



Connecting Local Farmers to Consumers Through Digital Marketing

April 25th, 2024

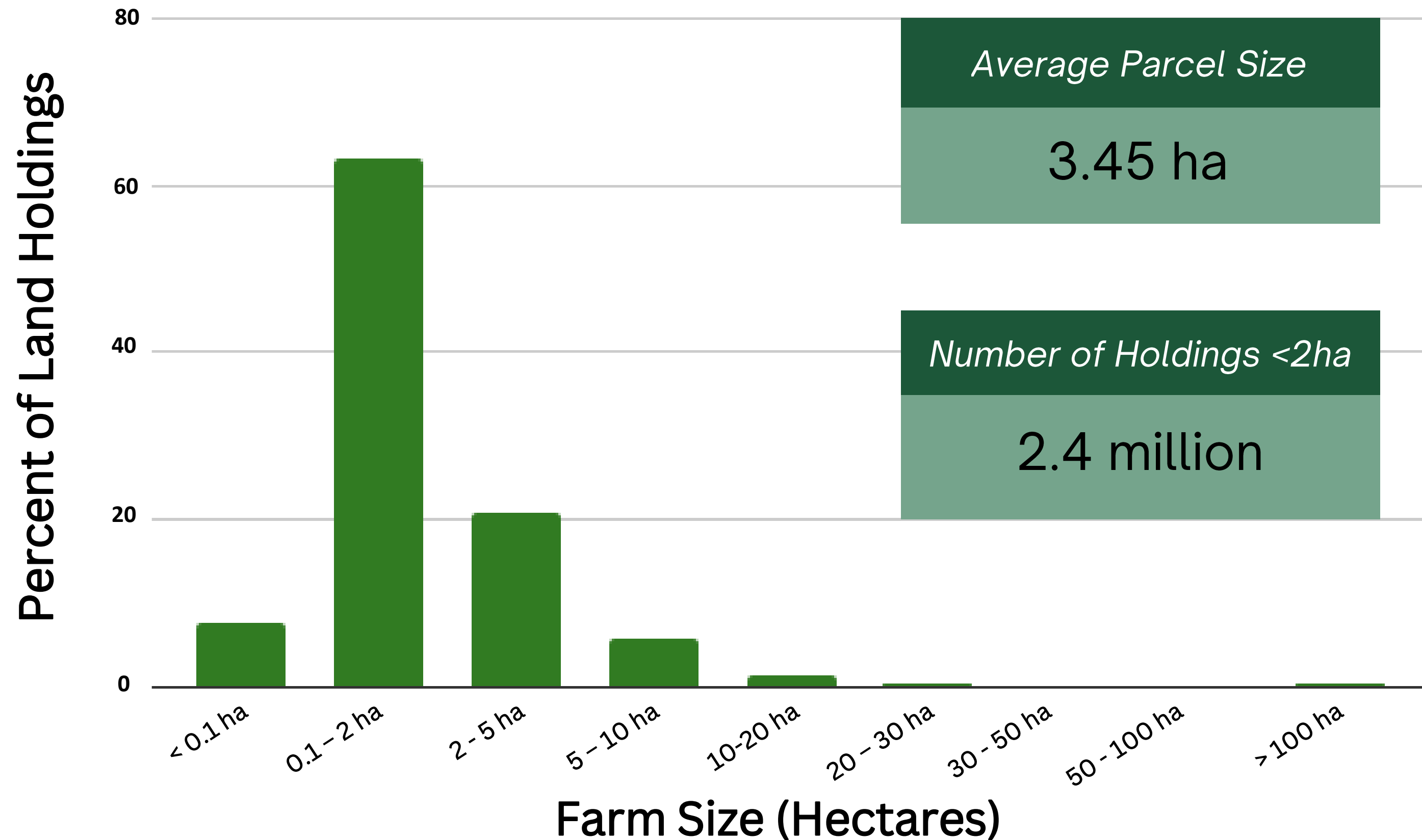
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Allison Morin, Samuel Thai



Our Project Was Based in Braşov County, Romania



Small Farms are Prevalent in Romania



Small Farms Contribute Many Benefits

↓ Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Pollution



↑ Increase Regenerative and Sustainable Agriculture Practices



↑ Increase Fresh, Local Food



↑ Increase Rural Community Development and Employment



However, Small Farmers Struggle to Maintain Farms

64+

Age of Farm Holder

Lack of Resources



Remoteness

Limited Market Access



Limited Farm Income

Farms in Romania Have a High Risk of Abandonment

	2010	2013	2016	2019
Belgium	I	I	I	I
Bulgaria	II	II	II	II
Czechia	II	II	II	II
Denmark	I	I	I	I
Germany	I	I	I	I
Estonia	II	II	III	II
Ireland	II	II	II	II
Greece	III	III	III	III
Spain	III	III	III	III
France	II	II	II	II
Italy	III	III	II	III
Cyprus	III	III	III	II
Latvia	III	III	II	III
Lithuania	II	II	II	III
Hungary	II	II	II	II
Netherlands	I	I	I	I
Austria	II	II	II	II
Poland	II	II	III	II
Portugal	III	III	III	III
→ Romania	III	III	III	III
Slovenia	II	II	III	II
Slovakia	II	II	I	II
Finland	III	III	III	III
Sweden	II	III	II	III
United Kingdom	I	II	I	II

- Class I (Low Risk)
- Class II (Average Risk)
- Class III (High Risk)

Cooperatives Foster Community and Resource Sharing Among Farmers

Cooperatives



Teamwork



Resources



Market Access

Food Boxes Represent Convenience in Local Food



Food Box Systems Support Small Farm Growth



Keeps Money Local

**Farmer-Consumer
Connection**



Increased Visibility

HighClere Consulting Supports Small Farmers in the SolBun Co-op



A Previous WPI Team Developed a Google Form and Email List to Promote Food Box Sales



SolBun Food Box Order Form

awmzuwallack@gmail.com [Switch account](#)

Saving...

* Indicates required question


Email *

awmzuwallack@gmail.com

First Name

Angus





**OUR GOAL WAS TO EXPAND
SOLBUN'S FOODBOX CUSTOMER
BASE IN BRAȘOV COUNTY BY
DEVELOPING AN ONLINE MARKETING
PLATFORM AND ORDERING SYSTEM.**

Objectives

01

Determine Common
Online Marketing
Practices

Identify Locals' Food
Purchasing Habits
and Motivations

02

03

Develop Farmer
Profiles

Design Website
Prototype

04

OBJECTIVE 1

Determine Common Online
Marketing Practices

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Analysis



Common Website Pages and Features

Pages	
About Us	10/10
Contact Us	9/10
Blog	9/10
How to Order	8/10
FAQs	4/10

Features	
Product Descriptions	9/10
Social Media Links	8/10
Featured Products	7/10
Customers Testimonials	6/10
Ability to Filter Products	6/10
Community Newsletter	6/10
Delivery Schedule	5/10
Sign In Option	5/10
List of Producers	4/10
Recipes	3/10
Online Chat Support	1/10
Video Marketing	1/10

OBJECTIVE 2

Identify Locals' Food Purchasing Habits
and Motivations

METHODOLOGY

55 Surveys at Supermarkets and Free Markets



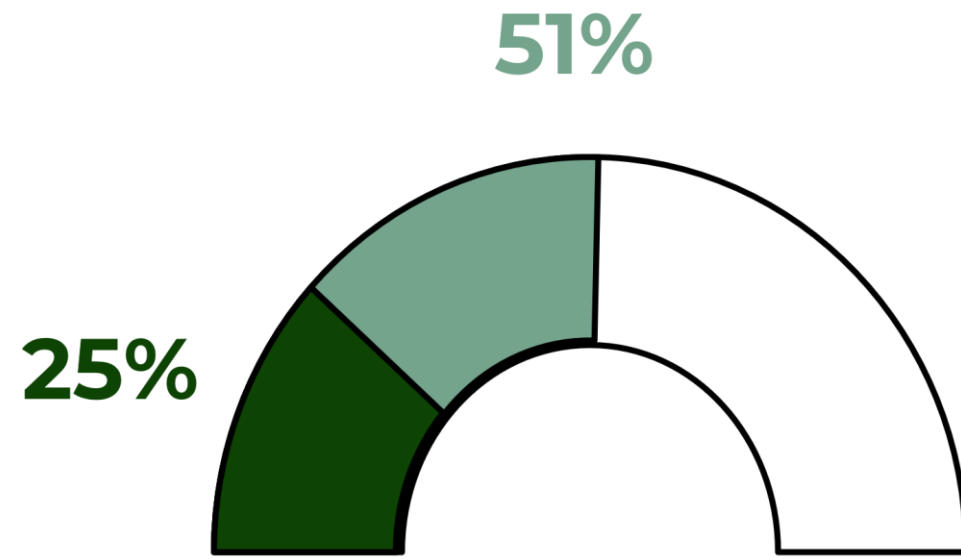
Focus Group with 9 Local Mothers



Where do people shop?
Why do they shop there?
Are they interested in a food box system?

