



# TOOLKIT

FOR ADAPTING FARMERS MARKETS  
TO MATCH CONSUMER TRENDS

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE 2018 SARE CONSUMER SURVEY

Farmers across the Northeast have reported marked decreases in consumer participation at farmers markets and reduced sales. Reports from farmers and market managers indicate sales were down anywhere from 20% to 70% over previous annual sales. When asked what they attribute the decreases to, the top 4 responses were:

1. **The over-proliferation of markets cannibalizing one another**
2. **Too many options for purchasing local food that offer more convenience**
3. **Inadequate advertising and promotions for the markets**
4. **Lack of understanding of consumer needs and desires**

In New York, farmers and market managers expressed grave concern about the future viability of farmers markets unless action is taken to reverse this downward trend.

Today's consumers are decidedly different than a generation ago. Most households are two-income families, children are involved in multiple sports and after school activities, and families no longer sit down to a home-cooked dinner together every night. Other types of retailers have already taken action to respond to these changes. Supermarkets have added services to make them a more convenient choice, including online ordering and curbside pickup. Many are adding restaurants allowing busy families to combine food shopping with dinner. Online retailers are offering delivery options for food, with meal kits that provide all the ingredients and recipes too, making family meals easier to prepare.

Farmers markets have not responded to this new generation of shoppers. Many are still doing business the way they have for generations. Farmers markets must understand the motivations and behaviors of their potential customers. What drives their food purchases and their choice of venue? While markets cannot compete with the convenience of offering a one-stop-shop for consumers, they must find a way to respond to consumer shopping behaviors and remain relevant to their changing lifestyles. The farmers markets that have found ways to satisfy the needs of today's shoppers are rewarded with a loyal customer base, a sustainable market, and a farmer base that has enough sales to support and grow their farm businesses.

With over 2000 family farmers participating in NY's farmers markets, any decrease in consumer participation and farm sales can have a negative impact on NY farmers' ability to sustain their farms. Similar concerns have been expressed by farmers market industry leaders in Vermont, Massachusetts and Maryland, as well. The impact of lower sales at markets forces direct marketing farmers to seek alternative marketing methods which may not match their personal and farm goals, as well as leaving them short of profits needed to sustain their farms.

To understand this trend, market leaders in these 4 northeastern states developed a consumer survey to begin to understand what drives consumer decisions in purchasing local food and their attitudes towards shopping at farmers markets. The survey was conducted during the summer of 2018 across the northeast. Significant outreach was done to ensure a mix of consumer demographics, urban and rural responses, as well as reaching both current and non-market shoppers. The goal was to reach 500 consumers from each of the four participating states. Responses far exceeded expectations.

<b>STATE</b>	<b>RESPONSES</b>
New York	955
Vermont	775
Maryland	576
Massachussets	580
Other States	290
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3847</b>

The survey was conducted through Qualtrics and managed by Dr. Todd Schmitt’s team at Cornell University’s Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management. Once complete, Dr. Schmitt’s team analyzed the results to give a clear view of consumer attitudes in purchasing local food and farmers markets. The results, at times, were surprising, and provided a wealth of information to help market managers to readjust how they are marketing their markets.

To organize consumer survey results, responses were grouped by the frequency consumers shopped at farmers markets.

**FARMERS MARKET FLAGBEARERS:** those who shop regularly at farmers markets

**CASUAL FARMERS MARKET SHOPPERS:** those who shopped occasionally at farmers markets, or who reported decreased farmers market shopping over the 2016- 2018 seasons.

**NON MARKET SHOPPERS:** those who reported that they rarely, if ever shop at farmers markets

As was expected, grocery stores were the number one venue for grocery shopping across all consumer groups. However, farmers market flagbearers show farmers markets as their second most important source for purchasing food and their primary source for local food. Casual market shoppers dropped farmers markets to third, while non market shoppers, in a ranking of 1 – 9, ranked farmers markets a 9. Clearly, it is important to understand such a low ranking to understand what farmers markets can do to attract a greater number of shoppers.

When asked about primary motivations for shopping for local food, we found some expected answers, but also some surprises. The top two motivations among all categories of shoppers was to support local farmers and to purchase local food. But, unexpectedly, keeping food dollars local and participating in a social or community setting did not rank as all that important for any category of shoppers. As many markets promote both of these concepts as a reason to shop at a farmers market, it appears that dollars spent on these messages are somewhat wasted dollars.

Customers were then asked to describe their feelings when shopping at a farmers market. While we see scowls and frowns on supermarket shoppers, we expect to see smiles at a farmers market. While that is borne out by the study, there are some issues that consumers brought out for farmers markets to consider. For example, many casual and, especially non market shoppers, expressed feeling pressured at a farmers market. Non market shoppers are not used to the direct contact with a seller, so having to shop for their foods at the farmers booths, with the attention of the farmer, causes angst and a feeling that they are obligated to buy if they attract the attention of the farmer. In this case, they avoid those negative feelings by avoiding the markets. This is directly opposed to the standard that by drawing customers into conversation at the market booth, farmers can build trust and customer relationships that translate into sales and loyal customers.

Customers were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very important, about the most and least important characteristics of the farmers market. The results are not all that dissimilar for the top 5 characteristics.

### **MOST IMPORTANT FARMERS MARKET CHARACTERISTICS**

RANK	FLAGBEARERS	CASUAL SHOPPERS	NON-MARKET SHOPPERS
1	Quality food products	Quality food products	Quality food products
2	Availability of local foods	Availability of local foods	Cleanliness
3	Cleanliness	Products efficiently organized	Availability of local foods
4	Environmentally friendly products	Cleanliness	Reasonable travel time
5	Reasonable travel time	Reasonable travel time	Prices clearly displayed

### **LEAST IMPORTANT FARMERS MARKET CHARACTERISTICS**

RANK	FLAGBEARERS	CASUAL SHOPPERS	NON-MARKET SHOPPERS
24	Availability of non-local foods	Availability of non-local foods	Special events (entertainment)
23	Availability of non-food items	Availability of non-food items	Availability of non-food items
22	Special events (entertainment)	Special events (entertainment)	Availability of non-local foods
21	Coupons, sales, discounts available	Available by public transportation	RTE prepared foods available
20	Available by public transportation	Coupons, sales, discounts available	Available by public transportation

These results were surprising as many farmers markets engage in special events, particularly music, in the hopes of encouraging more of the public to participate in the market. We may need to rethink the role that special events play in the market, such as using unique events to draw a targeted audience, or using music and events as an enhancement to the market atmosphere, rather than as a draw.

The question of public transportation seems to be of little importance to all categories of shoppers. However, the results may reflect a rural or suburban location versus a city location. In this case, each market will need to look into their consumer demographics to decide whether this is an important issue for them.

Surveyed consumers were also asked about barriers to shopping at farmers markets to help determine what kinds of issues prevented them from participating at farmers markets. The responses would help market managers to look at their operations and find ways to minimize those barriers preventing consumers from participating in their markets.

### **LARGEST BARRIERS TO SHOPPING AT FARMERS MARKETS, STARTING WITH THE LARGEST BARRIER**

RANK	FLAGBEARERS	CASUAL SHOPPERS	NON-MARKET SHOPPERS
1	Open only part of the year	Market time conflicts with schedule	Prefers convenience of one-stop shopping
2	Market time conflicts with schedule	Prices not competitive with other options	Market time conflicts with schedule
3	Prefers convenience of one-stop shopping	Already purchase local foods at other retail outlets	Already purchase local foods at other retail outlets
4	Prices not competitive with other options	Prefers convenience of one-stop shopping	Prices not competitive with other options
5	Already purchase local foods at other retail outlets	Already purchase local food at other direct to consumer outlets	Hard for me to get to the farmers market

### **SMALLEST BARRIERS TO SHOPPING AT FARMERS MARKETS, ENDING WITH THE SMALLEST BARRIER**

RANK	FLAGBEARERS	CASUAL SHOPPERS	NON-MARKET SHOPPERS
21	Not enough entertainment/events	Not enough entertainment/special events	Not enough entertainment/special events
20	Don't know where farmers market is near me	Don't know where farmers market is near me	Food production methods do not meet my standards
19	I find it intimidating to shop at a market	Prefer farmers market to be indoors or under cover	Vendors are not friendly or helpful
18	Prefer farmers market to be indoors or under cover	I find it intimidating to shop at a market	Prefer farmers market to be indoors or under cover
17	Walking around a market is difficult	Food quality does not meet my standards	Food quality does not meet my standards

Looking at the results, we see that pricing is a real barrier among all consumer groups. Is this a real or perceived issue? We cannot say with absolute certainty, but this is certainly an issue that farmers markets must be cognizant of. For non-market shoppers, when this perception is coupled with farmers not posting the prices of their products, it results in a significant loss of sales from this consumer group and perhaps enough of a barrier to prevent them from ever coming to the market.

It was also noted among the responses to the barriers for shopping at farmers markets, many shoppers were limited in their purchases by not having enough cash on them for all they might want to purchase. When coupled with the perception of high prices, consumers felt their ability to shop at the market was seriously hindered. This could be an easy fix for farmers markets by adding an ATM to the market, offering debit/credit purchasing through a market token system, or encouraging vendors and farmers to accept debit and credit at their own farm's stand. There are a number of processors they can work with to accept debit and credit with their mobile phones.

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SHOPPING AT FARMERS MARKETS, BY CONSUMER GROUP

Positive	Negative
Appreciate social interactions with friends and neighbors. (Flagbearer)	Pressure to buy as they are very nice and friendly; I feel bad to not buy from them. (Flagbearer)
Appreciate the knowledgeable staff. They help me try new foods. (Flagbearer)	Where is the real farmer? Most are hired help and can't answer questions. (Flagbearer)
Like the experience of shopping, bargaining, differing moods & feel of the FM across the seasons. (Flagbearer)	Can't carry everything! (Flagbearer)
Love building relationships with farmers and supporting them. I can shake their hand. (Flagbearer)	Perturbed to find FM more of a flea/craft market, and people reselling from produce companies. (Flagbearer)
Important to expose kids to different foods & learn about benefits of farming and buying local. (Flagbearer)	People like to chat and I run out of time. (Flagbearer)
It's not just fresh food, but food of superior quality and variety grown by people I know. (Flagbearer)	Not having prices out! (Flagbearer)
Like to be educated & reminded about the importance of eating local food every chance I get. (Flagbearer)	I have several young children and no guarantee of close parking or vendors who accept credit cards (Flagbearer)
With EBT food stamp assistance I am able to pay more attention to buying local and high quality food. (Flagbearer)	I feel pressure to buy as they are very nice and friendly and I feel bad to not buy from them. (Casual)
Much more access and ability to intentionally spend my food dollars on local products from good farms. (Flagbearer)	It's gotten too expensive. I worry about price. (Casual)
I guess the word is integrity of the FM participants - standards are upheld. (Flagbearer)	It's a very elite atmosphere and very expensive. I'm an outsider (Casual)
Hybrid of willing to pay more for local, wanting fresh food, & enjoying participation in the community. (Flagbearer)	Too many former clients who just want to chat. The farmer doesn't move to the next customer. (Casual)
Sense of community with vendors & fellow shoppers. (Flagbearer)	Unpriced goods, staff not helpful. (Casual)
Important to purchase high-quality, different, and inspiring foods. (Flagbearer)	More geared to out-of-towners and not the locals, including price and entertainment. (Casual)
Knowing that I am supporting local agriculture. (Flagbearer)	More for elites, than average working person. (Casual)
Feel very close to the farmers I support and miss them when they leave. (Flagbearer)	Cannot afford the luxury of FM prices (Casual)
A community run market provides unique social benefits. (Casual)	People running the stand can't answer questions about production, variety, or use. (Casual)
Community outreach to make product available to ALL community members, regardless of financial, cultural, physical abilities and age. (Casual)	Purchasing products during the middle of the work day that must be refrigerated until I get home. (Casual)
A reliable, predictable group of vendors. (Casual)	Too much emphasis on social events, live music, and non-food or prepared food distracts from the fresh food and makes it hard to shop for produce. (Casual)
Several produce vendors to choose from. (Casual)	Farmers markets take too much time. (Non-market)
Able to talk to a farmer. (Casual)	Cost, it's too expensive. (Non-market)
Being able to select my fruits and veggies. (Casual)	Can't get to FM during miniscule time it's open. (Non-market)
Child-friendly. (Casual)	Inconvenient times, limited selection, and small so I feel pressured to make a purchase. (Non-market)
A pleasant shopping experience. (Casual)	More craft vendors than fresh food vendors. (Non-market)
Ability to explore and try new things. (Non-market)	The market does not have enough variety and limited time to shop. (Non-market)

<sup>a</sup> Responses summarized from several questions in the survey where an "other, please describe" option was available or was an open-ended question. Some answers were edited for brevity, but without any loss in meaning or interpretation.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE FARMERS MARKET TOOLKIT

Farmers markets no longer have the appeal of the past, where they were the single source of purchasing local foods direct from farmers. Other outlets have cropped up in recent years that have usurped the farmers market brand and have captured the attention of consumers. Grocery stores and supermarkets have added a full line of local produce and promote the local growers in-store. This allows consumers to buy local and continue to support local farmers with all the convenience these stores can offer.

Farmers have added new ways to reach consumers without the hassle of packing their farm products and heading out to a farmers market to sell direct to consumers. Community Supported Agriculture has become more common with farmers to reach a consumer audience and build relationships with their consumers. These CSA programs are evolving to keep up with consumer trends – more choices, payment options, convenient pickup and delivery.

But does this trend mean the end of farmers markets? No, the results of the consumer survey clearly indicate there is a base of consumers that prefer farmers markets for purchasing local food – from the high quality and freshness of the food, to the relationships they build with growers to the belief that supporting local agriculture is important to themselves and their environment.

Other consumer groups, those who shop at farmers markets, but with less frequency than in the past, and those who say they never shop at farmers markets, can be won over. The results of the survey show what is important to these consumers and what appeals to them. Markets that can deliver what the consumer wants, in a way that appeals to their values and beliefs, will continue to thrive.

The remainder of this publication will provide a look at a variety of ways that markets across the country have adjusted their market operations, promotions and policies to match the consumer base in their communities. This toolkit is organized into four broad categories to make it easier to navigate the issues that are resulting in decreased consumer participation and farmers markets and potential solutions to those concerns.

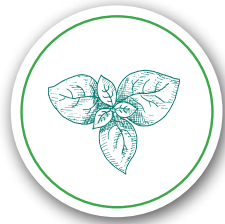
- 1. Marketing to Today's Customer**
- 2. Building Market Programs that Draw and Maintain Market Shoppers**
- 3. Enhancing the Customer Experience**
- 4. From the Farmer's Perspective**

The toolkit uses the results of the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey to acknowledge customer opinions of farmers markets, some of which are negative. But it is through acknowledgement of those negative attitudes and viewpoints that we can examine our farmers markets and turn those negatives into positives and build farmers markets that match what our customers are looking for in a local foods shopping venue.

Many of the solutions included in this toolkit will require an investment from the market, some in human resources, some financial, and some will require both. In many cases, there are suggestions in how you can accomplish those investments using outside assistance – sponsors, community partners and funders. But is important to the future of your market that you commit to investments into new programs, policies and opportunities that ensure the sustainability of your market and build a viable outlet for your farmers.

While this toolkit is not the “be all and end all” to help markets adjust to today's consumer, it will certainly point to many opportunities as well as make you think about initiatives that you can institute in your own farmers market to begin to rebuild your own market's customer base.





# BRANDING BASICS

## SITUATION: CUSTOMERS ARE FACING MORE OPTIONS FOR PURCHASING LOCAL FOOD THAN EVER BEFORE

As revealed in the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, farmers markets are up against steep competition. When customers seek out local food, they're not always turning to the market. For example, casual market shoppers are now more apt to shop for local food at the grocery store, instead of the market!

One reason that customers may be turning to grocery stores is that these companies are re-creating their brand image to appear as if they are a true purveyor of local goods.

In produce sections of supermarkets today, you often see hand-stamped logos, photos of lush fields, and even farmers market displays – complete with awnings – within the store. Some even name their produce sections "farmers markets."

Optimizing your market's brand is one strategy to deploy in your effort to shift local food dollars back to your market.

## SOLUTION: FOCUS ON BRANDING

### What Exactly is a Brand?

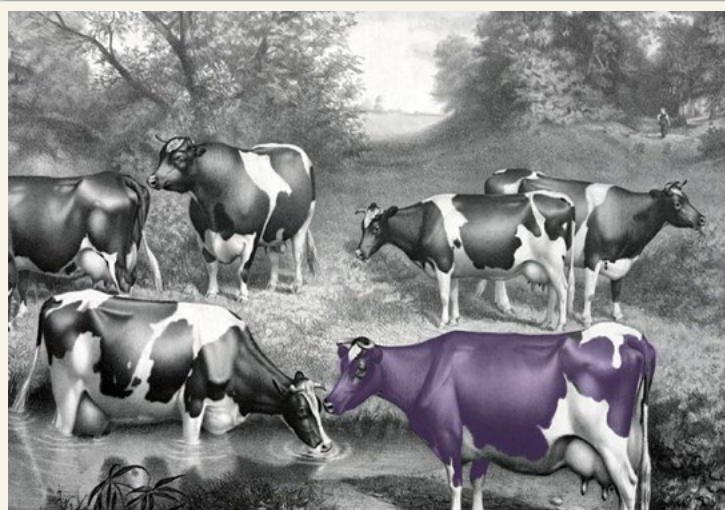
According to the American Marketing Association, a brand includes "features that identify one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers." Basic components of a brand typically include these 6 components:

*Business Name | Logo | Tagline | Typography | Color | Attitude/Personality*

In a successful brand, each of these 6 brand attributes work together to create an identity for your farmers market. The result of your focus on branding should be an emotional connection between your market and your customers. In other words, when a customer sees or experiences your brand, how do they feel? What impression does your brand make?

While many branding experts tend to focus on the visual aspects of the brand - the logo, typography, and colors - the attitude and personality of a brand is just as important, and will be focused on in depth later on in this section.

### 3 Attributes of Successful Brands: Unique, Memorable, Consistent



*Your goal is to create a brand that sticks out in a crowd, just like a purple cow!*

#### 1. Unique

Above all, a brand should be unique. It conveys what's special about your market. As the marketing expert Seth Godin suggests, you should seek to create a brand that is a purple cow: "the key to success is to find a way to stand out...to be the purple cow in a field of monochrome Holsteins."

#### 2. Memorable

Close your eyes, think of a brand you love. Can you picture the logo? What emotions do you feel? You shouldn't have to think about this for more than a few seconds because beloved brands are memorable. In fact, the word "brand" comes from the Viking word "brandr" which means to burn. A brand may also refer to a cattle brand. Simple yet unique symbols on cattle were used to show which rancher owned them.

### 3. Consistent

Strong brands are used consistently across all marketing materials, embodied in all customer interactions, and also across long stretches of time. The core of a brand should remain the same. It can be updated every decade or so, in order to stay relevant and catchy. But, in giving it a fresh look, the same elements should be used to stay consistent and build upon the brand as time passes.

#### Why Does a Brand Matter?

##### *Makes Your Market More Recognizable*

With a good brand, there's no mistaking an organization's identity! Your market will be more recognizable everywhere the brand is used: from social media to signage and brochures in the community.

##### *Differentiate Your Market From the Competition*

A well-defined brand will help your market stand out in the crowded local food arena. Your farmers market won't get confused with the new grocery supercenter in town, the local food coop, or any other retailer. A strong brand will also help you stand apart from other markets.

##### *Vendors Can Generate More Revenue*

Businesses that have strong brands, and use them consistently, benefit from an average 23% increase in revenue according to an INC. article.

Source: <https://www.inc.com/tracy-leigh-hazard/boost-profit-with-constant-brand-consistency.html>

##### *Customers More Inclined to Talk About Your Market*

Great brands make an impression and are easy for customers to remember, meaning they're more apt to bring up your market in conversation with friends and family. Word-of-mouth advertising is considered the most effective type of advertising: 92% of people believe recommendations from friends or family over any other form of advertising, according to a Nielsen study. [Source: https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimberlywhitler/2014/07/17/why-word-of-mouth-marketing-is-the-most-important-social-media](https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimberlywhitler/2014/07/17/why-word-of-mouth-marketing-is-the-most-important-social-media)

## SUPPORT: HOW TO CREATE OR IMPROVE YOUR FARMERS MARKET'S BRAND

The first step is to do a brand assessment of your current market logo, name, and its other brand attributes. Consider launching a short survey asking community members if they feel the market brand adequately reflects all that the market has to offer. Seek opinions or assessments from local ad agencies, college advertising professors or students, and other marketing professionals as to whether or not your brand needs an update. If you decide it's time to update or improve your brand, use this overview of the 6 brand guidelines to guide you:

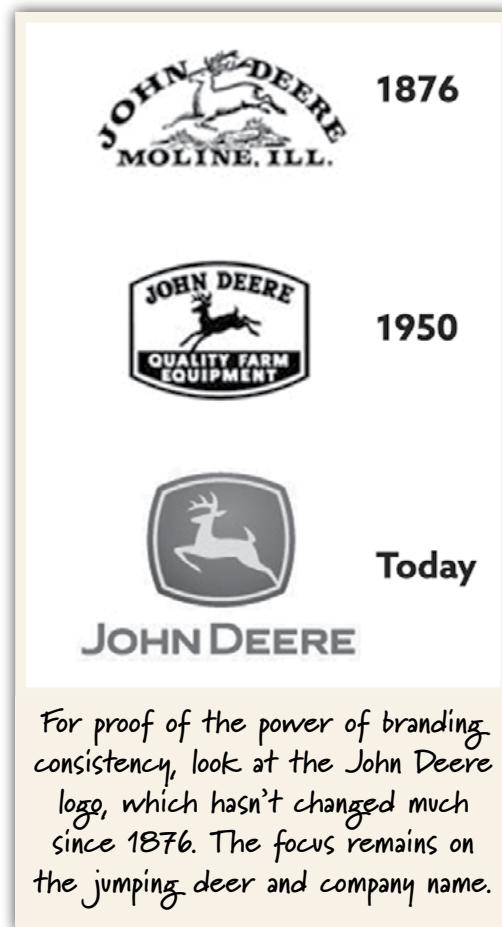
### 6 Brand Components

#### 1. Name

If your market does not have a name, think of unique attributes of its location, history, or special features. Example: Your market is located near an old lumber mill. You might call your market "The Mill Market" or "Market at the Mill."

#### 2. Logo

What is a visual symbol of your market? This may also tie into the location, or involve products that you offer. A good rule is to never try and squeeze all the market food offerings into a single logo. It's just not possible, and will not be easy to remember at all. Instead, focus on a single food item or symbol such as a market tote or tent.





The Rochester Public Market's logo illustrates key design concepts. It features just two colors so the blue is easy to remember. The logo includes a unique archway that you can see at the market. The Rochester city skyline forms the logo's shape. The hand-stamped look suggests the "human touch" of local farmers and producers. Finally, the script font used in the words "public market" suggest friendliness and approachability.

### 3. Color

Choose just one or two colors to define your brand. Colors are powerful brand identifiers, in fact, research from Loyola University found that color makes up nearly 80% of a brand's identity. For example, close your eyes and picture the John Deere logo shown earlier. What colors does it feature? Easy, right?

### 4. Tagline

The tagline for your farmers market should be a brand promise to your customers, and if possible, include a play on words or something memorable. The tagline for the Callicoon Farmers Market in the New York Catskills is "Where Every Farmer Knows Your Name." This tagline also provides a point of difference for this market. At a grocery store, every clerk won't know your name. But at a farmers market? You'll build relationships with multiple farmers, which makes customers feel special and included.

### 5. Typography

Also known as a font, the way letters are displayed can have a big impact on your brand personality. In general, the following holds true:

**STYLIZED** These are decorative fonts that often convey a specific, strong personality. For example, the comic sans font is meant to mimic comic book writing...not exactly what most markets are aiming for! One of the emerging trends in market logos is the use of a hand-stamped, or rustic, weathered font as shown in this example. Research other food retailer brands near you to make sure your font is different!

**SCRIPT** Script fonts look as if they have been written by hand. They suggest warmth, personal touch, and an informal and casual approach.

**SERIF** Serifs are the little lines that are attached to the end points of an individual letter. Serifs are meant to help guide the eye, and are considered easy to read. Most fonts in the 1700s through the early 1900s were serif. They convey tradition, trustworthiness, and sturdiness.

**SANS SERIF** Sleeker and more modern, sans serif fonts are devoid of any decorum on the ends of each letter. Use a sans serif font if you'd like to appear cutting-edge, modern, and confident!

### 6. Attitude and Personality

"Branding is more than a logo...Your brand is your voice in the marketplace...It is how you tell your story, and it is absolutely key to your success and your survival." -Amy Cosper, former Editor in Chief of Entrepreneur Magazine.

This quote underscores the importance of the attitude and personality of your brand. Attitude and personality should come through in how you communicate with customers at the market, on social media, and through marketing mediums such as a website or brochure.

To help you better define your brand, think of it as a person. What type of person would your brand be? Witty and sophisticated? Warm and welcoming? Goofy and fun? How would this person speak? What tone of voice or style of speaking would they have? What story would they tell about the market?

For example, consider the brand personality of Starbucks versus Dunkin' Donuts. Both sell coffee, but their attitude and personality is night and day. If Starbucks were a person, they might have a sophisticated attitude, wear a lot of black and designer labels, use big words, read the New York Times, and be pursuing an advanced degree. Dunkin' Donuts as a person would likely be casual, warm, and friendly; wear brighter colors, speak directly, and read USA Today.

## SUPPORT: HOW TO SHOWCASE YOUR BRAND

Once you've perfected your brand, the next step is to display it through marketing - both in the real world and in the digital realm. Remember, consistency is key! Refer to [Marketing on a Budget \(Page 20\)](#) for 10 places to showcase your brand..

You want to ensure that the exact same logo, typography, colors, and other components of your brand are used across all platforms: from the logo you display on social media to the banner at your farmers market manager table. Listed below are some common areas where you would want to include your brand identity.

*Website | All Social Media Platforms | Market Signage | Billboards/Roadside Signs | Brochures/Flyers | Posters*

## SUPPORT: WHERE TO TURN FOR BRANDING ASSISTANCE

### Local Advertising Agency

Contact local graphic designers and ad agencies to see if they'd like to help you rebrand or create a new brand for your market. Many ad agencies will take on non-profit or community-focused organizations as "pro-bono" (i.e. free) or "low-bono" (i.e. low cost) work, as a service to the community.

### College or University Class

Reach out to nearby colleges and universities that may have communications, media, graphic design, or advertising courses. See if the professor would like to utilize the branding of your farmers market as a real-world project for

students. This is what the Oneida County Public Market did when seeking a brand for their "friends of the market" organization.



### Crowdsourcing

Run a contest that invites the public to submit logo designs. This creates buy-in from the community that will be frequenting the farmers market. As an incentive, the market can publish the winning logo and credit the artist, or even give them a gift certificate to spend at the market.

For example, the Easthampton Farmers' Market logo show at left was made by a community member. The logo is their Facebook profile picture, and in the description, the artist is credited.

*This vibrant logo was created by a community member for free.  
The artist is credited on Facebook.*



SEE IT IN ACTION

The Oneida County Public Market does an excellent job of carrying their brand through their marketing materials. For example, the burgundy, light yellow, and teal from the logo are utilized in each social media graphic.

The market is held in a historic train station, note how a train is incorporated into the newsletter name and the "fresh product alerts."



The Oneida County Public Market logo is used on all signage, social media, etc.



Product alerts shared on social media.



Useful tips shared on social media.



The header for the emailed newsletter.





# FINDING THE CUSTOMER BASE

## SITUATION: OVERALL, CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION AT FARMERS MARKETS IS DECLINING

This is the primary purpose of this toolkit, to address a downward trend in consumer traffic at farmers markets. If you are experiencing this trend at your market, your objective should be to understand why your customer traffic is declining – and then implement solutions to improve the situation.

Even if you are enjoying steady traffic, or an uptick in traffic, it's essential to focus on continuing to please your current customers. After all, according to a Harvest Business Journal article, if you can increase your customer retention rates by just 5% - you'll see 25-95% higher profits. Source: <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/the-economics-of-e-loyalty>

If your goal is to increase customer traffic at your market, the best place to start is with an analysis of your current customer base – as well as those who choose not to shop at your market. This involves surveys and demographic research.

After gathering that information, you can then create and launch strategies for improving current customer retention while attracting new customers. This section will focus on how to go about surveying and gathering information for your customer analysis.

## SOLUTION 1: FIRST, UNCOVER EXACTLY WHO IS – AND WHO ISN'T – SHOPPING AT YOUR MARKET...AND WHY

### Categorize Your Customer Base

It is recommended that you divide your customers into the same categories as those in the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey: market flagbearers, casual shoppers, and non-market shoppers. To do this, ask this question and include answers A-D.

*How often did you shop at (your market name) this year?*

*A) I shopped more frequently at (your market name) this year than the year prior*

*B) I shopped about the same number of times at (your market name) this year relative to the year prior*

*C) I shopped less frequently at (your market name) this year than the year prior*

*D) I didn't shop at (your market name) in the last two years*

A, B = Flagbearer C = Casual D = Non-Market Shopper

By asking this exact question, not only will you be able to apply many of the recommendations in this resource guide to your own market customer groups, you will be able to determine the following:

*A, B) Flagbearers:* Once you know who your flag-bearing shoppers are – and why they continue to shop at your market – you can target people in your area who have similar demographic characteristics with marketing messages that resonate with them.

*C) Casual:* You can find out why these shoppers are not coming as frequently...what do they want? Why did they decrease their visits? How can you earn their business?

*D) Non-Market Shoppers:* Why aren't they coming to your market? Do they know it exists or what you offer? Sometimes, even simply surveying those who don't shop at the market is enough to alert them that there is a market in town!



## What Demographic Information to Collect and Why It Matters

Before you ask the juicy questions about people's shopping habits and preferences, you need to understand WHO they are. That's where the following demographic questions come in:

- **Gender**
- **Age:** Divide into segments i.e. 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, and so on. These are general age segments used by media
- **Place of Residence:** use zip codes or better yet, list out different regions of your town or city...some surveys even let you build a map that participants can click on to show where they live.
- **Tourist, Local, or Seasonal Resident:** This may be helpful information to know. For example, if you are a market that draws a high amount of tourists and seasonal residents, you may want to focus on marketing to local residents who can shop in the early spring and fall seasons when tourists and seasonal residents are less likely to be in town.
- **Place of Work:** if you operate a weekday market, this is a great question because you'll differentiate between their home location and where they work. Once you have this information, you can find out if these customers could be stopping by during or after their work day. You don't have to ask the specific workplace, unless there are major employers nearby that you could potentially target with promotional materials inviting employees to your farmers market.
- **How Many Children in Your Household?**

The following questions are up to you to include, they may be too personal for some – and it may also be trickier to use this demographic information. If you'd like to include them, just put the word OPTIONAL next to the question.

- **Benefits Received:** SNAP/EBT | Farmers Market Nutrition Program Checks | Farm to Family Coupons (in Vermont) | Other Regional Benefit Programs
- **Additional Questions:** Ethnicity | Household Income (divide into segments) | Employed or Not | First Language



### SEE IT IN ACTION

The following markets use cooking demonstrations to educate customers on the wide variety of products at the market, and how to use it!

#### Farmers Market Coalition Data Collection Best Practices

<https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/programs/farmers-market-metrics/data-collection-best-practices/>

#### OSU – OKC Farmers Market Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FRLXGG5>

#### Jackson Township Farmers Market Survey

<http://www.jacksontownship.com/FarmersMarketSurvey.aspx>

## SOLUTION 2: PROFILE YOUR FLAGBEARERS TO FIND OUT WHO SHOULD BE SHOPPING AT YOUR MARKET

### Create a “Flagbearer Mirror”

The 2018 SARE Consumer Survey revealed general demographic trends that apply to markets across the Northeast. In general, flagbearers tend to be female, 45 years of age or older, and in medium- to high-income brackets.

It may be tempting to simply target all your marketing to this demographic. However, it is essential that you do your own survey first to get to know who your flagbearers are on a demographic level: where do they live? Do they have children? How old are they? Do they receive benefits or not?

Once you have a demographic profile of your flagbearer, your goal is to launch marketing that will target others in your community that mirror that same profile! For tips on doing that, see [Reaching the Target Audience \(Page 26\)](#).

## Play Matchmaker

Don't focus solely on marketing to flagbearers. Your other objective is to look for opportunities in untapped demographic groups who would be interested in your market! First, you'll need to dive deeper into who exactly lives and works near your market. Here are some helpful places to gather information:

- Start by accessing the latest Census data for your area: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/>
- Check with your local Chamber of Commerce or Town Hall to see if public demographic information is available for regions within your town. You can also get a list of businesses, which is helpful if you run a weekday market.
- Use your own general knowledge – or the knowledge of others – about your town.

Once you have a better idea of who lives or works near your market, you want to “match up” what you offer with who is most likely to be interested in it. Here are some examples...

## Matchmaker Targeting Exercise

*One of your farmers is fluent in Spanish > Target Spanish-speaking communities*

*You regularly host activities and events > Target families looking for fun (and shopping!)*

*You run a weekday market > Target businesses with flyers that say take a break or grab lunch with us!*

*You have multiple organic vendors > Target higher-income areas with a Facebook ad*

*Your market is wheelchair accessible > Target senior living communities or senior housing*

*Your market accepts SNAP/EBT > Target low-income areas with flyers and posters*

## SUPPORT: HOW TO CREATE AND MANAGE A SUCCESSFUL SURVEY

### Decide on the Survey Mediums

Where will your survey “live”? For best results, you should create both a printed version and an online version. That way, you can collect answers in person at the market and about town, as well as through a survey link that can be shared online.

When setting up an online survey, there are many survey software companies. However, [www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com) is one of the easiest to use and most affordable. A free option would be using Google's Forms. Even if you collect written surveys, most software lets you enter in the survey answers. Another benefit of using survey software? There are often built-in tools to help you analyze and interpret the data!

