shared, relying on academic journals and reputable news articles sourced from IU Libraries, as well as conversations with individuals from Linton and necessary stakeholders.

The report reviews the community benefits of farmers markets in general, with application to Linton Farmers Market, specifically. The community impacts are partitioned into four categories: local government, economy, society, and health, concluding that these benefits are crucial to the viability of both the market and community. The market has both direct and indirect benefits that generate job opportunities, stimulate local economic activity, and sustain local businesses. In addition, the market prevents both common physical and mental illnesses. Schools play an important role in this issue, as they exemplify the potential to catalyze change in the food system, shifting people's focus to local food and agriculture.

The report transitions into an exploration of the vendors at Linton Farmers Market, documenting personal narratives of each vendor's needs and perspectives on the market. This section also provides a toolkit to share with vendors to help them understand how they can grow and find others with similar interests. They may then further benefit the community.

The report then exhibits the roles of food assistance programs in the resiliency of the Linton Farmers Market. Currently, much of the population which receives assistance does not utilize it at the farmers market. Considering around three thousand people in Greene County benefit from government subsidies, they have a great purchasing power. A price analysis is also provided which concludes that produce is often more expensive in local retail stores than it is at the Linton Farmers Market. Recommendations for increasing awareness among Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) recipients are as follows:

- Changing the day of the market to benefit those who may work on Saturdays
- Promoting the market in the local FSSA office (i.e. fliers, pamphlets, word of mouth, etc.)

Lastly, the report concludes with overall suggestions and future outlooks to restore the market and amend current issues that Linton Farmers Market is facing.

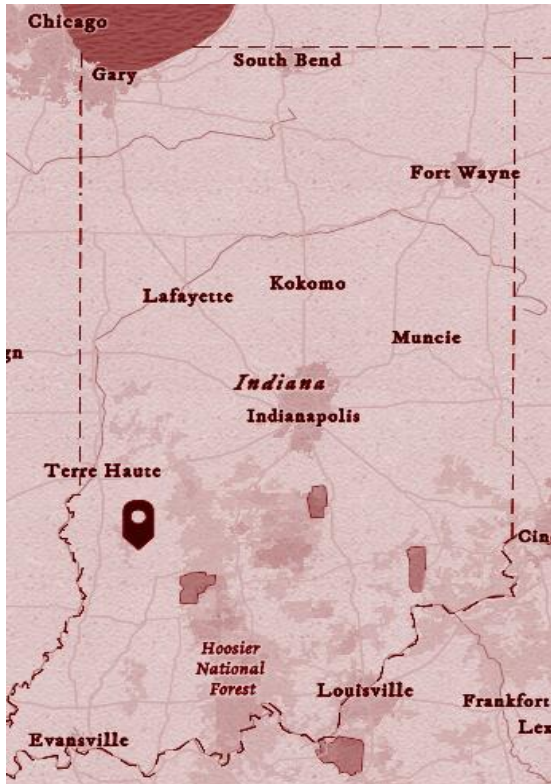
Introduction

As climate volatility increases, both environmentally and economically, it is critical that communities increase their resilience in every sector. The food system is one that arguably requires the most attention, as the first thing every human needs is sustenance. While the global food system is extremely interconnected, a resilient community has the means to sustain itself separately from the global system. This calls for detailed consideration of a community's local food system, and the ways in which it can be improved. A farmers market can be a vital part of this local food system, given the right management strategies and community involvement. A successful market has many benefits, ranging from economic to social impacts. However, the effect to which these benefits are felt, depends on how an individual community functions with regard to the market.

This report serves to investigate the Linton, Indiana Farmers Market and the ways in which it contributes to Linton's resilience, as well as where it could stand to improve. An understanding of the community must be reached, as the demographics of a town show where and to whom a farmers market is not only the most beneficial, but necessary. Furthermore, the thorough understanding of the Linton Farmers Market is necessary, as it is the heart of this report. Analyses were conducted using differing methods, varying from interviews to census data to literary reviews. Once data has been compiled, an assessment of the impacts of the Linton Farmers Market is made. To conclude, recommendations for improvement are made, which will hopefully benefit the entire town of Linton- its residents, farmers, economy, and social environment.

Background, Demographics and Food Access in Linton

Linton is in southwest Indiana, in Greene County, where it is the largest city in the county seat. Greene County was at one time coal-mining town but is now known for its tourist attractions. Solsberry Sculpture Trails is an outdoor museum located deep in the woods and brings outdoor sculpture and art education to the community at large with hands on workshops and programs. Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area consists of 9018 acres of protected prairie and marsh habitat that brings in nearly 12,000 wildlife watchers and 3,500 hunters a year (Center Rural Engagement, 2019). Linton’s largest tourist attraction, however, is the Linton Freedom Festival Parade which is known as “Indiana’s Largest Independence Day Parade” (<https://www.cityoflinton.com/>). This parade attracts nearly 40,000 people annually to enjoy the floats, bands, and entertainment.



