



## Marketing terms that appeal to New Englanders;

Understanding the gap between what consumers say is important to them and their food shopping patterns

### UNH Food Systems Lab:

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## Research to expand market access for New England farms

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- 1) Broaden customer base
  - Marketing messages that speak to a broader audience
  - Identify identity-based barriers
- 2) Support market development that reduces logistical barriers for farmers and customers



Photo shared w Food Systems Lab



Farm stands, stores



Community Supported Agriculture, CSA



Farmers' markets



Food hubs, produce auctions, etc.

# ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS (AFN)

- AFNs = relationship-based marketing models that prioritize fair prices, sustainability, transparency, local economic development

# How can Alternative Food Networks serve a broader diversity of consumer needs and cultural preferences?

- Investigate consumers' perceptions of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs)
- Examine food shopping behaviors and values of those who don't buy local food
- Understand the role cultural identity plays in food preferences, values and shopping behavior
- Identify priorities for marketing to a broader audience of New England consumers



Photo credit: John Benford

# Population-based survey of New Englanders: Food shopping habits and preferences in New England

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- Nov. 2022 – March 2023 by UNH Survey Center
- 2,110 completed surveys
- Random sample of landlines, cell phones, & addresses
  - Oversample to increase number of low-income, Black, Hispanic, and Asian respondents

***Results are statistically representative of all New England adults***



Testing the appeal of potential marketing terms:

What attributes of food are  
important to New  
Englanders?

# Scan to Access Research Briefs!

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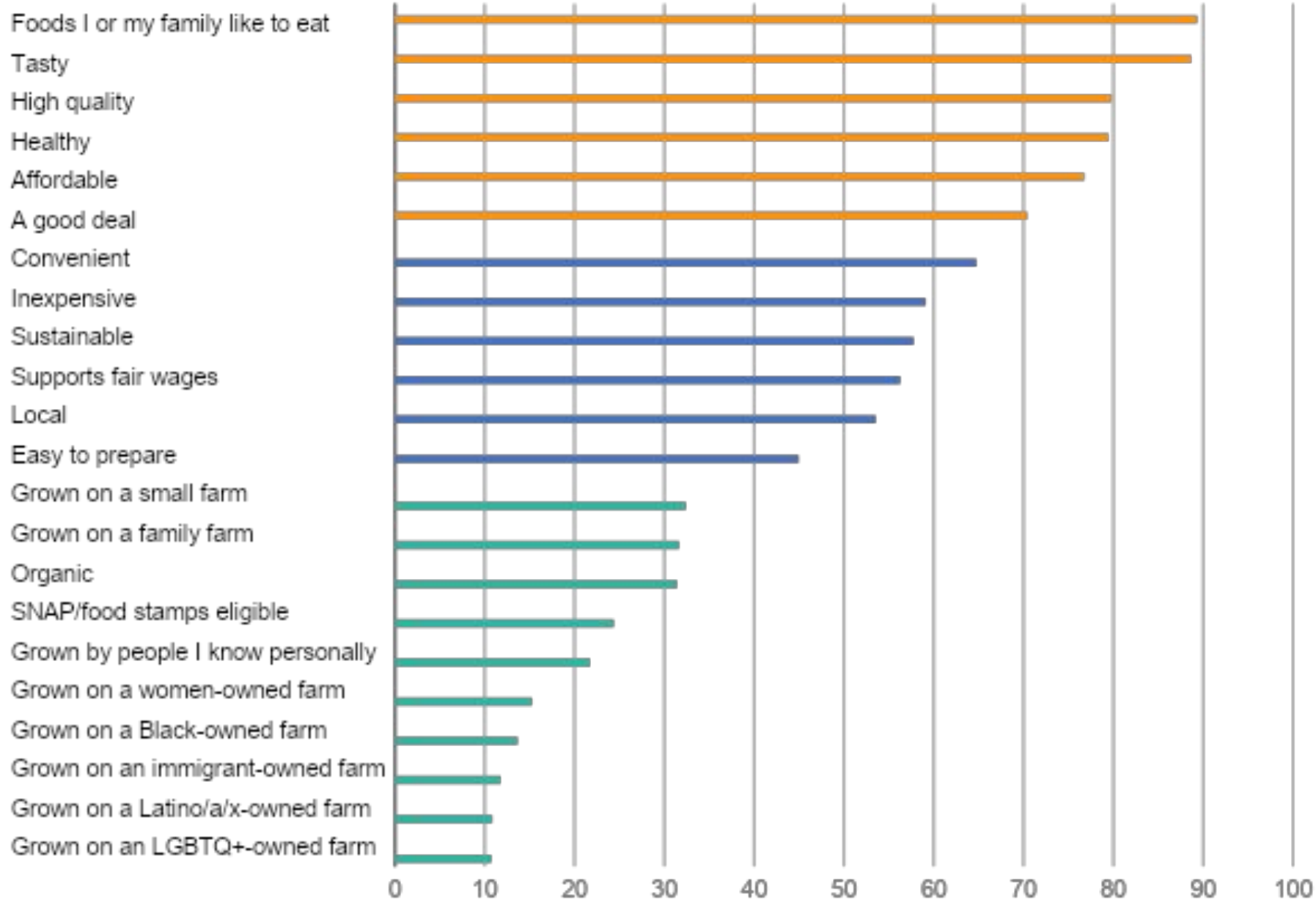
← Research Brief #1