Free Market Shoppers

Older Adults: 50 - 70



51% of participants shopped at the free market

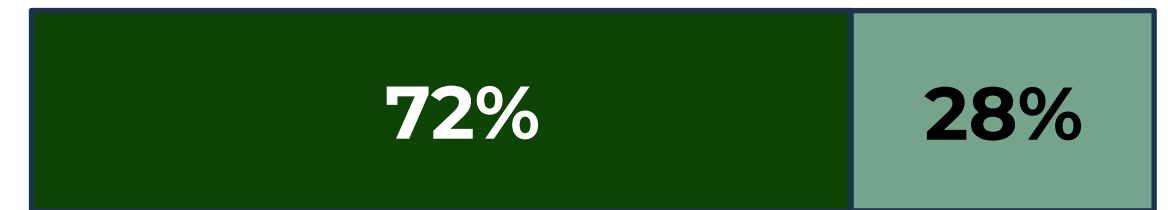
25% of participants shopped *solely* at the free market

41%
Freshness/Quality

21%
Low Prices

17%
Personal Connection

Would you try a food box?



No

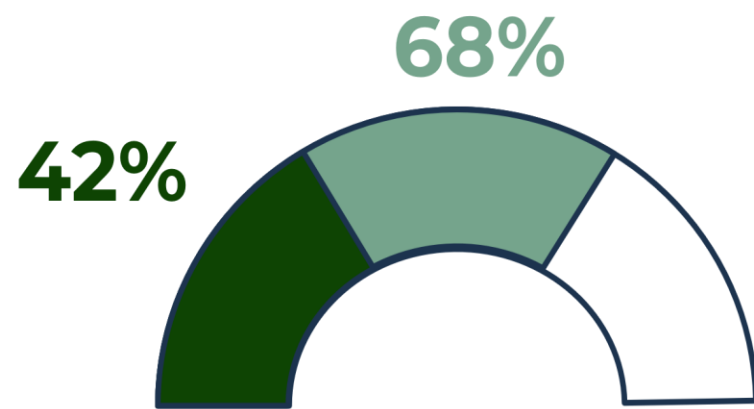
Yes



1. Guaranteed Freshness
2. Directly From Producers
3. Control Over Products
4. Specified Frequency

Supermarket Shoppers

Younger Adults: 20 - 40



68% of participants shopped at the supermarket

42% of participants shopped *solely* at the supermarket

52%
Low Prices

48%
Convenience

40%
Diversity of Products

Would you try a food box?



No

Yes



1. Guaranteed Freshness
2. Recipes
3. Delivery

Women With 3+ Children

Participants indicated they shop mainly at the **supermarket** due to the **convenience** and **product diversity**.

Factors Important When Buying Food

Factor	Total Score
Freshness/Quality	29
Price	23
Convenience	22
Power to Choose	8
Product Diversity	7
Authenticity	5
Personal Connection	5
Stock Reliability	1

Distrust in Free Market Sellers

“The sellers in the farmers market are either cheating us on **quality** or they are **cheating us on quantity**.”

Receptive to Food Box System

The participants consider that a food box would be a very good initiative, if it would offer **delivery** of the products...and **information regarding the content** before the placing the order moment.



OBJECTIVE 3

Develop Farmer Profiles

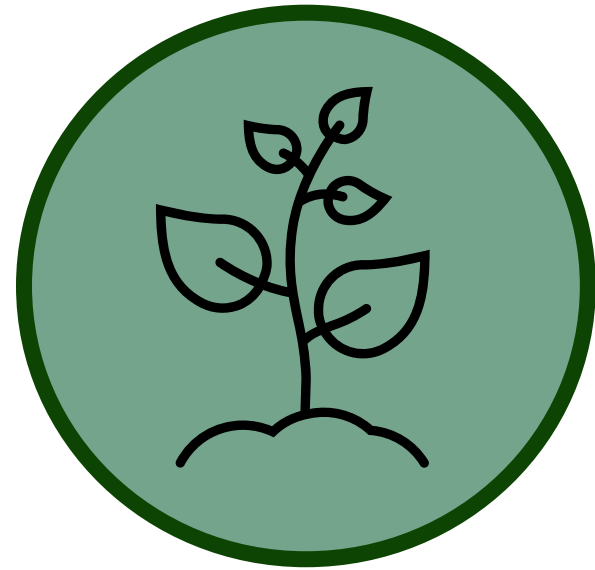
METHODOLOGY



Site Visits and Unstructured Interviews

- **Size/Location**
- **Products Grown**
- **Farmer Story**
- **Sustainability Practices**
- **How to Purchase from Them**
- **Photos and Video**

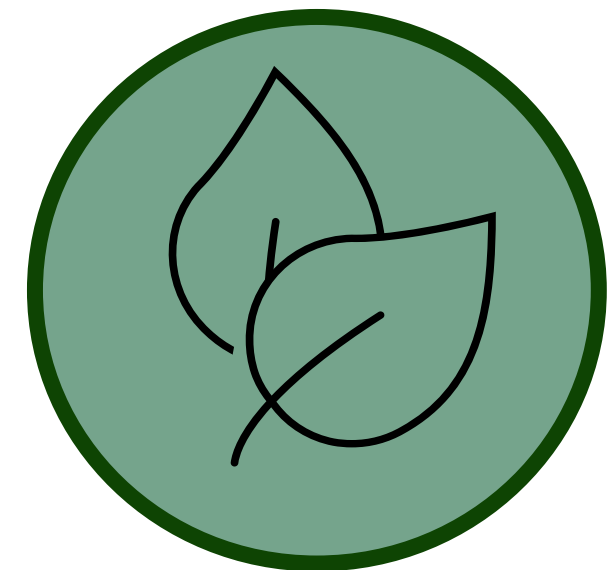
Developed Farmer Profiles to Connect Consumers and Producers



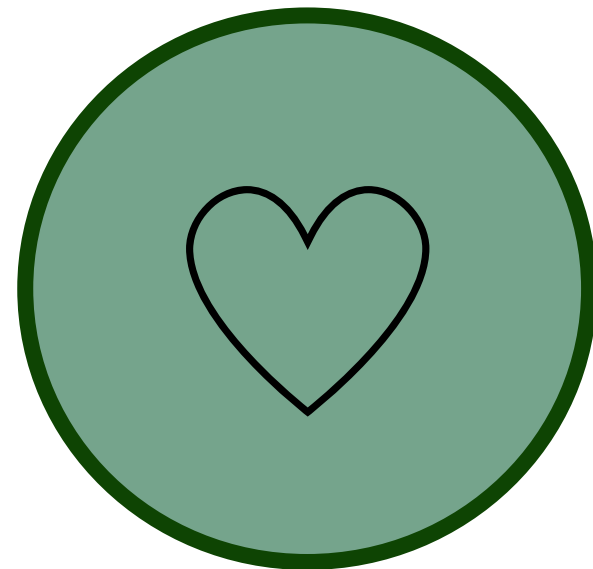
What They Grow



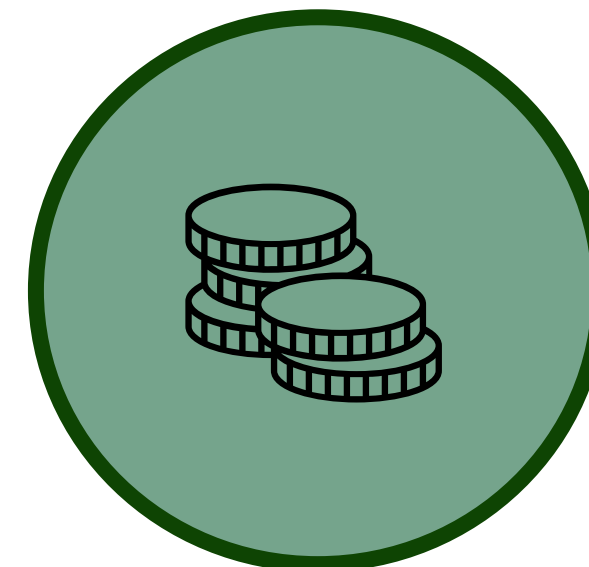
Meet the Farmer



**How They Promote
Sustainability**



Why This Farm?



