



Farmers Post

Phase II: Testing and Iterating

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Executive Summary

Farmers Post, which partners with the US Postal Service (USPS) to better connect small farmers to local consumers, could revolutionize how we access and consume food today. Our current food system often fails to make this connection, leading to long and costly supply chains that leave farmers struggling to turn a profit, consumers often lacking access to healthy and fresh produce, and enormous levels of food loss and waste.

One in four consumers say they are ready to sign up, characterizing themselves as very likely to be a Farmers Post customer in a survey conducted by Hart Research Associates in May 2023. These interested potential customers maintained their interest even after learning details about the program, including cost, models, and type of offerings. While this very likely group did include people one would expect, such as those who shop regularly at farmers markets, it was a diverse group overall, with high interest from Black,

Latino, and younger consumers (ages 18-49), as well as parents and people who self-describe as living in a food desert. Quality is a major draw and people are okay paying for that quality, including using limited SNAP and WIC funds to make purchases as long as those payments are accepted.

Farmers also remain enthusiastic about the program, seeing it as a large potential market opportunity and a way to build strong connections with the local community. However, they also remain cautious about large demand shifts in the last few years and want to see the program's risks addressed as much as possible. For example, participating farmers would like to see a Farmers Post entity share best practices and lessons learned, source data on local populations so they can grow the most wanted produce, and include information on the farms in boxes customers receive.



Two pilots, one in Connecticut with Healthy PlanEat and one in Virginia with 4P Foods, have begun to test some of those questions and models, as well as piloting different systems with the USPS. Both programs have focused largely on a new USPS program, Connect Local, but will be trying other USPS options as well. Healthy PlanEat shipped boxes during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 growing seasons. Shipments went well, and the CT pilot largely focused on better understanding the process for farmers and consumers. 4P Foods shipped boxes in fall 2023 and dedicated its VA pilot to testing different packaging considerations to minimize needed protective packaging for the products inside. Both pilots yielded key insights for future steps and recommendations and will continue in 2024.

While the pilots to date have focused on logistics, Farmers Post could have a significant impact on food insecurity and consumer health, issues that should be probed further in future pilots. Overall, people in the US eat just a fraction of the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Increasing that intake even slightly could lead to significantly improved health. This program could specifically be a game changer for the 12.8% of US households that suffered from food insecurity in 2022.¹ Small farms are located in the large majority of counties across the US but people still suffer from food insecurity in those counties. A better connection between small farms and local consumers is needed. However, to best support low-income and food-insecure consumers, tweaks will be needed to government programs to make Farmers Post as accessible as possible.

Based on the findings and research to date, our recommendations are:

- **Explore the ability to create a flat-rate USPS box to be used by Farmers Post.** This is an existing practice across many USPS programs already, including Connect Local, where flat-rate boxes are provided free of charge to use with the relevant program. However, none of the current boxes are appropriately sized for Farmers Post. We recommend one or two dedicated boxes, perhaps a medium and large model, with suggested sizes in the range of 13" x 10" x 7" or 16" x 12" x 8". This is a longer-term goal as volume and market are further explored in partnership with the USPS to ensure the costs would benefit both farmers and the USPS. This could also be a significant branding opportunity to continue to boost the program and therefore support more small farmers and consumers while also addressing food loss and waste.
- **Clarify and streamline the USPS Connect website.** While both Connect Local and Connect Regional provide good opportunities for shipping from farmer to consumer, there are growing pains in the website with some confusion over drop-off times, limited ability to look up addresses and drop-off locations in bulk, lack of clarity over expected delivery time frames when using Connect Regional, and limits to printing labels in advance. Addressing these technical hiccups would make for a much smoother Farmers Post process and encourage more farms to participate.
- **Simplify and streamline the process for Farmers Post to accept SNAP and WIC payments.** Currently, there are significant technical and cost burdens placed on small farmers who want to accept these payments through Farmers Post. If Farmers Post could qualify as a single entity, many of these barriers would be eliminated.
- **Bring Double Up Food Bucks online and apply it to Farmers Post – and add free or subsidized shipping.** Right now, in participating states, consumers who use their SNAP or WIC benefits to purchase fresh produce can see their buying power doubled due to Double Up Food Bucks. This program should be brought online and applied to Farmers Post. It should also be extended to cover shipping costs, so that low-income consumers who use their SNAP funds to buy from Farmers Post also see government support to cover the costs of shipping to their home.

Farmers Post is an exciting opportunity to create a win-win program for all stakeholders. Pilot testing is going well and there is clearly a large potential market. However, tweaks, adjustments, and key next steps are needed to build the best possible program. These include: (1) continuing pilots and expanding them to test outreach and delivery in low-income communities, (2) determining better practices to minimize food loss and waste and packaging, and (3) working with the USPS, as well as existing pilot partners Healthy PlanEat and 4P Foods, to construct and execute a plan to reach national scale. This program has the potential to bring gains to all stakeholders, but further work is needed to ensure we can unlock all of those benefits.





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Background

The current US food system fails to directly connect farmers to consumers, leading to inefficiencies and hurdles across the supply chain. Farmers struggle to turn a profit, earning just 7.8 cents out of every dollar that consumers spend on fruits and vegetables², while only 1 in 10 adults, and only 1 in 14 minority adults, consume the recommended daily serving of vegetables.³ Meanwhile, up to 40% of fresh produce in the US is wasted.⁴ These problems aren't new, but have been magnified in the last few years as supply chains have broken more often and markets have shifted due to COVID, war, trade battles, and other shocks to the food system.

In 2020, World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Markets Institute began to explore whether we could help create Farmers Post – a direct connection between farmers and local consumers while partnering with the United States Postal Service (USPS). We envisioned a third-party platform integrated with the USPS and providing a win for all stakeholders. Farmers Post would remove the burden from farmers of having to vertically integrate. By using Farmers Post they wouldn't need to develop their own website, do their own marketing, or navigate the USPS process (and minimums) individually. The program would allow consumers to go to one simple site, put in their zip code, and get fresh produce delivered to their door. It would bring more fresh produce to more people, a health win, while fighting food loss and waste; 16%⁵

of wasted food occurs on-farm, often due to failure to meet very strict specifications set by retailers. It would also bring a new revenue stream and positive marketing to the USPS, an underutilized asset facing a budget shortfall.

In 2021, WWF released a [business case](#) suggesting that with just a modest consumer uptake of 2-3%, the USPS could add \$1.5B in annual revenue. In June 2022, with support from the Institute of Food Technologists' Seeding the Future grant, WWF released results of its [Phase I work](#), exploring the need for Farmers Post, potential models, key stakeholders, and important learnings. Since then, we have continued to build on that work with two pilots, in CT and VA, and through consumer, farmer, and health research, policy outreach and exploration, and further model development. There has been huge forward progress, with great potential for a national program, but there are also key questions to continue to explore.





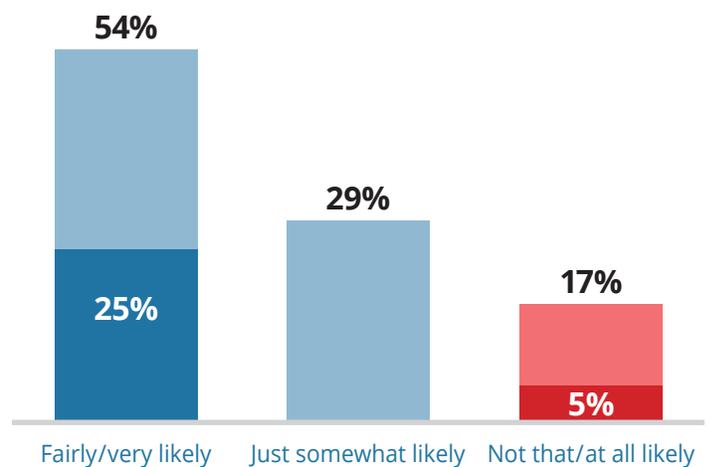
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Consumer Research

To better understand the full market potential of Farmers Post, WWF partnered with Hart Research Associates to commission a national survey of 1,005 adults, conducted online May 18-21, 2023. (Full results are available in Appendix A.) Our goal was to understand market size, segmentation, willingness-to-pay, and potential model choice.

Over 50% of consumers say they are very or fairly likely to be a Farmers Post customer, and a full one in four consumers say they are very likely to be a Farmers Post customer. When this is broken down by sub-category, groups that were most likely to be interested in the program were fairly diverse. Unsurprisingly, this included people who already buy regularly from farmers markets and through CSAs (community-support agriculture) but also included Black consumers, Latino consumers, younger consumers (ages 18-49), parents, and people who self-describe as living in an area where it is difficult to buy affordable or high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables (i.e., a food desert.) Those who are interested also maintain their interest even after learning details about the program, including cost, models, and type of offerings. There is an identical 54% of consumers who are very or fairly likely to purchase from Farmers Post both at the beginning and end of the survey, and nearly all (88%) of those who said they are very likely at the beginning of the survey remain very likely at the end.

Likelihood of buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.



Consumers are extremely excited about Farmers Post due to quality. They predict that while buying produce through Farmers Post may be more expensive than where they buy it right now, they say they are willing to pay for this increased quality. Consumers who are most excited about Farmers Post say they are also eager to support it and purchase from it for the chance to see more people accessing healthy food, to reduce food loss and waste, to support local farmers, and for convenience. It's also a selling point that this would be delivered by the USPS, which maintains its high approval

Table 1: Profile of very likely Farmers Post Customers

	Very Likely Customers %	All Adults %
White	54	61
Black	18	13
Latino	21	17
Men	56	49
Women	44	51
Age 18-34	36	31
Age 35-49	26	22
Age 50-64	22	24
Age 65+	16	23
Urban	37	30
Suburban	42	47
Small town/rural	21	23

	Very Likely Customers %	All Adults %
Poor	17	16
Working class	30	34
Middle class	34	38
Upper middle class/ well-to-do	19	11
Employed full-time	57	45
Children in household	33	26
Live in food desert	52	43
Cook ALL meals at home	33	19
CSA regular	32	14
Farmers market regular	49	31

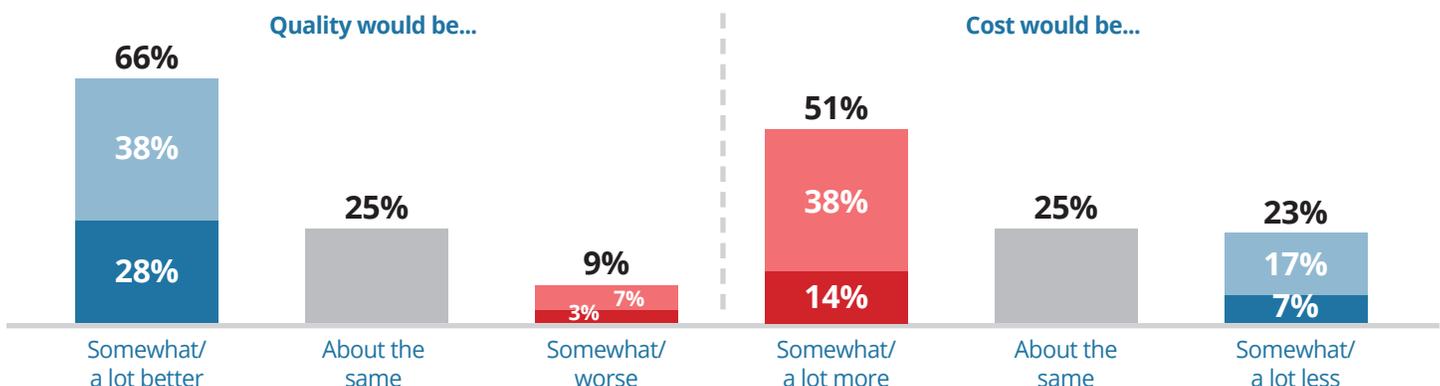
Bolded numbers indicate a statistically significant increase over all adults.

ratings with consumers, with 87% of those surveyed reporting they are somewhat or very satisfied with the USPS.

Intriguingly, while the wealthiest people are the most likely to say they are very likely to buy from Farmers Post, support and interest in the program holds up across all income groups. People who report living in a food desert are also even more likely than all adults to say they are very likely to buy from Farmers Post (31% compared to 25%). And, among people who have received SNAP/WIC benefits in the past year, 26% report they are very likely to buy from Farmers Post. This is great news for efforts to combat food insecurity, but it also does come with one caveat: recipients of SNAP/WIC point out that their interest and willingness to purchase from the program is dependent on being able to use their EBT payments to make the purchase, which they current cannot do.

