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Focus Group Report

Consumer and Opinion Leader Perceptions of Agriculture in Southwest Florida

Gulf Citrus Growers Association

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Background

As research continues to show perceptual gaps between those who consume and those who produce food, as well as the nationwide trend of urbanization, the need for the agricultural industry to enhance their communication efforts and engage consumers has become increasingly apparent. In order to understand how to enhance communication efforts, the industry must first understand consumers' perceptions of and attitudes toward the agricultural industry. The industry must also understand consumer responses to messages relating to the agricultural industry. Therefore, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) conducted research with consumers in southwest Florida, defined as Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties, to understand their attitudes and perceptions of the agricultural industry and their perceptions of messages about the industry. This research was done in partnership with Gulf Citrus Growers Association.

Methods

In the spring of 2013, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education conducted a survey with southwest Florida consumers, asking consumers their perceptions of the agricultural industry, attitudes toward the industry, and about specific topics related to information about agriculture. From there, a moderator's guide was developed with which to conduct focus groups. In the summer of 2013, researchers conducted six focus groups. Researchers held the focus groups in Port Charlotte, Fort Myers, and Naples, with two groups in each location. There were 55 participants consisting of 20 males and 35 females. They ranged in age from 20 to 41, with the average age being 30. The participants represented White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander races and ethnicities. Additionally, participants' levels of education ranged from some college to graduate degrees.

PIE Center researchers asked participants about their perceptions of the agricultural industry, their responses to messages about the industry and their opinion about an agricultural communications organization. To analyze the data, researchers recorded and transcribed the results and analyzed the content using the constant comparative technique to identify emergent themes. Researchers analyzed themes across all six focus groups and based findings on themes that emerged across the groups. The results are presented below with themes that emerged for each question asked to the participants, as well as themes that emerged throughout the focus groups as a whole. Each theme is supported by participant quotations.¹

Results

Occupations of Participants

Participants held occupations in education, healthcare, insurance, administration, retail services, pest control, food service, construction, engineering, pharmaceuticals, public service, government, finance, legal, fitness, creative services, landscape, students, and homemakers.

Perceptions of the Agricultural Industry

Participants were asked a series of questions focused on understanding their perceptions of the agricultural industry. Participants described the agricultural industry and answered questions about what came to mind when they thought of agriculture and words they would use to describe the agricultural industry. Participants were also

¹ Grammar and punctuation within the quotations appear as transcribed and may therefore not be grammatically correct. This is a common practice for focus group methodology to maintain the credibility of the statements.

asked questions about their perceptions of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida, including questions about their perceived importance of agriculture in southwest Florida.

Thinking about Southwest Florida Agriculture

At the beginning of the focus groups, participants were given an index card and asked to list the first three words or phrases that came to mind when they thought about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. During the focus groups, participants were asked to discuss what three words they wrote down when describing the agricultural industry and why they chose these words. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were specific commodities and products, immigration, economics, size, specific locations, positive terminology, negative terminology, environmental impacts and related terminology, the lack of information available about southwest Florida agriculture, and industry interworkings.

Specific Commodities and Products

When describing the agricultural industry, participants would often talk about specific crops or commodities, including fruits, vegetables, plants, plant products, and livestock. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed commodities he/she knew were grown in southwest Florida and said, “I wrote tomatoes, watermelons, and green peppers because it’s the only thing I know that’s grown around here.”
- A participant discussed Florida oranges when describing agriculture and said, “I wrote fruit production because I know Florida’s basically known for a lot of fruit production especially with Florida orange which is basically out here on [inaudible] Road.”
- A participant discussed knowing the state produced more than fruit production and said, “I chose fruit, so kind of going down the same citrusy path, but I know that Florida produces a lot more than citrus. I think of it as a fruit state. I also chose cows or beef cattle because I know there’s a lot of beef farmers, I guess you could say.”
- A participant discussed oranges due to its affiliation with the state and said, “I wrote oranges also as my first one because that’s Florida... I mean what... you know, that’s what we do right?”

Immigration

When describing the agricultural industry, participants mentioned migrant workers and the wages and low pay of migrant workers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant referred to migrant workers and said, “I wrote tomatoes, oranges, and migrant workers because they’re the ones, basically, that pick all the stuff for us.”
- A participant discussed the conflict surrounding Burger King and paying for tomatoes picked by migrant workers and said, “I was just thinking about the orange trees and like tomatoes, like the Mexicans pick tomatoes, and there’s like a big controversy about like, Burger King... about how they didn’t want to pay for the tomatoes because that’s what came to mind.”
- A participant discussed Immokalee and the poor treatment of migrant workers in that area and said, “I think of Immokalee and I think of everything that goes on with like the abused workers and the slave trade and all that other stuff. So, that’s what immediately comes to mind when thinking of the word agriculture in Florida.”

- The participants discussed seeing immigration issues in the news media and one participant said, “See as an outsider, you know, all we see in the news is really the migrant workers arguing over wages and, you know, when the weather comes through and there are freezes and things like that. As somebody that’s outside the industry, those are really the things that... that I see whether it’s in the news or on TV or the newspaper.”
- A participant discussed migrant workers and their wages and said, “I put healthy, I put migrant workers, and I put low pay. I think around here that agriculture is a good thing for this area. And I know the migrant workers work the fields and everything and that they are not getting paid very much.”

Economics

Participants discussed economic-related terminology when describing the agricultural industry. Participants mentioned employment or money and phrases about the industry being beneficial financially. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant mentioned jobs as being associated with the agricultural industry and said, “I wrote palm trees, plants, and jobs.”
- A participant discussed the amount of money that agriculture generates in the state and said, “Economics. A lot of money comes into the state, hundreds of millions... hundreds of millions based on agriculture.”
- A participant discussed seeing local farming operations grow and expand their business and said, “I wrote down, I live near a small farm stand and so I thought of that, that was the first thing I thought of. And so I wrote down small, local, and growing because they’re expanding right now. It’s a hydroponic farm.”
- A participant discussed that the agricultural industry was beneficial financially and said, “OK, I wrote delicate. Because with our climate, you know, freezing or bug infestations or whatever. Beneficial financially, and uninformed.”

Size

Participants talked about the perceived size of the agricultural industry, including discussion about both large and small operations. Participants also described the industry being larger or smaller than they thought it would be. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the agricultural industry as being small and said, “I put small because I don’t really see many unless I am traveling and there are not many acres.”
- A participant discussed that the agricultural industry was bigger than most would think it was and said, “I wrote bigger than we think. I know a lot of people don’t really see all the land and people that are in the industry. A lot of times it’s out... you know, you kind of see the front gate and there’s a lot behind there.”
- A participant discussed the large amount of resources used by the industry and said, “I wrote oranges, peanuts, and large because they take up vast amounts of space and water.”

Specific Locations

When describing the agricultural industry participants discussed specific locations in southwest Florida including Arcadia, Immokalee, Okeechobee, and the Everglades. Also included in this category were mentions of farmer’s markets and U-Pick operations. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed central Florida as being where a lot of agriculture takes place in the state and said, “I have central Florida because I know that is where most of it takes place.”
- A participant discussed having memories of visiting Immokalee as a child and said, “I wrote produce, Immokalee and fresh. And I guess kind of just ‘cause I remember as a little kid always going out to play football games in Immokalee and on the bus ride out there there’s all like the orange trees and stuff on the side of the road, so I don’t know, it’s kind of stuck with me.”
- Another participant discussed Arcadia as somewhere he/she remembered visiting growing up and said, “Well, I remember when I was younger and I used to [sentence trails off]... when my folks wanted to go get like, fresh citrus we’d drive from over here, we live like in the area right around here, and we’d drive over to Arcadia to go to the orange groves out there.”
- A participant discussed the Everglades having an impact on the amount of land available and said, “I just think in southwest Florida, you know, we have a lot of wetlands, for the Everglades. So, not a whole lot of places to grow things. However, we do have tomato fields and orange fields...”

Positive Terminology

Participants often used positive terminology when discussing the agricultural industry. Included in this category were discussions about the industry’s productivity, diversity, variety, youth programs, and closeness to home. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the industry as being responsible, well regulated, and productive. This participant said, “I wrote responsible, well regulated, and productive. Responsible because I grew up in a farming community and I know it usually gets a bad rap for pollution and so forth. But seeing it for myself, I feel that it really isn’t the case. Well regulated, being in the golf course industry I had to pass numerous tests and regulations for fertilizer license and pesticide license, and I know that is the same for the agriculture industry. Productive, I know in Florida in general; statistically, there is quite a bit... like 300 different commodities that come out of here, so I know it does do quite a bit of business.”
- A participant referred to his/her experiences shopping at farmer’s markets when describing agriculture and said, “Good because I’ve had some really good stuff in the farmer’s market.”
- A participant referred to the industry as being homegrown since they could easily access locally grown products and said, “I put homegrown, too, because I know my family we try to get as much stuff around here or even grow our own stuff at my house, so [sentence trails off]...”

Negative Terminology

In addition to positive terminology, participants also used negative terminology when discussing the agricultural industry. Participants discussed depleted resources, the lack of availability of southwest Florida products at the grocery store, and a lack of variety in the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the industry having depleted resources and not knowing if the industry could receive any assistance or relief and said, “I put farming, livestock, and depleted resources. Simply because I see the cows everywhere for the tax purposes and then the farming... pretty much everybody’s covered my thoughts there, and then depleted resources, just when like the citrus trees got attacked a few years back

and then the tomatoes with the workers and things of that sort. It's just there isn't really anybody to really help them or go with them; it seems like they don't have any resources to go to."

- A participant discussed the industry in Florida as dull compared to other places and said, "I think it's kind of dull. I don't see a variety of like flowers and plants that much. And it's weeds, lot of ferns, and stuff. You know, it's not like Hawaii, seeing those flowers."
- A participant discussed only hearing about negative terms related to the agricultural industry and said, "I wrote large, underrepresented, and disproportionate because I feel like it's all I hear about when I think of agriculture in Florida especially in the areas [sentence trails off]..."
- Two participants discussed the lack of southwest Florida agricultural products at grocery stores. One participant said, "I actually put scarce because you never see anything grown here in our own stores."

The second participant agreed and said, "Yeah, I never see anything. And then I put like, limited types because it is like orange and cattle. It is not like I mean, I know that there is a blueberry farm out there, but I never see anything like that. And then poor amounts, like what we do get? There is not a whole lot of abundance of it."

The first participant added, "That is what I was trying to think of, like here there is not much, but out there, there is a lot."

Environmental Impacts and Related Terminology

Participants discussed terms relating to the environment, including mentions of water pollution, river runoff, ecological damage, natural resource depletion and conservation, and weather problems. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed dumping in Lake Okeechobee and said, "You are probably going to hate mine. Pesticides, strawberries, and water pollution are my three, probably just because that is what I hear most about... especially with the dumping and Lake Okeechobee. We get a lot of red tide. I am not that well educated on agriculture in the area, but as far as my limited amount of knowledge, that is what comes to mind."
- Participants discussed the impact of phosphates in the Gulf of Mexico and one participant said, "I hear about the phosphates getting to the Gulf and it kills all the fishes and stuff. Like the different species; there is not as many species in the Gulf anymore. Is that true?"

Another participant added, "Maybe, I don't know."

A third participant responded, "It creates like algae blooms and then everything boom, boom, boom, and then it dies and it just gets them."

- A participant discussed pollution impacting his/her ability to fish in the canals surrounding his/her home and said, "Something I think about when I hear about the agricultural industry is pesticides. I know I live right down there and I catch fish in the canals up here and people tell me, 'Well, don't eat them because the pesticide runoff from the farms gets in the water.' And so, you know, I'd sure love to be able to go down to the canal at the end of my street and fish and bring it home, but after the first one, somebody told me I was crazy. So that's something that definitely comes to mind."

- A participant discussed water management as being related to the agricultural industry and said, “I think water management is a big part of it.”

When asked why, the participant responded, “Because water’s a precious resource and it just kind of runs off the street and collects all the oils from the people and it just gets dirty. Eventually you’re not gonna be able to produce too much with it. So, we gotta watch how we use it.”

Lack of Information

Participants discussed the lack of information that is available about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. Participants indicated that they felt uninformed and identified a need for information about the agricultural industry and the need to increase the number of advertisements about the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed not seeing much about the agricultural industry on television and said, “I chose small, distant, and poor advertising. Small, just because I’ve been, I’ve driven around Charlotte County and that area and I just haven’t really seen too much of it. Distant, because you’d, I’d probably have to go to like, more out to Arcadia and I live in Punta Gorda for it. And poor advertising because I don’t really see much of it advertised and like, yeah, not very many commercials on TV or billboards or anything like, that.”
- A participant discussed the industry needing to advertise to the public and said, “I wrote down it needs advertisement or more awareness to the public. And it’s not enough open markets, I guess, for people to expose their produce or whatever they grow and it’s definitely needed.”
- A participant discussed uninformed as one of the words they used to describe the agricultural industry and said, “My last [word] that I chose was uninformed because I would say that if you have to ask me any type of details about agriculture in Florida I will probably be the last person you would want to ask, because I am very uninformed.”

Industry Interworkings

Participants also discussed the agricultural industry and ways they perceive how the industry works. Included in this theme were discussions that the industry has changed greatly in recent history, the complexity of agriculture, and participants’ overall lack of understanding of the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- When discussing the agricultural industry, one participant said, “Complicated.”

When asked why, the participant replied, “You want to protect your crops, obviously from any kind of bugs or diseases, but you can’t do that without pesticides or other chemical means unless you use any kind of GMO or whatnot. And then there is regulations and you have to deal with all the workers and paying them. And there is a lot of middlemen as well in getting your crop to the store. It is a long chain.”

- Two participants discussed the differences in the agricultural industry in the past 30 years. One participant said, “Well, like the old-timers... they are always... it has changed so much, just in the last 30 years around here. With all the shopping malls and development, it used to be like you would have an acre or something and they would just have a field in your back yard with agriculture and stuff, crops. Now it is all just like, all buildings and stuff.”

The second participant added, “I think if you look around, you know, we have just, you know, we don’t see farms. That is something that whether you are living in Fort Myers, Bonita, Naples, Cape Coral, you are not seeing a farm anywhere unless you go centrally, so it gives you the idea that there really isn’t any farms around when actually there is quite a bit.”

Index Card Findings

Following the discussion of their index card, participants were asked to give their index cards to the moderator. These cards were kept and then analyzed. Participants provided 97 unique responses, with the most frequently listed words or phrases being oranges (16 mentions), cattle or cows (8 mentions), small (4 mentions) and farming (4 mentions). The rest of the items were mentioned one to three times by participants. A comprehensive list of responses can be found in the chart below:

Words that Describe the Agricultural Industry

Commodities

- Avocados
- Citrus
- Flowers/Plants
- Free range chicken
- Fruit
- Green peppers
- Livestock
- Meats
- Palm trees
- Peanuts
- Pigs
- Plants
- Produce
- Strawberries
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon

Employment and Workers:

- Employs a lot of people
- Fighting over wages
- Illegal workers
- Jobs
- Low pay
- Migrant workers

Financial Phrases

- Beneficial financially
- Bigger than we think
- Major (biggest) export
- Money
- More money
- Not enough open market
- Tax cut “controversy”
- Wealthy

Environmental Terms

- Depleted resources
- Environmental
- Frost
- Hot
- Low elevation
- Not very many farm lands
- Rainy
- Water pollution
- Wet

Locations

- Arcadia
- Central Florida
- Everglades
- Immokalee
- Okeechobee

Other Phrases

- 4-H/FFA
- Alligators
- Big in our area
- Big industry
- Delicate
- Disproportionate
- Dull
- Dwindling
- Far drive – distant
- Farm land
- Fresh
- Good
- Good Farming
- Growing
- Health
- Healthy
- Hidden
- Homegrown
- I don’t know
- Landscaping
- Large
- Limited access
- Limited types
- Local
- Monocrop

Other Phrases

- Needed
- Needs advertisement
- Pesticides
- Poor advertising
- Poor amounts
- Productive
- Responsible
- Rural
- Scarce
- Skinny
- Sparse
- Top crops for Florida
- Unavailable
- Under used
- Under-represented
- Uninformed
- Variety
- Well maintained
- Well regulated

Describing Southwest Florida Agriculture

Participants were asked to discuss agriculture in southwest Florida, including phrases and key terms they would use to describe the region. When describing the agricultural industry in southwest Florida, the main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were small farms, local farms and farmer’s markets, specific commodities, nonexistent, and concerns that were expressed about the industry.

Small Farms

When describing southwest Florida agriculture, participants often mentioned small farms. Participants discussed the increase in residential agriculture in southwest Florida and the number of small farms. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed small farms in southwest Florida. One participant said, “I don’t think of big farms. I don’t think of huge [sentence trails off]...”

The second participant interrupted and said, “Yeah, we are limited.”

A third participant added, “Well, like Labelle, there is big farms. But not like in this area, not really.”

The second participant said, “You head inland to Arcadia, you will see some bigger type of farms.”

The first participant agreed, “Yeah, when you get to Arcadia, but that is not in the districts they are talking about. Yeah. Arcadia is not one of them, that is Desoto County, that is not one of them. Glades County, Hendry County, but not Charlotte and Lee, I don’t think of huge farms.”

- A participant discussed the growth in residential agriculture in his/her county and said, “Charlotte’s has turned into residential agriculture.”
- Another participant discussed the number of small farms in southwest Florida being a cause for concern and said, “There’s not enough small farmers around.”

Local Farms and Farmer’s Markets

When describing southwest Florida agriculture, participants discussed specific farms and farmer’s markets they were aware of. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed his/her preference for shopping at farmer's markets, especially when certain crops are in season. The participant said, “First place we go is to the farmer’s market on Edison Avenue. We don’t go to the store because you get more at the farmer’s market. So, it is true. It’s like we pretty much only go there for like special things. And like stuff you can go get for cheap, you just, you’re in the grocery store, so you just pick it up. You don’t think about it.”
- Another participant discussed saving money at the farmer's market and said, “Like at the farmer’s market, you can go to farmer’s market and it’s much cheaper versus going to like a regular grocery store like Publix. It’s like, it’s very expensive.”

A second participant added, “Especially for organic at the farmer’s market versus Publix.”

- A participant discussed knowing about the local farmer’s market although access was sometimes an issue and said, “The farmer’s markets specifically, just because, you know, like in Cape Coral, I live in Cape Coral and they’re only open like the third Saturday or something. I’m a nurse, I’m single with two kids, and I live on my own. So sometimes, you know, that third Saturday doesn’t work for me, and I’d like to just, you know, buy local grown things and support my community rather than going to Publix, and it’s not really available for me.”

Specific Commodities

Participants discussed specific commodities such as sugar, citrus, and cattle when discussing the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. Participants also discussed the commodities found in Florida as being different than commodities found in the Midwest. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed livestock as being a part of the agricultural industry in Florida and said, “I think we do focus on citrus a lot more than on cattle and beef too, but that’s a big part of agriculture.”

- A participant discussed that Florida was home to a different type of agriculture than he/she experienced growing up and said, “And then when you think about it agricultural-wise as being in Florida, Florida’s a tropical place so, you know, most of around like... I moved to Ohio, and they... their agriculture system is way different. I mean every little piece of land, they’re farming it with corn. And it’s like they’re really big industry for corn up there in Ohio because of they really actually have seasons like winter and stuff. But here, it’s like always tropical always all around, so oranges and stuff is something, that like, citrus stuff is something that could be grown all year round but, you know, we have occasional cold fronts but, it doesn’t, we really don’t have seasons in Florida. That’s why people move to Florida.”
- Another participant discussed growing up in an urban area and not having knowledge about the products that he/she is buying and said, “I mean, when I think of it I’m from Wisconsin, from Milwaukee, I mean, that was a big city. So, a lot of my agricultural foods and so forth, I get from Publix, you know. I wouldn’t know the difference between a Florida orange or a California orange. Or milk or any of that, so I think it’s very, I think it would be nice to see if we could grow and harvest and keep a lot more, more of that in the state but it doesn’t sound like we do. Which I was not aware of.”

Nonexistent

Some participants talked about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida as being nonexistent. Included in this theme were descriptions of the industry not being visible, not interacting with the general public as well as questionable thoughts about the existence of an agricultural industry in southwest Florida. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant jokingly asked, “I was gonna say, do we have agriculture in Charlotte County?”
- A participant discussed not feeling like the agricultural industry was something they interacted with daily and said, “To me, I feel like I don’t interact with it daily. I’m not often out where most of the farms are or where any of the farmer’s markets are, so I feel like I kind of just forget that that’s even an option, a lot of the time.”
- A participant said, “It feels nonexistent, almost. Well, at least in Fort Myers itself.”
- A participant discussed growing up in a rural community and it being very different than the community they currently lived in and said, “To be honest like, growing up on a farm when I was younger, it was normal for me to see it and then when I started my freshmen year in high school when I moved down here...I lived in the city which I’ve never lived in a city before in my life so that was new for me. And now and then, in the rare occurrence that I would go out to the country, well, what’s called the, considered the country down here I would be like, wow you know like, I’m actually seeing this and like, it’s just one particular part of the town like, Port Charlotte or North Port or like, out in the estates of North Port like, it’s just something that you know you don’t see every day just driving down the road.”

