The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 laid the foundation for integrating agriculture and environment as the lynchpin for achieving sustainable development. Policy makers and researchers at various levels of institutional arrangements produce ways to minimize agriculture’s environmental footprints for a sustainable ecosystem. One way to account for the embedded energy in transporting food is to incorporate the cost of averting environmental degradation through environmental accounting. The primary objective of this paper is to understand how perceptive and willing local communities are supporting local farmers through their purchasing behavior of locally grown produce, viz. locally grown ethnic greens and herbs in the eastern parts of the United States. To investigate ethnic consumers’ purchasing behavior, a telephone survey was conducted May through October 2010, covering 16 east coast states and Washington D.C to better serve small and medium size farmers. Our target populations were Asian Indians, Chinese, Mexican, and Puerto Rican consumers. One of the focuses of our study was to predict how socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural variables influence the purchasing behavior of locally grown green and herbs to support local farms using a logit model.

Results indicate that 44% of respondents purchase locally grown ethnic greens and herbs to support local farms. The logit model indicates the age of the respondent when arriving to the United States, total expenditure per month on listed greens/herbs, language spoken by the store employee, respondents with high quality produce expectations, and Puerto Ricans positively relate to the likelihood of purchasing locally grown ethnic greens/herbs to support local farms. The model indicates that the number of visits per month, distance to the nearest grocery store, respondents who thought that the freshness and selection of produce is important while shopping, those who reside in urban and suburban areas, and those who make between $20,000 and $40,000 per annum are negatively related to likelihood of purchasing locally grown ethnic greens and herbs to support local farms. These results may be useful to the local farmers investigating the possibility of growing ethnic greens and herbs based on the demand and target markets.