



United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Service

2014 National Farmers Market Manager Survey Summary

A Snapshot of the 2013 Farmers Market Season

In 2014, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) surveyed nearly 1,400 farmers market managers from USDA's National Farmers Market Directory about their 2013 season activities. The National Farmers Market Manager Survey results can help market managers, planners and stakeholders formulate a better understanding of conditions surrounding the direct to consumer marketplace for local foods.

Some noted trends include:

Fresh Produce Dominates, Strong Organic Presence – Locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables remain at the heart of the U.S. farmers market business model. Virtually all market managers surveyed (99%) sold locally grown fresh fruits or vegetables at their market. Nearly two-thirds of these managers (66%) also indicated that at least one vendor was a USDA-certified organic producer.

Customer Demand Remains Robust – The majority of farmers market managers reported increases in customer traffic and market sales. Of the 91% of surveyed managers for markets open in both the 2012 and 2013 seasons: 64% reported increased customer traffic; 63% reported increases in their number of repeat customers; and 63% reported increases in annual sales.

Competition Between Farmers Markets not Threat to Market Sales – Competition between farmers markets was not regarded by market managers as a serious threat to market sales. A large majority (73%) of farmers market managers surveyed did not believe that nearby farmers markets had any effect on their market sales.

Markets Look to Expand to Meet Demand – Most farmers market managers actively sought to expand. Eighty-five percent looked to add vendors with 62% of those managers looking for vendors selling different types of products.

Markets Using Web and Mobile-based Technologies – Most farmers market managers surveyed (84%) used web and/or mobile-based technologies to communicate with customers, vendors, and their community. Of those market managers that used electronic technology: 81% had a website for their farmers market; 86% used social media or blogs and almost half (48%) used electronic newsletters to reach their customers.

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Markets Strengthen Community Engagement – Farmers markets continue to rely on community involvement for success with 75% of markets using volunteers to perform market operations and 46% choosing volunteers as market managers. Nearly half (49%) of market managers surveyed offered programs or opportunities to their community with most (88%) providing market space for special events, and 65% providing retail space for other organizations. In addition, 19% of managers indicated that their market assisted with transportation services to special community events at the market.

Access to Nutritional Assistance at Farmers Markets is a Win-Win – A large number (74%) of farmers markets now have at least one vendor accepting federal nutrition assistance as payment. Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women, Infants and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP), and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) expand the customer base for farmers, give recipients access to healthy foods and encourage the sale of locally-sourced produce.

Markets Step Up Nutritional Education – Most farmers markets (81%) feature programs to encourage healthy eating. Among the most common activities included offering nutrition education (76%), distributing healthy recipe cards to customers (68%) and sponsoring healthy cooking demonstrations (66%).

Markets Serve As an Important Link in Local Food Business Development – Farmers markets also provide essential services to other local food businesses. Approximately 21% of farmers markets helped incubate new agribusinesses by sharing facilities, retail space and/or providing technical assistance. Nearly 23% of farmers markets surveyed were used as a delivery point for community supported agriculture (CSA) enterprises.

During the 2013 farmers market season there were more than 8,100 farmers markets listed in the USDA National Farmers Market Directory. The characteristics, survey responses and data provided by the nearly 1,400 respondents to the 2014 Farmers Market Managers Survey are believed to be reasonably representative of those listings, and the U.S. farmers market sector as a whole.