### Select a Timeframe

It's best to collect data over at least a few weeks, whether your survey is being administered online, in-person, or both. A multi-week survey process is especially important for farmers markets, as market attendance fluctuates week-to-week due to weather, other events in town, public holidays, and more.

### Determine an Adequate Sample Size

It's unreasonable to ask a busy market manager to survey every person at the market, or every resident in town. That's where sample size comes in. Use the sample size calculator at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/> to determine how many people you need to survey to achieve a 90-95% confidence rate (with a 5-10% rate of error).

For example, if you've done a customer count and determined your market averages about 1,000 customers each week, your goal would be to acquire 250 completed surveys. That would give you a 95% confidence rate in the data collected. As mentioned earlier, you do not need to collect all 250 surveys at one market. Spread out the survey period over a month to make it more manageable.



## Sweeten the Deal

Everyone's time is valuable and being asked to take a survey – even a short one – may not appeal to everyone, especially those who do not shop at the market! You could offer small giveaways like pens or even a sticker to anyone who takes a survey. Or, go bigger with a \$50 market gift certificate – everyone who takes the survey is entered to win.

## Inform Your Vendors and Customers in Advance

On social media and in your email marketing, promote the fact you are running a survey at the upcoming market/s so no one is taken by surprise. If you are conducting the survey both online and in-person, simply put the link to the survey on social media or in your email with friendly messaging such as "Help your market! Take a quick survey now...or at any market this month."

If your vendors will be helping to administer the survey at their booths, ensure they understand why you are conducting the survey! Inform them so they can answer customer questions such as: what will you do with my survey answers? Will my email be shared with anyone beyond the market? if volunteers are helping to run surveys, train them not to stand in front of a vendor's booth and block sales while surveying.



Note the chair for survey takers and the tub of prizes at the Rock Hill Farmers Market.

## Surveys are Marketing Tools

When administering surveys, you have a valuable opportunity to collect contact information from people: their email address, or mailing address for example. But you must do this with permission! Include a line at the bottom of printed surveys saying: "OPTIONAL Your Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ (if you want to receive occasional emails about the market).

On the digital version of the survey, you can set it up so that the survey respondent must click a box to opt out from receiving your email. Otherwise, they will be added to your list.



Use catchy signage and graphics to draw attention to your survey both online and at the farmers market.

## In-Person Data Collection: Create a Survey Station...or Go Mobile!

Your best bet is to administer the survey at all points of entry at the market. Staff and volunteers should have a clipboard ready with multiple printed surveys and plenty of pens.

If you are limited with staff and volunteers, conduct the survey at the manager's table. Set up a big sign so folks know what you're up to. Empower your shoppers with language like: "Tell us how to improve YOUR market!" and "How can we do better? Tell us." Try an image of a corn cob and "We're all ears. Take our survey." If you have an incentive - such as a chance to win a prize for taking the survey - put that on your signage.

Don't just sit at the table...get up and approach folks at the market using a clipboard! Tell them how many questions your survey is, how long it will take, and even offer to record their answers if they seem hesitant. Another friendly reminder: do not block your vendors' booths while scouting for survey takers!

Remember, you need to capture survey responses from NON-MARKET shoppers, too. The nearest grocery store probably won't appreciate you setting up outside. But why not head to the park, a downtown area, a festival, or another public event? Maybe another non-profit will let you set up a table at their event. To get a diverse sample, go to multiple areas within your town or city.

### Digital Data Collection: How to Spread the Word

As mentioned, if you utilize an online survey software tool like Survey Monkey or Google Forms, a unique web address will be generated for your survey. You can then share this link anywhere you want. If the link generated is very long and includes many letters and numbers, you can use <https://bit.ly> to create a custom, shortened link for free. Here are some ideas of where you can promote your survey link:

- Include in any market newsletters – both printed and digital
- Share the link on Facebook or Twitter
- Join Facebook "groups" that have been created within your community. Post the link to the survey and invite group members to share their feedback.
- Send the survey link to your vendors and ask them to share it via their email list and social media pages
- Reach out to local community organizations, ask them to share it
- Contact local media outlets (print, TV, radio) and let them know you're doing a survey, could they spread the word so the community can help shape the market?

**SULLIVAN CATSKILLS FARMERS MARKETS**    SPECIAL EVENTS    FIND A MARKET    USE BENEFITS    MEET FARMER

## TAKE A SHORT SURVEY TO HELP LOCAL MARKETS

You can remain 100% anonymous - we'd love your honest feedback. Just click on the survey that describes you best. NOTE: You may have taken a similar survey in 2016, please take this one again so we know how we're doing!

**I AM A MARKET SHOPPER**    **I DO NOT SHOP AT MARKETS**    **I AM A FARMER OR VENDOR**

*The Sullivan Catskills Farmers Markets launched 3 online surveys, visitors to the website could click on the category they fit into, and begin the short survey!*





# MARKETING ON A BUDGET

## SITUATION: FARMERS MARKETS OPERATE ON A TIGHT BUDGET

Typically, farmers markets are non-profit organizations with a small staff – and an even smaller marketing budget. Even if you're fortunate enough to work for a market that has substantial dollars allocated to marketing, it's smart to save funds when you can. And no, you don't need to sacrifice effectiveness!

Many no- and low-cost marketing strategies can deliver a tremendous return on investment (ROI). In this section, you'll first learn how to generate funds for marketing – and 10 tips for how to spend it!

## SOLUTION: MARKETING IS A MUST...SO HOW CAN YOU PAY FOR IT?

### Vendor Fees

This is how many markets attempt to cover their marketing budget. However, to be successful, all vendors must give an equal and somewhat substantial amount – and oftentimes, vendors don't see the ROI of marketing. If you solicit marketing dollars from vendors, be clear on how you'll use their money. A popular tactic is creating a weekly event on Facebook for each market, and then "boosting" that event to show it to more people for a fee of your choice.

### Company Sponsorships

Because the farmers market is such a community asset, many businesses and organizations would like to align their brand with yours. Create a one-page sponsor sheet, and approach local businesses to see if they would like to help fund the marketing for your market.

Outline what their funding would cover: a new website? Fees for a professional social media manager? A new brochure?

Also be specific about what the sponsor would get in return for their investment: the ability to table at the market every week, once a month? Could they be included in your emails, on your signage, on Facebook?

As for which companies to approach about sponsorships, start with local pharmacies, hospitals and healthcare organizations, car dealerships, large manufacturers in the area, even food companies. In Massachusetts, many farmers markets have had success gaining sponsorships from renewable energy businesses such as solar panel installers.

When it comes to sponsorships, don't get caught up in the fact that potential food-related sponsors may slightly conflict with the food you're market sells. For example, the Portland Farmers Market in Oregon allows Whole Foods to sponsor the market. The reality is that most people will not get 100% of their food from the market (and in the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey it was revealed that even flagbearers only spend 47% of their food dollars at farmers markets).

### Media Sponsorships

A media sponsor is a unique relationship where no cash is exchanged. You would allow the media to table at your market or hang a permanent banner, in exchange the media outlet would provide you with free airtime or print ads.



A banner hangs at the Eastern Market in Detroit that reminds shoppers that the local TV station is the "proud supporter of the Tuesday Market"

## College Classes

To save on the costs of creating a logo, branding and marketing materials, or writing a marketing plan, you could approach a local college or university marketing department. Offer to be a “project” for their students, who can then be graded on their work they do for your market.

## Trade or Pro-Bono Programs

Many local marketing companies and advertising agencies may take on a few “pro-bono” projects to show their commitment to the community. Pro-bono translates to “for good” so it’s unpaid work. The caveat is that typically agencies use these campaigns to flex their creative muscles, which is a great thing if you are open to some envelope-pushing marketing ideas. Make a list of all the marketing and advertising shops in town, contact them to see if they’re looking for any pro-bono campaigns...you’d love to be on their list!

## Grants, Grants, Grants!

Large corporations often have health-related grants available for non-profit causes. Don't be intimidated by the term “grant writing.” Applying for a grant often involves simply filling out a form and stating how grant funds would be used.

Thousands of dollars are available, and it just takes one grant request to be accepted to provide your market with much-needed funds to better serve your vendors, customers, and the greater community! Start by approaching your County to see if any grants are available, as well as the USDA office in your area.

## SUPPORT: 10 LOW- AND NO-COST MARKETING IDEAS

### 1. Start with the Basics, First! (Free to \$2,000)

It is important to cover the basic marketing essentials first. Today, that means having a presence on Facebook (the most-used social media platform by all ages) and/or a website. You need to have a digital “homebase” on the Internet that showcase the basics of your market: location, hours, vendor lists, and events. Setting up a Facebook page is free, and ongoing management can be as little as an hour or so a week. As for a website, you can either hire a local web designer or use a tool such as [www.squarespace.com](http://www.squarespace.com) which lets you build an attractive website in just hours - no design skills needed. Many markets end up using their Facebook page in place of a website, since you can easily showcase the basics of your market on your page.

### 2. Flyers and Posters (Design/ Printing Costs Vary)

Other basic marketing materials include brochures or flyers, and a poster. You can try designing these materials yourself using the [Design 101 Guide in the addendum \(Page 78\)](#), or hire a graphic designer. You can create brochures, flyers, and posters in programs such as Microsoft Word or Publisher and Adobe Indesign. Include essential information on these materials: market dates, times, location, and vendors (if there is space). To print your materials, get quotes from local print shops. Or, head online to [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com), a very large print shop which offers low-cost printing such as 500 5x7 flyers for as little as \$75.

**SUMMER 2018 FARMERS MARKETS KICKOFF EVENTS**

COOKING DEMOS ♥ FREE SAMPLES  
LIVE MUSIC ♥ PRIZES ♥ KID'S ACTIVITIES

**HELLO Summer Hello MONTICELLO**  
JUNE 28 3-6PM  
JOE'S PARK  
NEXT TO SOY RESTAURANT  
515 BROADWAY IN MONTICELLO  
OPEN EVERY THURSDAY  
NEW LOCATION, DAY TIME!

**LIBERTY Markets Friday EVENINGS**  
JUNE 29 3-6PM  
CREEKSIDE PARK  
BEHIND THE ROOSTER  
119 N. MAIN IN LIBERTY  
OPEN EVERY FRIDAY

YOUR BENEFITS ARE WELCOME AT FARMERS MARKETS

SENIOR FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION CHECKS  
WIC FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION CHECKS  
WIC FRUIT & VEGETABLE CHECKS  
SNAP & FRESH CONNECT

Cornell University Cooperative Extension Sullivan County  
Sullivan COUNTY MARKET  
SULLIVAN CATSKILLS FARMERS MARKETS

An 11x17 poster promotes events at 2 markets.

### 3. Cross Promotion with Other Markets (Free)

Consider cross promotion with other markets. Often farmers participate in multiple markets. For example, the Ashfield Farmers' Market and the Shelburne Falls Farmers' Market have done a great job of promoting both markets (one is on Friday, the other on Saturday) because their days, hours, and dates of operation differ.

### 4. Earn Press Coverage (Free)

Utilize local media - newspapers, TV and radio stations, and even bloggers - to help get the word out about your market. It all starts with you drafting a 1-page press release for your market which should focus on newsworthy information that the media may want to share with the community. Examples of newsworthy topics include: when your market opens for the season and what the vendor lineup will be, any special events, if your market is now accepting benefits such as SNAP. To learn how to write a press release, turn to CISA's excellent resource at: <https://www.buylocalfood.org/marketing-tool-press-releases/>

Another tip for earning press coverage is to set up a complimentary listing at "Help a Report Out" (HARO). The website is <https://www.helpareporter.com>. When national and local media need a farmers market expert? They might call you for an interview. After signing up with HARO, you'll receive 3 press opportunities via email each day, for free.

### 5. Ask for Help (Free)

Because farmers markets are community assets, most local businesses and organizations will gladly assist you in promoting your market. They may set out your brochures or hang up your poster at their location, or even share information on Facebook for you. But first, make the ask! A simple Microsoft Excel database should be built including the business name, point of contact, phone number, email, Facebook page, and address. Your list should include:

- Schools, childcare centers
- Chambers of commerce and town/hamlet business associations
- Libraries, community centers, non-profits
- Government agencies: parks and rec, dept. of human services, Office for the Aging
- Restaurants, distilleries/breweries/wineries, stores, gas stations
- Hotels, inns, camps, B&B's, AirBNB's
- Religious organizations: churches, temples
- Outdoor recreation outfitters and facilities
- Banks, credit unions

### 6. Stand Out with a Sign! Literally (\$50)

On your market opening day, ask a volunteer or even pay someone to stand near your farmers market with a large sign that says "Farmers Market" – this can be printed by a local print shop on Coroplast (a water-resistant, thin plastic material) for about \$50.

Another DIY option: get poster board in bright colors: orange, red, yellow, and cut them out in shapes of vegetables...tomato, carrot, yellow squash. Write "farmers market" in thick marker and hold it out on the street. This may seem "hokey" but it will work!



*A volunteer holds a sign outside of the Scottsdale, AZ Farmers Market.*

## 7. Get Listed and Claim Your Space (Free)

Have you claimed your free business listing on Google, Yahoo, Bing, Yelp, TripAdvisor, etc.? Make sure your hours, website, and address are correct for the season.

Don't forget to add your farmers market to food- and market-specific directories. Start with <https://www.usdalocalfooddirectories.com/> and <https://www.eatwellguide.org> and <https://www.localharvest.org/>

Does your town, city, county, or state have a buy local program? Many offer free listings.

Almost every local media outlet – from TV to radio, newspaper to other guides – offers an online community calendar. Typically, it's free to add your farmers market dates and special events directly to their calendar.

## 8. Run a Google Ads Campaign (Any Amount You Choose)

You pay for your business to show up when someone searches for “farmers markets near me” or “local food” on Google. Google Ads are in the form of a few sentences that look very similar to the results you see when performing a search in Google.

To maximize your Google Ad, have a compelling, catchy headline, and a clear call to action, such as: “Join us this Saturday! 10am-1pm, Main Street Park. Best of all, you can target your farmers market to show up only when those who fit your specified target audience perform the Google search! Get started at [www.google.com/ads](http://www.google.com/ads).

## 9. Email Marketing (Free to Under 1,000 Subscribers)

Campaign Monitor, an email marketing software (EMS) company, found that email delivers a 44:1 return on investment! To send emails, you simply need to use an EMS like MailChimp or Constant Contact which, depending on your email list size, can be free or as little as \$15/month. Using an EMS will also help you stay in compliance with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's CAN-SPAM Act requirements, such as providing an unsubscribe link. Review the CAN-SPAM requirements, here: <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business>

Another reason to email your customers: A Marketing Sherpa study revealed that for 72% of customers, email is their preferred method for receiving information from a business. Use farmers market emails to alert customers of new vendors, provide useful recipes and prep tips, promote events or offers, and more.

Before you launch your emails, you need to collect email addresses at your market. Always have an email sign-up sheet at the manager table. Make the ask when people approach the market table: “Would you like to receive our e-newsletter with recipes, seasonality updates, and other market insider news?” Tell people why they should sign up for your email list!

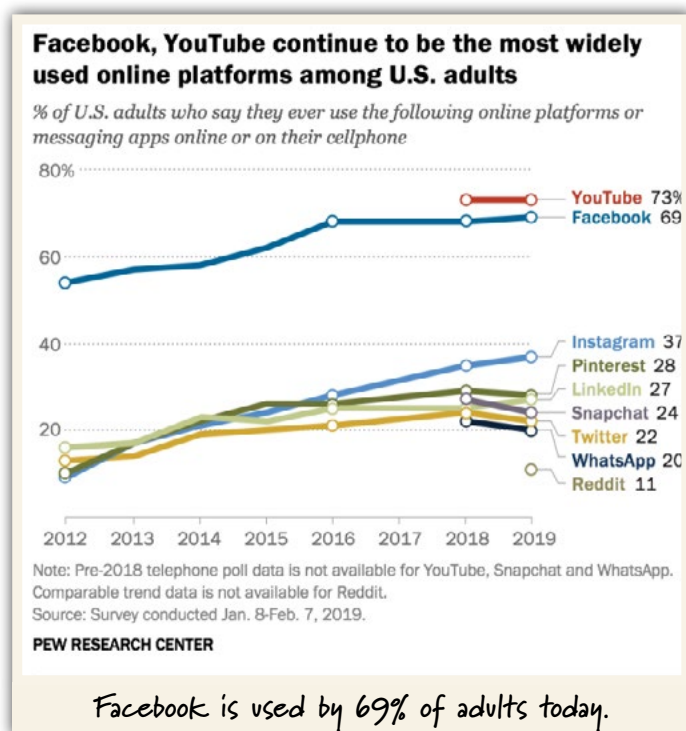
Another great tactic for collecting emails is to provide customers with a small “gift” if they sign up. The gift could be entering the consumer's name into a raffle or a special e-book of recipes. The Greenfield Farmers' Market and others within the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts do this with success.

If possible, add an email sign-up form at your website. Facebook lets you add a “sign up” button on your Facebook page which can link directly to your website sign up page.

## 10. Paid Facebook Advertising (Any Amount You Choose)

According to a Pew Internet Research 2019 study, Facebook is the most-used social media platform with 69% of all adults logging on. It also boasts the widest range of users...from Gen Z to baby boomers.

Unlike traditional media, Facebook advertising is very affordable and can be hyper-targeted (meaning you can show your page or message only to people in a certain area with specific interests).





# MASTERING MARKETING MESSAGES

## SITUATION: “BUY LOCAL” BURNOUT...CUSTOMERS UNMOTIVATED BY MESSAGES TO KEEP DOLLARS LOCAL

According to the 2018 SARE Customer Survey, all 3 customer types are NOT motivated to shop at farmers markets because they'll make a positive impact on the local economy. The primary reason for this? Customers now have other outlets for purchasing local goods, beyond their farmers market.

The unfortunate fact is that many of these other outlets, such as grocers and even supercenters like Walmart and Target, are either offering local or regionally sourced food – or making it appear like they do through point-of-purchase displays.

So, what DOES motivate a customer to shop at a farmers market? The answer is quite complex. The 2018 SARE Customer Survey provided general insights about what marketing messages resonate with shoppers (Solution 1) and which ones do not (Solution 2). Plus, we have added key opportunities for marketing messages that highlight unique attributes of a farmers market, that you can't get anywhere else (Solution 3).

## SOLUTION 1: FOCUS ON 2 MAIN MARKETING MESSAGES...SUPPORTING FARMERS + PURCHASING FRESH FOOD

While marketing messages that say “support our local economy” will likely not have an impact, the 2018 SARE Customer Survey suggests that messages stating “support our local farmers” ARE motivating to market flagbearers.

Perhaps another reason for the high responsiveness of customers to this farmer-focused message is the fact that while customers may purchase local food at the grocery store, only at farmers markets can they MEET farmers face-to-face.

Supporting farmers is the second most motivating factor for casual and non-market shoppers, with their top motivating factor being the ability to purchase “fresh food.”

## SOLUTION 2: MESSAGING THAT OVERCOMES BARRIERS TO MARKET SHOPPING

Another strategy to take in your marketing is to address misconceptions in the minds of your customers. The 2018 SARE Customer Survey revealed the largest barriers to customers attending farmers markets, which are explored below.

For many customers, the fact that the market was only open part of the year was a key barrier to shopping more, which is not a misconception - it's often the truth for many markets! Therefore, no marketing message can “fix” this. However, a manager may want to survey their customers and vendors to see if they'd be interested in a year-round market.

A thoughtful marketing strategy could ease some of the following barriers that are keeping shoppers away from markets. Along with the market not being open year-round, the following barriers were ranked as a top-five reason NOT to shop at the market by all three customer types: flagbearers, casual shoppers, and non-market shoppers. Listed below are possible messages you could use to help customers rethink shopping at their local market!

**BARRIER:** *“Market time conflicts with my schedule.”*

**Take a lunch or snack break at the market** (Many 9-5 consumers complain weekday markets are inconvenient)

**BARRIER:** *“I prefer the convenience of 1-stop shopping.”*

- **More than fruits and vegetables, farmers markets have it all!** (If your market sells meat, eggs, syrup, baked goods, and crafts - highlight this in your marketing.)
- **Start at the market, finish at the store!** (Don't make them choose between your market and the grocery store! Just urge that they start shopping with you, then finish at a nearby grocer.)
- **It's more than a shopping trip...it's social fun for everyone!** (Take convenience out of the equation by mentioning special events, social opportunities, and kid-friendly opportunities. Then, market visits become viewed as recreation or entertainment, where convenience is not a priority.)

**BARRIER:** "Market prices not competitive with other options."

- **Taste, freshness, and nutrition worth every penny.** If indeed your prices are higher, focus on the value that the extra cost provides the customer.
- **Dare to compare our prices. | Market prices: in season, within reason.** If your prices are competitive or just slightly higher than other retail outlets, welcome comparison shopping! Learn how to create a shopping cart comparison, see [Programs and Services: Building Market Programs for All Shoppers \(Page 32\)](#). Also, educate consumers that when local produce is in season, it is often the same or less than grocery options shipped in.

**BARRIER:** "I purchase local food at other retail outlets already."

- **How local can you go? | Local food for local people. | Truly local. We guarantee it.** Emphasize that you only accept farmers from within a certain mile radius, go a step further and guarantee it!
- **We put the "farmers" in farmers market.** Use language that conveys the fact that ONLY at a farmers market do you get to meet multiple people who grow local food. You can't get that at any other local food retailer!



## SEE IT IN ACTION

To highlight the farmers at the Sullivan Catskills Farmers Markets, 3 short films were produced by a local filmmaker. The films were debuted at an evening market, added to the website, and posted on social media. The farmers mentioned many customers would stop by at market and say "I saw you in the video..." and begin shopping. See the films at:

<http://homegrownwithheart.com/meet-catskills-farmers/>



## SOLUTION 3: HIGHLIGHT OPPORTUNITIES UNIQUE TO FARMERS MARKETS

Farmers markets are unique in that they are more than a retail space. They are places that promote community, culture, connection, and other special experiences that transcend a simple "transaction." Putting these attributes into words can be challenging, however, the following marketing messages should give you a good start:

**OPPORTUNITY:** *Farmers markets welcome children; parents always looking for kid-friendly activities.*

- **Kids love the market...bring them and see why!**
- **Teach your kids to love local...just like you! Bring them to the market.**

**OPPORTUNITY:** *Most people want to feel part of a larger community. The market provides human connection.*

- **Everyone meets up at the market!**
- **This is your community. This is YOUR market!**

**OPPORTUNITY:** *Markets provide opportunities for discovery and exploration of products unfamiliar to many.*

- **Think eggplant looks like this? It also looks like this...this...and this! Discover more at the market!**
- **Try a taste of something new. Explore the market!**



## SUPPORT: HOW TO FINETUNE YOUR MARKET'S MESSAGING

### How to Write a Good Headline: Speak in Benefits...Not Features

All great marketing messages have one thing in common...they are phrased to prioritize how a feature of a farmers market will benefit the customer. Features are facts. Benefits are interpretations of facts. It is as if you are "translating" how a feature will have a positive impact on the customer!

### Features vs. Benefits in Action

Whenever possible, lead with benefits over features. Here are a few examples of benefit-oriented messaging based on the "feature" that folks can shop with local farmers and vendors at the market:



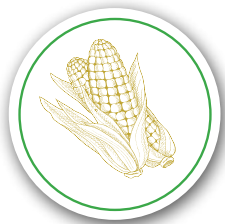
- Support local farmers. They'll support you with great food!
- Good food for you, a good living for local farmers.
- Meet, support, and shop with friendly farmers at the market!

### Using Features to Support a Benefit Statement

If you are leading with a benefits-oriented statement, such as "Bring home the freshest food to your family," you need to support that claim with a few features. Here are some examples:

- Our market only accepts farmers who grow food within 50 miles!
- Local food at our market travels a maximum of 50 miles, compared to 1,494 miles (average trip produce makes to grocery store)
- Produce is harvested fresh the morning of – or day before – the market!

The Sullivan Catskills Farmers Markets created a Spend Ten campaign including this infographic – giving customers 10 benefits-focused reasons to spend \$10 at their local farmers market. Visit: <http://homegrownwithheart.com/spendten2018/>



# REACHING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

## SITUATION: FARMERS MARKETS SERVE A WIDE RANGE OF CUSTOMER TYPES

Most farmers markets strive to be epicenters of community, where people from all walks of life come together to shop with local vendors. They strive to create an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere that appeals to anyone and everyone.

However, to attract all members of the community to the market, it is necessary to single out demographic groups and launch marketing that appeals to their distinct, unique needs.

### **If your goal is a market for all, do not take a “one size fits all” approach to marketing.**

Successful marketing involves reaching each target audience with the right message through the right medium. This section will focus on how to select the correct medium based on common target audiences that farmers markets may try to reach. We will cover the following target audiences.

- Current Market Shoppers
- Flagbearers
- Casual Shoppers
- Non-Market Shoppers (Broken Into Key Demographic Groups)
- Higher income households
- Lower income households
- Younger shoppers
- Older shoppers
- Households with children
- Metro counties
- Nonmetro counties

NOTE: There may be additional audiences that are unique to your area. It is important that you consider those audiences when planning your marketing. For example, in the Catskills region, the population nearly triples in the summer as many Hasidic Jewish people, as well as other populations from New York City, spend summers in the area.

## SOLUTION: SUCCESSFUL, BUDGET-FRIENDLY MARKETING IS TARGETED MARKETING! DISCOVER A 2-STEP PLAN

Your goal is to A) keep your current customers engaged and coming back to the market, and B) attract new customers. Therefore, you should strive to do the following:

### **1) Retain Market Flagbearers and Casual Customers**

To simplify and streamline the marketing process, it is recommended that you do not try to demographically target your current customer base (flagbearers and casual shoppers). Instead, the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey results have revealed general trends about the messaging that will resonate with these two groups.

Flagbearers and casual shoppers are your easiest group to target because you can collect contact information from them as they visit the market. You can do this by having a signup sheet at the market managers table. Greet guests and ask if they'd like to be the first to know about upcoming events, what's in season, and special offers. You could also offer a giveaway, like a market basket filled with produce.

To enter, customers would provide their contact information. You must give them the ability to enter WITHOUT providing contact info. This can be a simple opt-out box that says “check here if you would NOT like to be included in our email newsletter.”

Once you have collected contact information, this opens up the following powerful marketing mediums for you to use:

- Email Campaigns
- Direct Mail
- SMS Text Messages
- Facebook Ad Campaign to “People Who Like My Page”
- At-Market Signage

## 2) Attract Non-Market Shoppers

Now, you want to focus on reaching specific demographic populations. Use this as a guide to planning which marketing mediums to use. Keep in mind, overlap is ok!

### SUPPORT: HOW TO SELECT MEDIUMS USED BY SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

There is one medium that is so widely used by all demographics that it must be singled out first. However, you still want to ensure your MESSAGING is targeted to a specific demographic. Yes, we’re talking about Facebook.

According to April 2019 Pew Internet Research, 69% of all Americans use Facebook – with high percentages among all age groups. For example, 68% of 50-64 year-olds use Facebook.



*Sullivan Fresh Farmers Markets hosted a series of free events at the market to attract new customers. This image was used as a cover photo for a Facebook Event, which was “boosted” and targeted to those who are interested in gardening, the outdoors, and nature.*

Facebook provides unparalleled targeting opportunities through its Facebook Advertising program. You can pay to show your message to a highly specified target audience, for any amount or duration you choose. There are thousands of targeting options on Facebook, and you can even exclude certain groups based on their specified interests and demographics.

#### Facebook Targeting Example

If you are promoting that your market offers meat and eggs, you can choose to exclude those interested in veganism. That way, you are not wasting a single cent on those not interested in your messaging. On the other hand, you can get granular with your Facebook targeting and promote ads to those who live within a 20 mile radius of your market, are interested in grilling, tailgating, and BBQ.

### Higher Income Households

**Google Ads:** Run a Google Ads campaign that will help your market show up in paid search results, when those in a high-income bracket search things like “grocery stores in (your town name)” or “local food in (your town name).” To get started, visit: <https://ads.google.com/home/>

**Upscale Car Dealerships:** Would they put literature for your market in their waiting area?

**Fine Dining Restaurants:** Reach out to see if the chef might want to source products from your market, and then promote that sourcing to their customers...most of whom will be high-income.

## Lower Income Households

**Partner Organizations:** Reach out to your local government offices that serve low-income populations. This includes Department of Social Services, Office for the Aging, and WIC clinics. Ask that they help spread the word about your market. Provide them handouts or brochures to share and posters to display.

**Low-Income Housing:** Consider door hangers or flyers for residents. Check with the housing authority first to ask permission. NOTE: It is illegal (a federal offense) to put anything in or on someone's mailbox.

**Focus on WIC:** Market Managers can work with their local WIC office to plan to have WIC coupons distributed either at the farmers' market or at a location close to the market during its hours of operation. The Greenfield Farmers' Market, Chicopee and Holyoke Farmers' Market in western MA have done this and find it very successful. They help cross promote the distribution, and customers come shopping directly after picking up their coupons. A win/win for everyone. Some markets have even gone so far as to have a map of the market to distribute and they table where the distribution happens to answer customers questions. In the Catskills region, market managers have even gone to the WIC office and given a PowerPoint presentation to the staff focused on how to help encourage mothers to attend the market, including shopping tips, market basics, and more.

## Younger Shoppers (Gen Z and Millennials)

**Nearby Colleges and Universities:** Run an ad in the online/print version of the school newspaper. Put up posters and flyers on campus.

**YouTube/Snapchat/Instagram:** These three mediums are most popular with the younger set. Use them! Each offers advertising packages which can be targeted similar to Facebook.

## Older Shoppers (Seniors and Older)

**Traditional Mediums:** Newspapers, radio, and TV are still used by seniors and older. And yes, you can afford to advertise on TV and radio! The key is to run short 5-10 second spots called "adlets." You can say a lot in 5 seconds: "Shop the Main Street Market, open Saturdays 10-2 through October"

**Senior Living Centers:** Organize an outing with a senior living center. Or, bring flyers and posters to the senior center. Give presentations on your market or play Farmers Market Bingo, a favorite of many seniors.

## Households with Children

**Go Through the Schools/Daycares:** It could be as simple as asking them to set out your flyers or brochures. Better yet, see if a partnership is in order. If your market is held on a weekday, perhaps the class can take a field trip to your market.

**Facebook "Mom" Groups:** Moms (and dads, too) often create local groups on Facebook. Search for these pages using terms like "(Your town name) Moms" or "(My town name) Parents." Ask to join and then share information about any child-friendly programming you offer.

**Homeschooling Organizations:** These organizations often look for outings for students.

**SENIORS! GET \$20 TO SPEND AT THE FARMERS MARKET\***  
Age 60 and over. No I.D. or paperwork required. Based on income, most seniors qualify. Expires 11/30/18

**TO GET YOUR FREE \$20 JUST VISIT ANY FARMERS MARKET BELOW JULY 19-JULY 22**

<b>MONTICELLO</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>	<b>3-6</b>
<b>LIBERTY</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>3-6</b>
<b>ROCK HILL</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>10-1</b>
<b>ROSCOE</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b>	<b>10-2</b>

**CAN'T GO THIS WEEKEND? GET YOUR \$20. HERE:**  
 Office for the Aging  
 Sullivan County  
 Government Center  
 100 North St.  
 Monticello NY 12701

**GET DIRECTIONS AT:**  
 HOME GROWN WITH HEART . COM  
 @ SULLIVAN CATSKILLS FARMERS MARKETS

**FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MARKETS OR SENIOR WEEKEND, CONTACT:**  
 Cornell Cooperative Extension | Sullivan County  
 CALL: 845-292-6180 EMAIL: SULLIVAN@CORNELL.EDU

*A print ad targeting seniors ran in local newspapers throughout the Sullivan Catskills region.*



The Rochester Public Market utilizes advertising on local buses and bus stop shelters to spread the word about its SNAP program.

## Urban/Suburban Counties

### Public Transportation Signage:

Contact your local transportation authority to inquire about advertising at bus stops, train stations, or subway stations. Sometimes advertising is even available in or ON the vehicles!

### Flying to Local Businesses:

Ask nearby businesses to set out your brochure or flyer. In exchange, put out their marketing literature at the manager's booth at your market!

## Rural Counties

**Cooperative Extension:** Contact the Cooperative Extension in your county, they may help you promote the market through their own outreach methods.

**Religious/Social Organizations:** In rural communities, people often come together at places of worship or community institutions such as Elks Lodges. Reach out to the managers/leaders of these organizations, and ask if you might give a brief farmers market presentation - or even set up a "mini" farmers market right at their organization, to give a "sneak peek" of what is at the market.

## Example of Targeted Messages and Complimentary Marketing Mediums

There is a large Latinx population in your town that you want to target and invite to your market. Here are some examples of marketing messages you might use, and the mediums that could help you spread the word.

**Marketing Messaging:** Your targeted messaging should be bilingual or exclusively in Spanish. Depending on the average income level of the Latinx population in your town, you may want to either emphasize that your market accepts SNAP/EBT (lower income) or that credit cards are welcome (higher income). You might feature images or testimonials from Latina women, because studies have shown that they have felt unwelcome at certain markets.

**Marketing Mediums:** In some towns and cities, there may be a Latinx newspaper, website, or radio station that serves the community. Contact them! Perhaps they could trade advertising on their medium for a chance to have a free booth at your market. Reach out to community organizations that serve the Latinx population, ask that they hand out your literature. Be sure your at-market signage is in both English and Spanish. Lastly, run targeted Facebook ads to those for whom Spanish is a first language.



# FARMER TRAINING

## SITUATION: FARMERS CAUSE STRONG REACTIONS FROM CONSUMERS

In the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, all consumer groups commented that they felt a pressure to buy from any farmer they interacted with. Flagbearers and casual shoppers believed that the farmers were so nice and well informed, that they wanted to buy something from every farmer they interacted with, even if they didn't actually need anything.

But many non-market shoppers reported feeling that farmers were not always nice. Was this real or was it a reflection of them being uncomfortable shopping in a face-to-face situation? In addition, some SNAP shoppers, in a 2019 survey of New York SNAP consumers, indicated that some farmers were rude, to the point of shaming the shopper for using SNAP.

