



Community
Food
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Coalition

BUILDING HEALTHY FOUNDATIONS FOR FARMERS MARKETS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITIES AND COUNTIES

A publication of the Community Food Security Coalition and The Farmers Market Coalition

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Community Food Security Coalition is a leader in the field of community food systems. We build the capacity and connections of our members, and implement programs and policy change efforts to strengthen and accelerate the food justice movement. To learn more about our work visit our website or contact us.

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The Farmers Market Coalition seeks to strengthen farmers markets' capacity to serve farmers, consumers, and communities by providing the rapidly growing movement with information, tools, and representation at state and federal levels. We help build networks, link peers, inspire leadership, and connect farmers markets old and new with resources for success.

For more information on The Farmers Market Coalition, please visit: <http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/>




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ABSTRACT

Farmers markets address a community's need for food access, redevelopment and local economics by bringing a region's farmers and eaters directly together. They allow small and mid-size family farmers, who traditionally can't compete in the traditional marketplace, to sell their products directly to the consumer, often in areas that lack sufficient options to purchase healthy food. The bridging of divides between urban and rural communities is just one positive outcome of the growing local-food movement taking root in communities across the United States. This movement encourages responsible consumerism, sustainable agricultural production, and greater access to healthy and affordable food. Between 2008 and 2010 alone, the number of farmers markets has increased more than 30 percent as demand for local food continues to rise.^{1,2} This growth demonstrates that demand and supply are moving in lock-step fashion at the local level to bring these mutually beneficial structures to fruition.

Farmers markets not only represent an opportunity for producers and consumers. Cities, counties, regions and states can make targeted, cost-effective investments in long-term community health, economic diversity and entrepreneurial success with greater support for farmers markets. This paper provides an overview of the various benefits farmers markets bring to communities and offers recommendations for a variety of ways local governments, as well as other community agencies, can support and strengthen farmers markets. Suggesting that support for existing farmers markets is just as or even more important than starting new ones, we provide examples of some of the challenges, as well as offer a window into some of the creative solutions at play, in communities across the country as farmers, neighborhoods, and local governments work together. Lastly, we offer the reader links to numerous resources describing how to establish farmers markets, how to become involved on a variety of levels, and how to align policies to support their ability to yield crosscutting benefits to farmers, consumers and communities.

We hypothesize that with appropriate local government support, a farmers market can become:

- An important incubator for small businesses
- A platform for civic discourse, socialization and volunteerism
- An opportunity to promote healthy food and encourage better nutritional choices

- A reliable venue for agricultural producers to experiment with new product lines and adapt enterprise models based on local demands
- A system in which all stakeholders can participate in market governance
- A platform for educating both youth and adults about agriculture and the environment
- A catalyst for cross-disciplinary alliances between agencies and organizations that efficiently address a variety of regional needs
- An opportunity for market organizers to innovate, rapidly respond to local needs and build templates that serves as models for other communities

INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF HOW AND WHY TO SUPPORT FARMERS MARKETS

According to the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC), a farmers market operates on a regular basis and "is organized for the purpose of facilitating personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, shoppers and communities. To fulfill that objective farmers markets define the term local, regularly communicate that definition to the public, and implement rules/guidelines of operation that ensure that the farmers market consists principally of farms selling directly to the public products that the farms have produced."

The triple bottom line of economic, community and public health benefits inherent in successful farmers markets offers ample justification for investments in market development and growth. Evidence suggests that smaller, community based farmers markets can be just as effective anchors for community development and food access as high-profile public markets with permanent structures. Open-air, neighborhood farmers markets are dynamic, flexible, accessible to farmers and consumers, and lend themselves to citizen buy-in and participation. Markets open for limited hours each week also preserve the multi-use functions of public spaces, such as parking lots and parks.

This paper was inspired by a demonstrated need to help municipalities and counties streamline procedures and processes relevant for the establishment and operation of farmers markets. As such, it serves as a resource not only for grantees of the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) program, but

1 USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. 2010. Farmers Market Growth. Available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets>

2 Martinez, S., M. Hand, M. Da Pra, S. Pollack, K. Ralston, T. Smith, S. Vogel, S. Clark, L. Lohr, S. Low, and C. Newman. 2010. *Local food systems: concepts, impacts, and issues*, ERR 97. Washington, DC: USDA Economic Research Service.

also to the thousands of local agencies and organizations looking for ways to bolster farmers markets' roles as venues for healthy food access, and health and nutrition education. In support of innovative collaborations, and to further the dialogue about how to create sustainable food systems, this paper offers city and county governments a starting point for integrating farmers markets into place-making, public health and economic development goals. We suggest that local zoning, planning and health codes can and should be congruent with these goals in order to maximize farmers markets' potential to transform communities in positive ways.

After many conversations with practitioners in the farmers market sector, as well as city, county and food system planning professionals, we have concluded that improved local policies are needed if communities are to realize the full spectrum of public benefits that markets can offer. As it is, interested parties trying to create or maintain a farmers market must not only recruit from a limited pool of local farmers, create an organizational structure for the governance and management of a fair marketplace, but also navigate a variety of often confusing permitting processes and regulations. For example, they must comply with zoning regulations that may not be specific to farmers markets that try to setup shop in underused parking lots or along temporarily close streets for a few hours. Rather, they often have to apply for special event permits that are intended for street fairs and other once-a-year gatherings that are not directly applicable to their needs.

While state and federal policies and programs can have a significant influence on the long-term success of farmers markets, this paper concentrates on local and county government capabilities to identify resources, reduce redundancies and sustain efforts that enable farmers markets to prosper as entrepreneurial activities providing direct-marketing outlets. The recommendations that we provide throughout this paper for both city and/or county governments will help influence the necessary policy changes to state and federal governments, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) authorization and state and federal granting of government funds.

