

ALLEN COUNTY COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT 2015

During the summer of 2015, Allen County GROW conducted a community food assessment to examine food-related issues and resources within the community. Results will be used to inform actions to improve the community food environment and increase access to healthy foods for all community residents. In this assessment, data from existing sources were combined with survey responses from community members. Highlights of the food assessment findings are described here. More detailed information is available in the full report, which is available from Allen County GROW.



Community Member Perspectives:

More than 200 Allen County Residents participated in a survey that asked about their food purchasing and dietary habits as well as their satisfaction with the food environment in their county.

- ❖ **Satisfaction with the food environment** — The majority of survey respondents were satisfied with the quality, variety, and availability of healthy food in the community. Satisfaction with the number of stores and the price of healthy food was significantly lower (*Figure 1*).
- ❖ **Considerations when purchasing food** — Price, taste, nutritional value and food safety were the most important factors considered when purchasing foods. Factors such as locally-grown, pesticide-free, non-GMO and certified organic were rated as less important (*Figure 4*).
- ❖ **What is needed to improve diets** — When survey participants were asked what would help them to have a healthier diet, money for purchasing healthy foods and more time for food preparation were the most frequent responses. More than two-thirds said that more money for purchasing food would help (*Figure 2*).

Figure 1. Community Member Satisfaction with Available Food

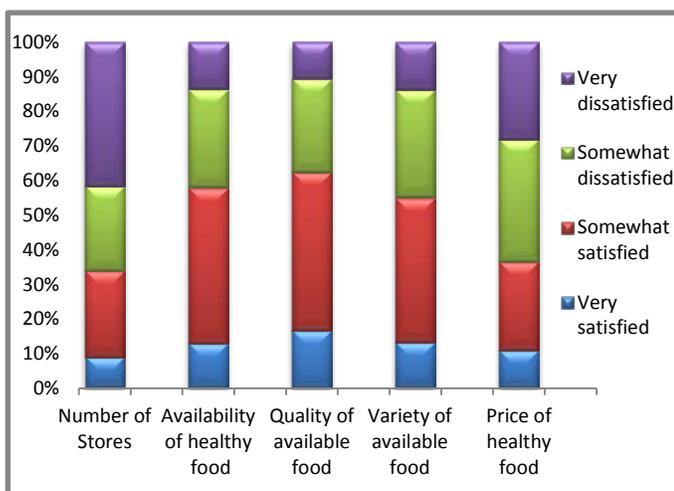
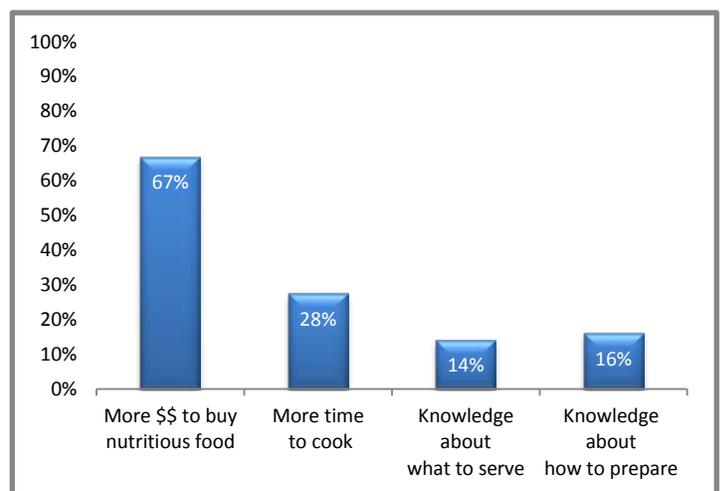


Figure 2. What Would Help Residents to Improve Diets



Community Strengths:

- ❖ **Strong agricultural base** — In 2012, there were 650 farms in Allen County, occupying more than 245,000 acres. Allen County farms sold crops valued at \$22,317,000 and livestock valued at \$15,840,000.
- ❖ **High number of home gardeners** — 44 percent of survey respondents reported that they grow some of their own food in a home garden. For residents who would like to garden but lack an appropriate yard space to do so, a community garden is available in Iola, and a second community garden is under development in Elsmore.
- ❖ **Low density of fast food restaurants** — Just as a lack of access to healthy food options may influence individual's eating behaviors, an over-abundance of less healthy food options may also negatively influence eating choices. Menu offerings at fast food restaurants are frequently filled with unhealthy choices that are high in calories, fats and salt levels. In 2013, there were only six fast-food outlets located within the borders of Allen County. On a per person basis, the density of fast food outlets in Allen County is substantially less than that in other parts of Kansas or across the United States.

Community Gaps or Concerns:

- ❖ **Limited access to healthy food options** — In 2015, there were three grocery stores (one Walmart and two smaller local stores) serving the entire county, plus one farmers' market operating one evening per week during summer months. USDA estimated that in 2010 nearly half (44.5 percent) of Allen county residents lived more than 10 miles from the nearest grocery store.
- ❖ **Limited agricultural production for direct sales** — Although agricultural enterprises are well-established in Allen County, the farm products are primarily commodity crops and beef sold to commercial markets. Less than one percent of 2012 farm sales were foods sold directly to consumers.
- ❖ **Affordability of healthy foods, food insecurity** — Affordability of healthy food options is a concern in Allen County. Food insecurity is defined as the household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food, because of a lack of resources. Estimates derived from national surveys suggest that more than one in seven (15.1 percent) of Allen County households is food-insecure. Only 36 percent of survey respondents indicated that they always have enough of the kinds of foods that they want to eat (*Figure 3*).

Figure 3. Community Members' Access to Enough Food

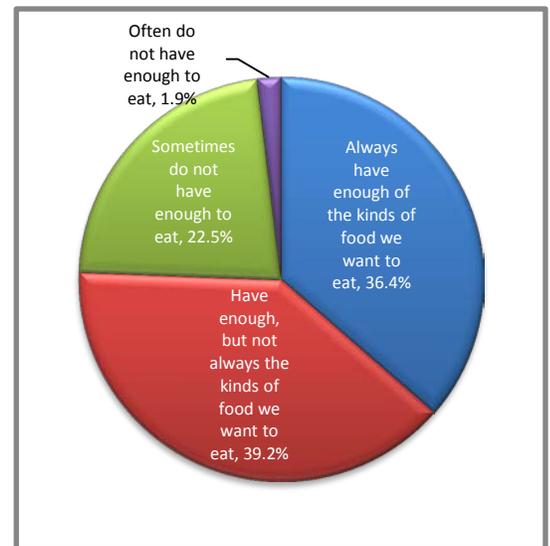


Figure 4. Factors that Influence Food Purchasing Decisions