Demographics:

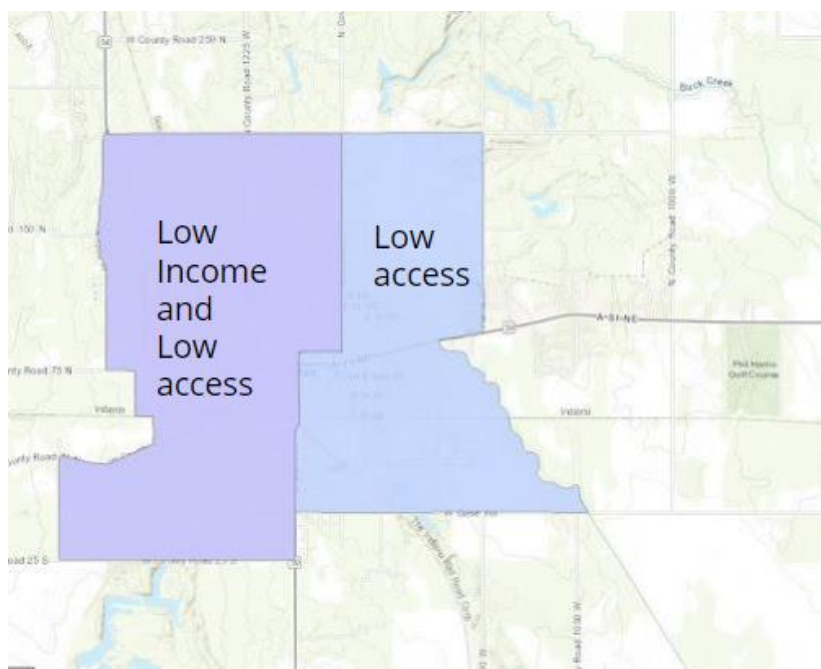
Linton is the largest town in Greene County with an estimated population of only 5,421 people, in comparison however, Greene County had a population of 32,261 people in 2018 (DADS, 2010). On average, this county earns as much as most Indiana residents with a median household income of \$45,153 (Center for Rural Engagement, 2019). Linton residents tend to

earn less with a median household income of \$39,317. Although 95.2% of Greene County is employed, 18.6% of Linton's working community earns below the poverty level. The high poverty level in Linton (as demonstrated in the map below) shows the need for a food system with high-quality food at a low-cost to meet financial and nutritional needs.

Food Access in Linton:

The goal of GIS is to create maps representing spatial data in order to understand the demographics and layout of Linton. This also allowed the visualization of areas of low food access and where the resources to lessen low access to food lie. This data was used to triangulate the spatial location of those who stand to benefit the most from the market and infer how the market itself benefits those people as well as the community at large. Unfortunately, specific data regarding SNAP recipient's locations are not accessible to the public, however the USDA considers the town of Linton as a whole to be a food desert, with half of the town being low access and income, with the other half labeled as just low access, and will be discussed in greater detail below. Food deserts can be described as geographic areas where residents' access to affordable, healthy food options (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient travelling distance ("Food Deserts-Food is Power," 2019)

For this report, all data for the self-produced maps came from the Indiana MAP resource database (Indiana MAP, 2011), as well as the USDA's food access research atlas (USDA ERS - Food Access Research Atlas, 2018) detailing the existence and locations of food deserts in the United States (see Figure 1 below).



The data above indicate that the Linton Farmers Market is located outside of the shown “low income and low access” food desert, so it is possible that location change could be beneficial to both the market’s revenue as well as community access and benefit.

Additionally, the food desert “boundary” encompasses a majority of Linton’s schools and religious facilities which can benefit from the market, as well as use their community influence to promote the market’s importance to the community. A map was created detailing the census distribution of Linton with the spatial locations of schools, hospitals, and religious facilities in the area, all of which contribute to the local food system but can also play a role in improving the role of the farmers market in the community (see Figure 2).