The survey also provided further insight into potential models. The large majority of consumers (81%) say they are excited about the option of home delivery, but it may still be important to offer drop-off at a centralized location nearby someone’s home (such as a school, VFW, or community center) for those who cannot safely accept a package at their residence. More consumers overall (55%) would prefer the option to buy a box each week at full price, but very-likely consumers instead prefer (at 58%) to pay an annual subscription fee and then get a 10% savings each week. The large majority (85%) of very-likely consumers also say they would like to collect packaging materials over a few weeks and then ship them back with a pre-paid label if they could leave a box on their porch or by their mailbox every few weeks. While this model hasn’t been tested yet in our pilot, this could be an important consideration to keep costs down for farmers while reducing the environmental footprint of shipments.

Considering where you buy produce now, how do you think Farmers Post fruits and vegetables compare?





Farmer Research

While Farmers Post could be a significant new market for farmers, it must be built in a way that supports and de-risks the process for these growers. Today, just 7% of US farms sell direct-to-consumer⁶ and the majority (57%) of those farms are located in higher-income, metropolitan counties.⁷ Nearly all of these farms sell via on-farm or pick-up models, such as on-farm stores, farmers markets, and pick-your-own enterprises. This leaves out a huge potential market – the 25% of US consumers who are very likely to sign up for Farmers Post and the myriad farms located near these potential customers. Today, \$9B is generated through local food sales⁸, but this could rise significantly with a new market opportunity. However, to do so, Farmers Post must be structured from the beginning in a way that best promotes farmers and gives them a chance to earn a profit.

WWF spoke to several dozen small farmers, including those participating in the pilots (detailed in the next section) as well as many who are not. These included diversified farmers from eight different states growing an array of fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Many, but not all, are currently selling to consumers in some format. Of the farmers interviewed, most say they reach consumers primarily through existing farmers markets.

Many of the farmers immediately see the potential market opportunity presented by Farmers Post, but they remain

cautious about being a first mover. Customer demand has varied dramatically over the last several years, especially with the shock of COVID's arrival in 2020, and so many farmers would like to see consistent, sustained demand in Farmers Post before committing to and investing in the program. None of them see the logistics as an insurmountable burden; they point out that even if they are the ones packing boxes, this would be far less time consuming than going to a farmers market — typically a multi-day endeavor when one adds in the time for harvesting, prepping, and then driving to, setting up, and selling the produce. However, it would still be a change in behavior and would need to be fit into an existing workflow and routine. When farmers already struggle to turn a profit, even this relatively small time commitment must be justified.

Despite this caution, most farmers see this as a long-term, sustainable way to build community connections and a larger customer base. They like the idea of selling locally but reaching people beyond those willing to visit a pick-up site. One of the biggest draws to the farmers is the potential consistency of sales while continuing to build personal connections to those who are likely to be emotionally invested in their operations.



There are a few key ways that Farmers Post could address these concerns while further cementing the potential benefits:

- **Offer best practices and lessons learned to farmers as they enroll.** Information could be shared on how to pack food to ensure freshness; what foods ship best in what temperatures and locales; what resonates most with consumers; how to most easily integrate packing into existing routines; and more. Technical assistance of this type up front will minimize hurdles to investment and drive down food loss and waste while boosting farmer incomes.
- **Surveying and providing data on local populations to determine relevant and culturally appropriate foods would add value.** While farmers can make an educated guess as to what would be of most interest, Farmers Post offers a chance to reach new consumers who may not already be purchasing food directly from farms. This is an opportunity to reach a new customer base whose

demographics and interests may differ from the standard customer base. Investing in local surveys to learn more about potential customers would add value for both consumers and farmers, providing a chance to grow culturally relevant foods that might provide a stronger draw and resonance and ensure more people are enjoying more healthy produce.

- **Include information on farms in the boxes.** Consumers would like to learn about where they are sourcing their food. Including pamphlets, QR codes for more information, or other ways of allowing people to learn about the farms that grow their food would help to build connection and be of interest to all involved in the program.

Continuing to collect information from farmers as the pilots expand and integrating those additional learnings into models will be essential as Farmers Post continues to expand.





Models

Throughout our research and piloting, we have honed in on two USPS programs, both under USPS Connect[®], that are most relevant to Farmers Post. It is likely that in the long run, as we have seen in the pilot, these will both be utilized depending on geography, population density, and participant considerations. We recommend continuing to pursue both of these, and as the program grows and volumes and markets are further established, working with the USPS to explore a dedicated box or two for Farmers Post and the potential for unique branding. We also recommend continuing to explore options for returning and re-using packaging.

Connect Local

Connect Local debuted in 2022. The USPS rolled out an early pilot in CT in fall 2022, but it has since expanded across the country. This program is targeted at fast, local deliveries for local businesses and speeds up the process by eliminating touch points. To participate, farmers need to drop off their boxes early in the morning (typically by 7 or 8 AM) at the post office that delivers to the addresses on those boxes. For example, if a farmer is delivering boxes to three separate towns, he or she may need to make three separate drop-offs depending on the post office structure in that region. However, those boxes will then be delivered the same day – usually within a handful of hours. Rates are based on the weight of the box, but a typical box in Farmers Post weighs

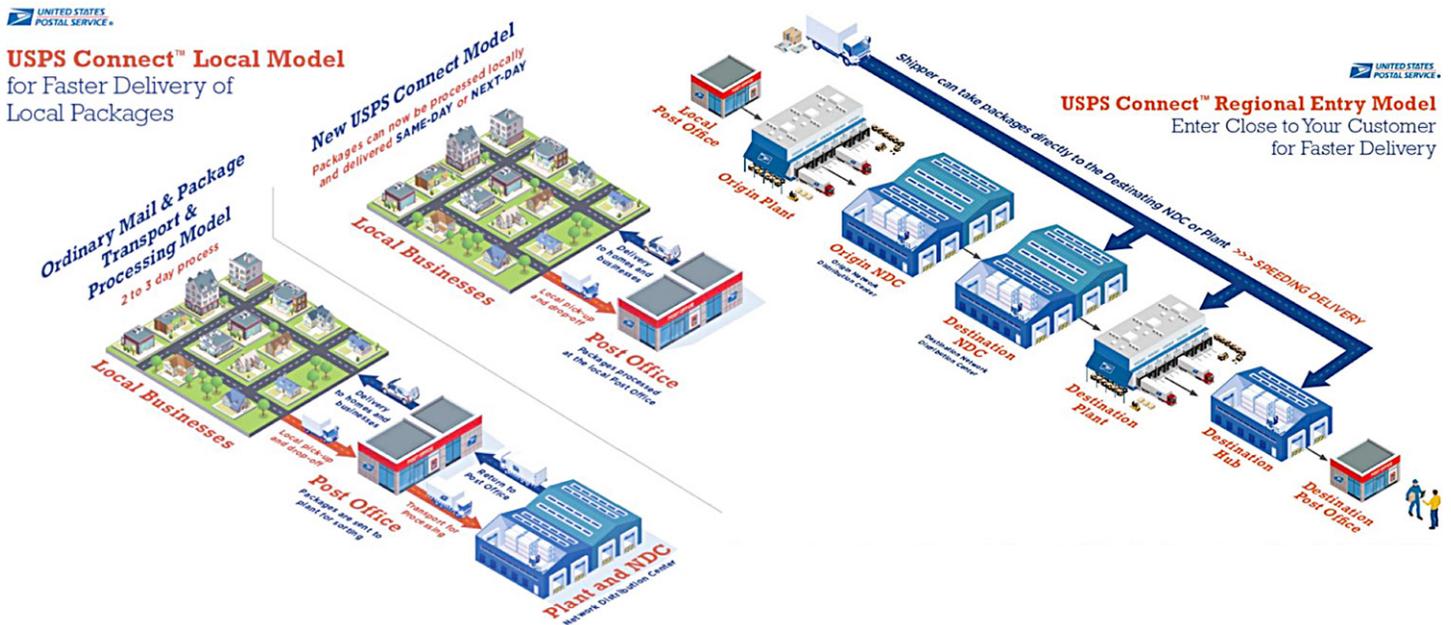
15-20 pounds and so would cost \$5.45-\$6.20 in shipping.⁹ This model will typically work well for a small farm that is largely delivering to customers in a densely populated region. If there is a larger farm or food hub with scattered customers across many towns, this model may be less time- and cost-effective.

Connect Regional

Connect Regional is a rebranding of the Sectional Center Facility drop-off program already used by the USPS. It allows next-day delivery to a larger region. Unlike Connect Local, which uses five-digit zip codes, Connect Regional uses three-digit zip codes and so provides a larger reach if packages are dropped off at a regional facility.

Under this program, farmers need to drop off boxes by late afternoon/early evening time (it can vary) at the regional destination facility that services the three-digit zip codes on those packages. Many regional facilities cover a range of three-digit zip codes. These boxes will then be delivered the next day (or two days if being sent to a more distant location.) Again, the pricing varies by weight but a 15-20-pound box would cost \$9.35-10.63. There are also quantity minimums to be met for drop-off, which are currently set at about 40 boxes. This model may work well for larger farms and food hubs that are delivering to a wider geographic area.

Illustration 1: USPS Connect® Local and USPS Connect® Regional Entry models



Farmers Post Box and Branding

To truly make Farmers Post a success, a dedicated, provided box from the USPS would be ideal. It would simplify the program for farmers and food hubs by ensuring that a box met USPS specifications and allowing for a range of weights instead of having to be precise with every box. Standardization also allows for more lessons learned and better practices on box packing and, while the box cost is ultimately built into the shipping cost, being able to get the box from the USPS without an additional cost streamlines cost planning.



Illustration 2: Proposed Farmers Post branding on USPS box

Many USPS programs, including Connect Local, already offer standardized boxes. In those situations, the USPS will provide flat-rate boxes free of charge to use with the relevant

program. However, while Connect Local does offer a few flat-rate boxes, none of them are the appropriate size for Farmers Post. We recommend one or two dedicated boxes, perhaps in a medium and large model. Suggested sizes are in the range of 13" x 10" x 7" and 16" x 12" x 8". These meet all USPS specifications to be machinable and are similar to box sizes offered in the past through the Regional Rate program. However, all boxes offered by the USPS need to cover 100% of their production costs, and the similarly sized Regional Rate C box was discontinued since it did not. This may be a long-term goal to work with the USPS to explore box feasibility as Farmers Post continues to expand and there is more information on volumes and markets to understand the full business case.

Similarly, over the long-term, there may also be a branding opportunity in partnership with the USPS in using a dedicated Farmers Post box. While most USPS flat rate boxes simply include the USPS logo and the shipping service name, Farmers Post boxes could be a different color (perhaps green to connote farms) or include images of fruits or vegetables on them. It's a chance for the USPS to be seen as delivering food to people who most need it, generating more support and goodwill, but also offering a built-in marketing opportunity to increase sales and interest in this unique program. That could be a win for all stakeholders, including farmers, the USPS, and consumers and the business case and benefits should continue to be discussed.

Re-using Packaging

Further testing and exploration are needed to determine the best packaging for Farmers Post and therefore the best options for re-using and returning those materials. As detailed in the Pilots section below, Healthy PlanEat used a liner and a cold pack while 4P Foods used very little packaging. The needs of Farmers Post boxes will vary based on weather, geography, and the produce being shipped. It is likely that for at least a portion of the year, produce will do best with some level of protection. However, costs and environmental footprint will quickly increase if padding, cold packs, and insulation are added to boxes.

Ideally, if additional insulation, cooling, or padding is needed, Farmers Post customers would be able to return that to the

relevant farm or food hub. To keep costs down, it would be most effective if a customer collected the liners or other relevant items in their house for a few weeks and, perhaps every fourth or fifth shipment, received a pre-paid return label in their box. They could then put all of the packaging materials of the last several weeks into the box that just came, put on the return label, and set it out on their porch or by their mailbox for easy pick-up. The USPS already has this capability, but testing would be needed to determine if/how often customers follow through on this and what that would then mean in total costs to the farm. In our consumer survey, 85% of very likely Farmers Post customers thought they would use this return method, but testing would be needed to see if that held true in practice.