How to Buy

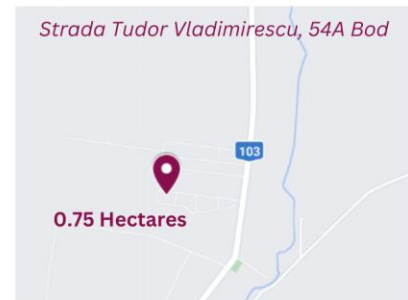
Rognean Orchard

Located just 20 minutes outside of Braşov in Bod Village, this 0.75 hectare family orchard has been providing fresh produce for the past eight years. Stop by their gate at Strada Tudor Vladimirescu 54A, Bod Commune, Braşov County.



What They Grow

Pears, cherries, plums, nectarines, peaches, apricots, fruit and vegetable juices as well as ten varieties of apples including generos, floretina, and golden.



Meet the Farmer

Farmer Teodor Rognean, a former industry worker, is now cultivating his fruit orchard in Braşov County. In 1995, he began transforming his land into the farmstead it is today. Eight years ago he sourced saplings from research institutes in Bistrita and Aiud to begin his farm. Today, he tends to his orchard alongside his devoted wife, Daneila.

How They Promote Sustainability

Trimmed branches from orchard trees are repurposed to provide heat for both the farm and the family's nearby residence which uses their resources efficiently. Natural fertilizers derived from a combination of free-range poultry waste and manure sourced from a local cattle farmer are used, eliminating the reliance on synthetic alternatives. This approach not only reduces environmental impact but also promotes soil health and biodiversity. Bee hives are set up around the farm to aid in pollination, fostering a balanced ecosystem and enhancing crop yields.

From the house to the orchard, everything on the farm has been built and maintained by Teodor's own two hands

Why Rognean Orchards?

Rognean Orchard shines in quality and care, stemming from family dedication. The farm operates without synthetic pesticides, showing a commitment to both health and the environment. Choosing Rognean offers not just great taste, but also



How to Buy

Rognean Orchard's produce is available for purchase at their farm. You can find them at Strada Vladimirescu street, north of Braşov County.

HOF Hărman

Located in Harman Village, HOF Harman is a small local farm that also functions as a gastronomy restaurant, priding themselves on only using local products in their cooking. You can find them at Strada Mihai Viteazul 429, Harman.



What They Grow

Onions, Salads, Tomatoes, Peppers, Beetroot, Aubergine, Berries, Rhubarb, Cabbage, Kale, Carrots, Parsley, Parsnips, Apples, Pears, Quince



Meet the Farmer

Welcome to HOF Hărman, where farming meets gastronomy in the hands of two lifelong friends turned passionate farmers and chefs. Formerly a teacher and an accountant, Corina Bozgan and Ioana Gherghel embarked on this journey together driven by a shared desire to make a meaningful impact in their community and provide nourishing food for their families. Self-taught and deeply passionate about farming, not only do they oversee the farm, but they also take charge of all the cooking in their restaurant, ensuring that every dish reflects their commitment to fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

How They Promote Sustainability

Sustainability is a core value of HOF Hărman. With free-roaming animals providing natural fertilizers and their own composting methods, they minimize waste and nurture the soil's health. By using chalk at the base of trees and marigolds as insect repellents, they maintain a balanced ecosystem without resorting to pesticides or herbicides. Through these practices, HOF Hărman demonstrates a commitment to environmentally friendly farming methods that promote biodiversity and long-term sustainability.



Why HOF Hărman?

HOF Hărman isn't just a farm, it is a farm-to-table restaurant, and they pride themselves on cooking with the freshest ingredients, straight from their fields. Complimenting their produce, any additional ingredients needed come from neighboring local farms, supporting the local community, and advocating for healthier eating habits. HOF believes in quality over quantity, encouraging everyone to savor fewer but better meals. Despite the hurdles—such as weather challenges and managing the land with a small team—they remain dedicated to their craft, finding pride and joy in every aspect of what they do.

How to Buy

Their food can be tried at their restaurant located at Strada Mihai Viteazul 429, Harman and you are welcome to walk around the farm and meet the animals after your meal. They are open for reservations for a full course meal experience each weekend, or during the week for groups of at least 5 guests. They specialize in cooking their favorite local recipes, carefully prepared with natural, local ingredients.

Ciuperci Brasovene

Located roughly 20 minutes north of Braşov, Ciuperci Brasovene is a small mushroom farm located in Harman Village; producing quality certified oyster mushrooms in its production tunnels since 2012. The farm is located on Strada Oltului, 45 Harman.



What They Grow

Pleurotus (oyster) mushrooms, a unique species of mushrooms that have a mild flavor and present a pleasing texture when cooked. Due to their mild flavor Pleurotus mushrooms work great in a variety of dishes and are often used as meat substitutes.

Meet the Farmer

Percec and his family are living out their dream working independently. Formerly a chef, Dorian and his wife, along with their two children, chose this path about a decade ago. For Dorian, farming isn't just a job—it's a lifestyle. He has full control of his life and providing a safe environment for loved ones and neighbors. They chose mushrooms because of the ability to grow in large volumes year round, as they are able to grow in a controlled environment. With no weather, they've learned everything about growing mushrooms, from machinery in the tunnels to marketing. Their farm isn't just a place to work; it's a source of love and a commitment to a more fulfilling life.



How They Promote Sustainability

Utilizing compost sourced from Hungary, they ensure a short chain from production to consumer, minimizing their carbon footprint. By offering fresh, healthy mushrooms in packaging tailored for both retail and bulk purchases, Ciuperci Brasovene promotes accessibility to sustainable produce in Braşov and Bucharest regions.

"Sometimes you need to go back to the root of it all, and eat at the end"

Why Ciuperci?

Ciuperci Brasovene remains committed to providing quality products in local food markets and chain stores. They focus their efforts on growing specialized oyster mushrooms. By using technology, they are able to monitor their environment and ensure the quality of their mushrooms. Ciuperci Brasovene is a family business and represents the values that matter most: quality food and personal connection. They guarantee local sourcing of their mushrooms, cultivated by a dedicated family.

How to Buy

You can find Ciuperci Brasovene mushrooms in hypermarkets throughout Romania. If you are purchasing bulk mushrooms, please check out his website: <https://www.ciupercibrasovene.ro>

Beatrix Lorncz Flowers and Aromatic Plants

Located in Harman Village at Strada Mihai Viteazul 443, Harman, Beatrix Lorncz has a small aromatic plant farm that features a large variety of plants, as well as the ability to grow all year round thanks to her greenhouses.



What They Grow

Flowers, Perennials, and numerous other aromatic plants, as well as floral arrangements



Meet the Farmer

Meet Beatrix Lorncz, an experienced farmer specializing in aromatic plants. After a decade of farming experience, she established her own farm in 2006. In their greenhouses, she and her two employees nurture a diverse array of plants year-round, sourced from across Europe. Beyond farming, Beatrix's talent extends to crafting beautiful floral arrangements from her own flowers, adding a creative touch to her agricultural endeavors.

How They Promote Sustainability

By cultivating plants that naturally protect each other, she minimizes the need for pesticides and other chemicals, promoting a healthy and balanced ecosystem.

The use of wood-based heating in the greenhouses reduces reliance on fossil fuels and decreases the carbon footprint of the farm. Through her commitment to these practices, she ensures that her farm operates in harmony with the environment, fostering a more sustainable future.

"Customers can always come back; to tell us the good, or the bad, and as friends"

Why Beatrix Lorncz Flowers and Aromatic Plants?