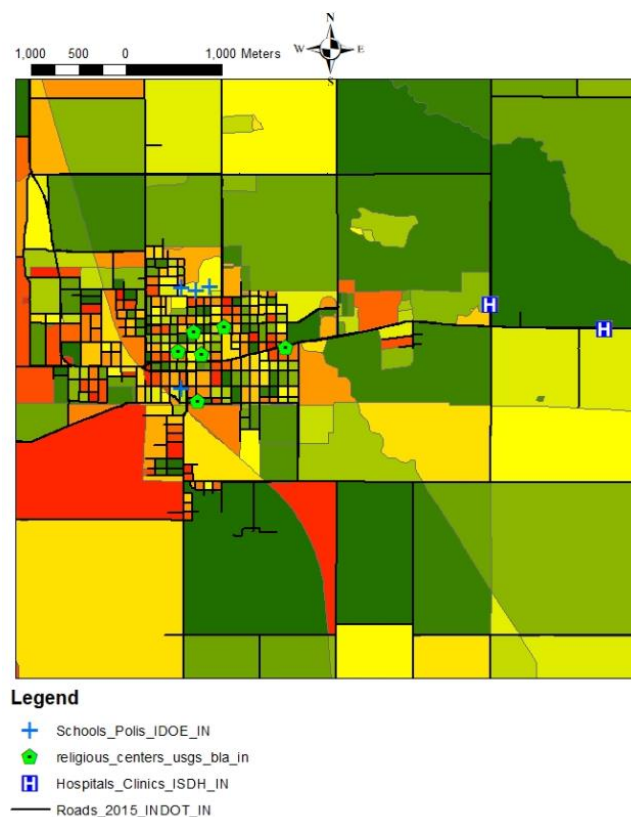
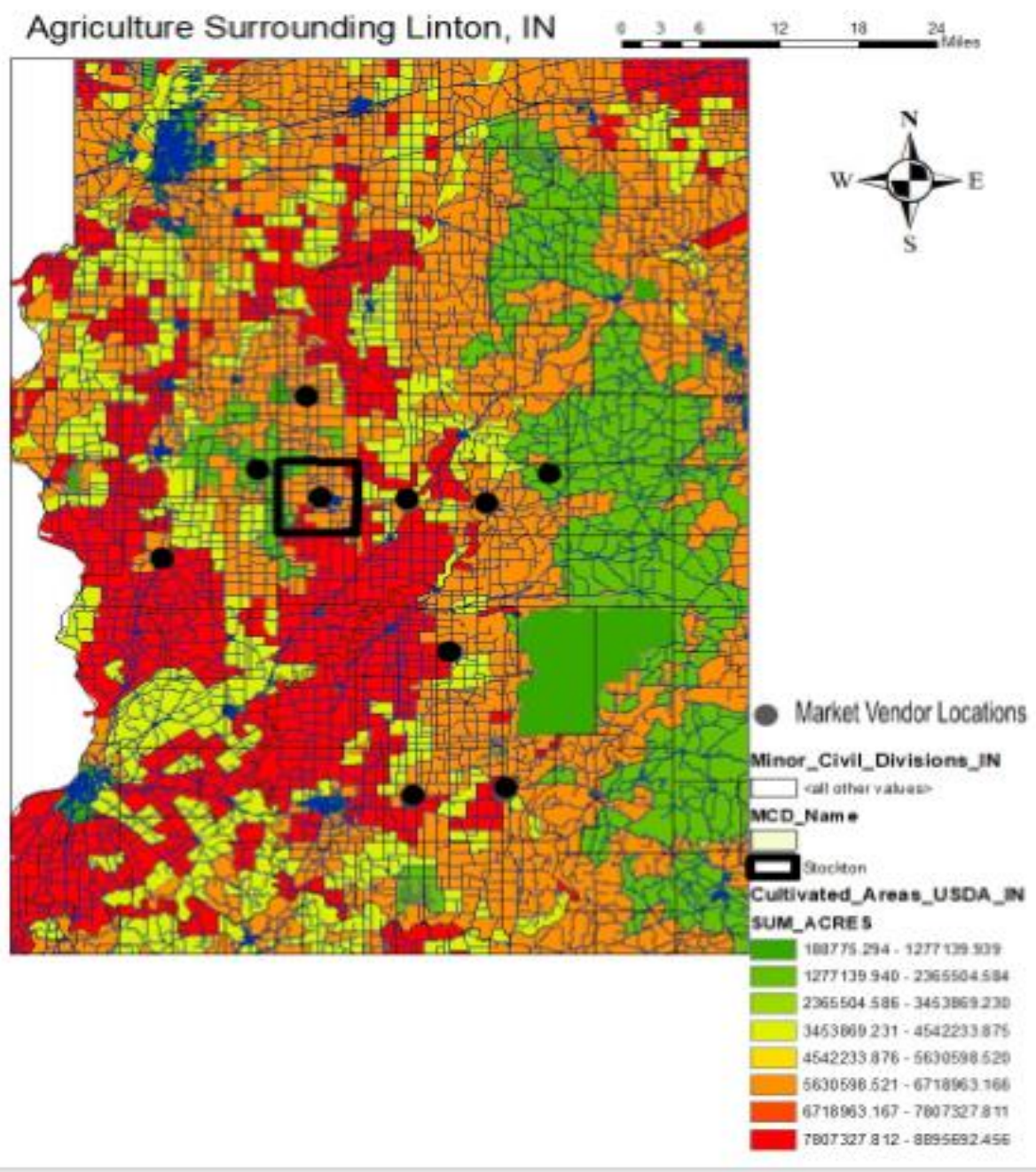


Figure 2: Locations of schools, religious centers and hospitals in Linton, IN

Furthermore, two additional maps are provided to help understand the food system and culture of Linton. Figure 3 (see below) displays the location of the market vendors’ farms in relation to the town. The purpose of the map is to demonstrate the relative distance food sold at the Linton Farmers Markets has to travel. Studies, such as Robinson’s and Farmer’s (2017) in Bloomington, IN have supported the hypothesis that most people value food that does not travel far and has not come from miles away from home. Linton is surrounded by agricultural land with the potential of minimal food miles.



With the exception of the farmers market, however, most, if not all, Linton’s food locations include food that has traveled a considerable distance. As shown in Figure 4 (see below), the town’s food outlets are predominately corporate with few local venues available for purchasing local produce. It is evident from the spatial distribution and frequency of food venues

that control over food resources in Linton disproportionately favors national and international corporate chains. This map shows that locally owned food outlets are limited, but also that locally produced food is even harder to come by. Therefore, the Linton Farmers Market is critical to maintaining the town's local food system.

