

The Benefits of Year-Round Farmers' Markets

Wandra Arrington*

Department of Agriculture, Alcorn State University, United States

**Corresponding author: Wandra Arrington, Department of Agriculture, School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, Alcorn State University, Lorman, Mississippi, USA,*

Abstract: Farmers' markets have become a critical ingredient to our nation's economy, food systems, and communities. Connecting the rural to the urban, farmer to consumer, and fresh ingredients to our diets, farmers' markets are becoming economic and community centerpieces in both cities and towns across the U.S. There are over 8,600 markets listed in the National Farmers Market Directory, demonstrating the continuous demand for these community-oriented markets and the many contributions they make to the respective local economies. This article provides information on the main characteristics of farmers' markets and the ways you can enjoy them in your community year-round. These markets benefit local farmers, vendors, consumers, neighbors, the community, and the local economy.

Keywords: Farmers' Markets, Farmers, Agriculture, Food Systems

Abbreviations:

US: United States; USDA-AMS: United States Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Marketing Service; USDA: United State Department of Agriculture; SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; WIC: Women, Infant and Children's; FMNP: Farmers Market Nutrition Program; SFMNP: Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Introduction

Farmers' markets are an integral part of the urban/farm linkage and have continued to rise in popularity, mostly due to the growing consumer interest in obtaining fresh products directly from the farm. Such markets provide consumers access to locally grown, farm-fresh produce, enable farmers with the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with their customers, and cultivate consumer loyalty regarding the farmers who grow the produce [1]. According to the USDA-AMS, the number of farmers' markets in the U.S. has grown rapidly in recent years, from just under 2,000 in 1994 to over 8,600 farmers' markets being registered in the USDA Farmers Market Directory as of 2019[2]. Depending on the location, the summer market season is any time from mid-March until mid-November, while the winter season tends to be between November and March. Winter and summer markets offer vastly different choices in produce. Winter markets usually offer less produce, and the options mostly comprise spinach, kale, microgreens, potatoes, and sweet potatoes, mushrooms, and squash. On the other hand, summer markets tend to offer a wide variety of greens, vegetables, fruits, and other specialty crops [3].

Farmers' markets are a centerpiece of local food systems. These markets offer important benefits to farmers, buyers, and communities across the U.S. On the supply side, the market outlets allow farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers and establish long-term relationships with them. For farmers, the benefits of these markets include receiving a larger share of the consumers' money, improving business cash flow, accessing an outlet for value-added products, delegating marketing to market managers, receiving immediate feedback for products and varieties, and joining different networks of farmers. On the demand side, farmers' markets promote the sustainability of local economies, increase the access to and availability of fresh and healthy foods, improve knowledge of seasonal produce that has been harvested at the peak of quality, and provide community events and entertainment for the community members [4].

Farmers' markets exist in every state and are located in all kinds of places—from main streets to city centers, from parks to parking lots, and from sidewalks to shopping centers. To find a market listing near you, ask your neighbors, friends, colleagues, or Google, or search for one in the USDA's Farmers Market Directory or any other local media source. Additionally, a large number of states have a state farmers' market association that can provide you with information as well [5].

What is a farmers' market?

A farmers' market is a public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives directly selling their produce to consumers. Farmers' markets facilitate personal connections and bonds of mutual benefits between farmers, shoppers, and communities. By cutting out go-betweens, farmers receive more of the money

paid, customers receive the freshest and most flavorful produce in their area, and local economies prosper. Each farmers' market defines the term "local" according to the agriculture of its region and regularly communicates this definition to the public. These markets also implement guidelines and operating rules that ensure that the market consists principally of farms selling their products directly to the public. To protect both farmers and consumers, some states have even established their own formal definitions that specify market characteristics in more detail [5].