Many consumers from each of the three shopper groups noted that it was sometimes difficult to get a farmer's attention when the farmer was in discussions with others at the market. Other shoppers seemed to monopolize the farmer's attention without necessarily being a customer. When this happens, the farmer loses the sale, but also leaves consumers with a bad impression of both that farmer and the overall market experience.

## SOLUTION: FARMER TRAINING PROGRAMS

We know that farmers wear a number of hats – producer, accountant, salesperson, and everything in between. They are performing all these tasks, often on little sleep, and regardless of how they are feeling or what other issues are going on in their lives. Often, salesmanship is not their top skill. So it is important that market management provides some of the training that will help farmers to better perform as salespeople.

Farmer training programs that concentrate on a variety of issues critical to market success will help farmers perform better with customers and be more successful at market sales. Concentrate on issues, such as:

### Opening and Closing the Sale

- Trainings should concentrate on the best way to handle multiple people at the farm table so that all feel welcome, even if they have to wait their turn. For example, try the 10/4 rule. All customers within 10 feet of the table are welcomed, with eye contact and a "hello." Then as the customer reaches 4 feet, they are engaged with a greeting, such as: "How are you?" You should just say something that breaks their stride and makes them notice the table and farmer.
- If the farmer is with another customer, a simple "be right with you" acknowledges the consumer and keeps them at the table until the farmer is free. This training can also focus on ways to talk with customers to minimize the pressure they may feel and help answer questions in a way that is informative without making the customer feel uncomfortable. Trainings can also include things like body language and listening skills to effectively communicate with your customers.

### Sensitivity Training

- Sometimes we can be abrupt with customers or insensitive to their national origin, race, disability, or financial position, without realizing that we are being offensive. A sensitivity training session will help farmers to understand their reactions to customers and overcome these issues. In doing so, we can begin to build a customer base that includes those we may otherwise offend.

### Product Display Guidance

- Some farmers need assistance in building a display for farm products that attracts attention and encourages sales. A training that helps farmers understand the concepts of display, such as layers, colors, signage, and design will help farmers to build a display that draws customers in and allows them to begin using their newfound salesmanship skills to grow their customer base and increase their sales.

## SUPPORT: SEEK OUT PARTNERS TO ASSIST WITH TRAINING

Many farmers market managers offer pre- and post-season meetings with their farmers. These are ideal settings for farmer trainings. Seek out speakers who may offer trainings in a way that is relatable to farmers. There are a number of resources to look to:

- Local colleges may have teachers and professors that would be willing to come to your vendor meetings and share their knowledge.
- Local ad agencies may be willing to assist, especially if they can reach a potential client or already have the market, or one of the vendors, as a client.
- SCORE is a volunteer organization of retired professionals that share their expertise with others
- Farm service providers, Cooperative Extension staff, and Buy Local organizations are all valuable resources. Many states have service providers that already work directly with farmers and/or have educators that are well versed in marketing. Their expertise is often shared with farmers through conference and workshops and are typically happy to give a presentation or workshop for your market's vendors.



### SEE IT IN ACTION

The following markets do extensive training for vendors. Use their websites to contact market managers for information on their trainings.

#### Down to Earth Markets

<https://downtoearthmarkets.com/>

#### GrowNYC's "Understanding Customer Behavior at Farmers Markets"

Authors Chris Wayne and Maria Rojas, Funded by NY Farm Viability Institute

[https://issuu.com/grownyc/docs/marketingdoc\\_v4\\_hires](https://issuu.com/grownyc/docs/marketingdoc_v4_hires)

#### Brighton Farmers Market

<https://brightonfarmersmarket.org/>

#### BuyLocalFood.Org

"Tools for Building Customer Loyalty at Farmers Markets"

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture

<https://www.buylocalfood.org/upload/resource/FM.customer.loyalty.tools.tipsheet.pdf>

#### Maryland Farmers Market Association

"Guide to Selling at Farmers Markets"

<https://marylandfma.org/farmers/guide/>





# BUILDING MARKET PROGRAMS FOR ALL SHOPPERS

## SITUATION: MARKETS ARE SOMETIMES SEEN AS BEING ELITIST

In the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, many of the casual and non-market shoppers complained that farmers markets feel elitist to them, with the perception that prices are too high for the average consumer and they can't justify the extra expense. Many commented that the product varieties are meant for "foodies," meaning that the varieties are not the common varieties that they are used to.

As an example, when looking for tomatoes, they look for red, round, and sweet. But when they get to the market, they see green, orange, black, pink, and striped. How do they know if it is ripe, over-ripe or under-ripe? Is it sweet, sour, or would they even like it? How do they use these strange tomatoes?

Beyond that, they are not comfortable buying direct from growers. They don't know how to talk to farmers and ask questions without feeling dumb. "I can't ask what that vegetable is. They will think I am stupid," a survey respondent said.

They also feel uncomfortable viewing products on a table without feeling committed to the sale, whether they want a product or not. "Sometimes farmers can be rude to me because I ask a question," reported another survey respondent.

For those who are not frequent farmers market shoppers, they feel like an outsider and unwelcome by the market and the farmers. While this may be their own internal issue, it is a cause for concern.

Item	Market Price	Grocery Store Price
Tomatoes	\$3 / LB	\$4.99 / lb
Bell Peppers	\$3.50 / LB	\$4.99 / lb
Red Leaf Lettuce	\$2.50 each	\$4.49 / head

Comparing prices for the Shelburne Falls & Ashfield Farmers Markets in MA with those of a nearby grocery store.

## SOLUTION 1: SHOPPING CART COMPARISONS

Most often, the belief that prices at farmers markets are too high is a misperception. But "perception is reality," so the belief is very real to those people. We need to help them see, not only that prices are comparable, but that the value in the product they are getting at farmers markets.

That's why some markets have adopted a shopping cart comparison program. The manager compares products in the market with those found at major local grocers and supermarkets. A chart is created and displayed near the market entrance that shows prices for grocer and market products side by side.

As research has shown, while supermarkets may have lower prices on produce, during the height of the season, a farmers market is usually less costly. But the chart, especially if accompanied by a visual (a box of produce, a shopping cart with the featured product), allows customers to easily see that farmers

market prices are NOT always higher than a supermarket. Share this information on your social media accounts and you can make your case with casual and non-market shoppers, as well as give a boost to farmers market flagbearers.

Now that you have showcased the cost comparisons, begin to identify the value behind the market products. Freshness means the product is healthier, tastier, and lasts longer once it is in your home.

Variety is also greater at a farmers market. How many varieties of eggplant are available at your farmers market? How many in local supermarkets? Showcase the value of the farmers market products in your social media, blogs, and other promotional platforms to help offset the misperception of markets being overpriced.



## SUPPORT: SHARE IT

Social media is a great tool for reaching existing customers and potential customers. Share your visuals and messages on Facebook, Instagram, or whichever channels you use. Making your case here will help you reach casual and non-market shoppers, as well as remind farmers market flagbearers of the value they enjoy by shopping at the market regularly.



### SEE IT IN ACTION

#### Good Bunch Farm Has Success with Price Comparisons

Good Bunch Farm at the Shelburne Falls and Ashfield Farmers Markets in Massachusetts used a variety of signage and Facebook posts to showcase price variations between farmers markets and supermarkets in their communities. The comparisons showed that farmers markets are more affordable, especially in the height of the season. The signage at market and the Facebook posts were continual reminders of the affordability of farmers markets. Read more about this project in the link below.

<https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/FRCOG-FC-Farm-and-Food-System-Project-Final-Report-093015.pdf>

## SOLUTION 2: INTRODUCE NEW OR UNUSUAL PRODUCTS TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Farmers markets are known for their wide variety of products and unique varieties of fruits and vegetables. It gives consumers choices and encourages consumers to try new foods. This can be quite appealing to many consumers such as ethnic consumers or those who eat based on religious values.

But some consumers find farmers markets to be elitist because the variety of foods in the marketplace is unusual to them. Many casual and non-market shoppers do not recognize them nor do they know how to prepare them. The feeling is that these unique varieties of product appeal to “foodies” and not to the general population.

## SUPPORT: PROMOTE THE DIFFERENCE

For those who may not understand what unique products are or how to prepare them, give them reasons to include them in their meal planning and invite them to the market to try them. Nothing is more attractive than a picture of a delicious dish prepared with market products and accompanied by a recipe. Make sure recipes are branded with your market logo so they are reminded of your market every time they use the recipe.

Your weekly ads, whether on social media or print ads, can include a listing of what’s in season, along with a recipe. That makes your ad a “keeper” that gets saved by customers in their recipe cache at home. Whenever they look at the recipe, they are reminded of your market and that it is a great place to buy their ingredients.

Food preparation and tasting demonstrations are another opportunity to showcase unique products. If a customer can watch how easily fresh foods can be prepared and how delicious they are, they are much more likely to try them on their own. Be sure to distribute the recipe with the demonstration. Again, it becomes a constant reminder of your market when the recipe is used again at home.

Often Cooperative Extension will host cooking demonstrations at farmers markets in their county/region. Contact Nutrition Educators at the Cooperative Extension office in your county.

Of course, you need to bring customers to your market to view the demonstrations. Prepare an events calendar that shows the schedule of the demonstrations. Add this calendar to your social media pages and your website. Then, promote each event and what products will be highlighted at each demonstration. If you have ethnic foods or foods common to religious celebrations or traditions, be sure you are targeting those audiences in your promotions!



## SEE IT IN ACTION

The following markets use cooking demonstrations to educate customers on the wide variety of products at the market, and how to use it!

**Broome County Regional Market** hosts cooking classes in the commercial kitchen of their farmers market. You can view the details of these events on their events calendar:

<http://www.broomecountyregionalmarket.com/events/>

**The Oneida County Public Market** showcases foods prepared from produce at the market each Friday on a local television news program. For details contact the market manager at:

[info@oneidacountymarket.com](mailto:info@oneidacountymarket.com)

**Down to Earth Markets** features dishes prepared with foods from their markets and shares on Facebook. They encourage their shoppers to share, as well. Visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/DowntoEarthMarkets/>



*Chef Series Cooking Demonstrations at the Northampton Tuesday Farmers Market.*



*Free handouts at the Rochester Farmers Market include tasty recipes and nutrition information.*



## SEE IT IN ACTION

### Chef Series

The Northampton Tuesday Farmers Market hosted a series of cooking demonstrations by local chefs, cookbook authors, and restaurant owners. It grew awareness of a wide variety of products and increased consumer purchases of the product featured each week.

During peak season, August and September, the demos took place at 5pm in the center of the market. The chefs prepared their recipe using food from around the market.

Using a microphone to be heard in the busy market plaza, the chef explained the process throughout the demonstration. Once complete, the market goers could try a sample.

The Chef Series was strengthened by a partnership with a local literary agent who helped book talent.

Local businesses sponsored the Chef Series in exchange for promotion on posters and online. Recipe cards were available for customers to take in person and online. Learn more:

Email: [info@growfoodnorthampton.com](mailto:info@growfoodnorthampton.com)

<https://www.growfoodnorthampton.com/a-delicious-summer-chef-series/>

<https://www.growfoodnorthampton.com/2018-tuesday-market-summer-chef-series-highlights/>

## SOLUTION 3: FARMERS MARKET AMBASSADORS

Many of the consumer survey respondents, particularly non-market shoppers, indicated that they did not feel welcome at the markets. It could be the uncomfortable feeling of dealing with growers as they shop and choose to buy products, or the unfriendliness of market staff and farmers. If a customer feels ill at ease, they are not going to shop at the farmers market. But we can overcome this issue with a Market Ambassador.

The Market Ambassador greets customers when they come in the market. A bit of conversation can begin to make a new shopper feel welcome and may help to identify any insecurities they may have about shopping at a farmers market. The Market Ambassador can offer to bring the shoppers on a “tour” of the market:

- Introduce them to farmers and help them understand the kinds of questions farmers can answer
- Share helpful tips such as to peruse the market first, then return to make purchases; if using SNAP benefits, explain the SNAP token system
- Point out the bathrooms, handwashing stations, and other key points of interest
- Describe the market mission and how it benefits the farmers, customers, community, and environment
- Outline the market events and programs that relate to them as customers
- Answer their questions and alleviate their concerns

A good Market Ambassador makes new customers feel welcome at their first visit and encourages return visits.

## SUPPORT: FINDING A PARTNER

This is a program that requires some funding. You'll want to compensate a Market Ambassador to ensure their personal satisfaction in the role, which translates into a successful ambassador. You may find the right person(s) within your current staffing or even in your volunteer corps. Other times, you may want to tap into local talent through a partnering organization that shares your market's mission and vision.

Be sure to train them well in all aspects of the Ambassador program, so they understand and internalize the mission of the program and their role. Preparing a job description and qualifications requirements to use in recruiting your Market Ambassador will help attract the right people for the job.

Provide evaluation and feedback to your Ambassadors, as well. Let them know how they are doing and what the results of their work have been. You may want to talk with the farmers and interview some of the customers that have used your ambassadors to get their viewpoints. Then share this with your ambassadors. Positive feedback reinforces their commitment to the program and encourages them to make any changes necessary to advance the program's success.



### SEE IT IN ACTION

#### Market Ambassador Programs

**The Southern Tier West Farmers Market Association** instituted SNAP Ambassadors at the farmers markets in their region as part of a USDA grant. The results showed a marked increase in SNAP usage at participating farmers markets. For more information, contact the Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board at [KLamendola@southerntierwest.org](mailto:KLamendola@southerntierwest.org)

**The Prevention Research Center at Case Western Reserve University** undertook a 5 year project to increase consumer use of SNAP benefits at farmers markets. Through extensive study and community partner input, Fresh Link Ambassador program was created with step by step guidance in creating a SNAP Ambassador Program to bring SNAP consumers to the market and empower them to increase their consumption of fresh, healthy, and locally grown food by purchasing direct from farmers at farmers markets. Learn more: <https://www.prchn.org/FreshLinkPhases.aspx>

## SOLUTION 4: FARM TOURS

One way to help consumers feel more comfortable talking with farmers is to build their knowledge of agriculture. Farm tours, hosted by the market, can help make the connection between consumers and farmers, build their understanding of agriculture, and improve their comfort level in shopping at a market where they meet farmers face-to-face.

A farm tour takes consumers directly to the farms participating in the market, giving the farmer the opportunity to lead consumers through their farm operations. A general talk on what happens on the farm, what their products are, and why they choose to be farmers can be very enlightening for consumers. Once the farmer breaks the ice with the walk through and presentation, consumers feel more comfortable asking questions and learning more about the foods they produce.

Some farms will want to go beyond a conversation and include activities that can give consumers a more hands-on learning experience, such as planting seeds in the greenhouses in early spring, harvesting beets in the field, or picking apples in the fall. Their participation in the process leaves a lasting impression and builds loyalty for supporting local farms and the foods they produce.

Post-harvest processes on the farm are important to highlight, too. Consumers are hearing about food safety issues on the news constantly – e coli, salmonella, listeria – found in cantaloupes, lettuce, tomatoes, green onions, and more. Most farmers are extremely careful to maintain the quality and safety of the foods they produce. They know their relationships with their customers are their lifeblood and they safeguard those relationships as best they can. So a tour of their post-harvest operations will show consumers the steps taken to ensure the safety of the food they bring to market.

## SUPPORT: HOW TO ARRANGE FARM TOURS

Markets that hosts these events are seeing a growing base of loyal customers. But the event does require time and resources to make it a successful event. First, a good relationship with the farmer is key. You will need to ensure the farmer understands the benefits of bringing consumers to the farm, has the time to devote to a tour, and runs a well-kept and safe farm.

Tours can be arranged in a number of ways. Many Cornell Cooperative Extension offices in New York host open farm days. Some counties in Maryland also host days in which farmers welcome visitors. A date is set and farms across the county open up to host consumers all day. Consumers choose farms they want to see and drive themselves from farm to farm. While this is not directly tied to farmers markets, it has the same impact. It builds consumer knowledge of agriculture and helps drive sales of the participating farms' products, whether at their farm, a farmers market, or another retail outlet.

Some markets may choose to hire a bus to bring their tour participants to the chosen farms. This keeps everyone together and limits the amount of time each farmer needs to spend away from their daily farm work. It is also an opportunity for the market to start a dialogue about agricultural issues, nutrition, and health while en route between farm stops. These tours directly build customer knowledge of agriculture, while increasing their comfort level in shopping face-to-face with farmers at the market.

Often, sponsors or local-level grants can be obtained that will pay for the event – promotions, bus rentals, and other costs. You will need to look within your own community to determine who would be appropriate sponsors in your community: your county's Farm Bureau, farm supply stores, seed companies, for example. Grants may be available from your community foundation, local bank, or other nearby businesses that have a mission to build their community.



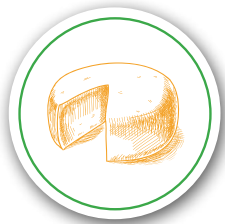
SEE IT IN  
ACTION

Farm Tour Programs

Schenectady Greenmarket: <https://www.schenectadygreenmarket.com/>

Cornell Cooperative Extension Madison County's Open Farm Day:

<http://madisoncountyce.org/agriculture/agriculture-economic-development/open-farm-day>



# BRINGING CONVENIENCE TO THE FARMERS MARKET

## SITUATION: MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE FARMERS MARKETS ARE INCONVENIENT SHOPPING VENUES

According to the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, consumers find farmers markets to be an inconvenient venue. Consumers are used to having big box stores open 24/7, as well as having the convenience of performing multiple tasks at one store.

However, farmers markets are open, typically, one day per week for a 3 to 6 hour window. That makes it difficult for people with busy schedules to participate. Think along the lines of busy families, those whose jobs keep them busy for the majority of each weekday, and parents with young children who do not have regular access to additional caregivers. The consumer with a schedule that makes farmers market shopping nearly impossible, needs convenient hours.

Consumers also want to multitask at their shopping venues. For example, supermarkets often offer in-store pharmacies and banking services along with food shopping. The one stop stopping fits a busy consumer. Again, farmers markets do not fit the bill for this type of consumer. Farmers markets lack the added service of being a one-stop shop.

Farmers markets concentrate on local food from local growers. A consumer cannot pick up toiletries and prescriptions at a farmers market. In fact, most consumers can't complete the week's food shopping at a farmers market. They may need pantry staples like salt or cooking oil, items not often found at markets.

## SOLUTION 1: BOXED MEAL KITS AND MARKET BASKET BUNDLES

Busy customers are drawn to meal delivery kits like Hello Fresh and Blue Apron. The box, delivered through the mail, contains the ingredients for a complete meal with an easy-to-follow recipe. Some of these services promote that they include local foods, although their definition of local may not match the consumer's definition. But it does meet the consumers need for convenience. Consumers don't have to shop for each of the ingredients, nor do they have to decide what's for dinner. That is all taken care of by the meal kit delivery service they have enrolled in.

The meal kit trend appears to have cut into farmers market sales. Why? It satisfies a need for those who want home-cooked meals and provides the convenience their busy lifestyles demand. The customer doesn't have to spend time thinking about what they will be preparing for their meal, nor time shopping for the ingredients. Everything is done for them.

How can markets compete with that? One solution to consider – create your own weekly meal kit that can be assembled at the market, using ingredients from your market vendors. It can include the protein, vegetables, fruit, dessert and even the drink (provided you are following the rules of your state for reselling each of these products).

The meal can be pre-sold prior to market day so you will know exactly how many kits to assemble. Then use your market volunteers to collect the products, assemble the packages, and distribute to the purchasers.

Maybe the market cannot fulfill the delivery component, although some markets may find a way to do that using their volunteers. But markets can make it convenient by creating one easy-to-access site for consumers to pick up their meal kits. It could be a curbside site where the consumer only needs to drive up and be handed the package. Or, it might be just one site within the market where they can find the package and do not have to traverse the entire market. What can work for your market?

While this does not solve the issue of bringing more customers into the market to shop from vendor to vendor, it does promote the market and generate sales for the market vendors. It is introducing consumers to the market and its products and may generate foot traffic when their lifestyle calms down or allows them the time to stroll the market.

If this is beyond your market's capacity, the market can encourage farmers to develop Market Basket Bundles. Together the farmers can work cooperatively to create something akin to a boxed meal kit that will satisfy the customer's need for convenience.

The goal of the Market Basket Bundles is to bring farmers of various products together to create food kits; i.e. salsa kit, eggplant parmesan kit, pizza kit. Produce farmers partner with other farmers in the market to create kits that each can promote and sell at their own table. Include a recipe and you have your own boxed meal kits.

Promotion is key – farmers must promote their own Market Basket Bundles, letting customers know you have them at the farmers market, what kits are available, and mostly, why your customers will want them. Use your social media accounts to promote them, including pictures. Nothing generates a sale more than a picture of a mouth-watering dish.

Oneida County Public Market  
Presents

## FARM TO TABLE FOR TWO

*Valentine's 2018*

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

*Make this Valentine's Day remarkable with a meal you prepare with your love in your home. We have put together everything you need with high quality, locally produced foods and products\*. You add the spice and romance.*

### THE MENU

- STEAK WITH SHALLOT BUTTER
- ROASTED RED POTATOES WITH ROSEMARY
- RED BEETS TWO WAYS
- FRESH GREEN SALAD WITH MAPLE VINAIGRETTE
- FRENCH-STYLE ARTISAN BREAD
- HONEY MEAD (ALCOHOLIC)
- DECADENT COOKIE SELECTION

*Reserve your Table for Two fresh box through our secured site:  
[www.oneidacountymarket.com/farmtotablefortwo](http://www.oneidacountymarket.com/farmtotablefortwo)*

**LIMITED AVAILABILITY.** *Pick up for pre-ordered boxes is Saturday Feb 10th between 11a -1p at the Oneida County Public Market Union Station, 321 Main St, Utica, NY.*

*Farm to Table Meal Kit at the Oneida County Public Market.*



**SEE IT IN  
ACTION**

Meal Kit

The Oneida County Public Market created a meal kit program for an all local Valentine's Day Dinner. While the one-time event had limited success, it is to be implemented in the future within their Friends of the Market organization as a means to build a new customer service to reach non-market and casual market customers and generate sales for their vendors. For more information contact: [info@oneidacountymarket.com](mailto:info@oneidacountymarket.com)

## SUPPORT: TIME AND ORGANIZATION SKILLS

This type of program will require a great deal of initial effort. The agreements and payment structure for participating farmers needs to be created. This will need to spell out:

- What products and quantities of each item will be required each week to fulfill orders
- Time frame for ordering
- How farmers and vendors will be reimbursed for their products, when payment will be made, and at what rate
- How will non-delivery of products, or a short delivery, be handled
- Quality expectations

Build your customer base through promotions for the program. Social media is a great venue for reaching customers. You could also get the participating vendors to put up signage at their market tables and share on their social media accounts. Put the opportunity on your market's website so customers can easily order ahead of market, as well as being able to order at their leisure, 24/7. Be sure to set deadlines ahead of market day, for example, "order by midnight Thursday for pickup at Saturday's market." This gives the manager time to pull orders together, contact vendors for product, and accommodate farmers' need to harvest, prepare and package their part of the meal kits.

Also, build in an online payment platform so that all orders are prepaid. It's a comfort level for vendors to provide the quantity of products for the meal kits, knowing that the orders are secured and not speculative. It is also a convenience for customers to pay at the time they order and not have to deal with that at the time of pickup.

Be sure your volunteers are well trained for the program. They should know what they need to gather from the farmers and how to store the products until pickup to ensure freshness and temperature controls. Train them in preparing an attractive package for the customer, including an easy-to-read and follow recipe that includes an identification of all the farmers as well as the market identity. Volunteers also will need training on the distribution process, tracking pickups, and positive customer service.

When all these pieces come together, you will have a meal delivery program that can rival any online meal delivery kit that is marketed on a national or regional basis. But the best part is that it is all local and benefits the farmers and vendors in your market.

## SOLUTION 2: MOBILE FARMERS MARKETS

Another way markets are finding to make themselves more convenient is to create a mobile market. This brings the farmers products directly to the consumer, rather than making the consumer come to the market. In this case, farmers products are aggregated by the market. Then the "market" arrives at regularly scheduled stops into the neighborhoods of the community, Community Centers, Senior Housing, etc. The market is made available on a limited time frame for consumers in the area to make their purchases of local food right at their doorstep. A typical stop on a mobile market is less than 1 hour, and then it moves on to the next stop.

This is a means to make local food from local farmers accessible to everyone. No need to drive or find other means to get to the market, no parking issues. It includes all the foods from the farmers within the market so the consumer has access to all the local foods available direct from the local farmers. It is now more convenient than having to go to a local bodega or grocery store.

## SUPPORT: FUNDING AND STAFFING

This is not a solution that comes easily. It takes careful planning, significant funding and staffing. Often a truck or van is retrofitted to include refrigeration and display shelving. If external shelving, it needs to allow the shelving to be closed while in transport, and either way, it needs to secure the product on the shelves during transport from location to location. If the truck uses internal shelving, you will need a ramp, with railings, to allow consumer access to the product. Signage on the truck, licensing, registration and insurance are additional expenses to consider. Don't forget gas, and routine maintenance on the vehicle, as well.



Farm Fresh Mobile Market in Syracuse, NY.

Staffing is also a significant expense. Someone needs to procure and aggregate the farmers' products for the mobile market. It all needs to be loaded into the truck and displayed. A driver with an appropriate license needs to be hired, along with a salesperson. Yes, these can all be the same person, but the job requirements need to be within the skill set of that person.

Promotion is also critical. You will need to reach out to potential stops for your market, securing permission to set up your mobile market in their parking lots, on city streets, or within an apartment complex. Then do outreach to the residents, neighbors, and clients of the locations where you will be stopping with your mobile market to build a customer base.

The bottom line: you need funding! Without it this endeavor will not get off the ground. Grants are often used to create mobile markets. There are a number of sources to look for funding:

- USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program
- Community Foundations
- Health care insurers, doctor's organization, health and nutrition organizations

Prepare a business plan for the mobile market with careful consideration of all aspects of the project from the set-up of the mobile market vehicle, to staffing needs, promotion needs and start-up costs. Prepare a pro forma showing 3 years of income and expenses. Highlight the benefits of the project to the community of farmers and consumers and why the potential funder is a match for your project. Then present this all to a funder (whether as a complete business plan or in the form of a grant application, as each funder dictates). This will help you answer any questions a funder may have, demonstrate the degree of thought and preparation that went into designing the program and ensure your success in securing the funding required.



## SEE IT IN ACTION

Take a look at the following mobile market programs!

### Massachusetts Ave (MAP) Project

<https://www.mass-ave.org/eat>

### Capital Roots' Veggie Mobile

<https://www.capitalroots.org/programs/veggie/veggie/>

### Sullivan County Fresh Market on the Move

<http://sullivance.org/agriculture/buy-local-sullivan-fresh/sullivan-fresh-markets>

### Springfield Go Fresh Mobile Market

<https://livewellspringfield.org/go-fresh-mobile-market/>





### SOLUTION 3: ONLINE STOREFRONTS BRING CUSTOMERS TO YOUR MARKET'S FARMERS 24/7

A way to build in convenience to a farmers market is to create an online storefront that allows consumers to peruse the products for sale by each of the market's vendors. Consumers can then shop from the convenience of their home and at all hours of the day. The storefront collects the orders from consumers and allows the farmers to generate sales and profits outside of the market.

Sales are transferred to the farmer who puts the orders together and has them available at the next scheduled farmers market for customers to pick up. This gives the farmer pre-sold orders for the market, and gives the consumer the opportunity to pre-order and have the sale complete and ready for pickup, minimizing the time they spend at the market. Of course, the market manager will want to find ways to bring those pre-order customers into the market to generate additional sales for the rest of the farmers, but at least it generates sales for the market's farmers.

While this can be a resource intensive solution for your market, in terms of human resources and funding, it can be a valuable option in reaching consumers who prefer online shopping. It brings your farmers and vendors to them in a manner that matches their needs, but also brings them to the market for pick up to match the needs of the market.

### SUPPORT: CREATING AN E-COMMERCE STOREFRONT OR USING AN EXISTING APP

E-commerce programs are easily assimilated into the farmers market website, as plug ins or add-ons to the site. For example, consider Square Marketplace. This POS system has ready-made software that you can use to build your storefront. It is free to use, as long as you use Square to collect payments online. It is simple to set up and has the backup of Square for set-up, operating and troubleshooting. Another opportunity is through the What's Good app. This is a program that connects farmers to both retail and wholesale buyers. Products are ordered from farmers through the app and then picked up at the farmers market.

Presumably, because consumers have the convenience of a 24/7 shopping app, more local consumers will have access to the foods produced by local growers and made available at a local farmers markets. It can increase farmer sales, as well as draw additional consumers to the market who may otherwise be shut out of the market due to time constraints.



#### SEE IT IN ACTION

#### Saratoga Farmers Market Uses "What's Good" App

The Saratoga Farmers Market uses the What's Good app to help drive more consumers to their farmers and their market. While the sales have been slow to build, it does appear to be catching on with consumers.

In fact, the Friends of the Saratoga Farmers Market have created a curbside pickup service to accommodate busy consumers with little time to spare at the farmers market. The Friends volunteers pickup orders from each of their farmers and holds them curbside for customers to pick up in one easy access location. Learn more by visiting:

<https://www.saratogafarmersmarket.org/freshfoodny/>





# CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

## SITUATION: CONSUMERS WITH CHILDREN ARE OFTEN TOO BUSY TO SHOP AT FARMERS MARKETS

This is the “busy mom syndrome.” While she would love to have healthy food for her family, she is busy bringing children to sports activities, scout meetings and a variety of other activities children are often involved in. This means running about evenings after school as well as Saturday mornings. It leaves very little time to visit farmers markets, even though they may know that this is an excellent source for healthy foods. This often results in shopper changes from a flagbearer for farmers markets into the less frequent shopper, known as the casual shopper.

In other cases, families with young children are unsure that bringing their children to the market is appropriate. Experiences at the supermarket are vivid in their minds – whether it’s the kids begging for sugary cereals, whining for cookies or the inevitable boredom of shopping up and down the food aisles – are enough to make any parent cringe at the thought of taking their kids food shopping.

However, this is not the same behavior most kids exhibit at a farmers market. Children are welcome and the most successful farmers markets will cater to children. Why? Because children are future farmers market shoppers and if the market can draw them in, give them a valuable and fun experience, they will want to come every week, encouraging their parents to come. But they will also continue to shop at farmers markets once they reach adulthood, giving markets and farmers another generation of shoppers.



Fun and Games at the Saratoga Farmers Market.

## SOLUTION 1: STORY HOUR

Many markets find that including a story hour on market day brings families with young children to the market.

The stories read can have an agriculture or seasonal food theme, such as “Who Grew My Soup” or “Right This Very Minute.” Listening to a story being read will encourage kids to come to the market, bring their parents who can shop while the kids enjoy story time, and build their interest in local and healthy eating.

NY Ag in the Classroom has a list of books that can be used for reading that will encourage and educate children about food and agriculture:

<https://www.agclassroom.org/ny/programs/literacy.com>

## SUPPORT: FINDING A PARTNER

Many farmers markets use a local library as a partner for story hour. It serves the library’s mission to encourage children to read at a young age, as well as serving the needs of the market. Adding an activity after the reading will help the kids to internalize the message. For example, have the children go through the market and collect vegetables to include in a soup. This gives the children an opportunity to talk to the farmers, shop like they are seeing their parents do each week, and participate in the preparation of the soup. Once it is done, they can all sample the soup.

Research shows that when kids participate in the choosing of vegetables and are active in the cooking practice, they are much more interested in eating the vegetables, and more likely to enjoy the food and eat those vegetables in the future.



## SEE IT IN ACTION

The Oneida Public Market in Utica, NY offers many programs for children, including story time. To learn more, email: [info@OneidaCountyMarket.com](mailto:info@OneidaCountyMarket.com)

## SOLUTION 2: POP KIDS CLUB

The Power of Produce (POP) Kids Club is a program developed and administered by the national Farmers Market Coalition which incentivizes kids to eat healthy. This program has proven effective in teaching kids to eat healthy and educating them about local food in a way they find fun.

Children enrolled in the program are given weekly tokens to buy a fresh fruit or vegetable. It is entirely their choice, each week, on what that food will be. Studies have shown that kids who choose their own foods are much more likely to eat those foods. Periodically, monthly or so, club members are given an extra token that they can spend on anything – baked goods, popcorn, or any other food they choose at the market. Kids find this a fun treat after being so good and healthy every week.

Many markets add other activities to accompany the POP Kids Club events. For example, a scavenger hunt for products at the market helps them learn to talk to farmers. In this game, kids must find various foods at the market, ask questions of the farmers to get the right answers to the questions, or be observant of activities at the market.

Each scavenger hunt sheet is entered in a drawing for a prize. Kids are encouraged to play to win prizes, learn as they are playing the games, and learn how to interact with farmers, a skill many adults find intimidating.



POP Kids Club Signage at the Oneida County Public Market.

## SUPPORT: FINDING A SPONSOR TO COVER THE EXPENSES

There are costs involved in operating a POP Kids Club, including: tokens for the kids in the club, reimbursements to the farmers for accepting the tokens as payment for their product, game pieces (i.e. scavenger hunt sheets), and prizes.

Many markets will also provide additional pieces to Kids Club members, for example, tote bags to carry their purchases or token holders to safeguard tokens until they are used. The Oneida County Public Market, for example, provides kid-friendly recipes each week to Kids Club members, along with a recipe card holder.

These expenses can add up to a challenging sum for many farmers markets to raise. But often community partners can be located to help cover costs. The partner may find that covering the expenses of the POP Kids Club will serve their unique mission. Some markets may offer the partner a complimentary table to promote their product or service. Other markets will add the partner's logo to market promotional materials like brochures and signage. The goal is to create a "package" for the partner to give them visibility in exchange for supporting POP, or any other program they may sponsor.

Medical insurers, health organizations, and physicians groups are common partners for POP Kids Clubs. Dental practices may provide items to club member tote bags – like a new toothbrush or floss. Medical insurance companies are particularly interested in sponsoring POP. Maintaining a healthy population reduces their expenses, so tapping into a local insurance company often results in effective partnerships. They may also add goodies to club member tote bags, too.



