



Farm to Preschool Implementation: An Assessment of Nebraska Childcare Programs

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NEBRASKA Nutrition And Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care



BACKGROUND

Farm to Preschool (F2PS) is an extension of the farm to school model, and works to connect early care and education settings (preschools, Head Start, center-based programs, programs in K-12 school districts, and family child care programs) to local food producers, nutrition education curriculums and local gardens¹.

Core Elements of Farm to Preschool (F2PS) Programs



Benefits to Farm to Preschool Participation

Farm to Preschool programming is an effective and sustainable approach to implementing comprehensive health changes through policy, systems and environmental initiatives in child care facilities in Nebraska through the implementation of nutrition education, local foods procurement and the use of preschool gardening interventions.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify the level of implementation of F2PS programming in regards to nutrition education, local foods and gardening interventions in Nebraska child care facilities and communities.
- Examine the level of interest in implementing F2PS practices in Nebraska.

METHODS

Design and Population

- (n=285) childcare providers who participant in Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in Nebraska.
- (n=356) child care providers who participate in Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (Go NAP SACC) in Nebraska

Data Collection

F2PS Survey

- An online survey distributed by Nebraska Department of Education, Nutrition Services, completed by childcare providers who participate in CACFP.
- The survey consists of 25 questions related to F2PS implementation regarding current practices related to the use of local foods, nutrition education and on-site edible gardening.

Go NAP SACC Survey

- Pre and post Nebraska Go NAP SACC self-assessment data, which was completed online.
- Data specific to F2PS edible gardening practices was utilized.

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS.

RESULTS

Table 1. Nebraska Farm to Preschool Implementation

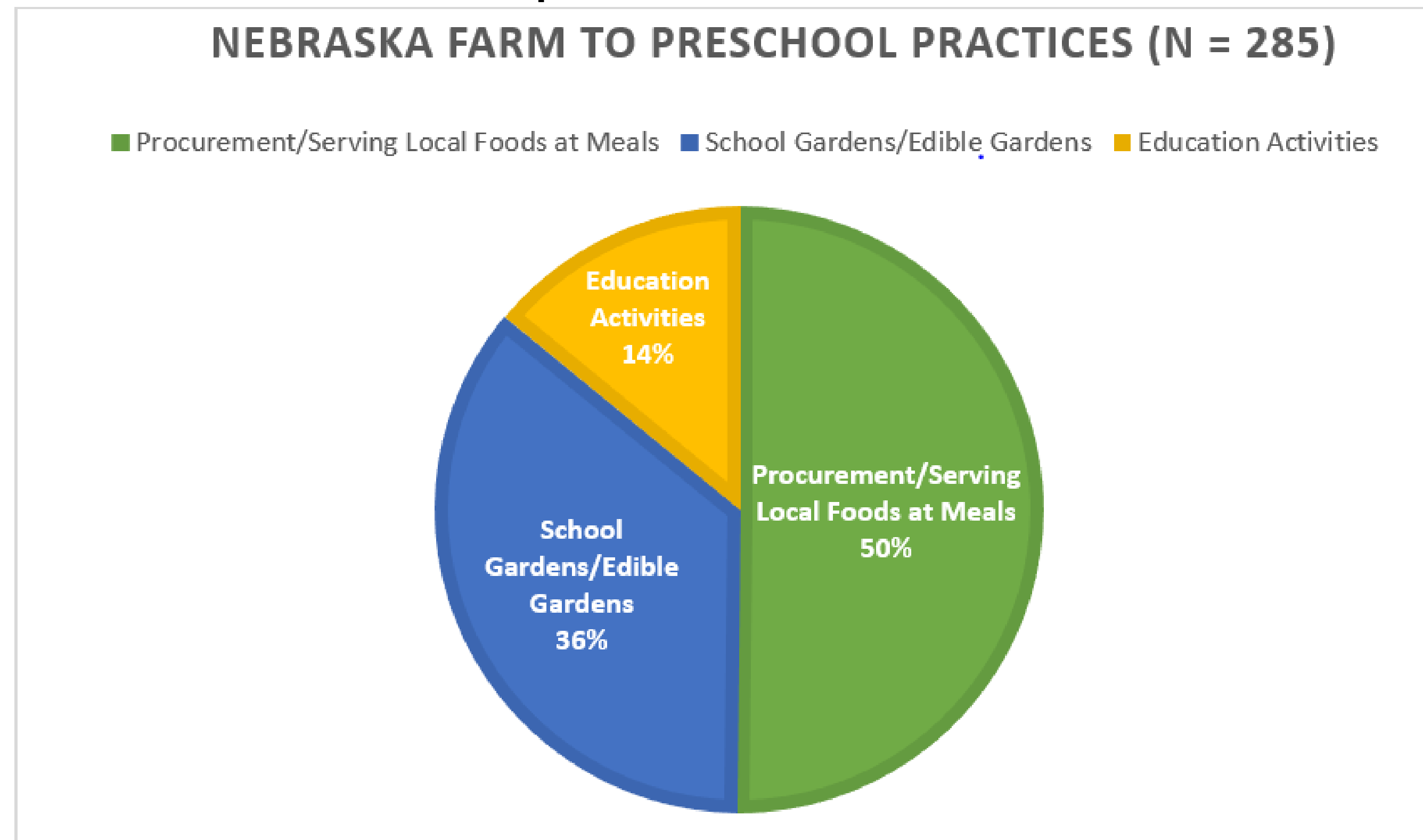


Table 2. Childcare Sites Planning to Implement Farm to Preschool in the Next Year, (n) = 285