This farm stands out for its commitment to cultivating a diverse array of flowers and aromatic plants using sustainable practices. Despite facing challenges, such as competition from supermarkets and limited government support due to their small-scale operation, her small team is dedicated to their craft. By prioritizing building meaningful connections with consumers, they have gained a loyal customer base who appreciates their high-quality products. Each handcrafted flower arrangement, crafted carefully in their workshop, reflects their dedication to quality and care. Whether adorning city balconies or brightening up your home, these flowers offer a personal touch of natural beauty and charm to any space.

How To Buy

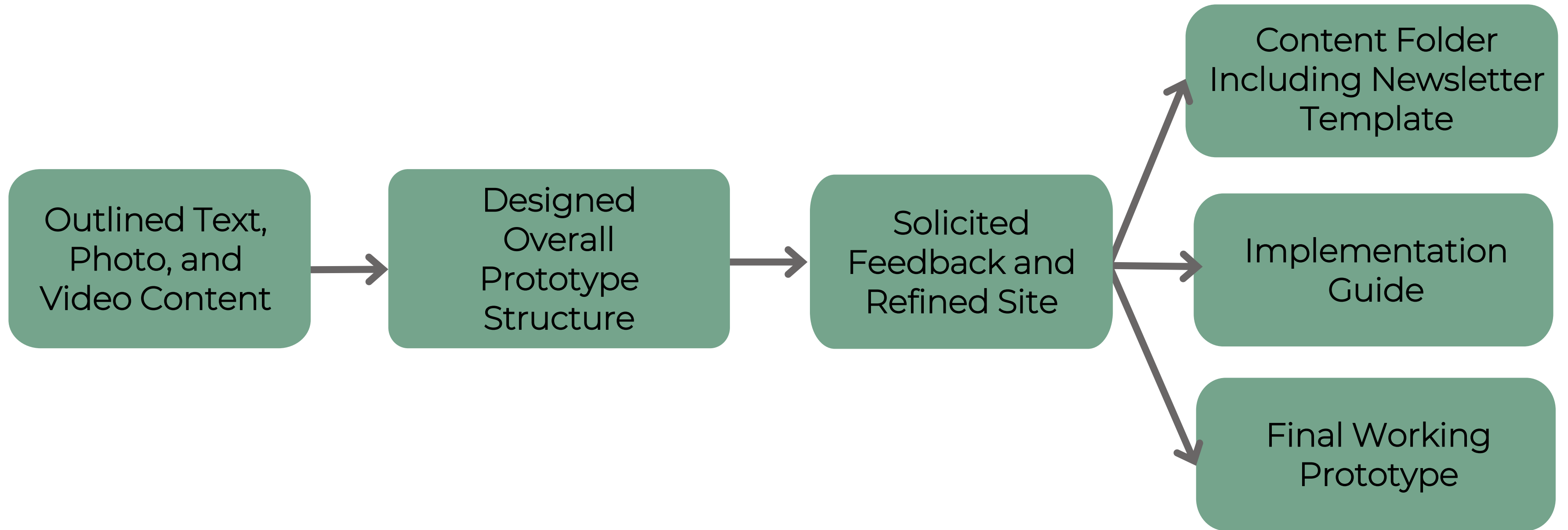
You can purchase Beatrix Lorncz's flowers directly at her farm gate located at Strada Mihai Viteazul 443, Harman. You can also take a walk around her beautiful greenhouses and buy any flowers that catch your eye! If you want a more specialized order you can also request bouquets and different floral arrangements through messaging her on facebook, or in person!



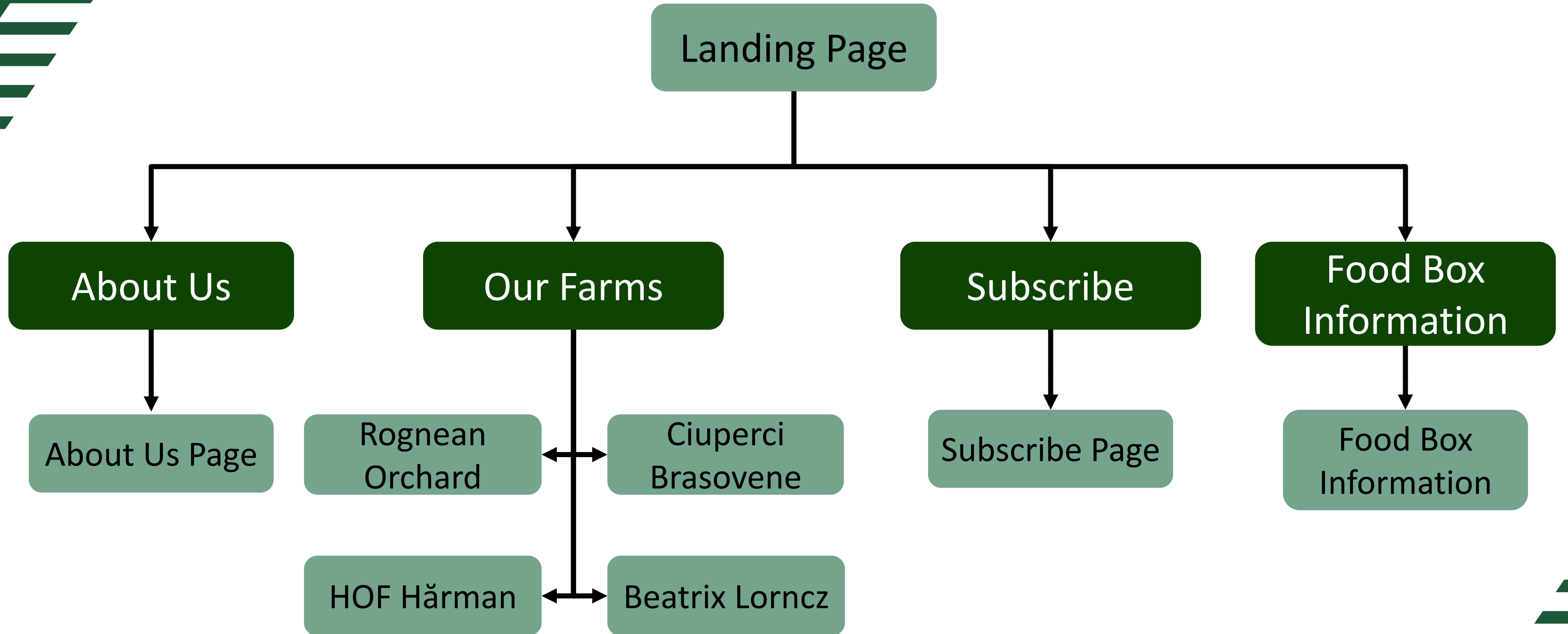
OBJECTIVE 4

Design Website Prototype

METHODOLOGY



Website Architecture



Tailored Feedback Refined Our Design

Stress How Consumers Can
Connect in Farm Profiles



Addition of a “How to Buy”
Section to Prompt User on How
to Engage with Producers

Easy for HighClere and SolBun
to Manage Website Long Term



Biweekly Newsletter
Template, Instead of Routine
Website Changes



Facebook Plugin for
Each Farm Page



DELIVERABLES



SolBun

Main Menu



About Us Our Farms Food Box Information Subscribe

SolBun Mission Statement



The purpose of this site is to demonstrate the authenticity and freshness of the local producers of the Brasov region. The food box system serves as a convenient system for accessing local produce in your area without the hassle of having to travel to your local or free markets. We hope you'll join us in supporting sustainable agriculture and enjoying the freshest produce straight from our farmer's fields.

Main Website Statement of Purpose



Newsletter Subscription

Subscribe to our biweekly newsletter for free to stay connected to the heart of local farming and learn more about our foodbox delivery!