Concerns

Participants were asked to discuss any concerns they had about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. Included in their discussion were concerns about the sustainability of the industry in southwest Florida, the lack of information available about the industry, the declining nature of the industry, concerns about workers and labor, and the environmental impact of the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed his/her concern about the working conditions and payment of migrant workers and said, “I think the working conditions for the people from Immokalee, you know, you always hear things about them and how unfair it is and the pricing and, you know, nobody, you know, nobody wants that job, you know, but people need to feed their, their family and their kids. I think that something needs to be done for them so that, you know, they have better conditions and, you know, better opportunities. I think that’s very unfortunate.”

Another participant added, “Yeah, and if the working conditions were better and they did have better pay and, you know, they had a better quality of life, then maybe more people would be willing to get into that industry and they could grow more, you know. At this point, nobody wants to do that, but if things got better, who knows?”

- A participant expressed his/her concerns about not knowing much about the industry and said, “I think my biggest concern is that I just don’t know enough facts about it. And I think a lot of people don’t. And I think that maybe some really good educational videos for all the schools for kids to learn about where they can actually see, watch a full-length video that explains the whole process so that all the different schools, the kids could learn about it. And I think more commercials on TV because a lot of people watch television, you know, just educational clips of different information about agriculture, in general, and, I just think that that’s the biggest thing is we just don’t know enough about it. We need more knowledge about all the processes of everything.”
- A participant expressed his/her concerns about the sustainability of the industry and said, “Is it something that can continue to produce and continue to be profitable and be environmentally sensitive to the point that we still have it in generations to come?”
- A participant discussed his/her concerns about water management Issues and the availability of water for the future and said, “And water availability, just constant concern that there is simply not going to be enough water in the aquifers and places like that. The Peace River is a major source of water, but a lot of places you see aquifers.”

Describing Agriculture to a Young Child

Participants were asked how they would describe the agricultural industry to a young child. During their descriptions, the main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were farm related terminology and describing agriculture as where food comes from.

Farms and Farm Related Terminology

When describing the agricultural industry to a young child, participants described farms and used farm related terminology. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed visiting a farm as a child and it making a large impact on him/her. The participant said, “When I was younger growing up here one of my favorite things was that Pitt’s Farm over on right of the bridge... Yeah, they have their own little farmer’s market and I don’t know. That doesn’t really explain how I tell kids things but that, as a kid, was really like, made a big impact.”
- A participant discussed what they would say to his/her child and said, “I have a three year old and I would tell him like farms and a farmer grows stuff. They grow the crops, they send it to the stores, we buy it.”

- Another participant discussed what they would tell his/her child and said, “I would just, I would tell my kids that it’s just farms with fruits and vegetables and it is something that they can actually visualize in their head, you know, that makes sense.”
- A participant discussed talking about it with his/her children and said, “I do have little kids and I, this was topic of discussion, maybe three weeks ago for us, and we plant and grow plants at home and I showed them that big farms have that in a big production they use machines to do a lot of their [sentence trails off]... help them in the production of their vegetables and fruits and that’s how they grow.”

Where Food Comes From

Participants discussed describing the agricultural industry as where food comes from. Participants discussed that the industry was responsible for producing food and mentioned that parents often discuss where food comes from with their children. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed the current disconnect that exists between youth and the food production industry. A participant said, “When my kids come home from school with different you know information from school about it’s more of the science of it than really the realism of it. You know I don’t think that they, I don’t think that kids these days really grasp that concept of milking your own cow, picking your own eggs from the chicken coop or whatever it’s called or, you know [sentence trails off]...”

A second participant said, “There’s a large distance.”

The first participant agreed and said, “Yeah, they don’t have that concept.”

- A participant described those that are involved in agriculture as being, “The people that put the food on the table.”
- Participants discussed having conversations with his/her children about agriculture while in the grocery store. One participant said, “I’ve definitely explained it to my children. I have two kids and I’ve, you know, we’ve had the grocery store discussion where it’s like, you know [sentence trails off]...”

Another participant interrupted, “They always ask where things come from.”

A third participant added, “This stuff doesn’t just show up, doesn’t just show up on the shelves...”

- A participant discussed what he/she teaches to young children in his/her classroom and said, “I teach preschool, so I understand what you mean when they go to school. We try to teach them about farming and tell them what farmers do for us and how it helps us with our vegetables and the animals that we eat, the pork comes from a pig and chicken and stuff and that came from the animals and the farmers.”
- Participants discussed explaining as where food comes from. One participant said, “Growing food. Fruits and vegetables for human consumption.”

Another participant added, “Yeah, where the food comes from.”

A third participant agreed and added, “The origin.”

Importance of Agriculture in Southwest Florida

Participants were asked questions about how important they felt the agricultural industry was in southwest Florida. The participants were asked about the importance they placed on agriculture and what they perceived as

the most important part of the industry. None of the participants indicated that the agricultural industry in southwest Florida was not important. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were economics, food, historical importance, and natural resource and environmental impact.

Economics

Participants discussed that the agricultural industry in southwest Florida was important because of its impact on the local economy. Participants discussed the impact the agricultural industry had on money, jobs in the community, and taxing issues. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said, “It’s a big part of the economy, the local economy.”
- A participant discussed jobs for migrant workers and said, “I would say that even though it doesn’t pay much, it provides jobs for the migrant workers and stuff. So that’s good.”
- A participant discussed the importance of jobs in the industry and said, “Well, it’s definitely important. Our orange industry, I mean our oranges go everywhere, so, I know the oranges are important. My brother has a job because of the oranges, so it is important.”
- A participant referred to the industry providing jobs for families and said, “Yeah. I feel like, especially basically referring to south Florida, I feel like the agriculture part as far as growing crops and stuff has been in south Florida. And when you go to Immokalee, you know, like that’s a place where they grow a lot of crops and a lot people, where people go to work in that industry. Like that’s basically the main industry in Immokalee, because a lot of people from the past always talk about, if they were born in Immokalee, this is what they did. They was working with watermelons or they worked with tomatoes or oranges. They always had to be some type of crop.”

Food

Participants discussed that the agricultural industry in southwest Florida was important because it was responsible for providing and producing food for citizens. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the importance of southwest Florida agricultural products since these products were frequently exported and said, “It feeds the nation. So, that is pretty important. It feeds many other countries as well. Canada, I think, is our biggest export. Most of it goes up to Canada and Europe and Central America, so, that’s a good thing, I guess. People need to eat.”
- A participant when asked if the agriculture in southwest Florida was important said, “Um, I guess if we grow a lot of the stuff that a lot of people eat, it’s pretty important, yeah.”
- A participant described the agricultural industry as being, “Muy importante, because this is a great place to grow things, so we’ve got to take advantage of it. If we got cities with ten million people that can’t feed themselves with any local land. We can grow a lot of crap down here.”
- Participants also discussed specific commodities, such as citrus and its impact on southwest Florida.
 - Participants discussed the importance of citrus not only in southwest Florida but also in the rest of the country. One participant said, “It’s important for not just us, but I mean the entire country in

cases of some of our crops. I know that some of our crops supply... The majority of the country's supply of oranges for instance, or tangerines. It's important."

Another participant adds, "Yeah. They think oranges, they think Florida oranges in Ohio is like gold."

Historical Importance

Participants discussed the importance of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida's history, discussing that the area was settled by farmers and that agriculture has been historically important to the region's economy. Participants discussed that the agricultural industry in southwest Florida was important because it was essential to the health of consumers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed agriculture being the reason that people settled in Florida and said, "I think there's whole communities obviously based on the agriculture. I'm sure that's what drove people down here. So I think that's probably a foundation of our history and other than that, like everything else, we're so industrialized we've lost touch so unless we're in it we don't necessarily know the in's and out's."

A second participant agreed and said, "Yeah. I feel like, especially basically referring to south Florida, I feel like the agriculture part as far as growing crops and stuff has been in south Florida."

- Another participant discussed cattle ranching and said, "Maybe it was the reason the state was settled, initially, for cattle ranching."

Natural Resources and Environmental Impact

Participants discussed the importance of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida due to its impact on natural resources and the environment. Participants discussed the role that agriculture plays in conservation and that the industry effects the environment, specifically beach runoff, groundwater and wetlands, in southwest Florida. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the importance of the agricultural industry could be associated with the amount of land occupied by the industry and said, "Yeah, I wonder if it may be more important than we even realize. Like you just said, I wonder how far they... they stretch. I mean, I know there's some big fields out there. I've never been through all of them around here, but I've been all the way down to Oil Well Grade, and that's nothing but fields off of it but you know, how far do these stretch out from here, you know?"

Another participant agreed and said, "It's a lot of land, which you don't realize."

The first participant added, "You know, how much would it affect if we didn't... if they weren't growing that, you know? [Food would] Have to come from somewhere."

- Participants discussed the agricultural industry's impact on the environment in southwest Florida. The moderator then asked, "Which do you consider the most important?" Participants responded,
 - "Probably protecting the environment, to me."
 - "Wetlands."
 - "Use of fertilizers. Instead of more organic grown than a lot of fertilizer."

- Participants discussed the importance of protecting the environment. One participant said, “If it is fish and wildlife, I think it’s important that we understand how to continue to protect our beaches and, ‘cause that’s a big part of our tourist industry. And if, you know, our agriculture industry has anything to do with our tourist industry, then we have to make sure that we protect that as well.”

A second participant interrupted and said, “It sure seems like it does. You start looking at the pictures after rain, heavy rainfall events, and when that finally gets down the rivers and comes out the bays [sentence trails off]...”

The first participant added, “And the beach erosion.”

Quality

Participants were asked a series of questions about their perception of quality. Participants were asked how they define quality in and outside of agriculture, traits of quality food products, and the importance of health benefits and quality and the quality of the agricultural and food production industries in southwest Florida. Participants were then asked questions about the trust they would have in a farmer that says they produce quality food versus the trust they would have in a corporation that says they produce quality food.

Defining Quality

Participants were asked a series of questions about their perception of quality. Participants were asked how they define quality, traits of quality food products, the importance of health benefits and freshness when defining quality as well as how they define the term quality when it is applied to food and agricultural products. Participants were also asked about the quality of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were quality as a tool of measurement, food characteristics, and growing practices.

Quality as a Measurement

Participants discussed the term quality as a tool of measurement. Participants discussed that quality can be a fluid term, the definition of which can vary by person. Participants used words such as best, good, and pristine to describe quality, and mentioned the purchasing location being a factor in determining if a product was of high quality. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed quality being a measure that varied from person to person. The first participant said, “I think, I don’t know, I think quality is kind of a person’s perception on something because like, what might make one person happy like, might be different for another person.”

The second participant responded and said, “Kind of like, ‘one man’s trash is another man’s treasure’ type of thing?”

The first participant said, “You know? Yeah. Cause like, working in the banking industry I find that like, you can’t make everybody happy and like, and you never will. So I may think something is up to my standards and then someone else may think differently, so that’s kind of how I feel about that.”

- A participant discussed that quality is how a product is measured and said, “Quality, I see, is kind of how it is gauged. It is not necessarily good or bad, it is what you are determining the quality of the product is.”
- A participant discussed defining quality through measurements and controls and said, “Well, I think quality control, like there’s some standards and rubric to measure something.”

- Two participants discussed that quality was a measurement of personal standards, although most people had a general understanding of the term. The first participant said, “It depends on quality, depends on quality measures on your standard.”

The second participant agreed and added, “Right, it’s just a measure.”

The first participant continued, “Yeah, on your standards, ‘cause everybody has their opinion, but everyone know what’s good quality and what’s bad quality.”

Food Characteristics

Participants discussed specific food characteristics when describing quality. Included in this discussion were characteristics such as the appearance, taste, freshness, nutritional facts, smell and texture of a food item. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed quality food as appealing to all five senses and said, “Well, look is one sense. What I was going to say is really something that appeals to all five senses. It looks right, like it’s the right color and right shape and everything else, it smells right, it feels right, you know. And even, even as far as sound goes, if you take a carrot and you go to snap it, it snaps [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant discussed the age of food impacting its quality and said, “When it comes to quality of food, I think age is important. How long has it been around. It’s better quality when it’s fresher.”
- A participant discussed that food does not have to be perfectly shaped in order for it to be quality and said, “I think quality doesn’t mean like, like a perfectly shaped carrot or a perfectly shaped pepper or something, you know? I don’t mind getting something that’s oddly shaped or proportioned as long as it’s really ripe and really good and tastes good, you know.”
- A participant discussed that quality is associated with the nutritional content of food and said, “I think what [participant] was saying earlier about, you know, making sure that you’re eating food that has the highest level of nutrients and vitamins and things like, that I think, that’s what I think of as quality like, eating fresh stuff, stuff that is gonna be the most nutritious for you.”

Growing Practices

Participants discussed the relationship between growing practices and the quality of a product. When considering growing practices, participants discussed a product’s origin, pesticide and hormone use, the amount of waste created by a product, and the safety associated with growing practices, including things like the labeling, cleanliness, and standards surrounding the product. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed associating the best quality possible with products he/she grew and said, “That goes back to kind of having oranges, mangoes, and stuff from my yard. I feel like I’m getting the best quality, ‘cause it’s right there in my yard. I’m picking my orange off my tree. I’m eating it. My mangoes taste way better. I feel like that’s the best quality I can get.”
- A participant discussed that the amount of waste emitted from creating food was associated with quality and said, “When I think about that, though, I also think about how much waste we create from things that we consider undesirable and I think that part of quality food should be not creating a lot of waste.” The participant continued, “Like, I think that part of quality food is making sure that you’re not just producing

lots and lots and only selling what's useable. That we're making good use of what we have even if it's not necessarily sellable or profitable."

- A participant referred to growing practices and said quality means, "No hormones, less preservatives and additives."

Characteristics Needed for Quality Food

Participants were then asked what characteristics needed to be present to consider food quality. Participants discussed physical characteristics of the food, the conditions that the food was produced in, and food labeling and their relation to quality food. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were visual appearance, food characteristics, growing conditions, and labeling.

Visual Appearance

Participants discussed visual characteristics that need to be present when they consider food to be quality. Traits discussed by participants included a lack of blemishes, color, no wax and the shape of the product. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that the visual appearance of food was important, "because people eat with their eyes first."
- A participant said they look for, "A lack of blemishes," when selecting food.
- A participant discussed the importance of color when making purchasing decisions and said, "I think color makes a big difference, I choose a lot of things by their color."

Food Characteristics

Participants discussed specific food characteristics that need to be present for food to be considered quality, including the ripeness, cleanliness, taste, price, and smell of the food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the importance of smell in quality food and said, "I want it to smell... Because there's a lot of times like, something like, you open up a can of green beans and you smell it. It just doesn't smell like anything."
- A participant discussed how long an item spent on a shelf when discussing the quality of food and said, "How long it was stored until it got to... until it got to you."
- Other characteristics mentioned by participants included, "freshness," "no mold," and "edible."

Growing Conditions

Participants discussed the importance of growing conditions when considering food to be a quality product. Participants discussed the origin of a product, the chemicals and additives used on a product, the way an item was harvested, and the environment in which food was grown. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the impact of the environment that food was grown in when considering quality and said, "It needs to be grown in a safe environment."

- A participant discussed that they did not want his/her food to be a crossbred and said, “I want it to be like a regular fruit or vegetable not like broccoflower or pluots or whatever those things are, or you know, just a normal fruit or vegetable not something that was merged with something genetically and made into something better.”
- Other terms mentioned by participants included, “Not pumped full of chemicals,” “no additives,” and “hormone free.”

Labeling

Participants discussed the importance of appropriate labeling when considering food to be a quality product. While discussing labels, participants discussed including information about the origin of the food, how it was grown, how it was harvested, and general packaging preferences. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that they would like information about how food was harvested on the label and said, “I think it would be nice to know whether it [food] was like mechanically farmed or whether it was hand farmed.”
- A participant discussed wanting to know, “where it [food] comes from.” The participant continued and said, “At least the state.”
- At the conclusion of the labeling discussion one participant said they would like, “Just kind of same thing everybody else is saying, like what all they put in it, where they get it from and everything. Like even just like down to when it was pulled off the vine or pulled out of the ground or whatever, you know.”

Importance of Freshness and Health Benefits in Quality Food

Participants were asked to describe the importance of freshness and health benefits when considering food to be quality. Participants discussed the impact that freshness has on their perceptions of the quality of a food and its impact on their purchasing decisions. Participants also discussed that the health benefits of food made an impact on their purchases.

Freshness and Quality

A majority of participants discussed that the freshness of an item was very important when talking about quality food. Participants discussed that freshness means that food is considered the best, and the fresher an item, the less likely it is to spoil. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed wanting food that was fresh and said, “If it’s been there for a couple of days and it starts like, if it doesn’t look good, you’re not going to buy it. But, you want fresh, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, everything.”
- Participants discussed that the freshness of an item affects the taste of a product. One participant said, “I think it affects the taste. And I mean, not only taste, but how long it’s gonna last when you get it home. I mean, if it’s not quality, I mean, you get home and three days later or two days later the bananas are gone, you know, or whatever.”

Another participant added, “I think all your senses are affected by how fresh it is. I mean the taste, the feel, the smell.”

- A participant discussed freshness being associated with the best and said, “Whenever you hear about ingredients and everyone is always saying, fresh. Fresh is considered the best, it is always considered the healthiest. So, I think that is why... I know, with my kids, I obviously want to give them the healthiest and best [sentence trails off]...”
- Participants discussed locally produced products as being fresher and said, “I like what she said about, you know, knowing where your produce or your food or your meats come from with local, with out of state, or something. If it’s picked fresh or picked months ago and packed up now and it’s nice to know the quality is good.”

Health Benefits and Quality

Participants felt that health benefits were of moderate importance when considering the quality of a food product. Participants associated health benefits with hormones, genetically modified organisms, and fertilizers that are used to grow and produce food. Although participants discussed being conscious of health benefits in quality food, it was not at the top of their priority list. Additionally, participants discussed that the agricultural industry was important because it was essential to the health of consumers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed taking health benefits into consideration when deciding to purchase food and said, “When I choose things sometimes for the antioxidant benefits and different health benefits like raw honey instead of regular honey. I do make choices based on the health benefits from it.”
- A participant discussed that health benefits were important in quality food but that it was often hard to find due to changing farming practices and said, “It [health benefits] is very important, but it is hard to come by nowadays because of the lack of, I guess, farms, like was said before. And all the chemicals and everything else you have to put in it and how they grow it and everything. Because somebody 50 years ago is going to live longer than somebody that is twenty today just because of how it has changed over the years.”
- A participant discussed that although health benefits are important they are not always obtainable. The participant said, “It [healthy food] is usually more expensive, so sometimes I am not able to get what I want.”

Quality of Agriculture in Southwest Florida

Participants were asked to discuss the quality of agriculture in southwest Florida. Participants were asked how they felt about the quality of southwest Florida agriculture and how they would describe it. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were declining and local markets, farms and products.

Declining

Participants discussed that the agricultural industry in southwest Florida was declining in quality, due to the industry not creating any new jobs, it not being the main industry in southwest Florida and the lack of information available about the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the agricultural industry was declining in its impact in Florida and said, “Like I said before, the state was originally settled for agricultural reasons. And I feel like now more and more people are coming to live here for other reasons or they work in different industries like tourism or they work in service industries rather than agriculture. So, it is not that it is declining in quality, it is just

declining in scope. Like it has moved to the center of the state only and it is not as big a percentage of the number of jobs in the state.”

- A participant discussed that agriculture was declining due to the push for tourism in the state and said, “I think it is declining overall in this area, just because there is more concentration on tourism, you would say, stuff like that. We are not spreading education enough about agriculture in this area.”
- A participant discussed that the industry was declining due to its lack of emphasis in schools and said, “Where I grew up, agriculture was king. Everybody knew about it and was in 4-H or had something to do with it. Who in Fort Myers Beach knows anything about what is going on in the agriculture business? It is definitely not being taught.”

Local Markets, Farms and Products

Participants discussed local farmer’s markets and U-pick operations when describing the quality of southwest Florida agriculture. Participants discussed visiting farming operations, the changing growing conditions and the lack of local products available in stores when referring to the quality of southwest Florida agriculture. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed local markets and farms as being high quality and said, “I mean, that’s the one thing you don’t know is what’s in what they’re [sentence trails off]... I used to bring my kids to a U-pick in Bonita all the time, and we’d go pick strawberries and the grape tomatoes and it was fun, I consider that high quality because I picked it myself.”
- A participant discussed southwest Florida agricultural products and said, “I think it’s [southwest Florida agriculture] superb. I think it’s some of the best. I think that it’s a treasure that’s quickly dwindling.”
- A participant discussed the high quality of southwest Florida products, but expressed frustration about not being able to purchase them in the grocery store and said, “It is kind of upsetting, there is a farmer’s market in North Port every Saturday and you go there and you taste the watermelon and it is some of the best watermelon you have ever tasted. And it is like, why can’t you get this in the store? You have got to drive twenty-five minutes from your house to go. You can’t buy it locally in a store though.”
- A participant discussed that Florida oranges are known for their quality and said, “I feel like our oranges are everywhere else in the country, it’s pretty good quality, right? It’s high quality.”
- A participant said they consider southwest Florida agriculture high quality because, “I’ve noticed a lot of those little stands on the side of the roads here.”