Food In Linton

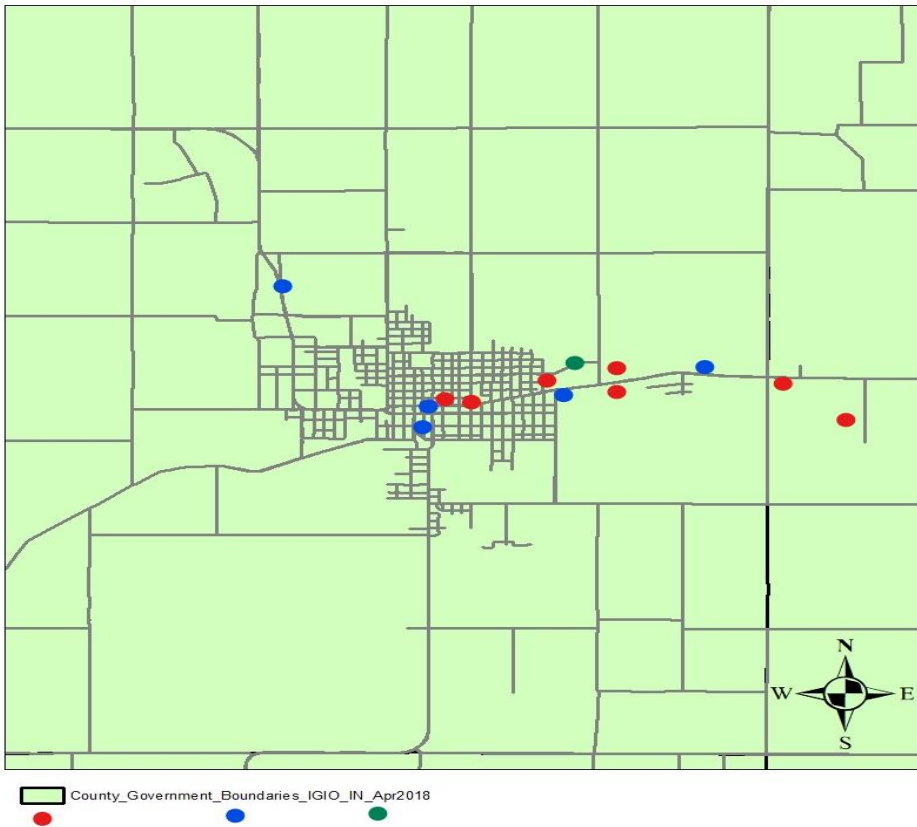


Figure 3: Local (blue); Corporate (red); and farmer market (green) venues

The Linton Farmers Market

Centrally located in Greene County in the town of Linton is the Linton Farmers Market. It is a non-profit, volunteer run organization located in Humphreys Park near the center of town. The market model connects consumers with local produce and homemade products, which come straight from the homes and farms of the vendors. Their mission statement (<https://lintonfarmersmarket.com/>) refers to connecting community, promoting small farms, and providing Linton with fresh healthy foods while generating support and income for the local economy. The hierarchical structure of the Linton Farmers Market begins with the mayor of Linton, John Wilkes, his appointed park board, Market Masters Mark and Joanne Stacy, the vendors, and volunteers of the market. The market was created out of need for fresh local food 7 years ago. With a limited number of vendors in the beginning, it has faced the ups and downs of the market seasons. Over the years, the market has grown to 20 vendors with a solid 12 full time vendors on a weekly basis. The last few years the market saw a drop-in sales and attendance, Mark Stacy recalls in an interview, but its positive aspects keeps the market going (Stacy, M., personal communication, September 28, 2019). Mr. Stacy believes two main factors directly affected the market's livelihood. The first was the relocation of the market two years ago from its home alongside highway 54 of Humphreys Park to the less visible back lot. The second challenge was the loss of 50% of their produce vendors, one example being an organic certified farmer. This joint attack inflicted the market, but the market carries on due to the will of the community, vendors, and volunteers.

Vendor Profile:

For this report vendors and farmers were researched and interviewed. By interviewing them as producers and individuals, an idea of their needs and contributions to the Linton Farmers Market developed. With this understanding of the vendors, one understands what makes market vending successful for small farmers, what the vendors like to see change, and what resources are available to vendors at the market. The Linton Farmers Market was visited twice over the season. This allowed a view to gauge how vendors and customers engage with one another and how the market flows. "Sometimes what producers are selling to consumers at farmers markets is, in part, the aura of personal relations and social connection. Embeddedness itself then becomes a value added in the farmers market experience" (Hergesheimer, 2011). Every vendor that responded with was eager to share their experience in vending and offer enthusiasm for homesteading life and stories of their relationships with the participants of the market. Consumers exist in this innovation as well, which adds to the social and communal benefits of the farmers market. Shoppers are also attracted to the overall interactions with friendly vendors and other shoppers, for in this space recipes and cooking tips can be shared (Buman, 2015)

The interviews conducted consisted of four vendors and the president of the park board: Spurlin Farm Homestead, Shanty Iris, Four Flags Farm, Wagler Family Farm, and Janette Evans,

the park board president. The interviews were conducted via telephone and lasted about one hour. A series of questions was developed to better direct the conversations. The questions were separated into three categories.

- A. Vendor/Farmer Profile: regarding how and why they started vending and what they do when they are finished with the market season.
- B. Community Profile: which allowed the vendors opinion about how the market has affected their lives in the community and how the community has responded to the market.
- C. Market Profile: to expose the positive and negative experiences of the market along with the vendors' needs and desired resources.

The interviews revealed many vendors have very different motivations and aspirations, but they share an interest for a more meaningful and connected life to their families, their land, and their community. According to Robinson and Farmer (2017, pg number??) these connections are often expressed by customers associating “a particular vendor [as] *their* vendor. These connections are what make a local food system work. Customers know their farmers name and they are proud and loyal to them. Bonds like these can transform a town, or region, or community” (Robinson & Farmer, 2017). Many of the vendors remarked on the customers and friends the market has created in their life. In an interview with Anna Telligman of Shanty Iris a first-time vendor she claimed she “has found her people at the Linton Farmers Market” (Telligman, A, informal interview, 2019). It became apparent how important is from her first visit as blood screening volunteer years before she began vending. Armonda Riggs, one half of Four Flags Farm, is a seasoned vendor. The Linton Farmers Market is her 4th market she has been involved in, but she never felt like she was integrated into a community until she visited Linton (Riggs, A, informal interview, 2019).

The vendors were asked what sets the Linton Farmers Market aside from other markets the collective statement is summed up as the market and community is small; people know who the farmer is, they know where they live. There is something so special about local food showing up for local people in a small town. Janette Evans, the president of the Linton Park Board, agrees as well. Janette was found vending crocheted goods one Saturday at the market. She was doing this in order to raise funds for the city of Linton. She believes that it is necessary to advocate on behalf of the Linton Farmers Market because it provides vital option for fresh food and interaction (Evans, J, informal interview, 2019).