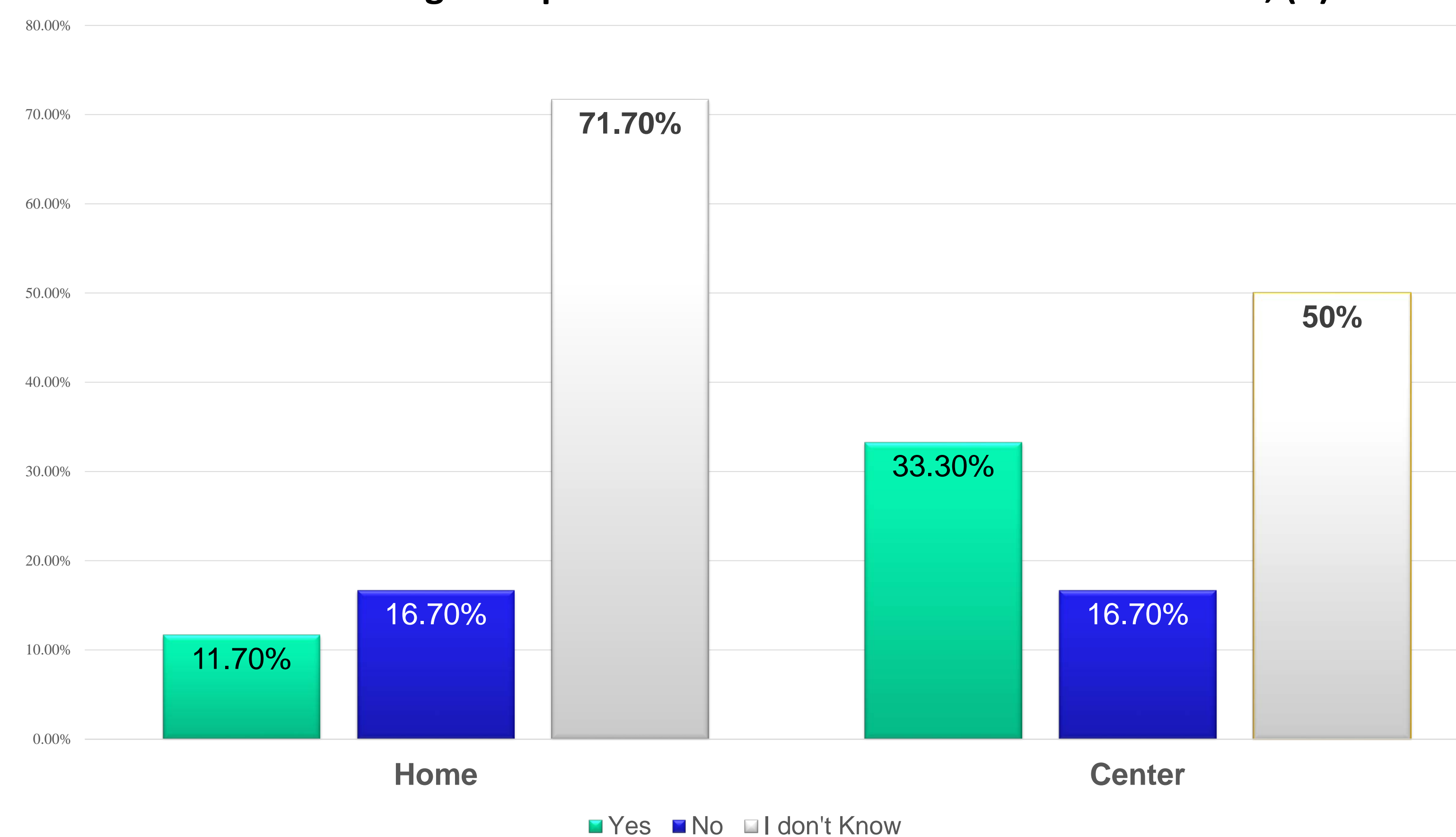
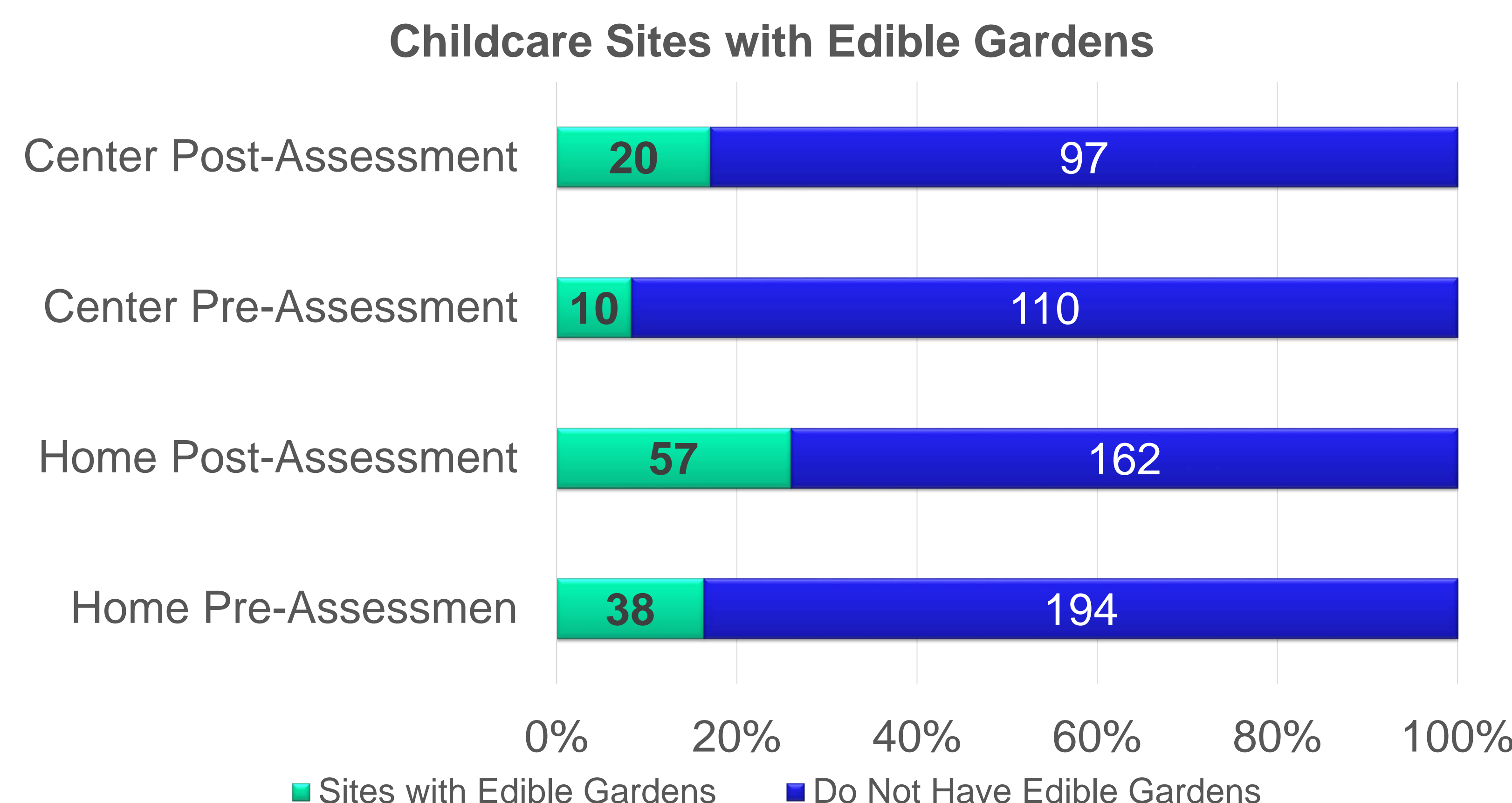