Link to *Subscribe Page*



Subscribe Page



Featured Farms Banner



About



About SolBun

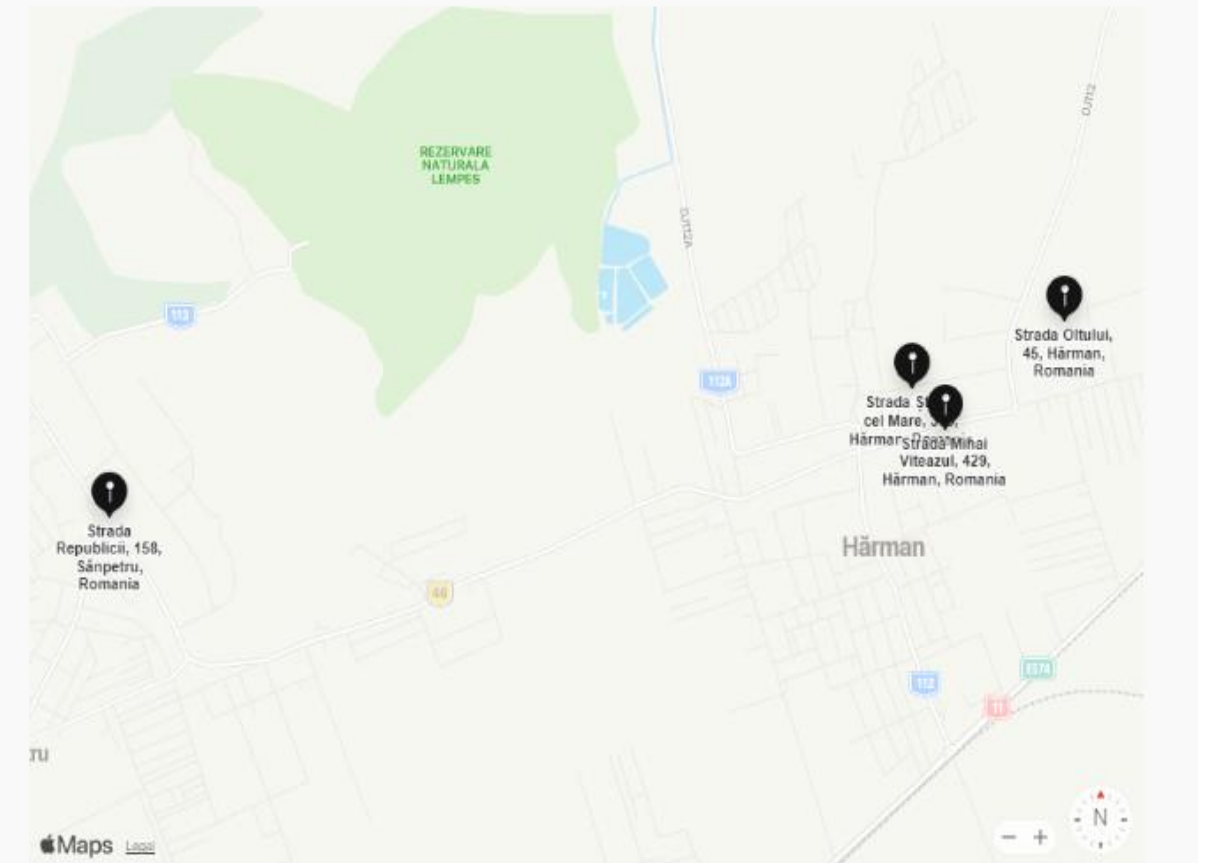
SolBun is a cooperative founded in 2020 by producers in response to the need for small farmers to collaborate, aiming to aggregate small farmers in Brasov County and foster new business opportunities and sustainable practices.

Information About the Founding of SolBun

Interactive Map of Member Farms



- Key:
- 5 Member Farms:
 - 1.) Strada Ștefan cel Mare nr 366, Hărman 507085
 - 2.) Podu Olt 507086
 - 3.) Unknown
 - 4.) Strada Republicii 158, Sânpetru 507190
 - 5.) Vad 377 Brașov, Vad 507197
 - External Collaborator Farms:
 - 1.) Tudor Vladimirescu street, no: 54A, Bod Commune, Brașov County.
 - 2.) Strada Oltului, 45 Harman.
 - 3.) Strada Mihai Viteazul 429, Harman.



Ciuperци Brasovene



Meet The Farmer



Former economists, Dorian and his wife, along with their supportive in-laws, chose this path about a decade ago. For Dorian, farming isn't just a job—it's about taking control of his life and providing fresh food for loved ones and neighbors. They picked mushrooms because of their ability to produce large volumes year-round, as they are grown in a controlled environment. With no formal training, they've learned everything themselves, from machinery in the tunnels to harvesting. Their farm isn't just a place to work; it's a labor of love and a commitment to a simpler, more fulfilling life.

The Farm



Located roughly 20 minutes north of Brasov, Ciuperци Brasovene is a small mushroom farm located in Harman Village, producing quality certified oyster mushrooms in its production tunnels since 2012. The farm is located on Strada Oltului, 45 Harman.

How To Buy

- At various hypermarkets and supermarkets
- Online at: <https://www.ciuperциbrasovene.ro/>

What We Grow

- Oyster Mushrooms: Known for their distinct mild taste!

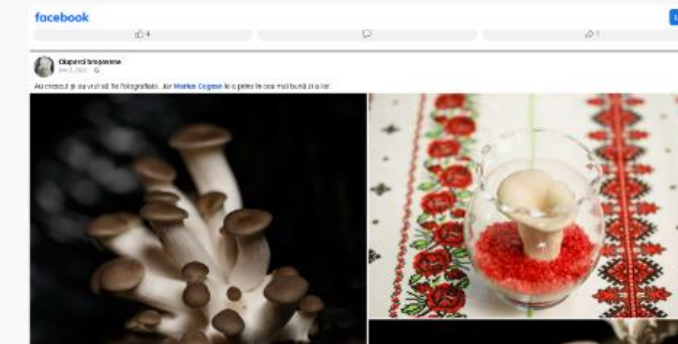


Why Ciuperци Brasovene

Ciuperци Brasovene remains committed to providing quality products, through both local food markets and chain hypermarkets. They have specialized in oyster mushrooms allowing them to focus their efforts on supplying high-quality products. By using technology to their advantage they are able to monitor the mushroom's environment and ensure that the climate is ideal. Ciuperци Brasovene is also a family-owned business and represents the idea of getting back to the values that matter most, including quality food and personal connection. Their emphasis on local sourcing guarantees fresh, pesticide-free mushrooms, cultivated with love and integrity by a dedicated family.

How They Promote Sustainability

- Compost Sourced from Hungary
- Low Carbon Footprint



Facebook Plugin

Short-Form Videos →

General Food Box Information

Food Box Information

Our food boxes provide residents of Brasov County with a weekly assortment of fresh vegetables and dairy products based on pre-orders.

How the Food Box Works:

1. Enter your name and email into the subscription list for our newsletter. This biweekly newsletter will include the contents of the food box as well as extras such as recipes and local events.
2. Receive your newsletter and review the products for that week. Included in that newsletter will be a link to a Google Form, this is how you will buy the food box for that particular week. **You will not receive a food box simply by subscribing, you must fill out the form for each week you wish to receive a box.** This Google Form will include your name and address, if you have any specific needs for drop-off times or locations you will indicate them here.
3. After you have filled out the Google Form our food boxes will be delivered to your door. The payment for the box is due at the time of delivery.



Like what you see?

Subscribe to our newsletter to stay up to date with all SolBun news!

Subscribe

← Link to *Subscribe Page*

FAQs About Price, Delivery, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Where is the ordering form for the food box?

You can order the food box using our Google Form included in the biweekly newsletter. If you are not subscribed to this newsletter, you can enter your name and email on the [Subscribe Page!](#)

When can I order these food boxes?

Food boxes are available throughout the summer growing season. Subscribe to our newsletter or follow us on Facebook to learn about when food boxes will start production this year.

Can I subscribe for a whole season?

Unfortunately, we do not offer season-long subscriptions. To receive a food box you must fill out that week's Google Form in the newsletter. This must be done for every week that you want to receive a food box. This allows you to review the produce arriving in that week's box before you submit an order!

Where will I receive my food box?

After you place your order, the food boxes are delivered to the address you entered in the Google Form. These boxes are delivered according to [\[this delivery schedule\]](#).

How much do the food boxes cost?

The food boxes are sold for a flat rate of 100 RON. This amount will be paid when your box is delivered, currently we only accept payments in cash.

What is in the food box?

Included in the food box is typically ~2kg of produce. The exact type of produce is dependent on the week and time of year so it will be sent out biweekly in our newsletter. Based on that week's produce you can then choose if you would like to subscribe to that week's food box.