Farmers' markets are much more than just a place to sell produce; they offer important benefits to farmers, buyers, and communities across the U.S. These markets provide a venue for communities to socialize, revitalize downtown districts, and help educate people to make healthier food choices. They are also attractive outlets for locally grown flowers, ornamentals, and edible crops. These markets tend to serve as the primary outlet for smaller and part-time operations or as a complementary outlet for medium- and large-size growers who wish to expand their sales [6]. According to a study by Brown et al. (2007), there are two common groups of farmers' market vendors: part-time and retired farmers. Part-time farmers tend to report lower sales value (which also represents a lower share of their household income) compared to full-time farmers [7]. Feenstra et al. (2003) found that almost 80 percent of vendors reported that farmers' markets provided the greatest opportunity to develop their business as compared with other market outlets. By selling directly to consumers, farmers can gain a higher share of the consumer's money, improve their cash flow, and travel shorter distances (which reduces costs in transportation, handling, refrigeration, and storage) [6].

Farmers indicate that these markets help them improve skills in customer relations, merchandising, and pricing; they also increase their self-confidence in business [8]. For consumers, quality and value are among the most important attributes when purchasing produce at farmers' markets. Consumers prefer these markets because they can buy fresh, locally grown, sold-by-grower, and seasonal produce [9]. Andreatta and Wickliffe (2002) surveyed customers of farmers' markets and found that the respondents preferred farmers' markets due to the availability of fresh produce (88 percent) and local products (64 percent). The same study found that the main disadvantages of farmers' markets were distance to markets (23 percent), seasonal variation (14 percent), and hours of operation (12 percent) [10]. Kezis et al. (1998) found similar customer characteristics in surveys they conducted in Maine, Virginia, and Delaware [11,3].

How are farmers' markets operated?

A farmers' market allows growers to sell their products directly to consumers at a given location and time. This marketing method has grown in popularity in recent years. Since USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service began tracking farmers' markets in 1994, the number of markets in the U.S. has grown to over 8,600 [12].

Some farmers' markets are operated by managers. In 2019, farmers' market managers operated 8,140 farmers' markets, representing the largest number of markets operated from June through September. The month of July was the highest month of operation, with 71.9 percent, followed closely by August, with 71.8 percent. Twenty-one percent of the markets operated year-round. At 52.4 percent, Saturday was the most common day of operation. Fruits and vegetables composed the most common category of products sold at 99.6 percent of markets, followed by condiments and sauces at 94.1 percent. The percent of markets that had the label "locally grown" amounted to nearly 84.7 percent. The labels "gluten-free" and "grass-fed" constituted 46.1 percent and 46.0 percent, respectively. Of the 4,076 markets that accepted Federal Nutrition Programs, 78.7 percent accepted SNAP. Of the 4,352 vendors/producers who accepted Federal Nutrition Programs, 66.7 percent accepted WIC FMNP, closely followed by SFMNP at 66.3 percent. On an average market day, 916 households shopped across farmers' markets in the U.S. and spent \$14,547 per market. Farmers' market managers served as paid employees in 4,321 markets, while they served as volunteers in another 3162. On average, the paid managers earned \$18.40 per hour. The managers worked an average of 19.4 hours per week. There were 31,609 volunteers contributing their time across 5,078 markets[13].

Most farmers' markets are operated on a seasonal basis, opening in the spring and closing in the fall. There are year-round markets as well, and they are generally found on the West Coast, Southeast, and Southwest regions of the U.S. To participate in a farmers' market, a grower, or vendor, pays a fee or a percent of the sales for booth space. The market has a manager who coordinates with vendors and promotes the market. The market is held in a public location, such as a town square or downtown street, on a weekly basis. Some markets are open in the mornings, and others are open in the late afternoon. All farmers' markets are regulated by the state in terms of what they can sell and how. All these markets must be approved by the respective State Department of Agriculture, and they have to follow the state guidelines. However, they can create other guidelines that do not contradict the state guidelines. The regulations that vary slightly according to each locality are provided for the respective market by the market director. Most markets require that the participants are local, based on whatever region they have identified (by county and, at times, including adjoining counties; in

some other cases, anyone can participate). To sell at any farmers' market, the regulations of the state and the guidelines of that specific market must be followed. This requires being approved as a vendor, having insurance, and generally paying some sort of vendor participation fee [12].

