

Review of the nutritional implications of farmers' markets and community gardens: a call for evaluation and research efforts.

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Journal of the American Dietetic Association

Volume 110, Issue 3, March 2010, Pages 399-408

Research

Review

Review of the Nutritional Implications of Farmers' Markets and Community Gardens: A Call for Evaluation and Research Efforts

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2009.11.023>

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Abstract

The development and promotion of farmers' markets and community gardens is growing in popularity as a strategy to increase community-wide fruit and vegetable consumption. Despite large numbers of farmers' markets and community gardens in the United States, as well as widespread enthusiasm for their use as a health promotion tool, little is known about their influence on dietary intake. This review examines the current scientific literature on the implications of farmers' market programs and community gardens on nutrition-related outcomes in adults. Studies published between January 1980 and January 2009 were identified via PubMed and Agricola database searches and by examining reference lists from relevant studies. Studies were included in this review if

they took place in the United States and qualitatively or quantitatively examined nutrition-related outcomes, including dietary intake; attitudes and beliefs regarding buying, preparing, or eating fruits and vegetables; and behaviors and perceptions related to obtaining produce from a farmers' market or community garden. Studies focusing on garden-based youth programs were excluded. In total, 16 studies were identified for inclusion in this review. Seven studies focused on the impact of farmers' market nutrition programs for Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children participants, five focused on the influence of farmers' market programs for seniors, and four focused on community gardens. Findings from this review reveal that few well-designed research studies (eg, those incorporating control groups) utilizing valid and reliable dietary assessment methods to evaluate the influence of farmers' markets and community gardens on nutrition-related outcomes have been completed. Recommendations for future research on the dietary influences of farmers' markets and community gardens are provided.



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