Twelve years ago, the Farmers Market Coalition began as a group of market managers sharing ideas and resources. With support from steadfast and innovative partners, FMC has grown into a diverse network of leaders from every state, a resource center for local food professionals, and a powerful voice in federal policy. We demonstrated the strength of that collective voice in 2018, when a multi-year effort to communicate the impacts and needs of markets culminated in major wins in the 2018 Farm Bill: permanent, mandatory funding for two key programs supporting farmers market operations, and language directing USDA to resolve a longstanding, problematic policy preventing farmers markets from fully optimizing wireless SNAP processing equipment.

The successes of 2018 extended beyond policy, with market managers and researchers from across the country coming together for the first ever National Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit, and National Farmers Market Week reaching its largest audience in history. Your actions, support and engagement made these landmark events possible. Thank you for your partnership. While the year also presented more than its share of challenges, we strive on, empowered by the shared mission that forged FMC a dozen years ago: to build a brighter future for farmers, consumers, and communities.

With gratitude,

Jen Cheek, Executive Director
Farmers Market Coalition
If I didn’t have a farmers market, I wouldn’t have a farm.

Dustin Rathgeber, Rathgeber’s Garten
Linton’s Farmers Market, IN

Why farmers markets? Farmers markets bring an incredibly wide range of important benefits to their communities and regions:

**Resilient Farmers & Farmland**
As one of the only low-barrier entry points into agriculture, farmers markets are growing the next generation of farmers. Independent farmers use farmers markets as incubators for new enterprises and the direct access to customers provides real-time feedback on new crops and varieties.

**Access to Fresh, Nutritious Food**
Nutritious food should be available to everyone. Farmers markets bring fruits and vegetables where they’re needed most, create welcoming retail environment where shoppers learn about food preparation and farming practices, and offer programming to assist low-income neighbors.

**Strong Local Economies**
For every dollar of sales, producers who participate in direct marketing generate twice as much economic activity within their region. For every $1 million in revenue, direct-market farms create almost 32 local jobs whereas larger wholesale growers create only 10.5.

**Connected Communities**
Farmers markets serve as community-building and community-defining institutions. For many customers, the social aspect of many farmers markets may be as important as the mercantile.

**Environmental Stewardship**
Farmers market farmers are much more likely to use sustainable farming practices than their larger, corporate counterparts, and are more likely to serve as important educators on the subject of production practices.
FMC’s mission is to strengthen farmers markets for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities.

FMC provides the support market managers require to run thriving markets, serving as a central hub from which to locate allies, identify and share best practices, and impact public policy.

- Support market success by providing members best-in-class operational tools & resources.
- Advocate for farmers markets at the national level.
- Facilitate nationwide grassroots advocacy.
- Promote the value of farmers markets to the public.
- Facilitate peer-to-peer networking opportunities for members.
In 2018

450
Market managers were provided with in-person training covering market operations, promotion, managing market risks, and data collection.

631
Online Guides, templates & reports available in FMC’s Resource Library.

400
Local food professionals participated in the first ever National Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit.

129
Legislative offices were engaged, with 21 in-person meetings on Capitol Hill as part of the Farmer Fly-in Project.

$250 million
Over 5 years in permanent, mandatory funding for the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) included in the 2018 Farm Bill.

$250 million
Over 5 years in mandatory, permanent funding for the re-named Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentives Program included in the 2018 Farm Bill.

$117,000
Awarded from FMC to 45 members to support market programs and food access.

1,670
Downloads of the National Farmers Market Week Media Kit.

32 million
Views of #FarmersMarketWeek posts across social media.
The Coalition

1,515 members across 50 states and territories, working together to build a stronger, more resilient, more equitable food system, direct from farmer to consumer.
FMC’s State Partner Program allows state associations to automatically provide FMC membership to their own members. This option is designed to help state associations easily expand their services, while also ensuring that their state is well-represented within the FMC member base. The more members we have in a state, the more we know about its needs and activities, and the better we can represent them in our policy efforts. FMC hosts monthly calls for our 25 state partner leaders:

- Alaska Farmers Market Association
- Arkansas Farmers Market Association
- California Alliance of Farmers Markets
- Colorado Farmers Market Association
- Georgia Farmers Market Association
- Iowa Farmers Market Association
- Illinois Farmers Market Association
- Hoosier Farmers Market Association
- Maine Federation of Farmers Markets
- Maryland Farmers Market Association
- Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets
- Minnesota Farmers Market Association
- Missouri Farmers Market Association
- Montana: National Center for Appropriate Technology
- New Hampshire Farmers Market Association
- North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association
- Oregon Farmers Markets Association
- PA Farm Markets
- South Carolina Association of Farmers Markets
- Tennessee Association of Farmers Markets
- Texas: Your Neighborhood Farmers Market Association
- Vermont Farmers Market Association
- Virginia Farmers Market Association
- Washington State Farmers Market Association
- Wisconsin Farmers Market Association
FMC gathered survey data in November 2018 to better understand the role that markets play in building a more equitable and sustainable food system. Four-hundred and thirty-seven market organizations responded, representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. FMC staff are continuing to review the survey results, and will share in-depth analysis throughout 2019. The survey will help FMC benchmark where market organizations are in terms of operational growth, as well as define areas in need of additional resources and support. Preliminary analysis of revealed the following:

Respondants shared the biggest challenges their markets are facing. The following challenges were reported, in decending order of frequency:

- Need more staffing/volunteer capacity for marketing
- Older growers, need for younger producers/ farmers/ growers
- Issue of reselling and the need to complete farm inspections for all vendors
- Market location(s) instability
- Organizational disarray (absence of operational systems)
- High market staff turnover
- Weather and environmental influences (heat, wind, etc)
- Too little diversity in products
- Organizational budget was too low to meet annual expenses in 2017
- Too few shoppers for markets
- Low SNAP participation levels
- Too few farmers/vendors for markets
Markets are building stronger relationships with public officials, those who have the ability to make policy decisions that impact local food sales. Of those, 51% invited an elected official to market, and 75% had an elected official attend their market!

The culture of data collection has grown, putting market organizations in the position to analyze the impacts of their vendors and improve outcomes. 48% of market org respondents collect sales data from their vendors.

Markets are leading the way in defining what it means to be “local.” 33% by mileage, 25% within state, 12% within a multi county region, and 15% within a multi state region.

88.6% of market org respondents enforce their definition of local in some way.

Markets are at the forefront of increasing access to healthy food. 7 out of 10 of market respondents accept SNAP benefits on site.
Big Wins in the 2018 Farm Bill

The success of this farm bill is a result of a multi-year effort from the farmers market community to make our collective voice heard.

FMC made the heaviest commitment to policy advocacy in our organization’s history, hiring a Policy Director, launching our Farmer Fly-in Project, and engaging with 129 different Congressional Offices. FMC worked closely with policy partners, in particular the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, where FMC staff led the Direct Marketing Sub-Committee. We made this commitment knowing that 2018 would include intense negotiations on the farm bill. Through the active engagement of the Coalition, our partners and members were able to fend off threats of elimination of key direct marketing programs, and ensure that key provisions and improvements were included in the bill.

- **Permanent, baseline funding for the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP),** a new program that combines the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP), and the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) into a comprehensive local food program.

- **Language directing USDA Food and Nutrition Service to resolve a longstanding, problematic policy that has prevented farmers market operators from using wireless SNAP processing equipment at more than one market location.**

- **A big increase in funding for the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Program,** which will also be renamed to honor local food pioneer and former FMC board member, Gus Schumacher.

- **Continued funding for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.**
Having an opportunity to speak directly to legislators and their staff was inspiring and taught me that all of our voices are important and should be heard.

If we don’t speak up and act as advocates, we won’t make a difference for ourselves and others. FMC helped us tell our stories and impress on our lawmakers the importance of thriving farmers markets for small ag.”

- Amy Greer, Winters Family Beef Farm, TX
Fresh food access for those who need it most

Call to Action: Funding the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program

The Presidential budget was announced in February of 2019, and it included bad news for the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The program is a critical source of fresh produce and farmer revenue stream, accounting for over $18 million spent directly with American farmers as well as $36 million servings of fresh fruit and vegetables for low WIC households. Knowing how essential this program is to many of our members, FMC responded by working with Congressman Adriano Espiallat, to draft a letter in support of full funding for WIC FMNP.