City and county involvement in farmers markets spans a wide spectrum of possible roles. Some city governments host and manage farmers markets, such as the Market at the Square in Urbana, Illinois, or the City Market in Charlottesville, Virginia. Others simply host markets on municipal property, with limited personnel

involvement in market operations. Others offer some extent of in-kind services, whether in the form of advertising, signage, parking spaces, research, sponsorship, reduced rent, or providing other staff time. In most cases, city and county governments also act as regulators by requiring licenses, permits and, in some cases, fees. Some local governments, by not acknowledging farmers markets in their codes, have no choice but to fit a square peg into a round hole. This means that they apply the same regulatory and tax structure to nonprofit farmers market organizations as they do to privately owned brick and mortar retailers. Fortunately, there appears to be growing recognition that proactive (rather than reactive) strategies are needed in order to clarify procedures that help avoid redundancies and the need for repeated trouble-shooting.

THE CURRENT CLIMATE FOR FARMERS MARKETS

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

According to recent calculations from the USDA Economic Research Service, farmers receive an average of 15.8 cents for each dollar consumers spend on food.³ The remainder goes to retailing, processing, distributing and marketing. Farmers markets are the most common form of direct marketing, in which farmers can retain a higher portion of the consumer's food dollar. This allows farmers to cover their costs of production, invest in their businesses and provide jobs in their rural communities.

The 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture reported that most farms selling directly to consumers are small farms with less than \$50,000 in total farm sales. Though many of these are located in urban corridors of the Northeast and the West Coast, more recent trends indicate that the number of farmers markets in the Midwest and rural counties is also keeping pace.^{4,5} Additionally, small-scale farmers, who primarily grow specialty crops⁶ or produce value-added goods, are not eligible to participate in as many federal programs, and rely on outlets like farmers markets as their primary source of income.

In bridging the gap between the consumer and producer, farmers markets offer the producers real-time feedback that allows them to efficiently adapt to cultural tastes and changing consumer demands. Through these venues, they can also begin to make the connections necessary to sell larger quantities to restaurants

3 Canning, P. 2011. A Revised and Expanded Food Dollar Series: A Better Understanding of our Food Costs (Economic Research Report Number 114). USDA Economic Research Service: Washington, DC.

4 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture: Small Farms

5 Kaufman, P. 2010. Density of Farmers Markets Highest in Rural Counties. Amber Waves. USDA Economic Research Service: Washington, DC.

6 Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables and nuts. Most specialty crop farmers cultivate smaller plots and are often operated by families, rather than cash crop farmers who typically manage larger, expansive plots to farm grains and other raw commodities that are then processed into other consumables by other entities.

and institutions, which provides them with additional financial security. Markets are replete with examples of small-scale food entrepreneurs, including farmers, who are starting businesses and expanding into other retail channels, growing financially sound businesses that might otherwise not be possible without a very large economy of scale.⁷

Research on the widespread economic impact of farmers markets is incomplete; however, new data at the state and local levels is emerging. In Iowa, for example, a recent study found that farmers markets contributed \$59.4 million to the state's economy in 2009 (and more than 500 jobs)⁸, and a single market in New Orleans, Louisiana, was found to contribute \$9.88 million in regional economic activity.⁹ A study in West Virginia found that, even when food sales lost to grocery stores was factored in, the state's 34 farmers markets still yielded a net gain of 43 full-time equivalent jobs and more than a million dollars in total economic impact in 2005.¹⁰ These emerging studies at the state and local level illustrate the dynamics among farmers markets, local spending and business incubation.

Thriving farmers markets can be more than places to buy tasty produce. They introduce new jobs in the form of farm personnel, as well as market staff, such as outreach coordinators, market managers and nutrition educators. These jobs, even those that are part-time, can address community education needs with on-site cooking demonstrations and classes that engage the expertise of local chefs to teach market patrons how to prepare unfamiliar fruits and vegetables and ways to add more of these foods into their family diets. Farmers markets are also retail anchors that can increase foot traffic to neighboring businesses and attract new merchants to underutilized areas. In 2003, researchers at Oregon State University found that farmers markets were the primary reason why patrons visited small towns on weekends, and that the amount of expenditures farmers market patrons spent at neighboring businesses depended on the proximity of neighboring businesses

and whether the hours of the market coincided with the business hours of neighboring stores.¹¹

There are different methods for sustaining a consistent customer-base at farmers markets to help create these vibrant spaces. Consumer-bases can be expanded by word of mouth, low-cost creative marketing, and by acceptance non-cash forms of payment, such as debit and EBT. When strategically located, farmers markets can also act as cultural mixing bowls that bridge neighborhoods, while increasing fresh food access to places where other options are few and far between. As markets grow, they encourage innovation, seasonal extension and new product development. Even in Maine, where there are long winters and smaller populations, there are 24 farmers markets operating in winter months, offering income opportunities for farmers and making seasonally available local food available more months of the year.¹²

ADDRESSING PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY

Farmers markets also provide a public service through their ability to increase access to healthy foods, educate consumers about nutrition, and empower both children and adults to ask questions about what they eat and how it's grown. They also have the potential to act as forums for civic engagement, volunteerism and the development of social capital. Phat Beets Produce is a nonprofit organization in Oakland, California, that uses the farmers market as such a forum and has been able to involve at-risk and hard-to-reach populations in neighborhoods with high poverty rates and little access to healthy foods through place-making focused on creating an equitable food system.