### SEE IT IN ACTION

#### Get Resources for Launching a POP Program at Your Market

Get POP Kids Club information and Materials From the Farmers Market Coalition

<https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/programs/power-of-produce-pop/>

POP Kids Club in Action at the Oneida County Public Market, Contact: [info@OneidaCountyMarket.com](mailto:info@OneidaCountyMarket.com)

Example of a Farmers Market Scavenger Hunt Sheet

[https://www.littlegreenthumbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/LGT\\_ScavengerHuntFM2.pdf](https://www.littlegreenthumbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/LGT_ScavengerHuntFM2.pdf)

### SOLUTION 3: KIDS CRAFT TABLE

Kids love to be creative and by providing them an outlet, you can draw kids to your market, along with their parents. Create an area for kids crafting. Put out supplies for the kids to do something fun with the products of the market. For example, make a veggie mobile that can be entered into a veggie mobile derby. Provide a variety of veggies to be used. Ask your farmers to donate their "ugly" produce and give them recognition. Be sure you have prizes for winners.

Another example could be creating a scarecrow using products found at the market. Again, ask for donations of supplies needed from your farmers and vendors – "ugly" produce, old clothing, etc. – and give them recognition for their donation. The scarecrows can be displayed throughout the market so kids can show off their creations.



Kids learn about nature at the St. Michael's Farmers Market. Photo by Maryland Farmers Market Assoc.

Sidewalk chalk art is another great way to get kids involved in the market. The South Wedge Farmers Market keeps a variety of sidewalk chalk available and encourages the kids to decorate the pavement and sidewalks at the market.

The more kids can be involved in the market, providing an outlet for their creativity and energy, the more they will enjoy the market and grow up to be local food shoppers themselves. In the present, parents will be encouraged to shop your market as they know their kids will enjoy the experience.

### SUPPORT: HOW TO SET UP CRAFTS AT YOUR MARKET

A kids crafting area will require supervision. Many markets offering this kind of programming use volunteers to man the tables and programs. It may be part of your Friends of the Market organization, part of your regular volunteer corps, or seek a local organization that will take this on. Maybe a local day care center will cover this in exchange for promoting their center, such as "Smiles Daycare presents Art at the Market".

You will also need funds to cover supplies. Whether it is chalk, paint, glue or other craft materials, you will need to cover all supplies that aren't donated by farmers and vendors. You might find a local craft store willing to donate supplies in exchange for promotion, or they may agree to sell you supplies at a discounted rate, again in exchange for promotion.



Sidewalk chalk art and painting at the South Wedge Farmers Market.



**SEE IT IN ACTION**

Contact these markets to learn more about their exciting kid's programs!

South Wedge Farmers Market: [info@swfm.org](mailto:info@swfm.org)

Northampton Tuesday Farmers Market: [info@growfoodnorthampton.com](mailto:info@growfoodnorthampton.com)

# TARGETED EVENTS FOR FARMERS MARKETS

## SITUATION: HOSTING TARGETED EVENTS DRAW KEY SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

According to the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, many respondents felt that farmers markets only appeal to a limited segment of the population. In some cases, consumers, especially non-market and casual market shoppers, believed markets were meant for foodies or those with greater disposable income than the average shopper. One way to overcome this perception is to offer events that showcase the market as being a place for many segments of the community.

The survey also revealed that events, in and of themselves, are not what draw consumers to a farmers market. But with a targeted event, it can attract consumers and help them to see the benefit of farmers market shopping.

## SOLUTION 1: CREATING AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FARMERS MARKET...BAG-FOCUSED PROGRAMS

An environmentally conscious customer will also be concerned about the number of plastic bags, clamshells, and other products in the market that fill landfills with non-degradable materials. In fact, New York State, along with communities across the country, have banned the use of plastic bags as a carryout option.

While it may be more difficult for farmers to comply, it is important to environmentally conscious customers that plastic is eliminated from the farmers markets. Many customers bring reusable cloth totes to carry their purchases home and decline the use of plastic for their purchases. A growing number of farmers markets will offer reusable totes for a nominal fee. This is a win-win for the market, eliminating plastic, while providing a tote bag with the market logo to help promote the market.

But how do we accommodate the shopper that has forgotten their reusable tote, is reluctant to purchase a new one, or simply lacks the cash for a new one? This severely limits their purchasing ability.

The Oneida County Public Market has solved this issue with a tote bag tree. A local corporate sponsor provided the market with funds to purchase a supply of reusable totes. These are maintained on a tote "tree" allowing customers to take a tote, free of charge, if they need one. It also encourages customers to leave a tote if they have extra. Any donated totes are thoroughly washed by the manager to ensure they are clean and free of contaminants before they are put on the tree for others to grab.



*Reusable Tote Tree at the Oneida County Public Market*

This is a win-win for customers and the environment, as well as upholds a clean and food-safe solution to plastic bags. Market customers and patrons appreciate the effort and feel a little more loyal to a shopping venue that "cares".

The Northampton Tuesday Farmers Market in Western Massachusetts has found a unique way to encourage the use of reusable tote bags, as well as recycling farmers feed and seed bags. A group of volunteers uses a technique of making reusable bags from used seed bags and recycled irrigation drip tape. The technique is a no-sew method using grommets to secure the pieces of the bag. The Bag Share Project sets up at the Northampton Tuesday Market throughout the season to demonstrate the bag-making and allow customers to make a bag to add to the market's bag sharing program. Farmers are encouraged to clean out their used feed and seed bags and donate them to the market to create these bags.

## SUPPORT: COVERING THE COSTS

Finding a corporate sponsor will cover the tote cost. Include your market name and logo, your web address, and a recognition of the sponsor on each bag. They do not need to be fancy: a simple and functional bag is all that is needed.



**SEE IT IN ACTION**

**Market Tote Programs**

Oneida County Public Market  
[info@oneidacountymarket.com](mailto:info@oneidacountymarket.com)

Northampton Tuesday Farmers Market  
<http://www.thebagshare.org/>



*The Bag Share Project at the Northampton Tuesday Farmers Market lets visitors make a bag from recycled materials to donate to the program.*

## SOLUTION 2: COLLEGE NIGHT AT THE MARKET

College students are out on their own for the first time, making their own life decisions, and finding ways to sustain themselves. Preparing their own meals and defining their own nutritional standards begin to be developed in their college years, if not already ingrained from their own family standards. Reaching out to college students, particularly those living off campus, and inviting them to your market may be a way to encourage them to eat locally and seasonally.

College Night at the Market is an event that can introduce college students to the farmers market by highlighting the area's colleges. Invite area colleges to set up at the market for the event. They can meet with potential students and transfers to introduce them to each college, its scholastic majors, student life at the college and recruit local students.

At the same time, you will want to highlight local food, nutrition and cooking skills for students. Many will not know how to cook, nor have the facts on nutrition and local food. So while the students are perusing the college tables, you will be educating the students on eating locally.

## SUPPORT: OUTREACH, OUTREACH AND MORE OUTREACH!

Promotion is key to the success of the event. You will need to spread the word for the College Night to reach all potential students. Use social media to target the college demographic. You will also need to be sure you are using the appropriate social media to reach the age group. For example, snapchat and Instagram are very popular with this age.

Make contact with high school guidance counselors and principals. They can help you spread the word with their students and encourage them to participate in the event. Community centers and recreation centers can also help. Provide them with flyers and posters to help promote the event.

The wider you can cast your net to reach students, the greater the success of your event will be and the more students you can introduce to the market and encourage them to be your next customer base.



**SEE IT IN ACTION**

**Learn about College Night at the Westside Farmers Market. Contact:**  
[westsidemarketrochester@gmail.com](mailto:westsidemarketrochester@gmail.com)

## SOLUTION 3: SNAP FOR LOW INCOME CONSUMERS

It has been repeatedly said throughout the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey that farmers markets are inaccessible to those on limited incomes. However, many farmers markets are now set up to access SNAP benefits as payment for foods within the farmers markets. Individual farmers and vendors may choose to participate as a SNAP retailer, but many markets are using a central terminal system that sets up the market itself as the SNAP retailer, using a token system to allow farmers and vendors to accept SNAP as payment through the market's SNAP authorization.

In a central terminal setting, the market becomes authorized as a SNAP retailer with USDA FNS. When a SNAP customer comes to the market, they swipe their benefit card with the market's terminal and receive tokens in exchange for the benefits, which are transferred from the benefit account of the SNAP user, to the market's own checking account. The customer uses the tokens to buy SNAP eligible foods from the farmers and vendors within the market. The vendors then turn the tokens back into the market for reimbursement. It's a simple process that encourages SNAP users to shop at farmers markets and adds sales and income to the participating farmers.

In other SNAP markets, farmers may have their own SNAP retailer accounts and customers can use their benefits directly with the individual farmers in the market. This also allows the individual to use other nutrition programs, such as eWIC and eFMNP to purchase eligible foods at the market, direct from the participating farmer.

Accepting SNAP tells low income consumers in your community that you welcome them at your market. It will encourage SNAP users to try out your market and build a new customer base for your farmers.

Along with the SNAP program,

a number of SNAP incentive programs have been established across the country. The incentive provides SNAP customers with additional buying power when using their SNAP benefits to buy food at the farmers markets. For example, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets offers a Fresh Connect check worth \$2 for every \$5 in SNAP benefits used at participating farmers markets. The incentive encourages SNAP consumers to shop at farmers markets for fresh, healthy foods from local producers. Another win-win program for local consumers and farmers market farmers.

## SUPPORT: HOW TO SET UP SNAP

If using a central terminal system, SNAP can be a heavy user of resources. It can be labor intensive: handling customer transactions and account reconciliations plus collecting and reimbursing tokens. It also requires a great deal of promotional effort to build community awareness of a market's ability to take SNAP benefits. Some state level organizations, such as the Farmers Market Federation of NY, have built media toolkits for markets to use, reducing the expenses for the individual markets: <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/media/>



*A vendor's sign welcomes SNAP customers at the Chicopee Farmers Market.*



*SNAP signage available through the Farmers Market Federation of NY.*



Incentive Program tokens at the Crossroads Farmers Market. Photo by the Maryland Farmers Market Association

There will also be charges for transaction processing, purchasing tokens, receipt paper, etc. All of these require that a farmers market add the SNAP program to their market budget to ensure that costs are considered. Many farmers markets in New York have found local partners to help defray costs, as well as administer the program. Markets have found partners through local civic organizations, community action programs, and hunger action programs; as well as other local organizations with poverty and/or nutrition-based missions.

Massachusetts Department of Agriculture sponsors the Healthy Incentive Program that encourages farmers to join the SNAP program, and builds customer sales through an incentive program tied to their Electronic Benefit Program. SNAP customers are given a dollar for dollar match on their purchases of fruits and vegetables from HIP authorized vendors. It has helped bring more SNAP customers to market, encourage healthier diets, and provide a significant revenue source for HIP authorized farmers.

There is some funding available through USDA's Food and Nutrition Services to help obtain equipment to accept SNAP. In addition, MarketLink is available to connect farmers markets and direct marketing farmers with SNAP processing.



## SEE IT IN ACTION

Learn about resources and tools for supporting SNAP at your market. Also included are links to successful promotion of SNAP programs at markets.

### USDA SNAP Information for Producers

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/farmer-producer>

### NYS Farmers Markets SNAP Program

<http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/snap-for-nys-farmers-markets/>

### Rochester Public Market Promotion of the SNAP Program

<https://www.cityofrochester.gov/markettokenprogram/>

### NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Fresh Connect Checks

<https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agservices/freshConnectPrgm.html>

### Fresh Link

<https://www.prchn.org/FreshLinkToolKits.aspx>

### Massachusetts Healthy Incentives Program (HIP)

<https://www.mass.gov/healthy-incentives-program-hip>

<https://www.buylocalfood.org/resources-for-farmers/healthy-incentives-program/>

### MarketLink

<http://www.marketlink.org/>

### Maryland Farmers Market Association

"Guide to Accepting Federal Benefits at the Farmers Market"

<https://marylandfma.org/guide-to-selling-at-accepting-benefits/>



## SOLUTION 4: PLAN YOUR LOCAL WEDDING

Wedding planning can be a daunting task for the engaged couple and their families. There's so much to do, from planning showers to hosting receptions. Food is a big part of the planning: what will you serve at showers, engagement parties, and the reception after the ceremony? But few families planning a wedding think of "local" as being a part of the festivities. As a farmers market manager, you have the opportunity to change that mindset and encourage wedding planners to think of "local" as part of the event and include your market and farmers as their source.

A bridal event at the market can showcase vendors that can supply the food, drinks, and even venues for weddings. Encourage your vendors to focus on what they can bring to a wedding and showcase that on the day of your event, from the hors d'oeuvres and drinks, to the main menu and desserts. Many farmers markets have cut flower vendors that can provide bridal bouquets and centerpieces for tables. Or, a barn setting or farm scene can be the perfect venue for the bridal showers and the wedding itself. But your customers need to be shown that your farmers market can supply a wedding! Your wedding event can showcase your farmers in a light never thought of before, introducing your market to families and wedding planners who will find that a farmers market has everything needed for the wedding, and their daily needs as well!

## SUPPORT: HOW TO LAUNCH THE EVENT

The purpose of this event is not to showcase bridal shops and caterers. It is to show the public that a farmers market can play a large role in wedding planning, by introducing wedding planners, engaged couples, and their families to the products grown, produced, baked, and brewed by market vendors. There are typically other events in the community that showcase a variety of local businesses that are key to weddings. But this event is strictly for your market vendors.

Not a lot of money needs to be put into the event. But it will take a lot of planning and preparation. Be sure your farmers are on board with the event and will do their best to showcase their farm products for the wedding planning audience.

Promotions are important to get the word out in the community about such a unique event. Boosted Facebook posts, flyers, print ads, and direct mail targeting wedding planners can attract engaged couples, their families, and wedding planners to your market on the day of the event. Don't forget, vendors can play a key role in spreading the word with their customers through their own social media as well.

Beyond promotions, you will need to set the atmosphere. Decorations throughout the market can help you set the mood and build a wedding business for your vendors.

### Let Us Help You Plan Your Local Wedding

Is there a wedding in your future?

Do you want to make it original and authentic with a local flair? Join us September 21st at the Oneida County Public Market and outfit your big day with local foods, local flowers and everything you'll need for a day you'll never forget.



**Oneida County Public Market**  
 Saturday, September 21, 2019, 9:00am to 1:00pm  
 Behind Union Station, 321 Main Street, Bagg's Square, Downtown Utica

*Wedding Planning Event at the Oneida County Public Market.*



**SEE IT IN ACTION**

**Wedding Planning Event**

After successfully hosting a wedding planning event, the Oneida County Public Market can share tips and ideas with you. Contact the market at:

[info@oneidacountymarket.com](mailto:info@oneidacountymarket.com)

## SOLUTION 5: RECYCLING PROGRAMS

As revealed in the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, farmers market flagbearers believe that environmentally friendly products are important and encourage them to participate in farmers markets. Casual market shoppers agree, although to a smaller degree. Therefore, it's important that farmers markets adhere to environmentally friendly practices. Learn about eco-friendly products and packaging that farmers can provide in [Market Layout and the 3 Ps \(Page 54\)](#). However, farmers markets themselves can enhance environmentally friendly practices for their customers, as well.

GrowNYC, through its Greenmarket program, offers a Zero Waste Program. Customers can bring table scraps, clothing, and textiles to the market, where they are collected by the market staff. Each week, the collected table scraps are sent to a composting site to be used to create fertile soil amendments. Recycled clothing and textiles are sent to a recycling facility to sort the materials. Higher quality clothing is sent to places where it can be reworn. Lesser quality materials are made into cleaning rags and the rest is shredded for fiber products.

Two markets in Baltimore, the Baltimore Farmers Market and Bazaar and the Wavery/32nd Street Market, have both partnered with the Baltimore City Office of Sustainability to collect customers' food scraps at the market. At one of the markets, a farmer takes these food scraps to provide feed for her hogs.

The goal of the program is to reduce the waste being transported to landfills and to recover and reuse what can be salvaged. The program successfully reduces the amount going to landfills, but it has also been a success in building the customer base for the markets. People who appreciate the opportunity to recycle are drawn to the markets to bring their table scraps and textiles. While there, they are introduced to the market, its farmers and the variety of high quality foods. It has been a win-win for GrowNYC and their communities.

If it is not in your market's capacity to take on such a large scale, ongoing program, consider creating a periodic event. Invite your local transfer station to come to the market where they can collect recyclables and compostable foods from your customers. They can provide informational brochures and educate the public about recycling while they are there.

### SUPPORT: WHAT'S NEEDED TO PLAN A RECYCLING PROGRAM

The program will require the market to contract with recyclers and compost facilities to be sure that whatever is collected has a place to go for processing. Once these agreements are in place, you are ready to set up your own market program. You will need a team of volunteers to take in the recyclables from the market patrons, as well as to transfer the collections to the appropriate recyclers.

Be sure all collected items are being stored, at site and through the transfer process, in leak-proof containers. The recycling and compost companies you are working with may have containers that can be used for collections and transfer.

Finally, you will need a variety of print material for distribution:

- What can/cannot be recycled and composted
- How to bring scraps to the market; i.e. table scraps should be frozen and wrapped
- General FAQs on the program, including location, days and hours of collection



#### SEE IT IN ACTION

The following 3 farmers markets have implemented recycling programs. Reach out to them to learn more.

**GrowNYC, visit:**

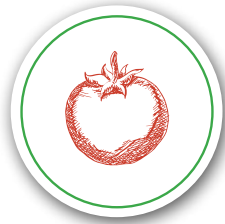
<https://www.grownyc.org/recycle>

**Baltimore Farmers Market and Bazaar**

Email [shanson@promotionandarts.org](mailto:shanson@promotionandarts.org) or [shuber@promotionandarts.org](mailto:shuber@promotionandarts.org)

**Waverly/32nd Street Farmers Market**

Email: [32ndstreetfarmersmarket@gmail.com](mailto:32ndstreetfarmersmarket@gmail.com)



# MARKET INTEGRITY

## SITUATION: DID THIS FARMER REALLY GROW THIS TOMATO?

Imagine this situation at your farmers market: Farmer Ted, a longtime vendor, shows up to market one June morning. He starts unloading his produce and you notice that he has tomatoes. They are beautiful, red, and plump. Great! You can post on social media that your market has the first tomatoes of the season. But wait, did Farmer Ted write on his market application that he was bringing tomatoes to market? Did you notice a high tunnel or greenhouse when you did a farm inspection a few weeks ago?

And then you see the stickers on the tomatoes: "Grown in Canada." You remember that your market has a strict grower-only policy (with allowances by the manager on a case-by-case basis). You will now have to let this farmer know he needs to put the tomatoes away.

As a market manager, you must balance seasonality of crops with ensuring product diversity at the market for consumer choice. In the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, all consumers believed that buying local was important, even if they were not shopping at a farmers market. One consumer went so far as to say that they were "perturbed to find farmers markets more of a flea/craft market, and people reselling from produce companies." This image of a farmers market will definitely hold back support from both casual shoppers, as well as non-market shoppers. But it is concerning enough that it may also reduce flagbearer support for the market.

Does your market have a policy or definition on what is termed "local"? To maintain the integrity of markets as the premier source for local foods, it is important that a definition is in place that the public has confidence in. Respondents to the consumer survey overwhelmingly defined local as being within 100 miles or within a multi-county region. Your market should have a definition, as well, so consumers understand what to expect from vendors. The definition will also provide a standard measure for management to ensure that vendors have adhered to your definition.

How your market responds to the concern over market integrity can very well spell the difference between market success and failure.

## SOLUTION: MARKET STANDARDS AND CHECK-BACK MECHANISM

At the farmers market, there is an expectation by shoppers of farmer integrity. At its core, integrity focuses on honesty and truthfulness. Both the farmers market flagbearers and casual shoppers seek out local produce and other goods on the belief that vendors are reliable, are honest in the labeling of their product source, and that a set of standards are being upheld. This is especially important for a market manager to understand and integrate into their market rules, policies, and operations.

In the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey, it was found that both flagbearers and casual shoppers prioritize local foods and farmer-grown products being sold at a farmers market, balanced with a reasonable variety in products and farmers. Non-market shoppers do not have that high of standards, but are still looking for a variety of products and farmers.



San Giovanni's Farm signage at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street Farmers Market. Photo by Maryland Farmers Market Assoc.

## SUPPORT: MARKET PRODUCT STANDARDS

Whether your market does not currently have standards related to the source of products, or there is something outlined in your market handbook, this is a good opportunity to decide what your market product standards and guidelines will look like. There are several ways you can accomplish this:

- 1. Talk with market customers.** Ask them what they are looking for and what are their expectations regarding where their products are coming from? How important is it to them that products on the table are grown by the farmer selling them?
- 2. Look at your current vendor make-up.** Are they mostly growers and producers? Do you allow a certain amount of resale of products? How is that measured, what do you require for documentation, and how are you verifying your standards are being upheld?

Labeling of product origin can be as simple as noting its city and state. Others may want to go as far as farm name, city, state, region, and product certifications, such as grass-fed, organic, biodynamic. As a market manager, ensure to the best of your ability that there is enough information on products brought into the market in the case of a recall or need for traceback of product.

### 3. How are you defining vendors at your market?

- **Growers and farmers:** producers of product from land owned, rented or controlled; who harvests and markets with a financial interest in product; any and all fruits, vegetables, poultry, meats and meat products, eggs, general dairy products, plants, and cut flowers.
- **Craftsperson:** objects must be created by the hand of the person. Examples include home goods and beauty products.
- **Bakers and food purveyors:** products baked or produced by the seller.

**4. What nutrition incentives does your market accept?** Some will require that certain percentages of produce come from a bona fide grower or from within a particular state or region.

The most important part of standards is that they are written in a way that can be enforced. If your market standards related to labeling and product sourcing cannot be quantified, then it will be extremely difficult to enforce them without seeming arbitrary, or impartial. Here is one example from a market in New York:

*Resale is allowed at the market. Each vendor is required to bring to market and have a display volume of not less than 80 percent of items produced directly by the vendor. The remaining 20 percent of products sold at the Market may be products purchased for resale. All resale items must be labeled with the original source and cannot be purchased from a store. The Market Manager reserves the right to enforce these percentages by asking for information from the vendor.*

From there you can create some standards that will meet customer needs and expectations, as well as farmers' current practices. Be sure your farmers understand how you will measure this. For example, is the standard measured across the season or within each market day? This is also an opportunity to educate your farmers on season extension and other production techniques such as high tunnels, as well as proper labeling of sources.

## SUPPORT: MARKET INSPECTION PROGRAM

A market inspection program can take many forms, and can span the gamut from informal to formal. At its core, inspections should be viewed as an opportunity to have a one-on-one experience with each farmer. You can learn more about their farm, their products, and what they are bringing to the farmers market. In fact, you could also use the inspection time to take photos of the farm for your social media or website campaigns.

The inspection should never be antagonistic; rather, think of it as a fact-finding mission. A market inspection program should give vendors a sense that market integrity is taken seriously. Ultimately, this assures customers are getting what they are seeking – a source of local food, with standards of production and quality upheld by market management.

When arranging a farm inspection, consider who would be the best person to conduct the review. The person(s) conducting the inspection should be knowledgeable about production. If that is not the market manager, then it would be important to bring someone from the management team or a volunteer who is familiar with farm production. Just be sure the person accompanying you to the farm is not competition for the farm you are visiting and that they understand the confidentiality required of them.

★  
SINCE  
2007

**ROBERT AND JOSH MORGENTHAU**  
are second and third generation owners of Fishkill Farms, which was started by Robert's father in 1914. They have transformed the farm from a commercial orchard and dairy to one that is more sustainable by diversifying the crops they grow and using organic methods to improve the ecosystem health.

**SIZE**  
270 acres owned, 100 cultivated

**GROWS AND RAISES**  
NOFA-NY Farmer's Pledge orchard fruit, Red Tomato Eco Apples, vegetables, and pasture-raised eggs.

**AT GREENMARKET**  
Year-round

**FARM VISITS**  
We welcome visitors on the farm. Visit our website for more information.

**FISHKILL FARMS**

**HOPEWELL JUNCTION, NY  
DUTCHESS COUNTY**

"Good farming makes the world a better place; it allows us to produce food that is safer, healthier, and more delicious!"

f /fishkillfarms  
t @fishkillfarms  
www.fishkillfarms.com

Greenmarket, a program of GrowNYC, promotes regional agriculture and ensures a continuing supply of fresh, local produce for New Yorkers. Greenmarket supports farmers and preserves farmland for the future by providing regional small family farmers with opportunities to sell their fruits, vegetables and other farm products to New Yorkers.  
**WWW.GROWNYC.ORG**

*Fishkill Farms signage at Grow NYC's markets helps customers feel confident about where their food is coming from.*

Here are some things you could consider when conducting a market inspection on a farm:

**1. Before You Go**

*Observe that vendor's table for a few weeks to see what they are bringing on a regular basis.*

*Do you have a crop plan for that farm? This is a tool to help the farmer let you know what they are planning to bring to market over the course of the season (weather dependent).*

**2. When You're on the Farm**

*Reassure the farmer that all information will be held in strict confidence.*

*Bring the crop plan and also your notes and observations of their market table contents over the season thus far.*

*Ask the farmer how their season is going, have they experienced any unexpected production issues?*

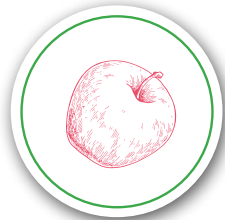
*Look in their fields for evidence of the plants or livestock related to what you have seen on their table.*

If you don't see something you expected to see (i.e. farmer has been bringing tomatoes to market and it is still too early in the season, yet you don't see a greenhouse or high tunnel), ask in a non-confrontational way the source of the tomatoes.

If you do not have a market integrity and standards program, then you do not have anything to hold up when asking a farmer to discontinue a certain action. In the example of the "early" tomatoes, without a written integrity policy, it would be far more difficult to ask the farm to stop selling the Canadian tomatoes or to label them as such.

At its core, a market inspection is a way to match up what you see on a vendor's market table with what is being grown, raised, or produced by the vendor. Remember that a market inspection is just one resource in your toolbox as a manager. But it is a critical tool when trying to maintain customer confidence in your market and your farmers.

**SEE IT IN ACTION** To learn more about GrowNYC's farmer integrity and standards program, visit GrowNYC: <https://www.grownyc.org/greenmarket>



# MARKET LAYOUT AND THE 3 Ps

## SITUATION: CUSTOMERS CRAVE CONVENIENCE, CLARITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Imagine you are a casual farmers market shopper...you are visiting the market less frequently than last year. Your primary reason is that you feel the market is not convenient. You don't want to engage in lengthy conversations with vendors about products. You want to know what the product is, how much it costs, make your purchase, and be on your way.

Finally, you are interested in sustainable packaging. As more focus is being put on the impact of plastics on the environment, and zero-waste becomes increasingly more important, you believe farmers markets should be at the forefront of this issue. So how does a market position itself to a casual customer like you, in an effort to boost your visits and spend?

## SOLUTION: THE 3 PS OF FARMERS MARKETS...PRICE, PRODUCT, PACKAGING

*Clearly Display All Product Prices, Organize Products Efficiently, and Encourage Minimal Packaging.*

**The 2018 SARE Consumer Survey suggested that for farmers market flagbearers and casual shoppers, minimal packaging is ranked in their top 10 important characteristics at a farmers market. It was #4 for the flagbearers, and #7 for casual shoppers.**

By encouraging your vendors to implement minimal packaging for their products, your market has a chance to convert some percentage of casual shoppers to farmers market flagbearers. Some examples of minimal packaging are:

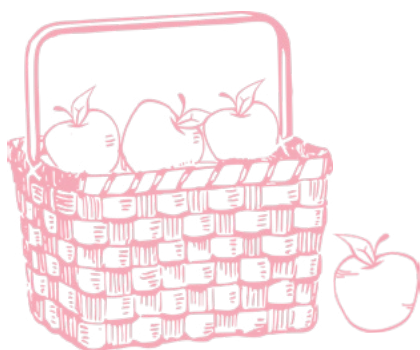
- Produce in baskets or stacked: In this way, shoppers can then choose which ones they would like and if they brought their own bags or baskets they can carry it out that way.
- Pre-packaged items, such as bread, in paper - not plastic - sleeves
- Items sold in bulk such as apples, potatoes, and bunched carrots

If your market is looking to encourage casual shoppers to increase their farmers market purchases, and convert any of the non-market shoppers, having prices clearly displayed and products more efficiently organized is a must.

The 2018 SARE Consumer Survey showed consumers had very strong opinions on these issues. In fact, inadequate signage and lack of pricing were a genuine source of irritation and rejection of farmers market shopping.

Consumers do not want to have to ask prices of products (perhaps due to a language barrier, time constraints, or not wanting to appear "stupid"). If they do have to ask, they often feel pressured to purchase that item. This may lead to a negative experience and not a repeat customer at that market.

The survey also confirms that casual market shoppers understand that they may not be able to get all their purchases at the farmers market. But efficient organization of the market layout and placement of vendors, along with prices being clearly displayed means they can complete their shopping faster and move onto their next errand. These simple adjustments to market policies and practices can influence casual shoppers to increase their frequency of market shopping and encourage non-market shoppers to test-shop the market.



Fresh Local Apples \$1.50/Pound

## SUPPORT: HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE 3 PS

### Smart Packaging

Some states, including New York State, will be banning plastic shopping bags starting in March 2020. Many farmers market vendors are using these for customer purchases. This could be a great opportunity for a community partnership, or sponsorship, to purchase reusable market bags for customers.

In addition, the Food Safety Modernization Act will dictate some packaging options, particularly on reuse of packaging, such as pulp containers. This is an opportunity to review your farmers' packaging choices to bring them into compliance.

Packaging can also apply to how products are being displayed. Vendors should be encouraged to, when possible, find environmentally friendly ways to display products. Examples include:

- For displays: stacking products or using baskets and other display materials that are made with natural products
- Eliminating clamshell containers
- Bulk items, such as apples, beets, carrots and squash, in cardboard boxes or heavy duty paper bags

### Clear Pricing and Information on Signage

In general, customers at a farmers market do not want to ask basic questions about products on a farmers market table. These could include:

- What is this?
- How much does it cost?
- How is it being sold? (weight/volume/per-item)
- Where was it grown? (if not being sold by the producer)

If a customer feels the need to ask too many questions to complete a purchase they may move onto the next vendor. Vendors should take into account that customers only spend a few seconds to find the information they are looking for before going to the next stall. To alleviate this, a market should consider ways to encourage better signage with their vendors. One method is to help vendors create easy-to-update signs for products which answer the simple questions above. These could include:

- Pre-printed signs put into a plastic sleeves or laminated, that can be written on with erasable markers
- Simple clip-art photos with the item and then, in large font, the name of the product and some suggested culinary uses
- Standardized signage with key information about the vendor (names, location, production practices, mission)



#### SEE IT IN ACTION

To learn more about CISA and their Be a Local Hero program, visit: <https://www.buylocalfood.org/resources-for-farmers/local-hero-program/>



The "Be a Local Hero" campaign in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts (Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties), run by CISA, has developed a series of signage for farmers and vendors to use.

Farmers can use these signs for prices and other general information. The "Be a Local Hero" logo on the signs conveys to customers that the product is local: grown in Western Massachusetts.

## Efficient Organization of Products at the Market

There is a certain percentage of farmers market shoppers who are coming for the “market experience,” spending time perusing the many stalls in the market and talking with farmers and neighbors. But many shoppers are looking for more efficient use of their time shopping at the market. They want to get in, make their purchases, and get out again quickly.

Farmers markets can help to provide for this need in several ways:

- 1. Create a map of your market** and designate who accepts certain currencies/ incentives, as well as the types of products that each vendor brings to the farmers market
- 2. Lay out the market** in a way which encourages people to move through the market to purchase all their items where they can enter/exit either in the same place, or at opposite ends of the market
- 3. Offer pre-sales of market items** through an online portal. For tips on how to do this, see [Bringing Convenience to the Farmers Market \(Page 41\)](#).
- 4. Work to encourage partnerships** between complementary farms for “boxes” of pre-determined items, for example, pairing a farmer with sweet corn and a dairy farmer selling butter

The map for the Troy Waterfront Market in Troy, New York includes helpful color coding. See the map at: <https://www.TroyMarket.org/Map>

Markets like the Downtown Syracuse Farmers' Market are making shopping more convenient with vendor maps. Each number on this map corresponds with the vendor and what products they sell.

