M&M Farmers Market

2016 Impacts

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) was formed to provide a central resource for farmers markets and the farmers and vendors that sell at farmers markets, working toward a mission of advancing farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products. MIFMA defines a farmers market as a public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling direct-to-consumer food and products which they have produced themselves. In addition, the market may include a variety of vendors as determined by market management. A farmers market is organized for the purpose of facilitating personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, vendors, shoppers and communities.

Over the last 10 years, the number of farmers markets in Michigan has doubled, from 150 in 2006 to more than 300 in 2016. This growth can be attributed to the wide range of benefits farmers markets provide their communities including, but not limited to, acting as the center of a thriving regional food system, supporting food and farm based businesses, serving as a community gathering place, increasing healthy food access, and protecting farmland and the environment.

[Graph of Farmers Market Growth in Michigan]

Michigan markets are central to strong regional food systems because they promote farm vitality and provide communities of all sizes direct access to farmers and their products. Michigan farmers markets operate as incubators for unique and varying food and farm businesses. By fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between customers and farmers, farmers markets give small businesses a unique outlet to develop a customer base and increase profits. Low-income areas can also be reinvigorated through exposure to diverse products found within these markets, especially to a wide variety of fruits and vegetables which are often difficult to access in underserved areas. Benefiting from one of the most diverse selections of local agriculture in the nation, Michigan farmers markets expose communities to an ever-changing selection of products throughout the year.

Farmers markets generate economic benefit not only for the farmers and small businesses that participate, but also for neighborhood and nearby businesses, as well as the surrounding region. Farmers markets attract shoppers to a downtown or commercial area where they will often linger and make additional purchases during their shopping trip, thus spreading economic impact throughout the community. Farmers markets also distribute impact through a community by supporting small businesses, which are more likely to purchase goods and services from local or regional suppliers for the inputs they need.

1 MIFMA definition of a farmers market: http://mifma.org/aboutus/
By creating a thriving marketplace on a weekly basis, farmers markets also foster community development. Farmers markets create an active public space that offers community members a unique experience to gather, interact, and build relationships. As a community gathering place, markets can shape growth, foster development, and strengthen communities.

Michigan farmers markets also expand access to local, nutritious foods which affects the health of the entire community. MIFMA strives to ensure all residents have access to locally grown, fresh, nutritious food. In 2006, only three of Michigan’s farmers markets accepted the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In 2016, 157 farmers markets in Michigan, just over half of all markets in the state, accepted SNAP. In addition to SNAP, customers have the opportunity to utilize many different food assistance benefits at Michigan farmers markets, such as Double Up Food Bucks, WIC Project FRESH, Market FRESH for Seniors, and Hoophouses for Health. Accepting a variety of food assistance benefits allows markets to serve a wide and diverse customer base and provides an inclusive environment for community members. When food assistance benefits, such as SNAP, flow through farmers markets, federal and philanthropic dollars circulate through local communities and benefit local businesses.

Farmers markets also help to protect Michigan agriculture, farmland, and greenspace. Farmland is protected and well cared for when farming is profitable. Supporting farm vitality helps keep and restore farmland to production, as well as enabling farmers to utilize management practices that protect the environment and incorporate and care for greenspace.

While the benefits of farmers markets are diverse and expansive, the economic impact of Michigan farmers markets has not been measured or documented. For this reason, MIFMA identified the need for standardized, accurate data collection at a local and state level in order to recognize and document the contributions farmers markets make to Michigan’s food and agricultural industry.
Successful farmers markets reflect on the benefits they provide, measure their impact, and share the outcomes. Having strong data leads to strong markets. Strong markets measure various impacts to share with vendors, customers, community partners, and other local stakeholders. The impact farmers markets have on their communities is significant. When a market is focused on attracting visitors, facilitating a thriving local marketplace, and administering various food assistance benefits, measuring and communicating about their impact is often an overlooked and undervalued investment of time, energy, and resources. Strong farmers markets understand the importance of identifying important metrics, utilizing sound measurement instruments and practices, being accurate and timely with measurement, and tracking metrics over time. Initiating this kind of thoughtful and comprehensive approach to data collection at farmers markets will help markets evaluate and share their impact.