A farmers' market allows growers the opportunity to sell their products directly to consumers without dealing with a food broker. In this process, farmers can explain how the food is grown and educate consumers on how to prepare it. Moreover, consumers have an opportunity to put a "face" on who is growing the product, which they do not necessarily receive from traditional retail food outlets. This form of direct marketing is also regarded as agritourism. Consumers also have the chance to purchase products that originate locally and are promoted as being "fresh." [12].

How does shopping at a farmers' market help the local economy?

Farmers' markets generate business, and business creates jobs. A 2011 Economic Research Service report found that fruit and vegetable farms selling at local and regional markets employ 13 full-time workers per \$1 million in the revenue earned. Comparatively, fruit and vegetable farms that did not sell locally employed only three full-time workers per \$1 million in revenue. [2] Farmers' markets also bring business to neighboring stores and communities where the market is located. Spending money at farmers' markets keeps the money in circulation within the local community, preserving and creating local jobs. A 2010 study of the Easton Farmers Market in Pennsylvania, for example, found that 70 percent of farmers' market customers were also shopping at downtown businesses, spending up to an extra \$26,000 each week. This differs significantly from many major grocery stores where a large percentage of sales leave the community, and possibly even the state or the region. A Virginia Cooperative Extension report showed if households in Southern Virginia spent 15 percent of their weekly food budget on locally grown food products, \$90 million in new farm income would be created for the region [2].

Farmers' markets facilitate access to fresh, locally grown foods, for starters. That may be one of the best reasons, but there are many more. Farmers' markets have fruits and vegetables at the peak of the growing season. This means the produce is at its freshest and tastes the best. The food is typically grown near where you live, not thousands of miles away or in another country. Shopping at farmers' markets also supports your local farmers and keeps the money you spend on food closer to your neighborhood [14].

How has the current economic crisis impacted farmers' markets?

Despite the recession, farmers' markets are booming. The Food Marketing Institute found that local and sustainable foods were a top buying trend in each of the last eight years. Economist Ken Meter of Crossroads Resource Center notes that, as a business model, farmers' markets are inherently flexible, which offers them protection from drastic economic changes. "They can adjust the price and adjust their product to get consumers' needs met. Retailers and big stores with big overheads and big expenses can't do that" [2].

When food is produced, processed, distributed, and sold all within the same region, more money stays in the local economy. This leads to economic development and job creation. Farmers' markets provide opportunities for small farmers and businesses to sell their products, and they help meet the growing demand for locally produced food. Being able to market to the consumer provides farmers important income opportunities quickly and directly without the added costs of shipping, storage, and inventory control. Another growing feature of farmers' markets across the nation is the acceptance of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infant and Children (WIC) benefits. By accepting SNAP benefits, farmers' markets provide access to a wide variety of fresh, healthy products. In fact, in 2012, over \$16 million were made at farmers' markets across the country in SNAP redemptions. Beyond the economic and business benefits, farmers' markets give communities across the country access to fresh, healthy foods, especially in urban and rural areas where shopping options may be limited. What began as a business necessity for numerous small farmers has evolved into a social event for entire communities, with many families and patrons viewing a trip to the Saturday morning market as the start of their social weekend. As markets grow, new features such as live music, cooking demonstrations, gardening tips, and educational opportunities are added as well. Businesses that surround farmers' markets also benefit from the additional foot traffic brought by the market [15].

Who benefits from farmers' markets?

- **Small and Medium-sized Producers**
Farmers' markets are usually the first point of entry into the marketplace for small and mid-sized producers. They help such producers grow their businesses, develop and test new products, and obtain a reliable source of income [1].
- **Family Farmers**

Family farms have decreased over the years because of high costs and bigger competitors. By buying from farmers' markets, you help support those local family farms, giving them the capital, they need to continue providing fresh produce for your family and community [16].

- **Consumers**

Farmers' markets allow consumers to have access to locally produced, healthy, farm-fresh food, develop face-to-face relationships with the farmers who grow them, and provide the opportunity to contribute directly to the viability of local farms [1].

