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Research Article

Accessing the Food Systems in Urban and Rural Minnesota Communities

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Abstract

Objective

Explore how urban and rural Minnesotans access the food system and to investigate whether community infrastructure supports a healthful food system.

Design

Eight (4 urban and 4 rural) focus groups were conducted.

Setting and Participants

Eight counties with urban influence codes of 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, and 10. Fifty-nine (urban, n = 27; rural, n = 32) adults. The sample was of mixed race and had a range of incomes. Almost half of the sample was obese.

Main Outcome Measure

Food systems access and the role of community infrastructure, civic engagement, and reciprocal relationships in food provisioning in counties with different urban influence codes.

Analyses

Themes and subthemes were identified through emerging concepts.

Results

Food access varied based on rurality and community infrastructure. Three themes emerged: community infrastructure around the conventional food system and food provisioning, alternative food resources, and perceptions of the effect food and of the influence diet and exercise have on health.

Conclusions and Implications

Civic engagement and community infrastructure affected food access. Rural residents rely more on retail grocery stores, gardening, hunting, and informal food exchange systems, whereas urban residents rely more on the retail grocery stores and food safety net systems. Hunting and gardening may contribute valuable nutrients to the diet.



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Key Words

food system; health; civic engagement; hunting

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â€ Hannah Miller was an undergraduate researcher in the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at the University of Minnesota at the time this research was conducted.

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