

2024 Farm Share Impact Report

Prepared for The Farm at Trinity Health

June 2025



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Quotations used in this report have been transcribed using the clean verbatim style. Speech errors, false starts, stutters, repetitions, and filler words have been omitted so long as their removal did not change the meaning or sentiment of the statement.



The Program Evaluation Group (PEG) partners with public and private organizations to provide evaluation training, consulting, and data services.

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The 2024 Farm Share evaluation, including the publication of this report, is supported by The Michigan Health Endowment Fund. The Health Fund works to improve the health and wellness of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of healthcare, with a special focus on children and seniors. You can find more information about the Health Fund at www.mihealthfund.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Evaluation Findings

- **Farm Share participants ate more fruits and vegetables.** On average, members ate almost an additional 1/3 cup of fruits and vegetables each day after participating. This equates to an additional 76 cups of produce over the 36-week season. The change was statistically significant, meaning the impact was likely from the program rather than by chance. Furthermore, nearly all participants agreed they had greater access to high quality fruits and vegetables and had eaten a greater variety of fruits and vegetables through the Farm Share.

“For me personally, it meant losing 35 lbs. Having the Farm Share in the house resulted in more veggies and less pizza! For my household it meant healthier meals.”

– Participant Survey, 2024

- **Farm Share participants improved food security and health.** Full season participants had statistically significant increases in food security and self-reported health status.
- **Expanding Farm Share access opportunities would help mitigate participation barriers for many people.** Limited time and challenging circumstances prevent many people from picking up their share even though they would like to do so. FSA participants who dropped out of the program were most likely to face barriers to pick up, especially health challenges. When asked what would make the Farm Share program a better experience, the largest number of people asked for additional ways to access the Farm Share, including

additional pick-up days or times, additional pick-up locations, or a delivery service.

- **The Farm Share has positively contributed to the stability and economic health of the farm businesses supplying the program.** All responding farms increased gross sales through the program. Farm businesses reported an average of five distinct positive impacts on their operations as a result of the partnership with The Farm Share.



Collectively, The Farm at Trinity Health Ann Arbor and Trinity Health Oakland served 684 members spanning 13 counties and impacting over 1900 people in 2024.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

441

members received produce boxes at no cost through the Farm Share Assistance program

Program Background

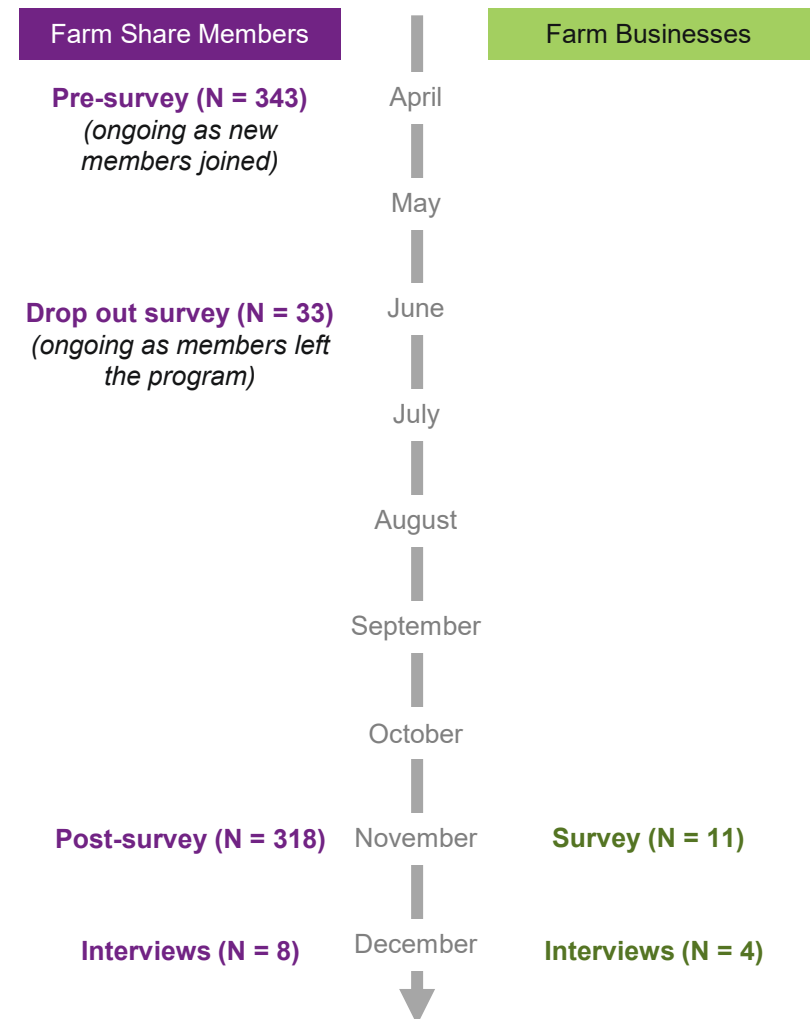
The Farm at Trinity Health provides community-centered food programs designed to improve health equity while investing in the local food system. The Farm Share works with 24 local farms to operate a weekly produce distribution at the Ann Arbor, Oakland, Livonia, and Brighton sites. The program runs for 36 weeks from early April through mid-December and offers both in-person and self-serve pick-up.

Farm Share members include both paid and subsidized members. Community members who are experiencing nutrition insecurity can participate in the Farm Share at no cost through the Farm Share Assistance program. Additionally, both Oakland and Ann Arbor operate food pantries on site with primarily non-perishable items. All Farm Share members are eligible to shop the pantry during in-person share pick up.

Evaluation Background

Through the 2024 season, The Farm at Trinity Health partnered with the Program Evaluation Group at the University of Michigan School of Social Work to capture the program experiences and impacts for both Farm Share members and farm businesses supplying the program. Data collection included surveys and interviews with both groups, as illustrated to the right.