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<https://www.unhfoodsystemslab.net/>

Research Brief #2 →



■ Less than one third ■ Btw one third and 70% ■ Over 70%



**Attributes of local food that survey respondents select as "Important"**



# Implications for marketing

- **“Foods I or my family like to eat” is #1:** Consider appealing to how much your customers will like your products and potentially offering samples
  - ... your family will love the taste of these carrots
- **Emphasize food attributes like “tasty”, “high quality”, and “healthy” to appeal to the majority of New Englanders:**
  - ... best tasting carrots you’ve ever had
  - ... best crop of the season
  - ... eating carrots helps prevent chronic disease



# Implications for direct marketing

## 01

Emphasizing producer characteristics and growing practices may not resonate beyond committed customers

- “grown on small farm”, “grown on family farm”, or “certified organic” only important to 30-32%

## 02

Selling your own products at farmers' markets may not be essential

- “grown by people I know personally” only important to around 22%

# Cautions for interpreting our findings

- Consider your current customer base and how you reach them
- Implications for farm stands and farmers' markets:
  - Is your farm stand, store or farmers' market easy to access by the general public or does it primarily attract a small, dedicated customer base?



# Why did we test similar attributes?

Testing how different potential marketing terms resonate

Follow-up interviews to understand how consumers interpret these terms

“affordable” appeals to the most people (77%)

- Using this term will appeal to the most customers
- ex: pitch the ways you work hard to make your products affordable

“a good deal” motivates bargain shoppers (70%)