Concerns about Southwest Florida Agriculture

Participants were asked to discuss the concerns they had about the quality of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. Participants discussed concerns about the sustainability of the industry, about the working conditions of the industry, about the availability of natural resources and about the longevity of the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed his/her concern with working conditions for migrant workers and said, “I think the working conditions for the people from Immokalee, you know, you always hear things about them and how unfair it is and the pricing and, you know, nobody, you know, nobody wants that job, you know, but people need to feed their... their family and their kids. I think that something needs to be done for them so that, you know, they have better conditions and, you know, better opportunities. I think that’s very unfortunate.”

- A participant mentioned his/her concerns over the sustainability of the industry and said, “Is it something that can continue to be profitable and be environmentally sensitive to the point that we still have it in generations to come?”
- A participant discussed concerns over the agricultural industry causing sinkholes and said, “Well, I think with the sinkholes that are popping up a lot lately, because a lot of farms use pumps into the aquifer to water their crops that that is a hazard in more rural areas, I mean, people are being swallowed up by sinkholes lately. Less rain and more sinkholes.”
- A participant discussed his/her growing concerns over the condition of southwest Florida agriculture and said, “We do have tomato fields and orange fields which I have seen lately are not doing so well. The orange fields, it looks like the trees are dying and there are no oranges and the tomato fields are barren, so I’m not quite sure what’s going on.”

Improving the Quality of Agriculture in Southwest Florida

Participants were asked to discuss how the quality of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida could be improved. Participants mentioned working with youth and increasing communication with the public. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were youth, increased communication with the public, improved local programs, and other suggestions.

Youth

Participants discussed increasing involvement with youth through outreach programs such as 4-H and in more formal settings such as schools. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the need to promote youth outreach programs and said, “More 4-H type programs and more advertisement of them. There is very limited, if somebody wanted to get into that, they would have to know how.”
- A participant discussed 4-H having an impact on them growing up and its importance in his/her life and said, “Personally, I think more 4-H, too because I was raised on it. And when I left, it is not the same, how it is today... how I was raised... I was in it when I was three years old. It is just not the same anymore. They teach you, they teach you a lot about responsibility and farming and animals and food and all that. It should just be put out there more.”
- A participant discussed promoting outreach programs in schools and said, “It is not advertised in schools. It is not... there is programs... I mean, yeah, there is a county fair every year, but that would be the only place that you would go to find it. Nobody knows where to look.”

Communicating with the Public

Participants discussed improving communication with the public about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida as a way to improve the quality of the industry. Participants discussed a need for access to information about the industry, including information about where to purchase local products, as well as the need for the public to understand the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed his/her concerns about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida due to the lack of information about the industry, and his/her desire to know more about the industry. The participant said, “I think my biggest concern is that I just don’t know enough facts about it. And I think a lot

of people don't. And I think that maybe some really good educational videos for all the schools for kids to learn about where they can actually see... watch a full-length video that explains the whole process so that all the different schools, the kids could learn about it. And I think more commercials on TV because a lot of people watch television, you know, just educational clips of different information about agriculture, in general, and... I just think that that's the biggest thing is we just don't know enough about it. We need more knowledge about all the processes of everything."

- Two participants discussed improving the quality of southwest Florida agriculture by increasing the accessibility to the industry through farm tours. One participant said, "Maybe open up their farms or something?"

Another participant replied, "That would be awesome, like, so you could actually talk to the farmer."

- A participant discussed the need for consumers to have more access to resources about the industry and information about how to get involved with the industry. The participant said, "I think the common person needs to have more, I don't really mean to refer to us as the common person, but more of an understanding of the resources. Like, okay, so we're sitting here talking about agriculture, which I'm sure before anybody received a phone call about this, all of us weren't thinking about agriculture... it was at the top of our priority list to get more knowledge on, but it's I think... understanding the resources and where they're coming from and just, you know, how it's supposed to help out in the community and how we're supposed to get involved."
- Participants discussed the need for the industry to inform consumers about what the industry is doing. One participant said, "Inform their consumers more."

Another participant agreed, "Yeah, inform consumers. We need to be more knowledgeable about what they're doing."

Improved Local Programs

Participants discussed improving local efforts as a way to improve the quality of southwest Florida agriculture. Participants mentioned increasing the number of small farms that are open for visitors, advertising the southwest Florida agricultural industry and partnering with grocery stores to increase the amount of local products available. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed increasing the amount of local food in grocery stores and said, "Well, they could sell more local stuff in the stores, that are local here to us."
- A participant mentioned partnering with grocery stores and restaurants and said, "Well, like partnerships with local grocery stores, like Publix and Winn-Dixie."

Another participant added, "And restaurants, advertise that you offer food grown locally [sentence trails off]..."

- A participant said the quality of southwest Florida agriculture can be improved through marketing and said, "Well, like she said, market better. Marketing and advertising."
- A participant discussed the desire to see more small farms and said, "I would like to see less large corporations running the show and receiving government subsidies and being so, it seems like a racket. I would like to see small farmers making better products and not giant corporations."

Other

Other ways to improve the quality of southwest Florida agriculture mentioned by participants included increasing the amount of jobs and decreasing the negative impact on the environment caused by the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- After one participant discussed his/her father's involvement in gardening, participants discussed that more information about gardening would improve the quality of southwest Florida agriculture. When referring to information being made available one participant said, "That's a good thing to help quality, through is increasing like awareness of how to [sentence trails off]..."

Another participant interrupted, "How to do it yourself."

The third participant added, "But that doesn't help the industry, if we're doing it ourselves."

A fourth participant said, "No. Just to be more visible, which helps."

- A participant discussed improving the environmental impacts of southwest Florida agriculture and said, "I was thinking if they could improve the environmental impact on the environment, it would be better."
- A participant discussed improving the quality of the industry by increasing the number of jobs and interest in those jobs and said, "If you could get more people who are going into their jobs to be interested in it, like coming out of high school and stuff. Because I don't... like everyone said before, I don't think anyone really thinks about it as a career path anymore. Maybe if more people were moving into that industry it would, like, bring some more life to it."

Trust in Farmers and Corporations

Participants were asked to describe the trust they had in a farmer that says they produce quality food, the trust they had in a corporation that says they produce quality food, and to describe why they trusted one more than the other.

Trust in a Farmer

Participants were asked to discuss the trust they had in a farmer that says they produce quality food, and participants discussed either having no trust in a farmer, limited trust in the farmer or fully trusting the farmer. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were no trust in a farmer, limited trust in a farmer, fully trusting a farmer, and ways to build trust with a farmer.

No Trust in a Farmer

Some participants discussed having no trust in a farmer that says they produce quality food. The main reasons discussed by participants were their need for more information about the food production process, their lack of understanding of regulations and the fact that the farmer was still running a business. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that his/her distrust stems from his/her lack of knowledge about the industry and said, "If I had like, a more knowledgeable basis, a more knowledgeable basis of just agricultural industry and then I had more of a discerning eye to, you know, look at someone in their face and say okay, I know if you're actually telling me the truth or not. Then I would feel more trustworthy. But given that I don't have her agricultural prowess, I would say that I, it would be kind of difficult for me to believe or again. I might be indifferent because I just can't tell like, if he's telling the truth or not, I just don't know enough."

- A participant said that quality is a term that can be used by anyone and said, “I mean anyone can say it, but unless they’re really willing to show you, how are we supposed to believe anything they say?”
- A participant said that in order to believe a farmer that said they produced quality food, “I’d have to see the farm to believe it.”
- A participant discussed that his/her mistrust was not exclusively for farmers, but applied to all salespersons and said, “I don’t think that is a thing about farmers, in particular. I think it is like any salesman telling you that something is good. A real estate agent or car salesman, everyone is going to tell you that their product is the best. But there is just no reason to believe someone unless they have some sort of proof.”

Limited Trust in a Farmer

Other participants discussed having limited trust in a farmer that says they produce quality food. The main reasons discussed by participants were the differences in definitions of the term quality and uncertainty toward the way food was sold. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said he/she would not trust a farmer that said they produce quality food because, “I don’t know, because I guess because I don’t know them.”
- A participant mentioned that quality is not a universal term and said, “His quality is not my quality.”

Trusting a Farmer

Other participants discussed trusting a farmer that says they produce quality food. The reasons discussed by participants were their ability to build a relationship with a farmer as well as a higher quality of food that is produced by a farmer rather than by a corporation. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed trusting a farmer that says they produce quality food and said, “When you got this farmer that’s selling you something. You just feel like it’s something he just went outside and, you know, and picked out of his field or, you know, just produced.”
- A participant discussed trusting a farmer more than a corporation and said, “His livelihood depends on you actually enjoying his product as opposed to a corporation which could care less whether you actually buy it or not. Someone else will buy it if you don’t.”
- A participant discussed trusting a farmer that says they are reliant upon your business and said, “I do think that when a farmer, a local farmer who is again your neighbor or somebody local that...who’s gonna see you the next day or the next week when you go back in, you’re gonna tend to trust that person more because again they have to rely on you coming back.”
- A participant discussed trusting a farmer because farmers, “Kind of take pride in it... Yeah, it means something to you. So that it means you don’t wanna, it has your name on it. Most companies, like I pass by a lot of farms out here and everybody knows that’s the tomato farms. Like when your name’s on something, that’s representing you. It’s not really representing the product so much, but your name comes first because they see the name and then they see the product. So, if you’re gonna disgrace your own name with bad product, then why are you in the agriculture business or in that sense?”

Building Trust with Farmers

Participants discussed ways to build the trust they have in a farmer. Participants mainly discussed allowing the public to visit farm operations and increasing the amount of information available about a farmer's practices. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant described getting to know a farmer as a way to build trust and said, "Well, I was just going to say that like, if I had farmers that I went to regularly and I was trying their produce on a regular basis then I would be able to tell if it was quality, I think. Like, if you are happy with the food you're getting then you would know if he was telling the truth that he was a quality farmer or she was a quality farmer."
- A participant discussed building a relationship with a person was a way to build trust and said, "Say you pick somebody and you start buying things off him and you say oh, this is real good and you keep coming back and you keep coming back and then you eventually get to know that person, then you eventually get to build trust with that person."
- A participant discussed using farm tours as a way to build trust between producers and the public. When asked for an example, the participant replied, "I think of that Worden Farms out on Vermont and how they do. They have little educational tours. They will take you around the farm. They have got all the food out there for you to see, touch. They show you how to cook it. They have recipes."
- A participant mentioned an increase in transparency would build his/her trust in farmers and said, "If they provide information of how their product is grown or their cattle were raised. You know, if they are willing to show you."

Trust in a Corporation

Participants were asked to discuss if they would trust a corporation that says they produce quality food, and participants discussed either having no trust in a corporation or having limited trust in a corporation. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were no trust in a corporation and limited trust in a corporation.

No Trust in a Corporation

Some participants discussed having no trust in a corporation that says they produce quality food due to the lack of information available about corporations, that corporations are just out for money, and that corporations don't care about the customer. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed not being able to build a relationship with corporations and said, "And it's anonymous, like you're not seeing who's producing your food. You don't have a relationship with them and there's no accountability there."
- A participant discussed his/her lack of knowledge about labeling standards and said, "Well, with a corporation, I mean... it goes to my point of education. Like me; for instance, I don't know what would be required as far as an FDA regulation goes, what would be required to advertise a product as quality, things like that, you know? That is why I would be suspicious of it."
- A participant talked about food recalls causing them not to trust companies and said, "Companies, by their nature are designed to make money, not tell you the truth. I think there has been evidence, ample example of that throughout the history of corporations. You know, every week you hear about somebody lying about

something, some sort of recall on something, so... I mean, they will tell you what they need to tell you until they get caught.”

- A participant discussed that corporations have more of a need to prove themselves to consumers and said, “Yeah, I think the company has more of a need to prove that they are doing the right thing than a small farmer would, for some reason. They’re less trustworthy. The profit is the biggest thing on their, on their list... [sentence trails off...]”
- A participant discussed the volume of production leading to his/her mistrust and said, “A food company that is mass producing is going to have quantity over quality sometimes, so that is going to be a worry.”

Limited Trust in a Corporation

Other participants discussed having limited trust in a corporation that says they produce quality food, since it is a corporation, although they did discuss having loyalty to specific brands. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the trust he/she has in brands and said, “Yeah, that’s a name that has been out for years and years people like, have trust in that brand name [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant discussed finding objects in processed food leading to his/her distrust and said, “But, I guess you know, we have a certain level of trust, but at the same time, I am always very cautious because when you are mass producing things, there is always stuff that can get in the food. There is no way to one hundred percent assure that it is safe.”

Communicating about Agriculture

Participants discussed what suggestions they have for the agricultural industry when it comes to communicating with the public about agricultural topics. Included in the discussion were questions about the importance of information about the agricultural industry, how useful information about the agricultural industry was, what types of information they would like to know about the agricultural industry, what information they would like communicated to consumers like themselves about agriculture in southwest Florida, what communication channels they would like utilized, and tips for communicating to a wider audience.

Importance of Information

Participants discussed that the agricultural industry was an important part of southwest Florida and the United States. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were food production, local agriculture, and economic impact.

Food Production

Participants discussed that the agricultural industry was important because it was the process by which food was produced. Participants discussed that feeling that they had a right to know information about their food, including information about where and how the food was produced. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that agricultural organizations should be transparent with information because consumers have a right to know what they are eating. The participant said, “They should be transparent, like... the companies should be transparent because like, of course it’s a right to know what you are eating, like that’s your sustenance so if they were... I mean they... you’re talking about the social media, if the companies seem at all shady about like their practices, obviously like it ‘causes a huge blowback, so I don’t know, they have to figure it out.”

- A participant discussed that although he/she does not think a whole lot about his/her food, it would be nice to have access to that information if they wanted it. The participant said, “I would think that not many of us... well, some of us may... but, really think about their food a whole lot. We don’t put a whole lot of thought into it, but if you do want to know about it or you are interested in something, it would be good to have access to that information.”
- A participant discussed that being able to access information about the agricultural industry is important, especially during foodborne illness outbreaks and said, “Yeah, I’d say very important, ‘cause if you’re... cows that like, mad cow disease or something of that nature is going around, you need to know about it... like some disease.”
- A participant talked about the importance of the agricultural industry putting information online due to influences on social media and said, “Well, and that’s why it’s important that the agriculture industry also puts forth their face because a lot of times you’re only hearing social media which is one side of the story.”

Local Agriculture

One of the themes that emerged when participants were discussing the importance of being able to access information about the agricultural industry was its relevance to local agriculture. Participants discussed the need to access information about local farmer’s markets, U-Pick farms, and farming cooperatives (co-ops), as well as information about the agricultural industry and its impact on southwest Florida. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the importance of information about local food, particularly because they were interested in purchasing local produce. The participant said, “I think it’s very important. I’ve actually done Google searches looking for local farms to try and set up some kind of weekly food, because... rather than the grocery store and it’s impossible to find anything local. I’ve tried it several times and I just can’t find anything. I’d get all my food from a farm if I could.”
- A participant discussed that information about local agriculture was important due to its growing popularity and said, “But, it’s like growing a lot, a lot more vendors are there and they have like food trucks and stuff there, too, now. So, a lot of people... a lot of the... I think the downtown people knew about it, but I don’t think it’s very big.”

Economic Impact

Participants discussed that the economic benefit of the agricultural industry is what makes it important. Participants discussed that the industry was important to the state economically and important to their personal economics. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the agricultural industry impacted his/her personal economics and said, “I feel like it affects you, like he said... it affects you economically, it affects your body, it affects the environment. It plays a big role in what is going on around you. So, it is important to have information on it.”
- A participant said that information about agriculture was important, “Um, because it is important for the state, economically. People have a right to know kind of what they are eating and where their food comes from. So, if they can’t access that information, they are denied that right.”

Usefulness of Information about Agriculture

Participants were then asked to discuss if they found information about the agricultural industry useful. All participants said that information about the agricultural industry was useful. Participants found information about the industry useful due to its personal and professional relevance, its social value, economic value, and impact on making purchasing decisions. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed information about strawberries being useful when making purchasing decisions and said, “I mean, it’s steered how we’ve bought like strawberries and stuff. We’ve noticed the strawberries from California don’t last nearly as long as the strawberries from Plant City.”
- A participant mentioned the differences in agricultural systems across the country and said, “I am thinking that there is a... it is important for, you know, the usual social reasons that were mentioned like nutrition and diet. It is also important for other economic reasons like... Fort Benning, where I just came from, there is like very little down here in southwest Florida, like ethanol pumps... E85 gas pumps and stuff like that. So, you know, it is important to educate people about the growth with the soil and the grains and stuff like that.”
- A participant said that they use information about the agricultural industry in his/her career. The participant said, “I would say professionally it is very useful for me knowing these things. A lot of, or many of the practices that we use in our profession derive from the agriculture industry. So, access to that information is useful.”

Communication Channel Preferences

Participants discussed the utilization of different communication channels when trying to reach consumers with information about the agricultural industry. Participants discussed a wide variety of communication channels, although most of the emphasis was placed on electronic-based communication. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were telecommunications and social media and YouTube.

Telecommunications and Social Media

Participants discussed electronic communication as an important part of reaching the public. Included in this discussion was the need for a main webpage containing comprehensive information, making educational videos available online and reaching out through social media. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant mentioned that farms should have a presence on social media and said, “I definitely think farms should have Facebook pages. They could do like blogs where they write cool blogs about what they are doing, what’s going on.”
- A participant discussed utilizing social media as a way to reach consumers of all age groups and said, “Yeah, by social media. That’s the wave of the future right now. Then you can contact more than one age group. ‘Cause all age groups are connected through social media.”
- A participant suggested that the agricultural industry should, “Maybe advertise on TV.” Another participant chimed in, “Yeah, more commercials.”
- A participant suggested that the agricultural industry just needed to, “Use your local media.”

YouTube

Participants discussed utilizing YouTube as a way to better communicate with consumers. Participants discussed watching videos on YouTube and the ability to show information about the industry to consumers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed using a YouTube channel to post videos about the agricultural industry. Included in this discussion were mentions of videos that would showcase “How we planted the fields,” and videos that demonstrated farmers were, “Just gonna harvest all this stuff, show you how we do it.”
- A participant agreed with another that mentioned YouTube, discussing how much he/she watched YouTube videos and said, “You bring up a really good point when you say You Tube. I’ve watched more YouTube commercials lately than regular commercials [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant discussed that schools could also use YouTube videos and said, “I do think public service announcements can be used because people do YouTube them and schools can use them.”

Suggestions for Communication Improvement

Participants discussed ways the agricultural industry could improve its communication with the public. Participants focused their discussion on utilizing different communication methods in order to reach a wide audience with information about the agricultural industry. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were suggestions for what to provide information about and local grassroots initiatives.

Provide Information About...

Participants discussed wanting more information about the agricultural industry, specifically wanting positive information about the industry, what producers are doing, and wanting to know what producers felt were the most important parts of the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed not hearing much positive information about the agricultural industry and said, “I think we hear when there’s a problem with local agriculture, but we don’t hear the positive that often. So, maybe get out some of the good things that they do. The jobs they create and, you know, the quality that they put behind their workmanship.”
- A participant discussed wanting to know information about the industry that producers considered as important and said, “What do they want me to know about? You know, they are trying to sell me a product, what do they want me to know? What do they feel is valuable and important about their product that I should know about? You know, organically grown, locally grown, pesticide free, that kind of stuff.”
- A participant wanted to know information about what local farmers are doing and said, “Yeah, just what they’re doing, you know, when their season starts, what they’re producing.”
- A participant discussed wanting to know about what producers care about and said, “I want to hear what they care about. Like, ‘We care about the taste of our food.’ Because food doesn’t really have good taste in Publix. Um, ‘We care about the health of our customers.’ Like I want to hear what they like care about, what they’re passionate about, and what their company is built on.”

Local Grassroots Initiatives

Participants discussed utilizing local grassroots initiatives such as food or commodity festivals, “public” days at the farm, increasing the number of available co-ops or having a stronger presence at community events as ways to improve communication. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed wanting to have an open farm day where participants would be invited to, “come out and help harvest,” at a local farm. The participant related this concept to a grape farm and said, “It would be educational, too, because even, you know, you could... even if you couldn’t take things home, even if you weren’t being paid for it at least you could bring your children and it would be a family event and the kids could see it... if you go to a farm and you see how much work goes into the farming of the grapes and... and, you know, maybe they would understand they would learn and... band people, adults as well that, you know, there’s too much work that goes into it to be wasted.”
- One participant discussed having farms available for tours on the weekends and, “Have produce tasting on the weekends just like the wine tastings.”

Improving Communications: A Snapshot

Participants were asked if they had thirty seconds to tell Florida farmers and ranchers how to better communicate with consumers like themselves, what they would tell them to do. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were community involvement, making it local, diversifying communication channels, and interacting directly with customers.

Community Involvement

Participants discussed increasing community involvement as a way to improve communications with the public. Participants discussed doing this by partnering with local businesses and restaurants, offering farm tours and festivals, having a presence at community events, and working in schools. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed partnering with organizations in the community to promote the industry. One participant said, “Or partner up with like, give like a fruit basket away or something, you know, at whatever you, or the Cattlemen’s Ball or whatever. I know my parents are involved with like the Girl’s and Boy’s Club. Just local charities, you just get your name out there.”

A second participant said, “Invite people out and have family day.”