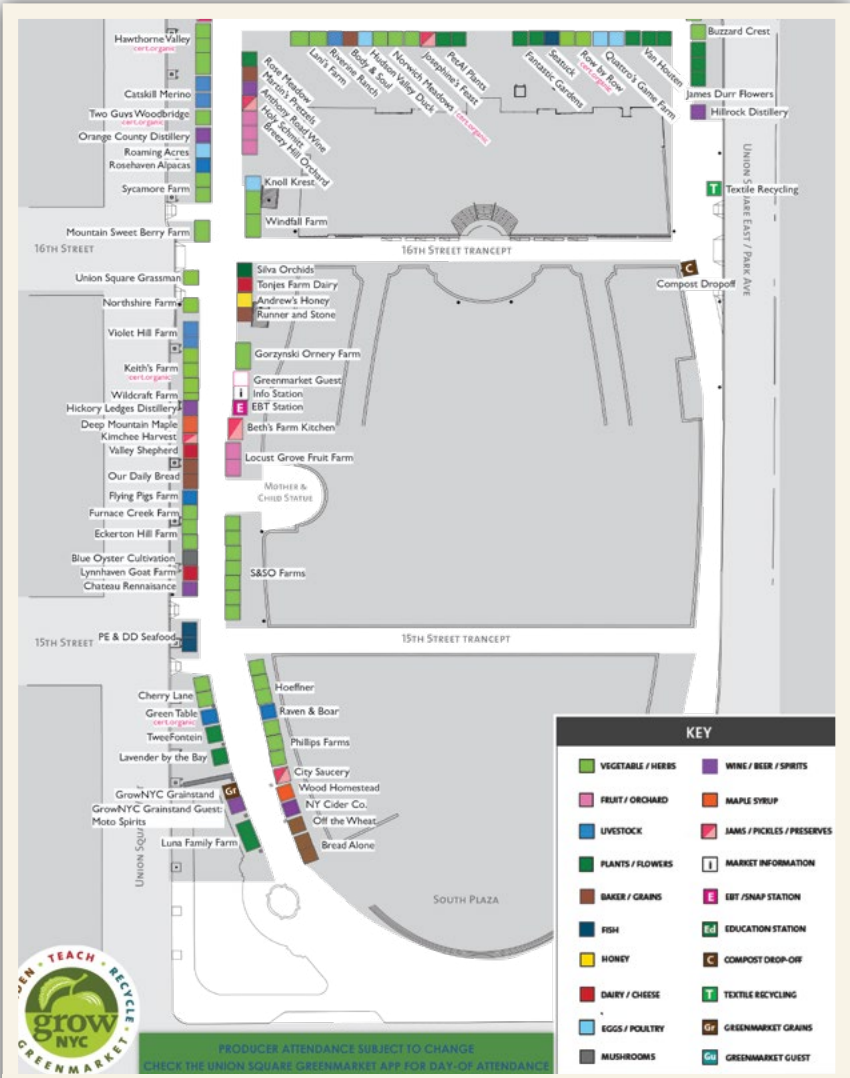




SEE IT IN ACTION

**LEFT:** GrowNYC created signage for each vendor in the market to help customers learn more about the farms, including their location and growing practices. Each vendor posts their sign at their booth each market day.

**BOTTOM:** GrowNYC produced a map for the NYC Greenmarket at Union Square. View the map in detail at: <https://www.grownyc.org/files/gmkt/usqmaps/unsq-sat.pdf>



Check out this color-coded map of Grow NYC's Union Square Market. Note the inclusion of nearby streets on this excellent example of a farmers market map.

★  
SINCE  
2005

**MIKE BETIT**  
has been raising pigs on pasture since 2001. Amanda Andrews joined the farm in 2010. Overtime, the farm has shifted focus from raising pastured livestock to producing organic vegetables, harvested at the peak of flavor. No matter what they are producing, Mike and Amanda maintain a focus on environmental stewardship.

**GROWS & RAISES**  
NOFA Certified Organic vegetables and pasture-raised laying hens.

**SIZE**  
20 acres

**AT GREENMARKET**  
Year-round

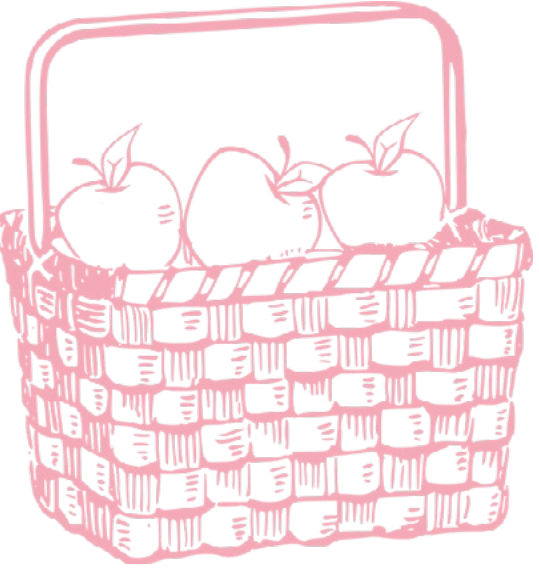
**TAMARACK HOLLOW FARM**  
PLAINFIELD, VT  
WASHINGTON COUNTY

"I enjoy the connection with the animals and the land. I love that my children will be raised with a sense of inter-connectedness and responsibility for their future."

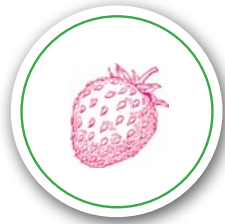
[www.tamarackhollowfarm.com](https://www.tamarackhollowfarm.com)

Greenmarket, a program of GrowNYC, promotes regional agriculture and ensures a continuing supply of fresh, local produce for New Yorkers. Greenmarket supports farmers and preserves farmland for the future by providing regional small family farmers with opportunities to sell their fruits, vegetables, and other farm products to New Yorkers.

[WWW.GROWNVC.ORG](http://WWW.GROWNVC.ORG)



Tamarack Hollow Farm signage at Grow NYC's markets.



# MEETING CUSTOMER NEEDS

## SITUATION: EVERY SHOPPER WANTS TO FEEL LIKE A VIP

Put yourself in the shoes of the casual market shopper. They want the market to be at a time and location that is convenient to them. They want it to carry every possible product so that multiple shopping stops are not required. They want to get in and out quickly. And finally, they want to feel as though they are “the market VIP” every time they shop.

The best chance of enticing a casual shopper to visit your market on a more regular basis is by creating an atmosphere where they feel appreciated and that the farmers market is adapting to their needs and wants. But, as a market manager, it can seem like an almost impossible feat to try and be all things to all people.

This being said, there are some ways that market managers can learn and understand community needs and adapt their market, to offer the best possible shopping experience.

## SOLUTION 1: MATCHING MARKET DAYS/HOURS TO COMMUNITY AVAILABILITY

Everyone wants their farmers market on a Saturday morning. They want local, organic fruits and vegetables, sustainably raised meats, eggs from free-roaming chickens, and apple pies that look like they came straight from grandma’s oven.

This is, of course, an oversimplification, but it drives home the point that if we want to try to convert the casual market shopper to a flagbearer we need to be thinking about what drives their purchasing habits.

There are easy ways to gather this information. The first step is conducting what is called a “dot survey” at the market. This is where you pose a few simple questions where market shoppers can interact with the questions but don’t need to actually speak with you. Under these circumstances, sometimes you can get more honest feedback.

The second step is a *Rapid Market Assessment*, or RMA. An RMA using outside peers, or community members, to assess three categories of your market:

- **Physical characteristics of the market site:** access, flow of people and traffic, liability issues, and organization.
- **Vendor and products:** product mix, product quality, signage, display, and customer service.
- **Market atmosphere:** the “feel” of the market, shopper demographics, interactions and conversations, and educational and community activities.

To conduct a dot survey as part of your RMA, do the following:

- **Create up to four open-ended questions** for your customers to answer. For help in creating questions, view “Tools for RMA” from the Oregon Small Farms Program: <http://nyfarmersmarket.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/toolsforRMA.pdf>
- **Place the questions on easel pads** with dot stickers.
- **Make sure to “seed” the questions** by writing in some answers already so customers don’t feel like they are the first ones to answer.
- **You can gather great qualitative data** on your customers, including where they are coming from, how much they are spending at the market, if they see your advertising, and products they’d like to see at market.



Colorful Responses to a Dot Survey at the State Center Farmers Market. Photo by the Maryland Farmers Market Assoc.



Using Dot Surveys at the State Center Farmers Market to “hear” from customers. Photo by Maryland Farmers Market Assoc.

RMA's are a great way to get qualitative data from your customers with little energy and time from you to conduct in-person surveys. They are also a great way to get engagement from community partners, or those looking to volunteer time at the market.

This process helps give you, as a market manager, a more informed perspective as to what the market shopper is experiencing at your market. Then you can make adjustments accordingly to enhance their experience and (hopefully) increase their shopping.

### SUPPORT: PREPARING FOR SURVEYS

You will also want to set aside funds for materials to conduct the dot surveys, as well as perhaps offer a stipend to those community members who helped you conduct the Rapid Market Assessment.

### SOLUTION 2: MAKE THE MARKET AS FUN AS POSSIBLE...UNLIKE THE CHORE OF SUPERMARKET SHOPPING

While some people find going to the grocery store relaxing, for many it is a mad dash to get a cart, push through aisles, hope the produce isn't picked over, and that your child's favorite cereal isn't sold out.

There are some characteristics from supermarkets that you can bring to your farmers market to enhance the shopping experience for the casual shopper and encourage them to stay longer and enjoy the market atmosphere. These include:

- **Creating a market map** which illustrates vendor locations, types of products they sell, and what benefits are accepted. For examples of market maps, see [Market Layout and the 3 Ps \(Pages 56-57\)](#).
- **Offering a carry-to-car service** to encourage larger purchases and assist those with mobility issues.
- **Working with vendors who produce popular items** to help ensure availability throughout the market day so those who aren't able to arrive right at market opening won't be disappointed

### SOLUTION 3: CREATE A COMMUNITY-FOCUSED, FAMILY-FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

A welcoming atmosphere can encourage casual shoppers who might be nervous about attending a market to shop because they have younger children, or are unfamiliar with the market. Here's how to create that atmosphere:

- **Background music:** Not a full-fledged concert, perhaps a busker program instead! This can be a great way to partner with local musicians, arts councils, and middle or high schools
- **Chalk sidewalk art:** The South Wedge Farmers Market in Rochester, NY runs a program encouraging sidewalk chalk art at the market. This is a great way to invite families to come to the market and allow for creativity
- **Walk with the Doc:** The South Wedge Farmers Market also charted out one-mile routes which begin and end at the market. On certain market days, a doctor leads a walk and answers health questions along the way
- **Market Ambassador:** Many farmers markets partner with their local Cooperative Extension's Nutrition Program and have a nutrition educator present at the market to welcome low-income families, walk them through the market, introduce them to vendors, and help menu plan. Some markets incorporate a Market Ambassador program into their market. To learn more, see [Building Market Programs for All Shoppers \(Page 35\)](#).



**SEE IT IN ACTION**

To learn more about programs at the South Wedge Farmers Market, visit: <http://swpc.org/community/sw-farmers-market/>

## SOLUTION 4: MAKING CUSTOMERS FEEL APPRECIATED FOR SHOPPING AT THE MARKET

Everyone wants to feel appreciated, and farmers market customers are no different. Customer appreciation days are one way to demonstrate that. This could include deals and specials that vendors run. Or maybe you can organize a market giveaway. This is also a great time to bring in community partners for health or wellness activities. Everyone loves a chair massage or a free blood pressure screening. The sky is really the limit when it comes to what partners might offer.

### SUPPORT: FUNDS FOR CUSTOMER APPRECIATION

If your market is conducting a customer appreciation day you will want to set aside some funds to support any activities for that day. It's also a great sponsorship or donation opportunity.





# PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY EVENTS

## SITUATION: A SUDDEN DROP IN CUSTOMER ATTENDANCE

Close your eyes and imagine this....it is a sunny Saturday in August. Your farmers market is full of vendors. Their booths are overflowing with fresh produce, baked goods, cheeses, local wine, and more. You have a fairly active social media presence and each week experience a steady flow of shoppers. But on this day, only the diehards show up...the shoppers who come no matter the weather, no matter if it's a holiday weekend or not.

Where are all your shoppers? The vendors are getting restless and will soon alert you of how much money they are losing today. You can't imagine what is going on. So you start asking several customers. Then you find out that a few miles away, there is community festival happening with music, heavily sponsored kids activities, giveaways, and more.

How could they do this to you? Don't they know that your market is always on this day and at this time? Why couldn't the organizers hold their event at your market? As a market manager we need to understand that there are only so many hours in a day and days in a week. While we can all be good community partners and attempt to coordinate events to the best of our ability, these incidents are bound to happen.

But good community relationships, coupled with clear communication, and a willingness to partner, are the keys to ensuring that even when these types of events occur, they can be a win-win situation.

## SOLUTION 1: OPEN, HONEST AND ONGOING COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Open, honest, and ongoing communication with those in the community who host events is the first key to success. It is by no means a silver bullet, but how would anyone know without asking or talking about their special events? As a market manager it is important that you are involved in your community. This helps in several ways:

- You are at the table to advise what the market could offer another organization's event
- When these types of discussions emerge, you can let organizations know where and when the market operates
- As market managers, you know not every event in the community is a fit with your market or market shoppers, but they could be of interest – which is why this second solution is equally important.

## SOLUTION 2: KEEP AN EYE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

If your market has a social media presence, be sure to like, or follow, other organizations in your community who may host events that appeal to a similar audience. This will keep you up to date when events occur that might potentially impact customer traffic at your market. Then you have the opportunity to reach out, and at a minimum, let the other organization know about your market. They may be able to reschedule their event, or you can utilize the following tactics.

## SOLUTION 3: LEVERAGE EACH OTHER'S EVENTS

Summer is the busiest time for community events, as well as farmers markets. Sometimes events may take place on the same days as your market, on a different part of the same day, or worse – at the same time. If you know about the potential competing event in time, you can evaluate whether you would like to approach the other event's organizers and explore two options: cross-promotion of the market and the event, and integration of event into your market.



SEE IT IN ACTION

To learn more about the Rochester Public Market's integration of the Artist's Row event, contact: [marketfriends@rochester.rr.com](mailto:marketfriends@rochester.rr.com)

## SOLUTION 4: CROSS PROMOTION

Offer to hand out materials at the market for the other event, and ask that the other event do the same. You could also both promote each other on social media, suggesting that attendees visit the market before or after going to the event (and vice versa).

This can be a great way to encourage people who may not have visited your market, but because they were encouraged by an agency that they trust, these people may give your market a try. After all, word of mouth is one of the strongest (and most trusted) marketing methods and could be the reason that both the market and the event gain attendance.

Integration can be considered if your market does not have space constraints, if the event fits in with your market's mission, and if the other event organizers are willing to be a full partner in the project. For more on what that means, let's move to Solution #5.

## SOLUTION 5: INTEGRATION OF EVENT INTO YOUR FARMERS MARKET

Let's face it...every community organization's dream is to show up at a farmers market and be able to take advantage of the built-in trust, attendance, and atmosphere that a typical farmers market provides. But this is a one-sided relationship. For successful integration of a community event into your market to work, both partners need to give (and sometimes take). Both groups must be willing to participate in planning, outreach, marketing, implementation, clean-up, and (hopefully) evaluation on how it went to see if it was successful for both groups.

Some things to consider as a market manager would be:

- How does this event fit with my market's mission statement and those we typically serve?
- Do I have space to dedicate to this event?
- What might be my potential risks for bringing this event into my market?
- Will it benefit my vendors?

It should be stated that sometimes integrating an event into your farmers market is not an option, or a reasonable solution for either party. But this is just one tool in your toolbox!

## SUPPORT: TIME AND MONEY

### Time

Planning your market each week takes time. So does working with another organization on an event. Even if it does benefit your market, you should always do a cost-benefit analysis with your time since that time could potentially be focused on other tasks.

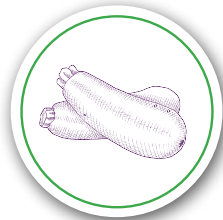
### Money

Marketing and outreach for events, partnership on events, or cross-promotion of events take resources. If you can find sponsors or outside funding to support marketing, it is a win-win for everyone. With that being said, all partners in events should be willing and able to put something into the marketing pot so everyone is invested in the success of the event.



**SEE IT IN  
ACTION**

**At the Brighton Farmers Market in Rochester, NY, all market events are sponsored and administered by local community organizations. Learn more: <https://brightonfarmersmarket.org/contact-us/>**



# TRANSPORTATION

## SITUATION: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, OR PUBLIC PARKING, IS NOT IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE MARKET

For the casual market shopper, transportation, or availability of parking, can often be a deal-breaker when it comes to attending a farmers market. Due to the location of many farmers markets - in urban centers, public parks, or public spaces - parking and/or access to public transportation can be limited.

If a shopper must determine their farmers market purchases based on how much they can carry, it may limit the amount of their purchases. This can also come into play for SNAP recipients who often must weigh whether they have the funds to pay for transportation to the market for not only themselves, but also their children if they don't have access to child care.

Some markets are set up on city streets, some in a public square, or in a parking lot that blocks public parking. While these are generally high visibility locations, non-market shoppers are not happy with the limited parking that these locations create. Other markets might be on their own property, like the Central New York Regional Market in Syracuse, NY or the Rochester Public Market in Rochester, NY, but the size of the crowds they draw each market days significantly exceeds the amount of parking available.

Farmers market flagbearers are not intimidated by the lack of parking. Rather, they are intent on accessing the high quality foods from local growers and will find a way to get to the market. But to encourage non-market shoppers, markets need to find a way to overcome the obstacles of parking and access to encourage their market participation.

## SOLUTION 1: VEGGIE VALETS

When customers have their arms loaded with the foods they have purchased at the markets, the long walk back to the car is daunting. It may have even prevented them from buying more or from buying bulk products. But the Veggie Valet can help overcome their reluctance.

The Veggie Valet, first encountered at San Francisco's Ferry Plaza Market, provides volunteers and wagons to help consumers get their packages to their cars. Customers are able to borrow a wagon or a volunteer can pull the wagon to the customer's car for them. A small charge can be added for the use, or a donation accepted to help offset any costs. Often, volunteer attendees at the Veggie Valet booth will hold packages for customers to allow them to continue shopping. Then when they are done with all their purchasing, they can collect their packages and use a wagon to haul their market finds to their car. A convenient and helpful customer service that encourages market shopping.

### Resources Needed: Funding the Wagons

Yes, a market will need to maintain a fleet of wagons. Funding them out of a market's shoestring budget can be difficult. But there are other options to try. Can you convince a local store; i.e. Tractor Supply, local feed store or garden

seed suppliers; to sponsor the project and supply the wagons you need? Give them credit for their donation by adding their name and logo to signage on each wagon. Also, local banks are always looking to support local endeavors with donations. They may donate the cost of your fleet, again, with credit for their donation.

**greentopia** | GREEN VISIONS  
Growing Healthy Futures

# VEGGIE VALET

**FREE SATURDAY SERVICE  
JUNE-SEPTEMBER  
8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

Veggie Valet volunteers can hold your Market goods while you go back for more, and can help you haul them back to your vehicle, bike, bus stop!

You can find the Veggie Valet check stand and helpers near the Market Office (brick house). Look for the Veggie Valet tent and yellow shirts!

Veggie Valet volunteers are from the Green Visions Program of Greentopia.  
[www.greentopia.org/green-visions](http://www.greentopia.org/green-visions)

*Promoting Veggie Valet and the program sponsor at the Rochester Public Market.*

The Veggie Valet program can be added to your Volunteer Program agenda, providing the bodies needed to maintain the program each market day. Be sure your volunteers are well trained in customer service and always have a smile on their face. Let them keep any tips they may get and be sure to show your appreciation for their effort.

Create a policy on how your Veggie Valet program will work to ensure proper usage, the wagons are not abused, and each wagon is promptly returned after each use. Share the policy with your volunteers and post it at the Veggie Valet booth so your customers are aware of the policy of use.

Then promote the Veggie Valet as available, low- or no-cost, and a fun way to shop the market when parking is limited.

## SOLUTION 2: EXPLORE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Many farmers markets do not have public transportation nearby, or simply do not have enough parking available to turn over their spots in a timely fashion to accommodate their customers. There are a few opportunities that could be explored by your farmers market if this is the case:

- 1. Contact the local public transportation office** and ask if they are willing to add a weekly stop to their route.
  - Oftentimes they may simply not be aware of the need or demand. This is not something that is being asked as a free service. Riders would be paying the regular fare.
  - Explain that you are asking for a season-long commitment – it will take time for outreach and publicity to encourage people to take advantage of this new opportunity.
  - This can also be transportation for local college students. Many college students live off-campus, or have access to kitchens in their living quarters. They are often attracted to the vegan/vegetarian lifestyle and like to cook from scratch with local, in-season items. They often also have disposable income or may have SNAP benefits that can be used at the farmers market. Working with college transportation may be a great opportunity to convert that group from casual shoppers (when the family comes to town for parents weekend) to market flagbearers.
- 2. Connect with community partners**, such as community centers, senior centers, and housing authorities. They already have relationships with the people you want to shop at the farmers market on a more regular basis and can add to the services the organization offers their constituents.
- 3. Rent a bus to make weekly runs from key community stops**, such as low income apartments, senior centers, community centers, to bring shoppers to the market. While this may take significant funding, it is an opportunity to seek partners and sponsors to help make this option possible. Be sure that you have added this program to your liability insurance. Should an accident of any kind happen while under the market's watch, having insurance will help cover any lawsuits or liability issues that occur as a result.
- 4. Contact local food delivery service companies** like Uber or InstaCart. This might be an opportunity for your farmers market, depending on the UberEats network in your area and also where potential customers are located. Ensure that delivery services in your area will work with fresh produce and a menu of foods that changes frequently.
- 5. Encourage ride sharing of market patrons.**
- 6. If all else fails...can you bring the market to the people?** Mobile markets are becoming more popular throughout the country. Learn more by viewing [Bringing Convenience to the Farmers Market \(Page 39\)](#).



*Veggie Valet wagons help get purchases to the customer's vehicle at the Rochester Public Market in Rochester, NY*



## SUPPORT: FUNDING AND MEETING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### Funds to Create Publicity Materials

In order to get out the word about any of these transportation options, you will need to be doing outreach. Whether it is fliers or social media, without funding behind it, it won't get off the ground. Having a set amount of money available to help with printing fliers, or boosting social media posts is really the only way that enough momentum can be created. For funding, could you approach a local business to sponsor the new transportation initiative? In return, you could offer them free booth space at your market.



Catch a ride on the convenient Market Trolley at the Rochester Public Market

### Time to Meet with Transportation/Community Partners Multiple Times

Planning and creating a transportation route is not as easy as we would like to think. In order for this to be successful, someone must have the time to meet multiple times with transportation officials, or community partners. Together, these different entities will need to plan out how a route will work in comparison to market times, where will it drop off and pick up patrons, and how frequently it will run during a market day. Will it be each market day, or just a few times a month? All of this takes time, so you will need to begin the process months in advance to allow for both planning and implementation.

### Funds to Support Transportation

If possible, it is nice to be able to offset the cost of transportation to encourage this opportunity. Can you talk to a local bank or health insurance

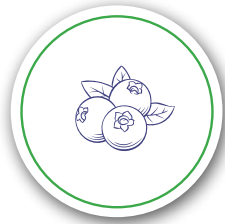
company to offer some funds to partially pay for transportation costs? If your market is close enough to other stops the bus, or van, is already making this may not be as much of an issue. As mentioned earlier, if you are asking for funds, be prepared to offer the funder something in return, such as promoting their business or organization at your market.



### SEE IT IN ACTION

Learn about the transportation partnership between Binghamton University and the Broome County Regional Market in Binghamton, NY. Contact the market manager, Amy Willis at [aw738@cornell.edu](mailto:aw738@cornell.edu)





# VENDOR DIVERSITY

## SITUATION: TOO SMALL A MARKET TO DRAW CUSTOMERS

Many small farmers markets have a difficult time gaining traction within their community. Too few farmers have signed on to participate in the market, unsure if they will make enough sales to justify their time and travel from the farm. While some customers in the community come to the market on a weekly basis, there just aren't enough shoppers to sustain the market nor to allow for growth. What are the issues that are preventing the market from taking hold in the community?

While it is important to look at all aspects of the market, a key deficiency at farmers markets, especially start-up markets, is that of vendor diversity. Customers prefer a full market, a diverse product line, as well as multiple vendors and farmers. If you lack a good mix of products and farmers, it will be difficult to both sustain and grow the market.

A mix of products should include multiple product lines. Fruits and vegetables, a variety of meats, cheeses, dairy products, baked goods, and other farm products. Processed foods, such as sauces, jams and jellies, pickles, and salsas are also a draw. Cut flower bouquets, wines, maple, and honey products are also a draw for customer participation. It's sometimes difficult to find vendors to populate your market for all these products, but they are out there if you know where to look or you can find alternative methods of bringing those products into the market.

## SOLUTION: VENDOR OUTREACH

You will need to assess the products that are missing or are in short supply at your market. A simple walk through your market will give you a pretty good idea of your needs. But to be sure, you may want to conduct some consumer surveys to learn what your customers are looking for. A Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) is an easy method to gather this information. The colorful dots on easel pads often draws the attention of customers at the market. An invitation to participate is welcome since it ensures your customers that you want their input. Customers then provide responses to your question on what products they would like to see at the market. To access instructions and further resources for conducting an RMA, see [Meeting Customer Needs \(Page 58\)](#).

### Cooperative Extension Resources

Once you know which products you want to include in your market, begin outreach efforts to find producers. Your county or regional Cooperative Extension office may help you identify producers of the products you are seeking and may know many farms that are looking for new sales outlets. They work with producers on a daily basis and can point out those farmers that you can invite to your market. They may make contact on your behalf, or provide you with contact information. They may also be able to help you prepare the sales message that will encourage the farm to participate in your market. NOTE: If you are a farmers market manager in Massachusetts, contact the Massachusetts Coalition for Local Food and Farms at <https://www.localfoodma.org/> for assistance with the items listed above.

### Producer Groups

Producer groups may also help you find farmers to invite to your market. For example, in New York State, the Small Scale Processors Association can identify a number of processors that can, jam, freeze or pickle farm products and would likely be happy to participate in a farmers market. Vegetable grower associations, beef producers, and organic farming associations exist in most states. A Google search will help you locate those organizations where you can find a listing of their members online or through a phone call to the organization. It is then up to you to invite those producers to your market.



## Inviting Producers to Your Market

Be sure your invitation includes key information that producers need to make the decision to participate in your market, such as:

- cost of participation
- requirements of participation, i.e. insurance requirements, licensing or permits needed
- market community demographics
- current customer counts
- marketing and promotion efforts by the market
- season, day and time of market



Vendors provide wholesale products to the Country Store at the Clarence Hollow Farmers Market.

If your invitation can show the producers the benefit to their business by participating in your market, you are sure to get positive results.

But, if the farmers and producers cannot physically participate, can you find alternative ways to bring their products to your market?

This will be particularly important to markets with a small customer base. Some farmers and producers will find that their physical participation is not justified, yet they would like to support your market and obtain additional sales.

In this situation, you may want to consider something similar to the Country Store at the Clarence Hollow Farmers Market, see it in action in the box below!



### SEE IT IN ACTION

To learn more about the Country Store at Clarence Hollow Farmers Market, visit: <http://www.clarencefarmersmarket.com/about.html>

The Clarence Hollow Farmers Market has created an in-market Country Store. This allows farmers and producers to have their products in the market, without them having to be there themselves. The market purchases the product at wholesale and offers the product in the country store. The market mans the store and sells the product for the farmer at retail value. The market then keeps the profit to cover their costs and add to their revenues. In some cases, the market sells the product on behalf of the farmer/producer on a consignment basis. That way the product is sold before the market has to pay for it.

As the market grows their customer base, farmers and producers with product in the Country Store may find that their sales suggest they should be attending the market themselves. It's a win – win – win. The market increases its product diversity, customers have access to more products, and farmers can generate additional sales and/or test the opportunities at the market before committing to physical participation.

## SITUATION: THE AGE OLD BATTLE...FOOD TRUCKS VERSUS FROZEN MEAT AND FRESH EGGS?

Imagine it's a sunny Tuesday morning at your weekday market. Your lunch rush is a few hours away, but today you are trying new vendors. Some customers have asked if you could have a food truck or two so they could purchase lunch before or after market shopping. You have not allowed this in the past because of lack of space, but this year you secured an additional block from the city - and you're bringing in the food trucks...

But should a farmers market also include ready-to-eat foods? How does that image match up with the community gathering space that a typical farmers market evokes?

A farmers market is rightly viewed as a vibrant community marketplace. Because of this, market sponsors, community members, or customers, may push for inclusion of ready-to-eat items and on-site food preparation by food trucks. It is true that this can potentially bring more foot traffic to the farmers market, especially for markets operating during mealtimes. But, does the presence of those ready-to-eat items, either hot or cold, encourage additional purchases at the market that would not have happened otherwise?

The 2018 SARE Customer Survey showed that for all customer types surveyed (farmers market flagbearers, casual shoppers, and non-market shoppers), special events, entertainment, crafts and ready-to-eat food product vendors were NOT motivators in encouraging consumers to visit and shop at farmers markets. As such, it can sometimes give the flagbearers, and to a certain degree the casual shoppers, the perception that the market is now positioning itself for out-of-towners, as opposed to the community.

There was also a feeling that these ready-to-eat vendors may distract from the core products at a farmers market (fresh produce, baked goods, meats, eggs, and dairy products, for example) and take away the amount consumers have to spend on those core products, as well as making it difficult to shop. These difficulties include noise (both for the vendors to interact with customers, and customers to hear), space, and a carnival-like atmosphere. Some markets resolve this issue by requiring that prepared food vendors use local ingredients in their menu items. This enhances the local food component of a farmers market and benefits the participating farmers with increased sales of their foods by the prepared food vendor.

It is important to weigh the impacts that prepared food vendors will have on the market. Balance the positive and negative aspects to determine whether your market should permit prepared food vendors.

## SOLUTION: SPECIAL EVENTS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

If your market is interested in integrating ready-to-eat foods, or food trucks, one option is to plan a few special events, or festivals. This can help accomplish several goals:

- It will help you better understand what the support would be from both your core group of customers, as well as vendors, for something that may become more long-term
- It can help you start to build a roster of potential ready-to-eat vendors. It is best to start with local restaurants, caterers, and chefs who support the local movement



### SEE IT IN ACTION

The Rochester Public Market in New York holds a food truck rodeo. Learn more at: <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/foodtruckrodeo/>

Some things to consider when thinking about incorporating ready-to-eat foods are space constraints at your market, access to electricity, and current waste management policies and procedures. Depending on market location, you may also need to consider local zoning laws and whether you must request a special event permit. This can be especially helpful if you are anticipating larger crowds attending. A permit may help alleviate, or at least identify, potential parking situations, trash pick-up, and security as these issues will need to be addressed as part of your permit application.

Finally, if the market is in an area with locally owned restaurants, coffee shops, and bakeries...approach them! This can accomplish two things. First, they may be interested in participating! Second, if at a minimum they are made aware of what is being planned, then they won't be caught off-guard when it happens and then have a perception of unfair competition.

You should compare these considerations against what you believe ready-to-eat foods can add to your market. If your market is held during a traditional mealtime, after work hours, for example, then having ready to eat foods makes it easier for shoppers to visit your market rather than having to rush home to prepare a meal. They can eat at the market or bring home their meal.

If the food truck uses local ingredients, this could mean an additional source of sales for your farmers; as well as showcasing delicious meals made from local ingredients for your shoppers.

## SUPPORT: PLACEMENT, POWER, AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

### Where Will You Put These One-Time Vendors?

What is the current capacity of your market in relation to your space? If you are already at capacity, or close to it, how would you design a layout to include these additional vendors? One thing to consider is that if a vendor is bringing a food truck, they often take up 2-3 times the amount of space as a traditional vendor. And if this is not on an on-going basis, does your market have the ability to contract and grow as necessary?

One example of this was at the Central NY Regional Market Authority in Syracuse, New York. Once they started to allow food trucks and other ready-to-eat food items at the market they encountered greater space overlaps between vendor spaces. Customers would form lines for the food vendor that would bleed into the more traditional farmers market vendor stall located next door. The long lines, snaking in front of their neighboring stall, hampered access to vendors' products and significantly reduced their sales. In order to resolve this, the market required the food vendors to purchase an additional space next to their own for customer lines to form.

### Power Needs

What are the current power needs at your market? Often ready-to-eat food vendors will have certain power requirements if they are cooking food, or keeping it cold. Generators are often the power source of choice, but evidence has shown that for both shoppers and fellow vendors the noise can be a distraction from sales. Sometimes propane can be an option so it should be considered. This will require some safety precautions, however. The propane tanks will need to be secured so they do not tip over, potentially causing an explosion.

### Waste Management Strategies

What are your current waste management needs? Who handles the garbage for your market? If you incorporate ready-to-eat foods you will want to consider the potential additional waste that will be created, and how it will be disposed of. If your market is located in a municipal area, this will need to be a conversation with their division of solid waste, or similar department. If you are not covered by a municipal waste management system you will need to incorporate the handling of the waste in the food truck or ready-to-eat vendor contract. Otherwise the additional waste will become the market's problem to deal with.



**SEE IT IN ACTION**

The Delmar Farmers Market in the Albany, NY area..... Learn more by contacting the market: [info@delmarmarket.org](mailto:info@delmarmarket.org)



# FROM THE FARMER'S PERSPECTIVE

## A NOTE ABOUT THIS SPECIAL SECTION...JUST FOR FARMERS

While farmers market managers and their team are responsible for bringing a customer base to the market, it is the role of the farmer to turn those customers into buyers for their farm. By understanding the habits, needs, and trends of the customers within their market footprint, farmers can adjust their practices to grow their sales at farmers markets.

## SITUATION: YOUR COMPETITORS ARE NOT OTHER VENDORS

The vendors in the market are not the direct competition. They are your partners in bringing people to the market. Together, vendors can make the market experience a positive one that draws customers back each week and gets them talking about the market to coworkers, friends, and family.

The competitor is the supermarket and other retail venues that draw consumers by the thousands. These retailers have convenience, selection, customer service, and price all wrapped up in a pretty package. How can we compete with that?

Supermarkets have long acknowledged the threat that farmers markets make to their sales and profits. Their displays began to look more and more like a farmers market, signage was redone to look homespun and "local" became a major focus. But now, the tables have been reversed. Farmers markets are now threatened by supermarkets as they take over the local food movement. But we can fight back using the following solutions.

## SOLUTION 1: TAKE CUSTOMER SERVICE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Supermarkets have mastered customer service. They direct consumers to the products they want, offer carryout service to help people bring purchases to their car, and many now take orders online then ready purchases for pick up.