According to the USDA, 5.9 million households live more than one-half mile from a supermarket and do not have access to a vehicle, and a full 23.5 million people live in a low-income area more than one mile from a supermarket.¹³ Food-insecure families tend to live within these types of areas where access to healthy food is not easily available. These areas are commonly called food deserts,

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- 7 Kim, E. 2010. Transitioning to Value Added Enterprise: Toigo Orchards. Wallace Center for Sustainable Agriculture: Arlington, VA.
- 8 Otto, D. 2010. Consumers, Vendors, and the Economic Importance of Iowa Farmers Markets: An Economic Impact Survey Analysis. Strategic Economics Group.
- 9 Marketumbrella.org. 2009. Crescent City Farmers Market Economic Impact Study Available at <http://www.marketumbrella.org/uploads/file/SEED%20report%20for%20CCFM%200709.pdf>
- 10 Hughes, D.W., C. Brown, S. Miller, and T. McConnell. 2008. Evaluating the economic impact of farmers markets using an opportunity cost framework. *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics*. 40(1): 253-265.
- 11 Lev, L., L. Brewer, and G. Stephenson. 2003. *Research Brief: How Do Farmers markets Affect Neighboring Businesses?* Oregon Small Farms Technical Report Number 16. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Extension Service.
- 12 Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association. 2011. Maine Farmers Markets. Available at <http://mofga.net/Directories/FarmersMarkets/tabid/352/Default.aspx>
- 13 Ver Ploeg, M., V. Breneman, T. Farrigan, K. Hamrick, D. Hopkins, P. Kaufman, B.L. Lin, M. Nord, T. Smith, R. Williams, K. Kinnison, C. Olander, A. Singh, and E. Tuckermanty. 2009. Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences: Report to Congress. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/AP036d.pdf>.

where fast food chains or small corner stores that don't stalk fresh produce dominate the market and are more accessible than grocery stores. Many customers in food deserts experience nutrition-related illnesses, such as diabetes and obesity.¹⁴ Concern that food deserts equate to poor health has resulted in concerted efforts to reduce hunger while increasing consumption of fresh, healthy foods. Farmers markets are recognized as tools to address community food insecurity¹⁵ and lack of access. A recent study in North Carolina found that proximity to farmers markets was associated with lower body mass index (BMI) among youth, while density of fast-food venues was associated with higher BMI.¹⁶

Food insecurity does not discriminate by location, and is therefore more than an urban concern. We now see many food-insecure families who live in low-income rural communities, reflecting how the face of food insecurity has changed with the changing economic climate. At the same time, connections are being made between community prosperity with physical, mental, and emotional health.

When farmers markets accept federal food assistance benefits, like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), they become more accessible to all members of a community. In addition to added health benefits, participation in SNAP stimulates the economy as well. The USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) calculates that every \$10 in new SNAP benefits generates as much as \$10 of economic activity.¹⁷ When spent at farmers markets instead of retail chains, this money can be recirculated within the local economy, rather than to distant corporate headquarters. In 2010, \$7.5 million in SNAP benefits were redeemed at farmers markets. While this number represents more than 70 percent growth in only one year, it still accounts for only .012 percent of all SNAP dollars redeemed nationally.¹⁸ Clearly, there is a tremendous opportunity for local communities to capture more of these federal dollars while increasing access to healthy food for those who need it most.

WHY FUND FARMERS MARKETS NOW?

Energy is coming not only from the community level. A number of national initiatives, including the Department of Health and Human Services' Communities Putting Prevention to Work program and Community Transformation Grant programs are inspiring and enabling local action. The First Lady's "Let's Move!" initiative is working with the "Let's Move! Cities and Towns" initiative to support healthy lifestyles through policy changes. "Let's Move! Cities and Towns" engages mayors and other municipal leaders in the campaign to solve the problem of childhood obesity within a generation. The initiative emphasizes the unique ability communities have to approach the challenge locally, and the critical leadership mayors and elected officials can provide to bring communities together and spur action.

In California, the Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign catalogues municipal policies that encourage physical activity and access to nutritious foods. As their website says, "cities can support local agriculture and bring healthy food to residents by defining farmers markets in the general plan and zoning code, and encouraging markets to accept the electronic benefit transfer card (EBT) and WIC coupons."¹⁹

Programs that incentivize purchases of local fruits and vegetables at farmers markets for federal nutrition program participants are taking root, too. Programs like New York City's Health Bucks, which increases the purchasing power for SNAP participants using their benefits at farmers markets, are now coming to scale thanks to programs like Wholesome Wave's Double Value Coupon Program in various states throughout the country and the Fair Food Network's Double Up Food Bucks Program in Michigan.²⁰ Agencies and organizations like the ones listed above play a large role in facilitating local programs.

14 The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calculates overweight and obesity trends from 1985-2009: <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.html>. The ERS published a study on Food Access and Its Relationship to Diet and Health Outcomes for 2009: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/AP036d.pdf>.

15 According to the Office of Research and Analysis at the Food and Nutrition Service at USDA, families termed food insecure are considered to have experienced hunger as a result of not having enough food to eat at some point during the year.

16 Jilcott, S.B., Wade, S., McGuirt, J.T., Wu, Q., Lazoric, S., and J.B. Moore. April 2011. The association between the food environment and weight status among North Carolina Youth. *Public Health Nutrition*. 13:1-8

17 Hanson, K. 2010. The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP. USDA Economic Research Service: Washington, DC.

18 Love, D. 2011. SNAP Farmers Market Sales Soar in 2010. The market beet newsletter, April 2011. Farmers Market Coalition. Available at <http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/snap-sales-soar-2010>.