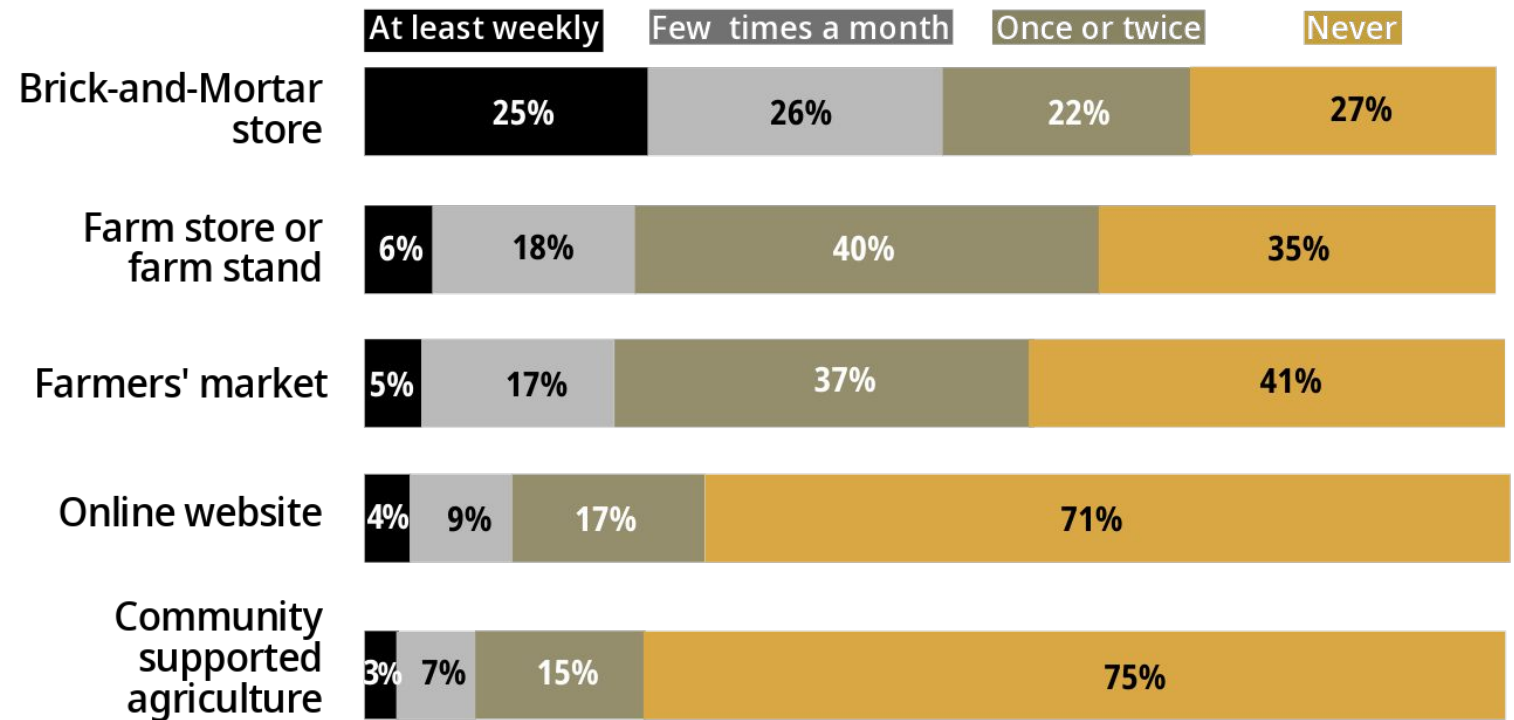
- **“2 for” deals:** “A good old fashioned “2 for \$5” or “3 for \$12” wins customers over every time.
- A big area of your display can be dedicated to “mix and match” deals to add an element of attraction” (Hailey, 2021)

“inexpensive” appeals to less people (59%)

- Often interpreted as being of lower quality
- Avoid using this term to communicate with customers