Pilots

Connecticut

Healthy PlanEat is a sustainable food tech start-up based in East Lyme, CT. It is an online farmers market, enabling farmers and food artisans to sell directly to local customers. To explore whether a sustainable shipping model could be utilized, Healthy PlanEat applied for and was awarded a grant from a CT-based non-profit to complete an initial sustainable shipping pilot with three farms during summer 2021. It has expanded its shipping program steadily since that time with

assistance from a USDA grant. Healthy PlanEat's pilot mostly depended on Connect Local, but did use other USPS offerings when Connect Local wasn't as convenient or available at that time. Healthy PlanEat provided farmers with its existing online marketplace, technical assistance, and physical materials including boxes, insulators, and ice packs. Farmers packed their own boxes and did their own drop-off.



Above left: Monitoring the growth of a greenhouse full of late fall vegetables is part of the daily routine for Dan Wood, manager of White Gate Farm. Packing (below left) and dropping off Farmers Post boxes (top right) is becoming part of his new routine. **Bottom right:** Chelsea Gubbins particularly admires “the cutest little container” of cherry tomatoes as she enjoys fresh produce delivered to her door.

The shipments went well. Farmers were able to pack the boxes, the shipments arrived on time, and customers were impressed with the ability to receive farm-fresh produce at their door – produce that was often picked just 24-48 hours earlier. However, this pilot was largely focused on logistics rather than trying to test recruitment of significant new customer bases. Even in the peak heat of the summer, all of the produce arrived in excellent condition with the insulation and ice packs. All the boxes were seasonal “farmer’s choice” boxes as opposed to a customer being able to choose their items a la carte to keep things simple for the farmers during initial piloting.

The participating farmers were small, diversified farmers who already were selling through other direct-to-consumer channels. While they had to adapt their schedules a bit to fit packing and dropping off boxes into their existing routine, all indicated that this was very doable. They see value in being

able to supplement existing sales outlets by reaching new customers, building their base to expand their farm, or just being able to even-out sales as different produce peaks at different times. The farmers also saw this as an opportunity to develop stronger relationships with local consumers – which they also see as key to Farmers Post success. As one farmer shared, if the customer has a relationship and understands the ebbs and flows of a farm, they are more likely to understand that box contents may vary each week and to be willing to accept that variance.

While the pilot proved successful, farmers would like to see increased scale to really work this into a large part of their routine. The biggest hurdle was getting to each individual post office to drop off boxes. For some towns, where they had a larger number of customers, it made sense. For others, it was an increased trip for little gain. If the program were scaled, this would become a more cost-effective proposition

Without Bags

With Bags

Produce



Nectarines



Plums



Minimizing Packaging

4P Foods tested the minimum packaging needs for different produce in different conditions, shipping identical shipments of produce loose inside a cardboard box and then also with delicate produce in polymer membrane bags from CAFRESH+.

for growers. They'd also like to see more automation (for example, these farmers weren't able to batch print labels and had to look up customer addresses and associated post offices one at a time – a frequent pain point mentioned in the Virginia pilot as well) and dedicated box sizes (see Models).

Healthy PlanEat is now evaluating expansion to new states and expects to continue the pilot, across CT as well as into new territory, starting in June 2024.

Virginia

4P Foods is a food hub based in Warrenton, VA operating across Virginia, Maryland, and Washington DC whose mission is to build a regional, regenerative supply network that can bring local food to all kinds of customers across the Mid-Atlantic. It works closely with farms to deliver healthy, seasonal, sustainably farmed food to retail and wholesale customers as well as providing food access boxes and products to community partners. As a food hub, 4P Foods

already collects food from its partner farms and aggregates it in a central location. This includes quality control, sorting, and boxing or bagging for final delivery. Aggregating from multiple farmers and producers allows 4P to offer more variety and choice to the end user. It offers its own home delivery service, but the last-mile delivery is the largest pain point, especially to more distant communities that may have fewer customers.

Due to their expertise in delivering food boxes, 4P Foods focused its pilot on heavily testing the logistics, packaging, and cold chain across Farmers Post. 4P Foods already has its own (temperature controlled) delivery vans and various sensors. It spent time in summer 2022 delivering boxes of food around their normal routes, with the temperature controls off, and temperature sensors present to test the changes throughout the day in peak Virginia heat. The goal was to understand the minimum packaging needs for different produce in different conditions – as well as the maximum shipment times that could be used.

Based on this analysis, 4P Foods completed three different test shipments with the USPS in 2023. Each shipment included two boxes to two separate addresses. It compared same-day and next-day delivery as well as different packaging possibilities. Each address received one box of food with the produce entirely loose inside the cardboard box and another one which included delicate produce in polymer membrane bags from CAFRESH+ designed to increase shelf life. This meant there were six separate paired shipments to provide learnings. None of the boxes included any type of insulation or cold packs.

Produce arriving the same day was definitely better than that experiencing next day delivery, but this showed more on delicate items, such as tomatoes, than on hardier ones. Items with delicate skin, such as tomatoes and peaches, shipped in far better quality in the polymer membrane bags, and this provided protection to other items in the box as well. When they were left entirely loose and were bruised, those items did leak some juice on other pieces in the box that otherwise would have shipped in good condition. In another shipment, the items were placed in paper bags and these delicate items also travelled better with the addition of those bags to protect them. Overall, 4P Foods felt that even with next-day delivery, produce could be packed without insulation or cold packs to arrive in good condition. But further tests would be needed on the delicate items to reach the quality they would want to provide to consumers.

There were a few hiccups. Connect Local remains a new program and there was some confusion at individual post offices on drop off times and use of the program. It is also difficult on the USPS website to analyze a large number of addresses to determine how many post offices would need to be visited to reach those consumers. The current system is built to ask consumers to enter an address to be able to then identify the drop-off location. The website doesn't make it easy to identify how many post offices would be needed to be visited for a set number of individual household addresses. The website also limits planning ahead; you can only create labels for shipments going out within the next three days. While the USPS is working with 4P Foods on answering these questions, if the program were to continue to expand, additional functionality would be needed to ease this process for farmers without having to go through dedicated USPS representatives. Finally, there were some concerns about labeling. Right now, Connect Local only allows labels to be prepared three days in advance. Many customers place their order a week in advance, so flexibility

on this front to allow farmers and food hubs to prepare may also prove helpful.

4P Foods is moving ahead with the next steps of its pilot. While its shipments to date were all to employees and their families, in 2024 it plans to open up the pilot to a select group of existing customers. 4P will continue testing with Connect Local but also plan to test Connect Regional and its 24-hour, as opposed to 12-hour, delivery. This may ultimately be a better option for a larger food hub.

Health Impact and Food Insecurity

In our Phase I report, we explored the potential health impacts of Farmers Post. Overall, people in the US eat just a fraction of the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables; increasing that intake even slightly, holding the rest of one's diet constant, could lead to significantly improved health. While there are numerous reasons that people fail to eat enough produce, accessibility and convenience are certainly significant factors. Farmers Post has the chance to change the narrative on what it means to live in a food desert or be food insecure by creating a markets-based program that covers the entire country. But policy tweaks and support, suggested below, will be needed to realize the full benefits:

- Simplify and streamline the process for Farmers Post to accept SNAP and WIC payments.** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provide federal funds to low-income families and children to fund purchases for health and nutrition purposes. Many low-income families use SNAP and/or WIC funds to purchase food regularly. In the last few years, both programs have begun to shift to allow online purchases, but there are many barriers to entry. For example, if farmers participating in Farmers Post would like to accept SNAP and WIC payments, each individual farm must complete an application and pay ongoing platform fees. For SNAP, there is one federal application but for WIC, there is a different application for each state. Even a single application can be a significant barrier to an individual small farmer. The fees can also be completely cost-prohibitive. There are significant technical and privacy concerns, including the need to accept a PIN, so there are only a couple of organizations certified by the government to provide an online platform for EBT payments. Even if the farms are going through a centralized platform, as envisioned in Farmers Post, a separate fee must be paid

by each farm and there can be minimum sales needed to use the technology. The fees vary but are currently around \$125/month. If a farm is only making a few dollars profit on a box, they would need to sell 80+ boxes to people purchasing with EBT payments to break even. There are currently some government programs to provide one year free to farms, but for most small farms, this will never make financial sense. By treating Farmers Post as one entity, this process could be significantly streamlined across application procedures and costs.

- Double Up Food Bucks should be brought online and applied to Farmers Post.** The Double Up Food Bucks program (and similar other programs) match SNAP EBT payments spent on fruits and vegetables, providing an incentive and further monetary support to low-income families sourcing produce. There is no additional eligibility on the side of the consumer, but individual farmers markets or other places of purchase need to apply to offer this incentive. The funding typically comes through the federal government (and is sometimes subsidized by state governments or foundations) but it is administered separately from cards used for SNAP or WIC, so the process to access the funds varies. At most farmers markets that participate in Double Up Food Bucks, this means that a consumer who wants to make a purchase using SNAP or WIC payments often has to go to a separate table to receive tokens or coupons that they can then use at the point of purchase to double their payment. Farmers who accept those then need to provide those back to the farmers market to be reimbursed for that cost. This can often take up to a month, a significant dent in cash flow to small farmers who typically struggle to earn a profit.

In summer 2023, a NY grocer, The Hub on the Hill, became the first in the country to tackle this problem and offer online, automatic Double Up Food Bucks to people making a purchase with SNAP funds online. However, the hurdles to get there were significant. This effort should be emulated, and support given for Farmers Post to do something similar. Right now, as a platform that doesn't hold physical goods, Farmers Post may not even qualify but this should be addressed.

- Subsidized or free shipping should be offered in the same manner as Double Up Food Bucks to consumers using SNAP or WIC funds to purchase from Farmers Post.** While the cost varies by model (see next section of this report), consumers can expect to pay \$5-8 in shipping when purchasing a box of fresh produce from Farmers Post. While for many consumers this will be a cost worth the convenience, for low-income families purchasing with SNAP or WIC funds, this may be a hurdle. SNAP and WIC funds cannot be used for shipping, and even if that were to change, that would mean using limited money for shipping rather than fresh produce. In the same way that Double Up Food Bucks offers a match for funds spent on produce if a consumer uses their SNAP funds, subsidized or free shipping could be offered specifically to consumers who use SNAP or WIC funds to purchase from Farmers Post. No other certification or validation would be needed since this would only apply to consumers who have qualified and are using their government-administered funds. This cost would need to be borne by the federal government, not by the USPS, but it is possible that the USPS could charge the "at cost" fee for these shipments to help support this program. This could be offered through a very similar





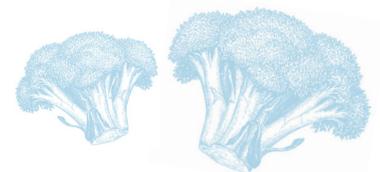
Pauline Lord (top center and right) and her husband have tended White Gate Farm for two decades, expanding its offerings to a farm stand and a seven-bedroom inn. Here, she works with Dan Wood to integrate Farmers Post into their routine.

program to Double Up Food Bucks to avoid needing to create a new one.

- Tips, recipes, culturally relevant food, and associated products could all help drive uptake of fruits and vegetables.** To encourage more people to make full use of the fruits and vegetables they receive in their box, especially if they are items that consumers are less used to purchasing, storage tips and recipe cards could be included in boxes. There could also be a focus on more “ready to eat” items, such as fruit, to lower the barrier to consumption. It’s possible that boxes could also be customized based on certain characteristics, like vegetables less likely to spoil (e.g. root vegetables rather than leafy greens) depending on a family’s needs and interests. Just as farmers would like to see data on what local consumers most want (see Farmers Research section), consumers would also appreciate culturally relevant produce. While not everything will grow well where it is in demand, it is possible that production of some fruits and vegetables could be boosted in regions where there is significant interest, such as large immigrant populations looking to source sought-after foods. “Bonus” items could also be added to boxes, either through optional add-ons or as gifts, if they help to encourage consumption. For example, in Mexico it is common to put Tajin, a chile lime seasoning,

on fresh fruit. Including a small packet if selling to an area with a lot of Mexican immigrants may help to encourage consumption. A Farmers Post entity could engage in further outreach and research to support target engagement.

