



# Downtown Marquette Farmers Market

## 2016 Impacts

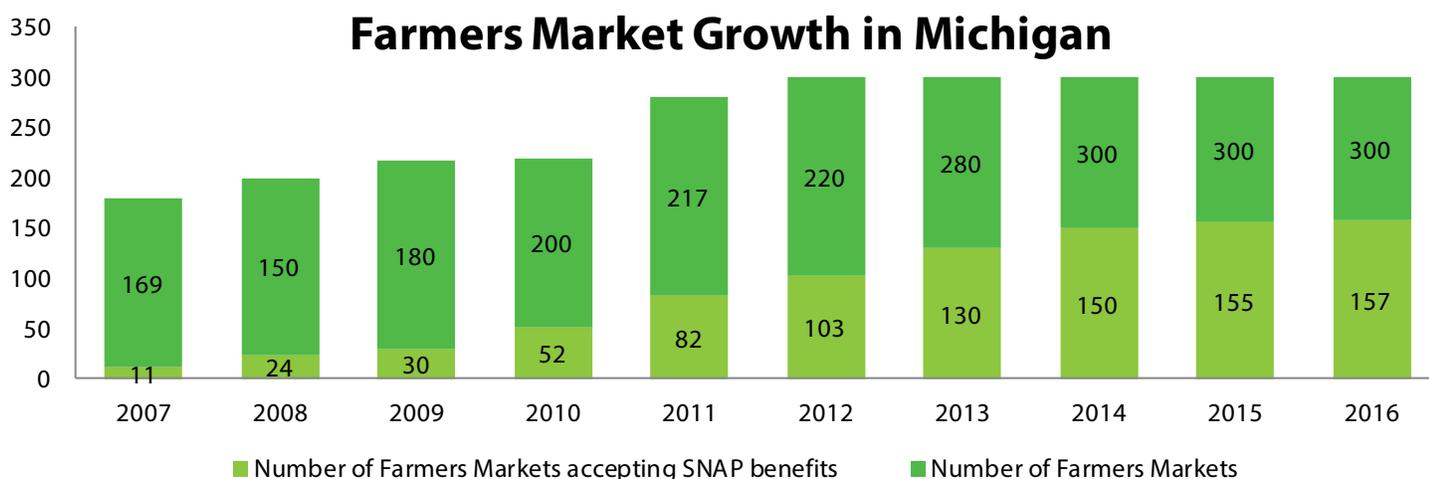


*This work was performed with funding from a USDA Rural Development Business Grant and a Specialty Crop Block Grant.  
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# INTRODUCTION

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.



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).<sup>2</sup>

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

## Downtown Marquette Farmers Market

**Sponsoring Organization:** Marquette Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

**When:** 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Saturdays, May – December

**Where:** Marquette Commons (112 S. Third Street, Marquette 49855)

**Style:** Pop-Up in Shared Building

**County:** Marquette

**County Population:** 67,215

**Website:** [www.mqtfarmersmarket.com](http://www.mqtfarmersmarket.com)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/downtownmarquettfarmersartistsmarket/](http://www.facebook.com/downtownmarquettfarmersartistsmarket/)

**Market Management:** Paid, Full Time Equivalent (85% Farmers Market Manager, 15% Office Assistant for DDA)

**Market Manager Status:** Certified Market Manager

**Number of Market Days Throughout Season:** 29

**Average Number of Weekly Vendors:** 30

**Total Number of Vendors Throughout Season:** 86

**Average Number of Visitors Each Market Day:** 1,640

**Types of Currency Accepted:** Cash, Check, Debit & Credit (via “Market Money”<sup>3</sup>) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)<sup>4</sup>, Double Up Food Bucks<sup>5</sup>, WIC Project FRESH (WIC FMNP)<sup>6</sup>, Market FRESH (Senior FMNP)<sup>7</sup>, Hoophouses for Health<sup>8</sup>



**Senior Project FRESH/  
Market FRESH**

3 Market Money: A special currency, given at the market bank for debit and credit transactions, that can be spent with any vendor at market. Vendors give U.S. currency in change. Market money never expires, therefore it can be used on multiple visits to the market.