2024 Evaluation Timeline



FARM SHARE MEMBER FINDINGS

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND REACH

684
members

13
counties across
Southeast
Michigan

Over **1900**
people reached

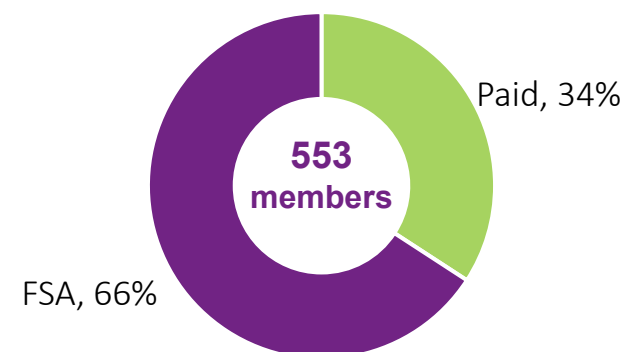


In 2024, The Farm at Trinity Health served 684 members between the Ann Arbor and Oakland locations. Members lived in 112 different zip codes and 13 different counties across Southeast Michigan. Based on the average household size of 2.8 people from the participant survey, the Farm Share collectively reached over 1900 people.

Farm Share members include households that purchase an annual or seasonal membership (paid members) and households that qualify for a free membership, called Farm Share Assistance. At both farm locations, Farm Share Assistance (FSA) members comprised more than half of the members.

The following page shows the demographic diversity and geographic spread of Farm Share members based on internal zip code records and survey data.

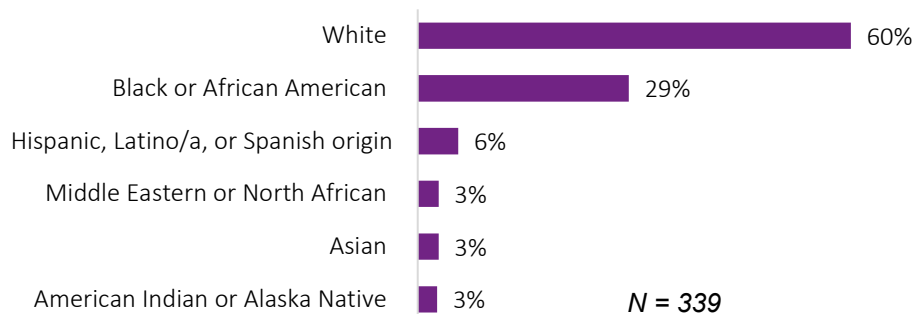
The Farm at Trinity Health Ann Arbor 2024 Membership



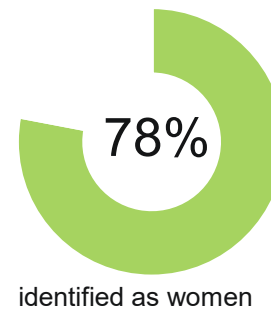
The Farm at Trinity Health Oakland 2024 Membership



Race and Ethnicity



Gender



identified as women

Household Composition

The average household size was **2.8** people.