19 Healthy Eating Healthy Living Cities. Available at <http://www.healcitiescampaign.org>

20 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. 2011. Physical Activity and Nutrition: Working with Farmers markets. http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp_pan_health_bucks.shtml

CHALLENGES

This paper argues that farmers markets provide multiple public services and should be understood and cultivated as such. Re-evaluating relevant local policies so that they are consistent and appropriate for the unique nature of farmers markets will help these promising organizations flourish for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities. First, however, cities, counties and even state governments should be aware of the primary limiting factors to the success of many farmers markets. As the sector rapidly grows, practitioners find that market sustainability can be hampered by:

- Overdependence on volunteers for management responsibilities and community education²¹
- Limited access to farmers'-market-specific professional development opportunities
- Inconsistent and often confusing permitting and licensing procedures for farmers markets and individual farmers
- A lack of farmers'-market-specific zoning and permitting
- Tenuous land use agreements that lend to location insecurity
- A need for more comprehensive evaluation of farmers markets' economic, health and social impacts²²
- Limited ability to invest in SNAP/EBT infrastructure and ongoing associated costs²³

In advocating for local government engagement with farmers markets, this paper offers strategies and examples of the myriad ways cities, counties and community agencies, even with few financial resources, can help address some of the challenges farmers markets confront.

Though there are many reasons to support direct-marketing enterprises like farmers markets, many local municipalities and counties are dismayed to learn that there are no uniform best practices to do so. What makes farmers markets unique from community to community also makes them challenging to define. Most farmers markets are operated by nonprofit organizations and more than 60 percent of them are managed exclusively by volunteers, according to USDA's most recent study of market managers.²⁴ This proportion makes the need to streamline and clarify policies and licensing processes all the more important in

order to reduce confusion and work redundancies.

Here, we encourage local and county municipalities to take a holistic view of food system planning, clarifying what may be confusing (or altogether nonexistent) policies and procedures, and offering financial or in-kind support to help grow farmers markets into reliable community anchors. Such support may take the form of a permanent market location, matching funds, signage, parking, waste management, street closures, and flexibility with laws governing permits and licenses. Both city and county governments should involve farmers market stakeholders including farmers and adjacent merchants, in the planning processes and make relevant regulations, resources and contact information readily accessible to current and prospective market operators. At a minimum, city, county, and other local agencies should maintain open lines of communication with one another and with existing farmers market operators. Such multi-tiered communication channels will enable all parties to better understand farmers market challenges, as well as identify and facilitate fruitful and cost-effective collaborations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY GOVERNMENTS

Creating space to enable entrepreneurship, celebrate regional agriculture, and encourage healthy eating can take many forms. Taking the full responsibility for hosting and managing of a market as a public service is not the only option. City or county governments, for example, exclusively sponsor only 15 percent of farmers market members of the Farmers Market Coalition. Governments can reduce redundancies and conserve resources by organizing a comprehensive plan for farmers markets that delineate the roles and responsibilities of all who are involved in establishing and maintaining a farmers market. For example, once organized and available in a centrally located resource, plans can be reviewed for redundancies so that multiple licenses or approvals are not required by different governing bodies to conduct the same farmers market activity. A useful tool for evaluating the "farmers market friendliness" of local governments may soon be available. The Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are, as of this writing, developing a community-based surveillance system targeting local government officials and what they can do to support healthy eating and active living. These efforts should coincide with direct marketing of healthy foods to communities by local farmers, such as in the form of farmers markets.

21 Stephenson, G. 2008. *Farmers Markets: Success, Failure, and Management Ecology*. Cambria Press: Amherst, NY.

22 Tropp, D. and J. Barham. 2008. *National Farmers Market Summit Proceedings Report*. USDA Agricultural Marketing Service; Washington, DC.

23 Briggs, S., A. Fisher, M. Lott, S. Miller, and N. Tessman. 2010. *Real food, real choice: Connecting SNAP recipients with farmers markets*. Community Food Security Coalition and Farmers Market Coalition.

24 Ragland, E., and D. Tropp. 2009. *USDA national farmers market manager survey 2006*. Washington, DC: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

CPPW SUCCESS: MIAMI, FLORIDA

Miami-Dade County, a Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grantee, found that the city of Miami lacked zoning and permitting regulations for farmers markets, and two markets in underserved neighborhoods were shut down as a result of this confusion. With support from the CPPW grant, an “Access to Healthy Foods Workgroup” was formed as a subcommittee of the Health Consortium, a cross-sector collaboration of various non-governmental organizations. Community partners on the ground worked with the workgroup to

- a. recommend a definition of “farmers market” to include in city code,
- b. provide examples of market benefits and best practices from markets throughout the country,
- c. recommend a six month pilot program during which time markets would only have to pay a one-time fee of \$153.50, waived for nonprofits while a health impact assessment can be conducted, and
- d. co-draft a city ordinance or resolution concerning markets following this 6-month pilot. With CPPW support, the community is now able to provide education to existing and would-be market managers on relevant zoning and permitting requirements.

In 2011, Portland, Oregon began an Urban Food Zoning Code Update, for which the city established a Project Advisory Group (PAG).²⁵ The PAG hosted four public meetings to evaluate:

- Types of activities in each topic area that are happening in Portland
- Benefits associated with the topic area (community-based, health-related, economic, and environmental)
- Possible negative impacts to surrounding areas;

- Existing zoning regulations and issues that have been identified as barriers
- How other cities/jurisdictions are addressing these topic areas
- Ways that equity can be addressed through the zoning code

Public comment was sought and compiled, leading to the development of draft zoning code language that implements the concepts most supported by the community. Possible regulatory approaches are being discussed.

