

Farmers Markets

and Community Development



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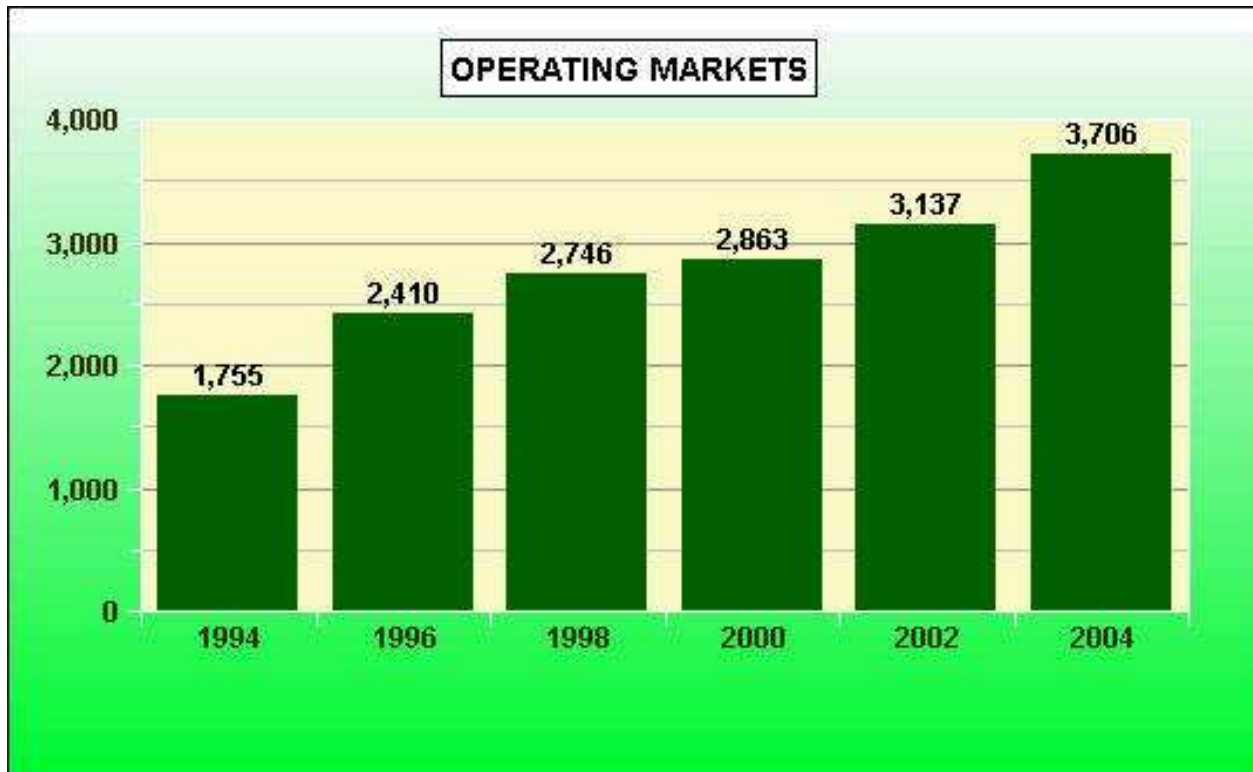
What is a Farmers Market?

A farmers market serve as a place for farmers (and others) to congregate and sell their produce.

The market also serves as a community meeting place for people to interact, often in a fun environment.

There are multiple organizational structures for farmers markets, although the dominant form consists of individual farmers selling directly to consumers for a specified number of hours from one to three days per week.

Although the concept of a farmers market seems reminiscent of the past, it appears that farmers markets are again growing in popularity.



Source: Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/FarmersMarketGrowth.htm>

National data show an increase in the prevalence of farmers markets.
Agricultural Marketing Services shows 23 registered markets in Mississippi.

Many medium and large-scale cities have farmers markets.



Charleston Farmers Market. (South Carolina).



Crescent City Farmers Market. (New Orleans, Louisiana).

Assistance to Farmers Markets



Over the past several years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, state departments of agriculture, and numerous nongovernmental organizations have developed programs to provide assistance to farmers markets.

These programs:

- Assist with promotion.

- Provide training and technical assistance.

- Network regional producers, consumers and markets.

- Focus on both producer and consumer needs.

