



Newsletter of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: A project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)



Photo courtesy Janet Bachmann

Mark Cain (left) of Dripping Springs Garden presents bouquets to Carol Eichelberger and Jean Mills of Coker, Alabama, at the Fayetteville Farmers' Market.

Farmers' Markets: Good for the Towns, Good for the Farms

Communities all over America are discovering that farmers' markets can revitalize town centers and strengthen local economies. People who come to buy delicious, farm-fresh food will stay to shop in nearby businesses. Farmers stay in town after the market closes and spend some of the money they just made.

Farmers and consumers especially benefit from "producer-only" farmers' markets, where vendors grow the food they sell. These markets are a place for exchanging more than just cash and food. Farmers can learn what their customers are looking for and – equally important – they have the chance to let customers know what's happening on the farm. When consumers understand what growers are up against, they become valuable allies. This issue of ATTRAnews looks at the central place of farmers' markets in sustainable food systems.

Flowers Sell Fast at Farmers' Markets

By Janet Bachmann
NCAT Agriculture Specialist

Vendors at the Fayetteville, Arkansas, farmers' market believe their market is one of the most attractive in the nation. Situated in the downtown square, the market is alive with blooming and edible plants. On Saturday mornings this is the place to be, with live music, coffee and pastries, and vendors selling fruit, vegetables, plants, crafts, and of course, specialty cut flowers.

Of the 50 farmers at a midsummer Saturday market, almost half bring cut flowers for sale. The market has become well known as a source of high quality, low-cost cut flowers. For some vendors, fresh vegetables or fruit are the main products, but many of these have added flowers as secondary products. For other vendors, flowers are the primary focus of the display and a major source of income.

Mark Cain and Michael Crane of Dripping Springs Garden began 19 years ago with organically grown blueberries and vegetables. They soon realized that flowers were more profitable than vegetables. They bring buckets filled with flowers and hire several people to serve customers waiting in

line for their specialty: made-on-the-spot bouquets. Prices start at \$6.00.

Vonnon Sisemore is another vendor who began primarily as a vegetable grower. He is now known for sunflowers, which he sells in \$5.00 bunches and bouquets. Sisemore cuts the stems long, trims the leaves, and secures each bunch with a rubber band. Or he will combine sunflowers with gladioli, statice, variegated privet, or Johnson-grass for a shorter-stemmed bouquet.

Henry Chotkowski raises hundreds of varieties of peonies around his bright pink house. He says selling bouquets works better at the farmers' market than selling single stems. On Mothers' Day, he and his wife host an on-farm garden party that gives visitors a chance to see peonies and irises in bloom and to purchase plants for delivery in September.



NCAT Agriculture Specialist Janet Bachmann started at the Fayetteville Farmers' Market selling vegetables and strawberries from her farm, Riverbend Gardens. She has found it profitable to add more and more flowers. For opening



Photo courtesy Janet Bachmann

Kilia and Mark Priest of Coyote Farms are best known for fragrant tuberoses, but they also grow tulips, gladioli, sunflowers, and lilies —Asian, Louisiana hybrids, and callas.

day of the market – the first Saturday in April – she grows mid-late to late season daffodils like Serola, Gay Song, Camelot, and the especially fragrant, late-blooming Pheasant Eye. Bachmann also enjoys growing ornamental onions, tritelia, crocosmia, amarcrinum, as well as bearded, Japanese, and Louisiana irises. She is presently evaluating woody cut flowers such as red twig dogwood, American beauty berry, and forsythia.

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Farmers' Market Tips

An Eggsample of Creative Marketing

Excerpted from ATTRA's *Direct Marketing*, by Katherine Adam, Radhika Balasubrahmanyam, and Holly Born

According to Jeff Ishee — a farmer with many years of marketing experience — if people knew how commercial layers are managed, they would be flocking to the local market to buy free-range or humanely produced eggs. Laid by hens that are allowed to roam free, with a rich and varied diet, these eggs have a deep yellow yolk, compared to the pale, watery factory-produced eggs. They've got the freshness and good taste old-timers recall from their childhood.

To take advantage of the market potential for farm-fresh eggs, talk to buyers about the differences between eggs raised naturally and those sold at the store. Explain why your product is nutritionally superior. Display photographs of your hens. Education helps consumer awareness and is a great sales booster. People who feel responsible for their health and recognize instinctively the value of your product will be back for more. And they won't mind paying more for your eggs.



