*Argument 12*

*The following appeared in a memo from the owner of Green Thumb Gardening Center, a small*

*business serving a suburban town.*

*"There is evidence that consumers are becoming more and more interested in growing their*

*own -vegetables. A national survey conducted last month indicated that many consumers were*

*dissatisfied with the quality of fresh vegetables available in supermarkets. And locally, the*

*gardening magazine Great Gardens has sold out at the Village News stand three months in a*

*row. Thus, we at Green Thumb Gardening Center can increase our profits by greatly*

*expanding the variety of vegetable seeds we stock for gardeners this coming spring."*

In this memo the owner of Green Thumb Gardening Center (GT) concludes that GT could

increase its profits by expanding its stock of vegetable seeds. The owner cites a national

survey showing growing dissatisfaction with supermarket vegetables, and points out that a

certain gardening magazine has sold out at one local newsstand three months in a row. I find

the owner's argument weak, for three reasons.

First, by relying on the national survey to support its conclusion the argument depends on

the assumption that the level of satisfaction locally with store-bought groceries reflects national

levels. Yet the owner provides no evidence to support this assumption. It is possible that

residents of this town are quite satisfied with these vegetables. Without eliminating this

possibility, the owner cannot rely on the national survey to conclude that this town's residents

would be interested in buying vegetable seeds from GT.

Secondly, by relying on the survey the argument assumes that consumers who are

dissatisfied with store-bought groceries are likely to grow their own vegetables instead.

However, the owner fails to provide any evidence to support this assumption. Perhaps

consumers are continuing to buy vegetables from grocery stores despite their dissatisfaction.

Or perhaps this dissatisfaction is leading consumers to buy their vegetables from special

produce markets and vegetable stands instead of supermarkets. Since the owner has failed to

consider and rule out these possibilities, the owner's assertion that this town's dissatisfied

consumers would be eager to buy vegetable seeds from GT to grow their own vegetables

cannot be taken seriously.

Thirdly, the mere fact that a certain gardening magazine has recently sold out at one

newsstand in this town is scant evidence that the town's residents would be eager to buy

vegetable seeds from GT. Perhaps three months ago this newsstand decreased the number of

copies it stocks; or perhaps the magazine does not even concern itself with vegetable

gardening; or perhaps the only reason for this apparent increase in sales is that other

newsstands in town have stopped stocking the magazine. Given these possible scenarios, the

fact that one newsstand has sold every copy of the last three monthly issues proves nothing

about local trends in vegetable gardening.

In conclusion, the owner's argument is unpersuasive. To strengthen it the owner must

provide more convincing evidence that consumers in this town are actually becoming less

satisfied with supermarket vegetables, and that as a result they are buying fewer such

vegetables. To better evaluate the argument we would need more information about

alternative sources of vegetables for local consumers--for example, the number and quality of

produce stands. We would also need to know why the newsstand's copies of the gardening

magazine sold out.