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## **Farmers Market Impact Metrics Released for First Season of Testing**

*Research project addresses the need for consistent measurement of farmers market impacts nationwide.*

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the national nonprofit, the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) released metrics this week that will allow markets and their partners to gather data on vendor and customer activities. The data will assist market organizers in constructing targeted marketing and advocacy plans and will offer farmers and other producers specific information on building their business goals.

The project is funded by the USDA's Agriculture, Food, and Research Initiative (AFRI) and will allow nine markets across the U.S. to test data collection and reporting techniques in 2015 and 2016. The project team gathered known metrics used over the last decade in farmers markets and food system research and prioritized those that could be easily gathered by the market community itself. The metrics were grouped into one or more of four types of benefit they provide: economic (i.e. sales or job creation), ecological (land stewardship), social (new relationships) and human (skills gained or knowledge transferred).

The research project's principal investigator Alfonso Morales, Assistant Professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison said, *"We believe that it is vital that grassroots markets have the tools and embedded skills to gather data on behavior for their own needs, not only on shopper activity but also on the small businesses that depend on these markets for their family's income."*

From the list of 90 metrics identified, the team focused its initial efforts into refining 38 of those metrics for immediate use by the nine pilot markets chosen for the project. Participating markets selected those metrics that are most useful to their current work and will begin to gather data in late spring 2015. The data will be analyzed by the project team and final reports shared with the markets later in the year. The team will conduct another round of data collection at the same pilot markets in 2016.

The first round of metrics sent to the markets focus on collecting vendor data through questions embedded into vendor applications or through direct surveys or observation at market of vendors. Later rounds of metrics will allow visitor data to be collected using the same methods, while future metrics are likely to focus on the "placemaking" skills of the market and the internal workings of the organization running the market.

Vendor metrics for this project include acres in production for markets, distance traveled from production to market, sales data, and the number of women-owned businesses. Jen Cheek, Executive Director of Farmers Market Coalition affirmed, *"Many markets are not sure what to collect and when; others already collect some of this data but are unsure of how to use it once collected. These measurement projects that FMC is taking on with the University of Wisconsin will*

*offer shared language and common-sense guidelines for reporting, while allowing markets and their vendors the freedom to define what success means to their market and community.”*

For more information, follow these links:

<http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/farmers-market-metrics-project-to-enhance-evaluation-efforts-of-farmers-markets/>

<http://news.wisc.edu/22983>

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The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening farmers markets for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities. For more information about the Farmers Market Coalition, including please visit their website at [www.farmersmarketcoalition.org](http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org).