4 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/)

5 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/)

6 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)

7 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/marketfresh](http://www.michigan.gov/marketfresh)

8 Hoophouses for Health: A program designed to increase access to Good Food for vulnerable families while at the same time expanding the Good Food infrastructure and season extension capacity of Michigan farmers. [www.hoophousesforhealth.org](http://www.hoophousesforhealth.org)

# MARKET DESCRIPTION

The mission of the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market is to:

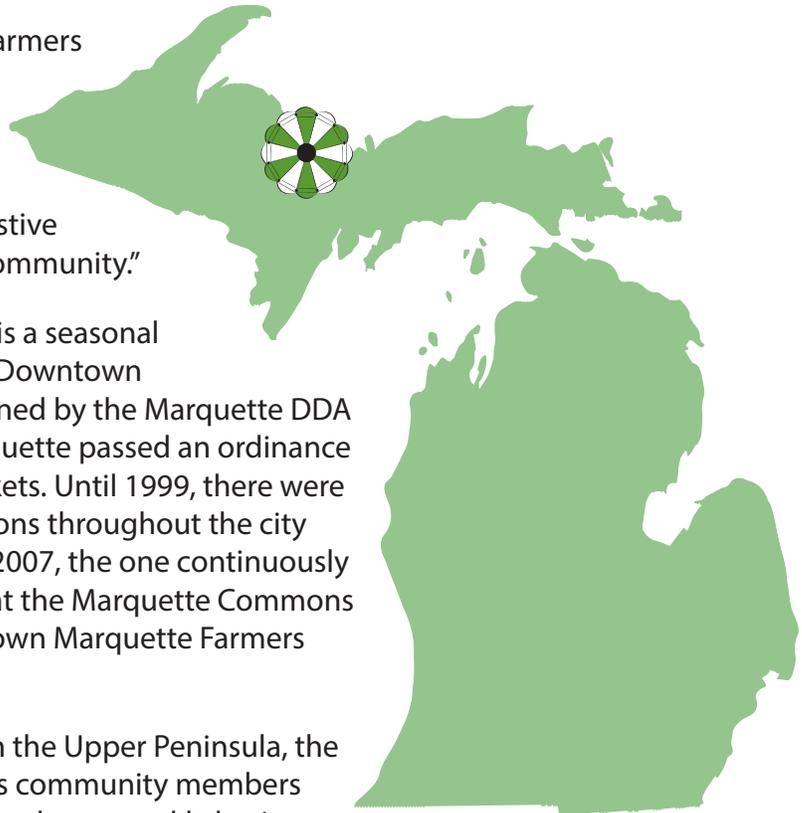
“Support local farmers, growers, and artisans; to make available wholesome quality food and goods; and to provide a festive marketplace that benefits the Marquette Community.”

The Downtown Marquette Farmers Market is a seasonal market that operates under the Marquette Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and is governed by the Marquette DDA Board of Directors. In 1985, the City of Marquette passed an ordinance allowing the establishment of farmers markets. Until 1999, there were farmers markets at various times and locations throughout the city but not one, central market or location. By 2007, the one continuously running market found a permanent home at the Marquette Commons and became officially known as the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market.

One of approximately 27 farmers markets in the Upper Peninsula, the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market gives community members and tourists access to fresh and nutritious food on a weekly basis.

Due to the heavy foot traffic through this market, vendor applicants come from all over the Upper Peninsula to participate. The market is located along the Iron Ore Heritage Trail with a view of Lake Superior. The concrete plaza the market occupies gives visitors creates a unique and appealing atmosphere. The Downtown Marquette Farmers Market brings a lively community event to the downtown area once a week, providing live music, cooking and craft demonstrations, bike repairs and many other engaging activities.