A third participant added, “Or even like community fundraisers. Just try to, that way they could build funds to help them buy their products to help make their, grow their product and people could come out and see what they are doing at the same time.”

- A participant discussed having events that bring people out to farms, like Farm Aid, would be beneficial for the community. The participant said, “You know, if they are trying to draw attention to the younger crowd, get people interested, you have got to appeal to what they are interested in, you know. Concerts. Have some sort of Farm Aid kind of thing where local concerts are out in the middle of giant fields and you bring out acts and people are driving out to these properties and seeing the farmland and seeing why they are coming out here to support local farmers, you know? I mean, Farm Aid was big for a while there. That would... I would go see a concert out in a farm field. Take me back to my youth.”

Making it Local

Participants discussed increasing local agricultural programs such as farmer's markets or co-ops as a way to improve communication with the public. Participants also discussed improving the amount of locally produced food that is available at grocery stores. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed increasing the presence of local farmers and ranchers at grocery stores. One participant said, "Yeah, just the little flag in the store or something, you know?"

A second participant interjected, "Or even if just like one day a month you get as many farmers in the area as possible and you just set up in a parking lot. And that way you can buy their fruit or whatever they are selling right there and then you know about them later on."

A third participant added, "And there may be a sign there that says, 'Our products sold in...' or 'You can find my food here [sentence trails off]...'"

- A participant discussed that farmers should be more present at farmer's markets and said, "Well, why don't they come to the farmer's markets? I mean tons of people go to those."

Communication Channels

Participants discussed changing communication channels as a way to improve communications. Participants discussed advertising the agricultural industry, creating a presence online, promoting the positive parts of the agricultural industry, forming a united organization and having farmers interact directly with consumers as ways to improve communications. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed an organization that markets the agricultural industry may be beneficial. One participant said, "Find an organization that's gonna do the brokering and the communicating and the education for them. Somebody who is already plugged in, so when I meet that organization I don't hear about one farmer, I hear about all of the available farmers and the goods that I can get."

Another participant added, "Marketing is key. Find a marketing organization."

- Participants discussed that advertising is a tool to use when communicating. One participant said, "advertisement."

Another participant agreed and said, "Yeah, let me know you are there."

A third participant added, "Yeah, advertise more. Partnership more. Definitely try and get involved with the schools."

- A participant discussed the importance of being accessible online and said, "Get online is a big thing. Maybe make it easier, so if I search for a local farmer's market it is a lot easier to find them or something like that."
- Participants discussed that often times media attention about the agricultural industry was negative. One participant said, "It seems like... anytime we do hear anything, it is negative stuff."

Another participant added, "You know, we need to hear the positive, not just, you know, we don't want to just hear the negative stuff that comes on the news, but we want to hear the good stuff."

Later in the discussion a participant said, “The only time you ever hear anything is during the wintertime. Like their crops get bit by the freeze or anything like that. You never talk about anything that happens during the spring, summer. Maybe they should talk more about during the time that it is not freezing outside.”

Interacting Directly with Consumers

Participants discussed increasing interactions with consumers through outreach programs and farmers talking to directly with consumers about their practices as ways to improve their communications with the public. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that information was not made available about the agricultural industry and that the industry should make it available. The participant said, “I had mentioned earlier, I grew up in a farming community and you always knew when it was harvest season, you always knew when the pumpkins were ripe and when the corn was due and when the beans were growing. Because everybody was out selling it, you knew about it. I don’t know about when the oranges are harvested. I don’t even know what crops are being grown in this area. So, I mean, there is not much of a presence letting people know that these things are out here.”
- A participant said the industry should, “Speak up more. You hardly really hear anything about it. Put your message out there.”
- Participants discussed never having the opportunity to interact with farmers because participants were not aware farmers existed in the area. One participant said, “Say anything. I mean why do... none of us even ever had a conversation.”

Another participant interjected, “Yeah, I didn’t even know you were there, reach out.”

A third participant added, “Yeah, say anything. Make contact.”

Agricultural Organization

Participants were asked about a hypothetical organization that would represent the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. Participants were asked what they would expect the organization to do for consumers, for the community, and for the agricultural industry, as well as their reactions to the name Farmers and Ranchers of Southwest Florida.

Expectations for Consumers

Participants discussed what they would expect this type of an organization to do for consumers. Participants also provided insight into their expectations of the organization’s structure, including input about whom the organization would represent and who would control the organization. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were community outreach programs, create a presence in schools, serve as an information source, and serving as an accountability agency.

Community Outreach Programs

Participants discussed the organization investing in community outreach programs by making a presence at trade shows, increasing consumer involvement in the industry through farm visits and festivals, and promoting local produce at grocery stores. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she would expect this organization to increase consumer involvement in the agricultural industry, saying, “Get us more involved. We’re the consumers, right? We’re the one who

they're selling to. Like we said earlier, let us know where the product that's grown locally goes. I think that's a huge thing. I mean, I would buy from a store if I knew that everything that people locally were growing. I mean, I'm giving back to my own community, why wouldn't I?"

- A participant discussed the organization having a presence at trade shows and expos and said, "You know how they have the home and garden shows, and senior expos and kid's family fun events and stuff? They should go to all those type of expos and set up booths and pass out literature that people would... more families would learn more about agriculture and just kind of, just get the word out better."
- Participants discussed this organization helping to establish clearer labels of local products in grocery stores. One participant said, "What they could also do is push labeling in grocery stores of things that are produced in Florida. And so when we go shopping, we can actually see what is from Florida and what is not so that we can choose to get more stuff from here just to help support it."

Another participant added, "A Florida section. We have a gluten-free section, why can't we have a Florida section?"

- Participants discussed this organization's role in offering farm tours. Participants mentioned, "Maybe showcase a farm," "A trip to an actual farm," and that a farm tour, "Could become a tourist attraction to."
- A participant discussed the organization hosting monthly events that engage members of the community and said, "It would be nice if they could do some more community... where you, you know, you have a meeting once a month or... I don't know, how many ever months and the community itself can come together."
- Participants also discussed the idea of festivals celebrating a specific commodity or portion of the industry. Included in this discussion were mentions of local festivals such as the Plant City Strawberry Festival, the Arcadia Watermelon Festival and seafood festivals that are frequently held on the water. One participant also said that farmers and ranchers should, "come out to the events."

Create a Presence in Schools

Participants discussed the organization should create a presence in local schools. Participants discussed that the organization should be involved in all levels of the school system and create materials for the schools such as classes and videos. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed funding educational programs at schools and said, "Maybe provide some funding for some educational projects at schools. Just so kids have an idea [sentence trails off]..."

Another participant interrupted, "Kids can grow their own stuff."

The original participant continued, "How things work and that way you reach a broader perspective to all the kids instead of just the ones that are interested who are in the Estates area, you educate the kids that are in town, too."

- A participant discussed putting together videos for schools to use to educate students about the agricultural industry. The participant said, "Well, I think putting together the videos for the schools is the best idea, you know, for all the schools... elementary, middle and high school. You know, just a really good... interesting, something that would... the kids would find interesting. It would have to be very visual, you

know, like a very interesting... not just someone speaking about stuff, but where they would actually see, you know, things that would grab their attention. But, I think that education is really important.”

- Participants discussed incorporating information into the agricultural industry into classrooms. One participant said, “You know, some... school lunches has always been pretty big issue in the past, you know? You know, if we are trying to educate kids on the importance, or the value... make food with the locally grown things and show the kids what it tastes like.”

Another participant agreed and added, “Actually what would be really awesome for middle school and high school is actually offering a class for students, nothing but just learning all about that. High school, especially, that would be really good for... you know, a good option for kids to take an actual course in that.”

Information Source

Participants discussed the organization should provide information about the agricultural industry and educating the public. Participants discussed mediums such as websites or videos that could be used to provide information about topics such as seasonality, local production and growing practices. Additionally participants discussed the importance of organizational accessibility and having a physical location where consumers could contact the organization. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed an organization serving as a public education tool, providing information to the public about production practices. One participant discussed that he/she would expect an organization to educate them about, “Local practices and like, production.”

Following agreement from other participants, one participant said, “Yeah. Enable us to make informed decisions as consumers.”

- A participant discussed providing information online and said, “If they possibly had a website where you could find information on what brand you are buying and where it is coming from, who you are buying it from, the different farmers who produce it and the methods.”
- Participants discussed that he/she would like the organization to provide information about the agricultural industry. One participant said, “I would like them to provide information.”

The moderator then asked, “What type of information?”

Another participant said, “It would be nice if they had some sort of website that I could reference for information about what to grow or where to buy stuff.”

- A participant discussed wanting information about when products are in season to be provided and said, “To go along with that, you know, we talked about quality earlier, when to buy. You know? When should I buy my oranges? When is the harvest, when is the opportune time to get the best?”

Accountability Agency

Participants discussed the organization should take a potential role as an accountability agency for the agricultural industry. Participants discussed the organization establishing quality standards, holding the industry accountable, being an honest source for information about practices and labeling products that are from the local area and communicating this information to consumers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed wanting the organization to be honest with their information, even if it was negative. One participant said, “Yeah, I guess you’d want them to be, you know, almost unbiased. Give you the good, the bad, and the ugly, you know, whether it was, what [sentence trails off]...”

A second participant interrupted, “But I think they need to be.”

A third participant added, “Be honest.”

- A participant discussed that the organization should serve as an accountability agency and said, “Yeah, they could, I mean, they could represent the agricultural industry and still actually be semi-independent and hold the agricultural industry accountable.”
- A participant discussed that the organization could hold members of the organization accountable and said, “Maybe guarantee quality and hold their members to some standard that they can agree on as a group.”
- A participant discussed the organization monitoring the quality of food and said, “They can also check the quality of the food.”

Expectations for the Community

Participants discussed what they would expect this type of organization to do for the community. Participants discussed the organization’s role in public education and outreach, interacting with consumers and representing the industry. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were public education and outreach and promoting local farmers.

Public Education and Outreach

Participants discussed the organization’s role in educating and interacting with the public and providing information to the community about any agricultural-related issues. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the organization providing information about home gardening and said, “Would they be able to help with like... I really don’t know how this all works, but you know, with your own fruit trees in your own yard, like if you wanted to safely... if they could help with that. How to safely, you know, have your own citrus trees and your fruits and vegetables... if you had questions about how to do that properly and safely.”
- A participant said they would like the organization to, “Have educational sessions.”
- Participants discussed the organization providing information about local farms. One participant said, “It doesn’t seem like there is a whole lot they could do other than something that has to do with information. You know, what is the status of local farms, are they doing well? Are they doing poorly? How can you help them if you are interested in them? How can they help you if you need help? Information really seems to be the only thing that they could actually do, that they had any power to do.”

A second participant added, “Along with that, if you could find information like... oh, what could I do to find out more information about the farms? Could I go volunteer at them? Could I go check one out? Something that would give them hands-on experience of it.”

Promoting Local Farmers

Participants discussed the role of the organization in promoting local farmers to the community, including providing information about farmer's markets and making farmers accessible to the community. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed farmer's markets being associated with the local value of agriculture. One participant said, "If they brought more awareness to where the farmer's markets were and what times and whatnot."

Another participant added, "Get more people using them, so they would see the value of agriculture locally."

- A participant discussed using farmer's markets to promote the sale of local produce and said, "I think they should encourage people to go to more farmer's markets so they can build more markets and farms so people will buy locally rather than at grocery stores."
- Participants discussed promoting farmer's markets since they are valuable to the local community. One participant said, "The fact that there are local farmers and also about farmer's markets and things like that, that the community can take advantage of."

Another participant added, "What value it has to the community."

Expectations for the Agricultural Industry

Participants discussed what they would expect this type of organization to do for the agricultural industry. Participants discussed expectations for the organization to represent political interest of the industry, represent small farmers, establish quality control standards, and advertise. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed the organization's role in lobbying for the industry and said, "Maybe be some type of lobbying group to help get their goals accomplished and help the farmers in whatever ways and whatever means that they are looking to accomplish."

Another participant added, "Lobbying on what is good for southwest Florida. Not necessarily what is good for the state, but what is good for the farmers here."

- A participant discussed the organization's role in representing small farmers and said, "You need to represent like and maintain if a small farm can't hold up because there's a giant tomato operation three miles away, you need to show some support like, you know, the local Publix, they can only grab these tomatoes from the local guy."
- A participant said he/she would expect the organization to, "Enforce quality control standards of some sort. Maybe advertise, too."
- A participant discussed the organization's role in establishing standards for the industry and said, "I was just thinking if they had uniform standards, maybe whatever the regulations are, maybe ten percent less pesticides or whatever, or something like that."
- A participant said that he/she would like to organization to, "Push people to buy things that are local for one and not, you know, like this is seasonal in this area. You know, buy these things and you know,

unfortunately it's not season for certain fruits or vegetables, so you'll just have to wait until that comes and make sacrifices."

Organization Structure

Participants also discussed their expectations of the structure of the organization. Participants discussed expectations that the organization would fix problems in the industry, be independent, and represent all sides of the agricultural industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed his/her expectation of the organization to be independent and said, "Be an independent organization that wasn't just a marketing front for, you know, certain agricultural companies."
- A participant mentioned the organization be encompassing of all sides of the agricultural industry and said, "Be sure that the members of the organization were representative in all aspects of the agricultural industry from growers, producers, packagers, you know... down to the retail side of it."
- A participant discussed the organization having a role in advocating for the industry and said, "Well, I'd expect them to be advocates for agricultural industry. So, although I'd like them to be independent, I really doubt that they would."
- A participant discussed problems occurring in the agricultural industry and the expectation of an organization to address them and said, "Yeah, address them and I want resolve to them. I don't want to keep talking about the same things over and over again that there is a problem with. I want to know what you are going to do to fix the problem for me."
- Participants discussed having representative from different aspects of the industry. One participant said, "I would expect like, different types of organizations like, you know, you want to have like a, you know, like a permaculture representative, like an organic farming representative, like different... different types."

Another participant interrupted, "Reflective of the entire community, I feel is important."

Farmers and Ranchers of Southwest Florida

Participants were asked to discuss their feelings toward the name Farmers and Ranchers of Southwest Florida. There were mixed feelings discussed by participants. While some of the participants felt positively toward the name, many had neutral or negative feelings toward the name. The main themes that emerged were the name not being personally relevant, mixed expectations associated with the name, issues with the name, suggestions for name improvements, and positive feelings.

Not Personally Relevant

Participants discussed that the name was not personally relevant and that the name Farmers and Ranchers of Southwest Florida would only be relevant to farmers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she did not feel like the name was relevant since they were not a farmer or rancher and said the name, "Makes me feel like it doesn't have a lot to do with me because I am not a farmer and I am not a rancher and I don't know any farmers or ranchers down here. And how does that organization affect me or, you know, what would my interests in them be?"

- A participant said that the name would identify who was involved but did not seem personally relevant because, “I would feel like it’s for farmers and ranchers of southwest Florida, but I don’t know that that would be for me because I’m not a farmer or rancher.”
- Participants discussed that the name of the organization doesn’t sound representative. One participant said, “It doesn’t imply that it’s like a representative council.”

Another participant added, “But it could be the name of their bowling team or the name of their... no honestly, we don’t know what the organization does, we just, you know, it’s identifying those two groups of people and that’s it.”

- A participant said that the name wasn’t inclusive of others and, “It doesn’t tie them to the general population. It just kind of, it’s them. Nobody else joins but them. If you don’t do that, you are not a part of it.”

Mixed Expectations

Participants discussed having mixed expectations of an organization with that type of name. Participants were unclear on whether that type of organization would work with the community, the agricultural industry or if it would be a political organization. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that an organization with that name would work to assist farmer’s purchasing decisions and said, “It sounds like they might be a group that like, uses group buying power to help the farmers and ranchers. Maybe they buy bulk equipment or pesticides or something to help the farmers and ranchers save money so that they don’t have to buy them individually. It sounds like something like that, a negotiation group.”
- A participant discussed that the name felt political and said, “I think that sounds political. Just like a union, not an organization.”
- A participant discussed that the name was not reflective of community involvement and said, “I feel like with that title, there is no obligation to the community.”
- Participants were asked expectations of an organization with this name and one participant said, “Farm and ranch. I don’t know, it sounds like when I hear it, it sounds to me something like 4-H.”

Name Issues

Participants discussed having issues with the name Farmers and Ranchers of Southwest Florida. Participants discussed having issues with the generic nature of the name, not liking the word ranching, and the name not having an acronym. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that the name would not appeal to a younger audience and said, “I don’t think that a title like that would appeal to, especially, the younger generations growing up in an urban environment like Fort Myers or Cape Coral or Naples.”
- A participant discussed that the word ranchers threw them off and said, “I don’t know really about ranchers. I mean I think they could use something better in there, really. So, I think of ranching I think of like, having cows or not cows, but horses on the space of a like, a spot of land. Like, I don’t really think of that as basically like, agriculture. Like I think like, they could put like, farmers and something else in there rather than ranchers, that’s just what I think.”

- A participant discussed that the name does not tell you anything about the purpose of the organization and said, “What is its purpose? Like the name doesn’t tell you what its purpose is.”

Name Improvements

Participants discussed ways to improve the name of the organization. Participants mentioned making the name more personally relevant by adding words like “community” or “local.” The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed making the name more relevant by including community in the name and said, “Like, put something like ‘Community Partnership’ in it... of Ranchers and Farmers or something like that that makes it less volatile. Less political and more local.”
- A participant suggested making the name more tailored to the target audience and said, “I think I would base the name not based on where it’s coming from but who it’s going to. I don’t think that I would be focusing on, I think I would be looking for a name somewhere along the lines of the local, Local Food Association of Southwest Florida.”
- A participant suggested reversing the order of words in the title and said, “I think reversed it sounds better. ‘Southwest Florida Farmers and Ranchers’ just sounds fresher.”
- Participants said the name did not make them think of an organization that works with the community and said, “Ranchers and farmers, I just think of ranchers and farmers doing their own thing.

Another participant added, “It doesn’t tie them to the general population. It just kind of... it’s them. Nobody else joins but them. If you don’t do that, you are not a part of it.”

Positive Feelings

Some participants discussed feeling favorable toward the name because it was very clear, sounded like it represented the entire industry and that the name was descriptive. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said he/she liked the name because, “It tells you what they are.”
- A participant said that the name sounded like a collaborative effort and, “It sounds like, they’re taking two different types of agriculture and bringing it together.”
- A participant discussed that the name encourages thoughts of the industry and said, “It’s very all-encompassing and like, kind of makes you think about more than one thing and does a pretty good job portraying the entire agriculture industry.”
- A participant discussed liking the name and said, “I like that it’s simple and straight forward and appears to be transparent.”

Message Creation

Participants were asked to develop a message about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida. Participants discussed keywords that should be contained in the message. The keywords that participants discussed were: community, local, economy, fresh, and environment. The following quotes are examples of messages created by participants and discussion surrounding this theme:

- “Why it is good for you, why it is good for the environment, and why it is good for the community.”
- “Locally grown and fresh.”
- “Fresh, local, and ready.”
- “Something about supporting your local agriculture.”
- “Actually, that one headline you had in the paper would be something... local food, local economy, local... you know, something like that.”
- “Like, ‘Buy local, live longer.’”
- “Good for the environment, good for the economy.”
- “Fresh and quality.”
- “I say sunny, fresh, and green.”
- “Why it is good for you, why it is good for the community.”

Concept Testing

As part of the focus groups, PIE Center researchers tested concepts with participants to gain a better understanding of their favorability toward messages about the agricultural industry. During the focus groups, researchers created mock newspaper clippings that were presented to participants (Appendix A). Participants were asked their reactions to the headline, if they would trust a story with this type of headline, how likely they would be to read a story with this headline, and what type of image they would see with this headline.

Concept 1: Take a Look into Your Food

The first concept that was tested with participants was “Take a look into your food.” Participants were given a mock newspaper headline with this across the top and were read the following prompt:

“Imagine that you are reading a news story, either in your local paper or online, that discusses agriculture in southwest Florida. The headline reads, ‘Take a look into your food’ and you learn the story discusses the production practices of farmers in your local area.”

Following the prompt participants were asked their thoughts on the headline, their likeliness to read a story with this headline, the trust they would have in this headline, the image they would see with this headline, and if they would seek out more information about the agricultural industry after reading this headline.

Thoughts on the Headline

Participants discussed how they felt about the headline, “Take a look into your food.” The main themes that emerged were participants’ discussion of positive, neutral, and negative feelings toward the headline, having feelings of anxiety, and wanting to revise the headline.

Positive Responses

Participants had positive responses to the headline and discussed that the headline was attention-grabbing and that they would be likely to read this article. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that food was important which made the headline attention grabbing and said, “We wanna know what’s, I was like yeah, because we eat every day, we consumer food every day. So they’re talking about our food? That’s something that we’re gonna wanna be interested in, gonna catch our attention.”
- A participant described the headline as attention grabbing and said, “I think that’s a headline that grabs your attention. For sure.”
- A participant said that he/she felt the headline was, “effective.” The participant said this was because, “Because it makes me think. I mean exactly what we were talking about earlier. ‘Take a look into your food,’ and I immediately want to read that and know what, what, what have they found? What are they writing about? Is it good, is it bad? You know?”

