

From: [The All Extension Mailing List](#) on behalf of [Thomas W. Blaine](#)
To: [The All Extension Mailing List](#)
Subject: ALL-EXTENSION: study of household behavior in rural food deserts
Date: Wednesday, August 29, 2012 4:03:25 PM

Extension Colleagues: This summer I worked with two student interns enrolled in ORIP (Ohio Research Internship Program) and Dr. Parwinder Grewal, OARDC, on an exploratory study of household behavior in rural food deserts. I am pleased to say that I can come and share the results of our study with any group you may have that has an interest in this emerging topic. We have developed a slide show that goes over a lot of results concerning how households acquire fresh fruits and vegetables in a rural food desert, along with barriers, opportunities and suggestions for research and outreach you, your colleagues or your clientele may wish to undertake.

The material in the slide show contains information with implications that cut across all program areas including ANR, CD, Youth Development and FCS.

I first became aware of the concept of a food desert a few years ago when I attended seminars that examined urban food deserts. These are typically described as places near urban cores where there is a paucity of locations where residents can purchase fresh fruits and vegetables easily. It is widely believed that the presence of food deserts contributes to an unhealthy diet. Many people who live in these areas have difficulty in obtaining transportation to retail outlets that sell fresh produce, and they subsequently adopt unhealthy eating habits that may last a lifetime.

The increased awareness of urban food deserts has contributed to the outreach and research related to urban community gardens that many of you have read about.

More recently I noticed that some of the focus on food deserts has been directed toward rural areas as well, including an article in the Journal of Extension co-authored by OSU's own Jill Clark on rural food deserts in Ohio. This article is a great place to start to gain an understanding of the topic, and it came out just as we were getting started with our study. Here is the link: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2012june/a6.php>

Earlier this month we completed our study, which features a survey of 184 respondents. Here are some of the results:

The respondents in our sample live an average distance of 11 miles from a grocery store – average annual cost of travel to and from to buy produce is \$735.

A total of 74% of households maintain a garden and the average household achieves 22% self-sufficiency in produce.

A total of 28% of households grow at least one-third of the produce they consume, and 43% grow at least one-fourth.

Senior citizens are less likely to produce their own fruits and vegetables, primarily due to health issues.

Larger, low income households are more likely to have a garden for home consumption, as are farming households.

If you are interested in learning more about our study, or would like for me to come and share the slide show with your colleagues and/or clientele, please email me or call me at 330-466-7877.

Sincerely,
Thomas W. Blaine, PhD
Associate Professor
OSU Extension

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