

Purchasing Locally Sourced Food: Gauging Interest and Involvement of Indiana Institutions

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Introduction

This research gauges the interest of Indiana institutions in purchasing local food, as well as their overall impact on the Indiana food system. One step in creating a more sustainable food system is relying on more local foods and relinquishing dependence on the global food system, however:

- **In Indiana, 90% of food sales come from out of state purchases**
- **Over three fifths of the land in Indiana is agricultural land**
- **Indiana does not have any incentive programs for institutions to purchase local food**

Barriers are considered in the survey, so that we see which approach has the greatest leverage point. This research gauging interest can be presented to policymakers in order for them to draft legislation financially incentivizing local purchasing habits.

This survey was primarily inspired by the survey created by the **Northeast Organic Farming Association Vermont (NOFA-VT)** in order to display the current food purchasing habits of Vermont institutions. Influences also include **The 10 Cents a Meal Program** in Michigan, in which if local food is purchased by an institution, then up to 10 cents will be reimbursed by the state for each meal as well as **Farm to Institution New England (FINE)** in the Northeast U.S. which organizes institutions into groups so that acquiring funding for local food programs is much easier.

Methods

The NOFA-VT survey provided the template for our surve which was distributed by email to 417 K-12 school food service directors, 49 college/university food directors, and 1 contract representative for the Indiana State Correctional System.

8 universities were surveyed by direct phone call and The survey was also distributed via snowball methods, or channels, including

- The Indiana Restaurant-Lodging Association (INRLA) and the East Central Indiana Chapter of the American Culinary Federation
- The Hoosier Chapter of the Association for Healthcare Foodservice
- Indiana Head Start (Tonia Carriger);
- Indiana University Sustainable Food Systems Science website
- Personal invitations from value chain coordinators

The primary food purchaser for each institution was asked to fill out the survey. None of the questions in the survey required responses. Questions included information about:

- Expenditures,
- Definition of local food
- Total meals served
- Percent of food expenditures spent on local foods

The survey was distributed twice before being closed for analysis. Qualtrics was utilized for descriptive statistical analysis to find visual data. ArcGIS Online provides spatial data mapping

Figure 1: Institutions which responded to questions involving expenditures or meals served are included in this table, including snowball responses. Displayed are the institution types included in each category, total of institutions who received the email, followed by the number of directors which responded who were initially emailed. Some directors provided data for more than one institution (i.e. a school district), so the total number of institutions represented is also included.

Institution Type	Included Institutions	Survey Sample	Number of Respondents	Number of Institutions Represented	Response Rate of Initial Survey Sample
University/College		49	20	20	41%
Correctional Facilities	County jails, state prisons, juvenile detention centers	1	8	28	100%
Other Food Service	Hotels, restaurants, assisted living, hospitals, catering, meical companies, group homes	0	44	44	N/A
School	Public and private schools	417	163	511	39%
Total		467	235	603	N/A