Food Assistance Programs

There are programs for farmers markets to serve as sources of affordable food for people in need. These include:

Food Stamps.

WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

(It is anticipated that this program may serve up to 8,000 low-income people in six areas of Mississippi.)

WIC Elderly Nutrition Program.

Farmers Market Food Recovery.

Historically, many smaller cities and rural communities hosted farmers markets. Many of these are no longer in operation.



Still, rural farmers markets may provide an important element of diversity for the local food economy.



Similar to suburban and urban markets, there has been a resurgence of farmers markets in rural areas. These markets face some challenges that are different from those encountered by their more urban counterparts.



Challenges Faced by Small-Scale and Limited Resource Farmers
 (Source: Green, Focus Groups and Survey Research, 2000 – 2006)

Challenge Frame	Challenge Claims
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfavorable environmental conditions Little information on sustainable production practices Insufficient labor (self/family labor, inability to hire labor) Lack of equipment and inputs
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System privileges large farmers Low commodity prices Lack of information on market prices Wholesale vegetable markets difficult to penetrate Direct marketing challenges in terms of time involved and small and poor rural population Direct marketing consumers expect to/can only pay prices charged at supermarkets
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low prices bring low returns Restricted access to credit Few loan programs for small and poor farmers Complicated application processes High interest rates
Land/Farm Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retaining ownership of land, homes and equipment Treatment by lending institutions and the USDA Disputes over heir property Unaffordable legal consultation
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses that privileging large/white farmers Generally poor state of the local economy Few opportunities for youth
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and programs privilege large farmers and corporations Inaccessible programs, services and information Dismissive and/or hostile treatment of small and minority farmers

Challenges Faced by Small-Scale and Limited Resource Farmers

Calls for Assistance from Small-Scale and Limited Resource Farmers
(Source: Green, Focus Groups and Survey Research, 2000 – 2006)

Program Frames	Program Recommendation Claims
General Access	Greater attention to small, poor and minority farmers Equal access to programs and services for small, poor and minority farmers
Access to Capital through Credit	Continuation and extension of direct lending programs Assistance with application process Alternative collateral requirements Lower interest rates More programs/funding for new and re-entering farmers
Information through Outreach & Education	Government programs and services Market dynamics and prices Increased production with sustainable practices Attention to crops small farmers more likely to produce (vegetables) Farmers and the Internet
Disaster Protection	Assistance according to applicant need Wider variety of assistance options Disaster protection for all farm produce Low-cost crop insurance for all types of produce
Market Development	Allow/require public institutions to privilege local produce Local marketing (e.g. farmers markets)
Community Social Service	Youth development programs Health care
Small Farms	Agency or advocacy position to directly assist all small farmers Local democratic participation in program development and delivery Role for community-based organizations

Recommendations Made by Small-Scale and Limited Resource Farmers

Noxubee County Farmers Market



The Beat Four Farmers Cooperative started the Noxubee County Farmers Market in 1994.

Originally housed under canopy tents in a church parking lot, the Farmers Market now has a building on Highway 45.



The Noxubee County Farmers Market:

Sells produce from Beat Four members and other producers.

Privileges local producers. Also sells some items from the larger region (example: peaches and watermelon).

Participates in a regional community food security (CFS) program.



Cleveland Farmers Market



The Cleveland Farmers Market was started in summer 2005. It was a growers market and participated in the WIC program.



Challenges Faced by Rural Farmers Markets

Competition with grocery stores and full-service retail outlets.

Some smaller-scale store owners/managers perceive farmers markets as a threat.

Relative to suburban and urban areas, rural communities have a lower population density and therefore a smaller local customer base.

Dominance of traditional commodity crop agriculture.

Fewer “specialty” growers to supply the market.

Traditional livelihood strategies among limited resource farmers have included on-farm and door-to-door sales. Farmers markets represent the “unknown.”

Limited experience with farmers markets.

In general, there is often less produce available for sale to support a farmers market (at least when organized as a “growers” market).

Customers are “picky” and will only come back to the grower/market a limited number of times if they are not satisfied.

Issues to Consider for Rural Farmers Markets

Community Development Initiatives Often Lead to More Questions than Answers!

What is the mission of the farmers market?

What organizational structures and operational procedures are best suited for farmers markets in rural areas?

To what extent and in what ways does the farmers market fit with the food culture of the community?

What is the actual producer and consumer base?

