

“SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE FARM GROWTH AND PERSISTENCE AT THE RURAL-URBAN INTERFACE: BALANCING FAMILY, GOALS, OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS”

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND APPLIED ECONOMICS
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PROFILE OF MIAMI, FL

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STUDY BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The project “Small and Medium Scale Farm Growth and Persistence at the Rural-Urban Interface: Balancing Family, Goals, Opportunities and Risks” is a joint project undertaken by researchers at The Ohio State University and The University of Vermont. The goal of this national study is to understand how the goals and values of farm families influence the future of agriculture in areas experiencing population and non-farm development pressures.

Despite the fact that farmland at the Rural-Urban Interface (RUI) is vulnerable to non-farm development, a substantial proportion of U.S. agricultural production occurs at the RUI.

- Counties considered to be agriculturally important¹ and located at the RUI represent less than 20% of

all U.S. counties, but accounted for 41% of U.S. agricultural sales.

- Just under half of total agricultural crop sales, 95% of U.S. fruit and nut sales, 84% of U.S. vegetable sales and 95% of nursery green house sales originated in metropolitan counties in 2007.

The long-term viability of agriculture at the RUI relies on successful establishment of new farm enterprises, growth of existing farms, and the persistence of farm enterprises across generations. Researchers examining agricultural change at the RUI have identified a range of issues beyond land costs and farmland conversion that affect the future of agriculture in urbanizing environments.

The core objectives of this study are as follows:

- To identify and assess the relationship of household dynamics (demographics, employment strategies and, goals and values) to the growth and persistence of small and medium scale farm enterprises at the RUI.
- To identify policy needs or program developments critical to improve farm and ranch vitality

¹ For a detailed explanation of agriculturally important-RUI counties see Jackson-Smith and Sharp 2008.

In this series, we describe the three-phase study and provide background information on one of five research sites, Miami, FL.

METHODOLOGY

Phase 1: Site Selection

The five case study sites were selected based on several criteria:

- An active agricultural base, within the top quartile of US agricultural sales
- Positive population growth indicating their location at the RUI
- Regional and production variation
- A higher than regional average percentage of small and medium size farms
- A higher than regional average presence of farmer diversity measured by women, minority, and beginning farmers

The selected sites are shown on the map in Figure 1 and listed below with a brief background. Individual site reports will be generated to profile each case study site.

Lewiston, ME has seen a growth in the number of farms while overall sales and farm acres have declined. The vast majority of farms (nearly 89%) are small. The majority of farm sales are from livestock and some fruit production. Lewiston has a large portion of beginning and women farmers.

Miami, FL is made up of three primary export agricultural systems: row crops (vegetables), tropical fruit and nursery operations that are located on extremely flat, rock ground soil terrain. The highest percentage of sales comes from small-scale farms. The region has a high population of minority and women farmers.

Columbus, OH is an agriculturally dense area with the highest percentage of sales coming from large commodity producers of corn, soybeans, livestock, etc. Columbus has a high population of women farmers.

Honolulu, HI is a major population center on the island of Oahu with an agricultural focus on fruit and vegetable production. Though small-scale farms are the most numerous, the highest percentage of

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sales comes from large farms. Honolulu has high populations of minority and women farmers.

Burlington, VT is a northern CBSA with the vast majority of its agricultural sales from livestock and dairy products. Burlington is notable for having a high percentage of female principal operators.

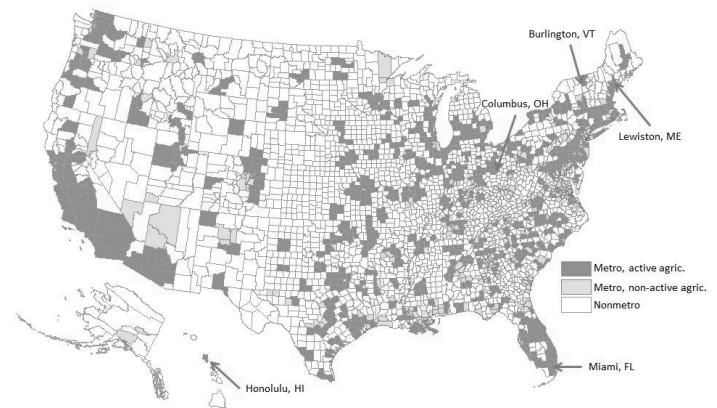


FIGURE 1: MAP OF CASE STUDY SITES

Phase 2: Interviews with Local Leaders and Farm Households

Interviews were conducted in each study site to understand the different perspectives and issues affecting farm families in particular locations. The interviews are also being used to develop questions for a farm household survey.

Phase 3: Farm Household Survey

The 2013 *Small and Medium Scale Farm Growth and Persistence* survey will be sent to 1600 farmers in the case study sites. Data collection will take place from Fall 2013 to Spring 2014.

MIAMI, FL INFORMATION

The Miami, FL case study site is located 35 miles southwest of the greater Miami metro area and is part of the expansive Miami-Dade County. There are three primary agricultural systems in the Miami case study site that include: row crops (vegetables), tropical fruit (orchards, plants and herbs) and nurseries (above ground watering systems). The population of the greater Miami-Dade area has seen an 11% increase over 10 years from census data, going from 5,007,564 in the year 2000 to 5,564,635 in 2010. Land use policies have been put into place to

limit the urban sprawl in the county through the formation of an Urban Development Boundary (UDB). See figure 2 for percentage farm acres of total acreage in Miami-Dade, Florida.