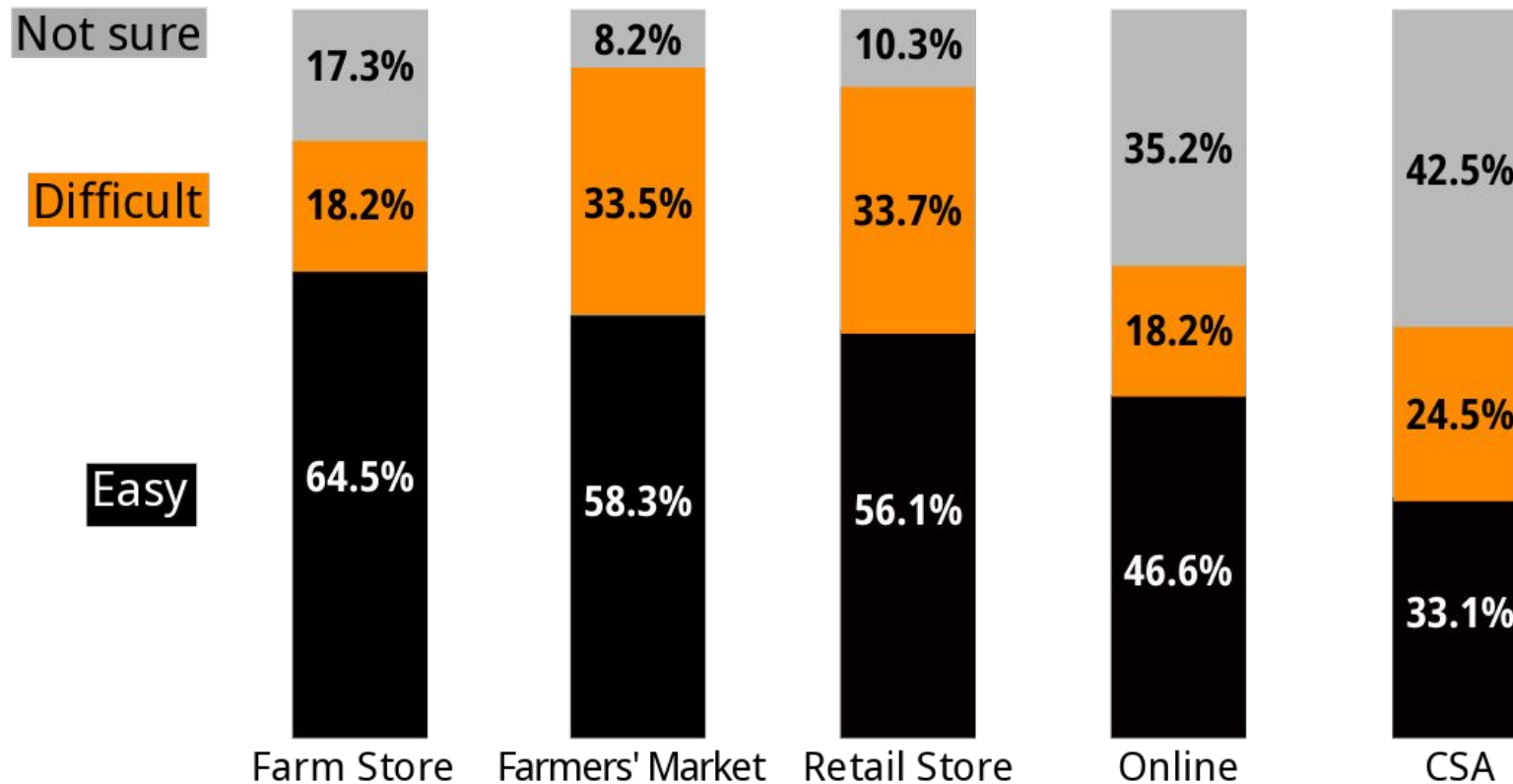
## Where do New Englanders buy local farm food and how often?

### Frequency of purchasing local farm food in the past six months among New England adults, by retail site



New Englanders most often purchase local food from brick-and-mortar stores. They only buy from farm stands, stores or farmers markets occasionally throughout the year.

# Percentage of New England adults' responses to survey question: "Over the past six months, which options (if any) for buying local farm foods have been easily available to you, whether you've used them or not?"



More than half of New Englanders say farm stores or stands, farmers' markets and retail stores are easily available to them...

...but they only shop occasionally at these places

...what other barriers limit participation?

Understanding the gap  
between what New  
Englanders say is important  
and how they shop

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# Exploring barriers to buying local food

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- Conducted 35 interviews with New Hampshire adult residents between June- November of 2023
- Prescreened potential interviewees on demographic characteristics to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences
  - household size, race/ethnicity, gender identity/sexuality, number of generations in the US, and shopping patterns
- Participants were asked to describe any barriers to accessing local food and things that would make it easier or make people more likely to buy from these local food venues





# Barrier # 1: Lack of affordability is embarrassing

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“I can't afford it. ... my sister brought me to a farmer's market, I think a couple of weeks ago, and just we left empty handed because everything was so expensive, and it's very embarrassing for me to go to somewhere like that and leave empty handed.”

## Barrier # 2: Prices override local food values

" I feel I associate local a lot with higher costs. Unfortunately, it's not something I really look for."