With the vendor community successful, the future of the Linton Farmers Market also comes with criticisms and concerns. One consistent need expressed from the vendors was a permanent place to call home for the Linton Farmers Market. The uncertainty of the market's location causes uneasiness that is easily remedied with a permanent long-standing location. In addition to that request, all the vendors interviewed expressed a need for a covered pavilion that

the market could operate under. A notable home base would create a sense of permanency and structure that would give customers a beacon to be drawn to. Farmers markets and their vendors can strengthen the link between their goods, desirable associations and community affiliations when they are aware of their contributions boosting local economies, small business ventures and reducing environmental impact through shorter farm to table distances (Robinson & Farmer, 2017). This decision of the markets location and permanency is ultimately up to the mayor of Linton, according to Janette Evans. The Park Board takes a vote on the placement of the market, but the mayor gets the final say.

Currently, it is necessary for vendors to bring their own tents which emulates a type of pavilion, but this setup is constantly challenged by weather conditions, faulty tent structures, and time away from other more important aspects of vending. Another change vendors spoke of was the day on which the market takes place. One vendor, Wendy Spurlin of Spurlin Homestead, pointed out the potential of changing the day of the market. It can be difficult to choose which market in the area to attend, so the Linton Market suffers from inconsistent vendors (Spurlin, W, informal interview, 2019). This, according to Mr. Stacy, causes the market to be an unreliable produce source. Inconsistencies include both not bringing similar products every week and not showing up reliably each Saturday. The vendors who show up every week make the most money because customers can rely on their products. This lack of consistency is also the most common complaint from customers at the market. While the vendors have a few qualms, they truly appreciate the support which the market grants. They also appreciate the level of food sovereignty which it provides to fit both their own needs and the needs of the community.

After speaking with the vendors, clarification was reached on the missing pieces which offer support and knowledge to the small farm community around Linton. These elements include a more convenient and permanent location, new day or time for the market, tangible and reliable information regarding small farming in Indiana. To gather this tool kit, Sherri Dugger, the CEO of the Indiana Farmers Union, was contacted and graciously provided resources to build the tool kit you see below (Women Food and Ag Network, 2019). The resources that Sherri Dugger mentioned are invaluable for new and small farmers alike.

Vendor Tool Kit

Women Food and Agriculture Network	Contact information for executive director Sherri Dugger within the Women Food and Agriculture Network. They work to engage women in building an ecological and just food and agricultural system through individual and community power.	https://wfan.org/news/2019/6/2/wfan-welcomes-sherri-dugger
Purdue Extension	With information ranging from farm safety to food safety and all related farm information, this is the all encompassing resource.	https://extension.purdue.edu/Greene/about
Grant Writing Business for Food and Agriculture Business	Helps farmers fill out grant proposals in order to receive necessary financial aid.	http://www.prosperityag.com/
National Farmer Union	NFU represents and advocates on behalf of family farmers, fishers and ranchers across the country, with formally organized divisions in 33 states.	https://nfu.org/

NW Indiana Food Expo Discussion	County Line Orchard 200 South County Line Road Hobart, IN 46342	Tues, February 11, 2020 All day	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fed-food-expo-discussion-tickets-82229377281?aff=er
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NE Indiana Local Food Forum	Walb Student Union 1 Purdue University Fort Wayne Union Circle Drive Fort Wayne, IN 46815	Fri, February 7, 2020 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM CST	https://www.neifood.org/
Beginning Farmer Institute (under NFU)	Washington DC Savannah, GA Northern California	Over the course of a year	https://nfu.org/education/beginning-farmer-institute/
Center for Rural Engagement Meetings	Partnered with IU Bloomington	See website for event dates	https://rural.indiana.edu/events/index.html
Indiana Small Farm Conference	Hendricks County 4-H Fairgrounds & Conference Complex	March 5-7, 2020	https://www.purdue.edu/dffs/smallfarms/small-farm-conference-2020/
Indiana Horticulture Congress	Indianapolis Marriott East 7202 East 21st Street Indianapolis , IN 46219	Tues, February 11, 2020 All day	https://www.extension.purdue.edu/event/21314

Impact

Farmers markets provide a variety of benefits to a community. These benefits are felt with greater intensity in small, rural communities such as Linton, Indiana. The objective is to assess the contributions that the Linton Farmers Market provides to the surrounding community. The contributions have been split into four different categories of benefits: economic, governmental, social, and health benefits. The following section outlines these advantages in relation to Linton.

Social Impacts:

Local food venues could tie healthy food to a healthy society. Research shows that farmers markets serve a variety of social needs in communities. It is necessary for one to experience the satisfaction of organically grown and sustainably harvested fresh local produce to understand the superior satisfaction of that over convenience food at the grocery store. Firstly, from rural to urban areas, USDA surveys reveal that people report significantly more positive social interactions at farmers markets than at grocery stores (States News Service, 2018). According to Hinrichs (2000), “[e]mbeddedness, in this sense of social connection, reciprocity and trust, is often seen as the hallmark (and comparative advantage) of direct agricultural markets” (p. 296). The culmination of these positive social connections between consumers and local farmers contribute to a community’s social health, supporting friendships, a sense of belonging, and unity, which are things that commercial grocery stores simply cannot offer.

In addition, local farmers markets can reflect and manifest a community’s values. In *Selling Local*, Robinson and Farmer (2017) claim that farmers markets strengthen social vitality, leisure, and local recreation, while strengthening a sense of belonging for both vendors and consumers. They also describe how farmers markets can connect “local crops, crafts, and cuisines” to the “identities, creativities, heritages, and collective memory of those who live in a particular region” (3). In support of this assertion, according to Conner (2010), local markets may foster a welcoming atmosphere that promotes patronage from certain subsets of the community. These appeals are not only crucial to the viability of the market itself, but also important to Linton as a rural community for its ability to attract and maintain residents. The latter was strengthened through informal interviews with two representatives from local churches as well as the Linton Elementary School Principal, Kent Brewer.

