Farm Fresh Foods for Healthy Kids: Innovative Cost-Offset Community Supported Agriculture Intervention to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Strengthen Local Agricultural Economies

Rebecca A. Seguin\textsuperscript{1}, Alice S. Ammerman\textsuperscript{2}, Karla L. Hanson\textsuperscript{1}, Jane Kolodinsky\textsuperscript{3}, Stephanie B. Jilcott Pitts\textsuperscript{4}, and Marilyn Stilaker\textsuperscript{5}
Cornell University, \textsuperscript{2}University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, \textsuperscript{3}University of Vermont, \textsuperscript{4}East Carolina University, \textsuperscript{5}The Evergreen State College

Abstract

Objective: To better understand the potential of cost-offset community supported agriculture (CO-CSA) to improve dietary quality in low-income families by conducting research, extension, and education activities.

Description: The Farm Fresh Foods for Healthy Kids (F3HK) intervention is under development. To date, 31 families have participated, and 13 families have been randomized to intervention (n=13) or control (n=18). All families received SNAP/EBT. Twenty families have reported increased access to fresh food over the one-season intervention compared to baseline. Geospatial data and qualitative data from interviews were used to explore accessibility issues and strategies to improve access.

Evaluation: F3HK participants reported increased access to fresh food in their homes compared to baseline. Geospatial data and qualitative data from interviews were used to explore accessibility issues and strategies to improve access.

Conclusion: The F3HK intervention is showing promise for improving dietary quality in low-income families. Further research is needed to explore this link.

Objectives

- Examine whether CO-CSA plus education improves dietary intake and quality in low-income households with children aged 2-12.
- Examine effects of CO-CSA plus education on knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, and self-efficacy related to nutrition, meal planning, and meal preparation.
- Develop education modules for use in undergraduate courses.

Description

Farm Fresh Foods for Healthy Kids (F3HK) is a community-based intervention to address childhood obesity and strengthen local agricultural economies. F3HK participants were recruited from 12 rural and suburban areas across the United States. The intervention includes four distinct but related modules: development of educational modules for use in undergraduate courses, development of an intervention to prevent childhood obesity and strengthen local agricultural economies, development of dietary quality after one-season of participation, but not other measures.

Participants who found pick-up challenging mentioned barriers such as:

- Time & effort
- Distance to pick-up
- Parking difficulties
- Traffic

Module 1

- What is a CSA? Creating a community-based local foods intervention where “local food” is a foreign concept

Module 2

- Assessing dietary quality in community-based local foods interventions and evaluations

Module 3

- Adapting a CSA to open new markets for farmers and increase low-income families’ access to local foods

Module 4

- Analyzing intervention impact on dietary behavior and quality

Conclusions

- CO-CSA plus education and kitchen tools is a promising method to improve attitudes, self-efficacy, and dietary quality among caregivers.
- Positive changes among caregivers may be a first step toward improved dietary quality among children but more research is needed to explore this link.
- Longitudinal outcome data will be examined for maintenance of behavior change.
- Education modules are being piloted, and will be evaluated and refined before dissemination in 2020-21.

Acknowledgments

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2015-68021-23210. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.