**"I would love to shop more locally... [BUT]... while it's really nice I feel like it's a luxury to shop locally because again, it usually means that it's more expensive, I think that foods that are being grown local being sold is very important, but I don't purchase them often."**

## Barrier # 3: Lack of familiarity and sense of belonging

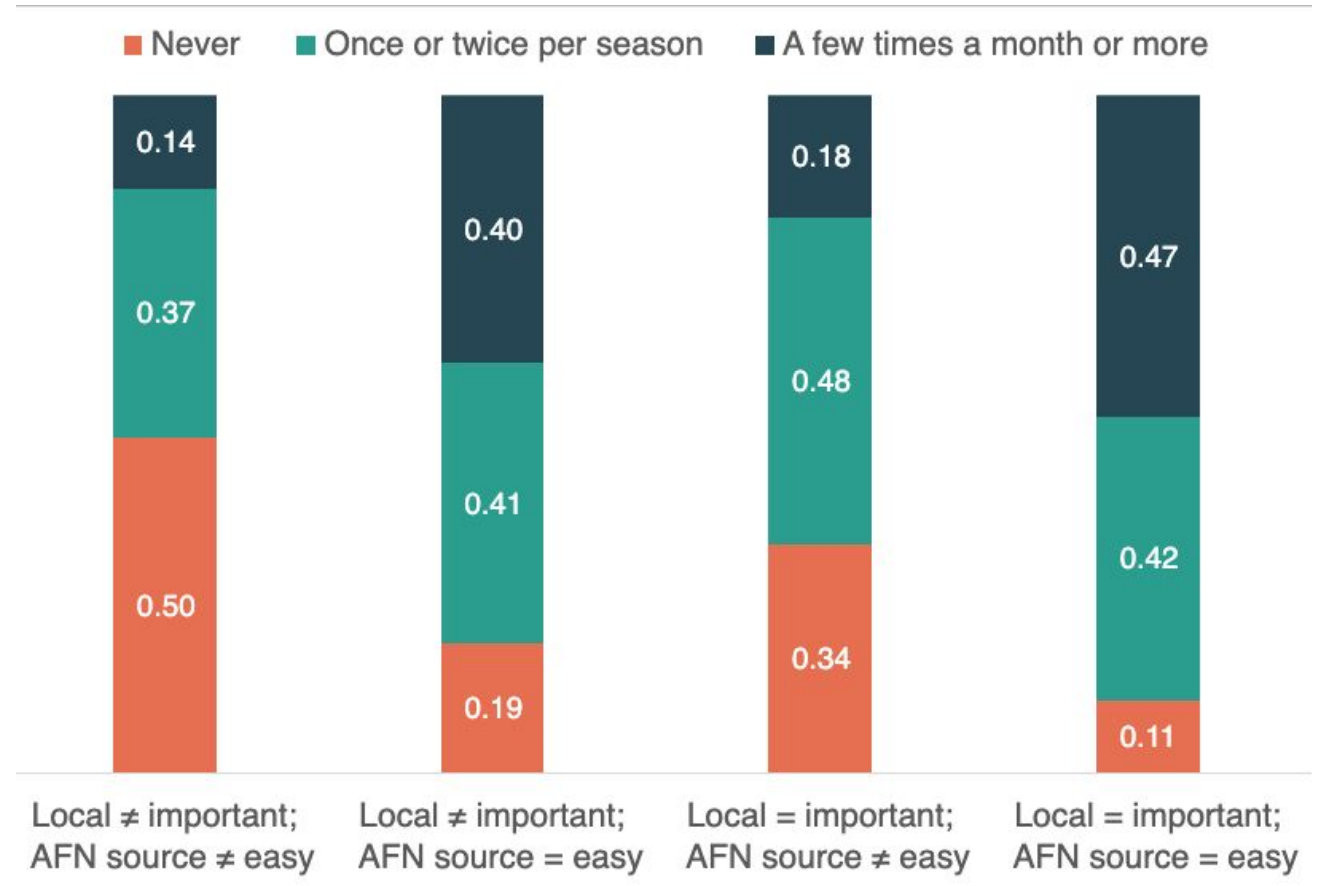
“Also, again, it is a little bit uncomfortable to go as a person of color because there a lot of people aren't used to seeing your type of person be there, you get stared at. That doesn't make it any easier to go and it does feel like it's an elite thing.”