According to the Indiana Department of Education, 517 students in the Linton-Stockton School Corporation depend on free meals, and 97 students rely on reduced-priced breakfast and lunch (IDOE 2019). This means that 44.9% of students eat school lunch, which is problematic due to privatization of the National School Lunch Program. Since the New Deal, the Agriculture Department pays \$1 billion every year for raw fresh commodities that are surplus from US farms, which go directly to public schools at no cost to the institution. According to the New York Times, “more and more [schools] pay processors to turn these healthy ingredients into fried chicken nuggets, fruit pastries, pizza and the like. The article further points out that, “some \$445 million worth of commodities are sent for processing each year, a nearly 50 percent increase

since 2006” (Komisar 2011). Processing food decreases the nutritional value of food, affecting the health, energy, and development of children. Typical meals in Linton-Stockton schools include sloppy joes, hotdogs, country fried steak, and for breakfast, items such as pop tarts and cinnamon rolls. While the students in Linton who eat cafeteria-style lunches are required to abide by a balanced-meal requirement, even the most nutritious lunch lacks fresh or local food, which is offered affordably at the farmers market, especially with Senior, SNAP, or WIC benefits.

A potential way to attack the harmful effects of privatizing the National School Lunch Program is the IN Farm to School Initiative (Indiana Farm to School Initiative, 2014), which is an entitlement program that exists in Indiana where the State provides the means for schools to purchase food directly from local farms. According to the National Farm to School Network, “each dollar invested stimulates an additional \$0.60-\$2.16 for local economic activity”. Additionally, there is an increase among children asking their families to make healthier food purchases, and it generally augments awareness and enthusiasm about local agriculture and food. Encouraging implementation of this program at schools could add value to the Linton Farmers Market in the eyes of society and for future generations.

Outside of school, during the summer, minors in Linton who qualify for free or reduced lunch at school are offered free meals at the park Monday through Friday, exactly adjacent to where the farmers market occurs on Saturday morning. The market is an opportunity for children and their families to affordably access the fresh, local, healthy food that they may need to supplement what this program offers. It enhances personal food sovereignty by providing options that expand people’s freedom to choose what, when, and how they eat. In addition, Linton’s abundance of corporate-owned, fast food and pizza restaurants where freshness is scarce and staff likely do not know where food is from, creates a convenient avenue for people to avoid fresh local food altogether. The social benefits that farmers markets offer creates resilience against this habit by building up food security while breaking down barriers to healthy food.

Health Impacts:

According to the Rural Health Information Hub (2017), farmers markets can be established in rural areas to help small local farmers financially, while also increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables for local residents. Rural farmers markets promote food security. Lack of access to nutritious food can negatively affect their learning, development, family life, productivity, physical, and mental health. Farmers markets have the potential to improve access to and utilization of fresh produce by communities. They also have an impact on nutrition related outcomes in adults, especially in low income communities. This research elucidates the benefits of farmers markets on nutrition and health-related outcomes, such as dietary intake and weight status, as well as outcomes not related to nutrition and health.

A phone interview was conducted with a floor nurse from Greene County Hospital, C. Shepard. Many cases the hospital receives relate to complications that are based in poor diet and exercise. Cases include diseases such as pre-diabetes, type two diabetes, heart disease, heart attacks, and clogged arteries. These issues primarily affect areas facing food insecurity, but they

are preventable if certain lifestyle changes occur. Processed food does not contain vital nutrients and antioxidants, and those in food insecure areas tend to have greater access to said food. These are direct causes of deadly issues. Nurse Shepard claims, “nutrition is foundational,” when asked about farmers markets and specifically the Linton Farmers Market. Nurse Shepard had nothing but positive things to say. “The Linton Farmers Market has the potential to do some real good not only for the town, but for the entire county in general. It will transform lives. Generations need to be educated on food that will directly improve their health.” Also, in the interview Nurse Shepard was able to share some information on how farmers markets can help with mental health. “Farmers markets are a partnership with the human body and the environment. Much of the time, farmers markets are outside. Here, people are exposed to the elements and sunshine, which has large amounts of Vitamin D helping fight anxiety, depression, osteoporosis, and cancer. It reduces stress and increases serotonin levels” It is an intertwining relationship that helps every participant involved. Moreover, resources have concurred with what Nurse Shepard claimed.

Additionally, little money causes the lack of access to nutritious food. Which as a result negatively affect people in these communities learning and development, family life, productivity and physical and mental health (Holbon, 2010). In these areas, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, and early death are highly present. The USDA believes that farmers markets are a key resource in the effort to increase nutritious eating and fight food insecurity. Many fruits and vegetables lose key nutrients and antioxidants the longer they sit after being picked, and many grocery store finds are several days old by the time they are purchased. Farmers market finds, however, are often picked the night before or the morning of the market.

WIC and SNAP recipients in low-income areas report high rates of maternal diabetes, low vegetable consumption and food insecurity. WIC mothers who attended farmers markets are more likely to decrease their chances of contracting diabetes. Farmers markets allow mothers of younger children to seek increased fresh vegetables in their family’s diet.