Neutral Responses

Participants had neutral responses to the headline and discussed that the headline could be about just one farmer and that their feelings could go either way. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that although the headline could be positive, he/she thought it would be negative and said, “I would think that, although it could be some type of informative article about our food or the agricultural industry, it, the immediate image is something negative. They might be writing about something bad that’s in my food.”
- A participant discussed that the headline wouldn’t prompt them to think of anything bad and said, “I would think of what is in your everyday food. Not anything bad.”
- A participant discussed that although the headline was negative, one case is not reflective of the entire industry and said, “Yeah, just one farmer. I mean, if it’s just one farmer, it doesn’t tell the whole industry.”
- A participant discussed that the headline seemed to be threatening toward consumers and said, “It’s a little threatening like, there might be something wrong with your food so you better take a look.”

Negative Responses

Participants discussed negative responses to the headline. Included in this discussion were mentions of participants being uninterested in this information, the article resembling a puff piece, the headline not being attention grabbing and thoughts that the article would be about issues in the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that the headline seemed derogative and said, “Well, this seems more derogative. Not that it necessarily stated derogatively, but it is like, it doesn’t sound good, so it makes you think more. It makes me think more on the bad side, like what is it really going to talk about?”
- A participant said that the headline reminded them of cleanliness issues with food production and said, “I think of the chain of food, like what did they eat, what did they give them, what antibiotics are in there and where did it go and what is in the plants? What is cleaned on the counter where the food is laid? Like the whole cycle of producing food.”

- A participant said that the article sounds like a filler story in the news and said, “The title sounds like a puff piece, just a useless piece of news that they throw in there to fill up the paper.”

Food Safety Concerns

Participants discussed that the headline would make them think of food safety concerns. Participants discussed that the headline seemed like a warning, that is prompted them to think of a food recall, it seemed to be surfacing a hidden danger, and that it would have to do with the nutrition of food. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Two participants discussed that the headline encouraged readers to think about nutrition. One participant said, “I immediately think it’s nutritional based rather than like some sort of agricultural type of information.”

Another participant agreed and said, “Yeah, I agree. I think it’s, it makes me think, am I eating something that’s just gonna make me, you know, feel more unhealthy? I don’t think of it as something that would make me think of an agricultural practice as much as a nutritional value.”
- A participant said that the headline made him/her think of another food recall and said, “Oh what is wrong again? My spinach is poisoned again, there goes my salad.”
- A participant said that the only thing the headline made him/her think of was, “Another recall.”

Anxious Responses

Participants discussed having anxious feelings toward the headline. Included in these responses were discussions about feelings of anxiousness toward the headline and thoughts that the headline would cause concern. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the headline made him/her nervous and said, “But with me, to be honest, when I read the headline, ‘Take a Look Into Your Food,’ I get anxious because then I immediately think it’s all negative, what have I been eating, they’re gonna tell me something I don’t want to hear.”
- A participant said that the headline made him/her feel “scared.” When asked why they felt that way the participant replied, “Because it’s telling us to look at our food, so there must be something wrong with our food for us to go like double check it. It is telling us to double check our food.”
- A participant said that, “I would be worried. Take a look into your food, what poison did they put into it?”

Proposed Revisions

Participants discussed ways they would revise the headline. Participants discussed that the headline needed to be more commanding and call to action. Participants also discussed that the headline needed to better reflect the topic matter of the headline. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she would read the headline if it was more of a call to action and said, “I would probably read like a commanding title like, ‘Look at Your Food.’ It sounds more like there is something crazy going on and you need to check it out.”
- A participant discussed that the headline should be more specific and said, “I think it should be a little bit more specific about what they are talking about. Because I feel like, I always look at an article relating to something being wrong with food. It needs to be a bit more specific.”

- Participants discussed that the title needed to be revised to more accurately portray the contents of the article. The moderator asked, “Okay. Well, what would you want it to say that would remind you of production practices of farmers in your local area?”

A participant replied, “Maybe add on the ending... ‘Take a look into how your food was produced.’”

A second participant said, “Maybe like, ‘Do you know how your food is produced?’ Like, ask you the question, make you think.”

The first participant replied, ‘How Was Your Food Born?’ Something simple like that, you know.”

A third participant added, “Yeah. I mean definitely in a, if it’s worded like a question, when you look at it you know what question it’s asking and that the answer is going to be in there. So if you want to know the answer to that question, you could read it. This is definitely a little bit more general, I mean, a couple of us had different opinions of what might be in the article.”

Likelihood to Read the Article

Participants discussed how likely they would be to read a news article with this headline. A majority of participants discussed that they would read the article, although some participants discussed not reading the article or other factors influencing their choice to read the article. The main themes that emerged were participants would read the article, may read the article, and would not read the article.

Would Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would read an article with that headline because of their curiosity and interest in the topic. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that he/she would read the article, “Because I want to know what I’m eating. What I’m feeding my kids.”
- A participant discussed that all people have to eat, which would lead them to read the article. The participant said, “Well, it’s a funny thing we all have in common. We all eat. You know, you have to eat to live and, you know, live to eat. Sometimes we pick different foods, but I guess it depends. Obviously, it’s not stating specifically which food. But it sparks, I think, any A of our interests, that we all eat and we’re all going to put some food in our mouth and the question is...which food should I be taking a look into? So, maybe I should read this.”
- A participant said he/she was interested what is in his/her food and said, “I mean, you want to know what’s in your food. It says, ‘Take a Look into Your Food,’ so I’m at least gonna start reading it and see what it’s about. If it’s negative or if it’s not.”
- A participant said he/she would read the article, “Because I want to know what is in the food. I want to know what I am missing, what I don’t know.”

Would Read the Article If...

Participants discussed that they would read an article with that headline but it would be conditional upon other factors, such as if they had time to read it, if it would affect their children, and if the headline was revised. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that if he/she had children he/she would be more likely to read the article and said, “I think my answer might change if I had kids or if it was somebody else that I was feeding. Because this is me, that is my decision to put that in my body, but if I had a child, then it would be a different story.”
- A participant discussed that the article didn’t seem urgent enough for him/her to want to read the article. The participant said, “I might end up reading it, but it definitely ain’t gonna be the one like when you scroll through the headlines, it’s not gonna be the first one you click on. Depending on how much free time you find yourself with, you know, whether that’s actually gonna be read.”

Would Not Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would not read the article based on the headline. Participants discussed not reading the article because they were uninterested in the topic, felt that there was enough information out there that they wouldn’t have to, and that they did not want to know what was happening. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that the article would contain information that he/she already knew and said, “It doesn’t, it’s not something that, I mean, it concerns me. Obviously I care what I put in my mouth, but it doesn’t concern me enough to read an article that’s gonna confirm a lot of the information I probably already know.”
- A participant discussed not reading the article because, “I’m not sure I really want to know what is in my food.”
- A participant discussed that the article resembled articles he/she had read in the past and said, “It is too much, it looks too much like, what everything else is already out there and I’ve already read enough that it’s kind of like, oh, it’s just more of the same, that’s smearing.”
- A participant discussed not wanting to know what was in his/her food and said, “I just...I would rather not know and kind of just take it, honestly.”

Trust in this Headline

Participants discussed if they would trust an article with this headline. Participants discussed that they had issues with trusting the local media on this issue, would trust the article depending on sources and that they would trust a local paper. The main themes that emerged were distrust of the local media, trust is dependent upon the sources in the article, and that participants trusted the local media.

Local Media Distrust

Participants discussed that they did not trust the local media when it came to serious topics and issues.

Participants also felt that the local papers were biased and could not be trusted. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed not trusting the local media and said, “There’s a lot of articles written like this like, look into your food. I wouldn’t trust it from our local newspaper only because I know a lot of two sides of the story and I’ve read things that have been completely biased and incorrect and out of context. So, I wouldn’t bother reading it from the local newspaper.”
- While discussing the local media’s reliability a participant said, “I don’t think I would. I would take it with a grain of salt.”

- A participant said that he/she would not take an article like this serious because the topic was too major for a local paper. The participant said, “Yeah, like for me, like, I personally wouldn’t take something this serious, I wouldn’t take it from a local newspaper. Because I personally would take something from peer reviewed articles if I am looking into something serious. Now, if I am looking for just local news like, you know, so and so, three grow-houses were busted, you know, I would turn to the paper for that. But something serious, I usually don’t, because I usually figure the newspaper always has its agenda, it’s biased.”
- A participant said he/she wouldn’t trust the article because, “I don’t really trust the local papers very much.”

Reliance on Sources

Participants discussed that their trust in the article would be dependent upon the sources that were used. Participants would not trust stories coming directly from the agricultural industry but would trust more scholarly sources. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed only trusting certain sources and said, “I wouldn’t trust the paper, it would go back to the resource for me. Like is this a doctor, is this a university, is this, where is this information coming from? Or did just Mr. Smith decide, this is what I feel about today?”
- A participant said that he/she would trust the article, “If they had quotes from like people who worked on the process of making the food and stuff.”
- A participant discussed a general distrust toward the agricultural industry and said, “I think, in general, people have like a, like people don’t really trust the agricultural business anymore. So, I think the people would come kind of already with a negative stigmata. No one really trusts. So if it’s already negative, people would just be like okay and if it’s positive people would be like, okay, that’s cool, you know?”
- A participant discussed only trusting things he/she could personally experience and said, “Um, I don’t know. I don’t really trust much of anything unless I see it for myself or have firsthand knowledge of it. I would want to see some evidence. It would have to have to have some evidence in it that I found compelling in order to, you know, not just anecdotal or, I don’t know.”

Trusting the Local Paper

Participants discussed that they would trust what the article said because they do trust the local paper. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed trusting something local and said, “I would trust something local. Me, personally, I would.”
- A participant discussed trusting the local paper and said, “I trust most of what I read in the local paper.”

Would the Headline Alter Their Thoughts on Agriculture

Participants were asked if an article with this type of content and headline would alter their thoughts on agriculture. Participants discussed that the article may alter their thoughts on agriculture, although it would be heavily dependent on the content that was found in the article. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this topic:

- A participant discussed that although the article may alter his/her thoughts, it would most likely not resonate and said, “I think it might affect me for a little bit, but when I was in college I took an agricultural philosophy class and I was a vegetarian for six months afterwards. But, you know what? I eat meat everyday now, so I think maybe it would, you know, maybe it would change my opinion for a little bit, but I don’t think one article would really change my thought process.”
- Two participants discussed that although the story may alter his/her opinion, it would be hard to find alternatives to food sources. A participant said, “I don’t know. I think that everyone knows about the whole, you know, Burger King scandal, the whole tomato thing, but how many people stopped eating Burger King? Like how many people stopped actually, how many people take the action to reinforce their thoughts? I mean, I’m, I’m a hypocrite too, I think it’s terrible, but I mean it’s like I never, I’ve been to Burger King since, so I think that, I don’t know, it would probably grab my attention. It would depend what the practice was and I don’t know, I feel like it’s hard.”

Another participant added, “What the consequences are.”

The first participant said, “Well, and it’s like, do you have another option to replace that?”

- A participant discussed existing perceptions taking a part in the article and said, “And I guess it depends on what your initial thoughts about the agriculture in the area is when you read the article. It could just bolster your opinion or feed the fire. I knew that always happens.”

Likelihood to Seek Out Information

Participants were asked how likely they would be to seek out information about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida after reading this article. Overall, participants had neutral feelings toward seeking out more information. Participants discussed that factors such as the article’s content, the information provided and if resources were provided following the article would alter their likelihood. The main themes that emerged were would seek information, would not seek information, and may seek information.

Would Seek Information

Participants discussed that they would be likely to seek out information about the agricultural industry after reading the article. Participants discussed the negativity of the article, the sources in the article and their personal interests all affecting their likelihood to read the article. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed seeking out information because it was about local agriculture and said, “Considering that you don’t see a lot of stories on local agriculture in the first place, I would probably seek out more.”
- Participants discussed being interested in knowing more about the agricultural industry. A participant said, “I think I would be interested in finding out more.”

Another participant agreed and added, “I think so, too. I would be interested.”

- A participant said that he/she would seek out information if the article was about local farmers and said, “If there was like a source mentioned or something that directed you back to something local then, yeah.”

Would Not Seek Information

Participants discussed that they would not seek out more information about the agricultural industry after reading this article. Participants discussed not being interested in the article, not having enough time to research, and not caring enough about the article to seek out more information. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she would not seek out information if he/she was busy and said, “It depends on what I am doing at the moment. You know, if I’m super busy, probably not. But if I have time to kill, I’ll probably go on a wild Google search.”
- A participant said that the articles content would determine if he/she looked for more information and said, “It depends on how much information was in it. If it kind of summed everything up into a nice little piece, probably not. But, I don’t know, it depends on the article itself.”
- A participant said that if the information was online he/she would probably not seek out information and said, “I think it would be even worse online because if it was online, a lot of times you only see the title and you can’t even see the first paragraph unless you click on it. So, I might not want to go through the effort of clicking on it just to find out that I don’t want to read the article. If the title doesn’t look interesting...”

May Seek Information

Participants discussed the content of the article would affect their likeliness to seek out more information about the agricultural industry. Participants discussed that if the article contained information on certain topics or provided resources they would be more likely to read the article. Participants also discussed where they found the article, whether it be online or in print, would also affect their likeliness to seek out more information. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the contents of the article would make him/her seek out information and said, “I mean, really it depends on what’s going on in the article. Like, if they’re saying something about like, a big brand name that’s been trusted over many years like, I mean, I’m sure you ain’t gonna have to look in the paper to find out what’s going on. You’re gonna see it on the news. I mean it’ll be everywhere, people are gonna talk about it. So I guess really it depends on like, what’s going on in the article.”
- A participant discussed seeking out more information if the article was negative and said, “It would have to depend on what kind of information they are trying to tell us about. Obviously, if there is something wrong, you are more interested in finding out what’s wrong and what you have to do to protect yourself. But if it is just...I don’t know... I hate to say...if it is boring, I am not going to look into it again.”
- A participant discussed that if the article was about something he/she purchased he/she would seek out more information and said, “I mean, if it’s gonna have something to do with like, something I’m gonna...I drink like, milk or something I buy at Publix or Winn-Dixie...I mean, yeah you know, I’m gonna...I’m gonna want to know what’s going on. I’m going to look into it further.”

Image Associated with the Headline

Participants were asked to describe the type of image they would like to see accompanying the article. Participants described seeing negative images with food, pollution and animals, as well as positive images with children or on a farm. The main themes that emerged were rotten food, scientific images, pollution and growing practices, and positive images.

Rotten Food

Participants discussed picturing the headline with images with rotten food. Participants described pictures of bugs on food, food that was misshapen, and food with body parts connected to it. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed seeing misshapen food and said, “Vegetables that aren’t to size and look very poor hanging from the vine.”
- A participant discussed seeing something unappealing and said, “Bugs all over your food. Something gross. Something creepy.”
- Two participants discussed seeing body parts in their food. One participant said, “Severed finger. That is my honest opinion.”

Another participant asked, “Well, you wouldn’t want to see that, right?”

The original participant replied, “That’s what I anticipate seeing, ‘Take a Look Into My Food’ ...Oh, my God, there’s like, a finger in my burger.”

- A participant discussed expecting to see a picture where, “Your food looks rotted. A picture of your food looking rotted.”

Scientific Images

Participants discussed seeing scientific images, such as magnifying glasses, chemical structures, and genetically modified organisms associated with the headline. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed seeing genetically modified foods and said, “A picture of half a fish and half a tomato. Genetically modified organisms.”
- A participant discussed seeing chemicals and said, “I’m thinking chemical structure.”
- A participant discussed seeing food under an X-ray machine and said, “I see an X-ray, and then they could have like all the words with all the bad stuff.”
- A participant discussed seeing a picture of a magnifying glass and said, “I don’t know, see I...I guess I live in a different abstract, but I think, ‘Take a Look Into Your Food,’ and I picture if there’s going to be a picture with this it’s going to be either a magnifying glass or a microscope that’s going to be taking a deeper look into the...into the food, you know.”

Pollution and Growing Practices

Participants discussed seeing images of pollution and growing practices, such as smoke stacks, spraying pesticides, food being injected with chemicals, and mutilated animals associated with the headline. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant expected to see an animal with problems and said, “A fish with three eyes.”
- A participant discussed that the negativity of the article affecting the image and said, “I think if it was a negative article, you could see bottles of pesticides or something like that.”

- A participant discussed farmers injecting chemicals to their products and said, “Farmers injecting something into the farm, farm food. Nowadays, I would read it, actually.”
- A participant said that they would expect to see, “smoke stacks.”

Positive Images

Participants discussed seeing positive images with the headline. Participants mentioned seeing images of fruit and vegetables, children, farmer’s markets, grocery stores, and local farms with the headline. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed wanting to see something positive that was reflected in the local community and said, “I would like to see something that is very positive about the good practices and how this produce, quality produce is going to be made available in the community. But when I read this, it makes me think that there is something hidden...something negative hidden in the local practices and that they are going to be uncovering something negative.”
- A participant said he/she would expect to see, “Maybe a farm or somebody picking vegetables or planting something.”
- A participant discussed always feeling positive when he/she sees a picture with children and said, “I always think positive when I see children. I don’t know if that’s because I’m a mom of two...two...two little ones, but I always think positive. So, if it would be like a kid picking tomatoes or strawberries or, you know, having the strawberry juice face, you know, I just think positive when I think of that associated with this.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would expect to see an image with food and said, “A whole bunch of fruits and vegetables in a basket, something like that.”

Concept 2: Florida Agriculture: Getting Back to Basics

The second concept that was tested with participants was “Florida agriculture: Getting back to the basics.” Participants were given a mock newspaper headline with this across the top and were read the following prompt:

“Imagine that you are reading a news story, either in your local paper or online, that discusses agriculture in southwest Florida. The headline reads, ‘Florida agriculture: Getting back to the basics’ and you learn the story discusses opportunities for you and your family to experience agriculture in southwest Florida and also discusses steps that farmers in your area are taking to improve your local environment.

Following the prompt participants were asked their thoughts on the headline, their likeliness to read a story with this headline, the trust they would have in this headline, the image they would see with this headline, and if they would seek out more information about the agricultural industry after reading this headline.

Thoughts on the Headline

Participants were asked to discuss how they felt about the headline, “Florida agriculture: Getting back to the basics.” Participants had overall positive feelings associated with the headline and referred back to the previous concept (Concept 1, Take a look into your food), discussing liking this headline better. Participants discussed feeling nostalgic after reading the headline and expressed overall positive feelings. The main themes that emerged were positive responses, neutral or negative responses, and expectations associated with the headline.

Positive Responses

Participants discussed positive feelings associated with this headline. Participants discussed that the headline was interesting, specific, sounded positive and that they overall liked the headline. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the headline seemed more informational and positive and said, “Like what I’m getting from this is like, it’s more of like, an informative article like, it’s meant to like, they were talking about meant to inform people? Like getting back to the basics like, what I get from that is... is they’re trying to get information across to the people that don’t know as much about agriculture, in general.”
- Participants discussed that referring back to the basics was a positive thing and that it increases confidence in farmers. A participant said, “Just confident that the local growers are trying to make a difference and just go back to the simple days and not get so high tech...and just go back to watering and using natural fertilizers and pesticides, things like that. Like they used to do.”

Another participant agreed and added, “I would echo what he said back to basics, no matter what it is it usually has a positive like...okay, we’re gonna go back to what we know works.”

- A participant discussed that he/she liked this headline more than the previous one and said, “Like I think that um, I don’t know, it’s less vague, it’s less ominous sounding. It’s not...I need to scare you with this information by concealing it from you, so you have to read or click on my link to find out what it is. It’s hey, we want to celebrate the success.”

Neutral or Negative Responses

Participants discussed some neutral and negative reactions to the headline. Participants discussed not understanding why agriculture had to go back, that the headline was not attention grabbing, and that the headline sounded negative. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the headline sounded negative and said, “This actually sounds negative to me. It almost makes it sound like they are changing and just cutting back, scaling back what they do and just going down just to the basic instead of...I don’t know, I look at it completely different. I think that people, in general, although I would probably read this...I think that the other one is more attention getting even though it wasn’t the best attention getting title. I think less people would read this.”
- A participant discussed that the headline wasn’t attention grabbing and said, “I wouldn’t read it, ‘cause it just doesn’t grab my attention.”
- A participant discussed that returning to the basics was cause for concern and said, “It’s like, I feel it says and then it kind of points out Florida agriculture. So it’s saying getting back to basics meaning they went off or they maybe were taking shortcuts and stuff. So maybe they’re trying to say we need to get back to doing this the right way. Maybe they were doing something wrong and problems may have come up, so let’s just go back to when there was no problems. And why cut corners and have problems, when we can just do it the right way the first time? It’s like don’t double work yourself. Like my mom always says.”

Expectations Associated with the Headline

Participants discussed that they would have mixed expectations after reading that headline. Participants discussed not knowing what to expect in an article with that headline, that an article with that headline would talk about old Florida, and that an article like that would provide information about farmers and where to find them. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she would expect the article to be positive and said, “I would almost expect it, or expect to read it and see like, if you buy locally grown food, and they are doing this and this, you are helping your environment and you are helping your local community and stuff like that. So, positive [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant discussed the article including information about local farms and said, “I hope they talk about the farmers and the farms and you know, maybe we could get a, find out where they’re at. Maybe visit a couple, just to kind of open that door, since like we said before, we see these farms around and we don’t, you know, don’t know who to talk to. You’d like to know more about them. I’ve wondered about those orange trees forever and like I’m like, who do I talk to? There’s like nothing out here but orange trees.”