For these reasons, MIFMA conducted a pilot project in 2016 with funding from a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG). Through this pilot, MIFMA sought to assess the economic contribution farmers markets make to Michigan’s rural communities. The pilot project supported seven farmers markets in six rural communities in collecting data and assessing economic contribution. Each of these participating communities is considered rural according to the following USDA Economic Research Service definition: a nonmetropolitan area, based at the county level, which includes a combination of open countryside, rural towns (places with fewer than 2,500 people), and urban areas with populations ranging from 2,500 to 49,999 that are not part of larger labor market areas (metropolitan areas).²

Participating communities benefited from this project by gaining access to data they could use to inform future decisions. Area small businesses also benefited by learning how the farmers market contributes to their independent stores’ consumer attendance and sales. Participating markets benefited by collecting data that can demonstrate the market’s impacts on the community and can be used to inform future decisions about expansion, the addition or enhancement of facilities, and/

or to identify and evaluate new opportunities. Data was collected over the course of the 2016 farmers market season in a variety of ways including: customer surveys, a pre- and post-season vendor survey to summarize season sales and trends, a daily vendor sales log, and data collection by market managers to document daily trends such as customer counts and vendor attendance.

Market managers who participated in this study faced many barriers including hesitation from farmers and vendors to report sales, taxing weather conditions, cumbersome reporting requirements, and limited staff time available for this project. To make strides in assessing the impacts of their markets, most managers had to overcome a lack in budget resources and staff time to collect useable information. The participating farmers market managers understood the value of the data being collected and took the time to make it a part of their daily operational duties.

Valuable records are attained by making data collection part of ongoing market operations. Utilizing the information gained from data collection helps to enforce market operations by showing what outside factors may be effecting market dynamics. Data collection also informs management strategy by identifying where energy should be focused. This helps market managers be strategic about the limited time they have to offer.

**METHODOLOGY**

Throughout the 2016 market season, market managers were asked to collect data through a farmers market profile, two connected Excel workbooks (one for master data entry and one to track vendor sales), a vendor profile survey, vendor sales slips, visitor/customer survey, and a visitor count log.

Vendors were asked to take a pre-season vendor profile survey that asked for information about acreage owned and/or leased, distance traveled to the market, products offered, and in which farmers markets they participate. Vendor sales were tracked each market day by collecting vendor sales slips. Sales slips accounted for cash, credit/debit, and food assistance program sales. Although these were required pieces of data, reporting was inconsistent due to lack of participation from all vendors. Market managers also tracked vendor attendance, volunteer hours, and visitor counts. Visitor surveys were also distributed throughout the market season to capture feedback from unique customers. The number of customer surveys to be collected was determined by using estimated annual visitor attendance and a survey sample calculator with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 10. Farmers market visitors were asked about what transportation method they used to reach the market, their zip code, the amount of money spent at the farmers market and at surrounding businesses, products they were purchasing and frequency of visits to the market.
MARKET PROFILE

M & M Farmers Market

Sponsoring Organization: M & M Farmers Market

When: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Saturdays, Year-round

Where: M & M Plaza (3937 10th Street, Menominee 49858)

Style: Pop-up in parking lot (summer), Pop-up in shared building (winter)

County: Menominee

County Population: 23,548

Website: www.downtownmenominee.com/menominee-county-farm-and-food-exchange/

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MCFFExchange/

Market Management: Volunteer Staff

Number of Market Days Throughout Season: 48

Average Number of Weekly Vendors: 10

Total Number of Vendors Throughout Season: 24

Average Number of Visitors Each Market Day: 80

Types of currency accepted: Cash, Check, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)\(^3\), Double Up Food Bucks\(^4\), Project FRESH (WIC FMNP)\(^5\), Market FRESH (Senior FMNP)\(^6\).

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\(^3\) SNAP EBT: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a nutrition assistance program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service to help low-income people and families to buy the food they need for good health. Benefits are distributed on debit-like Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards and transfer to retailers through an electronic system. [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/)

\(^4\) Double Up Food Bucks: A SNAP incentive program developed by Fair Food Network that doubles the value of SNAP benefits spent at participating markets and grocery stores. [www.fairfoodnetwork.org/projects/double-up-food-bucks/](http://www.fairfoodnetwork.org/projects/double-up-food-bucks/)

\(^5\) WIC Project FRESH: Federally recognized as Women, Infants, and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP). A program providing participating WIC clients with coupons to purchase eligible, locally grown, fresh, unprepared fruits and vegetables at authorized farmers markets. [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs)

\(^6\) Market FRESH: Federally recognized as Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (Senior FMNP). An educational program providing senior participants with coupons to purchase locally grown, fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets. [www.michigan.gov/marktfresh](http://www.michigan.gov/marktfresh)
MARKET DESCRIPTION

The mission of the M & M Farmers Market:

“The M & M Farmers Market (Exchange) sponsors farmers markets in Menominee County and other events consistent with our mission. The Exchange is managed by a group of individuals that support local farmers, craftsmen, and food artisans by providing a venue to sell produce and homestead related items directly to consumers.”