Where are the products from?

The products are from local small-scale farmers in Brasov County! These farms are all associated with the SolBun Cooperative, either as a principal member, associated member, or collaborating producer. Visit the [About Us Page](#) to learn more about SolBun and the farms that comprise it!

Are these products fresh?

Yes! These products are freshly harvested from local producers within Brasov County. Information about the farms these products are coming from will be included in each newsletter! To learn more about these farms and how they're ensuring the highest quality products you can visit the [Our Farms Page](#) to read their profiles.



Newsletter Information



Subscribe to our Newsletter

Subscribe to our biweekly newsletter for free! Learn more about:

- Items in this week's food box, and who is producing them
- Featured farms
- Local recipes to complement the foodbox



Where Users Subscribe to the Newsletter



Subscribe to our newsletter to join us in supporting sustainable agriculture and enjoying the freshest produce straight from our farmer's fields

First name (required) Last name (required)

Email (required)

Send

To learn more about how the food box works check out the Food Box Information page!

Food Box Information



Link to Food Box Information



Hear about this weeks food box, as well as how to tell apart genuine producers and resellers at Piata Dacia. Also included are recipes and our featured farm this week, Rognean Orchard.

This Week's Food Box

- Tomatoes
- Celery
- Potatoes
- Beets
- Carrots
- Rhubarb
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Parsnips
- Garlic
- Spinach

Price: 100 RON

[Click Here to Order!](#)

Subscribe to our biweekly newsletter.

Review the produce in the letter and click to purchase that week's food box.

Fresh produce is delivered to your door!

Recipes

Oyster Mushrooms



Oyster mushrooms, like the ones you might receive in our food box don't need much work in order to make them delicious. Simply roasting them in the oven with a little butter or oil and salt is all you need to make a great side dish.

Featured Farm

Rognean Orchard

Our Featured Farm this week is Rognean Orchard, run by Teodor and his wife Daniela. They have been producing over ten varieties of apples for the past 8 years, all without synthetic pesticides. Check them out in their full profile!



[Learn More!](#)

Upcoming Events

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Fri
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4

Genuine Producers vs. Resellers at Piata Dacia: How to Tell Them Apart



You may or may not have noticed, but at Piata Dacia, different vendors have different colored stands. These colors serve a purpose and can help you distinguish genuine producers from resellers/middlemen. Green and blue stands represent genuine producers while yellow stands represent resellers. Another way you can verify the authenticity of producers is most will have a certificate on the front of the stands confirming their genuineness. Make sure to use these tips the next time you're at Piata Dacia to ensure you're getting the freshest food !

Thank you for supporting local food!



RECOMMENDATIONS

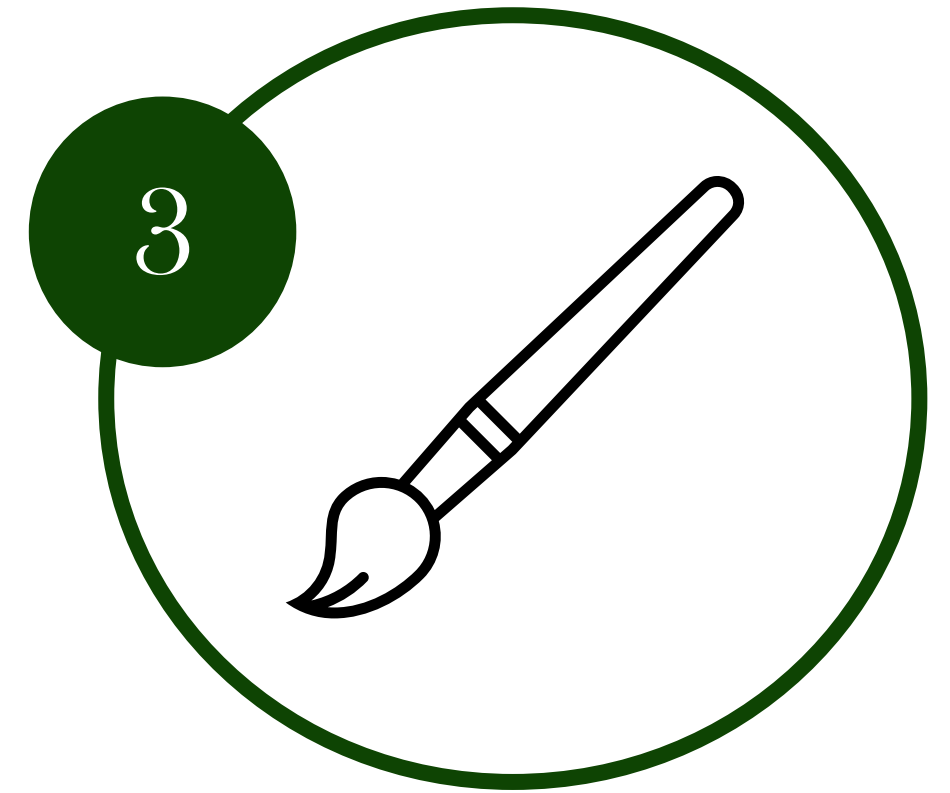
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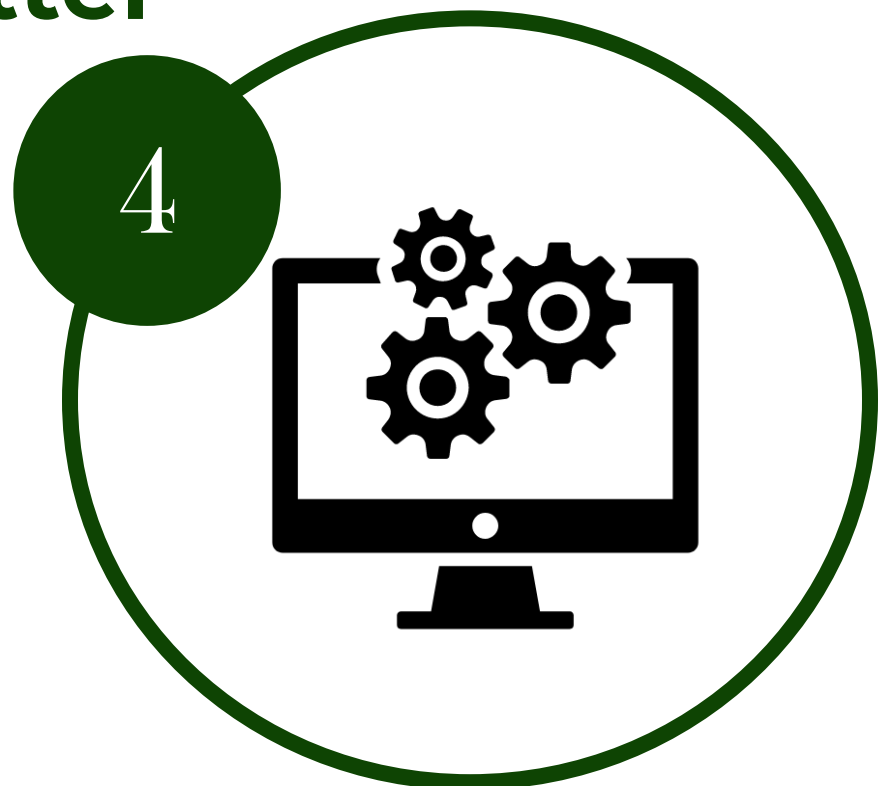
**Biweekly
Newsletter**