CREATE PHYSICAL SPACE FOR FARMERS MARKETS

Zoning codes and city plans are an obvious starting point for cities to recognize and legitimize farmers markets as a cross between retail businesses and public service. Several existing resources recommend incorporating farmers markets into land use plans to secure tenure for certain days and times. “Establishing Land Use Protections for Farmers markets,” for example, offers examples of municipalities integrating markets into their city’s general plans and model land use policies for supporting and protecting farmers markets and the farmers on which they depend.²⁶

Writing farmers markets into citywide general plans, which establish zoning codes that delineate land uses, growth and density, can be expressed through maps and organized according to compatibility with existing uses and utility for the surrounding areas. By identifying underutilized space and vacant lots, a city can annotate spaces for farmers markets and also complementary purposes like urban farms and community gardens. Charlotte, North Carolina, for example, is considering new city rules that would allow markets to prosper on inactive parcels through amendments to four zoning categories, both business and residential.²⁷ The City of San Francisco has writing these uses into their regulations, which defines a farmers market as an allowable use within their zoning codes and allows them to be established on city-owned land if they accept federal benefits. Planning for Healthy Places has created model land use policies to protect and promote farmers markets with support from California’s Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign.

Often formal changes to zoning codes are not necessary for a city to provide space for a market organization. By offering public space for farmers markets and recognizing the myriad public services markets offer, some cities have reduced or waived fees for farmers market operators. In Seattle, Washington, for example, farmers market advocates worked with the city’s Office of Economic

25 City of Portland. 2011. Urban Food Zoning Code Update Project Advisory Group. Available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?c=53995>

26 National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, Public Health Law and Policy Network. 2009. Establishing Land Use Protection for Farmers markets. Available at http://www.nplanonline.org/system/files/nplan/Establishing%20Land%20Use%20Protections%20for%20Farmers%27%20Markets_FINAL_091203.pdf

27 Staley, S. May 20, 2011. Charlotte freshening up rules governing market location. Charlotte Business Journal.

Development on an ordinance to reduce fees for street closures and use of parks, as well as streamline the permit application process.²⁸

Being temporal and transitory in nature, many markets lack confidence in their own permanence and are consistently at risk of relocation.

Long-term, minimal-cost leases to farmers market organizations allow them to better plan with their farmers for the future, with some assurance that the market won't be asked to relocate as soon as an attractive bid for redevelopment competes for its site. Cities can help markets negotiate with private business, schools, parks and other community institutions to secure long-term leases that allow for more permanent signage, while building consumer and farmer confidence in the reliability of the market's location.

ALIGN PERMIT AND FEE STRUCTURES

Creating clear and streamlined permitting processes for market operation, street closure, use of parking lots and other activities eases confusion about requirements and removes farmers markets from the fringes of legality. Temporary permits (e.g. permits valid for 14 days or less) are not relevant for regularly occurring markets and have the effect of hindering season extension and ultimate year-round operation. Defining and declaring the utility of farmers markets to the broader community allows administrators to distinguish them from street fairs, flea markets, parades, or other special events that may need daily or twice weekly permit renewal. Annual permits that are applicable to the market, rather than each individual producer stall, are easier to apply, collect and enforce. One suggested strategy to help farmers markets navigate requirements involves creating a blanket form for market operators to fill out that allows them to access all the permits and read relevant ordinances. Collaborating with county agencies and neighboring cities to develop common forms can help ensure consistency across political boundaries and reduce the likelihood of inadvertent violation. To encourage the proliferation of farmers markets on city property, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors elected to waive fees for farmers markets operating in city parks.²⁹

In many communities, permits related to food safety are tied to county rather than city agencies. In others, health department

permits are required for both, leading to confusion among farmers, farmers markets and, in some cases among the regulators themselves.³⁰ Farmers markets consistently report frustration with duplicative, confusing, or contradictory food licensing laws, which can be compounded when farmers are growing in the county and selling within a city that has different food safety specifications. Cooperation between city and county governments is key. We discuss food safety later in our recommendations for county governments.

PROVIDING FUNDING AND IN-KIND SUPPORT

Because farmers markets strive to keep their fees to farmers affordable and fair, most find that they need to identify other revenue sources if they are to effectively serve as hubs for health education, manage acceptance of SNAP benefits or perform other community services. To do so, a growing number of independently run farmers markets are establishing sponsorship programs, which offer cities a no-fuss means of being publicly recognized as supporting the market without having to undertake management responsibilities. If farmers markets are considered nonprofit service programs, funds can be established into which municipalities can donate matching resources.³¹

Operating or project-specific financial support are not the only ways that cities can foster farmers market sustainability. As stated above, there are several opportunities to provide in-kind support, including staff time, storage space, office space, signage, parking, electricity, port-a-potties, running water, waste disposal or street closures. In an effort to improve access to low-income families, cities can partner with markets and/or other community nongovernmental organizations to offer incentives for SNAP participants to use their benefits at farmers markets, which often provide these customers with matching market dollars for the SNAP dollars they spend. Matching dollars may come from different sources including private and federal funding. In Charlottesville, Virginia, for example, the parks and recreation department, which manages the City Market, developed a partnership with the Jefferson Area Board on Aging to manage SNAP acceptance at the market. The Jefferson Area Board on Aging also offers a matching incentive program with private funding from Wholesome Wave. These partnerships and programs expand the markets' customer base and increase the healthy food purchasing power of low-income community members.

28 Seattle City Council. 2010. Rules Regarding Farmers Market Permitting Process, 2009 Pilot Program. Available at <http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com/resources/OED-FarmersMarketOrdinanceAttachmentA.pdf>.