The M & M Farmers Market was established in 2013 and is open year-round. Jo Browne, the market manager, and Sharon McCaylan, the SNAP coordinator, are the lead volunteers for the market. The market runs solely on volunteer hours which, in 2016, totaled more than 300 hours with a value of approximately $7,000. The M & M Farmers Market coordinates an annual holiday market in addition to its weekly market.

7 Based on $23.56/hour average volunteer rate calculated by Independent Sector https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time
VENDORS

The M & M Farmers Market brings together a variety of farmers and vendors from Menominee County on the southern Michigan-Wisconsin boarder. All vendors participating in the market must be producer only and contribute an annual fee (weekly vendors receive a discount). Vendors at the market also accept a variety of food assistance programs to allow customers of all income levels to enjoy their products.

- Through the course of the 2016 season, 24 vendors attend the M & M Farmers Market.
  - Crafts and Services: 9 Vendors (38%)
  - Value Added Products: 7 Vendors (29%)
  - Produce: 6 Vendors (25%)
  - Meat and Fish: 1 Vendor (4%)
- Total Number of Individuals Employed Through Vendor Businesses: 26
  - Year-Round Employees: 19
  - Seasonally Employees: 7
- Total Acres Owned by Farmer Vendors: 252 acres
- Average Number of Miles Vendors Traveled to Market: 15 miles
- 3 Vendors are Considered Beginning Farmers as They Have Less Than 10 Years of Farming Experience

8 This number represents acres of land owned by farm vendors who reported owning land in the vendor pre-season survey.

26 employees are supported by our vendors’ businesses.
Small businesses create new, meaningful employment opportunities.

15 miles average distance food travels from farm to our market.
That’s fresh!

252 acres of farmland in production by our vendors.
America loses an acre of farmland every hour to development.
VISITORS

An average of 82 people visited the M & M Farmers Market each market day, resulting in approximately 1,880\(^9\) total visits throughout the 2016 season. The market attracted customers from all over Michigan, however, 66% of the 80 visitors surveyed came from Menominee’s zip code (49858). Along with serving Menominee’s local community, 74% of those visitors came from within Menominee County. Outside of Menominee, farmers market visitors came from 9 different zip codes around the country, including 3 from outside Michigan. The market is attracting people to the downtown area and supporting area vibrancy. Eighty-three percent of 104 visitors surveyed came to the area specifically for the market, and 48% planned to do additional shopping, eating, or other activities in the area on the day they visited the market. A majority (67%) of customers purchased produce at the market.

- Average Visitor Count Per Day: 80
- Estimated Annual Visitor Count: 1,880
- 93% of Visitors Used a Personal Vehicle to get to the Farmers Market
- 67% of Visitors Purchased Produce
- 23% Purchased Eggs
- 22% Purchased Value-Added Products\(^{10}\)
- 36% of Customers Shop at the Market Frequently (weekly or more)
- 48% of Visitors Planned to do Additional Shopping, Eating or Other Activities in the Area
  - Based on spending estimates made by visitors completing a survey, an estimated $1,670 was spent by farmers market visitors in the surrounding community the day of the market.\(^{11}\)

\(^9\) This number does not represent unique visitors. The average number of visitors was calculated by taking monthly visitor counts periodically throughout the market day according to the Rapid Market Assessment protocol developed by Oregon State University. www.smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/

\(^{10}\) This number represents the percentage of people who reported buying food in a specific category through the customer survey, who claimed buying produce, eggs, and value added products.

\(^{11}\) This number represents the estimated dollar sum from customers who reported spending a specific dollar amount in the area on the day they were surveyed at the farmers market.
SALES

From the 104 customer surveys collected, the following metrics were also analyzed: average customer purchases, visitor frequency, and products customers purchased. To help understand the overall sales at the market, visitors were asked to report the amount they were spending or planned to spend at the market that day. Comparing vendor documentation of sales and customer reports of purchases creates a clearer understanding of the actual sales conducted at the M & M Farmers Market.

Throughout the season, customers reported spending anywhere between $0 to $150 on a market day with an average of $20\textsuperscript{12} per visit. The median amount customer reported spending was $20. The amount customers most frequently reported spending was also $20 per visit. Shoppers who came to the market also spent between $5 and $200 at other businesses in the area surrounding the farmers market. On average, customers spent $45 spent in the area surrounding the market per customer.