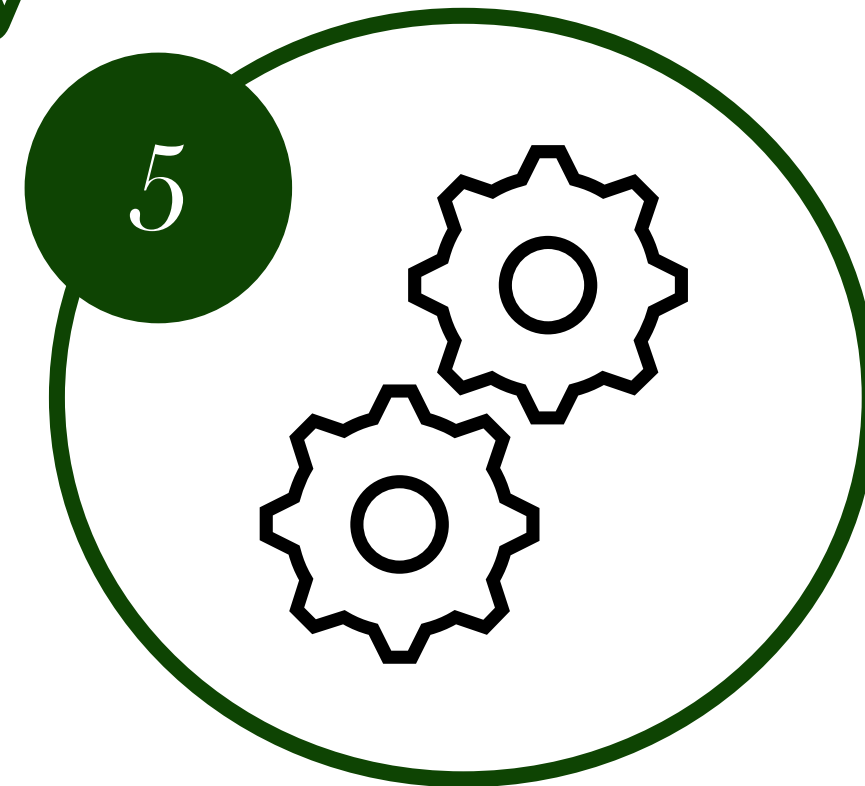
**Prior Consumer
Survey**



Improve Site Design



**User Testing and
Website Feedback**



Maintain Website

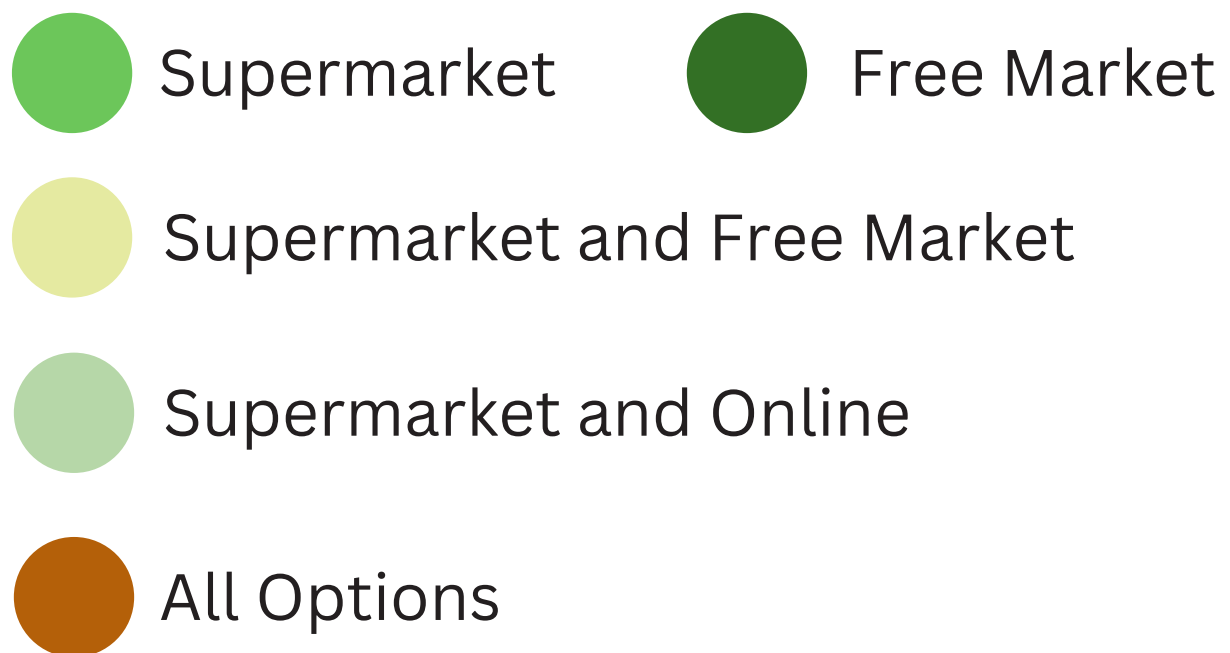
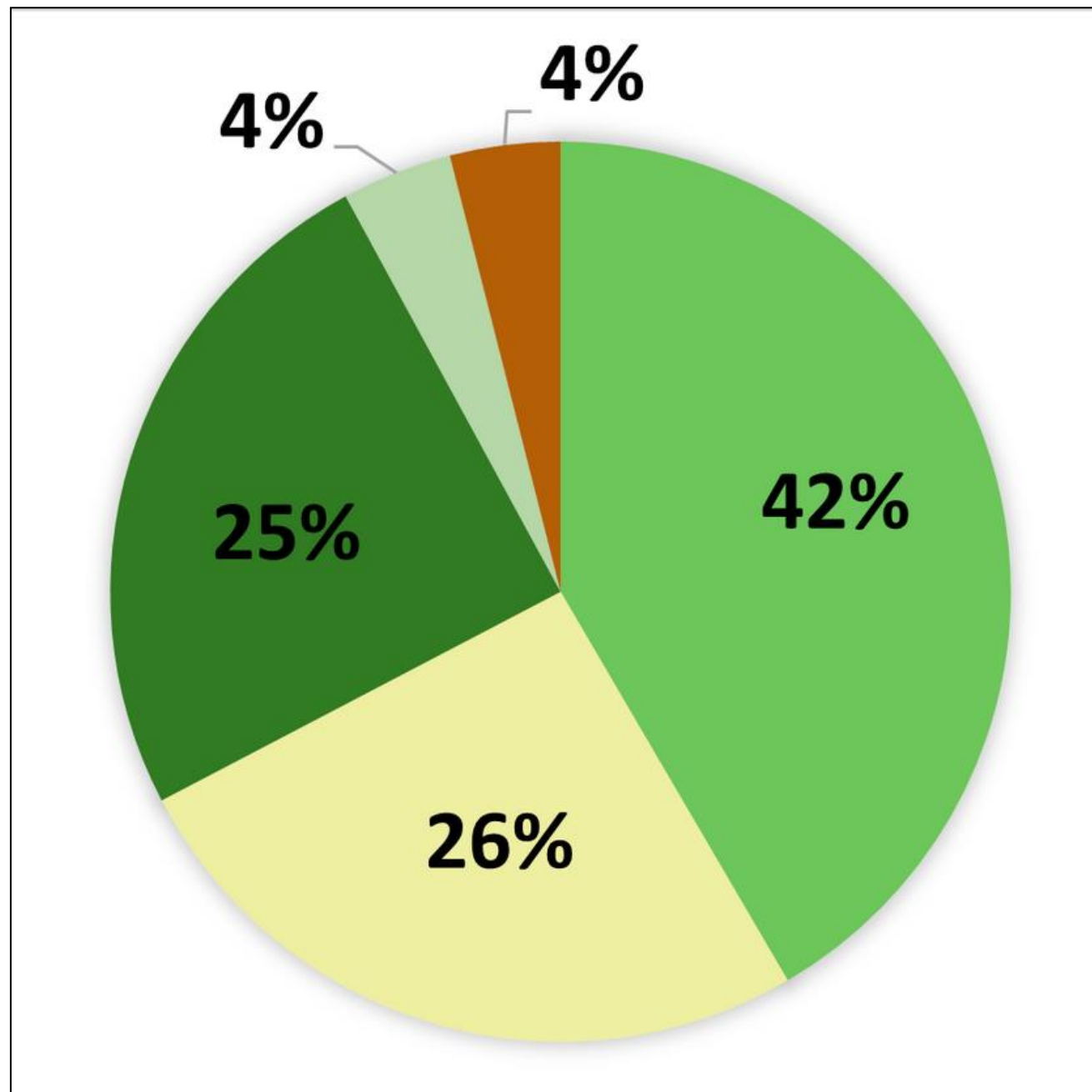


Thank You!

