



Farmers' Markets

The Come to the Table Project: People of Faith Relieving Hunger and Supporting Local Agriculture in NC

What is a farmer's market?

A farmers market can be as simple as a few farmers selling produce from the beds of their pick-ups on a Sunday afternoon. Some farmers markets host hundreds of farmers and tens of thousands of customers. A market can be held at a rural community center, in a church parking lot, or in a city park. Most charge vendors a small fee. If your faith community is struggling to maintain and grow its numbers, developing a farmers' market or another food ministry can be a powerful way to reinvigorate membership and help connect more meaningfully with other organizations, faith groups, farmers, and members of the broader community. If fresh food is scarce in your neighborhood, a market can help bring it in. If a market already exists, look for ways to support it.

Farmer's markets need:

Community support and enough customers
A steering committee of farmers and community members
Products that customers can afford and want to buy
A site that's visible, fairly flat, has parking and ideally, has shade
One dedicated market manager to enforce policies and collect fees

What ideas can help markets succeed?

Provide transportation to low-income families and seniors on market day.
Hold cooking classes, canning and freezing demonstrations, or pass out simple storage and cooking tips.
To welcome folks of different ethnicities, offer familiar foods and actively recruit farmers from diverse groups.
Connect farmers who need sales staff with members of the community who could use a job, especially where language or culture would otherwise separate vendors from shoppers.
Use donations or a percentage of profits to buy market coupons for seniors or low-income families.
Have a buy/sell/trade market, where people can swap what they have for what they need.
Add fun activities such as harvest festivals, summer celebrations, or live music.
Ask local businesses and organizations to sponsor the costs of starting a market.
Participate in the WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program and SNAP (see resources below).
Bring baskets of produce from the market to shut-ins, and partner with a local food pantry to get high-quality leftover produce to people in need of hunger relief.

For more information:

ASAP has publications on increasing access at markets: <http://asapconnections.org/downloads/asap-farmers-markets-for-all-full-report.pdf> & <http://asapconnections.org/downloads/asap-farmers-market-access-guide.pdf>
That's My Farmer! Toolkit from Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon shares best practices learned from a ministry that supports farmers' markets through coupons: www.emoregon.org/food_farms.php#5
The Wholesome Wave Foundation details the "Seven Steps for Success" for using EBT at Farmers' Markets in this publication: www.pps.org/pdf/SNAP_EBT_Book.pdf
The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program www.nutritionnc.com/wic/fmarket.htm
Eat Smart Move More North Carolina has a guide, *Bring Fresh Produce to Your Setting*, and surveys at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/FreshProduce/FreshProduce.html