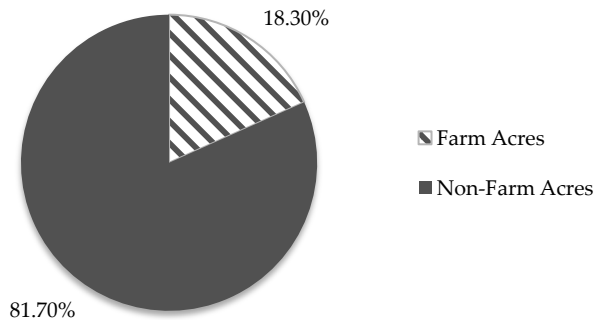


FIGURE 2: PERCENT FARM ACRES IN MIAMI-DADE, FL

FARM SIZE AND TYPE

The farm sector in this area can be characterized as predominantly small-scale with 62.5% of the area’s farm sales generated by small farms. The top agricultural products include: assorted vegetables, avocados, nursery stock, beans and corn.

Product	ACRES
Vegetables	33,451
Beans, Snap	13,735
Nursery Stock	10,279
Avocados	6,773
Sweet Corn	5,490

TABLE 1: TOP CROP ITEMS (ACRES)

Most farmers own the land they farm, or have obtained long term leases as opposed to tenant farming. Small, residential (or lifestyle) farms are the most numerous, and account for the majority of farming operations. Hobby farms have begun to establish and maintain niche markets that make them the second highest grossing farm type in Miami-Dade County.

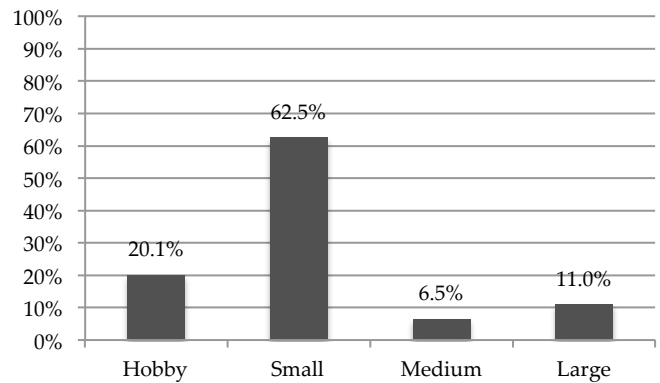


FIGURE 3: FARM TYPES IN MIAMI-DADE, FL

MARKET ORIENTATION

The RUI offers opportunities to market farm products to proximate urban populations in Homestead. Farmers take advantage of these opportunities to some extent, but there are few tourism and CSA farms (Figure 4). The subtropical climate enables crops to be grown year round and has made Miami-Dade County the agricultural export hub of Florida. A vast majority of crops are grown and sold directly to produce wholesalers with markets in large east coast cities such as Atlanta, Boston and New York. Most of the locally grown agricultural product supplies larger, niche markets in large US cities. Miami-Dade is unofficially known as “the winter bread basket” for this reason.

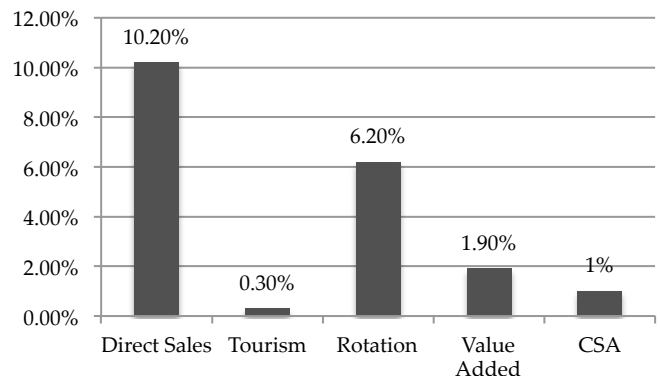


FIGURE 4: MIAMI-DADE, FL MARKET ORIENTATION

SUB-POPULATIONS

The population of Miami-Dade County, reflects the diversity of the Miami metro area. The minority

farming population with a total of 35.7% (Figure 5) is the second highest of all the case study sites. The minority farming population is made up of Southeast Asian, Latino and Caribbean farmers with a small subset of other minorities. Women involved in farm operations are also numerous at 30.3%, slightly above the national average of 30%. Women principal operators (P.O) account for less than half of these at 13.2%. Beginning farmers in this area (20.8%) are more numerous than the national average (13%).

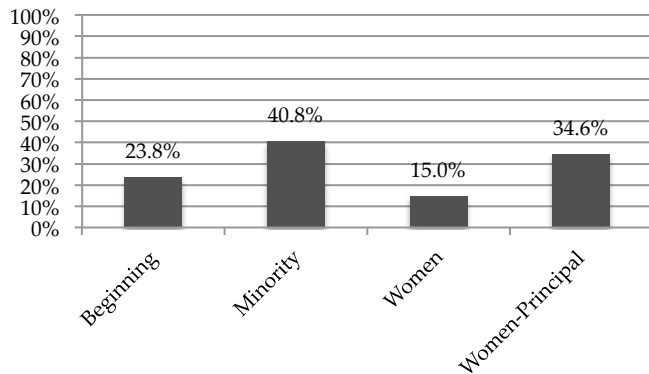


FIGURE 5: SUB-POPULATIONS OF FARMERS IN MIAMI-DADE, FL

NEXT STEPS

The research team is currently analyzing the qualitative data with HyperRESEARCH software. The results will be used to develop the survey of farm households. The next step will be to identify and survey 400 farm households in each study site, then analyze the data and report to the communities, local, state, and national policy-makers including USDA, nonprofit agricultural organizations, and disseminate findings through journals, press releases, and policy briefs.

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Project Website: <http://senr.osu.edu/research/ag-and-food-systems>