42% had kids under 18

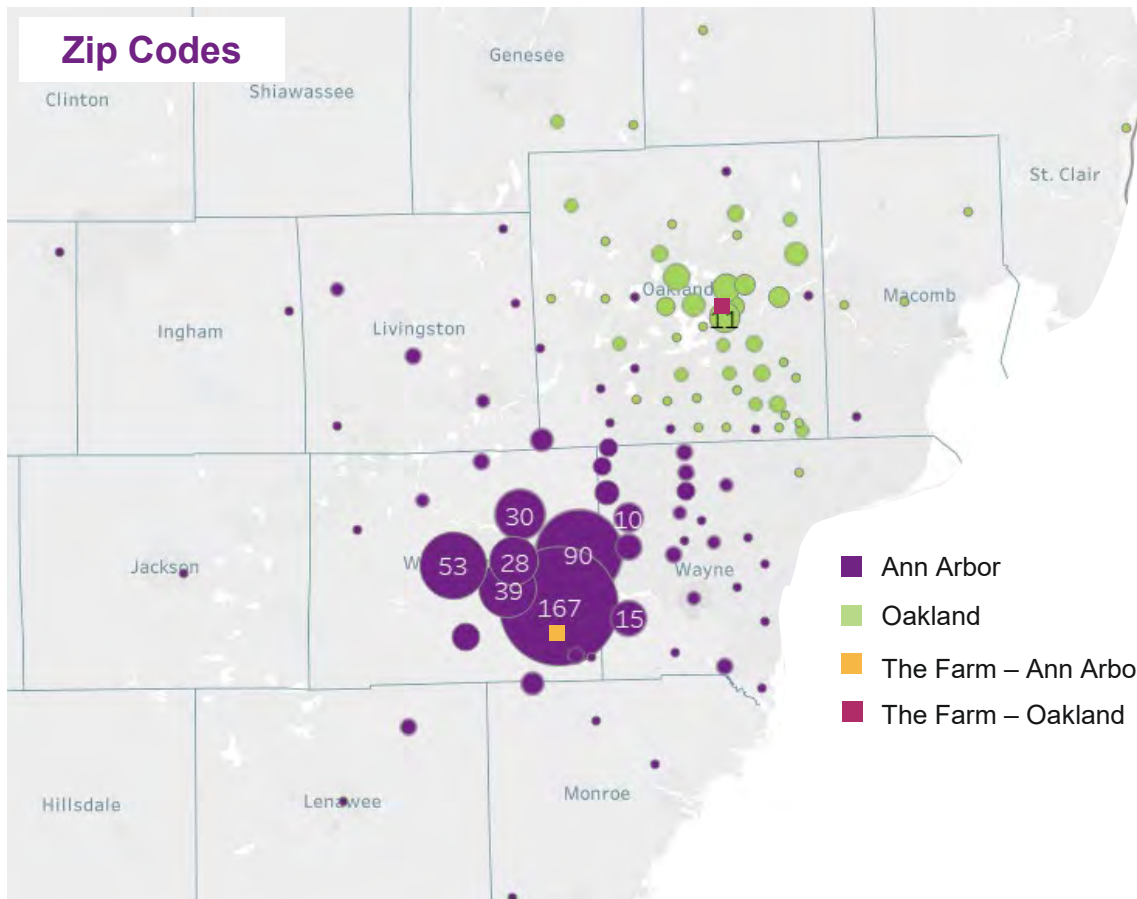


26% lived alone



5% had at 4 or more kids under 18

Zip Codes

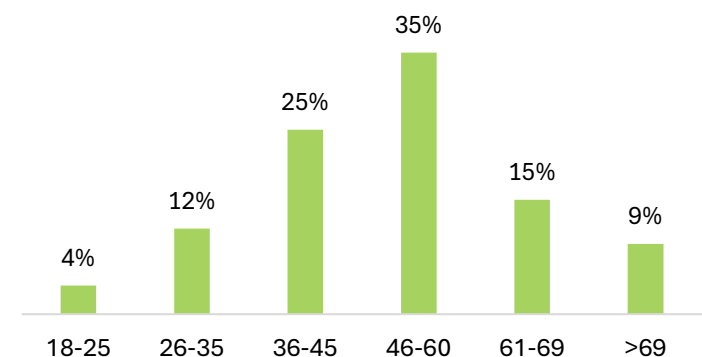


Languages

7 languages spoken at home in addition to English.

- Arabic
- Cantonese
- French
- Mandarin
- Marathi
- Spanish (6 households)
- Urdu

Age



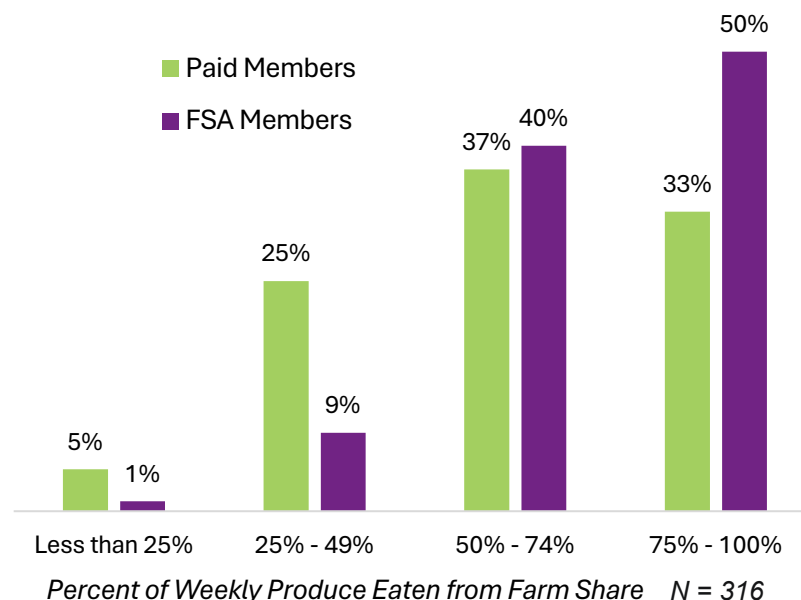
PARTICIPATION IMPACTS



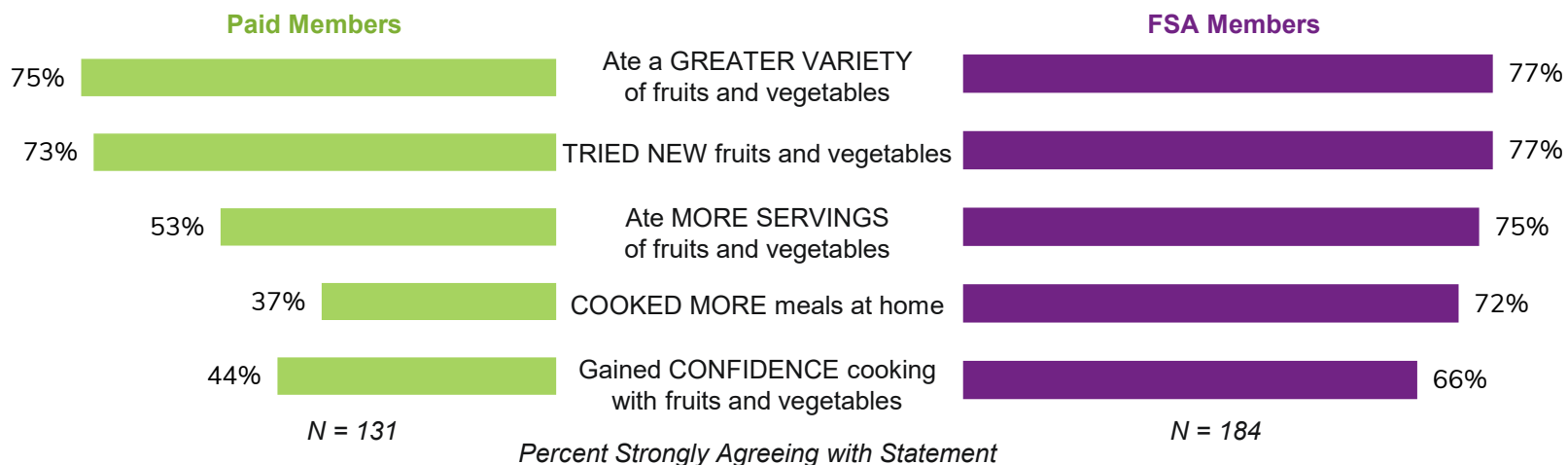
Farm Share members reported the weekly produce boxes made up a substantial portion of their diet. This was particularly true for FSA members. Ninety percent of FSA members said at least 50% of the fruits and vegetables they ate each week came from the Farm Share.

About 75% of both member groups reported trying new fruits and vegetables and eating a greater produce variety after participating in the Farm Share. FSA members were noticeably more likely to report eating more servings more servings of fruits and vegetables and cooking more meals at home than paid members.

90% of FSA members said at least half their weekly produce came from the Farm Share.



FSA members were more likely to strongly agree with impacts on cooking and eating than paid members.



“It allowed us to include more fresh whole vegetables into recipes and our daily meals that may have otherwise included cheaper, more processed ingredients.”

