

Social Sustainability in Agricultural & Food Systems

Spring 2018 Service-Learning Course
 Juliann Marmal and Jennifer Jo Thompson, PhD
 Department of Crop & Soil Sciences



College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences
 UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Course Information:

CRSS 4020S/6020S: Social Sustainability in Agricultural & Food Systems engages students across UGA in thinking about **how to create and support agricultural and food systems that are healthy and equitable for producers and consumers.**

A Socially Sustainable Food System:

- Ensures the health and safety of producers and consumers
- Facilitates equity in access to material resources and democratic participation
- Connects people to the land and to their communities

Relevant Service

Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx):

Athens' FVRx Program targets underserved individuals whose health may be improved by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. It provides nutrition education (through UGA SNAP-Ed) and "prescriptions" (in the form of vouchers worth \$1 per person in the household, per day) for fresh fruits and vegetables from the Athens Farmers Market.

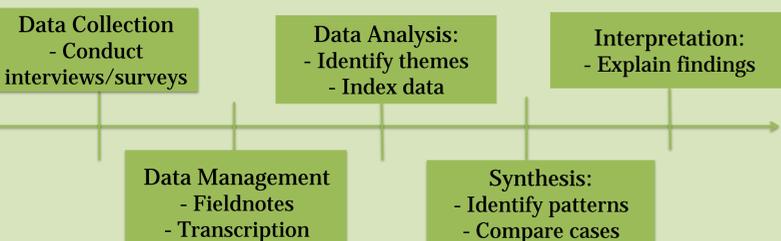
Research Objective: Students were interested in learning about the experience of people who participated in the Athens 2017 FVRx Pilot to: a) **Understand** how the program impacted participants, and b) **Improve** the program by identifying shortcomings, barriers, and challenges.

FVRx Follow-Up Assessment:

Students conducted 12 interviews with 14 participants from the Athens 2017 FVRx Pilot year to answer the following questions:

- 1) What were your expectations for the program?
- 2) What were some positive impacts? Negative impacts?
- 3) What was your experience like?
- 4) What made it easier or difficult for you to participate?
- 5) How will you sustain any changes? Barriers to this?
- 6) If you were in charge, what would you do differently?

Research Methods:



Results & Recommendations:

Overall, participants reported a very positive experience with FVRx. They enjoyed the nutrition classes and culinary component along with access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The program could be improved by providing more information about what to expect from the Athens Farmers Market. This includes explaining why prices are higher, when seasonal fruits are available, and how the market supports local farmers. A small number of participants emphasized their need for childcare, which is essential to their success with the program.

Academic Material

Community



Health Equity

Service Learning

Sustainability is meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹ It often been described in terms of **three interdependent dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social.**²

*"It is only when people's basic needs are met that they can begin to actively address bio-physical environmental concerns."*³

Personal Growth

How did it affect you?



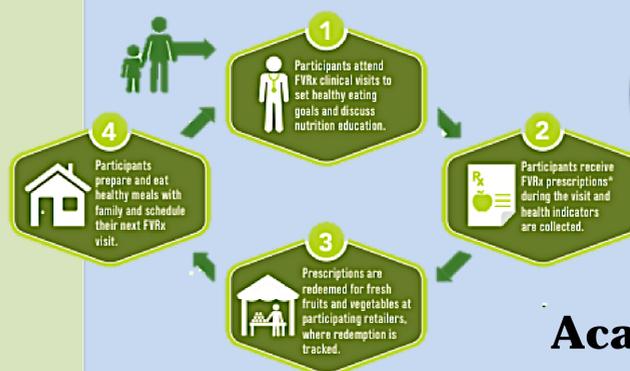
"I have grown though this experience to see how food systems have come to be separated from people and programs like these are ways to help people reconnect to them in meaningful ways."

Civic Learning

"This class and this project has provided a spark to refine how my expertise and passions can help shift various aspects of the food systems to improve social and ecological health disparities."

Academic Enhancement

"We need more interdisciplinary courses such as these for a number of reasons...but, perhaps most importantly, it gets people from many disciplines at one table discussing issues from multiple advantage points which is critical to enacting any social change."



References:
 (1) United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) Our Common Future (Brundtland Commission Report), <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>, accessed 2/25/2016.
 (2) World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), Johannesburg, South Africa.
 (3) Vallance, S., et al. (2011). "What is social sustainability? A clarification of concepts." *Geoforum* 42(3): 342-348.
 Photos: <http://www.wholesomewavegeorgia.org/food-rx/>