

Breakfast On The Farm: Consumer's Perception and Change of Attitude of Food Production on a Modern Farm

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INTRODUCTION

Breakfast on the Farm (BOTF), a free public event was held at Sandland Farms Inc. in Fulton County to help people learn about modern food production practices and introduce them to the farm families who work hard to produce a wholesome, safe food supply for Ohio communities and the world. The family friendly event welcomed both rural and urban visitors and consisted of:

- free breakfast
- a website and Facebook page to interact up to and on the event day
- 17 educational stations, staffed by trained volunteers
- a farm tour
- the opportunity to converse with local farmers and the host farm family

Aerial View Sandland Farms Inc.



AIM

The goal of the event was to engage and educate the general public about modern farming, local foods and animal management practices to fill the public knowledge gap on modern food practices.



METHODS

Breakfast on the Farm was a collaborative effort through multiple agencies, and multiple Ohio State University Extension Educators in both Fulton and Lucas Counties.

- Initially, a host farm volunteered and was chosen to be the host site. Sandland Farms of Swanton, OH is a family run, working dairy farm.
- Planning for the June 13, 2015 event began in October 2014. Fulton and Lucas County OSU Extension offices, as well as Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation and the Farm Bureau were the key agencies facilitating the planning meetings which occurred regularly up until the event.
- The Breakfast on the Farm event was modeled after Michigan State University's events and they shared their ideas and experiences.
- Local media coverage was provided by WTOL Channel 11 News prior to and during the event.
- Over 400 volunteers assisted at the registration area, breakfast area, all 17 educational stations, including the survey station, and parking. A volunteer training was held several days prior to the event. Key political personnel, from county commissioners to area representatives were also on hand to volunteer and greet attendees.
- In order to assess the impact of Breakfast on the Farm, participants were asked to voluntarily complete an IRB approved survey on the day of the event as they exited the farm.

RESULTS

Over 3,000 participants were in attendance for the event on June 13, 2015. The majority of attendees were from Fulton and Lucas counties; however other Ohio counties and several surrounding states were represented as well.

- 578 adults over the age of 18 completed surveys. The return rate was 36% for the adults in attendance, as children were not able to fill out a survey. Not only were people willing to take the written survey, but many visitors also requested to complete a survey before the volunteers had a chance to ask them.
- For nearly 60%, it was their first visit to a working dairy farm and their first time attending an event like Breakfast on the Farm.
- For nearly 70%, it was the first time they ever met a dairy farmer in person.
- *Levels of trust increased* for attendees in multiple areas, including that farmers will safe-guard milk, that milk is a safe food, that farmers will care for the environment and their animals, and that farmers protect water quality.
- *Levels of confidence increased in Ohio dairy products overall.* Many of the attendees already purchased a significant amount of dairy products but also agreed at an 81% rate to purchase more dairy products.
- All of these increases were deemed statistically significant after inputting the data and producing the reports from the statistical reporting package.

Over 3,000 people attended Breakfast on the Farm on June 13, 2015



Production agriculture tour, one of 17 educational stations



CONCLUSIONS

Attendees were able to learn information from having the access to modern farm production, and appreciated the transparency of modern farm practices. In person interaction has meaningful impact for consumers. Many families attended, including the adults who make household purchasing decisions at the grocery store. This event was able to bridge the gap of knowing where food comes from, how it is processed, as well as encouraging those attending to purchase food locally and support the farmers in their communities.

Modern dairy farm in operation



Farm safety educational station



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