Bean Poll

Based on the Oregon Extension Service’s Rapid Market Assessment tools, the Bean Poll was designed by marketumbrella.org. This version reduces the logistical issues of Dot Surveys and increases the ease in conducting market surveys in light of different types of weather and market layouts.

Why a Bean Poll?
Bean Polls allow for a simple “mood of the day” question to be asked of both vendors and shoppers. The Bean Poll offers a weather-friendly survey technique that can be staffed or left to shoppers and vendors to self-select. However, do remember that self-selecting surveys can reduce the diversity and number of your responses. The closed receptacles (cups with lids) used for the dried beans reduce the “prestige bias” of stickers on a sheet of paper. Prestige bias is a term used when people are influenced by previous responses shown to them while they are making their own response.
It also allows for reuse of the survey materials and is easy to store.

Description
The original version of marketumbrella.org’s Bean Poll was designed for their marketshare work and was first deployed in Natchitoches LA at the Cane River Green Market.
Please participate in a short survey on beans and give your opinion!
How to use the Bean Poll:
Define the question. The Bean Poll is designed to ask a qualitative question, with room for two or three follow up questions. This method is what is called a pulse survey, which is often used in employee satisfaction and industry health surveys. The question is written and posted on the left-hand side and cups list the possible answers. The space restriction usually means that should be 1-2 possible answers, based on how many cups can be placed in one row.
It also helps if there is a cup at the end for “unused beans” so that if respondent does not know how to answer a question, there is a place to put the left over beans.
Or, you may put a No Answer cup after the Yes and No cups for each question.

Since the dried beans are either handed or left for shoppers and vendors to decide to participate or not, this is not a method in which to track comprehensive economic or long-term issues. For comprehensive surveys, we recommend shopper or vendor intercept survey techniques, which are explained on marketumbrella.org’s website.

Instead, the Bean Poll is best used for questions that ask for opinion and perception from the part of the market community that is present at the market that day.
Questions such as:
• Did you like the event the market had today?
• Have you ever asked for assistance from the market staff?
• Do you think the market should consider adding another market day?
• Have you spent more or less on seafood since the oil spill?

In addition, you can ask a follow up question that asks for the same information such as:
• Did you like the event the market had today?
• Was the event useful to you?

• Have you spent more or less on seafood since the oil spill?
• If yes, are you spending more to support the fishers?

Asking a question a second or even third time increases the veracity of the final responses. In any survey, the more serious the question, the more you should work to get a wide response rate.
Triangulation is a way to increase the validation of the data in any survey. If you were to ask about adding a market day by using the Bean Poll, you might also set it up on more than one day, offer an online survey and ask vendors directly for their opinion to insure a wide selection of respondents and responses.

One of the ways that marketumbrella.org has used the Bean Poll technique to great satisfaction is with the Marketeer work. Marketeer is the organization’s program
for children’s educational activities at the market. The staff will go to a school, present basic information and ask the class to answer one or two questions. 

*Have you ever met a farmer?*
*Do you know where strawberries grow in our state?*

Those answers are compared to later answers from the same group after they have had a class trip to the market with a scavenger hunt and an educational module from market staff.

With this pleasant method, basic perception is measured and that data can be added to final reports of grants as well as in the market ‘s annual report.

The type of dried beans can be different for vendor and for shoppers; marketumbrella.org has used kidney beans for shoppers and navy beans for vendor answers.

The cups are attached to the board with plastic ties and lids have a hole cut in to the lid to drop the beans in.