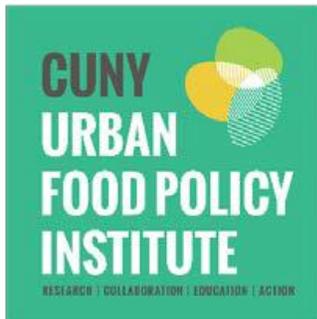


NOVEMBER 2022



# Summarizing key findings from an evaluation of GrowNYC Grainstand

EVALUATION BRIEF

**GROW**<sup>NYC</sup>

CUNY URBAN FOOD POLICY INSTITUTE & GROWNYC  
[cunyurbanfoodpolicy.org](http://cunyurbanfoodpolicy.org)      [gownyc.org](http://gownyc.org)

## GrowNYC Grainstand Evaluation

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Introduction

The Grainstand, a former GrowNYC Food Access and Agriculture program, operated from 2015-2021, with the mission of supporting the development of a regional small grain economy in the Northeast by bridging the gap to provide market access to both producers and consumers. The Grainstand operated a series of retail stands at GrowNYC's Greenmarkets with operations in four of the five boroughs. It served as a test marketer, aggregator and reseller of regional grains, beans, and seed oils.

Small grains, which include wheat, barley, oat, and rye, play an important role in crop rotations.<sup>1</sup> The addition of small grains to crop rotation can lessen environmental impacts through a reduction of fertilizer use, greenhouse gas emissions, and fossil fuel use.<sup>2</sup> Small, local grains may have more interesting flavor profiles and more distinct tastes than industrially-grown and processed grain.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the impacts of small, whole grains on the health of consumers (e.g. lowering the risk of heart disease and diabetes) make them an important component of a nutritious diet as well.<sup>4</sup> The GrowNYC Grainstand contributed to the local small grain economy of the Northeast by providing marketing support and points of access as a pathway to reach individual and wholesale consumers.

In partnership with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, GrowNYC conducted an evaluation of the GrowNYC Grainstand to build understanding of client purchasing patterns, grain knowledge, and motivations for shopping at the Grainstand. The evaluation also aimed to generate insight into the market potential of organic small grains and identify barriers to market growth.

#### Methods

A 38-question survey was distributed to Grainstand customers and GrowNYC clients using Qualtrics, an online survey software over a period of 10 weeks during the months of October to December 2021. Participants were recruited with the support of GrowNYC staff through GrowNYC and Grainstand social media channels and through the Grainstand listserv. Participants were included if they had previously shopped at the Grainstand.

#### Results

The survey received a total of 369 survey respondents. After exclusion for non-Grainstand customers (69) and incomplete responses (98), 202 responses were included in the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Cornell CALS, Small Grains, (Field Crops, n.d.). Retrieved from <https://cals.cornell.edu/field-crops/small-grains>

<sup>2</sup> University of Minnesota, Diversifying crop rotations improves environmental outcomes while keeping farms profitable, (U of M News & Events, 2020). Retrieved from <https://twin-cities.umn.edu/news-events/diversifying-crop-rotations-improves-environmental-outcomes-while-keeping-farms>

<sup>3</sup> Avis E. From Ancient Grains to Modern Miracles. Food Processing: The Magazine of the Food Industry. May 8, 2022. <https://www.foodprocessing.com/articles/2022/from-ancient-grains-to-modern-miracles/>

<sup>4</sup> Satya Jonnagaladda et.al, Putting the Whole Grain Puzzle Together: Health Benefits Associated with Whole Grains—Summary of American Society for Nutrition 2010 (Satellite Symposium, 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3078018/>

When asked about what motivates clients to shop at the Grainstand, 94% of respondents stated that supporting local agriculture and local farmers was important to them. In addition, 79% stated that knowing where their food comes from and how it is grown was important. Lastly, 81% of respondents chose quality as an important motivator for shopping at the Grainstand.

More than just a retail location for purchasing grains, the Grainstand served as an important educational opportunity for customers. More than 75% of survey respondents reported “gaining knowledge” from their Grainstand interactions, and 75% indicated the knowledge they had gained from Grainstand staff had informed or influenced their grain purchases. A large majority (90%) of respondents “agreed or strongly agreed” that they had discovered new products at the Grainstand.

### Discussion

In conducting this evaluation, GrowNYC aimed to expand their knowledge of the motivations, habits, and needs of customers of the Grainstand, and to generate insight into the market potential of organic small grains and identify barriers to market growth.

The market potential of small grains in the Northeast was demonstrated on a small scale by Grainstand customer commitment to purchasing as much of their grain needs at the Grainstand and customer declarations that if the Grainstand were to be at more of their local markets and if the supply of grains were more consistent, they would purchase more often. Furthermore, customers stated that if they were able to know that the Grainstand would be at their local market before they got there, they would be able to plan for purchases at the stand.

Barriers to market growth include general knowledge of small grains benefits and preparation methods, even among small grains consumers. Many survey respondents demonstrated knowledge regarding the characteristics of products sold at the Grainstand, including which ones were corn-based, gluten-free in addition to having some understanding of the health and environmental benefits of grains. There remains an opportunity to increase education about small grains, particularly their importance to decreasing the environmental impacts of some farming practices. Respondents also made it clear that they knew there was a gap in their understanding of how to use some of the lesser-known products sold at the stand. Many respondents stated that the Grainstand could meet their needs further by providing more education, recipes, and demonstrations about how to use more of the grains in their own kitchens.

### Acknowledgements

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