Small Scale Farmers of African-American Descent and Contamination Events

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Food safety: Fruits and vegetables

• Microbial food safety hazards of fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables
  – Food borne pathogens
    • *E. Coli* and Spinach
    • 1990-2003, 554 food borne illness via vegetables
  – Focus on BMPs for high risk audience
    • Agricultural economy
    • Mid- and small-scale farmers
    • Minority farmers
      – Amish farmers
      – Black farmers
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Black Farmers & Risk

- 1920: 1 in 7 farmers were Black
- 2003: 1 in 100 farmers were Black
- What happened?
  - Population shift: rural to urban
  - Emergence of corporate farms
Black Farmers & Risk

- History of failing to help Black farmers obtain government funds
- 1999: $3 billion class action settlement with Black farmers
- 2004: USDA fought the settlement
  - 90% of plaintiffs denied payment
- Alienation of Black Farmers from primary source of information and funding
Food safety: Fruits and vegetables

- **Social Science**
  - Mental Models
    - Black Farmers
    - Consumers
  - Surveys
  - Risk Communication
    - Farmers
    - Consumers

- **Natural Science**
  - Management surveys
  - Microbiology tests
    - Water sources
    - Soil
  - Source tracking of pathogens
Mental Models Research

• Mental Road Maps
• How humans know, perceive, make decisions, and construct behavior in a variety of environments
• Quantitative and qualitative components
• Intent, format and content of risk communication
Current Study

• Mental Models of Black Farmers:
  – Microbial Contamination
  – Daily Operation of the Farm
  – Economic Aspects of Farming

• 17 Black Farmers in Kentucky were interviewed

• All of the interviews were confidential.

• Interviews were recorded with permission.
Current Study

• Interviewees were offered an agenda of topics to discuss in a way that allowed for free expression. They were encouraged to raise additional topics spontaneously and to elaborate on their perspectives on these topics.

• Data analyzed and coded to develop a mental model
  – Used Nvivo
  – Color-Coded to compare to other groups
Observations

• Black Farmers have less reliance on:
  – Government
  – Suppliers
  – Farmer Association

• Disenfranchisement from primary sources of information

• Black Farmers rely heavily on:
  – Other Farmers
  – Continuous learning programs
Observations

• Need to integrate Black Farmers into government sources of assistance and information

• Need to utilize alternative communication venues to reach Black Farmers
  – Internet
Thank You

• Questions?

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