Total Expenditures on Food/Beverages in the Previous Fiscal Year

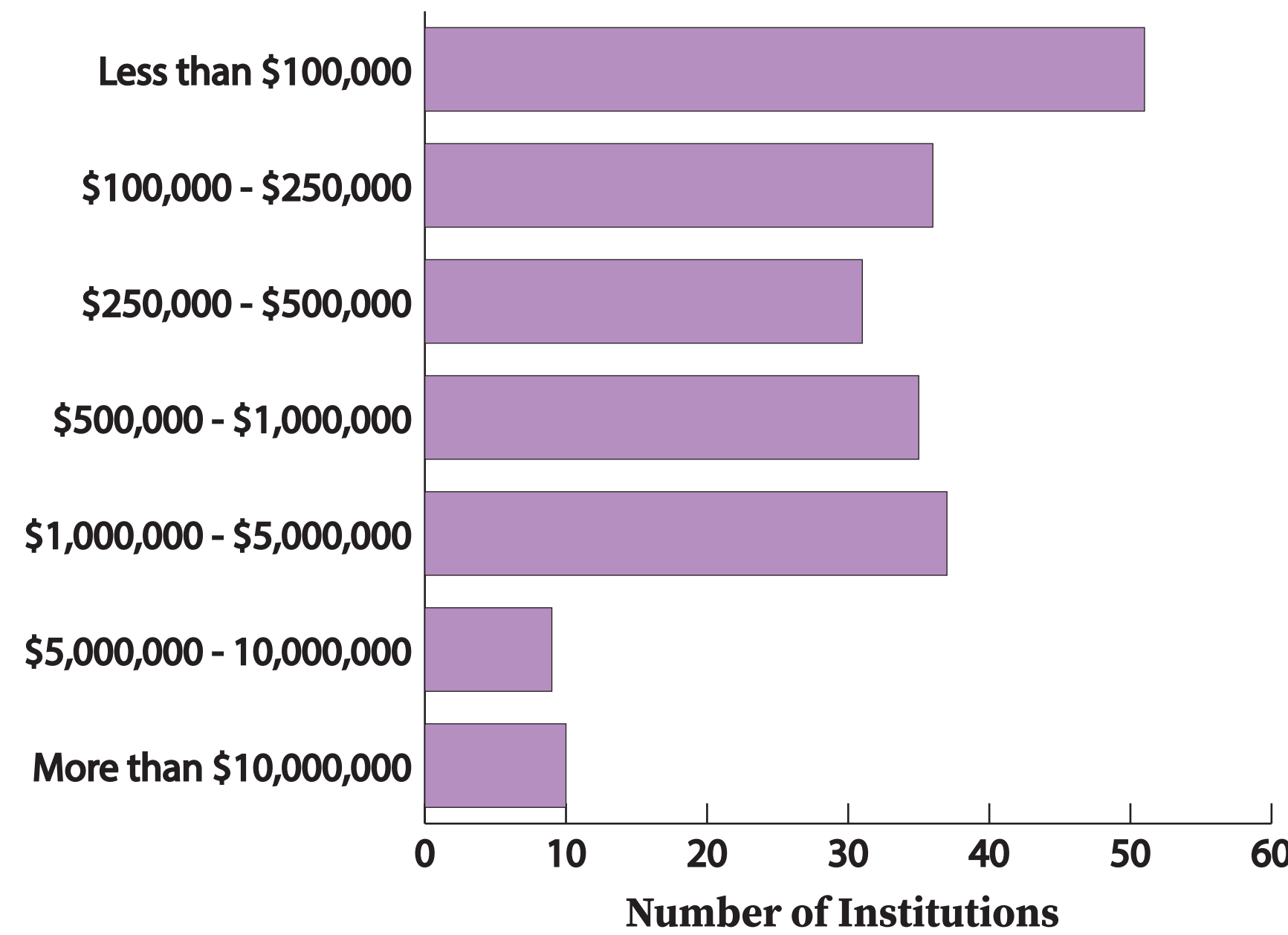


Figure 2: Institutions total expenditures on food and beverages in the previous fiscal year. This includes all respondents to the survey and, in total, more than \$225,000,000.