With the Congressman’s staff, GrowNYC, and other partner organizations, FMC secured 42 signatures. At a time when advocacy in support of WIC FMNP was minimal, this effort was vital in retaining funding for the program for both 2018 and 2019 fiscal years.
Since its inception, FMC has advocated for support for SNAP EBT equipment and administrative funding to increase SNAP access at farmers markets. In 2012, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) first began offering support using $4 million in funds from the President's annual budget for the agency. Now, 7 years later, a variety of avenues have been pursued and tested, with significant gains made: the share of SNAP dollars spent at farmers markets continues to creep upward, even as total SNAP dollars spent decreases across the country; a majority of farmers markets have received SNAP authorization; and payment processing companies are slowly releasing more suitable equipment options. SNAP programming and outreach has been tested and improved, offering the capacity to dramatically increase SNAP participation at markets.

However, farmer markets can’t reach their full potential as fresh food access points until the ultimate goal has been reached: widespread, long-term access to free, reliable wireless SNAP processing systems at farmers markets. July of 2019 highlighted the tenuous situation of equipment access at farmers markets, when one of the major equipment providers announced they would be shutting down. The loss of this provider would leave thousands of farmers markets across the country without SNAP processing capabilities during the height of the season. While provisions were made to extend service for the affected markets through early 2019, a long-term solution has yet to be identified, and markets are being held in limbo.

FMC seeks to provide stability for markets offering SNAP. Immediately after the shutdown announcement, we set up an information center where markets could find updates on the situation, information on alternative equipment options, and a mini-grant program to help out markets in dire need. We will continue to coordinate with markets, network leaders, elected officials and the USDA to compile and share information, assess the problem and identify paths of action to help markets avoid a disruption in SNAP services.

In 2019, we’ll continue to work to advance equipment innovation and improvement, but will also re-ignite efforts to lay the foundation for free wireless SNAP access for all markets to compliment the FNS equipment program. In 2015 and 2016 we encouraged FNS to mandate the provision of free wireless EBT equipment in each individual state’s SNAP service provider contract, but FNS was only able to release guidance strongly encouraging states to include the provision. Now, we’ll collaborate with state partners and policy leaders to support the inclusion of free wireless EBT equipment for markets in state SNAP contracts.
National Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit

In mid-September, 400 market operators, technical assistance providers, researchers and USDA employees came from 44 states and Canada to take part in the first National Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit. With a goal of fostering mutually beneficial connections between researchers and practitioners and offering hands-on technical assistance, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service partnered with FMC, as well as the Food Distribution Research Society (FDRS), Value Added Conference (VAC), and Farm Credit Council (FCC) to host the first-of-its-kind event. The Summit offered two days of presentations and workshops, surrounded by networking and peer-to-peer learning at the poster showcase, vendor expo and reception.

One-hundred and eighty-nine market managers from across the country registered for FMC’s pre-conference workshops: Managing Market Risk with the Farmers Market Legal Toolkit, Maintaining Market Integrity, and Building Market Capacity with Data Collection & Communication. Discussion during these workshops was indicative of the broad range of markets in attendance: rural to urban, small to large, new and well-established.

The Summit also provided the opportunity for FMC to honor Kate Fitzgerald and Eli Cook as the first recipients of the Gus Schumacher Award. The award recognizes individuals who exemplify Gus’ tireless work to bring fresh, local food to Americans of all income levels and backgrounds, and his people-first approach to building coalitions to support farmers market success.

FMC collaborated with FRESHFARM Markets to coordinate the Summit field trip to the Dupont Circle FRESHFARM Market. There, attendees were able to experience one of DC’s longest-running producer-only markets first hand, and bring their observations and questions to the Director of Markets, Nony Dutton, anchor vendor, Eli Cook of Spring Valley Farms, and General Operations Manager Nick Stavley of another DC-area market network, Community Foodworks.

“Connect: What was truly valuable about getting to share this work, was learning what others were doing and how we can potentially join forces and expand on each other’s projects. There was a real sense of community and collaboration at this summit.”
BUILD CAPACITY

The Go-to Web Resource for Market Managers

Farmersmarketcoalition.org houses an extensive catalog of online resources for farmers market operators and supporters. Regularly updated resources include:

Resource Library
631 reports, templates, examples, and guides are available in FMC’s Resource Library to enhance and enrich farmers market managers’ tools and knowledge on a wide range of topics and issues.