– Participant Survey, 2024

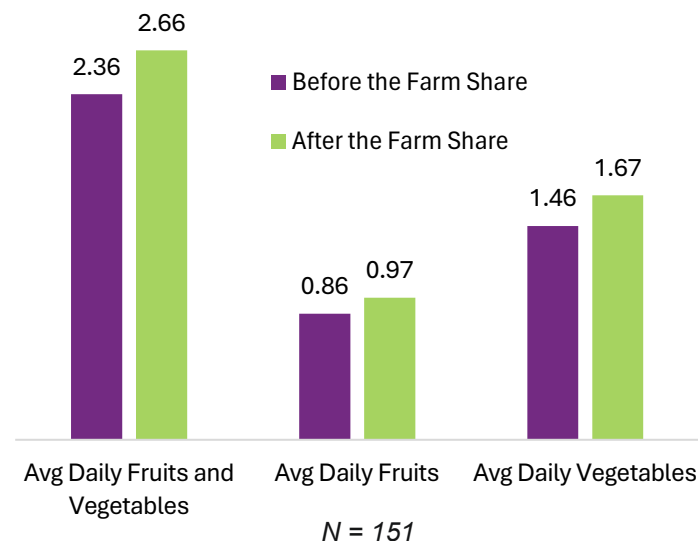
By comparing survey responses before and after participating in the Farm Share program, we were able to assess changes for 169 FSA members.

FSA members had a **statistically significant increase in fruit and vegetable consumption**.¹ Approximately 73% of participants increased their total average daily consumption of fruits and vegetables (measured in cups) after participating in the Farm Share. The daily average consumption of fruits and vegetables increased by an average of 0.3 cups (of the recommended 4.5 cups) after participating in the Farm Share. This equates to **eating an additional 76 cups of produce** over the 36-week season.

Looking at vegetables and fruits separately, 73% of participants increased their average daily consumption of vegetables. A somewhat smaller percentage of participants (59%) increased their average daily consumption of fruits. The smaller increase in fruit consumption follows the relatively lower quantity of fruit in the produce boxes compared to vegetables.

¹The increases in average daily total fruit and vegetable consumption, average daily vegetable consumption, and average daily fruit consumption (all measured in cups) were all significant at the 0.001 level.

FSA members increased average daily fruit and vegetable intake by nearly 1/3 cup.



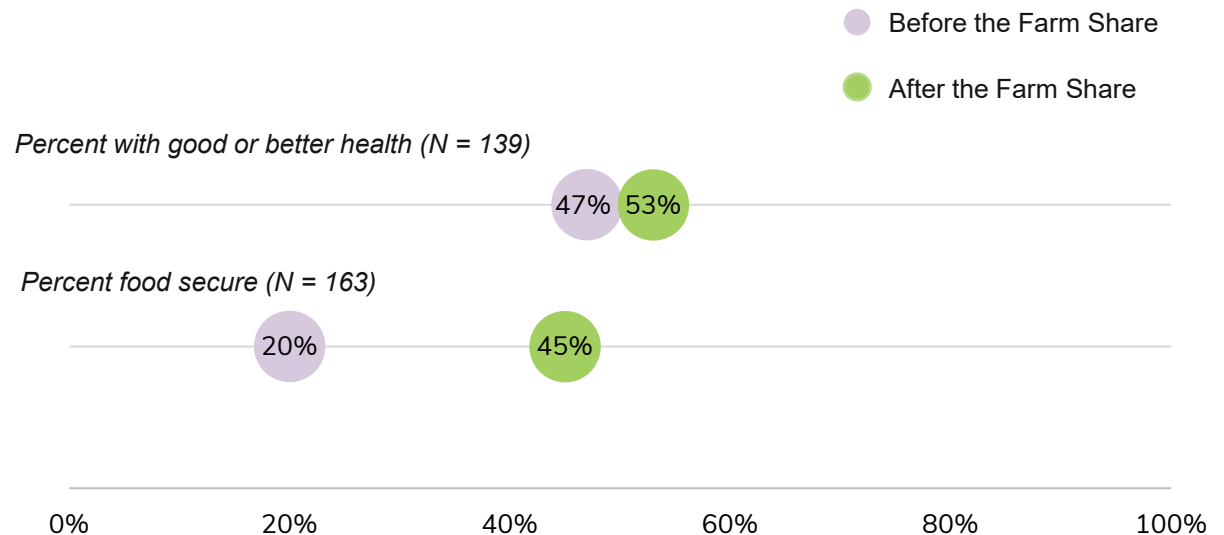
There was a small **improvement in the average self-reported health status** before and after the Farm Share program for FSA members. Approximately 25% of participants reported better health status at the end of the program. In a paired sample t-test, the increase in health status was statically significant at the 0.005 level. Looked at another way, while 47% reported good or better health before the program, 53% did so after, as shown below.

The impacts on food security were significant. Among FSA members, only 20% reported being food secure before starting the Farm Share. At the end of the program, this portion jumped to 45%, representing a 125% improvement. The **increase in food security** through program participation was statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

“For me personally, it meant losing 35 lbs. Having the Farm Share in the house resulted in more veggies and less pizza! For my household it meant healthier meals.”

– Participant Survey, 2024

FSA members saw a 13% improvement in the proportion with good or better health and a 125% improvement in the proportion that were food secure after participating in the Farm Share.



When asked to share in their own words what participating in the Farm Share meant to them, we found **14 different themes**, as shown below. While both paid and FSA members spoke of eating a greater variety, FSA members were most likely to mention increased access to healthy food and budget impacts. An additional 20% of participants expressed general appreciation for the Farm Share without specifying reasons.