Percent of TOTAL Expenditures Spent on Local Food

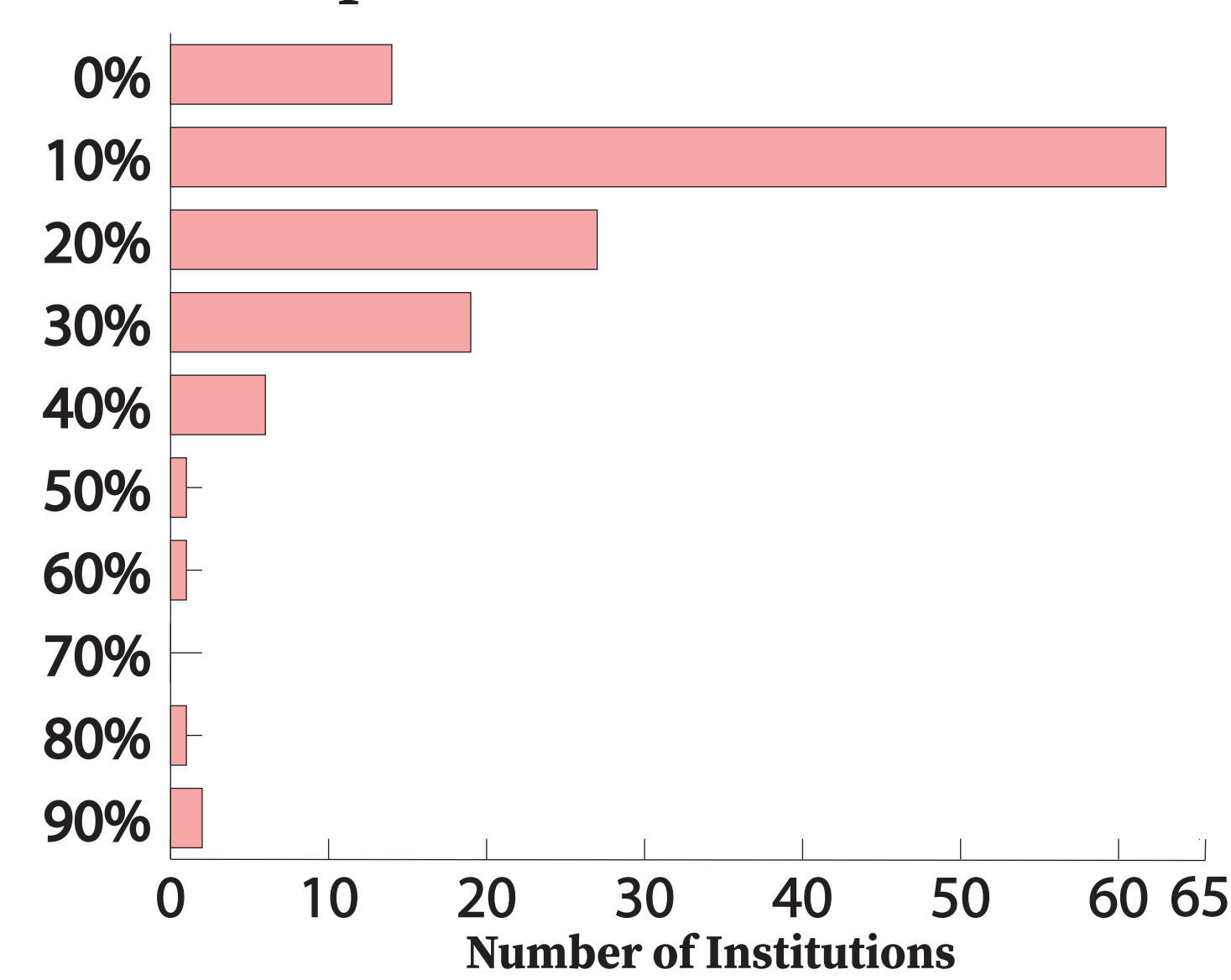


Figure 3: Includes an estimate made by institutions on what percentage of total food expenditures was spent on local food in the last fiscal year.