- Produce Prescription Boxes could utilize Farmers Post.** Produce Prescription Programs (PPx), which typically “prescribe” certain foods due to diet-related health risks, are increasing in popularity. Several insurance companies, including some Medicaid programs, are currently conducting trials of this type of structure. If these programs continue and become more widely available, they could make use of Farmers Post to easily reach consumers. In this case, boxes would be covered by insurance, but they would still need to reach the prescribed consumer. PPx programs could purchase through Farmers Post or partner with Farmers Post to ensure the relevant food items, often already centered on fruits and vegetables, are included and reach the target consumers. Current PPx programs either require pick-up or must hire their own drivers and delivery teams, a significant cost, and are dependent on unique geographies.





Next Steps and Recommendations

While Farmers Post has made great progress, there are several key steps to explore to help the program expand; in addition, some tweaks could help smooth the process. Action should be taken on the points discussed in the report above and action is also needed to smooth the way for low-income consumers to best make use of Farmers Post through SNAP, WIC, and Double Up Food Bucks. In the meantime, more work needs to be done on expanding pilots, specifically testing in low-income communities, research should be completed around better practices to minimize food loss and waste as well as packaging, and additional stakeholder building needs to be completed in partnership with the USPS to reach national scale.

Expanding Pilots and Testing in Low-Income Communities

Both 4P Foods and Healthy PlanEat plan to continue to expand their pilot testing in 2024. This will allow further testing of logistics, but also a chance to see if Farmers Post has the ability to attract new customers, as our consumer research suggests. However, there also needs to be testing in low-income communities.

Farmers Post has the chance to bring healthy produce to those who most struggle to access it today – and the USPS

has the chance to be the carrier of choice to improve the health of the country. As logistics hurdles are ironed out, however, pilots are needed to determine the best way to reach and serve consumers in food deserts, with limited incomes, and who need to purchase Farmers Post using EBT or other similar payments. Models may need to be tweaked to allow for different outreach strategies, different ways to sign up for boxes, and even different ways to receive boxes. We recommend working in a few key communities to solicit input, design targeted pilots, and collect feedback throughout the process to allow for iteration.

This testing will also be needed to bolster outreach to the USDA and Congress to build support for incorporating into the process SNAP and WIC, Double Up Food Bucks, and subsidized or free shipping (see Health Impacts and Food Insecurity). Congress has already supported Farmers Post. Representative Courtney (CT) successfully added language to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 urging the USPS to explore the best ways to support Farmers Post, including examining box sizes. This is a strong start but more action will be needed to ensure those most at-need are able to benefit from Farmers Post.



Determining Better Practices to Minimize Food Loss and Waste and Packaging

Produce is more stable than many other products, like dairy and meat, but it's still perishable. There will be trade-offs between packaging (e.g. plastics, insulation, cold packs) and food loss and waste. Farmers Post should strive to minimize both, which also makes the program more affordable to consumers and more profitable to farmers.

However, better practices will vary by geography, seasonality, and other weather events. It will also vary depending on what is being shipped and how various fruits and vegetables are combined. 4P Foods is already testing the boundaries of minimizing food packaging while maintaining food quality, but farms in different regions and with different products will not always be able to adapt those lessons directly. Smaller farmers won't be able to engage in this detailed level of research.

WWF can work with appropriate partners to test, explore, and establish standards and guidelines around packaging and shipping to ensure that this goal of minimizing all types of waste is met. There will also be opportunities to explore further circularity. For example, there is already a company that offers consumers a chance to mill and sterilize food waste in their house and then ship it to farmers to use as chicken feed. Perhaps those or similar efforts could be incorporated here so not only is waste minimized in initial shipping, but consumers could return appropriately sterilized waste back to farmers to incorporate into compost or animal feed.

Scaling Nationally with the USPS and other Partners

As learnings are collected and integrated from the pilots, there is an opportunity to turn to planning for scale. The USPS is exploring strategies for how it can best support a national roll-out. For Farmers Post to reach as many farmers and consumers as possible, it would be ideal for food hubs, like 4P Foods, virtual platforms, like Healthy PlanEat, and individual farmers to all be able to access a simple-to-use USPS program. Small farmers could decide what makes the most sense to them – participating in a physical or virtual hub or vertically integrating but still making use of an existing shipping program.

The USPS already has an existing network of agents across the country to assist small businesses with their shipping needs. As a program is formalized and tweaked based on

the pilots, WWF can help design and implement an outreach strategy in partnership with the USPS. Final parameters would need to be co-determined but could include outreach to farmers and agricultural groups, stakeholder building, and establishing an onboarding structure and process to provide to farmers and affiliated groups so that interested farmers can easily connect with and be onboarded by their local USPS support person.

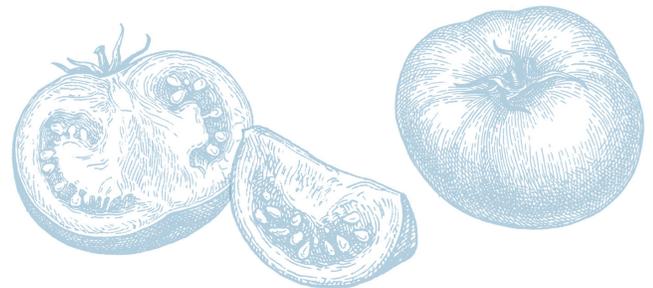
In addition to working directly with the USPS, WWF will also continue to support the existing pilot partners, Healthy PlanEat and 4P Foods, as they scale and continue to roll out Farmers Post to additional consumers and sign up additional farmers for increased reach. This may include similar outreach to farmers and agricultural groups, but also more broadly sharing lessons learned and continuing to explore policy actions to support reach to low-income and food insecure communities.

Farmers Post has made great strides but to truly unlock the health, farmer welfare, and environmental benefits of Farmers Post these key next steps need to be taken to ensure this program can be enjoyed by all.

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Citations/Footnotes

- 1 USDA, Economic Research Service.
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/key-statistics-graphics/>
- 2 USDA, Economic Research Service. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2019/05/14/where-do-americans-food-dollars-go>
- 3 CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.
<https://archive.cdc.gov/#/details?q=https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/division-information/media-tools/adults-fruits-vegetables.html&start=0&rows=10&url=https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/division-information/media-tools/adults-fruits-vegetables.html>
- 4 World Wildlife Fund. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/food-waste>
- 5 World Wildlife Fund. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/what-farmers-found-when-they-measured-fresh-produce-left-in-the-field>
- 6 USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service and USDA, Economic Research Service, 2019 and 2022 Agricultural Resource Management Survey, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/gallery/chart-detail/?chartId=104408#:~:text=About%207%20percent%20of%20America's,processors%2C%20grain%20mills%2C%20etc.>
- 7 USDA, Census of Agriculture 2017, Results from the 2020 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey.
<https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2022/local-foods.pdf>
- 8 Ibid
- 9 https://pe.usps.com/TEXT/DMM300/Notice123.htm#_c155

Appendix



HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Farmers Post Potential Customers

Key findings from a national survey of 1,005 adults conducted online May 18-21, 2023



1

Key Takeaways

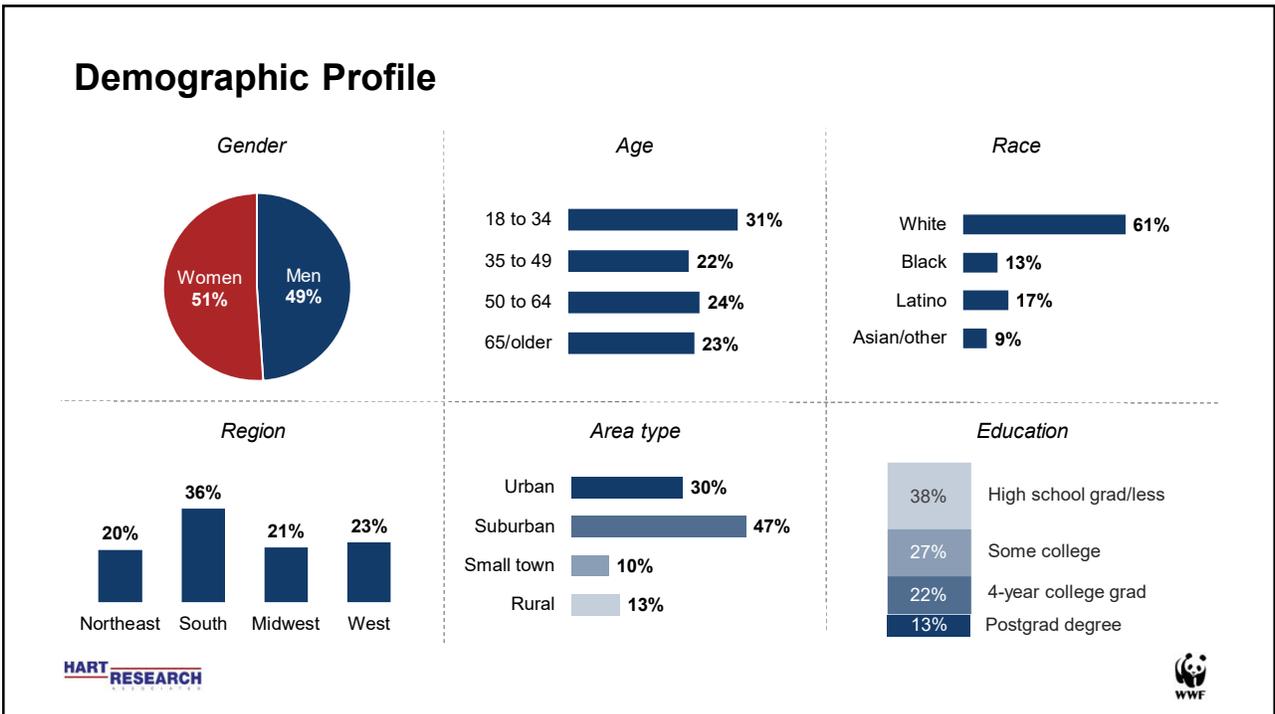
- 1 **Over fifty percent of consumers say that they are very or fairly likely to be a Farmers Post customer; and one in four of consumers say they are very likely to be a Farmers post customer.** After seeing a brief description of Farmers Post, those who over-index as very likely Farmers Post customers are a diverse group, including CSA and Farmers' Market regulars, as well as younger (18-64), Black, and Latino consumers, and those who say they live in an area that they self-describe as being difficult in which to buy affordable or high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables (definition of a food desert).
- 2 **Consumers who express high likelihood of using Farmers Post initially continue to say they are likely to use Farmers Post after learning details about the service, including how much it will cost.** Even more encouraging than the initial interest, is that interest remains high after consumers learn details about the potential offerings, including the size, cost, and types of fruits and vegetables (salad greens, onions, garlic, and chives, tomatoes, apples, and stone fruits are most appealing).
- 3 **Satisfaction with the United States Postal Service is high and is a selling point for Farmers Post.** Consumers express high levels of satisfaction with the service that they receive from USPS. And the fact that the USPS would be delivering Farmers Post is seen as a selling point for the program.
- 4 **Consumers believe that the quality of the produce they would receive from Farmers Post would be better than what they receive now, and while they are more likely to believe that they would pay more for Farmers Post, it is not a dealbreaker.** After evaluating Farmers Post, consumers overwhelmingly believe that it will have a positive impact on their health, food, and overall quality of life. Very likely users also view Farmers Post as having a positive impact on their personal finances.
- 5 **Among very likely users, the most compelling reasons for someone to use Farmers Post focus on expanding access to healthy food, reducing food waste, providing a more convenient and cost-effective option, and supporting local farmers.** These customers find many reasons to use Farmers Post to be compelling, but reasons that highlight the connection between farmers and the community, both local and beyond, are more compelling than statements that center on support for USPS or veterans. (This is also the case among those who move to be likely to use Farmers Post over the course of the survey.)



