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21st Annual National Farmers Market Week Celebrates the Resilience and Safety of Farmers Markets During the COVID-19 Pandemic

July 27, 2020 - The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC), a national organization committed to strengthening farmers markets, announces the launch of its nationwide campaign for the 21st annual **National Farmers Market Week** on August 2nd - 8th, 2020. National Farmers Market Week is a celebration started by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that highlights the essential role farmers markets play in the nation's food system. The campaign runs throughout the first full week of August each year and is formally declared by a USDA proclamation. This year, National Farmers Market Week is sponsored by Square, Farm Credit Council, American Farmland Trust, Farm Aid, the Food Liability Insurance Program (FLIP), and the Farm Board.

FMC's 2020 National Farmers Market Week campaign is designed to address the specific ways farmers markets continue to be an essential part of local food systems. This year, NFMW is centered on three key messages. **First, farmers markets are essential businesses.** Local food systems with short supply chains are resilient and dependable in making food available to their communities, and provide an essential service to the communities they feed as well as the farmers and ranchers that rely on them. **Second, farmers market operators are local food heroes.** When the pandemic hit, market managers were some of the first to implement innovative strategies to change their operations around public health protocols. Despite that fact, market operators are often left out of relief efforts for food systems workers. **Third, farmers markets are safe.** Emerging research supports that outdoor marketplaces like farmers markets can be safer than alternative indoor retailers due to unlimited air circulation, sunlight, the flexibility to enforce social distancing by spreading out vendors and products. Farmers Market operators continue to implement new strategies to keep their communities, staff, and vendors safe.

"It was a challenge to have a market this season. We implemented additional measures to keep our vendors, customers, and volunteers healthy and safe. We increased the number of hand wash stations, asked participants to wear face coverings, and encouraged social distancing while at the market. All in all, it's been worth it just to hear customers say that going to the market makes the summer feel 'normal.' Each year we have a lot of returning vendors, but we were still able to recruit 25% new vendors to expand our market this year," said Emily Alligood, the manager of the Larimer County Farmers Market in Larimer County, Colorado.

"National Farmers Market Week is a chance to celebrate all that farmers markets do for communities,"

said Farmers Market Coalition’s Executive Director, Ben Feldman. “This year we are focused on the essential role that farmers markets play in local food systems. Even in a global pandemic farmers market operators have worked tirelessly to innovate and come up with solutions to continue to serve their communities. While farmers markets are among the safest places to buy food, the increased costs and time required to stay operational are major challenges for all markets nationwide. It is more important than ever to support our local farmers markets during this crisis.”

As the only national organization dedicated to the needs of farmers market operators, FMC makes it easy for all market managers, regardless of capacity, to participate in National Farmers Market Week by providing free tools, guides and materials to more than 8,600 farmers markets nationwide. Market operators and organizations can use the resources to promote their markets and educate their communities during the weeklong celebration.

This year, due to social distancing restrictions, most celebrating will be confined to online. Farmers market supporters are encouraged to participate in the celebration by shopping at or donating to their local market and by using the hashtags #FarmersMarketWeek and #FarmersMarketsAreEssential to share the value that their farmers market brings to their community.

Farmers Market Coalition is also available to help local and national media cover National Farmers Market Week and the benefits of farmers markets. FMC can connect reporters to farmers market managers, farmers, and advocates for interviews, as well as members of FMC board and staff. In addition, reporters can access FMC’s infographics, farmers market facts, and featured markets and farmers to support their stories.

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The Farmers Market Coalition (Farmers Market Coalition) 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, visit www.farmersmarketcoalition.org.