Percent of Category Expenditures Spent on Local Foods

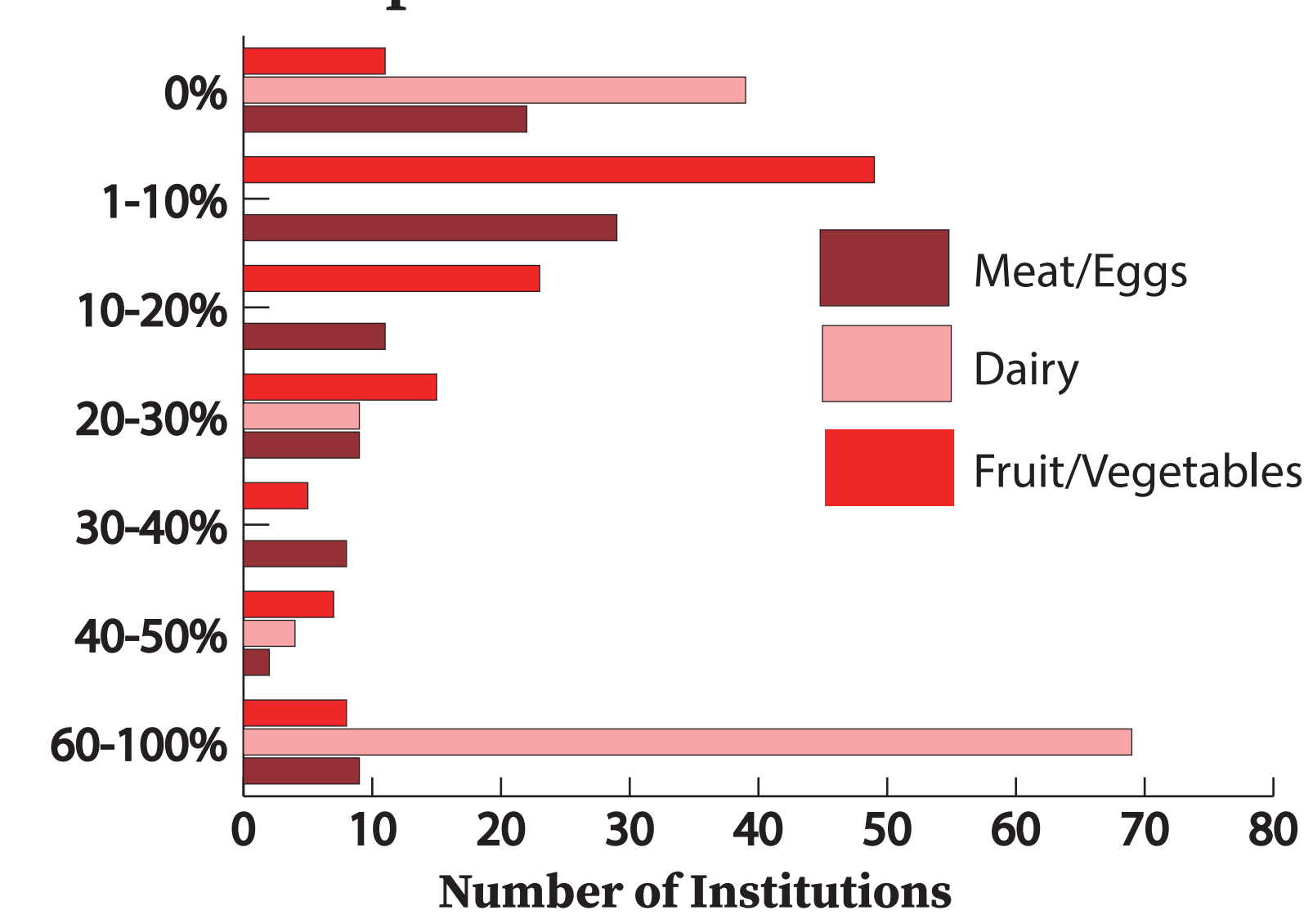


Figure 4: Includes an estimate of the percentage of each categories expenditures was spent on local food in the last fiscal year. Ex: 60% of dairy expenditures were spent on local dairy.

Results

Of the 467 inititally emailed, 191 institutions reponded. In total with snowball surveys, 235 institution food directors responded to the survey. (Figure 1)

- **56% of respondents are spending 10% or less of their food budget on local food (Figure 3)**
- **60% of institutions are already purchasing some fruits/vegetables locally and 22% institutions aren't currently purchasing any local fruits/vegetables, but they would like to in the future (Figure 5)**

This survey includes 603 insitutions in total

- **Expenditures totaled over \$225,000,000 (Figure 2, Figure 6)**
- **Total meals served each day totaled over 300,000 (Figure 7)**

While many institutions are purchasing large quantities of local dairy, not as many are purchasing a large percentage of local fruits and vegetables (Figure 4)

- However, fruits and vegetables are the category most often included in local food sales

58% of respondents define local food as food grown and/or processed within the state of Indiana

Highly motivating factors to purchase local are:

- Freshness of product
- Price
- Supporting the local economy

Common barriers to purchasing local include

- Distributor does not carry local products
- Products not available in the form needed

60% of institutions would **prefer to purchase local food from a specialty distributor or direct from farmers**

Discussion

Institutions are interested in purchasing local food and many do already, but the opportunity gap is very wide. For example, fruits and vegetables are the most common local food category purchased, but typically the percent purchased locally is low at about 10%.