- **The**

Farmers' markets often serve as an integral part of creating robust local economies, thriving neighborhoods, and vibrant civic design plans. They also provide easier access to fresh, healthy food in communities where such access may be limited otherwise [1].

- **Local Economy**

Most farms in the area are within 100 miles of the farmers' market. This implies that more local jobs are created and money is retained within the community itself [16].

- **The Environment**

In the U.S., food travels an average distance of 1,500 miles to get your plate! This signifies the increased use of fuels that pollute the environment. Additionally, several big-box farms use pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and processing equipment as well that can contribute to environmental decay. When you buy locally, your food not only travels shorter distances but is typically grown using methods that minimize the impact on the earth [16].

For instance, the chemicals and pesticides that most conventional farmers use are not acceptable for organic and local farmers. They often use healthier and greener alternatives. Local farmers do not package or transport their goods as far either. That means they do not have to worry about unhealthy preservatives; natural ones will suffice when necessary [17].

- **Low-income and Seniors Residents**

There are many ways to pay at farmers' markets. Cash usually works best; however, many farmers' markets accept credit and debit cards as well. Moreover, USDA has partnered with FMC to provide eligible farmers' markets and farmers who engage in direct marketing with the equipment necessary to accept SNAP benefits. In the past five years, the number of farmers' markets and farmers authorized to accept SNAP has grown rapidly, and the amount of SNAP dollars spent at farmers' markets has almost tripled.

In addition, more than 3,390 markets accept WIC FMNP vouchers and 4,590 markets participate in the SFMNP. In 2015, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service reported that over \$38 million was spent at farmers' markets through these two programs alone. Some markets have even developed their own locally based currencies, such as HealthBucks in New York and Fresh Bucks in Rhode Island [2].

What will you find at a farmers' market?

Farmers' markets vary in size and always reflect a region's agriculture and seasons. Some markets are seasonal and comprise a small number of vendors, while others involve hundreds of vendors and take place year-round. It is a source of pride to farmers and market shoppers alike that the products available at farmers' markets represent the agricultural diversity of a region or state. Depending on the time of the year, you might find avocados, olives, steak, or artichokes in Texas or California and be more likely to find pawpaws, peanuts, pork, and peonies in Virginia. Some markets concentrate on produce, while others sell everything from fruits and vegetables to baked goods, meat, eggs, flowers, and dairy products. Some may also feature locally made crafts or prepared foods as a complement to the agricultural products being sold. As the number of markets grows, so does the variety of products available. What is available in a farmers' market depends on a combination of location, season, and market rules about what can be sold. Many of these markets only sell locally grown, locally made, and/or locally processed foods, and they create a system of guidelines that ensure vendors are producing what they sell. Farmers' markets are unique as far as they give shoppers transparency while also protecting local farmers from having to compete with low-cost, low-quality, often imported meat and produce. The wonderful thing about farmers' markets is that if you are ever unsure about what a product is, where it came from, or how it was grown, you can just ask! [2].

What are winter markets?

Most farmers' markets are operated on a seasonal basis, opening in the spring and closing in the fall. There are year-round markets, and they are found on the West Coast, Southeast, and Southwest regions of the U.S. [12]. While fewer in number, winter farmers' markets serve as important a role as their summer

counterparts, maintaining access to fresh, healthy, and local food. Winter farmers' markets are traditionally held indoors to protect farmers, shoppers, and products from the often-harsh weather in the winter months [18].

Based on Ivanka (2014), winter farmers' markets are increasing in number around the country, growing more than 50 percent of the total crop annually. Winter markets now account for 25 percent of the markets listed in the USDA national directory [19]. Fresh, local produce can seem scarce in the winter. Though many farmers' markets close in the winter months, some markets will continue to operate even after the growing seasons have ended. Winter farmers' markets not only bring fresh food to the communities they serve but also allow farmers to continue building rapport with their customers [20].