“I didn't even know food co-ops were a thing. I have no preexisting knowledge of some of these things. ... I feel I don't even have the option to know where to start with these sorts of things, but I feel even if I did have those resources, I honestly wouldn't be tempted to utilize them very much because I guess I just have this preconceived idea that if I go to a farmer's market and I buy a carton of strawberries, it's going to be twice the price of strawberries at Walmart.”

# Predicted probability of buying from AFNs (farmers' market, farm stores or CSA)

Valuing local food is not enough.

New Englanders don't buy from AFNs regularly unless it's easy for them.





# Collaborative Aggregation and Marketing Models

Online farmers' markets

Multi-farm CSAs

Farm stands or stores that aggregate and sell products from several farms

Food hubs that sell directly to customers

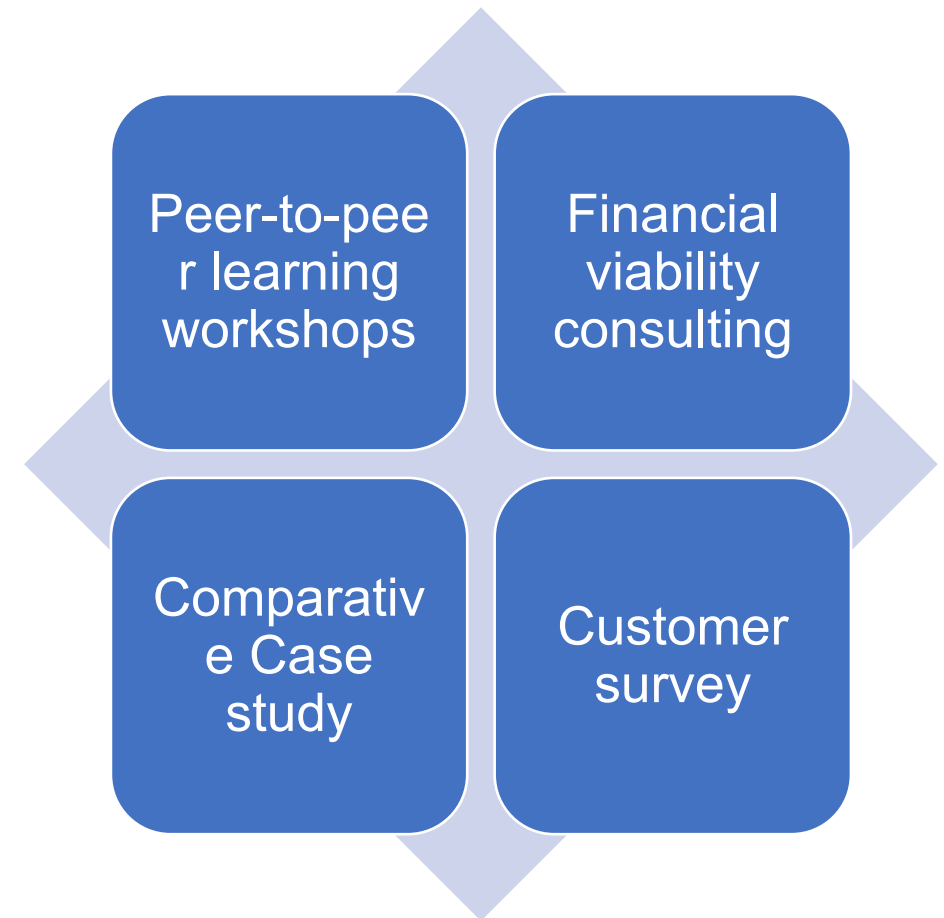
# Advancing development of Collaborative Marketing Models

**Goals:** Facilitate peer learning, share best practices and strategies for addressing common challenges

**Plan:** Synthesize and share back farmer, stakeholder, and customer perspectives, financial viability consulting



Sustainable Agriculture  
Research and Education





# Research Briefs coming soon...

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- **Brief 1:** What Do New Englanders Prioritize When Purchasing Food?
- **Brief 2:** Where Do New Englanders Buy Local Farm Food and How Often?
- **Brief 3:** How Does Culture Influence People to (Not) Buy Local Foods?
- **Brief 4:** Are Food Choices Important to Who We Are?
- **Brief 5:** Is There a Type Of Person Who Buys Local Food?

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# Follow up with us!

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