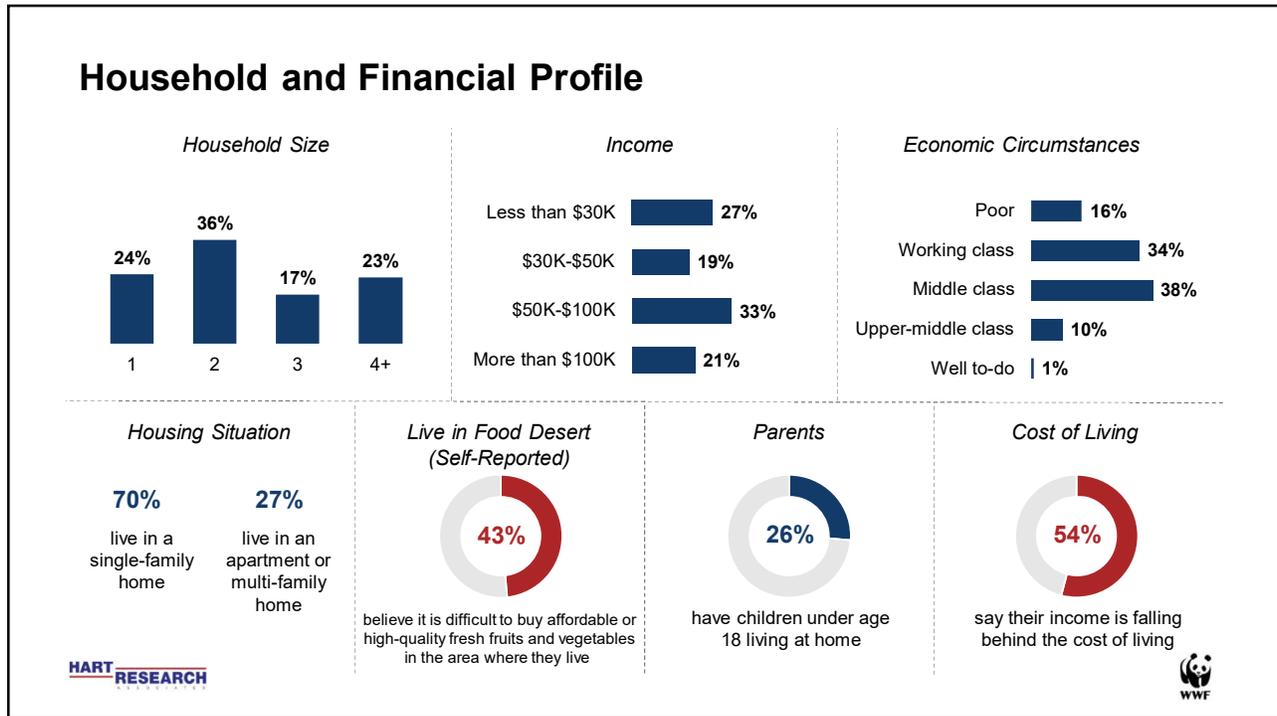

2

Consumer Profile

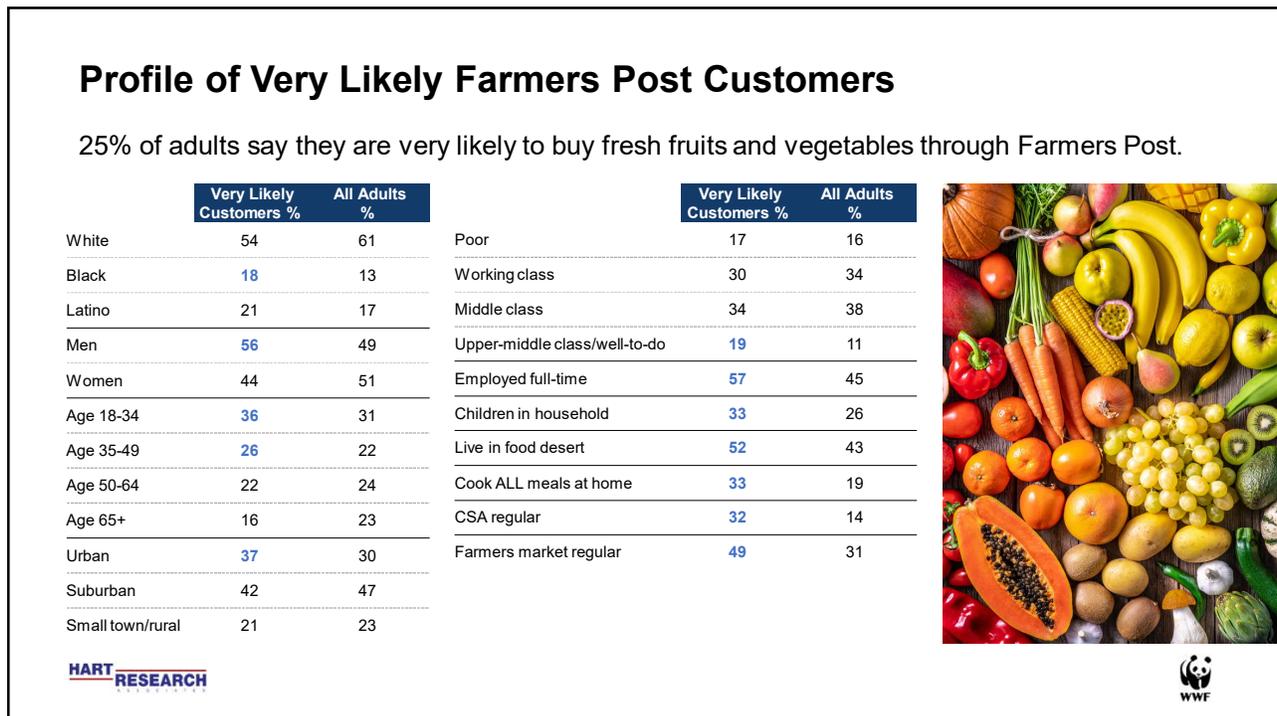
3



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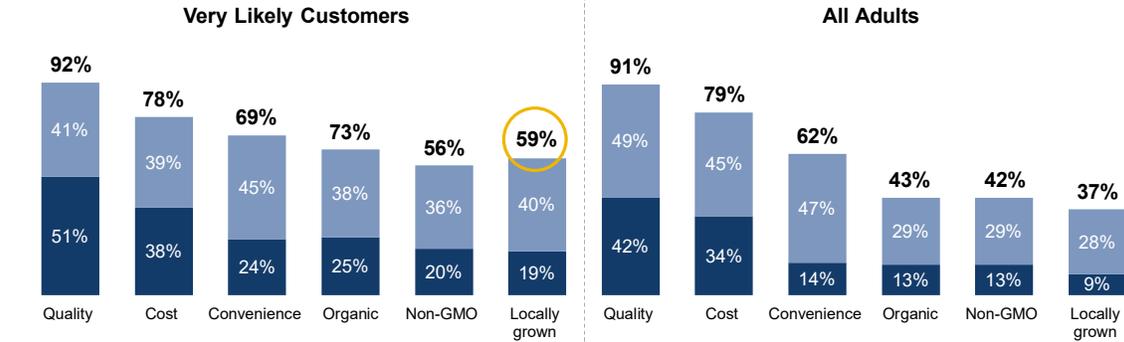


6

Quality is a more important consideration than cost in shopping for fruits and vegetables; very likely customers also value locally grown produce.

How important is _____ in deciding where to purchase fruits and vegetables?

■ My top consideration ■ Very important consideration



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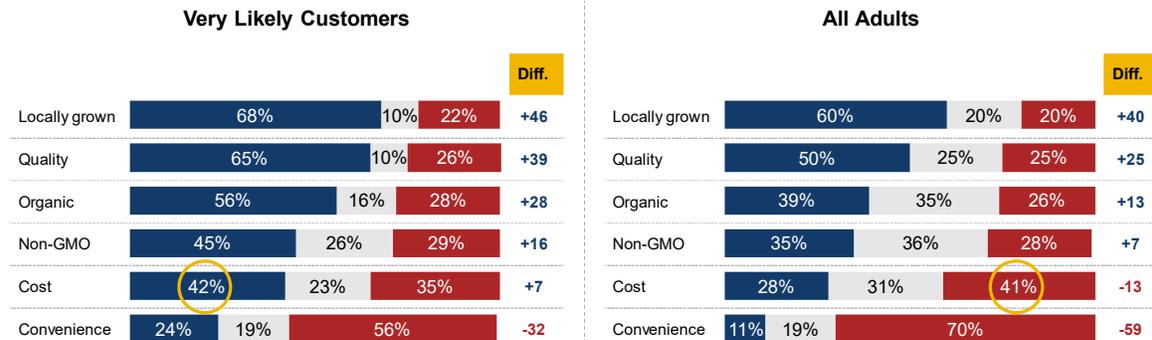


7

Farmers have an edge over stores in expected quality of fruits and vegetables. Stores do not have a cost advantage with very likely customers.

When purchasing fruits and vegetables, which source is better for...?

■ Purchasing directly from farmers ■ It depends ■ Purchasing in store



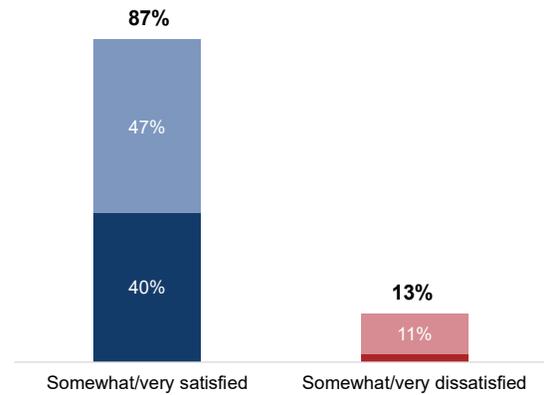
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8

Satisfaction with the service provided by the USPS is universally high.

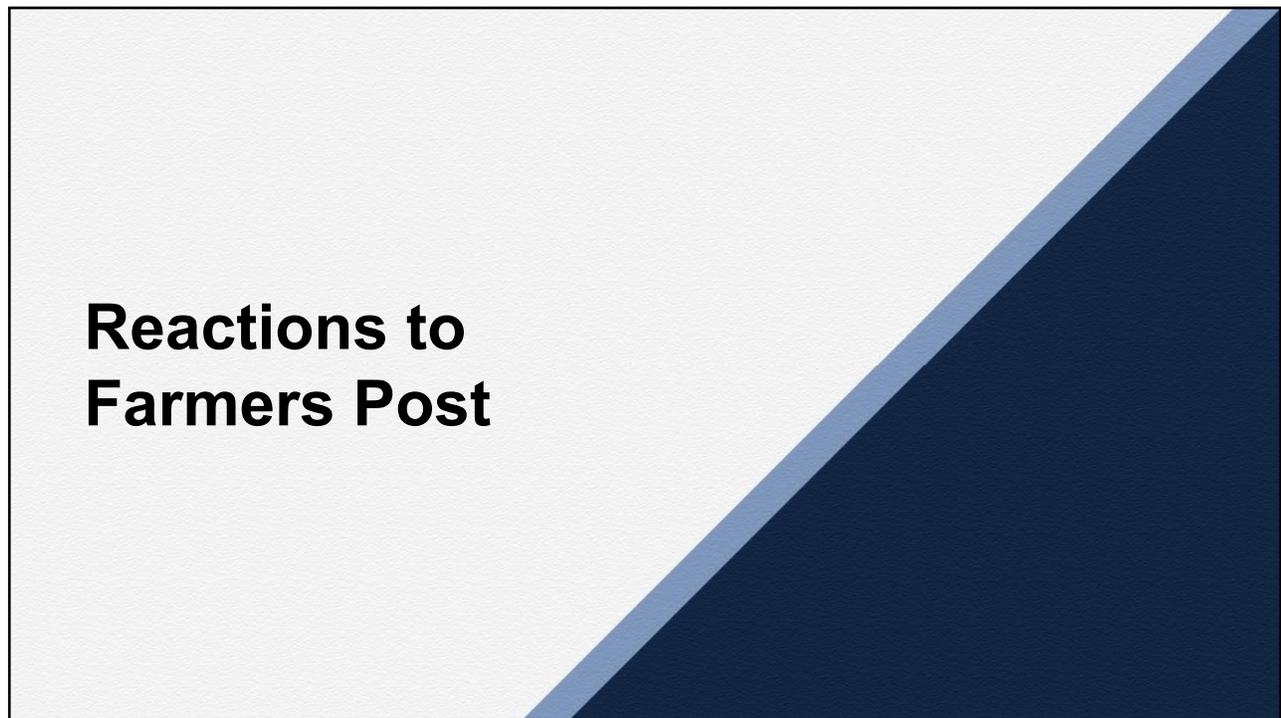
How satisfied are you with the experience of receiving and sending mail with the United States Postal Service (USPS)?