29 San Francisco Board of Supervisors. 2007. Amendment to Park Code - Section 7.21, to authorize Farmers markets, as certified by the Agricultural Commissioner, to be located on property under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Commission. Available at <http://www.sfbos.org/ftp/uploadedfiles/bdsupvrs/ordinances07/o0029-07.pdf>.

30 Sauter, S. (2005). *Roadblocks to Rural Economic Development: Restrictions on West Virginia's Farmers markets*. Food Safety Task Force, West Virginia University Extension Service.

31 Broad, E., Benton, L., Blake, M., Emery, A., Fitts, J., Greenfield, M., Powell, C., Kubota, E., Lopez, S., Policicchio, J., Preysman, D., Zhang, J. 2009. Mississippi Farmers Markets: Legislative Recommendations and Innovations to Promote and Sustain Farmers Market Development. Delta Directions Consortium: Cleveland, MS. Available at http://hisfoodsociety.weebly.com/uploads/5/0/5/8/5058105/ms_farmers_markets_-_legislative_recommendations_version_2__rotate.pdf

One thing few volunteer-based farmers markets typically have time to do is write grants that help them implement educational programs or other community activities. Providing in-kind assistance with grant writing to support a start-up market or improve an existing one is a service that most local agencies with city partnerships are ideally suited to provide. Cities are also perfectly positioned to commission research on farmers market impacts, which can demonstrate the market's success as a small business and as a public resource. This information can help future decision-making and increase chances of acquiring grant support. One available tool to help understand economic impacts is the Sticky Economy Evaluation Device, developed by marketumbrella.org and available on its website.

FACILITATE PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Some local businesses may feel threatened by farmers markets, with the perception that markets compete for space and patronage. As we have pointed out earlier, localized studies of economic impact indicate that merchants on the periphery of farmers markets (even grocery stores) experience increased sales on market day. The Easton Farmers Market in Pennsylvania, for example, calculated that the market enabled \$26,000 in sales at neighboring businesses each week during market operating hours (L. Pryor, personal conversation, June 21, 2011). Gathering such data helps cities make the case to stakeholders and potential funding partners that an investment in the farmers market is an effective economic stimulator.

Despite a market's demonstrated contributions, conflicts can arise when neighboring merchants feel that a farmers market is encroaching on their sales, whether or not such infringement is real or perceived. Recently, the city of Los Angeles was called in as the de facto mediator when a film school filed a complaint that the nonprofit Hollywood Farmers market adjacent to the schools' property was limiting parking for their students.³² In the end, the school withdrew its complaint, but not before sparking a lively and productive debate in the community about the value of the farmers market and its right to operate on a street for which all appropriate permits were paid. In the end, the community expressed a great need for the farmers market and supported its continuity in droves.

Ensuring open communication among stakeholders is often the first step to facilitating partnerships with other local community agriculture and nutrition promotion projects, such as community gardens, food policy councils, urban agriculture alliances and youth development programs. Often, a city's most important role is helping organizations and grassroots efforts connect the dots to better leverage community resources and effectively engage citizens in

their food system. For example, several food policy councils are being established throughout California that are gathering various invested groups and government agencies to convene around actionable items and develop congruent policies.

BUILD FARMERS MARKETS INTO MASTER PLANS

Some cities have demonstrated exemplary leadership in building farmers markets into master plans, which describe the city's holistic vision for future use with targeted benchmarks for meeting specific food-access goals. Local government can help maintain the integrity of farmers markets by making sure that only farmers are selling farm products at the markets. This ensures traceability of the farm goods. Other ways government can get involved to help plan for comprehensive health ensures the accountability of food distribution and retail.

In many cases, acceptance of and redemption of SNAP and other federal nutrition benefits is a proxy for fresh food accessibility, and leadership is emerging to help more farmers markets acquire wireless point of sale (POS) technology and promote SNAP acceptance to the broader community. Under a centralized system, shoppers come to the market, swipe their cards at the main booth for a certain amount of money, and are given tokens to spend at any booth in the market. Shoppers spend the tokens at different booths and, at the end of the day or week, vendors exchange the tokens for cash. This system helps markets overcome the logistical, financial and staffing challenges associated with implementing and advertising SNAP. Here, we provide two examples of large cities taking leadership to make their urban centers more food secure, ensuring that residents have ready access to fresh, locally grown food.

CASE STUDIES

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Since 2007, the New York City Council has supported the implementation of EBT into farmers markets. At that point, SNAP sales at the handful of GrowNYC Greenmarkets authorized to accept EBT reached \$14,000. With continued support for technology and implementation costs from the city council, as well as USDA, the program expanded to 40 markets by 2010, when SNAP/EBT sales exceeded \$500,000. In 2010, under the leadership of Speaker Christine Quinn, the New York City Council released a report that laid out 59 strategies for improving access to healthy food across the city,³³ including an expansion in the number of farmers markets and an increase in the number of markets that take EBT and other food

32 Linthicum, K., and D. Karp. July 14, 2011. Feud over Hollywood Farmers market ends – for now. Los Angeles Times. Available at <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-0714-farmers-market-20110714,0,6742146.story>

33 New York City Council. 2010. FoodWorks: A Vision to Improve NYC's Food System. <http://council.nyc.gov/html/food>

benefits. In a press event for the report, Speak Quinn noted, “New York State is home to over 36,000 farms and seven million acres of farmland. We rank second in apple production – growing more than enough to meet our local demand. Yet we still import apples from Washington and apple juice from China.”