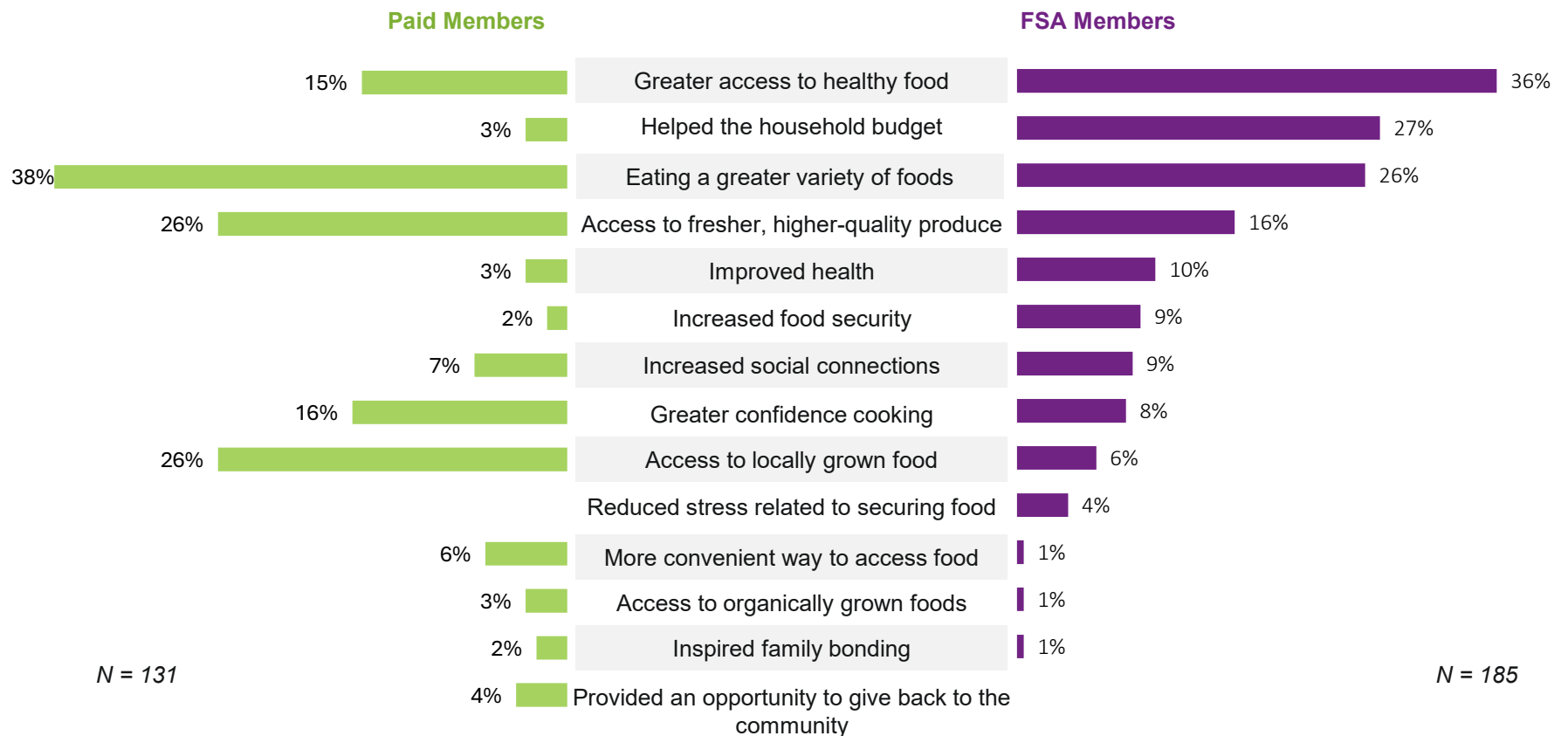
“The Farm Share meant getting way more variety. My kids tried all sorts of things and liked them because they were high quality.”

– Participant Survey, 2024

“I like it best for connecting to the community, seeing the same people every few weeks, and trying new recipes.”

– Participant Survey, 2024

Farm Share Impacts: Substantial portions of both groups mentioned eating a greater variety of foods.



PANTRY USE

“My husband tends to be the kind of person that just sucks it up and goes without. But when we started getting eggs from the food pantry, he started having an egg for breakfast every morning – made himself a breakfast sandwich, or whatever. And it was just a much better start to his day. So that was really good, especially for him.”

– Participant Interview, 2024

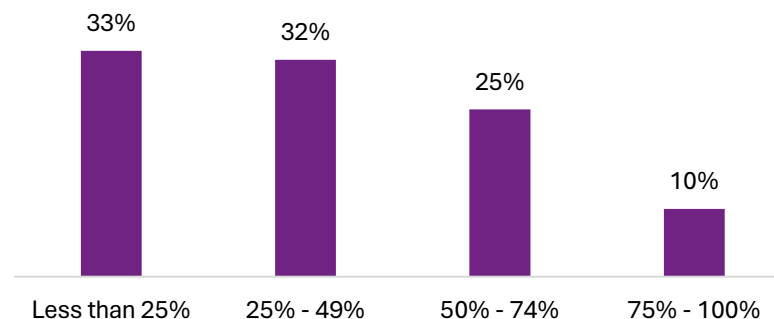


Most FSA members (82%) and a small portion of paid members (12%) **reported utilizing the pantry**. More than a third (35%) of FSA members said half or more of their household food needs came from the pantry each week. In contrast, for most of the paid members using the pantry (81%), the pantry supplied less than 25% of their household food needs.

Proteins were the most popular pantry foods, including eggs, milk, nuts, and cheese. Meat and milk alternatives topped the list of items members would like to see at the pantry, followed by flour and baking mixes and butter.

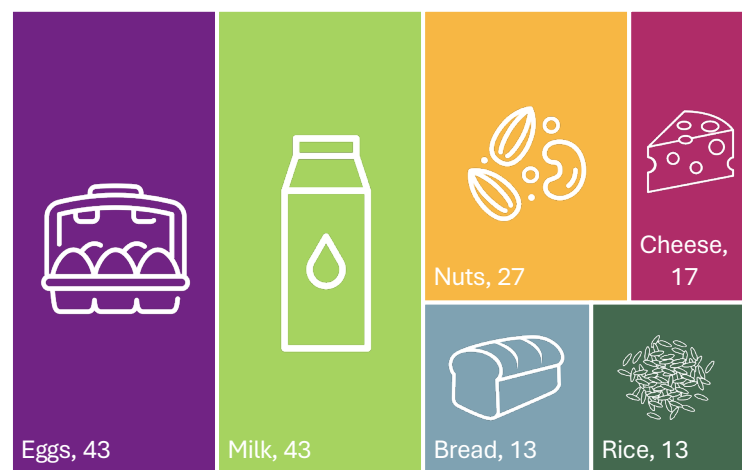
When asked what would make the pantry a better experience, 58% of FSA members indicated they appreciated the current format and offerings. Among those with suggestions, the largest group (20%) asked for **extended hours or additional days of operation**.