	Satisfied %
White	85
Black	91
Latino	93
Men age 18-49	90
Men age 50+	89
Women age 18-49	88
Women age 50+	83
Less than \$50k	87
\$50-75k	89
\$75-100k	91
More than \$100k	84
Urban	91
Suburban	87
Small town/rural	84



9

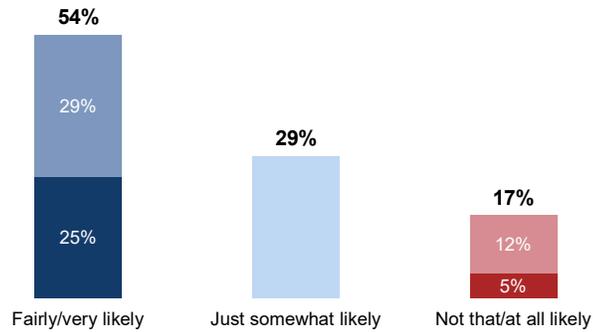


10

After we provide a brief program description, over half of adults express an interest in buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.

“Farmers Post connects local farmers directly to you by **delivering fresh fruits and vegetables shipped from local farms to your home.** The fruits and vegetables are delivered through a partnership with the United States Postal Service with delivery fresh from the farm in one to two days.”

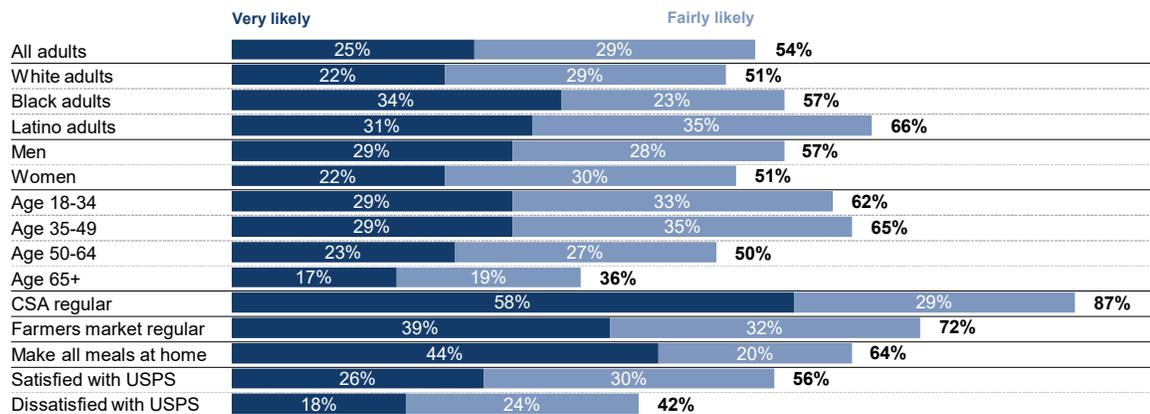
Likelihood of buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.



11

Local food enthusiasts represent a core group of likely Farmers Post customers and 18-64-year-olds are more open than seniors.

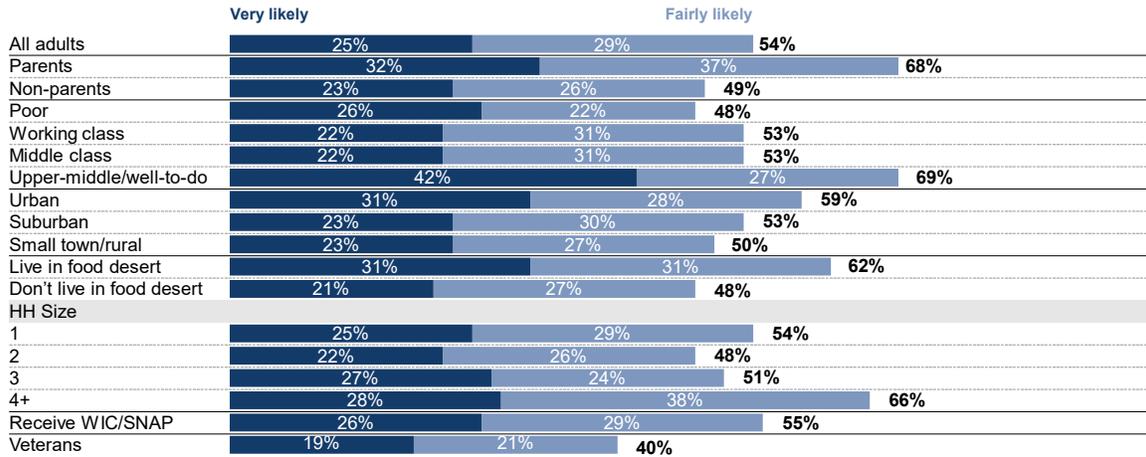
Likelihood of buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.



12

Parents, those of a higher socioeconomic status, and those who live in food deserts are more likely to use Farmers Post.

Likelihood of buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.



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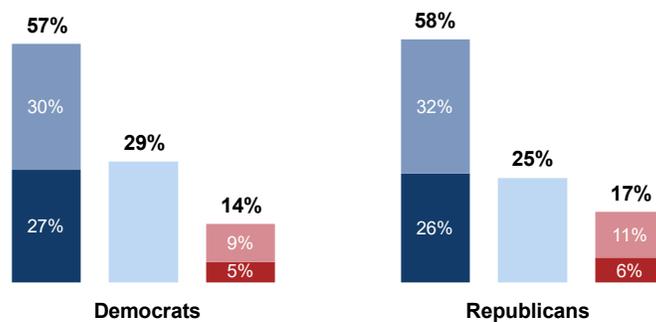


13

Interest in Farmers Post is equally high with Republicans and Democrats.

Likelihood of buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.

■ Very likely ■ Fairly likely ■ Just somewhat likely ■ Not that likely ■ Not likely at all



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14

Adults who receive WIC/SNAP benefits express interest in Farmers Post but have questions on how they can participate in this program.

“After seeing the different box options, I think it would be helpful in getting fresh produce (because what’s at the grocery store is so unacceptable. I mostly buy frozen just to get anything edible). I don’t have a car, so it would be helpful to have food shipped to me. I would basically **only be able to buy if Foodstamps/SNAP was accepted, though.**”

“I pay for my products through EBT and flex benefits, [and] **nothing was said about what payment types would be accepted.**”

“[I couldn’t use Farmers Post] because I don’t have the money. I’m on food stamps so **if they accept food stamps it would be awesome.**”



“It’s worth the money - **my concern is if they accept SNAP for payment.**”

“I have literally no access to fresh produce right now and **this would be soooo worth the money as long as they’d accept EBT/Food Stamps.** I love snacking on fruit, and this would be a great way to be able to have fruit again. Plus, I love how it supports local farmers and I much prefer relying on people in [my] community than big corporations.”

“Because our SNAP and USDA programs offer incentives to buy from [farmers markets], and **you know what you’re getting.**”



15

Positive reactions to Farmers Post are driven by the convenient delivery of high quality, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Why are you likely to buy fresh fruits and vegetables using Farmers Post? (Based on verbatim responses)

Better price/good deal/cost effective
 Healthier and more nutritious
 Support local farmers and economy
Guaranteed freshness
 Love concept (win-win)
 More convenient/direct delivery
 Grown locally
 Higher quality



*This includes the respondents (79%) who say they are very likely, fairly likely, and just somewhat likely to use Farmers Post.



16

In their own words, consumers explain why they would use Farmers Post.



"I would buy fresh fruit and veggies from local sources if they were available. Produce is terrible here and gets moldy fast."

"I think it would be nice to have fresh produce delivered directly to my home via USPS. Also, it would be nice for people in EBT such as the homebound, to have their produce delivered this way."

"You are getting fresh foods that aren't sprayed down by a bunch of chemicals, locally grown so you are helping your community and giving back to your community in some type of way."



"It would be actually more convenient for me than getting to the grocery store and better for farmers in the economy."

"I think this is a great idea. My money goes straight to the farmer and cuts out the middleman. I believe it would be fresher."

"It eliminates the middleman and less handling of the fruits and vegetables. Also, you know if you're getting it straight from the farmer, they can instill quality and freshness."



17

The biggest concerns about Farmers Fresh center on cost and ability to pick their own fruits and vegetables.

*Why are you **not likely** to buy fresh fruits and vegetables using Farmers Post? (Based on verbatim responses)*

Prefer to pick own
Cannot view/guarantee quality or freshness
Don't trust USPS/shipping
Cost? Will I save money?
Not in budget/cost effective
Is this available in my area?



*This includes the respondents (46%) who say they are just somewhat likely, not that likely, and not likely at all to use Farmers Post.



18

In their own words, consumers explain why they would not use Farmers Post.

“I like to select my own fresh fruits and vegetables, not have someone else pick which ones to send me.”

“I’m not really sure about the quality of the produce and there are often delays when you use the post office to ship items.”

“I cannot afford this sort of service and do not consume enough fruits or vegetables to make this something worth spending money on.”

“I have severe budget constraints and cannot afford a grocery/food delivery service.”

“I like to buy my food as conveniently, simply and cheaply as I can. It would just be too complicated to use Farmers Post.”

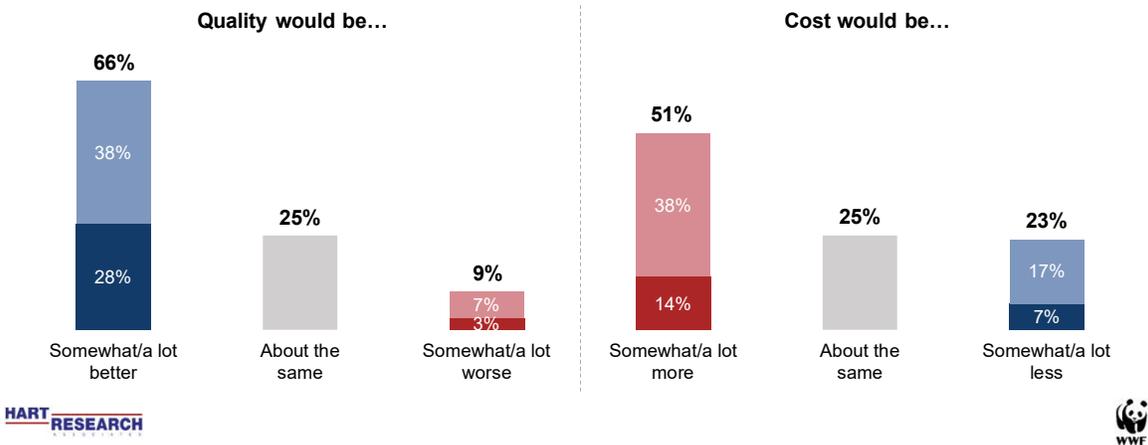
“I don’t feel I can trust the quality of the product not to mention the conditions during shipping. The length of time between ordering and receiving the products is not something I would want to deal with.”



19

Compared to their current source, consumers ALSO expect Farmers Post fruits and vegetables to be higher quality but costlier.

Considering where you buy produce now, how do you think Farmers Post fruits and vegetables compares?



20

Consumers respond favorably to details about Farmers Post, including the partnership with USPS.

Makes Much/Somewhat More Likely to Use Farmers Post:

	All adults	Very likely customers
Support local farmers Farmers Post supports local farmers so they can sell more of what they grow locally.	77%	94%
Reduce food waste Farmers Post allows farmers to sell more of the fruits and vegetables that they grow, which reduces food waste and makes farming more sustainable.	76%	96%
Accessibility Farmers Post provides consumers who are not able to travel to farmers markets access to healthy and fresh fruits and vegetables.	75%	94%
USPS partnership The fruits and vegetables are delivered through a partnership with the United States Postal Service with delivery fresh from the farm in one to two days.	65%	92%

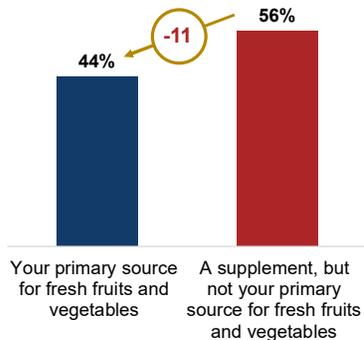
61% of all adults and 82% of very likely customers express favorable feelings toward a CSA-style model that directly connects consumers and farmers.