Peak harvest season is usually peak market season, and some markets are only open in the spring, summer, and early autumn. In 2010, 15 percent of all farmers' markets were open in the winter months. Nevertheless, year-round farmers' markets thrive in many states. A number of markets are expanding their seasons or transitioning to year-round operation by offering their shoppers items including meat, eggs, dairy, bread, and other products that are available fresh throughout the year. Even in colder climates, farmers are implementing a variety of season-extending techniques that can protect crops from frosts and allow them to be picked and sold fresh for more weeks of the year [2].

What are the benefits of winter farmers' markets to farmers, consumers, and/or the local economy? The most important ones are listed below.

1. Local markets can be enjoyed throughout the cold months

Traditional farmers' markets usually run from early spring to late fall, but some farmers' markets are open through the cold months to offer fresh products such as fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs, poultry, dairy products, baked goods, sauces, honey, handcrafted items, and more. There is a growing trend in cities across the country related to winter farmers' markets [21].

Winter farmers' markets are traditionally held indoors to protect farmers, shoppers, and products from the typically harsh weather in the winter months [18]. Winter farmers' markets stay open through cold months to offer the buyers delicious local food, drinks, and crafts. This means no matter the weather, you can still shop in comfort for your favorite offerings [20]. Moreover, winter farmers' markets are open for business to feed their communities during the darker months of the year.

2. Community gathering The purpose of a farmers' market is to help connect local farmers and producers with the community as a source of great seasonal offerings [21]. Winter farmers' markets not only bring fresh food to the communities they serve but also allow farmers to continue building a rapport with their customers [20]. Farmers' markets are a place for people to find fresh produce as well as other local goods; at the same time, it is also a space for people to gather and be community-oriented [20].

Winter farmers' markets are often more than just farm-fresh produce and things that are grown in the ground. There will be offerings and wares for sale by local artisans and makers. Purchasing items at a winter farmers' market makes you feel great knowing that you are supporting the livelihood of local growers and producers [21]. Winter farmers' markets keep shoppers connected year-round. They also provide the necessary income cash to farmers during the darker months.

3. Food access in the winter

Farmers' markets play a critical role in food access in the winter months to the communities they serve. Farmers grow food for the community year-round. Winter farmers' markets exist to support local producers and help the community eat locally for a longer period. Winter farmers' markets will not have the same options as the markets held in spring and summer. This is mainly because those fruits and vegetables are not grown or harvested during colder months [21].

Winter farmers' markets serve as important a role as their summer counterparts, maintaining access to fresh, healthy, local food. Access to farm-fresh products sold during the winter and early spring months is especially important because it is at farmers' markets that low-income residents or seniors can access their SNAP/EBT benefits. SNAP/EBT shoppers can buy local fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods throughout the cold months [18]. Many farmers' markets vendors accept credit cards, WIC FMNP, SFMNP, and SNAP benefits year-round.

4. Support local farmers year-round Farmers' markets all over the country open their doors showing off the best produce their fields have to offer. Farmers markets are a wonderful place to connect with local farmers and talk to them about food. By offering indoor winter farmers' markets, community members can support local farmers throughout the year. They can support local farmers and food producers and stock up on local products. The winter markets feature local grown and produced foods unique to specific areas.

Family farmers need the public's support, now that large-scale agribusiness dominates food production in the U.S. Small family farms have a hard time competing in the marketplace. Buying directly from farmers gives them a better return for their produce and gives them a fighting chance in today's globalized economy [22].

What kinds of winter produce will you find at winter markets?

During the winter months, you can still find fresh greens, cucumbers, herbs, and even tomatoes at many markets. Farmers rely on crops grown in hydroponic systems and greenhouses. Hydroponic systems involve growing plants indoors in nutrient-rich water rather than soil to produce warm weather crops such as tomatoes and cucumbers year-round [23]. Farmers who have invested in greenhouses will have some winter-hardy greens such as kale, spinach, arugula, Swiss chard, microgreens, and sprouts. Mushroom vendors are also popular at winter markets [20].

At winter farmers' markets, there are usually more vendors selling value-added products than fresh fruits and vegetables. As with all the farmers' markets, the produce will vary with location; however, most farmers sell produce from their fall storage. Root crops such as beets, rutabaga, carrots, and potatoes will be available, as well as onions, garlic, leeks, and varieties of squash [20]. Besides, although winter farmers' markets also sell meat and dairy items, some of these products sell out fast due to limited supply. For example, "Chickens don't lay as many eggs in the winter" [23].