Food Assistance:

In order to increase accessibility and inclusivity, the Linton Farmers Market accepts SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Program for Women, Infants, and Children), and SFMNP (Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program) benefits. The Linton Market offers “Market Bucks”, which doubles purchases for these three programs: the customer simply brings in their SNAP or EBT card to double their money up to \$10 for that market day. For example, if a customer brings in \$10, they can spend \$20 at the market that day; if a customer brings in \$5, they can spend \$10 that day, etc. This system is designed to incentivize those on assistance programs to participate in the Linton Farmers Market and is supported by local sponsorships and fund-raising activities. Depending on the program used, the customer can purchase accordingly: (“SNAP & Market Bucks,” 2019)

- SNAP Market Bucks:
 - fruits/vegetables
 - breads/cereals
 - meat/poultry
 - dairy products
 - jams/sauces
 - maple syrup/honey products
 - seeds/plants that grow food
 - wrapped/labeled baked goods for home consumption
- WIC and Senior FMNP checks and vouchers:
 - fruits/vegetables
 - edible herbs

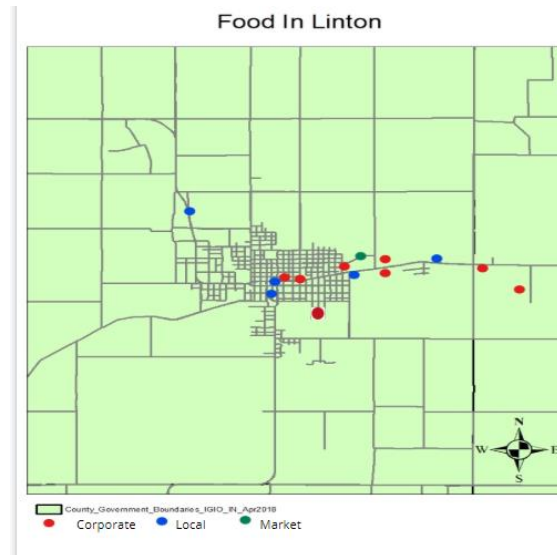
Though these incentives seem attractive, there seems to be an absence of customers using supplemental programs at the Linton Farmers Market. Focus will be pointed toward why this is, and how one can encourage recipients to use their benefits at the Linton Farmers Market.

Research began with education about federal aid programs (SNAP, WIC, and SFMNP) and their limitations. SNAP benefits are provided via electronic card that is used like an ATM card. It can be used to purchase products listed above; it *cannot* be used for alcohol, tobacco/vape products, vitamins/medicines, live animals, pet feed, prepared foods for immediate consumption, cleaning supplies/products, or hygiene items/cosmetics. To apply for SNAP, one must either be registered for work, take a job if available, or participate in a state-offered employment program (“Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) | USDA-FNS,” 2018). This is important to consider, as there is a probability that recipients are working or looking for work during market hours. As for the WIC program, children have always been the majority of recipients—of 6.87 million recipients in FY 2018, 3.52 million were children (“Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) | USDA-FNS,” 2016). This is important to consider: recipients (especially children) may not have accessibility to transportation; recipients may have/be parents working on Saturdays; or recipients may be at daycare centers on Saturdays.

In August of 2019, there was a total of 2,840 SNAP recipients in Greene County; this included 1,315 households. The average issuance per recipient was \$108.41, and the average issuance per household was \$234.13 (Division of Family Resources, 2019). Mark Stacy, the market manager at Linton, compiled data regarding SNAP customers in 2019. According to his data, there was a total of 18 SNAP customers this year. Of the 18 recipients that came, 14 (78%) did not return, and 4 (22%) were repeat customers (2019 Linton Farmers Market: SNAP Recipients Chart). This data is crucial to this report, as the majority of SNAP customers did not return.

As the Linton Farmers Market incentive program is designed to keep prices for SNAP/WIC/SFMNP recipients reasonable, it is important to factor in the already existing food culture of Linton. With the help of the mapping team, community food venues were located:

- Walmart Supercenter: 2251 E, IN-54
- Save a Lot: 209 S. Main St
- Dollar General: 1600 A St
- Dollar General: 956 Price Rd NE
- Linton Community Food Pantry: 440 E. Street Northeast
- Roosevelt Mission Inc: 89 E Vincennes St
- Linton Food Center: 206 Highway 83 N



These locations all accept federal aid programs, so they are inherent competitors of the Linton Farmers Market. Shown below is a price analysis to compare the costs of staple produce foods to see if it would make financial sense for recipients to even consider shopping at the market.

	Market Price	Supermarket Price
Tomatoes	\$2.75/lb	\$2.77/lb
Onions	\$1.00/each	\$0.75/each
Potatoes	\$4.00/3.5 lb	\$3.00-\$5.00/3.5 lb
Peppers	\$0.75/each	\$1.13/each
Green Beans	\$2.00/lb	\$2.60/lb
Chicken	\$3.00/lb	\$5.00-\$8.00/lb
Honey	\$8.00/16 oz bottle	\$3.00-\$4.00/16 oz bottle

According to these price comparisons, generally, market prices are not significantly more expensive than Linton supermarket prices for these basic nutritional goods. This allows us to conclude that price is not the sole deterrent of federal aid recipients.

Referencing the Family and Social Services Administration, there is no concrete promotion of local farmers markets. This should be considered, as most SNAP recipients may not even be aware of the Market Bucks Program. Failing to address food accessibility leads to limitations in nutritional opportunities for community members. In the peer-reviewed journal titled "Supporting Equitable Food Systems Through Food Assistance at Farmers' Markets" from the American Public Health Association, it was found that farmers markets EBT cards, and now SNAP benefits are accepted, create a decrease in health disparities amongst the population. Providing systems that accept food assistance benefits at markets positively impacts both the food benefits recipients and farmers. It allows low-income individuals receiving food assistance to eat more nutritiously and increases revenue for farmers present at the market.