Farmers Market Manager FAQs
Frequently asked questions & answers, and video interviews with flagship farmers market organizers across the US. A great starting point for current and prospective managers looking to develop and improve operations.

State-by-State Index
See important contacts, news, and resources available in each state. Track state-wide and city-wide farmers market initiatives by topic.

SNAP Guide for Farmers Markets
See important contacts, news, and resources available in each state. Track state-wide and city-wide farmers market initiatives by topic.

Webinar Archive
A list of frequently asked questions & answers, and video interviews with flagship farmers market organizers across the US. A great starting point for current and prospective managers looking to develop and improve operations.

POP Club Toolkit
The Power of Produce (POP) Club provides a fun opportunity for children to engage in the local food system through conversations directly with farmers, educational games and demonstrations, and exposure to new fruits and vegetables. In addition to participating in educational activities.
Released in January of 2018, the Farmers Market Legal Toolkit is the culmination of a three year partnership with the Center for Agriculture & Food Systems at the Vermont Law School, NOFA-VT, and FMC. Made possible by a USDA AFRI grant, the comprehensive toolkit includes legal resources, best practice recommendations, and case studies for market leaders on selecting and enhancing business structures, accepting SNAP benefits, and managing common risks. The toolkit is free to access at farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org.
Farmers Market Metrics (Metrics) is a complete evaluation & data communication system that empowers market operators to tell their market’s story and is offered through a subscription to FMC members. Streamlined metrics and data collection methods are combined with training resources and a dynamic data entry website automating analysis and reports. Helping markets tell their story with data and analyzing their internal impacts is finally possible with the introduction of Metrics.

Farmers Market Metrics expanded its reach this year, with 253 markets in 26 states across the country. About 25% of these markets report on their vendors, creating a base of almost 2,000 vendor profiles to use in aggregate analysis for understanding market participants and activities.

FMC and FarmSpread joined forces as strategic partners to encourage the professionalization of the industry through the use of best-in-class tools for markets. 2019 is shaping up to be an exciting year in our partnership, as we continue to grow our data sharing capabilities, which will allow Farmers Market Metrics users to capture over 80% of all Metrics data points through the use of FarmSpread's market management platform.

Through a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant, FMC is currently working closely with the Virginia Farmers Market Association and the burgeoning Greater Washington Farmers Market Association to use Metrics to create city- and state-wide data-based promotional campaigns.
Richmond Area Farmers Markets, Virginia

This preliminary data from 7 markets in the Richmond Virginia area demonstrates the significant community impact of Virginia’s farmers markets. Participating markets include Birdhouse Farmers Market, Carytown Farmers Market, Chesterfield County Farmers Market, Goochland Farmers Market, Lakeside Farmers Market, Manakin Market & South of the James Market.

- **5,927 acres**
  of diversified farmland in production by vendors.
  
  America loses an acre of farmland every hour to development.

- **32 miles**
  average distance food travels from farm to market.
  
  That’s fresh! Most food eaten in the U.S. has travelled nearly 1,200 miles.

- **193 businesses**
  are supported by these markets, over the course of the year.
  
  The markets allow new and small businesses to enter the marketplace.

- **37 vendors**
  are young or beginning farmers.
  
  Markets help build the next generation of American farmers.

- **638 employees**
  are supported by vendors’ businesses.
  
  Small businesses create new meaningful employment opportunities.

- **126 of our vendors**
  are women or minority businesses.
  
  These markets offer economic opportunity to all members of our community.

VAFMA’s mission is to support farmers markets through education initiatives, while building opportunities for collaboration, networking, advocacy, and innovation that supports the growth and sustainability of farmers markets statewide.

**Learn More At:**

vafma.org

**Stay in touch:**

- mary.delicate@vafma.org
- facebook.com/vafma4u
- instagram.com/virginiafarmersmarkets
- twitter.com/VAFarmersMktts
National Farmers Market Week

Each year, National Farmers Market Week (NFMW) highlights the important role farmers markets play in the nation’s food system. As USDA’s main partner in NFMW programming and promotions, FMC provides resources to inspire markets and facilitate their ability to offer special programming during the week. The goal of National Farmers Market Week is to build national awareness of the significance of shopping at farmers markets, resulting in increased support for small, local farms and businesses year-round.

