According to the USDA, less than 1% of the farmland in Indiana and Ohio is organically managed. Organic farming has been shown to be beneficial to the environment by improving quality of the air, water and soil. Consumers associate organic foods with good health and nutrition and act on this belief by purchasing organic foods. The USDA reports that the demand for organic products continues to grow, with fruit and vegetable sales higher than other products. At the same time, the USDA acknowledges that the number of organic producers remains low, leading one to ask the question “why?” This qualitative research study aimed to explore what motivated farmers to use their specific farming method and to investigate farmers’ thoughts in partnering with Registered Dietitians (RDNs) to improve the health of their communities by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. Thirty to forty-five-minute face to face interviews were conducted with 24 farmers (8 conventional, 8 certified organic, and 8 non-certified organic). The results showed that economics, environment, government policies and health/nutrition were factors that influenced decisions the farmers made about their farming practices. The farmers in this study believed continuing education about farming practices was important to improve their businesses, and the quality of their products. The farmers were willing
to collaborate with RDNs to promote their products and improve the health of the community. The farmers had ideas and suggestions for working with RDNs that focused on consumer education, accessibility, and community outreach. RDNs can explore opportunities and develop programs to work with farmers using the data from these research findings. If RDNs and farmers could work together to improve accessibility of fresh produce, educate the consumers about the importance of fresh produce, and reach out to communities in need, there could be increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. These partnerships between farmers and RDNs could lead to the prevention of chronic diseases and malnutrition in these communities as well as overall improved health outcomes.