Likelihood to Read the Article

Participants discussed how likely they would be to read a news article with this headline. A majority of participants discussed that they would be very likely to read an article with this headline, although some said that they would not or that it would be conditional. The main themes that emerged were participants would read the article, may read the article, and would not read the article.

Would Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would be likely to read the article. Participants discussed that they felt the article would be informative, was attention drawing, looked like something they could get involved with, involved the local community, and was overall positive. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she would read the article because it was different than most articles about agriculture and said, “I would read it. Online you rarely see an article like this because it is usually, the only agriculture that you read about is like grow-houses or something. You don’t see these online really, you have to look really hard, I think, to find something like this.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would read the article, “Because it’s interesting and I care what I eat and what I give my kids to eat.”
- A participant discussed his/her curiosity involving the term basics and said, “Why would I read it? Well, I would want to know what they meant by basics, what that entails.”
- A participant discussed that the basics is associated with positive changes and said, “What I think of, when you think of getting back to the basics is everybody, you know, always says whether it be family, families need to get back to the basics. Everybody always talks about going back to things. It makes you think of a time when things were better. So, just getting back to the basics makes you think okay, well, we’re gonna, we’re gonna get back to when things were better. And it kind of makes you take a better look at agriculture instead of having a negative connotation; now we’re gonna try to get back to what made agriculture great in the first place.”
- A participant said that he/she would be interested in seeing what was happening in the industry and said, “This looks like news. This looks like something is going on, something is happening. And that is why I would be interested in what is going on.”

Would Read the Article If...

Participants discussed that they may read the article associated with the headline, but it would be dependent upon the content of the article. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that what basics meant would affect their decision to read the article and said, “I would because it depends on what is about, I mean, they say, ‘Getting Back to the Basics,’ they could be building more farms? Or it could be, what was wrong with my food 20 years ago, so why do they have to go back to the basics? So, I mean, it depends on what it is about, but I would read it.”
- A participant discussed that the picture associated with the headline would affect their decision and said, “If we’re doing pictures again, like it I saw a picture of a greenhouse, then that would probably entice me more to want to read it and find out what it’s about.”
- A participant discussed that other articles in the paper would determine if he/she read the article and said, “Yes, but I mean comparatively this, the other one seemed like a threat. Like the other one, if you don’t read this, you don’t know what’s going on and you have to. This sounds interesting, but compared to the other headline, I’d read the other one first. I mean, I don’t know if you’re looking for a comparison, but yeah, it’d be interesting and maybe if you say you learned that they’re going to have events like family events for agriculture and stuff, if they had the events somewhere in bold, I might be more drawn to it as well. But, just seeing that headline, it’s easier for me to flip past than the last one.”

Would Not Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would most likely not read the article with that headline. Participants also discussed that they may read the article but it would be conditional upon other factors. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the article did not concern him/her and said, “I would be less inclined to read this one than the other one.” After being asked to explain why the participant said, “Because I don’t think it’s terrifying. Like the first one was scary so it gets my attention and I want to know what I need to be looking out for, you know? Whereas this one it just seems like, oh, that’s nice. If I had some time, yeah, that might be interesting but it’s not like, it’s not motivating me to read it. It’s not like, I feel like I might be in danger if I don’t read it, you know?”
- A participant discussed that the article was not relevant to him/her and said, “It just doesn’t, it doesn’t state that there’s a problem. So, knowing that maybe farmers are getting back to the basics isn’t that important to me.”
- A participant discussed that unless it would immediately impact them, they did not put importance on the article and said, “Like there is a recall and I need to make sure I am not going to eat that horrible peanut butter and die. Versus something good, I will just, oh, I will get to it later. It is not as important to me, just being honest.”

Information Wanted: Local Farms and the Basics

While discussing the concept ‘Florida agriculture: Getting back to the basics’ many participants discussed wanting information about the local agricultural industry after reading it. Participants discussed that they were interested in what the term basics meant and that they would like information about local production practices. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed wanting the article to include information about local farms he/she could take his/her children to. A participant said, “You know, locally owned farms that I can go see, maybe take my kids too, you know, petting, you know, the animals, I don’t know. But something where it just doesn’t tell me what it is that it also tells me, ‘Hey here, explore it on your own,’ what it is.”

A second participant added, “That would be great if you could actually take your kids to a farm nearby and really explain to them, this is where the food comes from; this is all the work that goes into it.”

- A participant discussed that he/she would want to find out information on ways to get his/her children involved and said, “Anything that I can involve my children in or my family, I want to get involved in.”
- A participant discussed his/her desire to know more about local agriculture because it’s something, “I would definitely be interested in showing my family and myself.”
- A participant said that the article made him/her, “Want to get involved,” with local agriculture.

Trust in this Headline

Participants discussed if they would trust an article with this headline. Participants mainly discussed that they would not automatically trust the article and that it was dependent upon factors such as if they were able to see the operations for themselves, what sources were used in the article, and if the article was about food production. The main themes that emerged were participants trusting the headline if they could visit the operation and trust was dependent upon the article’s content.

If I Could Visit the Operation

Participants discussed that they would trust the article if it included information about ways they could witness the changes taking place, either through an electronic source or by providing a physical location. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that information about the basics would make him/her trust the article and said, “I would trust what this article said if they actually had included steps that they had taken to get back to the basics.”
- A participant said, “Knowing that they wanted to involve me would make me trust it more.”
- A participant said he/she would trust the article more if, “If I can go see if for myself.”
- A participant discussed trusting the article if at the end the article mentioned, “A website that you can go and see pictures and comments.”

Depends on the Article’s Content

Participants discussed that they may trust the article but it would be dependent upon the content of the article, including what sources were used and what news outlet published the story. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the article would make him/her want to research the industry more and said, “I think it would make me want to research more. You know, probably coming from the source, I wouldn’t trust it automatically. But, I would be more inclined to want to research it further.”

- A participant discussed that he/she would need to be affected to trust the article and said, “I don’t know, as far as trusting it... the same as before, you know, I would, unless there is something in there that said how it affected me. Like this affects me in some way, then I would look into it more, you know? But I would definitely not just take it based on one article. It would have to be something backing it up, something else.”
- A participant discussed that the source of the paper would affect the trustworthiness of the article and said, “It would also depend on the paper and the, you know, the author.”
- A participant discussed not trusting the media and needing to do more research and said, “It is still a media paper. Still media. You have to do more research. You can’t just believe everything you read these days.”

Would the Headline Alter their Thoughts on Agriculture

Participants were asked if an article with this type of content and headline would alter their thoughts on agriculture. Participants discussed that the article may alter their thoughts on agriculture, but that it would depend on the content of the article, if the change was significant, and if information was provided that could be used as a resource. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this topic:

- A participant discussed his/her interest in knowing what he/she was feeding his/her children and said, “I think it would. I mean one of the things you described was some access, which I think a number of people talked about. And, you know, being a father, wanting to know what’s going in my mouth, what’s going in my kid’s mouth and getting an opportunity to kind of go visit a farm and see what’s going on, if the doors open to that which, a lot of times, you don’t think of that door being open.”
- A participant discussed that the article would alter his/her thoughts on local agriculture and said the article, “It would make me feel better about the local agriculture, definitely.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would want to know more information about the changes being made in the industry and said, “Of course, depending on what it said, if it stated, I am going to reiterate what I said earlier, which was if they said, oh they were previously using all these pesticides and now cut back on those, I think I would be pretty interested in seeing what changes they have made.”

Likelihood to Seek out Information

Participants were asked how likely they would be to seek out information about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida after reading this article. Participants expressed that they would either be likely or unlikely to seek out information, depending on the circumstances. The main themes that emerged were participants would seek out information and would not seek out information.

Would Seek Information

Participants discussed they would seek out information about southwest Florida agriculture if information was included about how to get involved or how to get in touch with local farmers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed including a link to a website would make him/her seek out more information about southwest Florida agriculture and said, “I think one thing, too, we haven’t read the whole article, nor am I reading the whole article but, at the very end it does say for more information about, you know, and then it has a website. There’s a website I can go to and it’s pretty easy nowadays with really quick, fast internet access just go click and you can get there pretty quickly and check out more about what this topic is. So, I probably would, based on that being there.”

- A participant said he/she would seek out more information, “If I knew that there were going to be events or tours or something like that and they could say, you know, contact here for more information on where to get a tour or, you know, that kind of thing.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would seek out information, “If it had, like the other article, if either one of them had some sort of, some way to like get in touch with local farmers.”

Would Not Seek Information

Participants discussed that they would not seek out information about southwest Florida agriculture because they would not be interested in the topic or were too busy. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the article would have to be concerning for him/her to seek out information and said, “It would have to be something like, that I would have to be worried about...”
- A participant discussed being busy and said, “I have got other thing going on and I am really not going to take the time to look into it, most likely.”
- A participant discussed that when it comes to seeking out information, “It depends. Like they said, if it has anything to hurt you. Or if it is something that you can do yourself or the people around you.”
- A participant said he/she would not seek out more information because, “It isn’t something that would spark my interest.”

Image Associated with the Headline

Participants were asked to describe the type of image they would like to see accompanying the article. Participants described seeing images of farms and farmers, children, images of the basics, and families. Participants wanted to see pictures of farmers on their operations, working in the fields, and wanting to know that it was local. The main themes that emerged were farmers and farmers, children and families, and the basics.

Farms and Farmers

Participants discussed seeing pictures of a farm and a farmer with the headline. Participants discussed seeing a picture of a local farmer on their farm and that it might feature specific commodities such as cows and tractors, orange groves, or vegetables. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed wanting to see a local farmer and said, “Down here a farmer would literally look like, an old dude under a hat, sitting on top of a horse out in the middle of palmettos.”
- Participants discussed seeing a local farmer and a participant said, “I could see like a picture of our local farmer right there, you know, from Naples or Immokalee or someplace right there alongside the headline.”

Another participant added, “I even see a cheesy picture of him testing the fruit before it’s harvested, you know, or walking up and down the groves or something like that.”

- A participant discussed seeing a farmer leaning against a barn and said, “I picture like, a farmer with a shovel over his shoulder or something just kind of leaning up against... Just relaxed, just like, that kind of carefree picture.”

- A participant discussed seeing a local farm and said, “All I am coming up with is like stock photos of cows and tractors, but maybe a legitimate picture of an orange grove that is being worked on at that moment.”

Children and Families

Participants discussed seeing pictures of children and families with the headline. Participants described pictures of children in a garden, of families interacting, of a farmer with a child, or of children at a U-Pick operation. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed seeing, “You know, like maybe a little kid learning how to garden or, I don’t know, families interacting.”
- A participant discussed seeing a family on a farm and said, “I see a dad with his daughter on his shoulder and mom next to them. Walking through, picking grapes. Getting a tour.”
- A participant discussed seeing a farmer with children and said, “I would like to see a farmer with soil in his hands, showing a kid, like what is in it, kind of thing.”

The Basics

Participants discussed wanting to see pictures of the basics or of simple farm supplies. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed seeing what was really important with food and said, “Immediately when I see like...getting back to the basics, I feel like it’s getting back to what’s really important with food, like what’s really important. Are we like enriching the soil to get the most nutrients in our food? Or are we picking at the right time so it’s super sweet or, you know? That type of stuff, like what’s important.”
- A participant discussed seeing very basic farm equipment and said the envisioned, “Maybe a horse with a plow behind it.”
- A participant discussed that he/she saw, “Maybe a picture with crops, like vegetables or whatever.”

Concept 3: Local Families, Local Food, Local Future

The third concept that was tested with participants was “Local families, local food, local future.” Participants were given a mock newspaper headline with this across the top and were read the following prompt:

“Imagine that you are reading a news story, either in your local paper or online, that discusses agriculture in southwest Florida. The headline reads, ‘Local families, local food, local future’ and you learn this story discusses how southwest Florida agriculture supports and contributes to the success of your local economy and community.”

Following the prompt participants were asked their thoughts on the headline, their likeliness to read a story with this headline, the trust they would have in this headline, the image they would see with this headline, and if they would seek out more information about the agricultural industry after reading this headline.

Thoughts on the Headline

Participants were asked to discuss their responses to the headline, “Local families, local food, local future.” Participants primarily discussed positive responses to the headline, although some participants discussed negative responses. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were positive responses and negative responses.

Positive Responses

Participants discussed positive reactions to the headline. Participants discussed that the headline was relevant to them, they were interested in the local community and that they were interested in the local economy. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the headline made him/her feel proud and said, “It just makes you feel proud that you were able to grow something, so if it’s something that’s local, you know, just like we take pride in our beaches, you know, we take pride in our agriculture, too.”
- A participant discussed sustainability being associated with the headline and said, “It kind of also makes me think that we might be more sustainable, like self-sustainable and that’s something that’s really important to me.”
- A participant discussed that the article would be positive and said, “Um, to me it seems like, if they are saying, ‘Local Families, Local Food, Local Future’, what is made here and being sold here is going to keep the community growing. So, I would think it would be a positive spin. That is how I would take it, that it was going to be here in our community helping to grow it, that’s what I think.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would be surprised by the information in the article and said, “I would be surprised. I didn’t really think that farming was that important for our local economy. So, if that was what the article talked about, I would be kind of surprised to hear it, that it was that important for Fort Myers, itself.”
- A participant discussed being involved in a story about the local area and said, “Like you know, when it has the word local and future in it, it has something to do with you. It has something to do with something that is going to affect you.”

Negative Responses

Participants discussed negative reactions to the headline. Participants discussed that the headline was misleading, boring, and was not attention grabbing. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the headline didn’t grab his/her attention and said, “I mean, this doesn’t really grab my attention, to be honest.”
- A participant discussed that the headline was misleading and said, “I thought it was kind of misleading because I don’t see any local food in any of my stores.”
- A participant discussed that the headline was boring although he/she liked a part of it and said, “I like, the local families part, but generally it looks like a boring headline.”

Likelihood to Read the Headline

Participants discussed how likely they would be to read a news article with this headline. A majority of participants discussed that they would read the article because the article seemed important to the area and that it would have a direct impact on them. Some participants discussed not reading the article because they did not feel that the article was important or appealing. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were would read the article and would not read the article.

Would Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would read the article associated with this headline. Participants discussed that the headline seemed personal, would have an impact upon them and the local area, that it was attention grabbing, and that it would incorporate ways to get involved with agriculture in the local community. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that this headline seemed more personalized and said, “This one, this one’s a little, like they said, it’s a little more individualized and like it’s talking to you more, instead of at you so, a little more eye drawing.”
- Participants discussed that all three elements of the headline were important and that the article was valuable to read. A participant said, “I mean, not reading it kind of has the idea of saying that you don’t care about like local families and local food. I mean, not that it does, but just seems like it kind of does involve our community more than something that’s a separate, like if it was just the agricultural business.

A second participant added, “And I think the local future’s important, too. I think that last one, if it was just, ‘Local Families, Local Food,’ maybe I’d be like um, you know, I’ll read it. But when it says, ‘Local Future,’ it’s like, okay, this is important to know how families locally and the food that they’re producing is going to lead to all of our futures, even if I’m not in the families that produce the food.”

A third participant agreed and said, “Right, they may be talking about our local economy, they could be talking about, you know, the local infrastructure, the local construction industry, it might not be, whatever it might be.”

- A participant discussed reading the article because local future is important and said, “I think the ‘local future’ piece is important because it, you know, I think this area particularly like, like, you said talking about improving the economy and improving things for the future. I mean, that’s something we definitely need.”
- A participant discussed reading the article to see how it would impact him/her and said, “I would read it, but I guess mainly just to see how it would impact the economy, locally and what exactly that would entail and how it would affect me.”
- A participant discussed that the article had to do with the local area and said he/she would read it, “Because it has to do with our area. And it would have to do with my family and what type of food we are gonna be eating.”

Would Not Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would not read the article associated with this headline because they felt that the article was not important to them personally, that the article was not appealing, and that the article was not a high impact story. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant mentioned that he/she would not read the article because, “It’s just so vague and you really have no direction on where this is going to go or what importance this would be.”
- A participant discussed that the article did not seem to be urgent and said, “It doesn’t seem to be a high impact story. It still seems like soft news. It is not saying, ‘Food Quality Problems in Southwest Florida,’ or ‘Tainted Meat in Southwest Florida,’ or anything that really would make me want to know about it. It’s...I

would read it if I had some spare time, but if I was just looking for some important news to read like really quickly before I went off and started my day, I probably wouldn't do it."

- A participant discussed that the headline was boring and said, "I like, the local families part, but generally it looks like a boring headline."
- A participant discussed that he/she would not read the article because he/she does not pay attention to local issues and said, "I am just saying, I am just thinking, I don't know, I hate to say this but I am guilty of not paying attention to local issues. Unless it is taxes, schools, or weather; I really don't pay attention to local stuff. I am more looking at big picture things."

Trust in this Headline

Participants discussed if they would trust an article with this headline. Participants discussed that they would trust the article because it was a story about their local community, which made it easier to verify, and that they trusted their local paper on local issues. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this topic:

- A participant discussed that he/she would trust it because the article is about the local area and said, "I guess I'd say yeah, because it's local, so it's about my community. It's something that's going to take place in the future and it's about our food, so yeah, I would trust it."
- A participant discussed that he/she is able to witness things happening in the local area and said, "I think that is because we are able to see the things that happen and we can say, 'Okay. Yes, we saw that and it is true.' Where with the national stuff, we are not able to [sentence trails off]..."
- A participant discussed that he/she would trust a local paper reporting a local issue and said, "Well, definitely if it is our local paper, obviously they know what locally is happening. And I don't know, I like the Charlotte Sun and I feel like they don't really write a lot of stuff that is not true, from what I have seen, so..."
- A participant discussed that an article about the local area was easier to verify and said, "Like if it's happening locally, like you'll even get a chance to like check out and stuff like that and find out for yourself is it trustworthy?"

Would the Headline Alter their Thoughts on Agriculture

Participants were asked if an article with this type of content and headline would alter their thoughts on agriculture. Participants discussed that although the information provided did not give them enough information to provide a definitive answer, they thought that a story like this had the potential to alter their thoughts. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were would alter thoughts and would not alter thoughts.

Would Alter Thoughts

Participants discussed that the article may alter their thoughts on the agriculture industry if it would alter their behavior, encouraged them to participate in the industry, discussed local agriculture, and that the article may increase their general awareness of the agricultural industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the local agriculture portion would alter his/her thoughts on agriculture and said, "If I saw how agriculture was helping local foods and local, I mean local families give this economy down here in this area a better future, then definitely."

- A participant discussed that the article would make him/her want to become involved and said, “Yeah, if you see like local future, I think that it’s for the positive and making it more incorporative. Then I would want to see what they’re talking about specifically, so that I could be a part of that.”
- A participant discussed the article would alter his/her thoughts do to his/her interest in local agriculture and said, “This would definitely alter my thoughts. I mean, coming down to Naples, I didn’t know what to expect, ‘cause in Tampa I always had a farmer’s market to go to. Like there would be months at a time I wouldn’t need to go to Publix because there’s always a farmer’s market down the street. So coming to Naples, I was like, oh, I don’t know if they have farmer’s markets here. Which I still kind of haven’t really found any apart from the organic market, but so if anyone knows where one is but if, if I did read this and I found that things were going on locally, that would be really awesome.”
- A participant discussed that the article would need to live up to the title and said, “As long as the article, you know, speaks about how it affects me and my local community and the families locally and in some way about, you know, the areas future, or the local families future, again it just needs to live up to the headline and, and, you know, fulfill what the interest was.”

Would Not Alter Thoughts

Participants discussed that the article would not alter their thoughts on agriculture because they already knew that the industry was important, and that they do not pay attention to local issues. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that his/her thoughts would not be altered since they already know about the local economy and said, “I don’t really think it would alter my thoughts because I mean, I think I already kind of knew that local things are important for the local economy. So, I mean, I don’t really think there are any ideas or thoughts to be changed there.”
- A participant discussed that the article would alter his/her thoughts if the article made him/her change his/her behavior and said, “Would the piece ask you to change any of your habits or what you buy?”

Likelihood to Seek out Information

Participants were asked how likely they would be to seek out information about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida after reading this article. Overall, participants had positive responses about seeking out information, although it would be dependent upon external factors. The themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were would seek our information and would not seek out information.

Would Seek Information

Participants discussed that they would seek out information about the agricultural industry after reading the article. Participants discussed that if the article provided information about local agricultural operations, if there was a website to visit, or if information was provided about local farmer’s markets they would be more likely to seek out information. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that a list of farmer’s markets would encourage him/her to attend and said, “If they actually had a list of the farmer’s markets, it would be convenient and I’d go there.”
- A participant discussed that providing information about where to access local products would make him/her more likely to seek it out and said, “I don’t know, maybe if there was like a link like after you went there, you read this and it said you know, a you know, that, I don’t know, they’ve supplied X, Y, Z restaurants with fresh vegetables, and they’ve supplied this one with this or whatever and here’s a link to,

you know, where more local restaurants buy locally, you know? Then yeah, maybe you click on it and you know, you know, maybe it persuades you to go here instead of over here because it does kind of, you know, they buy local, they support local, you know, maybe it pushes a little more that way. Keep things a little closer to home here.”