Often, a winter farmers' market is a wonderful place to find products such as local honey, spices, jams or preserves, beans, freshly ground flours, vinegar, and more. Since these types of items are usually canned or dried, they have a longer shelf-life. You might also see cut flowers or winter plants. Depending on the type, winter is often a suitable time for planting. Some farmers also sell or swap their seeds, especially heirloom varieties; therefore, make the most of this opportunity to stock up for your spring and summer garden [21]. Apart from mere farm-fresh produce and food items, winter farmers' markets also feature wares for sale by local artisans and makers, ranging from handcrafted jewelry and pottery to unique and one-of-a-kind art or woodworking. Other items you might find include essential oils, handmade soaps and lotions, and natural cosmetics [21].

What are the reasons why consumers should buy from farmers' markets over their local supermarket?

The most important ones are listed below.

1. Farmers' markets offer fresh local food

The fruits and vegetables are picked at the peak of their growing season, meaning this produce is the freshest and the tastiest available [16]. Local food is usually harvested at the peak of its ripeness cycle. While grocery and store-bought foods may have been picked at an opportune time as well, they still must be packaged and transported to wherever they are being sold. Sometimes, this implies that they are transported across the country, even the world. Local foods, however, do not have far to go. Most farmer's markets set limitations on how far sellers and farmers can travel to participate. This is to keep competition healthy and fair but also to protect the consumers. Local food that is picked at the right time and does not have to travel far will be fresher and riper than store-bought food [17].

2. Farmers' markets offer more variety

Supermarkets and food chains carry foods year-round, even out of season. But this also means that the food they carry is often not as ripe or fresh, nor was it produced in optimal conditions. In this context, farmers' markets offer so much more variety. Even though in a general sense the available food items may be less, you have so many more options. In the case of apples, for instance, different stalls or vendors may sell different kinds of apples, and even when they are of the same type, they may have been grown or produced differently, so they will look different and maybe even taste a bit different [17].

3. Local farms are not industrial and do not mass produce foods

The farms and suppliers of grocery stores and food chains grow their crops on a large scale. Because they must worry about efficiency and total yield, they often do not grow different crops together in the same field. This is referred to as a "monoculture" and is often more susceptible to disease and pests. Worse yet, the monoculture set-ups often deplete the necessary nutrients of the surrounding soil and earth needed to grow certain foods or plants. This signifies that the food produced is often of lower quality. Moreover, such setups are harsher on the environment and land, requiring more unnatural chemicals, pesticides, and fertilizers to be used. Thus, the impact made on the environment as well as the food produced is tremendous [17].

4. Local farmers have honed their craft

Here, the implication is not that the farmers that supply stores and food chains are terrible at what they do. It is simply being pointed out that local farmers have more freedom, and usually, this means they have more experience with a specific crop or type of food. Local farmers are free to choose what they grow, when, and how much. This allows them to focus almost entirely on quality over quantity [17].

What is the difference between a grocery store, supermarket, and superstore?

According to Campbell (2021), a grocery store is more specialized and not as large as a supermarket. Supermarkets have counters with butchers, hand-cut artisan cheeses, and deli meats and fresh seafood, but

grocery stores are usually more focused on a specific category of food or a targeted demographic, with a more limited variety.

A grocery store would be more of the smaller “mom and pop” type stores. They have fewer employees and not nearly as many departments. Moreover, they are typically not chain stores, or if they are one, it would be a small chain with just a handful of stores as opposed to a nationwide chain. Both a grocery store and a supermarket can be called a grocery store, but only one can be called a supermarket.

A supermarket sells mainly food items. They will have fresh food departments, such as produce, meat, deli, and bakery, and even a floral department. They may also sell non-food items such as health and beauty care, pet food, and household cleaning supplies. Their primary focus, however, is food. Some of the best-known examples of supermarkets include Safeway, Kroger, and Publix stores.