In addition, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene offers two “Health Bucks” for every five dollars city residents on SNAP spent at farmers markets. Health Bucks are now available in 65 farmers markets in all five boroughs.³⁴ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is conducting an evaluation of this program, with results and an evaluation toolkit to be available in the fall of 2011.³⁵

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Recognizing that many of Baltimore’s neighborhoods were considered “food deserts,” city mayor Sheila Dixon announced the need for a Food Policy Taskforce in 2008. A year later, the task force released a set of 10 food policy recommendations, one of which was to promote and expand farmers markets. After hiring a food policy director and forming the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) in 2010, the city conducted an assessment of markets within the city, and began using the number of EBT machines at farmers markets and number of markets that accept federal nutrition assistance as a measure of its success in implementing the Food Policy Task Force recommendations. The BFPI now notifies the 196,000 Baltimore residents enrolled in SNAP benefits which markets accept federal nutrition assistance.³⁶ With support from Maryland Hunger Solutions and outside funders, \$6,000 each was provided to three farmers markets in a 2010 pilot project that supported costs for EBT machines, market currency (tokens), administration and marketing.

One of the markets chosen to participate in this pilot was 32nd Street Farmers Market, a long-standing community-run market located on the fringe between very different neighborhoods—one beset by poverty and pawn shops, the other home to faculty, staff, and students of Johns Hopkins University and other nearby hospitals. Here in this mixing bowl of cultures, the market exceeded more than \$11,000 in SNAP redemptions in the first six months of the pilot, with very little promotion or outreach. This speaks to the power of location, word of mouth and the trust that low-income citizens place in the market as a space that is welcoming, culturally appropriate and affordable.

CPPW SUCCESS: HEALTHY LAKES, MAINE

After learning that the 50/50 match offered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service could be applied to support the use of EBT machines at farmers markets, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) conducted a pilot program with six EBT terminals in 2010. In 2011, they began allowing farmers markets to rent the machines directly from third party providers, offering to reimburse the market for SNAP transaction and monthly fees. However, this program was not widely publicized and few markets knew about the opportunity at their fingertips. Through the Communities Putting Prevention to Work program, the People’s Regional Opportunity Program (PROP) helped two farmers markets in Cumberland County to implement EBT in 2011. “Reimbursement for renting terminals bypasses concern about technology becoming obsolete and allows markets to flexibility to switch providers or change their system if necessary. More importantly, this reimbursement program alleviates the financial burden and risk markets take in starting up a SNAP/EBT program which, in turn, makes it increasingly possible for markets to give SNAP acceptance a try.” (T. Weber, personal communication, July 20, 2011). Even if markets are committed to the principle of incorporating EBT and are able to recoup costs down the road through increased sales, they face upfront costs of up to \$1,000. Programs like Maine’s that cover technology costs allow farmers markets to focus limited resources to promoting SNAP and conducting outreach to a new customer base.

34 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. 2011. Physical Activity and Nutrition: Working with Farmers markets. http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp_pan_health_bucks.shtml

35 Center for Excellence in Training and Research Translation. 2011. “Emerging Interventions: Health Bucks.” <http://www.center-trt.org/index.cfm?fa=opinterventions.intervention&intervention=healthbucks&page=overview>

36 Baltimore Office of Sustainability. 2010 Baltimore City Sustainability Report <http://cleangreener.highrockhosting2.com/uploads/files/AnnualReport.2010.ForWeb.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

County governments are in a unique position to converge the interests of rural, suburban and urban areas. As a whole, counties typically have more rural constituents than cities and are home to the farms on which farmers markets and their shoppers depend.

SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Countywide comprehensive plans provide long-range land use policies within unincorporated areas, delineate zoning jurisdictions, preserve farmland for diversified production, and can be used as a tool to help the county realize their overall vision for a vibrant, economically viable food system that's accessible to all residents. Assessing availability of food processing and USDA inspected slaughterhouse facilities, small business development resources, and other networks that support agricultural entrepreneurship is one important component of such plans. Re-evaluating existing land use plans with local food systems in mind can be a democratic process that engages citizens, presenting an opportunity for government leadership and civic participation. For example, the Multnomah County Commissioners in Oregon adopted a resolution that puts into place a 15-year plan for local food, healthy eating, social equity, and economic vitality. Objectives specifically incorporating farmers markets are

- a. to increase the acceptance of SNAP/WIC,
- b. establish more local food hubs that centralize distribution for regional farms, and
- c. ensure regulatory support for food production.³⁷

PROVIDE SUPPORT SERVICES TO MARKETS

In concert with county extension offices, economic and agricultural development agencies, and other county-level organizations, governments can provide a host of support services to farmers markets. This might involve signage, identification of host sites, or developing printed and online directories of farmers markets and farms (in particular those accepting Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) or SNAP benefits). Offering to help recruit producers, assist farmers in diversifying their production, and facilitate relationships with county farm bureau offices can be particularly useful for farmers

markets founded with a public health or economic development lens that may not already be connected with agricultural stakeholders.

County governments may also find it more cost-effective to partner with neighboring counties and city governments on regional marketing campaigns for farmers markets.