This year, August 5th through 11th marked the 19th annual NFMW, and it was big: 13 tools and resources in the NFMW Media Kit (downloaded 1,670 times) and 10 nationally featured markets. FMC’s 2018 infographic garnered 1,500 shares and 200,000+ reach on Facebook alone, with the hashtag #FarmersMarketWeek used on Twitter 4,819 times with an estimated 38.2 million impressions.

FMC’s #LoveMyMarket contest is also highlighted during NFMW and extends throughout the whole month of August, encouraging markets and shoppers to share their favorite market photos, creatively showcasing “I Heart Farmers Markets” tattoos.

“\nWe reached TONS of people that were not familiar with the market. It was a great day.\n
- Mulberry Market"
PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR FARMER IS

Where does your food dollar go?

At a traditional retailer:
- 85 cents goes to marketing and distribution
- and only 15 cents goes to the farmer.

When you buy direct from a local farmer, they receive 100% of your food dollar.

Farmers Markets Grow the Next Generation of Farmers

Studies have shown that farms are significantly more likely to survive if direct-to-consumer sales are part of their business plan.

Nearly 40% of young farmers reported that the highest proportion of their sales come from farmers markets and CSAs.

Shake the Hand that Feeds You!
Together We Can Build Strong Markets, Strong Farmers, and Strong Communities
New Partnerships

The National Farmers Market Poster Contest, sponsored by Farm Aid, had entries pouring in from 160 farmers markets from 41 states. The creative competition’s 184 submissions boiled down to 5 difficult-to-choose winners and 9 staff picks.

FMC was awarded the administrative Buy Fresh Buy Local® program duties by the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA). Buy Fresh Buy Local (BFBL) is the premier trademark of the local foods movement in the United States. The trademark was created and coordinated as a way to identify and promote locally grown foods. Since 2002, BFBL programs have been implemented by over 100 Regional and Local Chapters around the country.

FMC teamed up with health insurance provider, AmBetter, to provide shoppers at 14 markets $6,000 to spend on fruits and vegetables ($84,000 in total)! The farmers market staff and AmBetter representatives handed out the $5 coupons over a six week period, along with recipes and shopping bags, filling bellies with healthy food over the holidays.
What’s Next?

A TRANSITION: Ben Feldman will step into the role of Interim Executive Director in January, 2019. After 7 years as Executive Director, Jen Cheek will step down into the new role of Director of Programs.

A REFRESH: In our 2018 member services survey, we heard loud and clear that members want more clarity on what resources are available, and easier access to them overall. Based on that feedback, we’ve been working on a complete resource and website overhaul. Stay tuned in early 2019 to see the new and improved system, and to take part in the new training series.

A PLAN: The Board of Directors will complete the three-year strategic planning process they began in 2017, providing FMC with a long-term vision increasing the strength and impact of the Coalition.

IMPLEMENTATION: FMC will work closely with NSAC, and the USDA to ensure successful implementation of the new and improved elements of the 2018 Farm Bill.

ADVOCATING: FMC will continue to advocate for the needs of farmers markets at the federal level. With the 2018 farm bill passed, FMC advocacy in 2019 will focus on the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and support for efforts to include no-cost wireless equipment in state SNAP contracts.

A CELEBRATION: Promotions, templates and tools are in the works for the 20th anniversary of National Farmers Market Week in 2019.

A BIG EVENT: The next iteration of the Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit will take place on October 6-9, 2019 in the Chicago area.
2018 Key Partners & Funders

Ambetter Insurance
Center for Agriculture & Food Systems at the Vermont Law School
Farm Aid
Farm Credit Council
George B. Storer Fund at the Riverbend Fund
City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
USDA National Institute of Food & Agriculture's (NIFA) Agriculture & Food Research Initiative (AFRI)
University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Research & Extension

Financials

Revenue
$703,181
- Donations - 2%
- Membership - 3%
- Grants - 26%
- Sponsorships - 18%
- Contracts for Service - 51%

Expenditures
$512,628
- Programs - 65%
- Admin & Management - 12%
- Awards & Sponsorships - 23%

These figures reflect the 2018 calendar year. For more information on FMC fiscal year reporting and 990s, please contact info@farmersmarketcoalition.org