



# Ten Years of Advocacy Accomplishments

Over the last ten years, the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) has been a strong, passionate advocate for farmers markets and their place at the forefront of the local food movement. We believe that vibrant, thriving farmers markets are a win-win-win for the markets, the farmers and vendors that sell at them, and the communities that surround them.

We are incredibly proud of what MIFMA has achieved for our members. We feel these ten advocacy accomplishments exemplify the work we have done, and continue to do, to advance, support, and advocate for farmers markets in Michigan's food system.

## Established Our Vision

In September 2006, we identified our association's vision: MIFMA places farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement. We work to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food, and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support. That same month, we worked with Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS), the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), farmers and markets across Michigan to celebrate Buy Local, Buy Fresh – Select Michigan Day by hosting the first Farmers Market at the Capitol. We have hosted a Farmers Market on the Capitol lawn every year since.

## Supported Our Partners

In February 2010, we attended the first Good Food Summit and the MIFMA Board approved signing the Michigan Good Food Charter resolution of support in September 2010. The Michigan Good Food Charter is a vision and roadmap to advance Michigan's food and agricultural contributions to the economy, protect our natural resource base, improve our resident's health, and enable generations of Michigan youth to thrive.

## Magnified Our Voice at a National Scale

In addition to advocating for state level policies, MIFMA also recognizes the need to engage in advocacy at the federal level, especially as it relates to federal programs that directly impact farmers markets and the farmers and vendors that sell at markets. In 2015, MIFMA became a participating member of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) as a means of engaging in federal advocacy for sustainable agriculture issues in partnership with groups from across the country and with guidance from staff based in Washington, D.C.

## Expanded Acceptance of Federal Food Assistance at Farmers Markets

In 2006, only 3 of the 150 farmers markets in Michigan accepted Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Through our work in advocacy, education, and technical assistance, that number had risen to 24 by 2008. In February 2008, MIFMA, along with other partner organizations, was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the United States Department of Agriculture "in recognition of the outstanding collaborative effort which resulted in a significant increase in the number of farmers markets serving Michigan Bridge Card clients." Ten years later, in 2016, 160 of 300 farmers market accept SNAP, and many participate in other programs that increase access, like Fair Food Network's Double Up Food Bucks Program, Hoophouses for Health, Prescription for Health, and more.

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### Encouraged Safe Food Sampling

In March 2008, MIFMA began working with MIFFS and MDARD to update the Farmers Market Food Safety Frequently Asked Questions and food sampling regulations. In 2009, the Safe Food Sampling Guidelines were published on MDARD's website to provide clear and consistent guidance for farmers market vendors on safe food sampling.

### Improved Licensing Options

As more and more market managers and community partners began incorporating nutrition education into farmers markets through cooking demonstrations and food sampling events, challenges with applying for and financing proper licensing became a limiting factor. MIFMA worked in partnership with MDARD to develop a new licensing option for these activities that ensured food safety in a scale and economically appropriate way. This new licensing option was introduced at the 2015 Michigan Farmers Market Conference.

### Championed Cottage Foods

In April 2010, MIFMA Director Dru Montri began serving on the MDARD Food Law Steering Committee, including the subcommittee focused on Cottage Foods. We advocated for, wrote language for, and helped to pass the Cottage Food bill that was signed into law as Public Act 113 in July 2010. This bill allows food entrepreneurs to test food product ventures in a low-risk, low-cost setting.

### Advocated for Egg Sales

In March 2009, MIFMA met with MIFFs, MDARD and the Office of Attorney General (AG) to present arguments regarding whether or not MDARD has the authority to regulate shell eggs sold by the producer to the final consumer, or first receiver. Based upon the AG opinion the MDARD received in July 2009, eggs sold directly by a producer to a consumer would no longer be licensed or regulated by the department.

### Supported Wine Sampling and Sales

Over the course of seven years, MIFMA worked tirelessly with Senator Hansen to allow wine sales at Michigan farmers markets. In 2006, Representative Hanson introduced HB 6402 to allow special purpose licenses for farmers markets to allow for wine tasting and the sale of wine for consumption off the licensed premises. The bill was reintroduced three more times: in 2007 as HB 4117, in 2010 as HB 4147, and in 2011 as SB 32 and 1120. Each time the bill was introduced, MIFMA presented comments, wrote letters of support, and testified in committee hearings. Finally, in 2013, Senator Hansen reintroduced SB 79 with the support of 8 other bill sponsors and the continued support of MIFMA. The bill was signed into law as Public Act 100 in July of 2013.

### Certified Mushroom Foragers

Foraged mushrooms play an important role in both Michigan's food culture and tourism industry, but how can we ensure that wild foraged mushrooms are safe for direct market sales? In 2015, MIFMA worked in partnership with the Midwest American Mycological Information (MAMI) and the Crosshatch Center for Art & Ecology to develop a certification program to train and authorize mushroom foragers. The program provides a clear path to earning an Expert Mushroom Identifier Card from MDARD that allows foragers to sell wild-foraged mushrooms in accordance with federal and state law.

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