Based on customer surveys, a snapshot of spending at the market and other nearby businesses can be created. In future seasons, the market plans to collect additional sales data directly from vendors in an effort to further quantify the spending and impact of the market.

Sales data was collected through vendor reports and customer surveys. Vendors who sold at the M & M Farmers Market were asked to fill out a daily sales slip and provide it to the market manager. Over the course of the season, the market manager recorded how many vendors were present for each market day and how many of those vendors reported their sales.

- Estimated Total Annual Sales (based on customer spending): $38,105
  - Cash Sales (by vendors reporting sales): 91% of total sales
  - SNAP Benefits (by vendors reporting sales): 5% of total sales
- Estimated Total Sales (based on vendor daily reporting\textsuperscript{13}): $28,845

\textsuperscript{12} This average was calculated based on customers who reported spending a dollar amount at the market on the customer survey.
\textsuperscript{13} Not all vendors reported sales daily. This information is based on data from the sample of vendors who reported sales at market. For the M&M Farmers Market, on average 75% of vendors reported sales daily.

$38,105
in estimated sales

directly to the vendors’ local farms and businesses.

Returning 3x more of their sales to the local economy than chain retailers.
CONCLUSION

The 2016 pilot project conducted by MIFMA sought to assess the economic contribution farmers markets make to Michigan's rural communities. At the end of the pilot project it was evident that farmers markets impact their community in many ways, including, but not limited to, acting as the center of a thriving regional food system, supporting food and farm based businesses, and serving as community gathering places. The pilot project allowed for impacts to be measured over a market season and for the results to be used to aid market managers in future decision making.

Measuring impacts at the market level strengthens the entire Michigan farmers market community. By conducting the 2016 program, MIFMA has begun to form standardized data collection processes that can be utilized by any/all Michigan farmers markets. Utilizing standardized data collection processes also allows for data to be equitably compared between markets and for data to be aggregated from several markets in order to show impacts at a county, regional and/or statewide level. This kind of data can be a powerful advocacy tool for market managers in their local community, as well as for a statewide farmers market association, like MIFMA, that advocates at a state and federal level for programs and policies which support farmers markets and the farmers and vendors that sell at farmers markets.

In addition to identifying a variety of benefits from this data collection process, the 2016 pilot project also identified several challenges with this type of record keeping and impact measurement. Confusion regarding reporting requirements, the availability and investment of staff time to gather data, and cooperation from vendors were all challenges experienced by participating markets. Feedback from market managers encouraged MIFMA to find efficient, streamlined data collection tools for farmers markets. This need lead to the adoption of use of the Farmers Market Metrics Portal. In partnership with the national Farmers Market Coalition, MIFMA launched the Farmers Market Metrics Portal in 2017. The Farmers Market Metrics Portal is a web-based tool used by market managers to track and communicate farmers market data. This tool allows market managers to easily input daily data, track market vendors, and communicate impacts to their community.

The use of the Farmers Market Metrics Portal allows Michigan farmers markets to collect standardized data and measure impacts in a user friendly environment. Standardizing this processes will allow MIFMA to understand the scope of impacts farmers markets in Michigan have on jobs, tourism, agriculture, food access, and the economy.

Looking forward, MIFMA’s goal is to help Michigan farmers markets understand the importance of data collection and to demonstrate how collecting and sharing data can benefit their markets. Utilizing the Farmers Market Metrics Portal will allow markets to collect data independently while creating a common place to keep all Michigan farmers market data and an efficient way of measuring impacts of farmers markets across the state. The portal will allow farmers market managers to identify yearly trends due to consistent data collection each season.

Farmers markets have significant and meaningful impacts on their communities that reach far beyond vendor shopper sales and interactions, but the quantifiable data to support those impacts has always been lacking. Thanks to this project, the data gathered and the tools and resources developed, MIFMA hopes to build an even stronger case for farmers markets in Michigan and the tremendous impact they have on their local economies and the social wellbeing of their communities.

[14] The Farmers Market Metrics Portal was developed by the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC). In partnership with FMC, MIFMA and participating Michigan farmers markets have access to this portal. https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/programs/farmers-market-metrics/
About the Michigan Farmers Market Association

The Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) was started in 2006 as a statewide association to promote local food consumption in Michigan by connecting more farmers to consumers through farmers markets. Today, MIFMA works with its membership to maintain its mission and attain its vision.

Mission: MIFMA advances farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products.

Vision: MIFMA places farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement and works to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support.

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