

Farmers Markets

In a Nutshell

Farmers Markets serve many functions: they provide access to healthy foods, stimulate the local economy, support local agriculture, and create vibrant community gathering spots. In fact, Iowa State University found that farmers markets in the state contributed up to \$20 million in sales and created another \$12 million in direct and indirect economic activity.

The “How To”

How to Start a Farmers Market

1. See what else is out there. Check for nearby markets or local food options at localharvest.org. Any state Extension office or the Missouri farmers market association will also be able to provide valuable information.
2. Bring together a group of people for a meeting to discuss the feasibility of a market and determine your goals: to provide healthy food to underserved communities, to provide a thriving local economy, to serve a suburban community, or to activate a community space.
3. Contact your local health department and find out what Food Codes or Ordinances apply to farmers markets for your area.
4. Create a business plan that outlines your market's mission, financial plan, management, governance structure, operations, target audience, timeline, and marketing approach.
5. Determine if your market will offer SNAP/EBT redemption. The [USDA](http://www.usda.gov) offers helpful information to accept SNAP/EBT benefits.
6. Create market bylaws and applications for vendors. These will help to set clear expectations for all involved parties from the get-go. See page 10 of the National AgLaw Center Publication [Farmers Markets Rules, Regulations, and Opportunities](#) for examples.
7. Find a minimum of eight vendors that offer a variety of products, from fruit to meat to baked goods.
8. Invite other community groups and partners to participate in the market. Adding music, art, or other activities will help draw a broader crowd, and these partners can also help promote the market.



The Missouri Extension Office offers [FAQs about starting and operating a farmersmarket](#).

Planning & Zoning

Policies related to farmers markets are generated by city, county or local health departments and will provide operating guidelines, sampling standards, and more. If zoning permits are an issue, consider adopting new zoning provisions to establish farmers markets as an allowed land use.

State regulations by the Missouri Department of Agriculture, as well as information regarding weights and

measurement requirements, food safety best practices, information on selling eggs, etc., can be found at <http://mda.mo.gov/abd/fmkt/>.

Dollars & Cents

Cost of Implementation

The location for your market will likely be free – many take place in parks or public plazas. Local businesses will sometimes donate parking lots for a weekly or monthly market, as Schlafly Bottleworks does in Maplewood, MO. This is a win-win situation for the market and the business, as both parties contribute to the sales of the other.

A Market Manager is necessary to serve as the point person for vendors and coordinate with Health Department and location staff. Often a vendor will fulfill this role at the beginning stages, but funding a permanent Market Manager is a priority for the success of the market, either from grants or vendor fees.

There are numerous models for vendor fees: an annual base fee, flat fee per market day, percentage-of-sales fee or some combination. The fees can be sliding scale or fixed, and will determine the kind of vendor who wants to sell at your market. The Health Department may have separate fees.

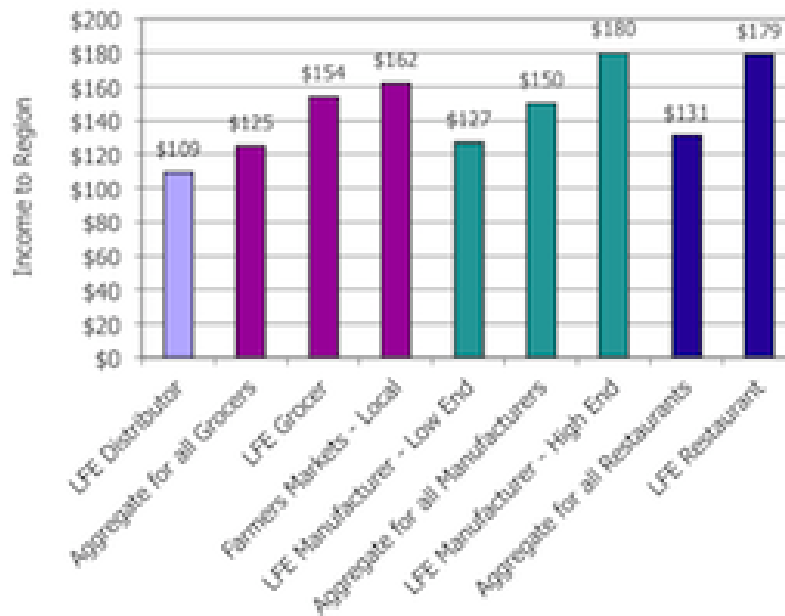
Return On Investment

USDA data from 2008 reported \$1.2 billion in local food sales, with direct-to-consumer outlets (farmers markets, roadside stands, CSAs) accounting for \$877 million.

More than half of farmers market shoppers (60%) visit nearby stores on the same day, stimulating the local economy, according to Project for Public Spaces (2008).

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Figure 1: Direct and Indirect Impacts for \$100 of Local Food Spending



LFE = Local Food Economy

Source: Why Local Linkages Matter: Findings from the local food economy. 2008

Measuring Success

Common metrics to measure the success of markets are pounds of food sold, number of vendors, and number of markets. Less common, but still valuable, metrics are attendance counts, customer surveys, and market assessments.