More than a third of FSA members relied on the pantry for at least half their food.



Percentage of Weekly Household Food Needs Coming from the Pantry

Eggs and Milk were at the top of the most popular pantry items.



Number of Mentions of Most Liked Items

PARTICIPATION BARRIERS

“One week my car was in the shop and I couldn't find anyone to pick up my share.”

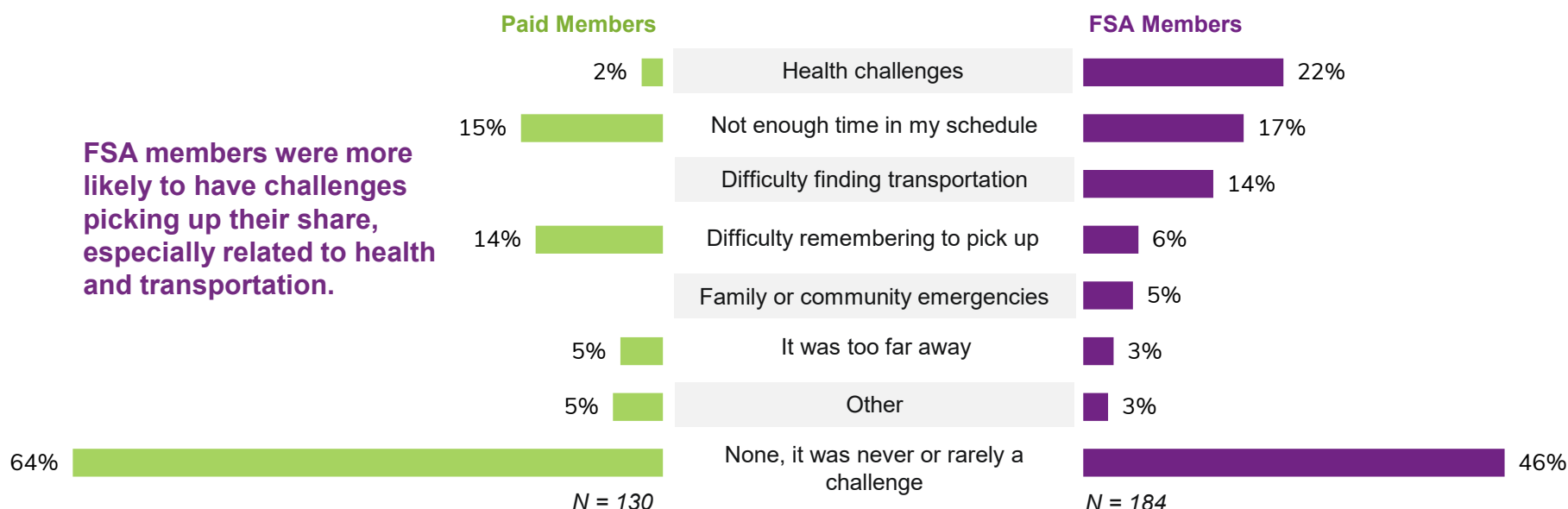
– Participant Survey, 2024

“It is a long way from parking. I have a light handicap.”

– Participant Survey, 2024

Evaluation findings revealed that **accessing the farm was the biggest barrier to program participation**. More than half of FSA members reported at least one challenge with pick-up. About 15% of both paid and FSA members struggled to find time to visit the farm. Health and transportation challenges affected substantial portions of FSA members. Looking at other challenges, paid members shared that travel and vacation plans sometimes prevented them from picking up their share. FSA members shared that limited mobility and insufficient handicap parking made pick-up difficult.

Within recommendations for the Farm Share, the largest number (43 people, 14%) suggested an improvement related to accessing the Farm Share, including share delivery, additional pick-up hours or days, or an additional pick-up location. Some of the interviewees shared frustrations with their inability to pick up during the in-person window, noting missing out on the pantry and the opportunity to select produce themselves. Among those who dropped out of the program, an even higher proportion (41%) suggested access improvements, especially a delivery service. In short, challenges getting to the Farm stood out as the greatest limitation and the desire for more access options stood out as the strongest recommendation.





Participant Story:

Brianna • Oakland County resident
Early 60s • lives in a household of 3, including her adult daughter

Over four years of participating in the Farm Share, their family has eaten more plant-based foods and Brianna gets better sleep and has more energy.



Brianna has participated in the Farm Share program for four years. She found out about the program from a sign at the hospital. Although she has not been able to do so yet, she hopes to have an opportunity to volunteer at The Farm. Her experience with the program has been extremely positive. She shared that the sign-up process was straightforward, the website was easy to navigate, and the staff were friendly. Brianna described the Farm Share program as a community and shared a desire for more opportunities to meet and get to know other Farm Share members in the future.

Brianna often ate the Farm Share produce raw (e.g., salads, juices) or followed recipes provided through the newsletter. However, the quantity of food in the share was often insufficient for her family's needs. While she suggested including more produce in the pantry as a potential remedy, she was also disappointed that she was usually unable to pick up food on Wednesdays due to her work schedule.



Despite the limitations, participating in the Farm Share program had a positive impact on eating patterns and health for Brianna and her family. The program allowed her family to have healthy foods even when they did not qualify for Medicaid or food assistance. As she put it, **“If it wasn’t for the Farm Share and the pantry, I don’t know if my family would have been able to eat healthy.”**

Brianna eats a more plant-based diet because of the increased access to fruits and vegetables. She shared that her daughter, who usually dislikes vegetables, enjoys eating the produce from the Farm Share because of its high quality. Participating in the program has also improved Brianna’s mental health and overall well-being: **“I think because I’m eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, I don’t have cravings for junk food or processed food as much. And because I’m eating healthier, that affects my mental health. I’m sleeping better. I have more energy.”**



Participant Story:

Mary • Washtenaw County resident
Late 30s • mother of 9 • husband unable to work

The Farm Share helped meet critical food needs and inspired new family cooking habits.