A superstore is a retail store, similar to a grocery store or bookstore, with a wide variety of product lines and a very large floor area. A superstore will have a grocery section that sells these items, but it will also have other departments. These departments may include clothing, home décor, gardening, and automotive departments. In a superstore, food is not the focus. It is just another department within the store. Walmart and Target are superstores that sell much more than groceries; both feature other categories such as clothing and electronic devices. Most Targets do have a grocery department in the store, but many do not sell fresh produce, have a meat department, or even have a refrigerated department. The Walmart Neighborhood Market is considered a grocery store [24].

Benefits of grocery stores/ supermarkets over local farmers’ markets

When you look at how local markets operate from the outside, it seems as if they might offer a lot less than a supermarket. For example, most local markets are seasonal, and the goods are based on regional factors. This means that if there is a fruit or vegetable that cannot be grown in your local area, you probably will not find it at the market. Due to many farmers’ markets’ different sizes, diversity, product offerings, and clientele. Supermarkets and food chains, on the other hand, carry foods year-round, even out of season. Some people prefer shopping at grocery stores/supermarkets instead of farmers’ markets. Based on Tiffany (2011), listed below are their top six advantages of grocery stores [25]

1. Convenience

Farmers’ markets tend to be open for a few hours, once a week, in a location that you do not get to choose. Crafting your schedule around the farmers’ market is simply not feasible every week.

2. Variety

Although a good portion of the country’s produce is grown where a person lives, the majority of the fields are operated by large produce companies and not small farmers. By default, there is a greater variety of food at the local grocery store than at the farmers’ market.

3. Price

The use of money-saving tips helps balance your grocery budget with higher farmers’ market prices. Nonetheless, when you compare the prices as a whole, the grocery store emerges as more affordable. Balancing your budget against quality food is difficult, so I use the stickers on the produce to help me make better choices. Better food choices mean a healthier family, and affordable prices mean feeding your family a little bit easier each month.

4. Coupons

Some of you might need to use coupons to make ends meet, and shopping at any place that does not take them simply is not an option. It is a necessity! Shopping at the farmers’ market is not an option because farmers’ markets do not take coupons.

5. Sales and Markdowns

Shopping the sales is vital to eating real food on a budget and since prices at the market are dependent on several factors (supply, demand, rain, travel, etc.). At grocery stores, you can get the same price until the next sale and take advantage of their overstock and bruised produce with hugely marked-down prices.

6. One-Stop Shopping

There is *always* something on your shopping list that you cannot get at the farmers’ market such as canned tuna or diced tomatoes, or it could be a vegetable. For someone who is already struggling to fit a trip to *one* store into a busy schedule, this is enough to bring them to tears!

Shopping at a few stores as possible is important with a busy schedule and choosing the grocery stores instead of the farmers’ market may be a better option.

Conclusion

Farmers' markets provide local residents with access to fresh, locally produced fruit, vegetables, meats, baked goods, and much more. It is also a place where neighbor meets neighbor, and the many benefits of having a farmers' market nearby are felt throughout the community. The food is typically grown near where you live, not thousands of miles away or in another area or state. Shopping at farmers' markets also supports your local farmers and keeps the money you spend on food closer to your neighborhood. There are several great reasons to visit farmers' markets, whether it is the promotion of a positive social atmosphere, the support of dozens of local small businesses, or simply the peace of mind in knowing where your food is coming from and how it is produced. Visit and support your local farmers' market. They benefit local farmers, vendors, neighbors, and the community.