Table 3. GO NAP SACC Pre/Post Report on Gardening Best Practices, (n) = 124 Centers, (n) = 232 Homes



DISCUSSION

Implications for Practice

- Nebraska childcare providers indicate an overwhelming need for additional resources around F2PS to increase implementation of the three core constructs.
- Results indicate that 85% of childcare facilities do not have a standards based curriculum regarding F2PS in Nebraska.
- Additional education for providers and parents should highlight that F2PS efforts have been found to be instrumental in influencing the development of healthy eating habits while developing kindergarten readiness in the areas of science, math, art and literacy.

Future Directions

- Identify standardized curriculum and resources for integrating F2PS activities into childcare programs to assist programs in developing goals, plans and action steps for increased implementation.
- Provide grant or fundraising opportunities for childcare facilities to support expansion of F2PS efforts.
- Provide information to childcare providers about ways to connect with local producers or increase edible gardening.
- Offer webinars that highlight success stories and ideas for increasing program activities in childcare settings.

Implications for Research

- Further studies are warranted to clarify the barriers and facilitators of F2PS utilization in family and center-based childcare settings in Nebraska.
- Initial research indicates that when F2PS curriculum includes where food comes from, how it is grown, hands-on experiences, and engages senses, children increase acceptance of produce.
- Additional data should be collected to differentiate current F2PS practices being implemented in childcare environments and across all socioeconomic levels.

CONCLUSION

- Data indicates that low numbers of childcare facilities are participating in F2PS educational activities.
- Data shows lack of a standard curriculum and educational resources to support F2PS implementation.
- More training is needed to increase the implementation of F2PS in Nebraska.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Full references are available upon request, jcoffey3@unl.edu