21

Very likely customers and local food enthusiasts would view Farmers Post as their primary source of fresh fruits and vegetables.

If you used Farmers Post to buy fresh fruits and vegetables, do you think it would be...?



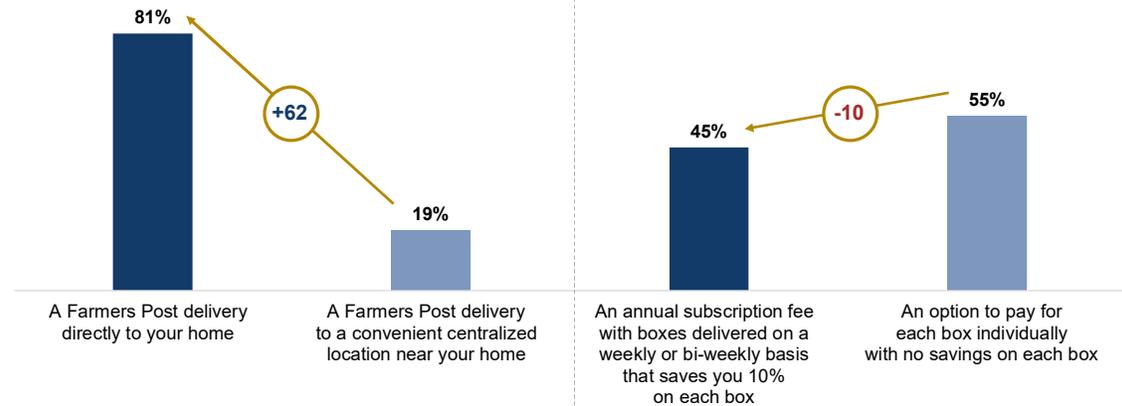
	Your primary source %	A supplement, but not your primary source %	Diff
Very likely users	72	28	+44
Farmers market regular	54	46	+8
CSA regular	63	37	+25
Age 18-34	55	45	+9
Age 35-49	47	53	-7
Age 50-64	40	60	-21
Age 65+	34	66	-32
Live alone	50	50	0
Live in single-family house	42	58	-16
Parent	50	50	-1
Not a parent	43	57	-15
Live in food desert	51	49	+1
Don't live in food desert	40	60	-20
Make all meals at home	53	47	+5
Make most meals at home	41	59	-17



22

Consumers want home delivery and lean to paying for individual boxes rather than an annual subscription (with savings).

Are you more likely to prefer...?



23

However, customers who are very likely to use Farmers Post prefer an annual subscription.

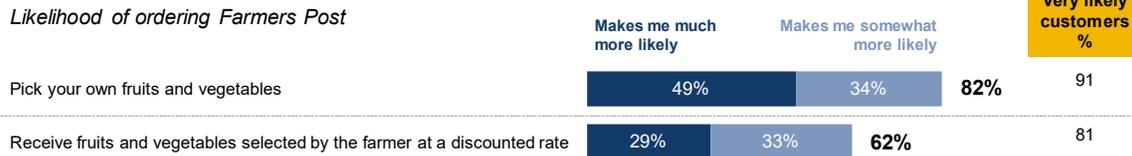
	Annual Subscription Model with Savings %	Pay As You Go Model with NO Savings %	Diff
All adults	45	55	-10
Very likely customers	58	42	+16
Age 18-34	56	44	+12
Age 35-49	48	52	-4
Age 50-64	40	60	-20
Age 65+	33	67	-35
Poor	47	53	-6
Working class	44	56	-12
Middle class	45	55	-11
Upper-middle/well-to-do	46	54	-7
Urban	37	63	-25
Suburban	46	54	-8
Small town/rural	52	48	+5
Parent	54	46	+8
Not a parent	42	58	-16
Primary source	52	48	+5
Supplemental source	39	61	-22



24

While a preference for “pick your own” exists, most people would be OK with a farmers’ selection. A pre-paid label option is the top pick to return the packaging materials.

Likelihood of ordering Farmers Post



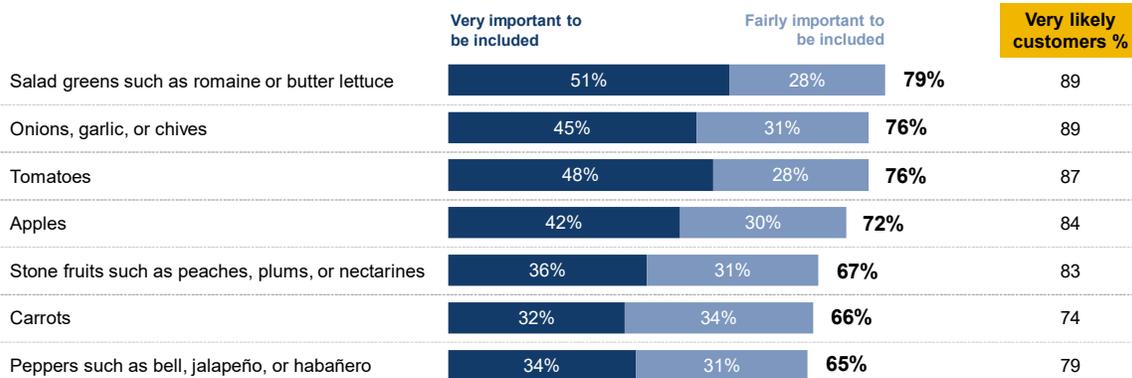
Likelihood of returning the packaging materials



25

Salad greens, aromatics, tomatoes, apples, and stone fruits are the most important fruits and vegetables to include in a Farmers Post box.

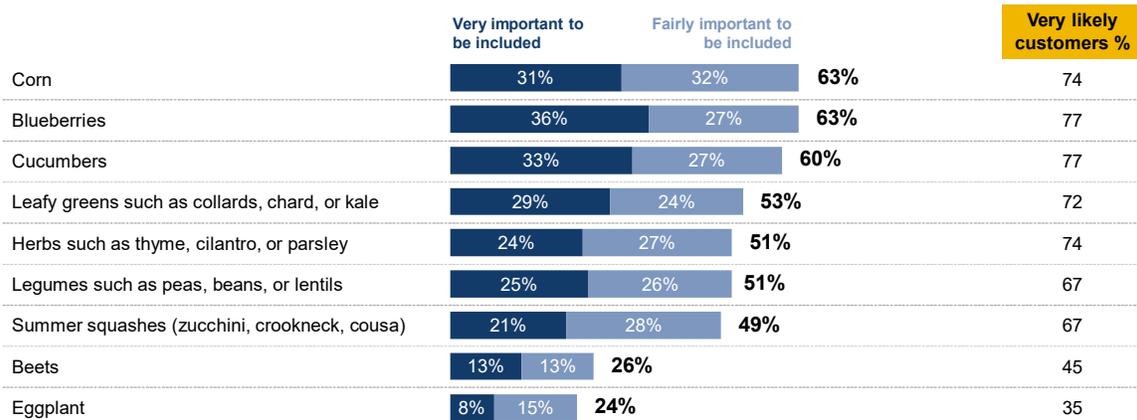
Total very/fairly important to include in the box from Farmers Post:



26

Less important fruits and vegetables to include in the box from Farmers Post.

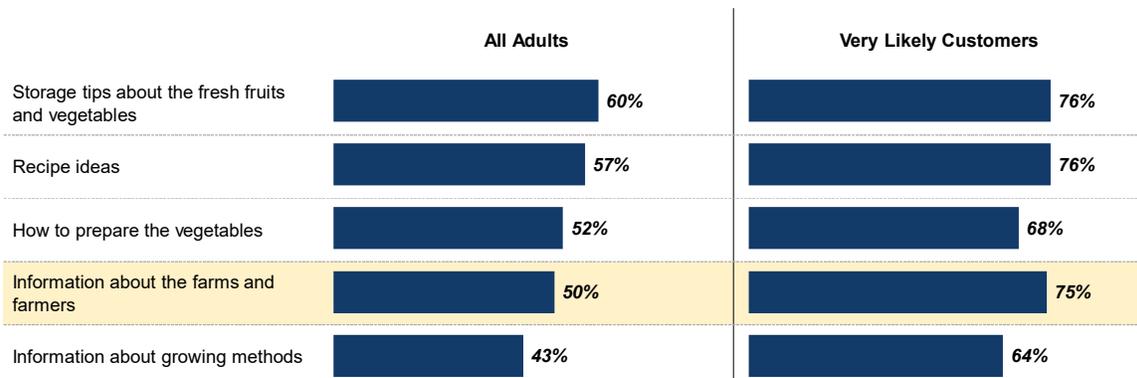
Total very/fairly important to include in the box from Farmers Post:



27

Consumers express interest in receiving storage tips and recipe ideas; very likely customers also care about receiving info about the farms and farmers.

TOTAL who rate their interest in receiving this information in a Farmers Post delivery between 8-10:



*Interest was gauged on a scale from 0 to 10, where a 10 means extremely interested, a 0 means not interested at all, and a 5 means somewhat interested.



28

Respondents were given examples of what they can expect to receive in a delivery from Farmers Post.

Pictures of medium box priced at a total of \$36



Pictures of large box priced at a total of \$46



*The total price includes the cost of shipping the Farmers Post package.

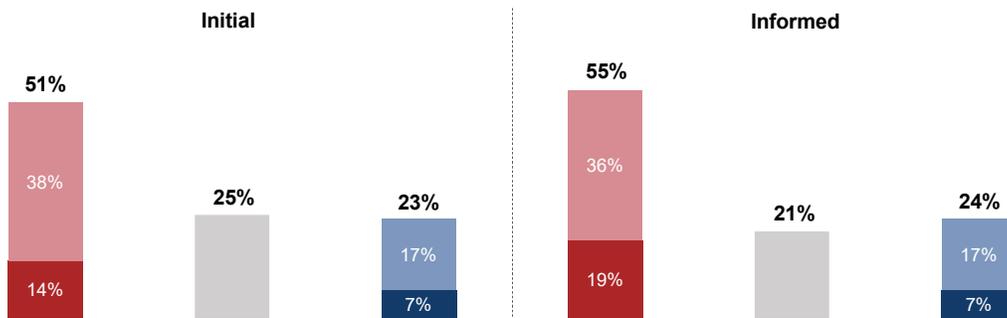


29

Once they see some examples of Farmers Post deliveries, consumers continue to believe that Farmers Post will cost more, but NOT a lot more.

Considering where you buy produce now, how do you think the cost of Farmers Post fruits and vegetables compares?

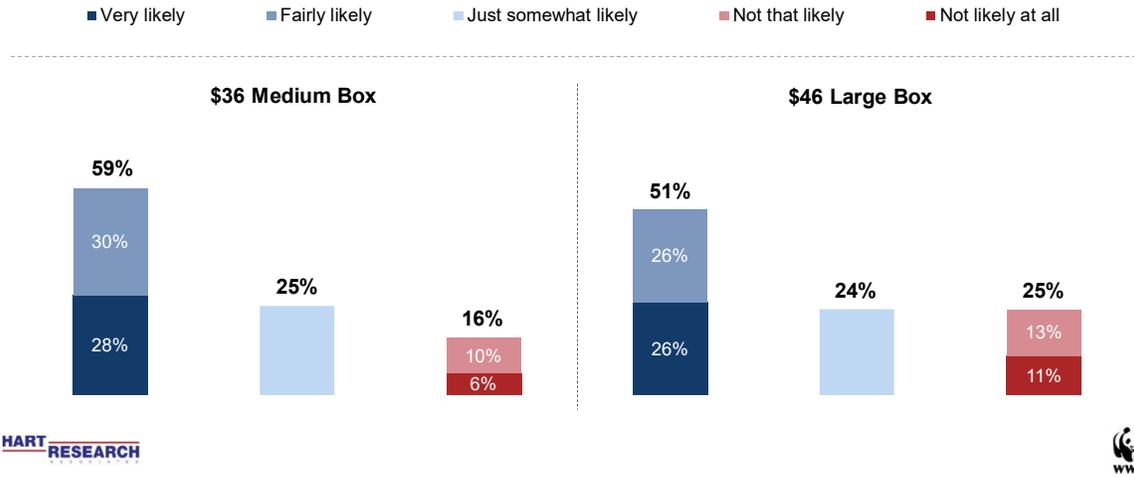
■ A lot more ■ Somewhat more ■ About the same ■ Somewhat less ■ A lot less



30

There is a greater demand for the medium-sized box than the large-sized box.