Considering price is a major motivator, fiscal incentives from the state are necessary to facilitate not only the purchasing, but also the preparation of local foods which can be more intensive. Institutions are the best leverage point to affect a great number of people, influencing personal food choices depends on exposure to local food in these institutions. Institutions must be willing to set an example for individuals considering their overall impact is so great.

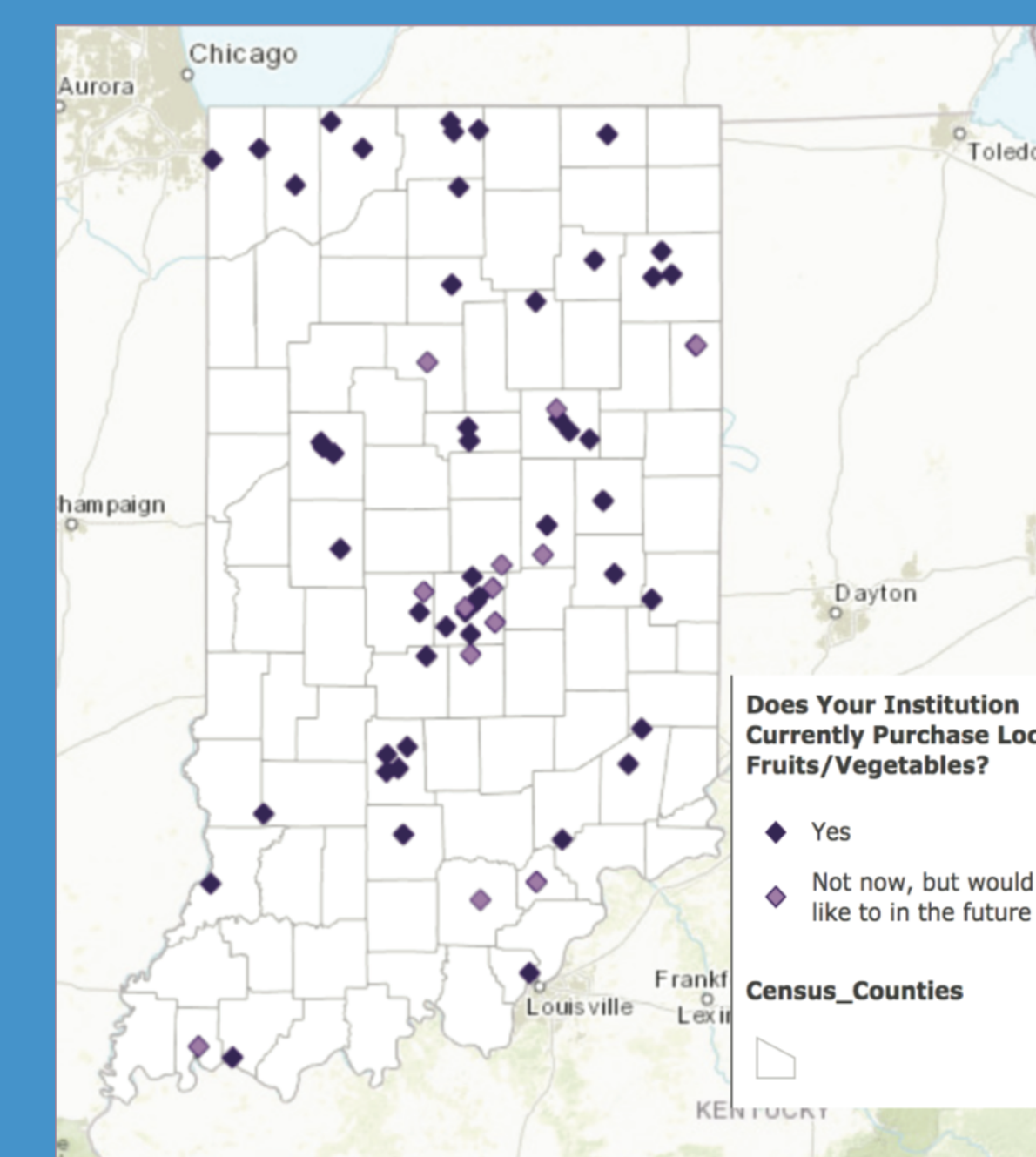


Figure 5: displays the 74 institutions which allowed us to plot their locations as well as whether or not they are currently purchasing local products.

