



Farmers Markets:

Good for your health • Good for your community • Good for the economy

The 2007 Census of Agriculture reported a remarkable \$1.2 billion in food sold directly from farmers to consumers. This is a 17% increase over the previous five years. The conclusion? More farmers are making more products directly available to more Americans in more ways. One of those ways is farmers markets.

Each year, more Americans in more communities get more of their food from farmers markets. In August, 2008, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported 4,685 farmers markets operating in the United States. This was a 170% increase over the last ten years. Fifteen percent of these markets operate in winter months, extending their seasons to generate more reliable income for small-scale family farmers and build sustainable local economies.

More farmers markets mean more opportunities to:

- support healthy lifestyles
- make fresh, nutritious food available to more people
- support small family farms and preserve America's rural landscapes
- strengthen communities and stimulate local economies

What is a farmers market?

Farmers markets vary from hundreds of food producers across a regional food system to just a few farmers collecting in a town square every month. Each market is a unique representation of its community, with a wide variety of products available for sale. Most farmers markets showcase local food, local producers, and local pride.

Farmers markets...

Support healthy lifestyles

- Offer unique varieties of fresh, nutritious food at the peak of flavor, directly from the grower
- Encourage walking, bicycling, and use of public transit
- Develop vibrant community networks and gathering places
- Provide opportunities for fresh air, social interaction, and learning about healthy cooking and regional products

Farmers markets...

Make fresh nutritious food available to more people

- Redeem more than \$20 million in Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) vouchers to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to more than 2.3 million low income families
- Redeem \$20 million in Senior Farmers Market Nutrition (SFMNP) vouchers, which provide fresh vegetables, fruits, herbs, and honey to more than 963,000 low-income seniors.
- Accept EBT cards that accompany the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Food Program (formerly known as food stamps).
The number of farmers markets accepting SNAP benefits nationwide grew 34 percent between 2007 and 2008.
- Donate hundreds of thousands of pounds of unsold, fresh produce to food banks, shelters, and other social service agencies.

FarmersMarketCoalition.org

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Farmers markets...

Support small family farms and preserve America's rural landscapes

- Grow opportunities for farmers. In 1999, Alabama had 17 farmers markets involving 234 farmers. By 2008, the state had 102 markets involving 1,064 farmers.
- Promote diversity. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of women farmers rose by almost 30%, and Hispanic farm ownership rose by more than 10%, coinciding with growth in farmers markets.
- Preserve agricultural land from over-development. New York City's Greenmarkets rely on more than 27,300 acres of farmland, and 80% of participating farmers credit their business' success to farmers markets.
- Keep farmers farming. Thirty five percent of farms near Ithaca, NY believe they would simply not exist if it was not for farmers market and direct sales in and around the city.

Farmers markets...

Strengthen communities and stimulate local economies

- Grow jobs and strengthen local economies. In 2004, Iowa farmers markets generated 20.8 million in economic activity, directly creating 324 jobs. Oklahoma farmers markets generated 7.8 million in statewide economic activity.
- Reduce the distance food travels. In 2008, more than 85% of farmers at Portland Farmers Market traveled 50 miles or fewer to get there, a fraction of the distance traveled by most food in the U.S.
- Revitalize downtowns. In 2003, 24% of shoppers at Portland, Oregon's midweek market came downtown specifically to attend the market, then continued to shop downtown.
- Make local food affordable. Produce at Seattle farmers markets was up to 20 cents per pound less than at nearby food retailers.
- Attract new small businesses. Farmers markets have attracted new small businesses to downtown Oswego and Rochester, New York.

Support your farmers market and support your community.

What is the Farmers Market Coalition?

Our mission is to strengthen farmers markets for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities. FMC is a 501(c)(3) representing farmers markets managers, farmers, state farmers market associations, and other organizations dedicated to helping farmers markets thrive in the long-term. Through education, networking, and advocacy, FMC helps farmers markets nationwide maximize their capacity to support agricultural entrepreneurship, provide healthy alternatives for consumers, and strengthen communities.

These talking points were developed in partnership with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Farmers markets are good for everyone.

Join us to make them even better.

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