Likelihood of buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.



31

The demand for the medium-sized box is greatest with certain subgroups, such as Black adults, older adults, and urban dwellers.

Total very/fairly likely to buy fresh fruits/vegetables through Farmers Post.

	Medium Box %	Large Box %		Medium Box %	Large Box %
All adults	59	51	Parents	72	71
White adults	55	46	Non-parents	54	45
Black adults	64	57	Poor	52	46
Latino adults	66	66	Working class	60	53
Men age 18-49	74	68	Middle class	58	51
Men 50+	54	42	Upper-middle/well-to-do	68	56
Women 18-49	58	57	Urban	61	54
Women 50+	47	37	Suburban	58	49
CSA regular	85	80	Small town/rural	56	53
Farmers market regular	68	62	Live in food desert	67	58
Make all meals at home	63	59	Don't live in food desert	52	46

32

In their own words, consumers explain their feelings toward the medium-sized box examples.



"It's the perfect amount for a household to eat before the fruit and veggies go bad. It's conveniently shipped to your house and saves you time and money."

"For a cost that is under \$40, this is a great value. They include a good variety of vegetables such as onions and lettuce and tomatoes."



"It is not clear to me what the quantity of vegetables you would get in a medium box would be but from what is shown in the images, it does not appear to be a lot of savings given the cost."

"The selections are too much for me to handle. Half of it would spoil before I finished it. I don't know what some of these items are, others I'd never buy in the first place."



33

In their own words, consumers explain their feelings toward the large-sized box examples.



"It looks like a good deal that amount of food for approximately 46 dollars plus tax would provide my household with good food for a good amount of time without draining my wallet."

"There is more variety in the types of fruits and vegetables being offered, and it looks like there would be plenty of each type. The value seems to hold up to the price."



"I prefer to walk to a store or Farmers' Market near my home to buy all my groceries. Thereby, I would save the \$6 shipping fee."

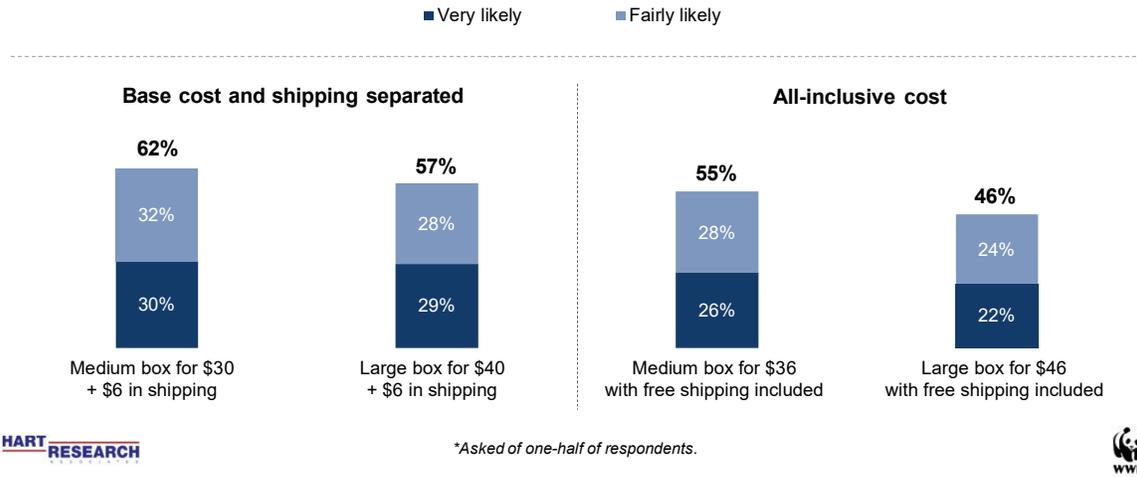
"Too much for me and too much cost. Not sure how fresh or stable fruit/veg would be by the time it came in the mail."



34

Consumers are more likely to buy the Farmers Post boxes with the base and shipping cost listed separately.

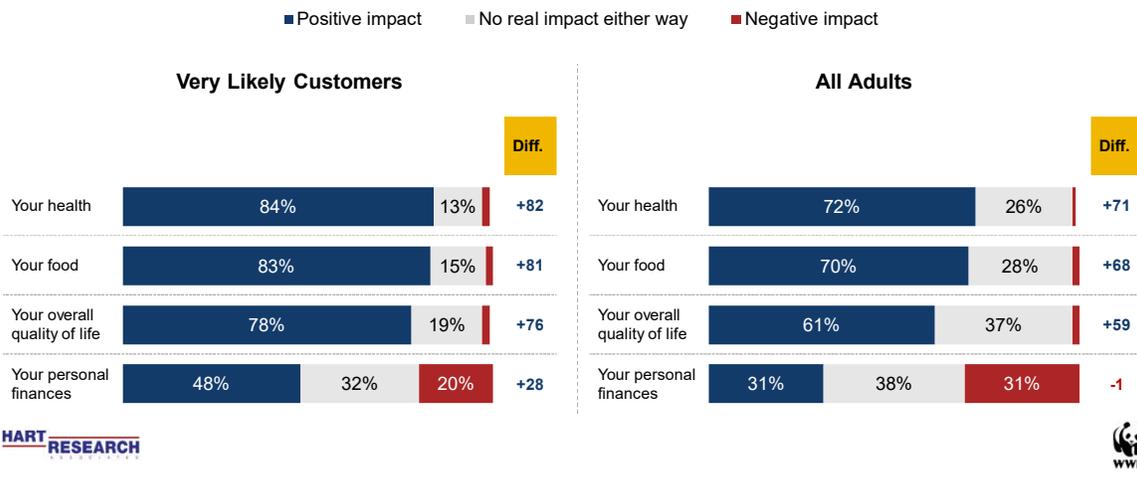
Total very/fairly likely to buy fresh fruits/vegetables through Farmers Post.*



35

Overall, consumers see the health and overall quality of life benefits of Farmers Post but are mixed on its financial impact. Those most likely to use Farmers Post see positive impacts in all aspects.

Total Expect Farmers Post to Have Positive Impact on Selected Areas:



36

Messaging

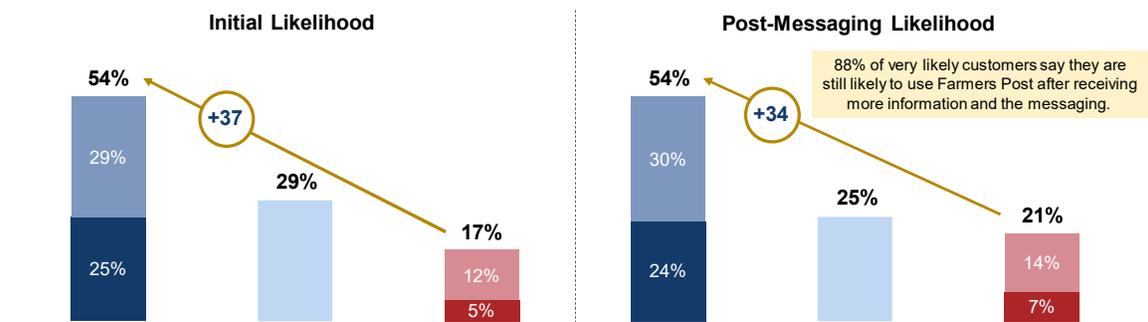
All respondents read reasons why someone might want to use Farmers Post and reasons someone might not want to use Farmers Post.

37

After messaging and learning more about Farmers Post, including the offerings and price range, interest remains at essentially the same level.

Likelihood of buying fresh fruits and vegetables through Farmers Post.

■ Very likely ■ Fairly likely ■ Just somewhat likely ■ Not that likely ■ Not likely at all



38

Of the seven reasons to use Farmers Post, food desert and buy local arguments make the strongest cases.

Among all adults, this is an IMPORTANT REASON someone might want to use Farmers Post:

		Very Important %	Very/fairly important %
FOOD DESERT	Farmers Post expands access to healthy food for people who live in food deserts or cannot drive to a store or farmers' market.	50	80
SUPPORTS BUY LOCAL	Farmers Post supports local farms and our communities and encourages people to eat locally.	48	80
CONNECTION	Farmers Post helps local farmers reach customers who otherwise cannot reach them.	47	81
REDUCES FOOD WASTE	Farmers Post reduces food waste and makes farming more sustainable by allowing farmers to sell more of what they grow.	46	79
COST EFFECTIVE	Farmers Post is a convenient and cost-effective way for me to get high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables.	41	71
SUPPORTS VETERANS	Farmers Post supports our veterans both by generating revenue for the United States Postal Service, which is one of the largest employers of veterans, and providing greater access to healthy food for our veterans, who are on disability.	39	72
SUPPORTS USPS	Farmers Post makes the United States Postal Service more efficient and saves taxpayers money by generating more revenue.	29	60



39

Very likely customers also find the food waste and cost effectiveness arguments convincing.

Among very likely customers, this is an IMPORTANT REASON someone might want to use Farmers Post:

		Very Important %	Very/fairly important %
FOOD DESERT	Farmers Post expands access to healthy food for people who live in food deserts or cannot drive to a store or farmers' market.	77	91
REDUCES FOOD WASTE	Farmers Post reduces food waste and makes farming more sustainable by allowing farmers to sell more of what they grow.	76	90
COST EFFECTIVE	Farmers Post is a convenient and cost-effective way for me to get high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables.	75	91
SUPPORTS BUY LOCAL	Farmers Post supports local farms and our communities and encourages people to eat locally.	74	93
CONNECTION	Farmers Post helps local farmers reach customers who otherwise cannot reach them.	71	93
SUPPORTS VETERANS	Farmers Post supports our veterans both by generating revenue for the United States Postal Service, which is one of the largest employers of veterans, and providing greater access to healthy food for our veterans, who are on disability.	62	85
SUPPORTS USPS	Farmers Post makes the United States Postal Service more efficient and saves taxpayers money by generating more revenue.	58	84



40

The strongest messages varies by age, economic circumstances, and parenthood status, but the food desert argument is a standout across the board.

This is a VERY IMPORTANT REASON someone might want to use Farmers Post:

	Very Likely customer %	18-34 %	35-49 %	50-64 %	65+ %	Poor %	Working class %	Middle class %	Up.-middle / Well-to-do %	Parent %	Not a parent %	
Food desert	50%	77	48	52	50	50	51	51	48	51	58	47
Supports buy local	48%	74	44	53	50	47	46	49	46	56	56	45
Connection	47%	71	44	49	52	43	47	49	44	52	51	45
Reduces food waste	46%	76	46	50	47	41	48	48	41	53	54	43
Cost effective	41%	75	44	45	40	33	36	44	38	49	49	38
Supports veterans	39%	62	36	47	41	35	39	44	36	38	46	37
Supports USPS	29%	58	30	35	29	22	34	31	25	32	37	26



41

Farmers Post is most vulnerable to criticisms about the cost and the reliability of USPS. Very likely customers also worry about the local supply of fruits and vegetables.

TWO Biggest Reasons Not to Use Farmers Post:

	Very Likely Customers %
It costs too much	46%
USPS cannot be trusted	30%
The quantities are not really what I need	25%
It requires too much planning	22%
Local farmers only have a limited supply at a given time	22%
The delivery of the packages is too complicated	7%
I don't cook or prepare fresh meals at home	5%
I just don't eat fruits and vegetables	5%

Even with their concern of the USPS, 87% of consumers are satisfied with their experience sending and receiving mail from the USPS.



42

At the end of the survey, consumers see the many benefits of using Farmers Post – personal and social. Hesitant consumers mention cost and interest in a trial subscription.

Why are you _____ to buy fresh fruits and vegetables using Farmers Post? (Based on verbatim responses)

Very/fairly/just somewhat likely
(79% of respondents)
Positive reasons

More convenient/direct delivery
Love concept (win-win)
Guaranteed freshness
Healthier and more nutritious
Support local farmers and economy
Love the variety and quantity Higher quality
Better price/good deal/cost effective



Just somewhat likely/not that likely/not likely at all
(46% of respondents)
Neutral and negative reasons

Quantity too small/large
Don't trust USPS/shipping
Want a trial subscription
Not in budget/cost effective
Prefer brick and mortar store
Prefer to pick own