References

- [1]. NFMD (2021). National Farmers Market Directory. USDA-AMS. <https://nfmnd.org/>
- [2]. Farmers Market Coalition (2021). About Farmers Markets. <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/education/qanda/>
- [3]. Pinto, A., and Torres A. (2021). What You Need to Know About Selling in Farmers Markets. Purdue Extension Horticulture Business. https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/hortbusiness/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2017/09/7.VCH_FarmersMarkets-and-Their-Benefits.pdf
- [4]. Rodriguez, O., Enrique, V., and Ariana, T. (2019). Indiana Farmers Markets: Specialty Crop Prices of the 2018 Market Season. Purdue Extension Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Survey. <https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/hortbusiness/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2019/08/4.Indiana-Farmers-Markets-Specialty-Crop-Prices-of-the-2018-Market-Season.pdf>
- [5]. Farmers Market Coalition (2021). About Farmers Markets. <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/education/qanda/>
- [6]. Feenstra, G.W., Lewis, C.C., Hinrichs, C.C., Gillespie, G.W. and Hilchey, D. (2003). "Entrepreneurial outcomes and enterprise size in US retail farmers' markets." *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* 18(1):46–55.
- [7]. Brown, C., Miller, S.M., Boone, D.A., Boone, H.N., Gartin, S.A., and McConnell, T.R. (2007). "The importance of farmers markets for West Virginia direct marketers." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 22(1):20–29.
- [8]. Brown, A. (2002). "Farmers' market research 1940– 2000: An inventory and review." *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* 17(4):167– 76.
- [9]. Egan, T. (2002). "Growers and shoppers crowd farmers' markets." *New York Times* 29 November 29.
- [10]. Andreatta, S., and W. Wickliffe II. (2002). "Managing farmer and consumer expectations: a study of a North Carolina farmers' market." *Human Organization* 61(2):167–176.
- [11]. Kezis A., F. R. King, U. Toensmeyer, R. Jack, and H. Kerr. (1998). "Consumer acceptance and preference for direct marketing in the Northeast." *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 38–46.
- [12]. Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (2021). Farmers Markets. Iowa State University. <https://www.agmrc.org/food/farmers-markets>
- [13]. USDA (2020a). National Farmers Market Managers. Released August 17, 2020, by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Agricultural Statistics Board, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). ISSN: 2691-3267 https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/nfar0820.pdf
- [14]. USDA (2017b). Top Reasons to Shop at a Farmers Market. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2012/07/02/top-reasons-shop-farmers-market>
- [15]. USDA (2017c). Farmers Markets as Community Centerpieces. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2013/08/05/farmers-markets-community-centerpieces>
- [16]. Bramble, A. (2021). Benefits of Buying at a Farmers Market. UPMC MyHealth Matters. <https://www.upmcmymyhealthmatters.com/benefits-of-buying-at-a-farmers-market/>
- [17]. FM (2021). Farmer's Markets vs Supermarkets. FarmersMarket.net <https://www.farmersmarket.net/article/farmers-markets-vs-supermarkets/>
- [18]. Mass Farmers Markets (2021). 2021 Winter Farmers Market Initiative – We need your Help! Growing Farmers Markets. <https://www.massfarmersmarkets.org/wfmi>
- [19]. Ivanka, J. D. (2014). 5 Tips for Shopping the Winter Farmers' Market. Hobby Farms. <https://www.hobbyfarms.com/5-tips-for-shopping-the-winter-farmers-market/>
- [20]. Schipani, S. (2018). How to Shop Winter Farmers' Markets. Hello Homestead. <https://hellohomestead.com/how-to-shop-winter-farmers-markets/>

- [21]. Spears, K. (2018). Making the Most of a Winter Farmer's Market. Blue Matter. <https://blog.coldwellbanker.com/making-winter-farmers-market/>
- [22]. CUESA (2021). 10 Reasons to Support Farmers Markets. Cultivating A Healthy Food System. <https://cuesa.org/learn/10-reasons-support-farmers-markets>
- [23]. Sacks, K. (2021). Winter Farmers' Market Shopping Tips. Food Print. <https://foodprint.org/blog/winter-farmers-market/>
- [24]. Campbel, J. (2021). What's the Difference Between a Grocery Store & a Supermarket? The Grocery Guy. <https://thegrocerystoreguy.com/whats-the-difference-between-a-grocery-store-a-supermarket/>
- [25]. Tiffany (2020) 6 Reasons to Shop the Grocery Store Instead of the Farmers Market. The Humbled Homemaker with Erin Odom. <https://thehumbledhomemaker.com/grocery-store-instead-of-farmers-market/>