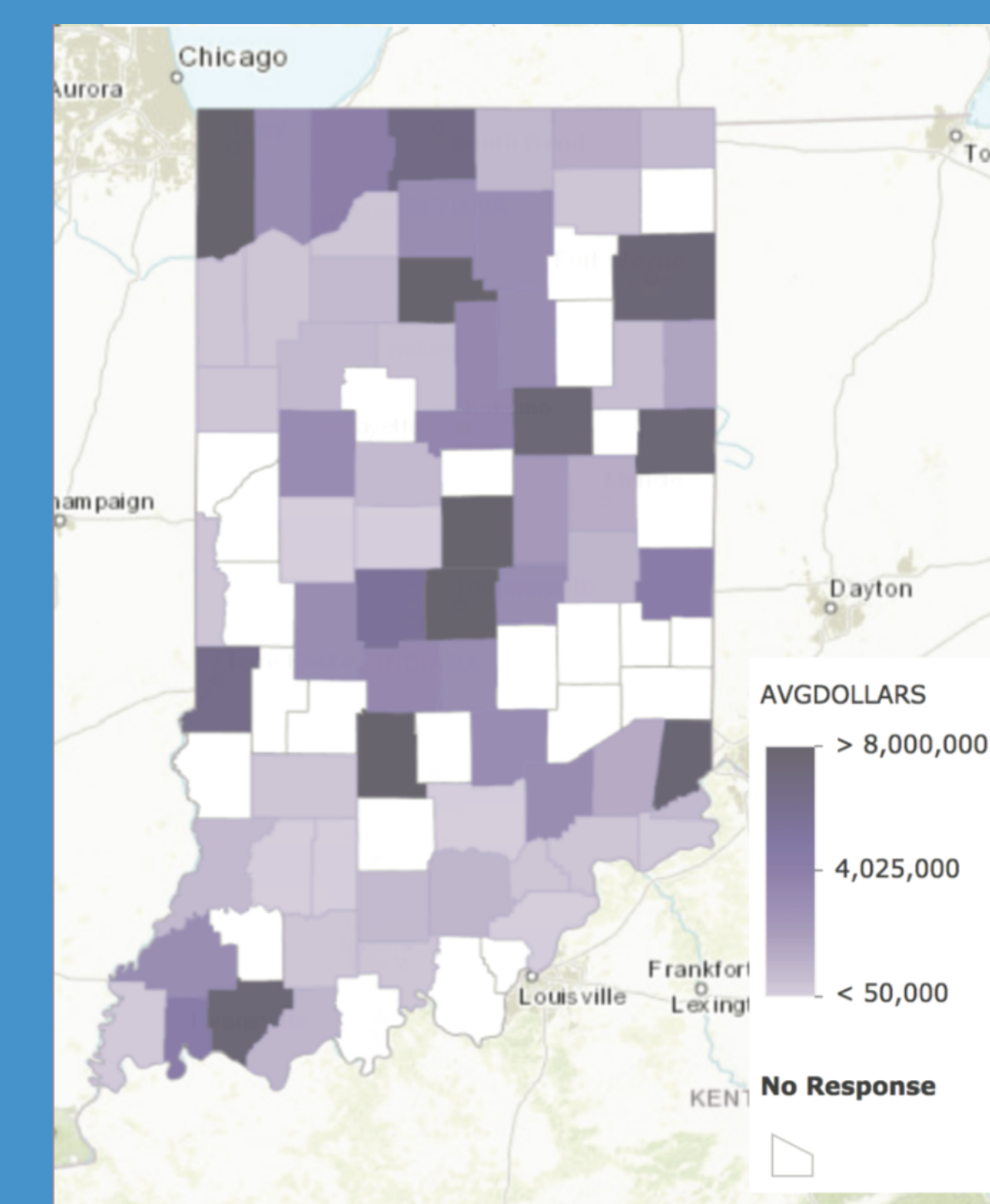


Figure 6 includes all institutions and is a summation of total expenditures by county. While the high end of expenditures extended into \$37,000,000, there was not much in between.