- A participant discussed that the article may increase awareness in local products and said, “Maybe it might make you more aware to look for other local things, the availability of stuff that is out there.”
- A participant discussed wanting to find follow-up information with the article and said, “I don’t know, I think that there would be a perfect introduction to a local resource, you know, like for example, if a resource were to be a website. And a website were to debut, then this would be like a really great introductory article to be like this is what this website’s about, this is information it offers you, and why it’s important to you.”

Would Not Seek Information

Participants discussed that they would not seek out information about the agricultural industry because the article seemed too vague or that participants did not have time to do research. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the article wouldn’t provide quality information and said, “It doesn’t look like it’s gonna give a whole lot of information, quality information.”
- A participant discussed that the article was vague and said, “It seems really vague like, something, oh, if you buy local food it will stimulate the economy. It’s kind of vague.”
- A participant discussed that the article being positive would affect his/her decision to seek out information and said, “If it was positive, probably not, because then obviously they are doing something right.”

Image Associated with the Headline

Participants were asked to describe the type of image they would like to see accompanying the article. Participants described seeing imaged with local farmers, children, and a map with local farms. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were local farmers, children, and other images.

Local Farmers

Participants discussed seeing images of local farmers accompanying the headline. Participants discussed seeing images of farmers in their field, a local farmer, and small farming operations. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed wanting to see, “Maybe a few people standing around outside an obviously small farm field.”
- Participants discussed wanting to see a familiar area and a participant said, “I want to see like a familiar area, if it’s local and people outside in their back yards maybe with a few neighbors like composting, or, you know, putting up a fence.”

Another participant added, “Something that we would recognize.”

- A participant discussed that he/she would like to see, “Just like a family in front of a farm. That’s what I would want to see.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would like to see images depicting the success of a local farmer and said, “As ironic as it sounds, expansion is what I would like to see when I think about that. And success in our local community. I would love to see expansion.”

Children

Participants discussed seeing pictures of children accompanying the headline. Participants described images of children in a cafeteria, children at a U-Pick operation, and children planting vegetables. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that he/she would expect to see cafeteria or school lunch programs and said, “I don’t know, for some reason, I think of like cafeterias and like elementary schools or something like that, I don’t know, and I think of, I think of little kids when I think of the future. I know that’s so typical, but I just feel like something like this would probably, I don’t know if it’s really integrated into the community, somehow relate healthy eating, local, all that stuff.”
- Participants discussed seeing children at a U-pick operation and a participant said, “I picture something like the U-Pick with kids picking from there.”

Another participant added, “Kids picking watermelons and strawberries.”

- A participant discussed that he/she would expect to see children and said, “Kids planting vegetables.”

Other Images

Participants discussed other images or elements of images that they would expect to see accompanying the headline. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the most important aspect of the image was, “Something that’s recognizable in southwest Florida.”
- A participant discussed wanting to see a farmer that he/she knows and said, “Like a farmer that I know or the blueberry place or something that is known out here.”
- A participant discussed wanting to see a local sign in the picture and said, “I would want to see a picture, if it was local agriculture, I would want to see someone standing by like, a highway sign that says like, ‘Port Charlotte’ or, ‘Welcome to Port Charlotte’ or, ‘Welcome to Desoto County’ or something in southwest Florida and then like, with a bushel of tomatoes and a bushel of like, oranges and smiling next to the sign. That’s what I would want to see and then I would say, ‘Okay, that seems kind of quirky, I like that.’”
- A participant discussed wanting to see a map featuring local farms and said, “I would like to see a map of, like the closest farm to Fort Myers, or something.”

Concept 4: Get to Know Your Farmer

The fourth and final concept that was tested with participants was “Get to know your farmer.” Participants were given a mock newspaper headline with this across the top and were read the following prompt:

“Imagine that you are reading a news story, either in your local paper or online, that discusses agriculture in southwest Florida. The headline reads, ‘Get to know your farmer’ and you learn this story discusses southwest

Florida farmer's interest in hearing what people like you have to say about agriculture and developing practices to meet the needs of your local community."

Following the prompt participants were asked their thoughts on the headline, their likeliness to read a story with this headline, the trust they would have in this headline, the image they would see with this headline, and if they would seek out more information about the agricultural industry after reading this headline.

Thoughts on the Headline

A majority of participants had positive reactions to the headline, "Get to know your farmer." Participants discussed that this type of headline was an invitation for members of the community to become involved with local farmers and that they would be interested in that opportunity. Some participants did express neutral or negative reactions to the headline and proposed changes to the headline to make it better reflect the content of the article. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were participants wanting to know a farmer, neutral or negative responses, and suggestions to change the headline.

I Want to Know My Farmer

Participants discussed wanting to know their farmer and become more involved with local agriculture.

Participants discussed the headline being a great way to invite the community to become more involved and a way to provide information to the community about local opportunities for involvement. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed liking the headline and said, "I think that's good. I think it's like an invitation for you to get more involved and know where your stuff is coming from and it wants to pull you in to know where you can go to get that information."
- A participant discussed that the headline made them excited to learn more and said, "I was like kind of excited like, oh, cool, there is a local farmer that is doing something like, you know, that you could go be a part of or you can go help support. Or, you know."
- Participants discussed that the headline made it seem like farmers wanted to work with the community and become more involved. A participant said, "I think it makes you feel like you're a part of it or if they want your opinions, then you feel like you're important to the growth of agriculture. And you're more involved in it and that maybe, you know, people, like, the local community can make an impact."

Another participant added, "I think to build on that it, almost implies they're putting up a two-way street, you know, where the farmers get to know about us and what we like and what we don't like and then we also get to kind of give them feedback as opposed to just they grow it and ship it and we go buy it and there's nothing in between."

The first participant replied, "And then like earlier, we were talking about a connection to the farmer or like to know where it's growing, or is your farmer trustworthy, or, I think that all ties into here."

- A participant discussed wanting to know more information about the farmer after reading the headline and said, "I'd be really happy if they put the person's name down and where their farm was at and I'd probably go there and get to know my farmer a little more personally than an article."

Neutral or Negative Responses

Participants discussed neutral or negative feelings related to the headline. The headline being boring or not specific was mentioned, as well as participant confusion about whether or not they have a farmer. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed the headline as being, “boring” or “not attention grabbing.”
- A participant discussed that he/she did not have a personal farmer and would find the headline strange and said, “You don’t have your own personal farmer for your own household, so it is just kind of... kind of a strange headline.”
- A participant discussed that it was a neutral topic and just a story about a farmer and said, “It’s like a neutral topic, you know, like nothing special in the story, just a little story about a farmer.”
- A participant discussed that the headline did not have enough information and said, “It just doesn’t have enough information, like, people will be like, ‘What farmer?’”

Change the Headline

Participants discussed changing the headline to make it better reflect the content of the article. Participants mentioned not knowing if they had a local farmer and wanting the headline to be more local and engaging. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that the headline did not match the description and said, “More like a farmer wants to get to know you.”
- Participants discussed the headline needing to become more relevant. After being asked how they would change the headline, a participant said, “Get to know the person that puts food on your table. I don’t know, something that makes it more personal, like [sentence trails off]...”

Another participant replied, “Well, if you threw the word ‘local’ in there, that would make it more personal because you’d know it was coming from around where you were living.”

- A participant discussed the headline missing a word and said, “I think it’s missing the word ‘local’ before ‘farmer.’”
- Participants had discussion surrounding the headline and its reflection of the article’s content. After being read the description of the article, a participant responded, “Well, that sounds more interesting than ‘Get to Know Your Farmer.’”

A second participant said, “That title doesn’t fit the description.”

A third participant added, “I just think I would be more likely to read an article with a title that sounds more like your description than this title because this just, like again, sounds less like soft news and more like someone actually has something important to say.”

A fourth participant said, “‘Local Farmers Looking for Options,’ or something, I don’t know.”

Likelihood to Read the Article

Participants discussed how likely they would be to read a news article with this headline. A majority of participants discussed that they would read the article because they are interested in local farms and the opportunity to get to

know local farmers. Some participants discussed not reading the article because it did not interest them or that it was an advertisement. Participants also discussed reading the article being conditional upon other circumstances. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were participants would read the article, may read the article, and would not read the article.

Would Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would read the article associated with this headline. Participants discussed being interested in getting to know their local farms and farmers, as well as having general interest in agriculture-related topics. The following quotes are example of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said he/she would read the article because, “It would interest me.” The participant continued, “I was just thinking about the U-Pick farms.”
- A participant discussed he/she would be curious about the article and said, “I like to buy my stuff from the store in the farmer’s market. I mean, the title is like a 4-1-1 on the farmer, but I would still read it out of curiosity.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would read it and said, “Why? Because I’m gonna get to know my farmer.”
- A participant discussed reading the article because of the content and said, “I said I would read it, but the title would kind of not be the reason, if I just kind of skimmed it and got some information like you were saying about what was in the article, I would probably read the whole thing.”

Would Read the Article If..

Participants discussed that they would read the article associated with this headline, but it was situational. Participants discussed that other headlines in the paper and the amount of time available would affect if they would read the article. The following quotes are example of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed that reading the article would depend on what else was in the newspaper that day and said, “It’d depend on what other headlines were around it for me. It doesn’t grab me enough.”
- A participant discussed that he/she may read the article because of the language of the headline and said, “I’m interested in language and it says, ‘Get to Know your Farmer,’ and I’m wondering why they assume that I have a famer and what they mean when they say ‘my farmer,’ What are you really talking about, you know?”
- A participant discussed not knowing if the article would apply to him/her and said, “I don’t know, I might not read it, because I am so used to going to the grocery store and buying my produce and meats and stuff.”

Would Not Read the Article

Participants discussed that they would not read an article associated with this headline. Participants discussed that they were not interested in knowing more about local farms and farmers, and that they felt that the article sounded more like an advertisement than an information source. The following quotes are example of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant said that the headline, “Just wouldn’t grab my interest.”

- A participant discussed that the article sounded like an advertisement and said, “This does sound almost like an advertisement. You know, it’s like when you have the diet pill advertisements. ‘Get to Know Your Farmer,’ do I really want to read that? I fast forward through commercials, you know? I may not read it because it does sound almost like an advertisement for somebody who’s a local farmer that wants you to come out and buy their product.”
- A participant discussed that he/she wouldn’t read the article because he/she didn’t know what to expect from the article and said, “I don’t think I would read it, either. It’s, I’m always looking for things to do or with my family or with my kids and this one, I don’t know, probably I will figure something out, but nothing that to bring my family with. I’m looking for the experience and I don’t know if I will get an experience out of this.”
- A participant discussed already knowing a farmer and not being interested in knowing more and said, “I don’t know, I really wouldn’t, we already kind of got everything situated with our farmer already, so to get to know another one locally wouldn’t be interesting, you know what I’m saying?”

Trust in this Headline

Participants discussed if they would trust an article with this headline. Almost all of the participants discussed that they would trust the article. Participants discussed trusting the article because it was about specific local farmers and that a story focusing on one individual had less room for bias. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this topic:

- A participant discussed that a story about local farmers would be trustworthy and said, “I think that if they are just talking about a local farmer in your town and what he does and what he sells, then I would think it is trustworthy. If it is just something on that lines.”
- A participant discussed that they would trust this article more than the others because a story like this one, “It leaves less room for personal persuasion.”
- A participant discussed that a the article would be trustworthy and said, “Yeah, I wouldn’t think anything negative like, I would trust what it says about the farmer because everybody needs their fifteen minutes of fame, you know, no matter what, who they are, what it is. And if the paper went to this length to actually publish, you know, invest their money and time to, you know, put it on paper and have everybody read it, I’m sure they wouldn’t want to be discredited and have the like, newspaper’s name smeared knowing that you know it’s not Joe Schmoie, it’s reputable Old McDonald, you know?”

Would the Headline Alter their Thoughts on Agriculture

Participants were asked if an article with this type of content and headline would alter their thoughts on agriculture. Participants discussed that the article could alter their thoughts on the agricultural industry but it would be dependent upon what type of information was provided in the article. Participants discussed that the article could make them more aware of the industry in southwest Florida and that they would be interested in becoming engaged with the community if that information was provided. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this topic:

- Participants discussed that the article may make them more aware of agriculture in the local area. A participant said, “It might bring it to my attention that there is agriculture depending on what kind of impact it has around us. My knowledge of it right now is limited so, it could change my view.”

Another participant agreed and added, “[They] kind of took the words out of my mouth there. I just, it feels like there is no agriculture here. So, like [they] said, it might bring it to my attention that it exists and that there is plenty of it.”

- A participant discussed the article getting them to go to the farmer’s market and said, “Like if we got to know the farmer or something, then maybe I’d go to that farmer’s market and I would go there all the time or something like that.”
- A participant discussed the article having a positive impact on their view of farmers and said, “I would feel like the farmers are trying to make themselves more available to the public, which is good.”
- A participant discussed that the article may alter their thoughts on agriculture but more information on how to become involved would need to be included in the article. The participant said, “You really need to include information in an article like this of how the person can reach out to their farmer. You can’t just like introduce a couple farmers and then leave it closed, so it’s like that’s the only information you can get is from the article. You’d need to really open it up and allow people to take the next step if they want to, to reach out to the farmer or to the, you know, distributor, whatever it may be.”
- A participant discussed that information would be necessary in the article and said, “And like I said what information they give you to go check it out yourself. Then if it was left open with no information, you know, ‘I spoke to a local farmer in the area,’ you know, and I mean, like not, not telling you where the person’s at, what they grow, if they have livestock, if it’s something that’s used locally or shipped out. It’d just have to be the content of the story.”

Likelihood to Seek out Information

Participants were asked how likely they would be to seek out information about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida after reading this article. Overall, participants had positive to neutral feelings toward seeking out more information. Participants discussed that factors such as the article’s content, the information provided in the article, personal preferences, and the resources that were provided following the article would alter their likelihood to seek out more information. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this topic:

- A participant discussed that he/she would be most likely to seek out information after reading this article and said, “Out of all the stories, this one maybe, I might think about it later down the road and just wonder if any of those changes actually took place. Like maybe if there was a call for certain crops or maybe, more organic food or something like that. Whether, see if that actually showed up at farmer’s markets, if there were more of those crops being produced. So, yeah, I might look for that in the future.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would pay attention to future articles on the topic and said, “If there is, like you were saying, if there is a tag line at the end that said, ‘Check out this column next week for another profile of another local farmer.’ Like if there was something to follow up, because I feel like this could just sort of fall off. It’s like, oh, that was interesting, but where do I go with that information from here?”
- A participant discussed the need to support local farmers and said, “Well, if it is about a specific farmer or set of farmers you’d feel more, well I would, you’d have that more personal connection you’d wanna, you know, help them by supporting them, and you know, talking them up and spreading the word.”

- A participant discussed the importance of contact information with the article and said, “The contact information would be the most important part of the story, whatever the story may be about.”

Picture Associated with the Headline

Participants were asked to describe the type of image they would like to see accompanying the article. Participants described seeing local farmers, children, and lots of different farmers. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were images of a farmer and a local farm or farmer’s market.

A Farmer

Participants discussed that they would see a picture of a farmer accompanying the story. Participants discussed seeing a local farmer, a farmer with children, and seeing a variety of farmers. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed seeing a group of farmers and said, “I think I’m really set on this like almost being a little bio kind of like, here’s a picture of this group of people, this is what they do, this is where they are, now you know them.”
- A participant discussed seeing a variety of farmers and said, “When you have the pictures you can have picture of everyday men, women, different races, different sizes.”
- A participant discussed seeing a local farmer and said, “I would like to see a local farmer, not like a potato farmer from up north. I’d be like, “That’s great, I eat potatoes and all, but like how’s that impacting me here, in my town?’ You know, and I can’t really get to know my farmer who’s on, you know, hundreds of miles away.”
- Participant discussed seeing a farmer interacting with a customer and a participant said, “I would think like, you know like, a consumer and like, a farmer like, shaking hands or like, something like, to that effect [sentence trails off]...”

Another participant added, “Yeah, like a traditional farmer, like what everyone pictures a farmer should look like, and somebody coming to buy something and shaking hands.”

A Local Farm and Farmer’s Markets

Participants discussed that they would expect to see a picture of a local farm accompanying the story. Participants discussed farmer’s showing consumers their products as well as farmer’s markets that would be associated with the story. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed seeing a picture of a local farmer at the farmer’s market and said, “A picture that showed like a local farmer’s market with a guy on the front of it [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant discussed seeing a farmer with consumers on a farm and said, “Like a farmer explaining to a group of people or like showing a group of people an orange on a tree. Or explaining, you can tell he is like, I don’t know, something like that.”
- A participant discussed seeing a farmer next to their booth at a farmer’s market and said, “Maybe just a person standing next to a stall at the farmer’s market, like just showing off whatever they grow, just a pile of it on the stall and just saying, ‘This is mine,’ just so that you could see that they’re a farmer, because that would show that they grow it.”

Interest in Knowing Local Farmers

Participants discussed their interest in getting to know local farmers throughout discussion surrounding this concept. Participants discussed wanting to know local farmers and have the ability to visit their operations. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this topic:

- A participant discussed wanting to know more about local farmers and said, “It’s just what we’ve been leading up to the whole time is wanting to know more facts about local growers. Knowing which farm they have and maybe getting tips from them too, you know, if you’re trying to do your own thing.”
- A participant discussed wanting to know about farmers, and not just one specific farmer and said, “Perhaps it’s not about a specific farmer though, it’s just to persuade you to get to know your farmer. Like not a specific farmer, but just, you know, ‘Hey people, these are the farmers that are willing to talk to you. Reach out to them ask them a question.’ You know?”
- A participant discussed his/her interest in getting to know local farmers and visit their operation and said, “Yeah, I probably be interested in more like to find out who he is, where it’s at and to go visit. And hopefully it’s not just like visiting the storefront, or, you know, I want to go see the farm not just, you know, the market.”
- A participant discussed his/her interest in an opportunity to meet local farmers and said, “Well, just by the title of that, I picture like a ‘meet and greet’ with a taste testing. Like an event for families to go and like, actually shake hands with the farmer and taste samplings of fruits and vegetables. That is what I picture.”
- A participant discussed wanting to know a farmer that would invite him/her to their operation and said he/she would want, “Someone that would want you to come out to their farm. Want you to ask questions, get to know him, what he does, you know, why he enjoys doing it.”

A participant discussed that the headline ‘Get to Know Your Farmer’ would make him/her want to visit operations with his/her children and said, “You said that’s a part of the article that there’s actually, actually activities that you can go down there and see or some kind of a tour you can take. I don’t know specifically, but none of these headlines really mention that and really clue us in to that. You know, that content within the article that it’s, there’s an activity there that, you know, like we’d talked about. Several of us would bring our kids to go see how one of these farms works and none of the headlines have really, you know, pulled me in, in that way to say this is an actual physical activity you guys can go do.”

Picturing a Farmer

Throughout the discussions of the concepts, participants kept mentioning seeing pictures of a farmer. Participants were then asked to describe what a farmer looks like. Participants described the clothes that a farmer would wear, his physical attributes, and background items that would be in a picture with a farmer. The main themes that emerged surrounding this discussion were farmer’s clothing, farmer’s physical attributes, and farming accessories.

Farmer’s Clothing

Participants described the type of clothing they would expect a farmer to wear. Straw hats, boots, overalls, plaid shirts, blue jeans, and baseball caps were all discussed by participants. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- When describing a farmer’s clothing, participants used phrases such as: “boots,” “stained clothes,” “overalls,” “plaid shirt,” “jeans,” and “a straw hat.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would expect to see a farmer wearing, “bib overalls and a straw hat.”
- A participant said that a farmer, “He’s got a big hat.”

Farmer’s Physical Attributes

Participants described the physical attributes they would expect a farmer to have. A farmer’s tan, rough hands, being covered in dirt and being sweaty were all discussed by participants. Participants also discussed that a farmer would look similar to them. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- When describing a farmer’s physical attributes, participants used phrases such as: “scruffy,” “got some muscles on them,” “sweaty,” “someone dirty,” “very, very tan,” and had, “rough hands.”
- Participants discussed that a farmer would look similar to him/her and be relatable. A participant said, “I’d like to know that he looks just like us, you know, like any other typical family out there. So I can better relate to him as if he’s my next-door neighbor, you know, and I didn’t, I didn’t know he was busting his tail for this food that I am eating. It’d be nice to know that.”

Another participant agreed and said, “Yeah, I think that’s real important. The fact that, you know, when I think farmer I think of somebody from here, somebody around where I live, a neighbor.”

- A participant discussed that he/she thinks a farmer looks like, “An everyday person, to me.”
- A participant said that he/she could not imagine seeing a clean farmer and said that almost all farmers are, “Covered with dirt.”

Farming Accessories

Participants described items or backgrounds that they would expect to see accompanying a farmer. Farming equipment, tools, locations and accessories were all described by participants. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- When describing accessories that are associated with a farmer, participants used phrases such as: “pitchfork,” “scarecrow,” “driving an F-350,” and as having, “lots of kids.”
- A participant discussed that the location of the farmer is the most important factor and said, “Maybe if you just had him standing in a field. I feel like it has more to do with the environment he is in, or setting, than what he is wearing. As long as he is not as pale as me.”
- A participant described seeing a farmer in a field and said, “Maybe if you just had him standing in a field. I feel like it has more to do with the environment he is in, or setting, than what he is wearing. As long as he is not as pale as me.”
- A participant discussed that he/she would expect to see a farmer, “Sitting on a tractor.”