Mary's husband was diagnosed with complex PTSD two years ago, preventing him from maintaining his role as the primary breadwinner for the family. While pursuing government assistance and experiencing delays, she learned about the Farm Share program through a Blue Cross Complete nurse during a pregnancy-related outreach call. The family had recently moved from Oakland County and was experiencing food insecurity at the time.

Mary found that Farm Share staff were consistently kind and understanding. While pickup was usually manageable, additional pantry hours or days would be helpful. The family used the program to explore food. **"So while we were getting this amazing assortment of food, we thought, 'okay, this is our opportunity to try new things with the kids. This is an opportunity to get the kids involved in the cooking.'"**

Her 14-year-old son often took on weekly cooking responsibilities after watching Food Network

videos. Her 16-year-old daughter learned to make hummus from pantry ingredients. Their main challenge was that the quantity of produce was often only enough for half a meal for their family, though they supplemented with WIC benefits. Mary suggested offering participants the option to double up on certain items while skipping others to better accommodate larger families.

The program significantly impacted the family's eating habits, pushing them to use fewer prepared foods and take a more intentional approach to meals despite their stressful situation. It relieved pressure on the parents, who had been prioritizing the children's nutrition over their own. Her husband began eating eggs for breakfast regularly once they had access to the pantry. She reported that the children developed healthier relationships with food, with most switching to fruit as their default snack instead of chips. Mary particularly appreciated the program's communal aspect, including the involvement of local farmers.



REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM FINDINGS

PARTNER FARM CHARACTERISTICS

24

farm business
partners

142,365

pounds of food
purchased

\$311,185

of food purchased

\$503,801

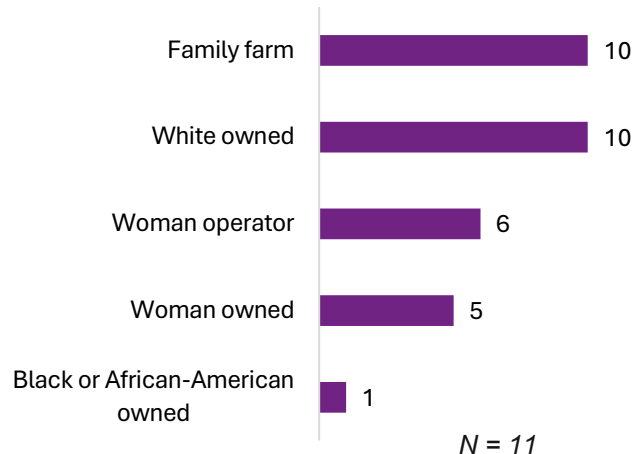
in economic
impact

In 2024, The Farm at Trinity Health partnered with 24 farms to provide fresh produce to its members. The Farm Share purchased a total of 142,365 pounds of fresh food from local farmers, totaling \$311,185 and generating an estimated \$503,801 in economic activity.

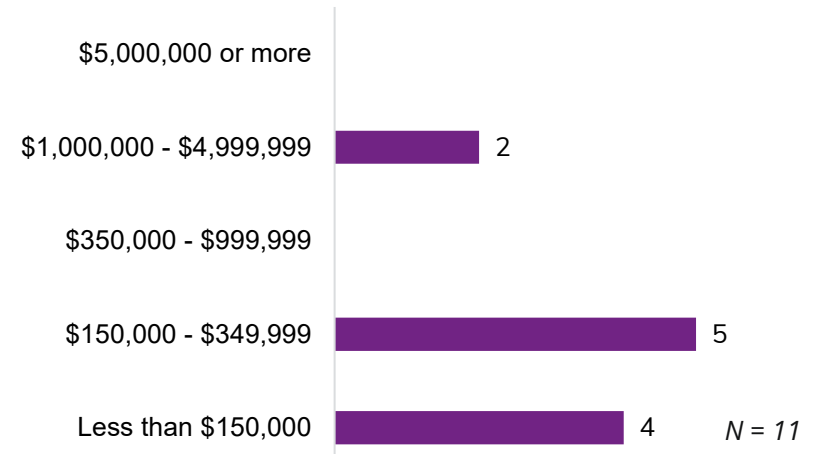
Of the 11 farms surveyed, all but one were small-scale operations of 50 acres or less and family owned. Five farms identified as both woman-owned and operated and one farm as woman-operated only. Sales to the Farm Share comprised an average of 12% of total sales across respondents, ranging from 1% to 30%.



Farm Ownership



Farm Gross Sales



PARTNERSHIP VALUE

In the survey, all farmers rated their experience working with The Farm at Trinity Health team as either positive or very positive. In both survey responses and interviews, farmers talked about their appreciation for the Farm Share program as well as the relationship they have with the Trinity Health staff, highlighting their great communication and knowledge about farming and agriculture.

Farmers also highlighted the value of the partnership for their businesses and identified many ways in which selling produce to the Farm Share has impacted their operations. Many farmers also valued the opportunity to provide local and fresh produce to families and individuals who may be experiencing food insecurity.



“We love knowing that this will continue to be an important, long-standing outlet for us. We love the give and take, the understanding of the organization around what it means to work with farmers and advocate for local food production, and we love supporting the mission of food as medicine.”