### Follow the supermarket's lead. Excel at customer service!

- 1. Keep them in the loop.** Let your customers know what new products are coming to market and take orders. Let regular customers sleep in, knowing you won't sell out before they get there because you reserved product.
- 2. Lend a helping hand.** Supermarkets have shopping carts. Farmers market shoppers have just their two hands. Offer to hold heavy packages until they're done with their market shopping for pick up on the way out. Offer to load packages in their car for them. Some people just can't lift a box of winter squash or a bushel of apples. This will increase the amount of product the customer can buy, and you win a customer service award and a loyal customer!
- 3. Greet customers.** One way to draw people to your table is to engage them. At 10 feet from the table, make eye contact. At 4 feet, verbally greet them. This makes it hard for people to just walk by when you have caught their eye and their attention. But don't use a sales pitch as the 2018 SARE Consumer Survey shows that customers are turned off by a sales pitch. Make it a conversation and you are more likely to get a positive reaction. Now close the sale, and don't forget the upsell in a way that shows your interest in their well-being, rather than in your own profits. "Don't forget the basil to go with those tomatoes. It makes your sauce/sandwich so much better tasting."
- 4. Get to know your customers.** Remember their names and greet them by name when they approach you. They will feel welcome and reward you with greater loyalty.
- 5. Learn your customers' shopping habits.** Do you remember they buy cucumbers every week? If you do, then hold some for them when cucumbers start to get scarce. Or ask them how the cucumber salad they made last week tasted or what new ways they are using your cucumbers. Supermarkets can be customer friendly, but no supermarket will go so far as to learn their shoppers buying habits without the benefit of computer programs that electronically track purchases. Most customers would prefer human interaction over computer tracking any day.

## SOLUTION 2: PERSONAL APPEARANCE MATTERS

Have you noticed that employees in supermarkets have a uniform appearance? A store apron or shirt, name tags, or visors? That's not a coincidence. When employees stand out, consumers know who to go to for questions and assistance.

Follow the lead of these retailers. No, not a uniform, per se. But a uniform look. What if you and your sales staff all wore the same polo shirts with your farm logo, or a cap with your farm logo? This sets you apart from vendors, and makes you look professional. That professional look builds your credibility in the eyes of consumers. The answers you give to questions, and advice you give for using products you are selling becomes more real and believable to your customers.

It is also important to be neat and clean. Yes, you were in the field harvesting your beets before you came to market, but your customer prefers that you have cleaned your body and clothing from field dirt and debris. No one wants to buy food from someone with dirty hands, hair, and clothing.

In addition to cleanliness, be sure you are not eating or smoking when waiting on your customers. If you must smoke or have a snack, step away from your table. When you are ready to come back, wash your hands first.

## SOLUTION 3: DISPLAY SMARTER

Supermarkets have the ability to create impressive displays that draw consumers to the produce aisle. They have the funds and the time to research the best techniques and placement. But farmers have the best products – fresh, colorful and in abundance – and they are with their display throughout to keep it fresh and inviting.

**1. Build your display on levels.** Use layering to create a feeling of abundance and to draw the customer's eyes to take in all you are offering. If you can't create layers, lift the back legs of your table to create a slant. This effectively layers your table and makes customers eyes move throughout your display. A brick under the back legs is all it takes. But be sure the layers are not so high that you can't converse with your customers over the top.

**2. Your display must give the appearance of abundance,** even if you don't have a lot of any particular product. Quantity draws attention. The larger your display, the more effective it will be in drawing people to you. If you have a limited amount of any product, use smaller baskets or trays to contain small quantities of product. The smaller the container, the fuller the appearance will be.

**3. Continuously restock your display.** You want it to always look full and inviting. You must also maintain your display. Don't let your greens wilt. Keep a mister with you to keep your products looking fresh.

**4. Create eye appeal.** Mix up your colors and textures to draw customers to your table and keep their eyes moving across your display. Baskets of yellow, green and purple beans set up in a checkerboard pattern.

**5. Use your signs to help you sell.** A sign over head should state who you are and where you are from. That way customers know who they are buying from and can look for your sign to find where they bought the best apple cider they ever had. Include price signs that identify the product, a bit of information about the product and the name of the product. Not everyone knows what kohlrabi is and they are often intimidated to ask. So if your sign reads "kohlrabi," along with the price and that it makes a great slaw, customers don't have to ask what it is and may even buy it because they don't feel "stupid" when they can't identify it and now they also know what to do with it. Then engage them with your favorite way to eat it.

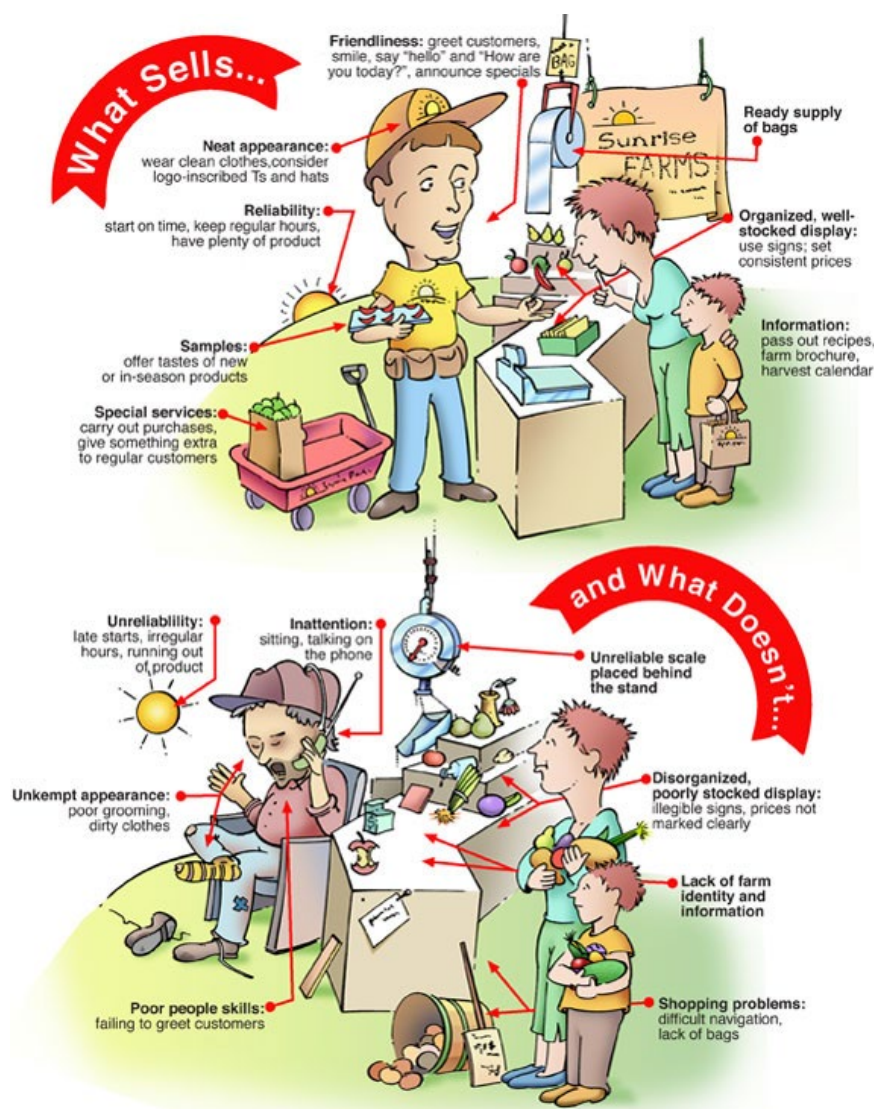
**6. Be a part of your display.** You are an important element to your display and the face of your business. Be alert and attentive so you can engage as people approach you. If you are sitting on your tailgate, texting your friends, scrolling through Facebook or talking on the phone then you are not paying attention. Customers will not interrupt you to make a purchase or make you stand up to wait on them. It means you will lose their sales and on subsequent trips to the market, they will not pay attention to you either and walk on by you to reach farmers who are attentive and ready to make the sale.

# GET SMART ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE

## TOP 5 ANNOYANCES FOR FARMERS MARKET CUSTOMERS

1. Vendors make or take phone calls while serving customers.
2. Vendors chat too long while other customers wait in line to pay.
3. Long lines at vendor stands.
4. Vendor does not acknowledge waiting customer.
5. Vendor cannot make change.

\*Courtesy University of Missouri Extension





## SOLUTION 4: ADAPT NOW, BECAUSE IT IS NO LONGER A CASH ONLY WORLD

Fewer people carry cash today. In a recent Community Merchants USA study published by Forbes Magazine, only one in four sales is done by cash. Most people use credit cards or online payment systems rather than cash. That means, as a retailer, you must also accept all forms of payment in order to get the sale. There are too many options available to you to avoid accepting payment in means other than cash. Yes, there are fees involved, but the alternative is NO sale at all.

There are benefits to accepting debit and credit beyond the convenience to your customers. By accepting debit and credit, you should find that the average size of your sales may increase. Customers are no longer restricted to the amount of cash in their pockets. A study conducted by Dun & Bradstreet shows customers are willing to spend up to 18% when using credit rather than cash. Other studies show that willingness to spend more with credit is as much as 83%! When using credit rather than cash, consumers focus more on the benefits of the product rather than the actual cost. Since the benefits of fresh, locally grown food is high, as a farmer, you should see a significant increase in your sales as a result of accepting credit.

A side benefit to using a POS system, beyond allowing your customers to use their debit/credit cards is that it offers an abundance of data. Sales data is stored for you to analyze. Tracking sales data can show you most and least popular products, allowing you to tweak your production to mimic what your customers are looking for. You can determine your average sales size to give you a benchmark to help you grow your sales – what have you done to increase sales? Did you increase your farm's use of social media? Did it generate an increase in customer purchasing? Your sales data, stored in your POS system will help you to see what has and has not worked for you. Another benefit is inventory management. The data you generate can track this for you and help you to make key decisions to maintain your farm business.

## SOLUTION 5: KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Every community is different. If you are vending at multiple farmers markets, then you have seen that the customers in each of your markets has different shopping habits based on a number of factors – age, income level, ethnicity, etc. It is incumbent on the marketer to learn the demographics of the communities where they will sell and match their products, package sizes and pricing to the community where you are selling. In a community with a diverse population, you may need to learn the traditional foods of multiple populations to reach your full community with the foods they want.

Research the holidays of your community demographics, as well. Many holidays, whether religious or traditions, center around food. If you can provide the foods that are important to these holidays, then you will find a new customer base that will be loyal to you and your farm. Don't forget to promote your products. Marketing will be a key to your success.

## SOLUTION 6: PROMOTION IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, TOO

Farmers market managers should be promoting your market to the community to help bring in a diverse customer base. But that doesn't mean they have the sole responsibility. You should make every effort to promote your farm and your presence at each of the markets you attend. The following tips should help get you started.

### At the Market

- **Offer a deal of the week:** In retail, this is known as a "loss leader." You could offer one product at a great deal, knowing you'll pull in more foot traffic - but also knowing you may take a slight loss on the product, or at least a smaller profit margin. The goal is to simply get more customers to stop and shop with you. In most cases, people do not just buy the featured "deal of the week." They'll buy more with you.
- **Reward loyalty:** It could be a simple stamp card based on how many times a customer visits you, or how much they spend over the season. Once they reach 10 visits or spend over \$100, you could reward them with a \$10 gift certificate good for their next trip to your booth at the market. Or, give them a tote or t-shirt... a reward for them that also doubles as marketing and brand awareness for you, and build their loyalty to your brand.
- **Create a tote or t-shirt:** Use these as giveaways, or sell them to customers. Feature your farm's logo and name on the t-shirt or tote. That way, your customers become walking advertisements when sporting their tote t-shirt.

- **Collect contact information:** When people are shopping with you, collect their contact details so you can stay in touch. It could be a simple sign-up sheet asking for their email address (if you will launch an email campaign) or phone number (if you want to send text alerts). Make the “ask”. Most customers won’t willingly jot down their contact information unless they know they’ll get something out of it. Actively invite customers to join your email or text program so they’re first to know about what’s in season, special events, new products, or even giveaways.

## Beyond the Market

- **Get social:** Social media is a must in today’s world. The wonderful thing is, social media is free to set up - and can be free to manage (if you’ve got the time). Start with setting up a Facebook profile for your farm. Facebook is the most-used social media platform across all age groups. It’s easy to navigate, and you can keep a boundary between your personal life and farm. Instagram is great for sharing photos and you can easily cross-post from Facebook. Help your farmers market reach more customers by sharing all of the market’s Facebook posts on your Facebook page.
- **Set up an email campaign:** As long as you have less than 1,000 emails collected, you can send professional-looking emails for free through [www.MailChimp.com](http://www.MailChimp.com). Mail Chimp is called email management software or EMS. An EMS can help you stay in compliance with federal anti-SPAM laws, guide you in creating beautifully designed emails, and even automatically remove unsubscribed people from your email list. Aim to send an email about once every 2 weeks. Include recipes, prep tips, what you’re bringing to market, and a sneak peek into life on your farm.
- **Hand out flyers and posters:** Create simple flyers and posters that feature your farm’s name, logo, and a list of what you offer - and which markets you attend. Go around town and ask local businesses if they’d set out your flyers and hang up your poster. You could also ask loyal customers to help do this (reward them with some of your products). As for printing, contact local printers or use online printer [www.VistaPrint.com](http://www.VistaPrint.com) which is very affordable: 500 full-color postcards only cost about \$125 with shipping and free design templates are available.

## SOLUTION 7: GET INVOLVED

Your farmers market is likely doing events that draw customers to the market. It is important to participate. Not only will you be doing your part to make the market event successful, but you can draw customers to your stand as well. If the market is hosting a cooking demonstration, for example, donate your products. Those who participate in the demo, watching and tasting, will seek you out after so they can make the recipes at home with the same delicious food.

Some farmers markets host online farmers markets to engage consumers all week long. This is an opportunity to sell your farm products. It is important that you participate. First, if there isn’t a variety of farmers and products on the online market, consumers will not be interested. So participating will help to ensure the success of the endeavor. Second, you are able to connect with your customers 24/7. These people will shop for your products, order them online and then come to the market to pick up, where you have another chance to sell them additional products. But it is also your chance to reach customers who may not otherwise shop at the farmers market for a variety of personal reasons. Instead, they may prefer the online shopping experience that allows them to shop at their convenience. By being a part of the online market, you can reach a whole new customer base. The effort of participating is relatively low compared to the rewards of reaching more customers and increasing your sales and profits.



### SEE IT IN ACTION

Discover more resources created to help farmers like you increase sales and customer satisfaction at your farmers market!

Grow NYC’s “Modernizing Your Farm Sales with Mobile Point of Sale Systems”  
[https://www.grownyc.org/files/email/farmroots/marketingdoc\\_v4.pdf](https://www.grownyc.org/files/email/farmroots/marketingdoc_v4.pdf)

Grow NYC’s “Understanding Customer Behavior at Farmers Markets”  
[https://issuu.com/grownyc/docs/marketingdoc\\_v4\\_hires](https://issuu.com/grownyc/docs/marketingdoc_v4_hires)

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)  
<https://www.buylocalfood.org/resources-for-farmers/>

Maryland Farmers Market Association’s “Guide to Selling at the Farmers Market”  
<https://marylandfma.org/farmers/guide/>

# FARMERS MARKET VENDOR EVALUATION TOOL

This evaluation tool can be used independently by vendors. Or, a market manager may use it to evaluate each vendor. After completing the evaluation, the manager should review their observations with the vendor, and together, they can create a plan for improvement.

	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	SUGGESTIONS
<b>OVERALL IMAGE</b>				
Overall impression is favorable – attractive, wholesome				
Neat, clean, well-organized				
<b>DISPLAY</b>				
Well organized space, no trip hazards				
If customers enter your space, entrances/exits are clearly established				
Doesn't obstruct customer traffic flow through the market				
Neat and orderly in front of and behind tables				
Power cords are taped down to prevent tripping or well overhead				
Food handling in safe and hygienic manner (per county regulations)				
Tents and/or canopies are tied down/weighted				
Display tables/materials in good repair, free of hazards to customers				
Clean and attractive table covering, does not distract from products				
Proper height/angle for customer access and interaction				
Logical grouping of products				
Layers are used to display product				
Colors and textures of products are coordinated				
Fully stocked at all times				
Clean containers, appropriately sized for products				
Tent or canopy to protect products from sun and airborne contamination				
Tent color does not distract from product being displayed				
If vehicle is within customer view, it is clean inside and out				
Vehicle secured: locked, brakes intact, no gas or other leaks				

	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	SUGGESTIONS
<b>PRODUCTS</b>				
Products clean, wholesome looking				
High quality products, with lesser quality well marked				
Products stored and displayed up off the ground				
Product and package sizing are appropriate for customer base				
Non-hazardous food segregated from potentially hazardous foods				
Foods maintained at appropriate temperatures				
Products licensed as appropriate				
Certifications are posted				
Proper labeling as required by law				
Sampling done in accordance with county regulations				
<b>PRICING</b>				
Signage clearly identifies your business name and brand				
Clear, easy to read signs that identify product and price				
If products sold by weight, using appropriately labeled and certified scales				
Taxable items identified properly				
Use of pricing strategies to promote larger sales				
If resale items, signage identifies source				
<b>CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>				
Bags available for customer use/purchase				
Holds customer packages for later pick up				
Takes orders for subsequent weeks				
Recipes available				
Sampling or demonstrations				
Customers encouraged to touch & smell products				
Business cards/farm flyers available for customers				
Learns customer names/shopping habits to build customer relationships				
Clear customer complaint policies and procedures				

	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	SUGGESTIONS
<b>PAYMENT</b>				
Accepts other forms of payment: debit/credit, SNAP and nutrition program vouchers/coupons				
Cash box or other way of collecting money secure, out of customer reach				
Money in cash box organized for efficiency				
Enough change (coins and bills) for market day				
<b>PERSONNEL</b>				
Courteous to customers				
Cheerful, friendly to all customers, no matter race, ethnicity, age, form of payment used				
Make eye contact/greet customers				
Invites sales and upsells additional products				
Standing to encourage sales				
Not distracted by cell phone, iPad, electronics, books, magazine, newspaper				
Personal appearance is neat/clean				
Informed about product, willing and able to answer questions				
Does not eat and smoke in display area				
<b>SIGNAGE</b>				
Printing is legible and large enough to be easily read				
Signs posted high enough to be seen from a distance				
Signs identify products and other information				
Signs feature farm name/logo				
Signs displayed for SNAP and other federal, state, local nutrition programs				
Banner or signage with farm name and location is prominent				
<b>PROMOTION</b>				
Farm has a website, an active Facebook, and Instagram presence				
Shares market social media posts to the farm pages				
Farm participates in market programs/events				

# DESIGN 101 GUIDE FOR FARMERS MARKETS

## DESIGN 101: CREATING GRAPHICS FOR YOUR FARMERS MARKET

If you are operating on a small budget and can't afford to hire a marketing professional or graphic designer, you'll have to create graphics yourself. This quick reference guide will provide you with tips for designing the basic marketing materials you need to promote your farmers market. This guide was created using frequently asked questions about where to turn for design and marketing support.

NOTE: It's very important that you only use photos and illustrations that are explicitly licensed for commercial use. It is illegal to use an image someone created – whether it's a photo they took, or a graphic they created – without obtaining the proper license. You cannot download images from other websites or search engines like Google without that license or permission from the creator, without potentially creating liability for your market, and for you personally.

### Q) WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT GRAPHICS I SHOULD CREATE FOR MY FARMERS MARKET?

The most important graphic to start with would be your market's logo. If there is one component of your marketing that you should leave to an expert, it should be your logo. Please refer to Chapter 1 Marketing: Branding Basics for tips on where to find logo support, even with little to no funds available.

After the logo is created, you may be able to produce the following graphics yourself, which we'll review in this guide:

- Posters/Market Signage
- Brochures/Flyers
- Social Media Graphics (Images and Videos)

### Q) WHAT KEY DETAILS SHOULD I INCLUDE IN THESE GRAPHICS?

It depends on each graphic. However, it is important that your graphics reflect your brand: your colors, fonts, style, and more. Again, refer to Branding Basics in this toolkit to take a closer look at brand components and to review examples of strong brands.

Here is a rough overview of what elements your graphics should contain to help you get started:

#### Posters/Market Signage

While a poster or market sign may be large, text and graphics should be very minimal as people are walking or driving by only have seconds to view the graphic. Here are a few best practices:

- If you'd like to print your own poster, most printers will print up to an 11x17 size. However, you can use the design programs (to be covered later in this document) to create larger posters that you can have printed at a professional printer in your area or an online printer such as [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com).
- For a poster, the words "Farmers Market" should be big and bold, and the most prominent text on your poster. If your logo contains the words "Farmers Market," then make the logo the most dominant text AND graphic on your poster.
- You could add one image or supporting graphic to your poster. Perhaps a photo of the market or an illustration of market produce. Do not add more than one image and be sure that it is simple, clear, and easily understood by anyone viewing the poster or signage.

Once you've got the viewer's attention with the words "Farmers Market" – provide other essential information including:

- Market season, including year so people know that your poster is new!
- Market day of week, and time of day
- Address and location
- Any benefits accepted
- How to learn more: Website, Facebook page, etc.

## Brochures/Flyers

When it comes to flyers or brochures for farmers markets, you have more room to work with than on posters or signs.

A typical brochure size is an 8.5x11 folded into thirds, this is known as a tri-fold brochure). Popular flyer sizes may include a 4x11 double-sided piece, this is known as a "rack card" as it fits into many pamphlet holders and racks at tourism locations such as hotels, convention centers, and public buildings.

In a brochure, you may want to include all that was mentioned above for the poster creation as well as the following items:

- List of vendor names and what they sell
- Calendar of farmers market events
- Farmers market map
- Information about loyalty programs, kid's programs, and any other special services or programs you offer

## Social Media Graphics

Less is more when it comes to social media graphics. In fact, most of the graphics you share to social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat should be photos or illustrations.

If you want to create a graphic – perhaps announcing the opening of your market season – keep text to a minimum (and logos are considered text to Facebook), or risk the social media platforms not showing your graphics to your followers. The reason for this is because social media platforms aim to prevent people and businesses from posting too much promotional content.

In fact, Facebook will typically not run any advertisements with graphics that contain more than 20% text. You can learn more about Facebook's rules for text on images by clicking on this link.

## Q) TO MAKE MY GRAPHICS, WHERE CAN I GET PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS FOR FREE, OR CLOSE TO FREE, THAT ARE LICENSED FOR COMMERCIAL USE?

### Free! Pixabay.com or Pexels.com

Access 100% free photos, illustrations, and even video clips. All content at these sites has been released for commercial use by the creators. Most of the content is of a high quality, although you'll find some that is not up to par with design standards.

### \$10-\$30 Images at iStock.com or Adobestock.com

For professional images, these websites are the go-to for designers. All content is highly professional and there are millions of images available.

### Free! Your Own Camera

If your smartphone is less than 5 years old, the photos and videos you take will be suitable for all digital use – and most printed materials (brochures, 8.5x11 flyers). You can download photos you take of the market, vendors, and product closeups to your computer, and then upload those photos to the design programs which will be reviewed next.

You could also ask vendors and other customers to share their photos for use in your marketing materials. Sometimes, all they may want is credit – not monetary compensation. You can do this on social media by “tagging” the vendor in your post, or mentioning the customer by name.

NOTE: Unless you are taking a crowd shot of the market from far away, where individual faces are hard to distinguish, it’s important to get written permission from people you photograph. This is even more important if you are taking a photo of a child under 18. This written permission is known as a “model release” form. Customize your own model release using a template at Legal Zoom: <https://www.legalzoom.com/forms/model-release-adult?kid>

## Q) WHAT DESIGN PROGRAM SHOULD I USE TO CREATE MY GRAPHICS?

You’ve got options, and yes, you can create graphics in Microsoft Word. This program and others are reviewed below. To start things off, explore the exciting new (and free!) programs that allow you to easily and quickly create beautiful social media and digital content.

### Adobe Spark

*What You Can Create:* All Materials *Downfalls:* None

Adobe Spark is a web-based tool, meaning you do not have to download any software to use it. However, you will need an internet connection! Simply visit [www.spark.adobe.com](http://www.spark.adobe.com) and start using it. Or, download the free mobile app.

What can you create with Spark? Virtually anything! From Facebook cover graphics to Instagram collages, flyers to posters, there are over 20,000 Spark templates that you can customize with your logo and information.

The free version is quite powerful, but the Adobe Spark watermark will remain on any graphic you create until you upgrade to the \$9.99/month version.

### Canva

*What You Can Create:* All Materials *Downfalls:* None

Like Adobe Spark, Canva is also a web-based tool you can start using by visiting [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com). Canva is an excellent program for creating social media content. The free version is quite robust, and includes access to over 1,000 fonts, photos you can incorporate into your graphics, and much more. Again, the Canva watermark will be included until you upgrade to the paid version, which is also \$9.99.

### Animoto

*What You Can Create:* Online Videos *Downfalls:* No free version, but cost is only \$8/month or \$96 per year

Videos are a powerful way to increase engagement on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms. Animoto makes it simple to create these videos without any prior knowledge or experience. Just like Adobe Spark and Canva, Animoto is a web-base program. Visit [www.animoto.com](http://www.animoto.com) to check it out.

You’ll be able to access video templates you can customize in a few clicks: add your own text, upload images from your smartphone or computer, and even access over 350 music tracks. Then, save your video and upload it to the social media platform of your choice!

### Microsoft Word

*What You Can Create:* Posters/Market Signage, Brochures/Flyers

*Downfalls:* Can’t easily create images for social media, email, or other digital applications.

It’s quite amazing what you can do in Microsoft Word with a little know how. To access Microsoft Word, you’ll need to purchase the Office 365 Home package, which is \$69.99 per year or \$6.99 per month. Note that Office 365 includes access to Microsoft Publisher, a program outlined below. To learn about Office 365, visit: <https://www.office.com/>



Recent versions of Microsoft Word include access to poster and flyer templates you can customize with your logo and brand.

To access these templates, open Microsoft Word. Select “New” and then “Create Document From Template.” Type in the document you want to create, such as “Poster” or “Brochure” and then select your template to customize.

Don’t think Microsoft Word is limited to creating documents sized at 8.5x11 only. You can create a poster as well. To do so, open Microsoft Word. Select “Layout” from the main menu, and then “Size.” You’ll see you can specify the 11x17 size.

## Microsoft Publisher

*What You Can Create:* Posters/Market Signage, Brochures/Flyers, Social Media Graphics

*Downfalls:* Not as many tools available as programs such as Adobe Photoshop or InDesign

When you purchase the Microsoft Office Suite, you should also have access to Microsoft Publisher. This program provides more graphic capabilities than Microsoft Word.

For example, when you create a Publisher file (which ends in .pub), you can save that file as an “image file.” An image file ends in one of the following file extensions: JPEG, GIF, TIF, or PNG. These are the only types of files you can upload to Facebook, a website, or any other digital platform.

To create these image files suitable for uploading to a digital platform, you simply select “Save As” from the main menu, name your file, and then choose one of the image file extensions.

There are also Microsoft Publisher templates available for you to customize.

## Adobe Creative Cloud

*What You Can Create:* All Materials

*Downfalls:* Cost for full Creative Suite is \$52.99/month for a small business, although non-profit rates may be available. To explore pricing, visit: <https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/plans.html>

Adobe Creative Cloud includes programs such as Photoshop, Illustration, and InDesign. These are the “big 3” programs used by most professional designers. To access these programs, you will need to pay month-to-month. As noted, to access the “big 3” along with other Adobe programs for videos, web design, and more, you can pay \$52.99/month – or, select the programs you want. For example, if you’d like just Photoshop, it’s \$20.99/month.

Adobe Creative Cloud is a very powerful tool, and you’ll need to invest time learning how to use the programs. However, there are thousands of free tutorials on YouTube to help you get started.

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# **Assessing the Barriers to Increasing Customer Participation and Farm Sales at Farmers Markets: Implications for Marketing Strategy**

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# Assessing the Barriers to Increasing Customer Participation and Farm Sales at Farmers Markets: Implications for Marketing Strategy

Todd M. Schmit, Roberta M. Severson, and Ekubo Sawaura\*

August 8, 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

Farmers' markets (FMs) could be considered the original flag bearer of the local foods movement. They represent one avenue in addressing customer demand for "locally grown" and provide a means for farmers to capture 100% of the customer dollar. FMs may also increase customer loyalty and create non-economic benefits and ties between farmers, consumers, and communities.

Brown (2002) estimates that between 1970 and 2001 the number of FMs in the United States grew nearly ten-fold, from 340 to over 3,000. They attribute part of the expansion to funding from the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act aimed at expansion of direct marketing of agricultural commodities from farmers to consumers (U.S. Congress 1976). In 2009, the USDA launched the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Program" as a means to better connect consumers with local producers, support marketing associations and market managers, and improve the effectiveness and accessibility of federal nutrition programs at farmers markets. Federal funding from the Farmers Market Promotion Program, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and electronic benefits transfers (EBT) with food stamps has existed for several years, as have various efforts at state levels.

The number of FMs nearly doubled in the past decade (i.e., 4,385 to 8,687), but more recently growth has slowed considerably; e.g., between 2016 and 2017 the number of FMs increased by only 0.2% (AMS 2018). Further, based on recent Agricultural Census data, Low et al. (2015) found flattening trends of both farm participation and farm sales in direct-to-consumer (DTC) markets. They noted that between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms participating in DTC markets was up 17% and farm sales through those markets up 32%; but over the next five years, growth levels declined to only 6% and 8%, respectively. By 2017, the number of farms with DTC sales actually decreased by 10% from the 2012 level (NASS 2019).<sup>1</sup> On the customer side, farmers and FM managers are attesting to a marked decline in customer participation and sales at FMs, creating uncertainty regarding the viability of FMs to sustain farming operations in the long term (Eggert 2018).

So what's happening? Several hypotheses exist. First, farmers may be shifting to other channels (direct and/or wholesale) with relatively higher financial returns. While shifts to other DTC channels are accounted for in the DTC census statistics above, expanded wholesale opportunities are surfacing through restaurants, groceries, and institutions. Schmit & LeRoux (2014) demonstrated that on over 30 diversified vegetable farms, FMs were the worst performing channel in terms of sales per hour of marketing labor; specifically, FMs averaged \$32, while wholesale channels were \$51. If marketing channel reallocation away from FMs is occurring for this reason, financial impacts at the farm level may be ameliorated or improved. Further, if farmers are shifting away from FMs, changes in consumer purchasing patterns for local foods should coincide. Even so, that leaves considerable concern to FMs themselves, which often serve multi-purpose goals, including low entry barriers for new farm entrants and human and social capital benefits to the communities they operate in.

A second hypothesis asserts that a slowing growth rate in the number of FMs may indicate FMs are approaching market saturation (Bonanno et al. 2017). If true, further FM additions result in new FMs cannibalizing sales and customers from pre-existing ones. In that case, one would expect total FM sales (across all markets) to be level (all else constant) but declining sales per FM, on average. Such a distinction

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<sup>1</sup> Comparing total DTC sales between 2012 and 2017 is problematic since the definition of DTC sales in the 2017 Census included "value added" or processed product sales, a component excluded in earlier versions of the Census.

requires additional information from consumers on changes in their consumption habits and FM participation, something, to the authors' knowledge, has not been directly assessed.

A third hypothesis relates to demographic and generational differences of shoppers; e.g., a lack of interest, appeal, or understanding by younger shoppers. Numerous studies have focused on FM customers using a variety of data; e.g., consumer telephone or online surveys, FM shopper surveys, and population demographics of communities where FMs are located. It is consistent across studies that quality and freshness of products are two of the most important characteristics for FM customers and the lack of a one-stop-shopping experience (i.e., like at supermarkets) is often noted as a barrier. Many customers also express concern about the economic (e.g., support for local farm businesses and retaining food dollars locally), social (e.g., sense of community, purchasing directly from a farmer) and environmental (e.g., growing practices, food miles traveled) impacts of their food choices. While a marketing emphasis on freshness, environmental benefits, and support for farmers resonates with existing customers, it may do little to bring in new customers (Zepeda 2009). Specific information on the values and barriers from all types of consumers is needed for such an assessment.

Demographic characteristics and preferences of FM shoppers show much variation in the literature. Some studies show shoppers tend to be female, older, and with higher incomes and education (Aguirre 2007, Kezis et al. 1998, Govindasamy et al. 2002), while others have found no significant differences in age, income, or employment status (Wolf et al. 2005; Eastwood et al. 1999). With respect to age of DTC shoppers, Abello et al. (2014), Blanck et al. (2011), Keeling Bond et al. (2009), and Stephenson and Lev (2004) found middle-aged shoppers have higher DTC purchases than other age cohorts, while Gumirakiza et al. (2014), Zepeda and Li (2006), Onianwa et al. (2005), and Brown (2003) found no significant differences across age groups. Further, some studies have found that FM shoppers tend to buy more organic foods, shop regularly at food co-ops and health food stores, have their own vegetable gardens, cook more frequently, and belong to health clubs (Wolf et al. 2005; Zepeda 2009).

If preferences of FM shoppers (and potential shoppers) are changing, marketing efforts and operational features of FMs need to evolve to retain customer participation and attract new ones. A recent study by Hamilton (2019) describes the life cycle of local food markets and their changing landscapes. Based on personal interviews conducted, they showed that what has worked in the past is insufficient today. Price and convenience were not the leading consumer priorities during earlier vestiges of DTC markets but they are now. Add to this the complexity of marketing efforts to address a wide range of customer preferences over income, race, and ethnicity characteristics to make the customer experience a welcoming one for all. For example, Conner et al. (2010) show that Latina women expressed feeling unwelcomed in a Michigan-based study, while persons who were white with higher incomes placed lower importance on value and convenience. Signage to explain product attributes is important, including additional languages for persons challenged by English as a second language. Furthermore, access issues commonly surfaced as a barrier to shopping at FMs, including travel to/from FMs and convenient and sufficient parking (Eastwood et al. 1999; Lockeretz 1986). For customers utilizing public transportation, there are scheduling issues and physical limitations to how much can reasonably be carried (Ragland et al. 2011). Low-income shoppers tend to rely on public transportation more, which is often less frequent on Saturdays (a popular market day), and also a day of work for those persons holding more than one job (Tropp and Barham 2008).

Of course, traditional retail grocers have not been ignorant of growing consumer preferences for locally-sourced products. Indeed, Guptill & Wilkins (2002) found that large grocers were marketing locally-produced food as early as the 1990s as a strategy to compete against FMs and other DTC alternatives.

Time constraints of customers, the ease of one-stop shopping, and more convenient hours of operation make the retail grocery store an attractive option for local food oriented consumers.