Resources about Farmers' Markets

Farmers' Market Coalition

This coalition was recently formed by cooperative agreement between the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association and the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

www.nafdma.com/FMC

Growing for Market Magazine

Lynn Byczynski, editor and publisher

P.O. Box 3727, Lawrence, KS 66046

785-748-0605, e-mail: growing4market@earthlink.net

www.growingformarket.com

Guide to Developing a Community Farmers' Market

Farmers' Market Federation of New York, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and NY State Dept. of Agriculture & Markets

Contact: Diane Eggert, 315-475-1101, e-mail: diane99@dreamscape.com

Farmers' Market Federation of NY

2100 Park St., Syracuse, NY 13208

Local Harvest

Web site lists U.S. farmers' markets, family farms, and other sources of locally grown and marketed food. Farmers, market managers, and businesses related to locally grown food can add their listings for free.

www.localharvest.com

The New Farmers' Market: Farm-Fresh Ideas for Producers, Managers and Communities

By Vance Corum, Marcie Rosenzweig, and Eric Gibson, 2001.

New World Publishing, 530-823-3886, e-mail: nwpub@nwpub.net

Teaching Direct Marketing and Small Farm Viability: Resources for Instructors

This new training manual provides useful points for farmers' market members or organizers. Download sections or the entire manual, or order a copy for \$29.00 (tax and shipping included, check made payable to UC Regents) from:

(see "Resources" on page 3)

ATTRA Publications Useful to Farmers' Market Growers

In addition to this list, ATTRA offers many more publications on business planning and on specific crops, farm products, processing, and value-added techniques that are useful for growers who sell at farmers' markets. All these publications are available for free from ATTRA at 800-346-9140 or www.attra.ncat.org.

- Adding Value to Farm Products: An Overview (IP141)
- Adding Value through Sustainable Agriculture Entrepreneurship: Overview and Resources (RL046. Web only: not available in print)
- Alternative Beef Marketing (CT089)
- Alternative Meat Marketing (IP165)
- Direct Marketing (IP113)
- Enterprise Budgets and Production Costs for Organic Production (RL041)
- Farmers' Markets (IP146)
- Green Markets for Farm Products (CT140)
- Keys to Success in Value-Added Agriculture (IP172)
- Market Gardening: A Start-up Guide (IP195)
- Marketing Organic Grains (CT154)
- Moving Beyond Conventional Cash Cropping (IP201)
- Organic Marketing Resources (IP124)
- Pork: Marketing Alternatives (IP153)
- Postharvest Handling of Fruits and Vegetables (IP116)
- Resource Guide to Organic and Sustainable Vegetable Production (IP188)
- Sustainable Farming Internships & Apprenticeships (RL033. Web only: not available in print)
- Scheduling Vegetable Plantings for Continuous Harvest (CT173)
- Season Extension Techniques for Market Gardeners (IP035)
- Sustainable Cut Flower Production (IP025)

America Is Hungry!

Why Farmers' Markets Are a Big Part of the Future of American Agriculture

By George DeVault

America is hungry. No. Actually, America is starving – for food that tastes like food. America is hungry – for food that comes from the family farm just down the road, not from the other side of the country or the world. America is hungry – for food that is fresh, not jet-lagged.

America is hungry – for *real* tomatoes, not slices of pink cardboard on hamburgers in the middle of the summer. America is hungry – for food that is *not* drenched in pesticides, pumped full of antibiotics and covered with sealing wax. America is hungry – for food that doesn't just fill the belly, but titillates the taste buds, satisfies the soul, and makes the human spirit soar like a hawk.

At least that's what Americans tell me and my wife every week at farmers' markets. Melanie and I have a 20-acre farm about one hour north of Philadelphia. It is certified organic. We raise vegetables and flowers. We've been direct marketers since we bought the place 20 years ago. We have sold at four different *producer-only* farmers' markets, from South Street in Center City Philadelphia to one that opened last just summer in our hometown of Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

In a typical week, we might talk – face-to-face – with 1,000 different people. We know most of our customers by sight, and many by name. Their children, spouses and pets, too. And, every week, they all tell us the same thing: They are absolutely sick and tired of the tasteless supermarket produce. They don't trust it, either. In this age of globalization – and global terrorism – many say they are increasingly afraid of food from afar.

That's part of why we grow the widest selection possible in our part of the country. Our signature crops include sugar snap peas, garlic, blueberries, salad mixes of all kinds throughout the summer, red, white and blue potatoes on the Fourth of July, heirloom tomatoes, artichokes, and flower bouquets that last a good 10 days. We extend the season from early spring to late fall with three high tunnels.