Overarching Themes

Throughout the course of the focus groups several themes repeatedly surfaces at varying points in the discussion. The overarching themes included working with youth, communication with the public, environmental concerns, making it local, lack of knowledge, and agritourism.

Working with Youth

Throughout the focus groups, several participants referenced increasing the number of programs available for youth that would increase their involvement with the agricultural industry, the lack of information taught to youth about agriculture in schools, the importance of school gardens, and working with youth in the community. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants had a discussion surrounding providing videos for use in classrooms. A participant said, “I think that maybe some really good educational videos for all the schools for kids to learn about where they can see, watch a full lengths video that explains the whole process so that all the different schools, the kids could learn about it.”

Another participant agreed and said, “I think putting together the videos for the schools is the best idea, you know, for all the schools, elementary, middle, and high school. You know, just a really good, interesting, something that would, the kids would find interesting. It would have to be very visual, you know, like a very interesting...not just someone speaking about stuff, but where they would actually see, you know, thing that would grab their attention. But, I think that education is really important.”

- A participant discussed that he/she thought working with school cafeterias was an effective way to incorporate agriculture in the school system and said, “I don’t know, for some reason, I think of like cafeterias and like elementary schools or something like that, I don’t know, and I think of, I think of little kids when I think of the future. I know that’s so typical, but I just feel like something like this would probably, I don’t know if it’s really integrated into the community, somehow relate, healthy eating, local, all the stuff.”
- A participant said that school gardens were helpful since youth are typically not taught how to grow things and said, “Yeah, school gardens is huge. They teach you how to germinate lima beans [in schools], but they never teach you how to grow it.”
- A participant discussed that distributing information through public schools would be helpful and said, “I think a really great way to distribute information like this would be through the schools. Like through all the public schools, especially, you know, I don’t know what it’s like to be around little kids, but I have a feeling like, you know, if a seven year old comes home he’s like super, super excited about something, it’ll get the parents involved. And I feel like that’s what, you know, I’ve kind of heard some of what some of you describe and I feel, you know, the public schools, you reach so many families, from so many different backgrounds, and everything else.”
- A participant discussed increased involvement in schools through field trips and said, “Like farmers visiting the schools, like she was saying, you know. That’s a good way to introduce little ones. Or have them get field trips to their farms and then like the U-Pick farms, you could have a whole class on it.”
- A participant discussed becoming involved with schools through financial support and said, “Maybe provide some funding for some educational projects at schools.”
- A participant discussed that it is hard to find agriculture in schools and said, “It is not advertised in schools. It is not, there is programs, I mean, yeah, there is a county fair every year, but that would be the only place that you would go to find it. Nobody knows where to look.”

Communication with the Public

Throughout the focus groups, several participants referenced increasing the amount of communication between the agricultural industry and the public. Participants discussed the need for increased communication between the agricultural industry and the public, as well as the need for transparency by the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed wanting to be able to access information about who grows their food and said, “If they possibly had a website where you could find information on what brand you are buying and where it is coming from, who you are buying it from, the different farmers who produce it and the methods.”
- One participant discussed growing interest in the agricultural industry and food production process and said, “I think a lot of people are starting to get more interested in where their food comes from and wanting to eat healthier, so I think it’s important for them to, the agriculture business to make themselves available to people, because I think it’s bigger now and more important now than it used to be.”
- One participant discussed not knowing much about Florida agriculture other than what he/she had seen and said, “We would like to know about the about the industry agricultural-wise like more than just produce, ‘cause that’s all we really see. When you see, you see a lot of orange groves, see a lot of tomato fields. You really see that type of stuff, but we don’t really see everything else that’s being grown. So, if we were knowledgeable about that or they, like the state of Florida would tell the people what else we are the main producers of, that would help.”
- A participant discussed finding information about the agricultural industry at grocery stores in another city. The participant said, “I lived in Washington, D.C. for the last three years and something, even though it was like the Whole Foods grocery store nearby, something they would do is put like the name of the farm where it came from, how long ago it was picked, like detailed information. So you know, like oh, Henry picked these tomatoes and I have this connection now, and I think that was like a really strong way to get people to feel more involved. And I think that because so many people now, like you were just saying, are so much more interested in what am I eating, where does it come from, let me be more involved [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant discussed the agriculture industry in southwest Florida having potential to connect with consumers and said, “The whole agriculture thing and here if they connected with the people more, they could really make something of it.”

Making it Local

Participants discussed the importance of the local area throughout the focus groups. Participants discussed that information about the area was important, relevant, that they would be more trusting of information about local agriculture, that they would be more likely to pay attention to information about local agriculture, and that they felt more information about the local industry would improve their opinion of the industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed the importance they place upon local food and said, “I have children and I like local food and I think local food’s important. I think there’s a lot of local families, and you all are really showing me that there is, that just don’t know what’s local and what’s available. And it really does make a difference to our future for the farmer, the sales and the families.”

- A participant discussed the importance of incorporating local agriculture into communication about the industry because, “I think it makes you feel like you’re a part of it or if they want your opinions, then you feel like you’re important to the growth of agriculture. And you’re more involved in it and that maybe, you know, people, like, the local community can make an impact.”
- A participant discussed his/her desire to support local businesses and said, “I like to support local businesses and local growers. Like there is Florida wines that come from the area around here and when I see those, even though they might not be the best, I still might get that just to support the families and the local businesses.”
- A participant discussed wanting to learn more about local farms and said, “It would be nice to know that there are actual families here that grow things that make it to the store. I mean, because we were saying earlier that we never see anything around [sentence trails off]...”
- A participant discussed wanting to know about local agriculture and said, “If it is talking about our local, absolutely I would want to know. I would have to know more. I have to know what is going on in our area.”
- A participant discussed it was important to make information local, “Because it has to do with our area. And it would have to do with my family and what type of food we are gonna be eating.”

Lack of Knowledge

Throughout the focus groups participants discussed their perceived lack of knowledge about the agricultural industry. Participants discussed wanting to know more information about the agricultural industry, that they did not know enough about the industry, and that they wanted more information to be made available about the agricultural industry. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- A participant discussed being concerned about his/her lack of knowledge and said, “I think my biggest concern is that I just don’t know enough facts about it. And I think a lot of people don’t.” The participant continued, “I just think that’s the biggest thing is we just don’t know enough about it. We need more knowledge about all the processes of everything.”
- A participant discussed not knowing what was going on in the local area and said, “We have tomato fields and orange fields which I have seen lately are not doing so well. The orange fields, it looks like the trees are dying and there are no oranges and the tomato fields are barren, so I’m not quite sure what’s going on.”
- A participant discussed that most people need more information about the agricultural industry and said, “I think the common person needs to have more, I don’t really mean to refer to us as the common person, but more of an understanding of the resources. Like, okay, so we’re sitting here talking about agriculture, which I’m sure before anybody received a phone call about this, all of us weren’t thinking about agriculture, it was at the top of our priority list to get more knowledge on, but it’s I think, understanding the resources and where they’re coming from and just, you know, how it’s supposed to help out in the community and how we’re supposed to get involved.”
- A participant discussed that they don’t know enough about the agricultural industry to know if what is being said about the industry is true or not. The participant said, “I feel like, if I had like, a more knowledgeable basis, a more knowledgeable basis of just agricultural industry and then I had more of a discerning eye to, you know, look at someone in their face and say okay, I know if you’re actually telling me

the truth or not, then I would feel more trustworthy. I would say that I...it would be kind of difficult for me to believe or again, I might be indifferent because I just can't tell like, if he's telling the truth or not, I just don't know enough."

- A participant referred to their lack of knowledge about agriculture as their biggest concern about the industry and said, "I think my biggest concern is that I just don't know enough facts about it. And I think a lot of people don't. And I think that maybe some really good educational videos for all the schools for kids to learn about where they can actually see, watch a full length video that explains the whole process so that all the different schools, the kids could learn about it. And I think more commercials on TV because a lot of people watch television, you know, just educational clips of different information about agriculture, in general, and, I just think that that's the biggest thing is we just don't know enough about it. We need more knowledge about all the processes of everything."

Agritourism

Throughout the focus groups participants discussed their desire to become more involved with the agricultural industry, primarily by visiting agricultural operations and getting to know farmers. Participants discussed that if there were operations in the community that they could take their children to, they would be likely to visit the operations. The following quotes are examples of discussion surrounding this theme:

- Participants discussed increasing interest in accessing the agricultural industry. A participant said, "I mean one of the things you described was some, access, which I think a number of people talked about. And, you know, being a father, wanting to know what's going in my mouth, what's going in my kid's mouth and getting an opportunity to kind of go visit a farm and see what's going on, if the doors open to that which, a lot of times, you don't think of that door being open."

A participant added, "Yeah, more people are hoping for more things like this now, I think."

A third participant agreed and said, "Yeah, that availability is nice."

- A participant discussed creating a miniature farm tour in southwest Florida and said, "Incentives would be cool, kind of like, when you go to, I don't even know what they have down here that will have like, those cards where you stamp every time you visit. So maybe you can have like a tour where they have like, ten you have like, the pink card and there are like, ten farms on the card and if you make a trip to each farm and you get your card stamped you'll get like, a free whatever you know. And then if they have like, thirty farms in the area they can have a card for each like, ten for ten farms so they'll have a pink card for this set, a blue card for the next set, and a yellow card and you can just kind of make it almost like, a scavenger hunt."
- A participant discussed wanting to be able to take his/her children out to a farm and said, "That would be great if you could actually take your kids to a farm nearby and really explain to them, this is where food comes from; this is all the work that goes into it."
- A participant discussed wanting to know about things they can involve his/her children in and said, "Anything that I can involve my children in or my family, I want to get involved in. You know? Like, hey, is there a day? Can we milk a cow? What's up?"

Findings

The results of these focus groups provide a detailed look into consumer perceptions of the agricultural industry, consumer definitions surrounding the term quality, and consumer responses toward messages about the agricultural industry. The summary below compiles the results:

- When describing the agricultural industry, participants often mentioned specific commodities and products, the economics of the industry, environmental terms, specific locations in southwest Florida and immigration related topics.
 - Participants are aware of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida, including what products are grown in the area and where products are grown, but are not overly educated on these topics and are unsure where to find more information about these subjects.
- Participants discussed concerns about the long-term sustainability of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida, as well as concerns about workers and labor related issues.
 - Participants are aware of some of the issues that are facing the agricultural industry in southwest Florida, but do not have a comprehensive understanding of these issues and do not know where to find information surrounding these issues.
- All participants discussed that the agricultural industry in southwest Florida was important and mentioned the industry's economic impact, historical importance and the industry's role in producing food as reasons why the industry was important.
 - Participants understand the importance of the agricultural industry in southwest Florida, but they do not understand the impact that the industry has on the local economy and do not have specific knowledge as to why the industry is important.
- Throughout the focus groups participants discussed the lack of information available about the agricultural industry and their desire for more information. Participants discussed wanting to know more about what producers do, how they operate, and that they would like to be able to visit operations in the local area.
 - Participants have the desire to know more about the agricultural industry in southwest Florida, but they are not sure where to find information. Participants discussed wanting information in one easy-to-use, easy-to-access source.
- Participants discussed the negative impacts they believe the agricultural industry has on the environment and specifically mentioned impacts on groundwater, water pollution, and depletion of natural resources.
 - Participants are aware of the environmental impacts that the agricultural industry has on the environment but they do not know specific information. This presents an opportunity for producers to discuss ways that the agricultural industry impacts the environment and what producers are doing to combat these impacts.
- Participants believe there is moderate quality associated with southwest Florida agricultural products, but they have not heard enough about local products or seen enough of them in stores for them to know anything about it.

- Participants discussed that the industry could improve perceptions of the quality of southwest Florida agricultural products through an increase in local programs, increased communication with the public about the products and increasing their involvement with youth.
- Participants had favorable reactions to the idea of a regional agricultural organization, and would expect the organization to serve as a liaison between the community and farmers.
 - Participants would expect the organization to promote local farmers, work with public schools, increase involvement with the local community, and provide information to the community about local agriculture.
 - Participants would expect the organization to work with youth through outreach programs, school gardens, and incorporating agriculture into the classroom.
 - Participants would expect the organization to communicate with them through a variety of sources including telecommunications, print media, videos, and social media.
- Participants discussed trusting farmers more than corporations and their desire to build relationships with farmers in their local area.
 - Participants enjoy the social interaction that is associated with visiting farming operations, shopping at farmer's markets and seeing organizations present at community events.

Recommendations

Throughout the focus groups, participants discussed their desire to have more information about the agricultural industry. Participants discussed information about the agricultural industry as being useful, important and beneficial. There are several opportunities to increase the information available to consumers about agriculture, which can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

Findings from this research provide support for the need to enhance communication efforts in the five county region. Participants in this study, which primarily consisted of opinion leaders, who are younger, more educated, and more urban, want more information sources and channels about agriculture, but are not sure where to find them. These opinion leaders do not share the same historical background and relationships with their land grant institution as more rural audiences, so they do not think about seeking information from university sources and/or county Extension. On the other hand, they understand the importance of the industry, and although they have both positive and negative perceptions of it, they are interested in learning more.

Based on the results and findings above, it is apparent that developing stronger relationships with opinion leaders as a target audience is important. Engaging with them through two way communication techniques, including a mix of mass media, public relations, and online media sources is recommended. Using an integrated mix of media, rather than relying on one of two information sources and channels, and targeting more urban areas will be necessary to reach this audience.

In the focus groups, rather than testing actual message themes, researchers tested message positioning. When message positioning is tested, researchers are not testing the actual message themes, but rather testing the direction of potential messages that might prove salient, or that may stick, with the target audience. The "Know a Farmer" message position had the most promise, yielding position reactions and a sense of trustworthiness with opinion leaders, particularly if real farmers were mentioned. The United States Department of Agriculture has

launched a similar message campaign, “Know A Farmer, Know Your Food,” which has proven to be successful in the state of California with their “Know A California Farmer” campaign. One downside to this message is that some participants discussed being less likely to read or pay attention to this message, so consideration would have to be given to attention getting devices to make this effective.

It was apparent from the findings that participants felt traditional broadcast media was critical to achieving enough reach and brand awareness for a campaign. Coupling traditional broadcast media with strategic messaging will be essential. This approach would need to be part of the overall media mix, and reach could be achieved by including earned media appearances on local public information and news shows, show sponsorships, cause related marketing efforts, and special events all tied around a common theme in order to build frequency impressions and stick in the minds of the target audience.

It is recommended that in order to develop this type of campaign, consideration be given to hiring a communications specialist – a practitioner trained in strategic communications techniques – to work with Gulf Citrus Growers Association and assist in shaping and implementing an ongoing strategic communications plan. Further, it is recommended that GCGA engage in strategic planning based on the results of this research in order to develop a strategic communications plan that would have duration of 3-5 years.

To fund a plan of this type, consideration should be given to seeking extramural funds through grants activity, such as a USDA specialty crop block grant, as well as fundraising.

More specific recommendations include the following:

Utilizing a Variety of Communication Channels

When communicating with consumers about the agricultural industry, it is important to use a variety of communication channels, including traditional broadcast media, social media, the Internet, and videos.

- Reaching consumers through traditional media channels, such as print or broadcast, will be important. Forming partnerships with local television stations or inviting members of the media out to visit operations or to special events is encouraged.
- Agricultural stakeholder groups, individual farmers and ranchers, and representative bodies should create online resources for consumers that provide information about a variety of agricultural topics including growing practices, day-to-day operations, and seasonality.

Increasing Youth Outreach Programs

A need exists for the agricultural industry to work with youth and schools systems to enhance the agricultural information translated to youth. Industry associations and organizations should try to target youth through outreach programs such as after-school activities, community outreach programs and partner with schools to create school gardens, schedule farm field trips and have farmers guest speak at schools as ways the industry can become involved with the school system. Not only does partnering with youth outreach programs increase the potential for youth to become involved in the agricultural industry when they grow older, but the industry will also be able to reach parents through these programs. By working with youth, the industry will be able to build a relationship with consumers starting at a young age.

Creating Key Partnerships

The task of communicating to the public about agriculture is not a small task, and will require an abundance of resources, including financial support, resources for consumers, a physical structure, and support of community leaders. By partnering with other organizations with similar goals, organizations will be able to pool their resources and maximize their impact. These partnerships will be needed at various levels, partnering organizations with other organizations, farmers with farmers and people with people. These partnerships will be key in building an all-inclusive, representative organization. Additionally, there is potential for partnerships to be made between these organizations and government associations or universities.

Launching a Public Relations Campaign

In order to establish the recommendations listed previously, it is recommended that a public relations campaign promoting the agricultural industry in southwest Florida be implemented.

- **Increase involvement at community events.** Agricultural associations or organizations can build their brand, consumer trust and demonstrate corporate social responsibility by attending and sponsoring community events, becoming involved with local charities and hosting events for the community. Hosting a local farm showcase dinner, sponsoring community groups, working with local nonprofits, and attending local food festivals are ways to become more involved with the community. Participants discussed a need for more information about the agricultural industry, as well as trusting organizations that they could build relationships and directly interact with. By increasing involvement at community events, associations or organizations can build trust with consumers and become more salient in their minds.
- **Appoint southwest Florida agriculture spokespersons.** Southwest Florida agriculture spokespersons would be local farmers and ranchers that would serve as representatives of the industry to public. These spokespersons would be active on social media, promote the industry at community events, serve as spokespersons to the media, and provide information about their operations to the public in southwest Florida. Agricultural associations or organizations should identify farmers and ranchers to serve as spokespersons that would be willing to engage in social media, allow the public to visit their operations and be an active member in the local community.

THE DAILY PAPER

Local families, local food, local future

Norris Center for the Performing Arts, 27570 Crossfield Drive in RHE, on Saturday, March 20 at 2 and 4 p.m. Tickets are \$38 for adults and \$19 for students for the evening performance and \$30 for adults and \$15 for students at the matinee performance. For reservations, call 544-0403.

• **UPCOMING** — The Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District and Friends of School Music host the 15th Palos Verdes Elementary Choral Festival on March 23, 24 and 25 at the Norris Center for the Performing Arts, 27570 Crossfield Drive in RHE. All shows begin at 7:30 p.m. For tickets, call the Norris box office at 544-0403.

• **ONGOING** — The Distinctive Edge, 20950 S. Western Ave., Suite 113 in RVP, continues "Third Time's a Charm," an exhibit of 3-D collages by artist Steve Jacobsen, through March 30. For gallery hours, call 833-3613.

• **ONGOING** — "Natural Treasures" exhibition contin-

Two years ago, U.S. Navy personnel and their families assigned to the Arangi Navy base, home of the U.S.S. Kittyhawk, were treated to a rare experience when Terry Fleming and his local Irish/American band, Innisfree, traveled to the base to entertain them on St. Patrick's Day. Fleming and the other five members of Innisfree were delighted and honored to be able to go to Japan and lift the spirits, if only for a few hours, of the Navy personnel and their families.

For the third year in a row, Fleming — a local insurance broker in Rolling Hills by day and an entertainer by night — and the band travel to entertain the Navy men, women and families at various bases throughout Japan.

Fleming, the leader of the band on accordion and harmonica, actually is the only member of the band from Ireland. Other members include lead singer Jake Delaney, a civil engineer in Newport Beach; Terry Doyle, guitarist, a news director with CBS news; Denis Doyle, Celtic harpist, a professor at Glendale College; Kevin Weed, keyboards and bagpipes, music

teacher and assistant director of the Orange County Symphony; and Mike Tibbany, bass, a computer engineer. The band has been playing the length and breadth of California for the past 25 years. They have played at pubs, wakes, weddings, birthdays and on occasions where there was little chance for throwing a party.

Fleming says it was by coincidence the band got the opportunity to travel to Japan. Another band was unable to travel at the last minute and so he and his band were offered the opportunity to go in their place.

With some trepidation they made their first trip and with the overwhelming response they received at Arangi, any fears they had were quickly allayed. On a damp St. Patrick's Day, hundreds of families, clad in many shades of green, whooped it up, sang their hearts out and danced up a storm. At the evening were on, many in the audience were emboldened to try their hand or foot at the Irish jig, with much encouragement from the band.

Even though far from home, the Arangi base — situated a few hours

south of Tokyo — felt like home away from home, with its lush green rolling landscape and its multitude of cherry blossom trees. "Yes," Fleming says, "one was struck by the commitment and dedication of our men and women in uniform as they played their part in protecting and serving in an ever challenging and hostile world."

A couple of the families even took time out from their busy schedule to host Terry and the band members. They treated them to a guided tour of the base and accompanied them on a few exciting trips off the base, visiting beautiful ancient temples, monuments and several giant Buddha's.

On a visit to downtown Tokyo, the band came across what they assumed was a very rare sight, a place called "Scruffy Murphy," an Irish pub located in the heart of a bustling downtown. Upon checking the establishment out, they discovered a real authentic Irish Pub with excellent Guinness and good pub grub. It also happened to be open mic night, so the band members took over the stage

and entertained the locals for a few fun-filled hours. It turned out that it was just one of many establishments in the city.

A special bond developed between the band members and these families and already exchange visits have occurred when the same families were on leave in the United States.

For more information about the band, log on to www.thebridgeonline.com.

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