Shifting preferences and priorities for today's FM shoppers is a key focus of this research. The next generation of potential customers is emerging with different needs and expectations. In an increasingly competitive environment for local foods, FM managers and farmers need to evolve their marketing strategies to best match those changing needs and expectations. However, to understand the opportunities for growth, it is important to have a better understanding of who is shopping there, what their impetus to shop there is (or is not), and, importantly, how to improve the customer experience to keep them coming back. The objective of this research is to address these issues directly.

Using household survey data we differentiate households by their FM participation habits and examine the variety of reasons why people are interested (or not) in buying food at FMs and the barriers they face (real or perceived) to participating more. Delineating consumers in this fashion is important when considering targeted marketing strategies to: (1) maintain participation of those already active, (2) increase participation for those whose participation has declined, and (3) attract new customers. In order to do so, we must examine potential differences in demographic profiles of these consumer classes, their motivations for shopping at FMs, the characteristics they most value at them, and the barriers they face to participating more. To the degree they are similar, targeted strategies are less important, but where differences exist multiple strategies will be necessary.

We continue now with a description of the household survey data used to address our research objectives and the types of information collected. This is followed by a description of the methodology employed to assess differences across consumer types (i.e., by FM participation status) and demographic characteristics of the survey respondents (i.e., income, age, household composition, and location). The empirical results follow and we conclude with implications of the research, suggestions for targeted marketing strategies, and directions for ongoing research.

## HOUSEHOLD DATA

In concert with our state-level partners, an online household survey was developed and administered targeting all consumers regardless of their FM shopping habits.<sup>2</sup> The survey focused on food sales at FMs by farm vendors. To improve clarity for respondents, we explained what food products they were to consider and what constitutes a FM.<sup>3</sup> The limitation to farm sales is not meant to diminish the value nonfood or nonfarm vendors play in some FMs, but simply to focus on the underlying project goal aimed at improving farm financial performance at FMs. That said, we do include questions about the value customers ascribe to the availability of nonfood and ready-to-eat (RTE) prepared food vendors and whether their presence affects their frequency of participation and purchases from farm vendors.

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<sup>2</sup> A Notice of Exemption was received from the Cornell University Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, Institutional Review Board for Human Participants (Protocol ID 1805007986) based on the intended involvement of human subjects and the potential risks they face by participating. Descriptions of the risks and benefits to participating are included as a preamble to the survey (see Appendix 1).

<sup>3</sup> We asked respondents to consider local food products broadly; i.e., fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy products, baked goods, and other processed food products. As to what defines a FM, we instructed them to consider a FM as a public and recurring assembly of different farmers (or their representatives) selling the food that they produced or processed directly to consumers. FMs may be indoors or outdoors and typically consist of booths, tables, or stands where multiple farmers (or their representatives) directly sell their products.



Surveys were pre-tested with our state partners and revised based on their feedback.<sup>4</sup> The survey went live on 20 June 2018 and marketed to consumers in the 4 project states (NY, VT, MA, and MD). A Facebook page was developed as a portal for persons to access and complete the survey, on either computers or smart phones. As awareness of the survey grew, FM organizations and agencies from other states requested that we expand its availability.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, the survey recorded the county and state of residence for each respondent. The survey closed 01 October 2018.

Each of the state partners realized their goal of 500 completed surveys (NY = 925, VT = 775, MD = 576, and MA = 580) for a combined 4-state sample of 2,856 responses. Households participating from other states increased the total to 3,847. The distribution of respondents by FM participation status (discussed below) were nearly identical between the 4-state and all-state samples. Given the nature of our analysis (i.e., dividing the sample by level of FM participation), the results presented here are based on the all-state sample of respondents. Since nearly three-quarters of the sample is from the original four states, the metrics computed are weighted more heavily on respondents from the original four states.<sup>6</sup>

We recognize some inherent issues in our survey method that may bias the sample to some degree. In particular, the survey was available only online and only in English. This may bias downward the number of respondents where English is not their first language and for those whose online access is more limited, often lower income households. In addition, the survey is rather lengthy and some respondents may not complete it due to survey fatigue. Finally, it can be difficult for persons to remember their composite of FM activities across a two-year time span, but a general assessment is sufficient for our purposes. In any event, the convenience sample provides sufficient observations across consumer groups for statistical testing, something necessary to address the research objectives.

### *FM Participation Distribution*

By design, we sought information from all types of consumers irrespective of their FM shopping habits. Use of Rapid Market Assessments at FMs is a common and useful way to collect information from customers quickly and efficiently; however, it is limited to customers already attending the FM on a particular day (Lev et al. 2008). It is relatively easy to get input on FMs from regular FM customers, but not so for non-attendees as the incentives to participate are likely to vary. Accordingly, additional efforts were made to enrich the sample. State partners promoted the survey not only through their networks of FMs and trade associations, but also more generally through local, regional, and state cooperative extension associations, chambers of commerce, and a variety of local government agencies. The importance of input from all types of shoppers was also emphasized in the preamble to the survey to further encourage participation (see Appendix 1).

Project partners were interested in learning about how to retain their current and active customer base, to entice persons whose shopping frequency has declined to return more frequently, and to get consumers who don't shop at FMs to participate. To sort responses on this dimension, a survey question asked participants to compare the number of shopping trips they made to FMs last year (2017) relative to the year prior (2016). The choice set included:

- I shopped more frequently at FMs last year than the year prior,
- I shopped about the same number of times at FMs last year relative to the year prior,

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<sup>4</sup> The full set of survey questions is included in Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Respondents from 28 additional states and the District of Columbia participated; on average, about 34 per state.

<sup>6</sup> Smaller sample sizes for individual states prohibited completion of statistical analyses at the state level with any reasonable level of confidence. Since respondents are not uniquely identifiable (only their county and state of residence is known), customer data by state are available upon request, with approval of the project partners.

- I shopped less frequently at FMs last year than the year prior, or
- I didn't shop at FMs either year.

We combined the first two categories resulting in three “buckets” of consumer participation: those with the same or growing level of FM participation (B1), those with decreasing participation (B2), and those that did not attend FMs (B3). A similar question was asked relative to “total dollars spent” at FMs, with a very similar distribution of respondents by bucket. The empirical results to follow are based on FM shopping trips, but are robust to either metric. In addition, two similar questions were asked regarding shopping for local foods at “any outlet” rather than at FMs specifically.

Distributions of respondents by consumer bucket are shown in Table 1. Notice the difference in distributions based on local foods trips at any outlet versus at FMs. The percentage of respondents classified as B1 for any outlet (88%) is greater than for FMs (74%); the reverse is true for B2 (7% and 20%, respectively). These differences are indicative of consumers shifting some from FMs to other outlets for local food purchases (hypothesis 1). The same direction of differences follows for total spending. While the differences are lower in magnitude for B3 consumers (particularly on total purchases), it does suggest that those that aren't shopping specifically for local foods end up buying some anyway; e.g., at a grocery store.

Also consider that for any bucket, the percentage of respondents for trips to and dollars spent at FMs is very similar; i.e., for B1: 74% and 75%, for B2: 20% and 19%, and for B3: 6% and 6%, respectively. While an indirect measure, this does provide some evidence that cannibalization across FMs is relatively small, at least in the aggregate for this sample (hypothesis 2). In the case of a growing number of FMs and more prevalent cannibalization, we would expect further disparity between the percentages of respondents classified by trips than by total purchases (i.e., we would expect the trip percentage to be less (more) than purchase percentage for B1 (B2)).

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents on Trips and Purchases for Local Foods, by Bucket (N = 3,847).<sup>a</sup>**

Bucket	No. of Trips, Any Outlet	No. of Trips, Farmers Markets	Total Spending, Any Outlet	Total Spending, Farmers Markets
B1	88%	74%	90%	75%
B2	7%	20%	9%	19%
B3	5%	6%	1%	6%

<sup>a</sup> % = percentage of respondents defined in a particular bucket.

### *Demographic Characteristics*

Demographic characteristics of the sample, by FM bucket, are shown in Table 2. Respondents were limited to those at least 18 years old and designated as the primary food shopper for the household. Age cohorts were determined based on general life stages. That is, those 18 to 24 might be in early careers, enrolled in college, or living at home. Those 25 to 34 are more likely to have children and those over 60 might be nearing retirement and/or are empty-nesters. The distributions by age are very similar across buckets, although those with declining levels of FM participation were more prevalent in the middle-aged category (35-44) and less so for respondents age 60 or above. For those attending FMs (B1 and B2), the results are consistent with the literature showing higher participation levels for those 45 years of age or older. However, irrespective of bucket, the three (two) age categories under (over) 45 years of age are less than (more than) U.S. population estimates (Howden and Meyer 2011).

**Table 2. Demographic Summary of Consumer Sample, by FM Bucket (N = 3,847).<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>B3</b>
<b>Percent of Respondents</b>	<b>74.3</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>6.3</b>
<b>Percent by Age:</b>			
18-24	2.1	2.4	4.7
25-34	13.2	13.9	14.0
35-44	16.6	21.0	17.0
45-59	29.5	31.5	28.1
Greater than or equal to 60	38.5	31.2	36.2
<b>Percent by Household Income:</b>			
Less than \$25,000	8.7	7.4	11.0
\$25,000 to 49,999	18.6	18.4	14.4
\$50,000 to \$99,999	35.8	35.6	44.0
\$100,000 to \$149,999	20.6	22.8	12.0
\$150,000 or more	16.4	15.8	18.7
<b>Percent by Household Size:</b>			
One	17.6	15.9	17.3
Two	49.3	44.1	47.6
Three	15.8	18.0	12.6
Four	11.8	14.6	15.6
Five or more	5.5	7.4	6.9
<i>Average household size (No.)</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>2.5</i>
<b>Percent by Household Structure:</b>			
Single (no partner)	23.2	22.9	27.0
Married or Single w/partner	71.3	70.8	68.2
Children (under 5 years old)	8.4	11.5	10.3
Children (5 to 17 years old)	15.0	21.7	18.9
Multi-generational (3 or more)	4.5	5.1	3.9
<b>Percent by Racial/Ethnic Composition</b>			
White	90.7	89.3	90.0
Hispanic or Latino	0.8	1.1	0.9
Black or African American	1.3	1.1	0.4
Native American/Hawaiian/OPI	0.2	0.1	0.9
Asian	1.0	1.6	1.3
Other	6.1	6.7	6.5
<b>Percent by Gender:</b>			
Male	15.3	13.8	20.7
Female	83.6	85.5	78.9
Nonbinary	1.1	0.7	0.4
<b>Percent by Work Status:</b>			
Unemployed or Disabled	2.5	2.4	3.4
Part Time	14.9	16.1	15.3
Full Time or Self-employed	51.0	55.1	50.2
Retired	23.6	18.8	23.0
Other	8.0	7.6	8.1
<b>Percent by County of Residence:</b>			
Metro	71.8	72.1	70.0
NonMetro	28.2	27.9	30.0

<sup>a</sup> Survey respondents were classified into buckets by their level of participation in FMs over the last two years. Bucket 1 (B1) consumers had constant or growing levels of participation, Bucket 2 (B2) consumers had decreasing levels of participation, and Bucket 3 (B3) consumers did not attend FMs either year.

Distributions of B1 and B2 consumers by household income are also very similar. Consistent with the literature (and relative to the U.S. population), higher income households are more likely to shop at FMs (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). That said, the percentage of respondents for the highest income category drops for B1 and B2 and increases for B3, perhaps reflective of a FM participation limitation at the upper income extreme. Relatedly, most respondents, regardless of bucket were employed full time, albeit at levels less than indicative of the U.S. population as a whole, even when accounting for the higher representation by retirees in our sample (BLS 2018). That said, there were relatively less retirees classified as B2 shoppers, consistent, with the age result above.

The average household size of respondents was around 2.5, consistent with the U.S. population, and a mode of 2. Distributions across buckets are similar, although larger household sizes (four and above) are more prevalent in B2 and B3. The higher percentages are likely due to children in the household and are consistent with the distributions for household structure where more households with children were in the B2 and B3 cohorts. Single person households were also more likely to be in B3. Combining the age, household size, and household structure results demonstrates consistency with the literature that younger, single consumers are less likely to shop at FMs. Relative to the U.S. population, the percentage of respondents for single (two) person households is lower (higher) (Lofquist et al. 2012). The combined percentage of households with children (regardless of age) is consistent with the U.S. population; however, the relatively higher percentage of households with young children (under age 5) may imply that those households find the FM environment more amenable than those with older children.

Clearly the sample is not racially or ethnically diverse; however, it is consistent with the literature that generally shows white, non-Hispanic consumers participate more in FMs. This appears particularly so in this sample, weighted heavily by consumers in NY, VT, MA and MD. Consistent with the FM literature, the majority of FM customers (B1 and B2) were female. However, a similar distribution follows for B3, since primary food shoppers in households tend to be women.

Finally, the distributions of respondents by metro or nonmetro county of residence were very similar, with only a small increase in the percentage of B3 respondents for nonmetro areas.<sup>8</sup> While the distribution of metro and nonmetro counties in the United States is roughly the inverse of our respondent sample (i.e., 38% metro, 62% nonmetro), of the counties with at least one FM, 64% are metro, similar to our sample (Singleton et al. 2015). This makes sense since higher population concentrations provide a larger customer base. Assuming respondents shop at FMs in their county of residence, we expect a similar distribution of FMs by metro and nonmetro to be represented.

In general, the representativeness of our sample of FM shoppers is consistent with the literature, but for a somewhat overstated sample of retiree and under-stated sample of non-white and Hispanic participants. Differences relative to the U.S. population ascribe to the types of consumers more likely to shop at FMs. It is interesting that the distributions for most demographics were consistent across all buckets and implying that such demographics are not as strongly correlated to the participate/non-participate decision as one may have hypothesized. Accordingly, differences in the evaluative FM metrics we discuss below (e.g., average ratings on important characteristics or barriers to participation) across

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<sup>8</sup> USDA's Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (RUCCs) distinguish metropolitan counties by the population size of the metro area and nonmetropolitan counties by degree of urbanization and adjacency to metro areas (USDA ERS 2016). Metro counties were assigned as those with RUCCs of 1 through 3, while nonmetro counties were assigned as those with RUCCs 4 and higher.

buckets cannot as easily be ascribed to demographic differences, providing support to the overall evolution of local food markets and customers mentioned above (Hamilton 2019).

## METHODOLOGY

A better understanding of the importance assigned by consumers to various characteristics of FMs is invaluable in (re)designing FM operations, locations, vendor composition, and vendor displays to attract customers and maximize customer sales. The same can be said for FM managers and farm vendors in addressing the primary barriers consumers face in participating more. However, characteristic values and barriers may differ by type of consumer (i.e., B1, B2, and B3). Accordingly, we assess these characteristics and barriers by FM bucket and determine if they are different from one another in a statistical sense.

For each question, we compute average scores or frequencies of the responses (i.e., the magnitude) and rank responses by bucket. Both the rank and the magnitudes are important in interpreting the results. The magnitudes are then compared across buckets to determine if they are statistically different from one another. Note, both statistical and non-statistical differences can be informative.

We conducted means difference tests across samples to analyze statistical differences. This procedure involved computing differences between means and calculating a significance value using the *t*-test. The associated *p* value is the probability of obtaining the observed differences between the samples if the null hypothesis were true. The null hypothesis was that the difference in means is zero, with  $N_1 + N_2 - 2$  degrees of freedom. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

## RESULTS

The empirical results are presented from general to specific. We first describe general food shopping characteristics of consumers in our sample. We follow with particular attention to FMs by describing consumers' primary motivations for shopping at them and the feelings they have when attending. We conclude this section by assessing the importance of various FM characteristics and the primary barriers consumers face in participating more – elements particularly relevant to operational and marketing implications for FM managers and farm vendors. Distinction by FM cohort (i.e., B1, B2, and B3) and key demographic characteristics inform targeted marketing strategies to alternative types of consumers.

### *Food Shopping Characteristics*

Table 3 shows the allocation of total food spending purchases, on average, for nine different food outlets. The outlets are ordered from highest to lowest spending levels based on the B1 results.<sup>9</sup> As expected, the outlet where most food purchases occur is the retail grocery store and, with the exception of FMs, purchases at remaining outlets fall in reasonably consistent rank order across FM buckets. The FM flagbearers (B1) stand up to their name by indicating that nearly 19% of total food expenditures, on average, occur at FMs. Most of the drop in FM purchases by B2 and B3 consumers are accounted for by increased purchases at grocery stores. B3 consumers also purchase more at super centers (e.g., Walmart).

Combined purchases at other DTC channels (i.e., farm stands, CSAs, and farm stores) are reasonably similar across buckets (11-12%), as well as at cooperative groceries (10%), which often focus on sourcing local food products. Given so, there appears to be reasonable support for local food purchases irrespective of FM bucket, but for FMs themselves (by definition).

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<sup>9</sup> By definition, the percentage of food dollars spent at FMs for B3 consumers is zero. We report the actual average spending profiles given by respondents that reveal a very small, but not exactly zero, percentage.

**Table 3. Distribution of Total Food Spending Dollars, Local and Nonlocal, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Food Outlet	B1 Rank	B1 %	B2 Rank	B2 %	B3 Rank	B3 %	B2 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>
Retail grocery store	1	47.4	1	54.0	1	57.0	+	+
Farmers markets (DTC)	2	18.7	3	9.0	9	0.7	-	-
Cooperative grocery store	3	10.0	2	11.1	3	9.7	Nsd	Nsd
Super centers	4	5.4	4	5.9	2	10.7	Nsd	+
Farm stands at the farm (DTC)	5	5.2	5	4.7	5	3.6	Nsd	-
Community Supported Agriculture (DTC)	6	4.3	6	4.5	4	4.5	Nsd	Nsd
Farm store (DTC)	7	3.0	7	3.1	6	2.8	Nsd	Nsd
Convenience stores	8	1.3	8	1.7	7	2.4	+	+
Meal delivery services	9	0.7	9	0.8	8	1.0	Nsd	Nsd

<sup>a</sup> % = percentage of total food spending in a particular outlet. Farm direct-to-consumer market channels are indicated by DTC. For ease of exposition the “Other” category is excluded. As such, the sum of percentages for each bucket will be less than 100% (i.e., by 3.9%, 5.1%, and 7.6% for B1, B2 and B3, respectively).

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

General support for local food purchasing is also evident when comparing the likelihood consumers shop at various outlets specifically for local foods (Table 4). Scores here represent the average likelihood ratings on a scale from zero to four. The scores for FMs are as expected given to how the buckets were defined and where for B3 consumers all other DTC outlets rank relatively higher. It is clear that retail grocery stores are the primary outlet for local foods by B2 and B3 consumers, and significantly higher than B1. Super centers are also significantly higher for both B2 and B3, but at far lower likelihood scores.

While not shown, no statistical differences were found across FM buckets in how “local food” was defined. In terms of geography, local was most commonly defined as a multi-county region followed closely by state of residence. In terms of miles, 100 miles was most common for B1 and B2 consumers, while 50 and 100 miles were reported equally by B3 consumers. Significant variation in responses within buckets, however, precluded any statistical differences across them. For comparison, the 2008 Farm Bill defined local food as food that will be transported no more than 400 miles from its point of origin or within the state, while other organizations concerned about environmental impacts, namely food miles, suggest 100 miles or within the state.

Since the decision to shop at FMs is strongly linked to consumer motivations for purchasing local foods, it is useful to understand how important purchasing local foods is to consumers across FM buckets (Table 5). The distribution of responses for B1 consumers is not surprising, nor is the drop in average importance rating from B1 to B3 (Table 5). However, the (statistically significant) drop in average ratings from B1 to B2 consumers is arguably larger than to be expected given that B2 consumers are attending FMs, just less than they have previously. While the ‘local’ messaging is still important, it is statistically less important for these consumers. That said, 65% and 45% of B2 and B3 consumers, respectively felt buying local foods was “very” or “extremely” important to them, giving support to marketing strategies directed towards these cohorts in continuing to emphasize local. The relatively high level for B3 consumers provides support to possible FM participation in the future.

**Table 4. Likelihood of Shopping at Outlets for Local Foods, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Food Outlet	B1 Rank	B1 Score	B2 Rank	B2 Score	B3 Rank	B3 Score	B2 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>
Farmers markets (DTC)	1	3.13	2	2.41	7	0.85	-	-
Retail grocery store	2	2.69	1	2.91	1	3.12	+	+
Farm stands at the farm (DTC)	3	1.94	3	1.87	2	1.47	Nsd	-
Farm store (DTC)	4	1.64	5	1.62	5	1.15	Nsd	-
Cooperative grocery store	5	1.56	4	1.65	4	1.19	Nsd	-
Community Supported Agriculture (DTC)	6	1.28	6	1.28	6	1.05	Nsd	-
Super centers	7	0.81	7	0.92	3	1.30	+	+
Convenience stores	8	0.42	8	0.51	8	0.51	+	Nsd
Meal delivery services	9	0.19	9	0.25	9	0.23	+	Nsd

<sup>a</sup> Consumers were asked how likely they were to shop at each location for locally grown/produced food, with available choices as: not likely (0), somewhat likely (1), likely (2), very likely (3), and extremely likely (4). The Score is the average rating across responses. Farm direct-to-consumer market channels are indicated by DTC. For ease of exposition the “Other” category is excluded.

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

**Table 5. Importance of Purchasing of Local Foods, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Level (Rating)	B1 Rank	B1 %	B2 Rank	B2 %	B3 Rank	B3 %	B2 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>
Extremely Important (4)	1	44.5	2	30.5	5	23.5	-	-
Very Important (3)	2	34.7	1	34.4	3	21.4	Nsd	-
Important (2)	3	15.3	3	24.5	4	24.0	+	+
Somewhat Important (1)	4	4.7	4	9.0	2	18.9	Nsd	+
Not Important (0)	5	0.8	5	1.7	1	12.2	Nsd	Nsd

<sup>a</sup> % = percentage of responses with that level of importance.

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

### *FM Motivations and Perceptions*

While consumers in our sample are assigned to buckets based on how their attendance at FMs has **changed** over the last two years, it says little about their motivations (or not) in attending FMs in the first place, nor how they feel while at these markets. Understanding these subtleties is important in developing targeted marketing strategies. The results are presented here based on the average response of all consumers, by FM bucket. For ease of exposition, we do not provide tables for each demographic breakdown; rather, we summarize the differences from the average results for particular demographics (where they exist) in the implications section of the paper below.

Perhaps related to earlier vestiges of the local foods movement, the most common primary motivation for B1 consumers to shop at FMs was to support local farmers and vendors, followed closely by purchasing fresh food (Table 6). The top two categories for B2 and B3 consumers are the same, but in reverse order. Indeed, support for local farmers and vendors, while relatively high for all buckets as a primary motivating factor, was statistically lower in importance for B2 and B3 consumers. Focusing more on freshness in marketing efforts than on local farmers may well appeal more to decreasing and nonparticipating FM consumers.

**Table 6. Primary Motivations for Shopping at Farmers Markets, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Primary Motivation	B1 Rank	B1 %	B2 Rank	B2 %	B3 Rank	B3 %	B3 %A <sup>b</sup>	B2 v B1 Different <sup>c</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>c</sup>
Support local farmers and vendors	1	42.0	2	37.7	3	16.5	30.0	-	-
Purchase fresh food	2	38.7	1	42.4	2	22.9	41.5	Nsd	Nsd
Keep food dollars in local economy	3	8.6	3	8.1	5	6.4	11.5	Nsd	Nsd
Other	4	6.4	4	6.0	4	6.8	12.3	Nsd	+
Participate in social/community setting	5	4.1	5	5.3	6	2.5	4.6	Nsd	Nsd
I don't shop at FMs	6	0.2	6	0.6	1	44.9		Nsd	N/A

<sup>a</sup> % = percentage of responses selected as primary motivation. N/A = not applicable.

<sup>b</sup> %A = percentage of responses selected as primary motivation, excluding observations with “I don't shop at FMs” selected.

<sup>c</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05. For tests on B3, %A percentages were used.

Note that nearly 45% of B3 consumers responded that they do not shop at FMs, presumably ever. While B3 consumers are defined as not shopping at FMs in the previous two years, over half of B3 consumers selected one of the other categories likely implying that they have shopped at FMs previously. Both full (%) and adjusted (%A) percentages are shown, where the latter excludes observations where “I don't shop at FMs” was selected. Statistical tests used the adjusted values. For all buckets, the remaining categories fall well short of the top two choices. Only the “other” category for B3 consumers demonstrated a statistical difference (relative to B1). For these consumers, “other” responses included exploring the markets, introducing children to healthier food choices, buying plants for gardening, and searching for lower prices, and perhaps are messaging areas worthy of attention.

Marketing efforts focused on “keeping food dollars local”; i.e., increasing total regional economic impacts through higher local spending, has little appeal customers as a primary motivating reason to shop at FMs, even though it is strongly related to supporting local farmers. Given increasing competition and availability to purchase local foods, this is reasonable; i.e., it is not a differentiating factor. Further, understanding what the concept really means is perhaps beyond most consumers in motivating participation. Opportunities to participate in a social or community setting at FMs ranks even lower (for all consumers). While educational and entertainment events are popular at many FMs, they clearly do not motivate most consumers to attend and purchase food from farmers.

Understanding feelings customers have when attending FMs are important and, particularly for negative feelings, can inform changes in FM operations and marketing efforts to improve the customer experience. Consumers were asked to select all feelings that apply to them when attending FMs. As above, we provide full and adjusted percentages for B3 consumers. The top three categories in Table 7 represent “good” feelings and the next four represent “indifferent or bad” feelings.

It is encouraging that the rankings are identical across buckets (with the “I don't shop at FMs” category excluded), whereby the good feelings rank above the bad. However, there are clear differences for both B2 and B3 consumers relative to B1. In particular, the percentage of consumers with good (bad) feelings are consistently below (above) those for B1. The large drop off from the good feelings to the bad for B1 and B2 consumers should not be overlooked and was expected as most persons do not conscientiously choose to participate in a negative experience. The drop in percentages from B1 to B2 for the good feelings is consistent with declining levels of participation.



**Table 7. Perceptions when Attending Farmers Markets, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Customer Feeling	B1 Rank	B1 %	B2 Rank	B2 %	B3 Rank	B3 %	B3 %A <sup>b</sup>	B2 v B1 Different <sup>c</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>c</sup>
Proud to support local vendors	1	84.8	1	71.4	2	32.2	56.2	-	-
Happy, it's a fun place to be	2	77.1	2	63.1	3	26.7	47.7	-	-
Welcomed and appreciated	3	63.3	3	42.6	4	16.9	30.8	-	-
Nothing in particular	4	6.2	4	13.9	5	13.1	23.1	+	+
Pressured obligated to purchase	5	4.1	5	10.1	6	9.3	15.4	+	+
Intimidated to talk to the farmers	6	3.8	6	6.9	7	5.9	10.0	+	+
Confused, too much going on	7	2.1	7	5.7	8	5.1	6.9	+	+
I don't shop at farmers markets	8	0.4	8	0.6	1	44.9		Nsd	N/A

<sup>a</sup> % = percentage of responses selected. Respondents were asked to check all that apply, N/A = not applicable.

<sup>b</sup> %A = percentage of responses selected, excluding observations with "I don't shop at FMs" selected.

<sup>c</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1.

Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05. For tests on B3, %A percentages were used.

Reducing the perceptions of feeling pressured or obligated to purchase can likely shift the scales, as are ways that farm vendors could be more proactive in initiating conversations with potential customers to reduce the intimidation factor. While conversations with farmers, producers and vendors as seen as a positive means to build trust and elicit sales, customers can have a different perspective. For example, the customer may not want to purchase the product from the farmer following the conversation, but does so because of feeling obligated at that point to make a purchase. Other shoppers may be shy, may not be fluent in a language, or may be embarrassed by asking a "stupid" question and thus are intimidated to talk to farmers. Some shoppers may be overwhelmed by all the conversations going on between farmers and customers, crowded spaces, and pets on leashes, etc. Educational programs for vendors focused on soft skills development may be one avenue for improvement.

Finally, note that nearly one-quarter of B3 customers feel "nothing in particular" when attending a FM; in other words, this is a shopping trip and nothing more. Indeed, nearly one-half of B3 consumers do not even feel "happy" at a FM or consider it a "fun to place to be." This may be less a reflection of the FM itself, but how they feel about shopping for food in general. Even so, what are ways to preserve the fun and social characteristics of FMs that some value (B1 and B2), while having market operations efficient enough for a traditional shopping experience (B3)?

A summary of written comments provided by responses is shown in Table 8; either from "other: please describe" options in some questions or open-ended questions available in the survey. While we leave a detailed exposition to the interested readers, they support the main findings presented thus far.

### *Important Characteristics of FMs*

The five most important characteristics for each sub-sample are shown in Table 9. The characteristics are in rank order for B1 consumers. Consumers ranked characteristics on scale from not important (0) to very important (4). Scores in excess of 3 (important) are bolded. While the top five are reasonably similar across buckets, two additional characteristics were added beyond those for B1 to fill out the top five for B2 (food products efficiently organized) and B3 (prices clearly displayed) consumers. All consumers want quality, local food at FMs and in a clean environment, although availability of local foods is rated lower for B2 and, particularly, B3 consumers, likely tied to convenience factors and the 1-stop shopping food outlets.

**Table 8. Positive and Negative Aspects of Shopping at Farmers Markets, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Positive	Negative
Appreciate social interactions with friends and neighbors. (B1)	Pressure to buy as they are very nice and friendly; I feel bad to not buy from them. (B1)
Appreciate the knowledgeable staff. They help me try new foods. (B1)	Where is the real farmer? Most are hired help and can't answer questions. (B1)
Like the experience of shopping, bargaining, differing moods & feel of the FM across the seasons. (B1)	Can't carry everything! (B1)
Love building relationships with farmers and supporting them. I can shake their hand. (B1)	Perturbed to find FM more of a flea/craft market, and people reselling from produce companies. (B1)
Important to expose kids to different foods & learn about benefits of farming and buying local. (B1)	People like to chat and I run out of time. (B1)
It's not just fresh food, but food of superior quality and variety grown by people I know. (B1)	Not having prices out! (B1)
Like to be educated & reminded about the importance of eating local food every chance I get. (B1)	I have several young children and no guarantee of close parking or vendors who accept credit cards (B1)
With EBT food stamp assistance I am able to pay more attention to buying local and high quality food. (B1)	I feel pressure to buy as they are very nice and friendly and I feel bad to not buy from them. (B2)
Much more access and ability to intentionally spend my food dollars on local products from good farms. (B1)	It's gotten to expensive. I worry about price. (B2)
I guess the word is integrity of the FM participants - standards are upheld. (B1)	It's a very elite atmosphere and very expensive. I'm an outsider (B2)
Hybrid of willing to pay more for local, wanting fresh food, & enjoying participation in the community. (B1)	Too many former clients who just want to chat. The farmer doesn't move to the next customer. (B2)
Sense of community with vendors & fellow shoppers. (B1)	Unpriced goods, staff not helpful. (B2)
Important to purchase high-quality, different, and inspiring foods. (B1)	More geared to out-of-towners and not the locals, including price and entertainment. (B2)
Knowing that I am supporting local agriculture. (B1)	More for elites, than average working person. (B2)
Feel very close to the farmers I support and miss them when they leave. (B1)	Cannot afford the luxury of FM prices (B2)
A community run market provides unique social benefits. (B2)	People running the stand can't answer questions about production, variety, or use. (B2)
Community outreach to make product available to ALL community members, regardless of financial, cultural, physical abilities and age. (B2)	Purchasing products during the middle of the work day that must be refrigerated until I get home. (B2)
A reliable, predictable group of vendors. (B2)	Too much emphasis on social events, live music, and non-food or prepared food distracts from the fresh food and makes it hard to shop for produce. (B2)
Several produce vendors to choose from. (B2)	Farm markets take too much time. (B3)
Able to talk to a farmer. (B2)	Cost, it's too expensive. (B3)
Being able to select my fruits and veggies. (B2)	Can't get to FM during miniscule time it's open. (B3)
Child-friendly. (B2)	Inconvenient times, limited selection, and small so I feel pressured to make a purchase. (B3)
A pleasant shopping experience. (B2)	More craft vendors than fresh food vendors. (B3)
Ability to explore and try new things. (B3)	The market does not have enough variety and limited time to shop. (B3)

<sup>a</sup> Responses summarized from several questions in the survey where an "other, please describe" option was available or was an open-ended question. Some answers were edited for brevity, but without any loss in meaning or interpretation.

**Table 9. Most Important Characteristics for Shoppers at Farmers Markets, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Characteristic	B1 Rank	B1 Score	B2 Rank	B2 Score	B3 Rank	B3 Score	B2 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>
Quality of food products	<b>1</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3.27</b>	Nsd	-
Availability of local foods	<b>2</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.33</b>	3	2.83	-	-
Cleanliness	<b>3</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.12</b>	Nsd	Nsd
Environmentally friendly products	4	2.80	7	2.66	12	2.18	-	-
Reasonable travel time	5	2.68	5	2.78	4	2.74	+	Nsd
Food products efficiently organized	10	2.34	<b>3</b>	<b>3.19</b>	10	2.34	+	Nsd
Prices clearly displayed	8	2.51	6	2.67	5	2.73	+	+

<sup>a</sup> Consumers rated characteristics of FMs on a scale from not important (0) to very important (4). For those that don't currently shop at FMs (B3), they were to indicate the level of importance if they were to do so. The Score is the average rating across responses, with those greater than or equal to 3 (important) bolded.

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

Interestingly, only environmentally friendly products (e.g., organic, minimal packaging) shows up in the top 5 for the B1 consumer, with lower values ascribed by B2 and, even more so, B3. Efficient organization of food products is a key characteristic for B2 consumers, and a lack thereof a likely contributing factor to their reduction in attending FMs. Similarly, prices need to be clearly displayed for B2 and B3 consumers, arguably consistent with a grocery store setting, and consistent with the higher frequencies of which these consumers felt pressured to purchase and intimidated to talk to farmers.