CREATE STATEWIDE FARMERS MARKET FOOD SAFETY PLANS

One common regulatory role for county governments is concerned with sanitation and health. Ensuring the safety of the food supply is critical. However, when licensing requirements differ from county to county, are duplicative or contradictory with other state licenses, or are altogether inappropriate for the sale of non-hazardous, uncut produce and baked goods, both market managers and farmers have a hard time understanding what's allowed.³⁸ The existing regulatory landscape in many jurisdictions creates an over-burdensome environment that can stifle farmers market development. In some cases, this is compounded by a lack of proper training or awareness on the part of local regulators as to how policies relate to farmers markets and interact with one another. One helpful resource for jurisdictions that are re-evaluating sanitation policies related to farmers markets is "*From the Field to the Table: Suggested Food Handling for Farmers Markets, Fairs, and Festivals*" which contains food sanitation guidelines and recommended policies for sanitation departments as well as recommended practices for farmers and market managers.³⁹

Statewide farmers market food safety plans are one way of streamlining guidelines. Legal analysis of Mississippi codes in 2009 led to the recommendation that the state add a section to the law on Adulterated and Misbranded Foods to exempt home production of food for sale at farmers markets and clarify that the home-based processors are not subject to general food regulations.³¹ In 2010, the Maryland Legislature passed SB 198, instituting a Producer Mobile Farmers Market License that effectively prohibited municipalities from enacting any food safety licensing fees above and beyond those required by the state.⁴⁰ This was celebrated as a victory for farmers and market managers who had long been confused about overlapping or contradictory jurisdiction that resulted in duplicative costs to farmers and markets. According to Amy Crone, agriculture marketing specialist with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, this means that "no county or local jurisdiction can

37 Multnomah County Office of Sustainability. December 2010. Multnomah Food Action Plan: Grow and Thrive 2025 Community Action Plan. Available at http://multfood.org/files/PDFs/Dec2010_MFAP.pdf

38 Bentman, H. July 4, 2011. Farmers market regulations draw ire. PhillyBurbs.com. Available at http://www.phillyburbs.com/my_town/quakertown/farmers-market-regulations-draw-ire/article_b582396c-511b-5852-a82e-f26c9121cae4.html

39 Drake, C. and Swango, B. (2006). *From the Field to the Table: Suggested Food Handling Guidelines for Farmers Markets, Fairs, and Festivals*. marketumbrella.org: New Orleans, LA.

40 http://www.mda.state.md.us/md_products/farmers_market/pdf/SB%20198%20Producer%20Mobile%20FM%20License%20%28effective%2010-1-2010%29.pdf

charge a licensing fee to sell raw agricultural products,” and in order to sell anything other than raw fruits and vegetables, eggs, and naturally acidic fruit jams and jellies and non-potentially hazardous baked goods, “the only license a farmer should need, even if selling at farmers markets in multiple counties, is the \$100 license from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene” (A. Crone, personal communication, March 16, 2011).

California offers another interesting case study illustrating widespread impact through grassroots partnership. Roots of Change (ROC) manages the California Farmers Market Consortium (CFMC), a statewide partnership of eight organizations dedicated to increasing food access and the incomes of specialty crop farmers in California by supporting farmers markets. This project has helped form partnerships with other nonprofits working on improving access to farmers markets, as well as county and state offices that work with farmers markets and low-income populations to increase food access and the incomes of specialty crop farmers selling at these markets. More than 850 individual farmers throughout the state have benefited from this incentive project at more than 60 farmers markets from San Diego to Humboldt County⁴¹. Counties, cities, academic institutions and nonprofit organizations can partner on similar projects, such as those of Wholesome Wave and Fair Food Network, which are designed to get fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to low-income families.

Clearly, policy at the county and local levels informs policy at the state level, and vice versa. City and county governments can support alliances at the state level that address the barriers and duplicities found in regulations. Connecting with and supporting the growth of state farmers market associations, which are often grassroots run, helps grow the capacity of farmers market networks to learn from one another and act as stronger partners with local governments. In the end, farmers markets are most successful when they cultivate innovative partnerships to meet community goals. City and local governments can play a vital role by paving the way for these alliances that improve the health of their citizens as well as their regions’ farms and economies.

CONCLUSION

EXISTING RESOURCES

Many organizations interested in the proliferation of farmers markets have created how-to manuals to help organizations and market managers navigate the rules and processes for establishing themselves as legal entities, improving their operations and accepting federal nutrition assistance benefits.⁴² The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) and other organizations also host resources on their websites about accepting federal benefits at farmers markets, as well as materials on how to support farmers markets at the community, city and federal levels.⁴³

While a variety of private funding opportunities exist, there are three significant funding programs within the USDA that support local food projects at the community and state levels, including the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and Community Food Projects.^{44,45,46}

For the purposes of seeking funding for farmers market activities, statistics are always helpful in communicating the needs of a given community. Below are just a few of the useful tools available to communities looking for data to help inform their projects:

- County-Specific Obesity, Diabetes, and Physical Inactivity Prevalence Data (CDC):
http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.html?s_cid=govD_dnpao_079&source=govdelivery#County
- Food Environment Atlas (USDA): <http://www.ers.usda.gov/foodatlas/>
- Food Desert Locator (USDA): <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodDesert/>
- National Farmers Market Directory: <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/>

41 Roots of Change. 2011. California Farmers Market Consortium Available at <http://www.rootsofchange.org/content/activities-2/california-farmers'-market-consortium>

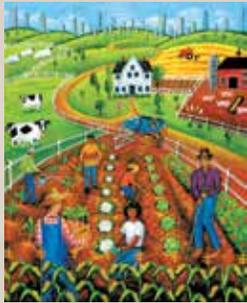
42 Owens, N. and K. Verel. 2010. SNAP/EBT at your Farmers Market: Seven Steps to Success Project for Public Spaces. Available at http://www.pps.org/pdf/SNAP_EBT_Book.pdf.

43 Farmers Market Coalition. n.d. Resource Library. Available at www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources

44 USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. 2011. Farmers Market Promotion Program. Available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp>

45 USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. 2011. Specialty Crop Block Grants. Available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/SCBGP>.

46 USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture. 2011. Community Food Projects. Available at <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/communityfoodprojects.cfm>



**Community
Food
Security
Coalition**