Americans may buy supermarket produce in the off-season, but they don't like it. Not one little bit. All winter

long, Americans complain about cardboard tomatoes and strawberries that don't taste like much of anything. When the days start to grow longer in February, Americans are as hungry as a bunch of groundhogs, drooling for the first tender greens of spring. That's when they start bugging us with e-mails: When does the season start? It's not too late to sign up for this season is it?

Why? America is *hungry* – starving, again – for human contact. How often does the cashier smile and say "Hi!" when you go to the supermarket? Bleep! Bleep! Bleep! That's usually all you hear, the endless bleeping of the bleeping bar code scanner.

Most cashiers don't know the prices, let alone where the food comes from or how it was grown. And they couldn't care less. It's not their job. God help you both if the computer goes down.

That's why I get such a big kick out of making change at farmers' markets. People are just amazed – get the goofiest grins on their faces – when you total up a big order in your head and say, "OK, let's see. \$53.50 out of \$55.00. Fifty cents makes \$54.00, and a one makes \$55.00. Thank you SO much for coming out to the market today. Bon appetit!"

No wonder the number of farmers' markets has grown from a few hundred 20 years ago to more than 3,100 today. No wonder more than 19,000 farmers throughout the country are now making their living by selling only at farmers' markets.

What is the future for farmers' markets in America's food system? Farmers' markets *are* the future for much of American agriculture. Never forget – America is hungry. Feed her with real food from producer-only farmers' markets.



George DeVault and his family are farming organically near Emmaus, Pennsylvania. This article is excerpted from Mr. DeVault's keynote address at the third Iowa Food Policy Conference, September 2004.



Photo by Bill Tarpenning, USDA

Vendors and customers at the Crescent City Farmers' Market in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Resources... continued from page 2

Univ. of Calif. Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems
1156 High St., Santa Cruz, CA 95064
E-mail: TrainingManual@ucsc.edu
<http://zzyx.ucsc.edu/casfs/training/manuals/tdm>

USDA Farmers' Market Web site
www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

Finding Organic Seed and Annual Planting Stock

ATTRA has new tools to help organic farmers decide which crops to grow. A new on-line database, *Suppliers of Seed for Certified Organic Production*, lists sources of organic and untreated seed for annual crops: grains, cover crops, and vegetables. The database provides contact information and crop varieties for sale. Farmers need to check with suppliers for current availability. ATTRA is also offering a new publication, *Seed Production and Variety Selection for Organic Systems*, that provides insight into the current regulatory climate and the future direction of the seed industry. Both the publication and the database are available at www.attra.ncat.org.



House Restores Program Funding: Bill Moves to Senate

On June 8, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 2744, the 2006 agricultural appropriations bill. Ferd Hoefner, of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, said that he expects quick action by the Senate committee and that the Coalition will be vigilant in making sure that House funding levels are maintained. Hoefner provided these updates on key programs (all figures are in millions).

Sustainable Ag. Program	House Funding	President's '06 Budget	Sustainable Ag. Program	House Funding	President's '06 Budget
SARE	\$12.4	\$9.2	Value-Added Producer Grants	\$55.5	\$15.5
SARE Professional Development	\$4.1	\$3.8	Renewable Energy Sec. 9006	\$23.0	\$10.0
ATTRA	\$2.5	\$0.0	Outreach/ Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers/ Ranchers	\$7.8	\$5.9
Rural Business Enterprise Grants	\$40.0	\$0.0			

New Director for National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture

The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture is an alliance of hundreds of organizations from across the country that work together to build a sustainable system of agriculture. The Campaign unites interests that range from family farmers to environmentalists, consumers, and community food security groups, strengthening the links between urban and rural communities. Many farmers and organizations learn about the status and availability of particular sustainable agriculture programs through the Campaign's e-mail alert service.

A new executive director, Deborah Burd, has just been hired by the National Campaign. Burd has been involved in many aspects of community development, including helping to create a loan fund for small farmers, and building local market opportunities throughout Western Maine. She has also served as a board member for the Maine Rural Development Council, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and GrowSmart Maine.

Burd rejoices about the news that the full House has restored ATTRA's funding. "We are carrying forward our efforts in the Senate to get the funding to allow important sustainable agriculture programs to continue," she said.

To learn more about the National Campaign and how to receive e-mail updates about programs, visit the Campaign's Web site at www.sustainableagriculture.net, call 845-361-5201, or email mkrome@inxpress.net.

New and Updated ATTRA Publications

- ◆ Suppliers of Seed for Certified Organic Production (RL040. Web only: not available in print.)
- ◆ Paddock Design, Fencing, and Water Systems for Controlled Grazing (IP152)
- ◆ Sustainable Agriculture: An Introduction (IP043)

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