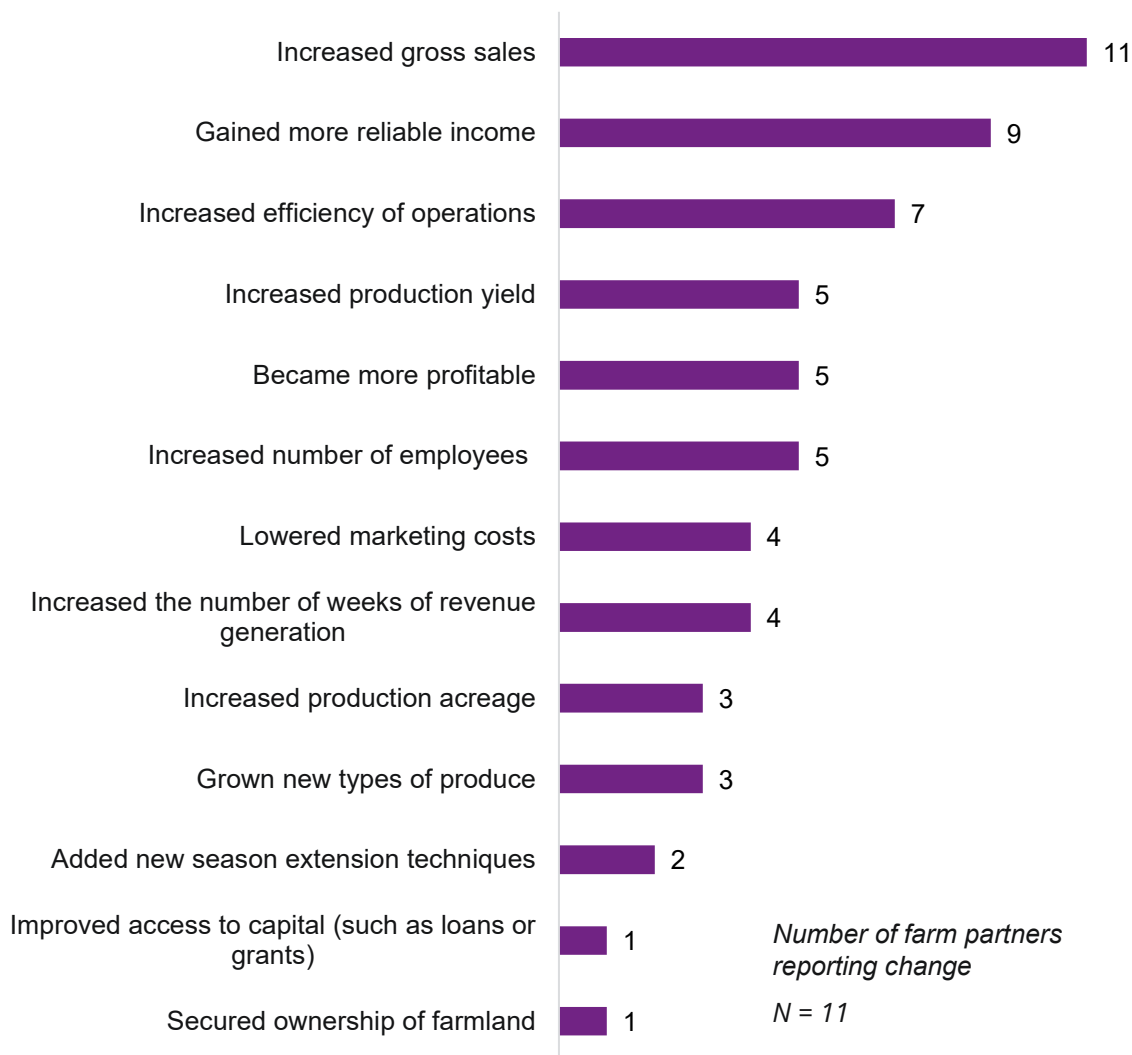
- Farmer partner, 2024

“It’s a nice feeling that when you put that seed in the ground or plant in the ground in the spring, that that product is already sold [to Trinity].”

- Farmer partner, 2024

IMPACT ON FARM OPERATIONS

All farm business surveyed reported increased gross sales.



Farmers noted multiple changes to their business operations as a result of their partnership with The Farm at Trinity Health. Each farm reported between two and nine changes with an **average of five changes per farm**. Six farmers reported more than five changes. Notably, all farmers reported their gross sales increased since selling products to Trinity Health. The majority also reported gaining a more reliable income.

In addition to the changes listed in the graph, farmers shared they greatly value the ability to sell large quantities of produce on a recurring basis and the opportunity to extend the months in which they were able to sell produce.

One farmer shared that selling to Trinity has helped them cut down on produce waste. Another spoke about the influence that Trinity has had on their crop planning, sharing that **“Trinity helps inform the crops we decide to go big on, and helps us dial in the crops, and grow them better every year.”**

SUMMARY OF METHODS

PARTICIPANT SURVEYS

PEG and The Farm Share team at Trinity Health developed four separate surveys to capture Farm Share participants' experiences in the program. First, we administered a **participant pre-survey** at the beginning of the spring 2024 season and ongoing as new individuals enrolled in the program. The pre-survey sample included 343 respondents.

Second, we conducted a **participant post-survey**. Post-surveys were collected from November 20 – December 26, 2024. The post-survey sample consisted of 318 respondents. Based on 582 total participants in the surveyed Farm Share programs, this sample represents a 55% response rate. Using the names respondents listed on their surveys, we matched 174 pre- and post-surveys for respondents.

Third, we sent a short **FSA drop-out survey** to FSA members who stopped picking up their produce box for four or more consecutive weeks to understand reasons for leaving the program. The sample for FSA members who dropped out included 29 responses, giving a 24% response rate.

Finally, we sent a **paid member drop-out survey** to paid Farm Share members who chose to end their membership after the spring or summer

seasons about reasons for discontinuing their membership. This sample consisted of 14 responses, for a 42% response rate.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

PEG team members conducted eight semi-structured interviews with FSA members to complement the survey data with in-depth descriptions of personal experiences. PEG team members used a purposive sampling strategy to identify a diverse set of participants with respect to time in the program, overall experience, pantry use, and CHW interaction. Trinity team members reviewed and approved the list of interview candidates. The eight interviews were conducted between December 18, 2024 and January 7, 2025. Interviewees were mailed a \$25 Visa gift card in recognition of their time.

FARMER SURVEY

The Farm at Trinity Health staff sent a survey electronically to all farm businesses from whom they purchased in 2024. The resulting survey sample consisted of 11 respondents of Trinity Farm's 24 farm business partners, for a response rate of 46%.

FARMER INTERVIEWS

Farmer interviews were conducted with four farm business who sold produce to The Farm at Trinity Health in 2024 and agreed, in their survey response, to be contacted for an interview. The four interviews were conducted and recorded through Zoom between January 8 and January 20, 2025. Interviewees were mailed a \$25 Visa gift card in recognition of their time.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

We used the economic multiplier estimates developed for the [GusNIP NTAE Nutrition Incentive Economic Impact Calculator](#) to estimate the total economic impact of The Farm at Trinity Health's purchases from local farmers in 2024.