

In 2009, 72 Vermont farmers' markets generated \$7 million in gross sales, \$4.3 million of which came from agricultural sales.

While no statewide economic studies have been conducted yet in Vermont, economic impact analysis studies in Iowa and Oklahoma found that every dollar spent at a farmers' market generated an additional \$0.58 - \$1.36 in sales at other area businesses.

Other related economic activity takes the form of wages paid by farmers to employees, purchases made by farmers at local stores, and local tax revenue in areas with a local options tax.

In municipalities with a downtown, farmers' markets attract visitors to the downtown area, driving customers to local business and making the downtown area a more attractive destination.

"Nearby businesses love us."

***–Chris Wagner, Manager
Burlington Farmers' Market***

Town Plans

Farmers' markets can help municipalities meet town plan goals, including:

- Ensuring community food security
- Increasing the availability of locally grown foods to lower income residents (Wolcott)
- Helping youth maintain a healthy weight (Wolcott)
- Identifying and preserving agricultural land as required by the Vermont Planning and Development Act
- Maintaining the economic viability of agriculture (Manchester, Stowe)
- Promoting opportunities for the public to purchase local agricultural and forest products (Stowe)

The UVM Center for Rural Studies assisted with this section.

Resources

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

PO Box 697, Richmond VT 05477
(802) 434-4122 / info@nofavt.org / www.nofavt.org

Vermont Farmers' Market Association
www.vtfma.org

**Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Vermont Planners Association**

89 Main Street, Suite 4
Montpelier, VT 05602-2948
(802) 229-9111 / info@vlct.org / www.vlct.org

**VT Land Use Education & Training Collaborative:
Vermont Planning Information Center**
www.vpic.info

International City/County Management Assn.
Washington, DC
(202) 289-ICMA / (202) 962-3500 / www.icma.org

**Publication: Community Health and Food
Access: The Local Government Role**
<http://icma.org/en/Search?s=farmers%2Bmarket>

Farmers' Market Coalition
Cockeysville, MD
www.farmersmarketcoalition.org.

Project for Public Spaces
New York, NY
www.pps.org/markets

Local, State, and Federal Grants

NOFA-VT mini-grants can help new markets get going. These short-term funds can also help existing markets undertake new initiatives.

Additional funds can become available to municipalities that partner with markets on other grants of mutual benefit. Community Development and Economic Development grants are potential sources of shared grant income.

Periodically, the USDA makes grants to farmers' markets.

In 2011, funds are available for infrastructure to support farmers' markets. Interested municipalities should contact the NOFA-VT office.

Supporting Your Farmers' Market

A guide for municipalities



Farmers' market customers come to buy food for their families, socialize with their neighbors, and participate in the life of their community. This guide helps municipalities partner with their farmers' market for a stronger market and, in turn, a stronger community.



Prepared by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

Farmers' Markets Benefit Communities

"By setting up a farmers' market, local officials can create a vibrant shopping experience that benefits area farmers, businesses, and consumers."

–International City/County Management Association

- Farmers' markets keep wealth in local communities by providing a venue for direct producer-to-consumer sales.
- Farmers' markets allow local farmers to sell their food at a higher profit margin, strengthening their business and improving the local economy.
- Farmers' markets build the resilience of local food systems, increase food security, educate citizens about the diversity of healthy and local food products, and incubate new businesses.
- Farmers' markets bring people together, strengthening the fabric of the community.

"The Farmers' Market is a huge asset to our community."

–Bill Fraser, City Manager, Montpelier



What Markets Need from Communities

Just as communities benefit from the presence of a farmers' market, farmers' markets benefit when they receive support from their host community. To be successful in the long term, markets need:

- A safe, sufficiently-sized space
- Signage that advertises the market to passing traffic
- A day and time that is consistent year to year
- Adequate parking for shoppers and vendors
- Support from local citizens and local government

Town managers, selectboards, city councilors and other local government officials can be instrumental in fostering a new farmers' market to success, or ensuring that an established market will continue to thrive.



Operational Support

Farmers' markets benefit substantially from municipal operational support. At least one-third of Vermont's farmers' markets receive municipal support, such as:

- Space for the market, free of cost or at a favorable rate. Virtually all the income from farmers' markets goes directly to the vendors; markets generally operate on a non-profit basis and keep only enough to pay operating expenses. High site fees can make the overhead cost of the market unprofitable to vendors.
- Signage for the market on municipal land. Municipal policy often impacts markets' ability to post signs. By working together, markets and municipalities can find a solution that will comply with local ordinances and ensure that the market is well-publicized to both residents and passers-by.
- Parking assistance, including blocking off spaces or parking lots the night before or the morning of market day.
- Electricity for music and special events.
- Garbage collection.
- Inclusion in municipal newsletters and publications.
- A link between municipal and market websites.
- Safety audits, with the help of police departments. Market managers do a safety audit of their market, assessing how and where foot traffic and vehicles will flow to ensure safety of market visitors and vendors.
- In areas with public transportation, municipal officials can advocate for a bus stop at the market to make it more accessible to residents who don't drive.

"The farmers' market has stimulated the community and demonstrated that if we work together, we can make something really good happen."

—Dave Crawford, Manager, Village of Essex Junction

Regulations, Policies, and Permits

Siting a farmers' market can require a careful examination of zoning laws regarding land use, signage, and parking. Street closures may also be considered. Farmers' market leaders may ask for a copy of current zoning laws so that they can explore how their plans to start or expand a market interact with local law.

Several Vermont municipalities (including Hartford and Jericho) define a "farmers' market" in their zoning regulations, providing clarification should any future issues arise.

Time spent up front determining what space the market will use and at what times, what signage is allowed, and what municipal services will be involved, is time well spent and will avoid confusion or conflict once the market gets going.

"Be clear in writing about the terms of the agreement. Get it approved by the people it needs to be approved by; have them pass a resolution... Details, issues, and concerns to be dealt with are just that."

—Bill Fraser, City Manager, Montpelier

Liability and Insurance

Liability and risk management are frequent and valid concerns for municipalities. It is important that people and property are protected from any accidents that might occur at the farmers' market.

Most Vermont markets carry their own general liability policy. Some markets require individual vendors to carry their own liability/product insurance.

Municipal insurance policies via the VLCT can't extend their coverage to farmers' markets; some commercial carriers can.

Several Vermont farmers' markets are sponsored by their local Chamber of Commerce and are insured via a general liability rider on the Chamber's policy.



When planning a new market...

It's not always beneficial to vendors to have a farmers' market in every town. Vendor fees, market equipment, hired labor, and time are costs that a farmer must balance against potential—not guaranteed—sales. Too many markets in a small area could decrease the gross sales at each, resulting in insufficient income for the farmer.

When contemplating a new market, engage community members and potential vendors to identify who is available to support the market, and to determine if local producers have the capacity to vend at another market.