Economic Development:

According to Martinez (2010), farmers markets impact local economies in both direct and indirect ways. Possibly the most direct impact comes through import substitution. These insights the concept of domestic production for domestic consumption and encourages products to be made in house rather than exporting everything that is produced and importing the goods being consumed. This not only invigorates the local economy, but it begins to make the community more resilient. If there were some sort of natural or economic disaster that cut off the travel of goods to Linton, it would be less difficult to transition being self-sufficient. Martinez finds that it is likely that this then generates additional economic impacts as workers and businesses spend the additional income on production inputs and other products within the area. This encourages new business as well as new consumers, both in the community of Linton and consumers from other cities and states. Similarly, by purchasing goods at a farmers market from a local farmer or small business, wealth stays within the community of Linton and bolsters the economy. In this situation, one is supporting their local economy rather than that of another city, state, or even country through exports.

Indirect impacts also make up a significant portion of the overall advantages provided by farmers markets. A study done on the economic impact of Iowa farmers markets by Otto and Varner (2005) found that each dollar spent at a farmers market in Iowa generates 58 cents in indirect and induced sales. This study also found that every dollar of income earned at farmers markets generates an additional 47 cents in indirect and induced income. Additionally, in Iowa each full-time equivalent job that is created by a farmers market supports almost half of a full-time equivalent job in another sector of Iowa's economy. This study is worth comparing to Linton because Iowa has a similar average income and city population to Greene County. However, Linton is significantly smaller than Iowa's average city and therefore these figures are

inflated when compared to Linton. Linton will still see similar benefits such as additional income and sales generated, but the amount generated is less than represented in the study.

Additionally, farmers markets have positive impacts on other local businesses. There has been some research done on the possibility of farmers markets developing business skills and fostering business opportunities. Feenstra et al (1997) examined the role of farmers markets in creating and sustaining local businesses and found that farmers markets help medium and large-scale businesses to expand and complement existing businesses. They also act as a low-risk incubator for small-scale and new businesses, as farmers markets provide relatively stable prospective customers. New businesses can use this environment to meet new customers, obtain free advertising, learn from other businesses and determine which practices are most and least successful for them.

Government Structure and Policies:

Operating a farmers market involves policies at national, state, and local levels. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a large contributor to the policy surrounding farmers markets and has implemented policies that benefit small farmers and local food systems. Specifically, according to Low, et al (2015), the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative aims to “strengthen USDA’s support for local and regional food systems” (Low et al. 2015, p. 57). Similar programs can be found at the state level that offer financial incentives to small and/or rural farmers in order to help them grow their business and sustain their way of living.

In order to gain more insight into how the government structure affects the Linton Farmers Market, the mayor of Linton, John Wilkes was interviewed. Mayor Wilkes was adamant in his support for the Linton Farmers Market because of the many advantages it brings to the town. For example, the farmers market brings people to town, is a social gathering for the citizens of Linton, improves access to fresh produce, and stimulates economic activity for other businesses in the vicinity of the market. While Mayor Wilkes is very supportive of the farmers market, he was not able to speak to the policies related to the farmers market and was not sure why the Double Bucks Program for SNAP, WIC, and FMNP recipients is not being used to its fullest extent. Regardless, he sees promise in the Linton Farmers Market and knows that the removal of it from the community would greatly disadvantage the Linton community and Greene County as a whole.

To get a better understanding of farmers market policies at the state level, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has published information regarding Indiana’s Fresh Bucks Program. The Fresh Bucks Program was founded in 2013 and is currently only available in Marion County and the surrounding Indianapolis metropolitan area. According to the CDC (2014), the Fresh Bucks Program is a collaborative initiative between multiple Indiana State Departments including the Indiana State Department of Health and the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration to “double the buying power (up to \$20) on Indiana-grown crops for SNAP recipients in the form of Fresh Bucks tokens” (pg 4). While the system in place at the Linton Farmers Market is called Market Bucks, the two systems are very similar and aim to increase the

availability to local produce and healthy foods to people on SNAP, WIC, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). The Linton Farmers Market expressed that they are struggling to attract such recipients to the market, but the research summarized by the CDC explains that marketing campaigns are the best way to attract SNAP, WIC, and FMNP recipients. Many of the same strategies described in the article could be applied to the City of Linton, including distributing educational and marketing materials to community organizations, displaying signs that advertise SNAP acceptance, and ads in the local newspaper.

Recommendations

- Speak with vendors and determine what they are bringing, then advertise what will be available to the public that week
- Target churches, schools, city hall
- To increase awareness of Linton Farmers Market amongst food assistance recipients, encourage FSSA office to distribute information about market bucks to applicants
- To increase revenue and popularity, attract tourists from Goose Pond, Linton Freedom Festival, and Solsberry Trails to Linton Farmers Market. This could be done by having a booth set up at the Freedom Festival, or fliers at local attractions.
- Increase awareness of policies available all national, state, and local levels that both help local farmers become more successful and increase access of fresh foods to those who might not be able to afford such goods.
- Communication with vendors is of utmost importance to understand their concerns. Without their input the market cannot run fluently and could potentially be undermined.
- Share the toolkit with vendors to help them understand how they can grow and further benefit the community
- Strengthen social aspects of market to attract and retain diverse consumers.
- Advocate for the implementation of the Indiana Farm to School program at Linton-Stockton Schools.
- Promote Linton Farmers Market during the Summer free meal program.

Conclusion

The community benefits, vendor contribution, and the geography of food assistance programs in Linton ensure the Linton Farmers Market's resiliency within Greene County. This market holds a worthwhile place in the community that has the ability to generate long-standing relationships with the surrounding communities, provide an area for healthy choices, and bring income to new and old business, including small farms. These actions along with bridging the gap of food assistance programs will positively impact the local and global food system. The market's resilience brings an assurance of food access and security directly to those who receive any government food assistance. The accomplishments of the market will flourish because the structure it has built has created a foundation worthy of future growth. If the community can continue to back the market and take the precautions and recommendations offered by its critics

and supporters, then the Linton Farmers Market will prosper.

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