

Farmers' Markets: Improving Health, Improving Community

What is a Farmers' Market? It's a market where a group of farmers come together in a single location to sell their food products to the public. To be a truly local farmers market, all products sold in a particular stall should be grown, caught, reared, baked, processed, etc. by the stallholder. Farmers' markets today have a broad diversity of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy products, eggs, baked goods, on-farm processed goods and flowers.

When do Farmers' Markets operate? Farmers' markets usually operate when fresh produce is available. In Michigan this typically means between May and November. Daily operations vary a great deal among markets, with some open several days or evenings a week, Saturdays, or a combination. Market hours are established based on farmer availability and customer desires.

Who benefits from Farmers' Markets?

- Local farmers benefit with an outlet to sell directly to consumers and maximize profits by eliminating the "middle man".
- Consumers benefit with a good source of fresh, wholesome food; they know where their food is coming from; and they help support their local economy.
- Communities benefit as the sale of local food products helps the local economy; improves viability of local agriculture and helps to preserve open space; and people tend to spend additional money at other retail businesses if the farmers' market is nearby.

Farmers, consumers and communities ALL benefit from the wonderful social interaction that occurs at well-functioning farmers' markets; they help to create new relationships and mutual support.

Who can start a Farmers' Market? Anyone! Farmers' markets have been started by a wide variety of interested groups and individuals. For example:

- A group of farmers obtain permission to use a town parking lot on Saturday
- A group of local merchants add a Farmers' Market as an additional attraction
- A group of citizens want an outlet for farmers in the area and a single place to shop for a wide variety of local foods.

How can we start a Farmers' Market? Learn about the issues and responsibilities that are involved in operating a Farmers' Market. This can be done through the resources outlined below. Your county's local Michigan State University Extension office may also be able to help you start a market.

Resources:

USDA Farmers' Market website <http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>

Michigan information: <http://www.michigan.gov/mda/>, then search on "farmers markets".

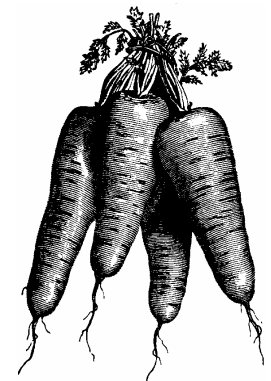
Neil Hamilton, The Legal Guide For Direct Farm Marketing (1999), publication information at <http://www.law.drake.edu/centers/default.aspx?pageID=aboutAgCtr>

Vance Corum, Marcie Rosenzweig & Eric Gibson, The New Farmers' Market (2001) order at <http://www.sare.org/publications/>

Janet Bachman, Farmers' Markets (2002) on line at

<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/farmmarket.pdf>

Your Michigan State University Extension County Office at <http://www.msue.msu.edu/>



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