The least important characteristics of FMs for consumers are shown in Table 10. The low scores for availability of non-local foods scores are consistent with the local food rankings in Table 9. To be sure, the presence of non-food product vendors and ready-to-eat (RTE) food vendors is of little importance in getting food shoppers to the market to buy food from farmers, as are special events and entertainment activities. Surprisingly, availability by public transportation was not important for any group, although it is related to reasonable travel times (Table 9) and, for metro areas, was rated higher (see differences by demographics in the conclusions and implications section below).

In considering other characteristics where statistically significant differences existed across consumer groups, day-weekend hours are preferred by all consumer groups; but scores for evening hours are higher for B2 and B3 shoppers (Table 11). Higher scores for adequate parking, accepting debit/credit cards, and attention to prices for B2 and B3 consumers were also evident, while SNAP/EBT availability and establishing relationships with farm vendors were less important. While often an important message in marketing efforts for FMs, the value of these relationships was rated in about the middle of the 24 characteristics (for all groups). An average score of 2.2 implies only moderate importance for B1 consumers (on average), with values dropping off precipitously for B2 and (particularly) B3 consumers.

How consumers define "relationship" is open to interpretation. In any case, having relationships with farmers is not a differentiating factor for FM relative to other DTC channels. Indeed, one may argue that the operational features of CSAs promote stronger relationships between customers and farmers. In terms of demographic distinctions, values for relationships with farmers were modestly higher for low income, no-children, older, and nonmetro consumers (more below).

**Table 10. Least Important Characteristics for Shoppers at Farmers Markets, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Characteristic	B1 Rank	B1 Score	B2 Rank	B2 Score	B3 Rank	B3 Score	B2 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>
Availability of non-local foods	24	<b>0.57</b>	24	<b>0.47</b>	22	<b>0.74</b>	-	+
Availability of non-food products	23	<b>0.70</b>	23	<b>0.62</b>	23	<b>0.58</b>	-	-
Special events (entertainment)	22	<b>0.84</b>	22	<b>0.75</b>	24	<b>0.49</b>	-	-
Coupons, sales, discounts available	21	<b>0.94</b>	20	<b>0.96</b>	17	1.11	Nsd	+
Available by public transportation	20	<b>0.95</b>	21	<b>0.87</b>	20	<b>0.85</b>	Nsd	Nsd
RTE prepared foods available	19	<b>0.96</b>	19	1.03	21	<b>0.83</b>	Nsd	-

<sup>a</sup> Consumers rated characteristics of FMs on a scale from not important (0) to very important (4). For those that don't currently shop at FMs (B3), they were to indicate the level of importance if they were to do so. The Score is the average rating across responses, with those less than or equal to 1 (only somewhat important) bolded.

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

**Table 11. Other Selected of Characteristics for Shoppers at Farmers Markets, FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Characteristic	B1 Rank	B1 Score	B2 Rank	B2 Score	B3 Rank	B3 Score	B2 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>	B3 v B1 Different <sup>b</sup>
Open during day	12	2.23	13	2.11	14	2.12	-	Nsd
Open during evening (after work)	15	1.63	15	1.81	13	2.12	+	+
Open on the weekend	6	2.66	8	2.62	8	2.48	Nsd	-
Adequate parking	11	2.26	11	2.35	7	2.55	+	+
Wide selection of kinds of food	7	2.61	10	2.49	11	2.25	-	-
Accepts debit/credit cards	14	2.03	12	2.17	9	2.36	+	+
Accepts SNAP/EBT benefits	17	1.41	17	1.25	19	1.04	-	-
Price level	9	2.35	9	2.56	6	2.56	+	+
Relationship with farmer vendor	13	2.20	14	1.95	15	1.45	-	-

<sup>a</sup> Consumers rated characteristics of FMs on a scale from not important (0) to very important (4). For those that don't currently shop at FMs (B3), they were to indicate the level of importance if they were to do so. The Score is the average rating across responses, with characteristics with statistical differences shown.

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

### *Barriers to Increasing FM Participation*

Understanding the most and least important characteristics of FMs to consumers is useful in identifying changes in FM operations and marketing efforts, particularly when considering changes by type of FM consumer. However, this does not directly address the barriers consumers face in participating more. Accordingly, we asked consumers to rate the size of barriers to increasing their participation at FMs, on a scale from 0 (not a barrier) to 4 (a very large barrier). Used in context with the FM characteristic values, this will provide more precise strategies to operational reforms and marketing changes. Tables 12 and 13 respectively show the five largest and five smallest barriers consumers face to attending FMs more frequently. It is interesting to observe that for even the highest ranked barriers, the average scores are just over 1; i.e., a "minor" barrier. This may be due difficulties in consumers assessing how "large a barrier" is. In any event, we assess the average size of barriers here and then highlight differences by demographic characteristics (where they exist) in the implications section later. For consumers that didn't shop at FMs (B3), they were asked to indicate the size of the barrier if they were to. Barriers scored above 2 (a modest barrier), on average, are denoted in bold. Notice that for all barriers but one in Tables 12 and Table 13, the average scores for B2 and B3 consumers are statistically above those for B1 consumers. In short, barriers to consumers increase as their level of FM participation declines.

**Table 12. Five Largest Barriers to Attending Farmers Markets More Often, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Barrier	B1	B1	B2	B2	B3	B3	B2 v B1	B3 v B1
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Different <sup>b</sup>	Different <sup>b</sup>
It is only open part of the year	1	1.07	6	1.22	7	1.28	+	+
Market time conflicts with schedule	2	1.03	1	1.67	2	1.86	+	+
Prefer convenience of 1-stop shopping	3	0.92	4	1.43	<b>1</b>	<b>2.10</b>	+	+
Prices not competitive w/other options	4	0.91	2	1.55	4	1.61	+	+
Purchase LF @ other retail outlets already	5	0.89	3	1.51	3	1.64	+	+
Purchase LF @ other D2C outlets already	6	0.85	5	1.32	6	1.34	+	+
Hard for me to get to the FM	11	0.48	10	0.90	5	1.39	+	+

<sup>a</sup> Consumers rated barriers preventing them from shopping at FMs more frequently, on a scale from not a barrier (0) to a very large barrier (4). For those that don't currently shop at FMs, there were to indicate the size of the barriers if they were do so. The Score is the average rating across responses, with those greater than or equal to 2 (modest barrier) bolded.

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

**Table 13. Five Smallest Barriers to Attending Farmers Markets More Often, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Barrier	B1	B1	B2	B2	B3	B3	B2 v B1	B3 v B1
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Different <sup>b</sup>	Different <sup>b</sup>
Not enough entertainment/special events	21	0.08	21	0.16	21	0.08	+	Nsd
Don't know where FM is near me	20	0.14	20	0.24	15	0.66	+	+
I find it intimidating to shop at a FM	19	0.15	18	0.40	16	0.53	+	+
Prefer FM to be indoors or under cover	18	0.23	19	0.36	18	0.52	+	+
Walking around FM is difficult	17	0.28	15	0.49	14	0.66	+	+
Food quality does not meet my standards	16	0.28	17	0.46	17	0.52	+	+
Food prodn methods do not meet my stds	14	0.35	16	0.47	20	0.49	+	+
Vendors are not friendly or helpful	15	0.34	14	0.53	19	0.51	+	+

<sup>a</sup> Consumers rated barriers preventing them from shopping at FMs more frequently, on a scale from not a barrier (0) to a very large barrier (4). For those that don't currently shop at FMs, there were to indicate the size of the barriers if they were do so. The Score is the average rating across responses, all averages are less than 1 (a minor barrier).

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

Given how the FM buckets were defined, it is not too surprising that the highest rated barrier for B1 consumers was that FMs are only open part of the year. These consumers are strong FM supporters and would likely participate and buy more if the market seasons were longer. The remaining largest barriers are fairly consistent across buckets, albeit in slightly different rank order. Timing conflicts, the convenience of 1-stop shopping at other outlets, noncompetitive pricing (real or perceived), and purchasing local foods at other outlets readily summarize the primary barriers. The latter again emphasizes the increasingly competitive marketplace for local foods. The one-stop-shopping element is particularly the case for B3 shoppers, as is more difficulty in getting to FMs. Overall, convenience and competition are the overriding factors for all consumer groups.

The lowest barriers are all well below 1, the minor barrier level, albeit higher (statistically at least) for B2 and B3 consumers (Table 13). Consumers tend to know where the markets are, they need not be under cover nor have entertainment/special events, and most do not find walking around at them difficult. Food quality and production methods meet consumer standards. Vendors, on average, are friendly and helpful to the shopping experience.

It is generally accepted that increasing the number of trips consumers make FMs leads to higher total spending, although likely not of equal proportion. Accordingly, we asked consumers specifically about their barriers to spending more (Table 14). In this case, the top five rated barriers are identical, and statistically higher for B2 and B3 consumers relative to B1 consumers. Prices are perceived to be too high and consumers don't carry enough cash with them. The variety of products and of farm vendors also comes into play (consistent with the literature) and likely relates to a range of food products consumers are looking for during their shopping trip. Interestingly, and in particular for B2 and B3 consumers, simply not posting prices leads to less total purchases. This is in support of the results on important characteristics (above) and to the relative convenience and simplicity of the shopping experience.

**Table 14. Five Largest Barriers to Spending More at Farmers Markets, by FM Bucket.<sup>a</sup>**

Barrier	B1	B1	B2	B2	B3	B3	B2 v B1	B3 v B1
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Different <sup>b</sup>	Different <sup>b</sup>
Prices too high	1	1.19	1	1.81	<b>1</b>	<b>2.01</b>	+	+
I don't carry enough cash with me	2	1.06	2	1.43	2	1.71	+	+
Limited variety of local products	3	0.89	4	1.22	3	1.39	+	+
Limited no. of farmers to choose from	4	0.88	3	1.28	5	1.29	+	+
Prices are not posted by the vendors	5	0.71	5	1.09	4	1.38	+	+

<sup>a</sup> Consumers rated barriers preventing them from buying more at FMs, on a scale from not a barrier (0) to a very large barrier (4). For those that don't currently shop at FMs, there were to indicate the size of the barriers if they were do so. The Score is the average rating across responses, with those greater than or equal to 2 (modest barrier) bolded.

<sup>b</sup> Nsd = Not statistically different, + = statistically different and greater than B1, - = statistically different and less than B1. Statistical significance was defined as a *p* value less than 0.05.

## IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

Everyone highly values food quality, clean markets, reasonable travel times, and adequate parking at or access to FMs. When compared to general food outlets, the availability of local foods is relatively more important at FMs, even for B3 consumers. Having a wide selection of different kinds of food (fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy) is important for both kinds of outlets, but consumers, on average, accept that it is less likely to exist at FMs. That said, improvements in this characteristic, like others involving convenience of food shopping, will likely improve FM attendance by those whose attendance has diminished or is recently nonexistent.

B2s and B3 consumers need food products to be more efficiently organized and prices clearly displayed to improve participation. While B3 consumers may not be able to get all they want at the market, knowing that they can productively get in and out quickly will go a long way in supporting their return. While the availability of nonlocal and out-of-season foods at FMs is often a complex and emotional topic. Thinking creatively about involving local grocery stores to offer such products at FMs or locating FMs close to grocery stores may well be amenable to consumers and farm vendors since the products are not directly competing with their own products for sale.

While many FMs have special events, entertainment, craft and RTE food product vendors, none of these characteristics are likely to increase sales of farm vendors to any significant degree. In addition, timing conflicts with consumer schedules are unavoidable, but perhaps can be investigated further to better allow all types of consumers access to the markets. In particular, the growth in competition for local food product sales cannot be overlooked. Indeed, purchasing of local foods was seen as important even for B3 consumers, and all consumers found availability at other marketing channels a sizable barrier to increasing FM attendance.

B2 and B3 consumers were relatively more price conscious and consider prices at FM competitor outlets closely. Further, while not shown above, all consumer types ranked price levels as a larger barrier at FMs than at other outlets for local foods in general. Messaging on prices is often not included in marketing efforts and perhaps should be, where conditions warrant. On the plus side, consumers ranked the importance of having a relationship with the seller higher at FMs than at other outlets when shopping for local foods. While overall rankings for this characteristic at FMs were not as high as one may have expected, the relative gain over other food outlets in general is an encouraging sign. Whether the ranking at FMs is above those at other farm DTC outlets is unknown, but worthy of further study given the competitive marketplace for local foods.

To further inform targeted marketing efforts aimed at increasing customer attendance and farm sales at FMs, we summarize the distinguishing characteristics of FM consumers by type of consumer (Table 15) and differences by demographic factors (Table 16). To be clear, Table 15 represents a summary of the results based on the average consumer in each FM bucket. Where particular differences resonate within those buckets by demographic characteristic, they are highlighted in Table 16. We expect such an exposition will serve as a useful guide to marketing efforts to ensure priority elements are considered in promotion and marketing efforts, operational parameters at FMs, and farm vendor presentation.

Similar efforts in other regions will allow for more variation in demographic profiles of consumers and the kinds of FMs operated. Doing so will provide additional information on marketing strategy and, perhaps, inherent regional differences. Finally, including specific questions about potential cannibalization effects at markets; i.e., asking about customer transaction size per market, will provide more direct data in testing the influence (or not) of this area of concern.

To be sure, FMs are unique in their levels and types of farms participating, customers attending, and the geographic areas and consumer demographic profiles from which they operate. For more productive use of the results presented here, FM managers and farm vendors should consider what the primary objectives of their own targeted marketing strategies are and the resources available from which to employ them. From an economic perspective, the type of customer to target will be for whom the marginal returns of their participation gain is the highest. That said, understanding the true benefits and costs from alternative strategies is difficult and strategies will necessarily differ by market, community, and strategic goals. In addition, unintended consequences of not targeting a particular segment may result in diminished sales from that group, if promotional messaging is unique and distinct. In short, a holistic approach is advised whereby strategies are multiple and varied, depending on the targeted consumer. We expect the information presented here will be useful in aligning those strategies to improve FM performance for farm vendors.

**Table 15. Primary Considerations for Marketing Strategies to Improve Attendance and Purchases.**

Bucket	Marketing Consideration		
<b>B1 Farmers Market Customers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Highlight quality products, clean markets, and ease of travel to and from</li> <li>2. Prioritize support for local farms, then fresh food products</li> <li>3. Reinforce appreciation for attending</li> <li>4. Keep the food shopping experience fun and friendly</li> <li>5. Only local and own-farm products, with reasonable variety in products and farmers</li> <li>6. Environmentally friendly products (organic, minimal packaging) increase purchases</li> <li>7. Minimally (but not zero) price conscious</li> <li>8. Variable operating hours will reduce time conflicts</li> <li>9. Increase SNAP/EBT availability and use of debit/credit cards</li> <li>10. Relationship with farm vendor moderately important</li> <li>11. Market season extension will increase purchases</li> <li>12. Recognize competition with other outlets (particularly other DTC outlets)</li> </ol>		
	<b>B2 Farmers Market Customers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Highlight quality products, clean markets, and ease of travel to and from</li> <li>2. Prioritize fresh food products, then support for local farms</li> <li>3. Reinforce appreciation for attending</li> <li>4. Keep the food shopping experience fun and friendly, but organizationally efficient</li> <li>5. Only local and own-farm products, with variety in products and farms important</li> <li>6. Clearly display product prices; reduce need to talk to farmers and pressure to purchase</li> <li>7. Moderately price conscious</li> <li>8. Variable operating hours will reduce time conflicts, including addition of evening hours</li> <li>9. Increase SNAP/EBT availability and use of debit/credit cards</li> <li>10. Adequate parking important</li> <li>11. Relationship with farm vendor minimally important</li> <li>12. Address competition with other outlets (including retail grocery and other DTC outlets)</li> </ol>	
		<b>B3 Farmers Market Customers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Highlight quality products, clean markets, and ease of travel to and from</li> <li>2. Prioritize fresh food products, then support for local farms</li> <li>3. Introduce strongly appreciation for attending (incentives?)</li> <li>4. Double down on an efficiently organized shopping experience</li> <li>5. Only local and own-farm not required, must have sufficient variety in products and farmers. Common non-local/off season goods would improve attendance.</li> <li>6. Clearly display product prices; reduce need to talk to farmers and pressure to purchase</li> <li>7. Very price conscious</li> <li>8. Variable operating hours reduce time conflicts, particularly addition of evening hours</li> <li>9. Prioritize SNAP/EBT availability and use of debit/credit cards</li> <li>10. Adequate and convenient parking required</li> <li>11. Relationship with farm vendor not important</li> <li>12. Address competition with other outlets (including retail grocery and other DTC outlets)</li> </ol>



**Table 16. Emphases for Marketing Strategies, by Demographic Characteristics.**

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<b>Demographic Characteristic and Marketing Emphases</b>
<b>Higher Income Households:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Prioritize support for local farms over fresh food characteristics (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>2. Higher preference for weekend hours and adequate parking (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>3. Lower valuation for special events, RTE food vendors, and SNAP/EBT availability (B3)</li><li>4. Want more variety of products and farmers (B2, B3)</li><li>5. More strongly desire 1-stop shopping, but less price conscious (B1, B2, B3)</li></ol>
<b>Lower Income Households:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. More intimidated to talk to farmers (B3)</li><li>2. Value higher SNAP/EBT benefit availability (B1, B2) and having prices clearly displayed (B2, B3)</li><li>3. More strongly value relationship with farmer (B1, B3),</li><li>4. More amenable to nonlocal foods (B3) and concern for reasonable travel times (B3)</li><li>5. Inconvenient/limited parking problematic (B3), as is the ease of getting to/from FMs (B2, B3)</li><li>6. More price conscious, prices not competitive (B2, B3)</li><li>7. More often have own garden (B1, B2, B3) and time conflicts with FM hours (B2, B3)</li></ol>
<b>Younger shoppers:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Prioritize support for local farms over fresh food characteristics (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>2. Feel more intimidated, pressured, or confused (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>3. Less importance on weekend hours (B3) and quality of food products (B3)</li><li>4. Stronger values for SNAP/EBT and debit/credit card availability (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>5. Purchases restricted more by short market season (B1, B2, B3)</li></ol>
<b>Older shoppers:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Prioritize fresh food characteristic over support for local farms (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>2. Less intimidated and confused (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>3. Less interested in selection of different forms of food (fresh, canned, frozen) (B1, B2, B3)</li><li>4. Stronger association to relationship with farmer (B1, B3)</li><li>5. More often have own garden (B3) and more sensitive to food production methods (B2, B3)</li><li>6. Find parking more inconvenient (B2, B3)</li></ol>
<b>Households with Children:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Prioritize support for local farms over fresh food characteristics (B2)</li><li>2. Less intimidated confused and pressured (B2, B3) and more happy and appreciated (B2, B3)</li><li>3. Higher valuations for weekend hours (B1, B2) and debit/credit cards (B3).</li><li>4. Want more variety of products and farmers; prefer convenience of 1-stop shopping (B2, B3)</li><li>5. More likely to shop at other D2C outlets (B2, B3)</li></ol>
<b>Metro Counties:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Higher values on weekend hours, public transportation, and SNAP/EBT benefits (B1, B2)</li><li>2. Find FMs harder to get to (B2, B3) and higher preference to 1-stop shopping (B2, B3)</li></ol>
<b>Nonmetro Counties:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. More sensitive to prices (B2) but value relationship with farmer more (B1, B2)</li><li>2. Find variety of products and farmers lacking and more often have own garden (B2, B3).</li></ol>

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## APPENDIX 1: CONSUMER SURVEY

We are asking you to participate in a research survey on consumer participation and farmer sales at farmers markets. The survey is being organized by Todd M. Schmit, Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University, in association with the Farmers Market Federation of New York, Cornell Cooperative Extension – Broome County (NY), Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture in Massachusetts, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont, Maryland Farmers Market Association, and University of Maryland Extension.

### **What the study is about**

Food choices are an integral part of our health and well-being. Interest in purchasing food sourced from nearby farmers and growers has gained interest and appeal in recent years. Due to a variety of reasons, some people are very interested in purchasing local foods while others are not. This survey focuses on the purchasing habits by **all types of consumers** for local foods in general, and specifically at local farmers markets, as well as the barriers to participating in and purchasing local foods at farmers markets.

### **What we will ask you to do**

**We value everyone's opinion**, whether you shop at farmers markets a lot, a little, or not at all, and whether you shop for local food specifically or not. Opinions of all types of food consumers are critical to the success of this work. By consenting to participate in this study, we will ask you to complete an online survey about your food purchasing habits overall, for local foods, and at farmers markets. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. However, only one survey per household should be completed, by the household's primary food purchaser. You must also be at least 18 years of age to participate.

### **Risks and discomforts**

We do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

### **Benefits**

While participating in the survey will not benefit you directly, we hope to learn more about consumers' interest in purchasing local foods, where they like to buy them, and the barriers to expanding local food sales, particularly through farmers markets. Accordingly, the results will be useful to us in identifying specific solutions that farmers markets managers and vendors can take to reduce the barriers consumers face in more fully participating.

### **Compensation for participation**

None.

### **Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security**

We anticipate that your participation in this online survey presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet. The surveys will be completely anonymous; no personal identifiers (e.g., name, address) will be asked for or recorded. However, we do ask for your county and state of residence to allow us to do state-level analyses, where appropriate.

### **Data Sharing**

Data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science and health. As personal identifiers will not be collected, other researchers, by current scientific standards and known methods, will be unable to identify you from the information we share. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

### **Taking part is voluntary**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the survey begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with Cornell University or with any of the collaborators mentioned above.

### **If you have questions**

The main researcher conducting this survey is Todd M. Schmit, an Associate Professor at Cornell University. If you have any questions regarding the survey you may contact Todd at [tms1@cornell.edu](mailto:tms1@cornell.edu) or at 607-255-3015. You should also feel free to reach out to any of the collaborating organizations listed above. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 607-255-5138 or access their website at <http://www.irb.cornell.edu/>. You may also report your concerns or complaints anonymously through Ethicspoint online at <http://www.hotline.cornell.edu/> or by calling toll free at 1-866-293-3077. Ethicspoint is an independent organization that serves as a liaison between the University and the person bringing the complaint so that anonymity can be ensured.

#### **Statement of Consent**

Once you have read the above information and received answers to any questions you have. Please click on the "I APPROVE" box below to proceed to the online survey. Thanks!

***I APPROVE***

**Before you begin, please read the two simple definitions below to assist you in answering questions for the survey.**

**What food products are included in "local foods"?** Please consider local food products broadly to include fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy products, baked goods, and other processed food products. You will be asked how you define "local" as part of the survey.

**What's a farmers market?** Please consider a farmers market as a public and recurring assembly of different farmers (or their representatives) selling the food that they produced or processed directly to consumers. Farmers markets may be indoors or outdoors and typically consist of booths, tables, or stands where multiple farmers (or their representatives) directly sell their products.

**1. How important is it to you to purchase local foods?**

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

**2. In terms of geography, what is your definition of local food?**

- Grown and/or made within my county of residence
- Grown and/or made within a multi-county region that I live in
- Grown and/or made within my state of residence
- Other (please describe)

**3. In terms of distance, what do you think is the maximum distance food can travel in order to be considered local?**

- 50 miles
- 100 miles
- 250 miles
- 500 miles
- Other (please describe)

**3. Comparing the number of shopping trips for local foods (in any outlet) last year relative to the year prior, would you say:**

- I shopped more frequently for local foods last year than the year prior
- I shopped less frequently for local foods last year than the year prior
- I shopped about the same number of times for local foods last year relative to the year prior
- I didn't shop specifically for local foods either year

**4. Comparing the total volume of purchases (dollars) of local foods last year (from all outlets) relative to the year prior, would you say:**

- I purchased more local foods (in dollars) last year than the year prior
- I purchased less local foods (in dollars) last year than the year prior
- The level of my purchases on local foods were about the same (in dollars) last year relative to the year prior
- I didn't purchase local foods either year

**5. Comparing the number of shopping trips to farmers markets last year relative to the year prior, would you say:**

- I shopped more frequently at farmers markets last year than the year prior
- I shopped less frequently at farmers markets last year than the year prior
- I shopped about the same number of times at farmers markets last year relative to the year prior
- I didn't shop at farmers markets either year

**6. Comparing your total farmers market shopping purchases (dollars) last year relative to the year prior, would you say:**

- I purchased more at farmers markets (in dollars) last year than the year prior
- I purchased less at farmers markets (in dollars) last year than the year prior
- My overall purchases at farmers markets were about the same last year relative to the year prior
- I didn't purchase anything at farmers markets either year

**7. What is the importance of each of the following characteristics when you are shopping for food (local or not)?**

Characteristic of outlet when shopping for food	Not Important (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	(2)	Important (3)	Very Important (4)
Open during the day					
Open during the evening (i.e., after work)					
Open on the weekends					
Reasonable travel time to and from shopping outlet					
Adequate parking					
Available by public transportation					

Characteristic of outlet when shopping for food	Not Important (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	(2)	Important (3)	Very Important (4)
Wide selection of different kinds of foods (e.g., fruits, vegetables, meats, eggs, dairy)					
Wide selection of different forms of foods (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, deli)					
Quality of food products					
Availability of local foods					
Availability of non-local foods					
Availability of non-food products					
Accepts credit/debit cards					
Accepts SNAP/EBT food stamp benefits					
Other incentives for low-income persons					
Offers & accepts coupons, sales, other discounts					
Price level					
Prices clearly displayed					
Relationship with seller					
Availability of particular brands (company or farmer)					
Environmentally friendly products (e.g., organic practices, minimal packaging)					
Special events (e.g., entertainment, fundraising)					
Availability of ready-to-eat, prepared foods					
Cleanliness					
Food products efficiently organized					
Other (please describe: )					

**8. What is the importance of each of the following characteristics when you are shopping at a farmers market? If you don't currently shop at farmers markets, indicate the level of importance of each if you were to do so.**

Characteristic of farmers market	Not Important (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	(2)	Important (3)	Very Important (4)
Open during the day					
Open during the evening (i.e., after work)					
Open on the weekends					
Reasonable travel time to and from farmers market					
Adequate parking					
Available by public transportation					
Wide selection of different kinds of foods (e.g., fruits, vegetables, meats, eggs, dairy)					
Wide selection of different forms of foods (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, deli)					
Quality of food products					
Availability of local foods					
Availability of non-local foods					
Availability of non-food products					
Accepts credit/debit cards					
Accepts SNAP/EBT food stamp benefits					
Other incentives for low-income persons					
Offers & accepts coupons, sales, other discounts					
Price level					
Prices clearly displayed					
Relationship with vendor					

Characteristic of farmers market	Not Important (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	(2)	Important (3)	Very Important (4)
Availability of particular brands (company or farmer)					
Environmentally friendly products (e.g., organic practices, minimal packaging)					
Special events (e.g., entertainment, fundraising)					
Availability of ready-to-eat, prepared foods					
Cleanliness					
Food products efficiently organized					
Other (please describe: )					

**9. Last year how many times did you go to a farmers market during the market season of May through October?**

- Never
- Less than once a month during the market season
- Once a month during the market season
- Two to three times each month during the market season
- Once a week during the market season
- More than once a week during the market season

**10. When shopping at a farmers market, what is your primary motivation? (select one)**

- To support the local farmers and vendors
- Keeping my food dollars in the local economy
- To participate in a social/community setting
- To purchase fresh food
- Other (please describe)
- I don't shop at farmers markets

**11. When shopping for local foods other than at a farmers market, what is your primary motivation? (select one)**

- To support the local farmers and vendors
- Keeping my food dollars in the local economy
- To participate in a social/community setting
- To purchase fresh food
- Other (please describe)
- I don't shop specifically for local foods

**12. When I go to a farmers market, I feel (check all that apply):**

- Happy, it's a fun place to be
- Proud to support local vendors
- Welcomed and appreciated
- Nothing in particular, it's about shopping and moving on with my day
- Pressured or obligated to purchase
- Confused, too much going on
- Intimidated to talk to the farmers
- Other (please describe)
- I don't shop at farmers markets

**13. How large are the following barriers in preventing you from shopping at farmers markets more frequently? If you don't shop at farmers markets now, how effective are the following barriers in preventing you from shopping at them?**

Barrier of shopping more at farmers markets	Not a barrier to me (0)	A minor barrier to me (1)	A modest barrier to me (2)	A large barrier to me (3)	A very large barrier to me (4)
I have my own garden or my neighbors share produce from their garden with me					



Barrier of shopping more at farmers markets	Not a barrier to me (0)	A minor barrier to me (1)	A modest barrier to me (2)	A large barrier to me (3)	A very large barrier to me (4)
I prefer the convenience of a grocery store for one-stop buying					
I don't know where a farmers market is located near me					
The time of the market conflicts with my schedule (e.g., work, sleep, school, family care, community responsibilities)					
There is not enough variety of food or farmers at my local farmers market					
Food quality does not meet my standards					
Food production methods do not meet my standards (example organic, cage-free, grass fed, food miles)					
I purchase local foods at other direct marketing channels (example, CSA, farmstands, farm store) already					
I purchase local foods at other retail outlets (example grocery store, convenience store) already					
I find prices are not competitive with other options					
I find it intimidating to shop at a farmers market					
I am unsure if vendors are selling their own products					
I am unsure if vendors are selling locally-sourced products					
Vendors are not friendly or helpful					
It is hard for me to get to the farmers market					
The market is too far away					
I prefer the market to be indoors or undercover					
Parking is inconvenient or limited					
I find walking around the market difficult (example too crowded, poor lighting, uneven surfaces)					
It is only open part of the year					
Not enough entertainment or special events					
Other (please describe)					

**14. How large are the following barriers in preventing you from buying more at farmers markets when you attend one? If you don't shop at farmers markets now, how effective would the following barriers be in preventing purchases by you if you were to attend one?**

Barrier of buying more at farmers markets	Not a barrier to me (0)	A minor barrier to me (1)	A modest barrier to me (2)	A large barrier to me (3)	A very large barrier to me (4)
I have my own garden or my neighbors share produce from their garden with me					
I prefer the convenience of a grocery store for one-stop buying					
I don't know where a farmers market is located near me					
The time of the market conflicts with my schedule (e.g., work, sleep, school, family care, community responsibilities)					
There is not enough variety of food or farmers at my local farmers market					
I don't carry enough cash with me					

Barrier of buying more at farmers markets	Not a barrier to me (0)	A minor barrier to me (1)	A modest barrier to me (2)	A large barrier to me (3)	A very large barrier to me (4)
Limited number of farmers to choose from					
Limited variety of local products					
Poor quality of local products					
Limited to no access to non-local products					
Prices too high					
I am unsure if vendors are selling their own products					
I am unsure if vendors are selling locally-sourced products					
I have a language barrier between me and the vendors					
Prices are not posted by the vendors					
Products not labeled with growing methods					
Other (please describe)					

**15. What percent of your total food dollars (local and nonlocal) are spent at the following food outlets? (Note, total of percentages must equal 100%)**

- Farm stands at the farm
- Farm store
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- Farmers markets
- Convenience stores
- Cooperative grocery store
- Retail grocery store
- Super centers
- Meal delivery services
- Other (please describe)

**16. How likely are you to shop at the following locations for locally grown/produced food?**

Location	Not likely (0)	Somewhat likely (1)	Likely (2)	Very likely (3)	Extremely likely (4)
Farm stand at the farm					
Farm store					
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)					
Farmers markets					
Convenience stores					
Cooperative grocery store					
Retail grocery store					
Super centers					
Meal delivery services					
Other (please describe)					

**17. What state and county do you live in?**

- State:
- County:

**18. Please check the age bracket in which you fall.**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-59
- 60+

**19. What category or categories best describe you (check all that apply)?**

- White
- Hispanic, Latino, Spanish origin
- Black or African American
- Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Other (describe)

**20. What is the number of persons living in your household?**

- **Number of persons:**

**21 How do you describe your household? (Check all that apply.)**

- Single
- Married or single with significant other/partner/roommate
- Children (under 5 years old)
- Children (between 5 and 17 years of age)
- Multi-generational (3 to 4 generations)

**22. Please describe your work status:**

- Unemployed
- Employed part time
- Employed full time
- Retired
- Other (please describe)

**23. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- Other (please describe)

**24. What was your total household income before taxes last year?**

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 to 34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

**25. Feel free to provide any additional comments about your local food purchasing habits and how they've changed in the text box below (optional)**

**SURVEY COMPLETE!**

**[CLICK ON THE ARROW BELOW TO SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSES!](#)**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION!**

## OTHER A.E.M. EXTENSION BULLETINS

EB No	Title	Fee (if applicable)	Author(s)
2019-05	Assessing the Barriers to Increasing Customer Participation and Farm Sales at Farmers Markets: Implications for Marketing Strategy		Schmit T.M., Severson, R.M. & Sawaura, E.
2019-04	Crop Budgets and Cost & Return Studies for Organic Grain in Western New York		Li, J., Gómez, M. & Murphy, J.
2019-03	2018 New York State Berry Market Analysis: Pricing Information of Local Berries		Davis, T., Gomez, M. & Pritts, M.
2019-02	The State of the USDA Inspected Red Meat Harvest & Processing Industry in New York & New England		Waro, M., Kalaitzandonakes, M., Baker, M., Peters, C., Gomez, M. & Conard, M.
2019-01	The State of the Agricultural Workforce in New York		Stup, R., Ifft, J. & Maloney, T.
2018-08	Six Year Trend Analysis New York State Dairy Farms Selected Financial and Production Factors		Karszes, J.
2018-07	Production Agriculture Diversification for Each State in the United States		Tauer, L. W.
2018-06	Dairy Business Summary New York State 2017		Karszes, J., Christman, A., Howlett, A. & Knoblauch, W.
2018-05	Business Summary New York State 2016		Karszes, J., Christman, A., Howlett, A., Windecker, K. & Knoblauch, W.
2018-04	Approaches to Balancing Solar Expansion and Farmland PReservation: A Comparison across Selected States		Grout, T. & Ifft, J.
2018-03	Economic Contributions of the Apple Industry Supply Chain in New York State		Schmit, T.M., Severson, R.M., Strzok, J. & Barros, J.
2018-02	Case Studies of Supermarkets and Food Supply Chains in Low-Income Areas of the Northeast: A Cross Case Comparison of 11 Case Studies		Park, K. S., Gomez, M. & Clancy, K.

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