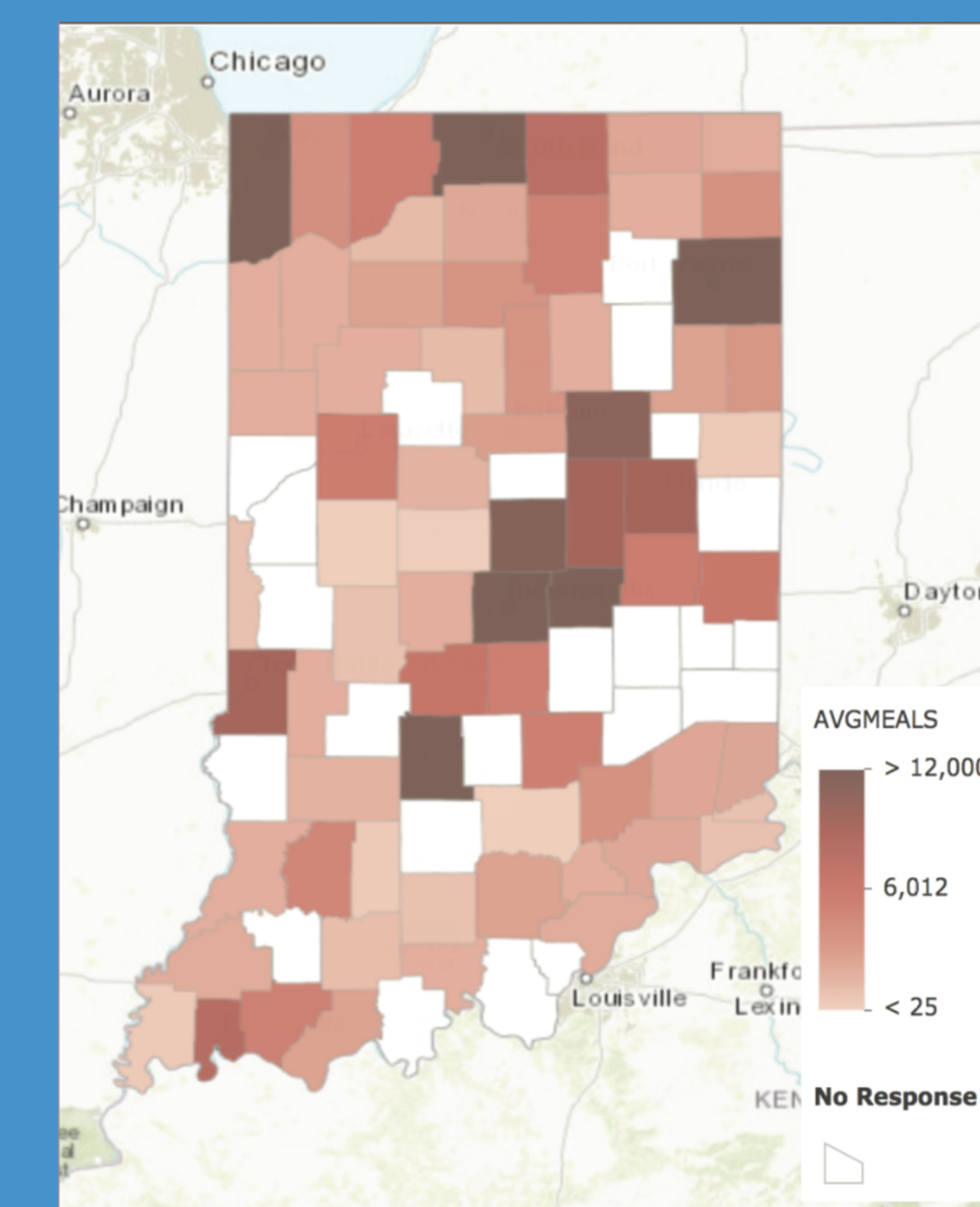


Figure 7 includes all institutions and indicates how many meals are served each day when these institutions are operating. The total number of meals is, on average, over 300,000 each day.

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