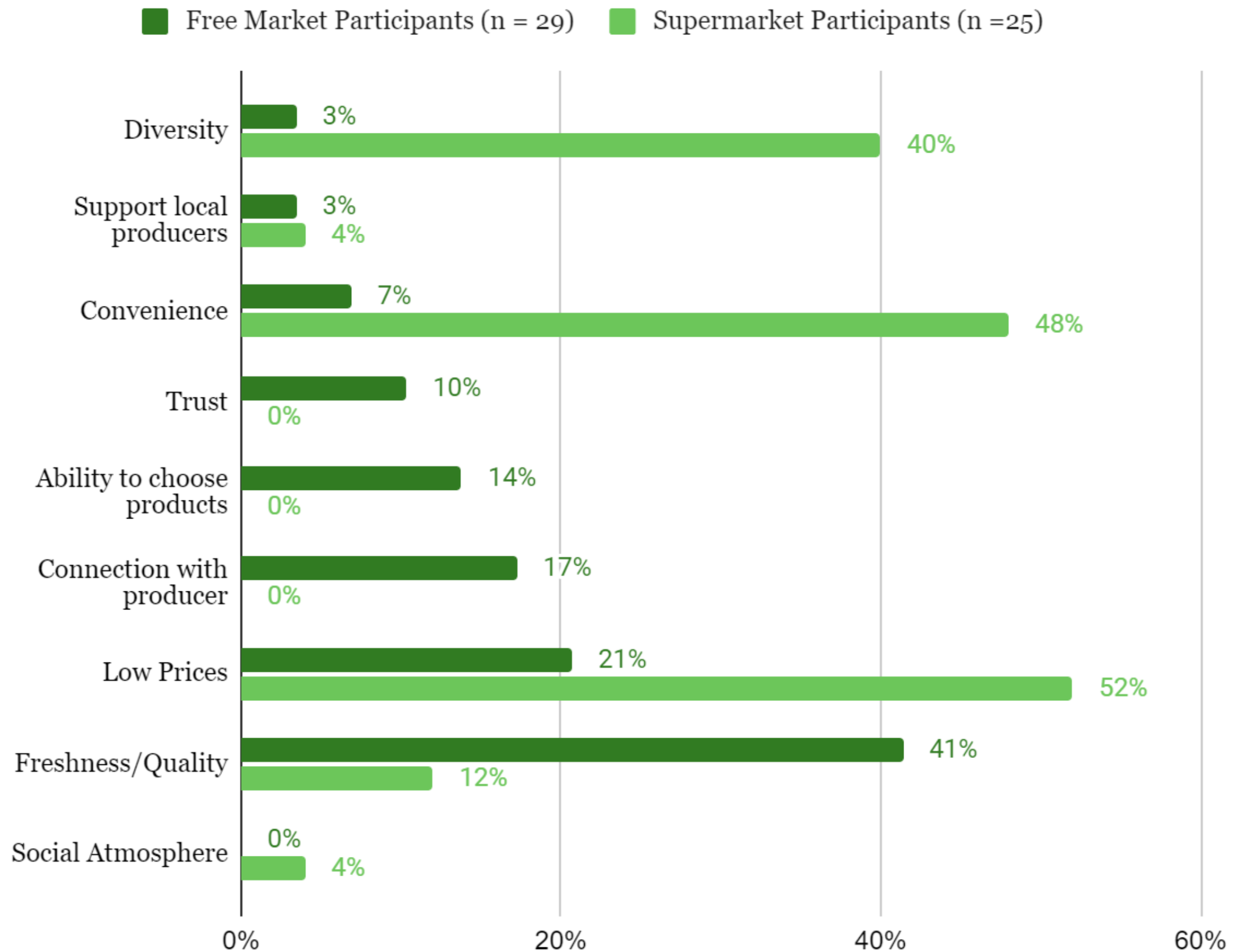
Questions?

References

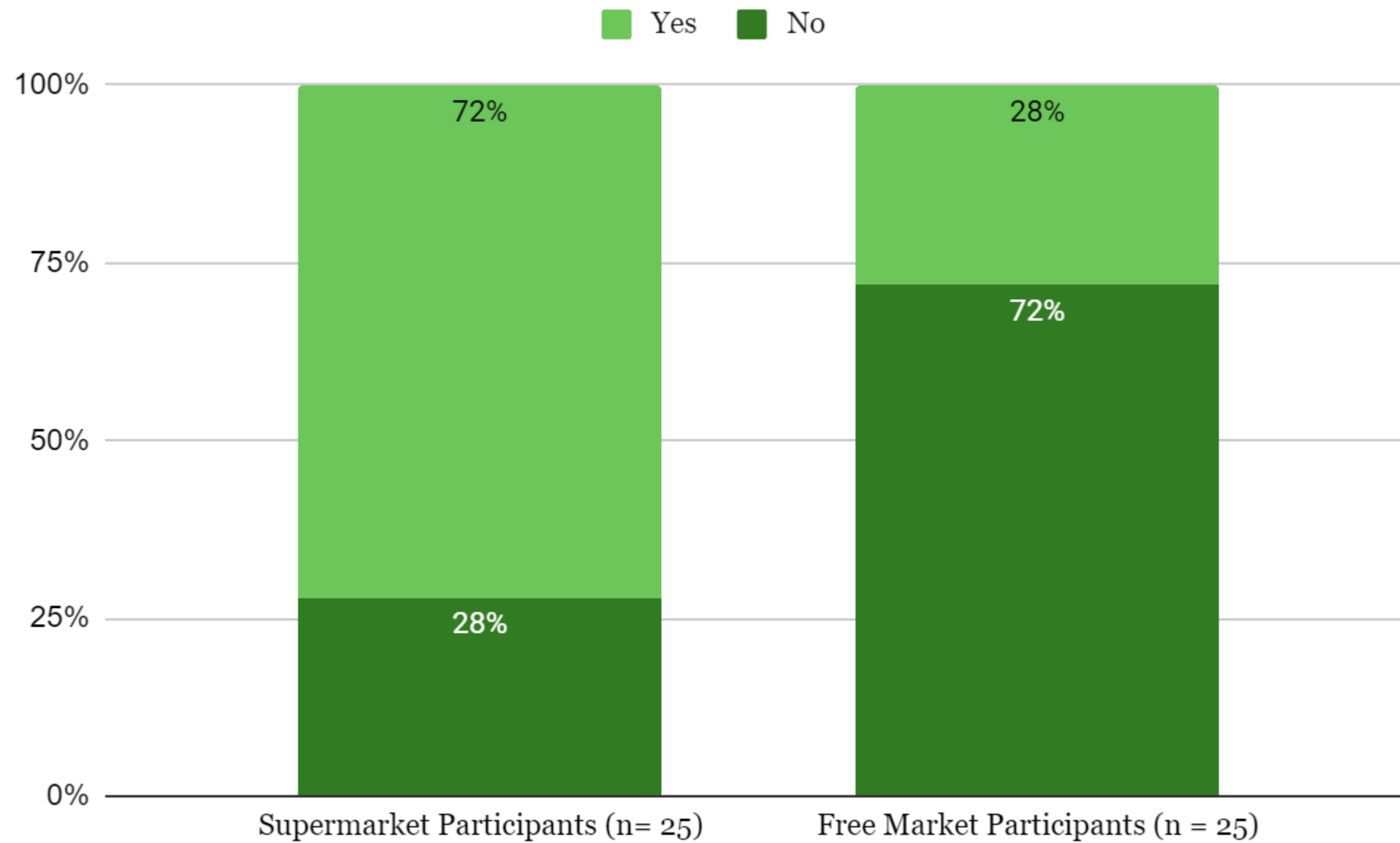
Slide Number	Citation
3	<u>Agarwal, B., Dobay, K. M., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2021). Revisiting group farming in a post-socialist economy: The case of Romania. <i>Journal of Rural Studies</i>, 87, 148–158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.10.006</u>
6	<u>Pawlewicz, A., & Pawlewicz, K. (2023). The Risk of Agricultural Land Abandonment as a Socioeconomic Challenge for the Development of Agriculture in the European Union. <i>Sustainability</i>, 15(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043233</u>
11	<u>Borovicka, Cailin, Hoey, Lindsay, Santopadre, Troy, & Zuwallack, Angus. (2023). <i>Strengthening coordinated action among small farm cooperatives in Romania.</i></u>
18	<u>https://cariere.kaufland.ro/descopera-kaufland/locatii.html</u>



Why Do You Shop Where You Do?



Would You Try a Food Box?



What Factors Would Be Important in a Food Box?