The Downtown Marquette Farmers Market exposes customers to a diverse set of northern Michigan farmers through a producer-only market. The vendors at this market offers products from eight vendor types, which categories including: eggs, meat and fish, produce, value-added products, produce, dairy, plants and flowers, crafts/arts/services. Visitors of varying types have the ability to access fresh, nutritious foods through five different food assistance programs offered at market. Throughout the 2016 season, the market hosted eleven nutrition/cooking demonstrations. These food education events were directed at all ages while giving visitors the opportunity to learn more about products they bought, nutritional benefits, how to store products for maximum shelf life, and new ways to prepare different items.

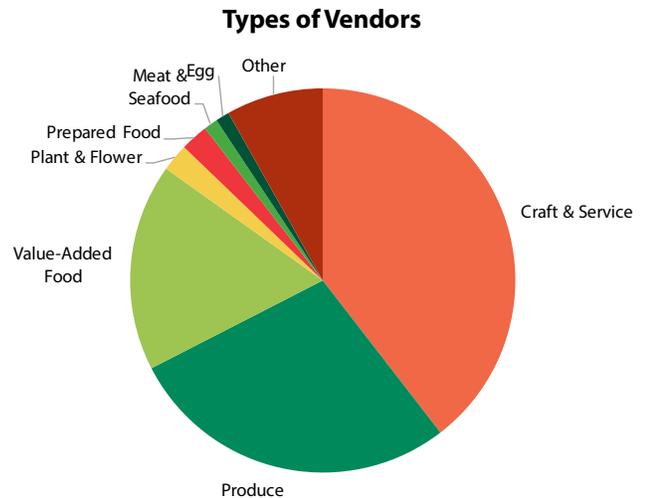


# VENDORS

The Downtown Marquette Farmers Market brings together a variety of farmers and small businesses from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The Market is open to producers -only vendors.

Vendors at the market accept a variety of food assistance programs to allow customers of all income levels to enjoy access to fresh, nutritious foods.

- Through the course of the 2016 season, 86 vendors attended the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market. These small businesses represented a broad range of product types, including 52 different food items eligible to be purchased with SNAP.
  - Crafts and Services: 34 Vendors (40%)
  - Produce: 24 Vendors (28%)
  - Value-Added Products: 15 Vendors (18%)
  - Plants and Flowers: 2 Vendors (2%)
  - Crafts and Services: 34 Vendors (40%)
  - Prepared Food: 2 Vendors (2%)
  - Plants and Flower: 2 Vendors (2%)
  - Meat and Fish/Seafood: 1 Vendor (1%)
  - Eggs: 1 Vendor (1%)
  - Meat and Fish: 1 Vendor (1%)
  - Other: 7 Vendors (8%)
- Total Number of Individuals Employed Through Vendor Businesses: 167
  - Year-Round Employees: 130
  - Seasonal Employees: 37
- Total Acres Owned or Leased by Farmer Vendors<sup>9</sup>: 1,795 acres
  - Owned: 1,229 acres
  - Leased: 566 acres
- Vendor Fee: Flat Rate
- Average Number of Miles Traveled to Market: 25 miles
- 13 of the Farm Vendors are Considered Beginning Farmers as They Have Less Than 10 Years of Farming Experience
- 10% of Vendors' Businesses are Owned by Individuals are Under the Age of 35
- 7% of Farm Vendors are Certified Organic



<sup>9</sup> This number represents acres of land owned or leased by farm vendors who reported owning or leasing land in the vendor pre-season survey.



**167 employees**  
are supported by our vendors' businesses.  
*Small businesses create new, meaningful employment opportunities.*



**25 miles**  
average distance food travels from farm to our market.  
*That's fresh!*



**1,795 acres**  
of farmland in production by our vendors.  
*America loses an acre of farmland every hour to development.*

# VISITORS

Weekly, an average of 1,460 people visited the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market each week, resulting in approximately 47,000<sup>10</sup> total visits throughout the season. The market attracted customers from near and far. However, 67% Sixty seven percent of the 237 visitors surveyed came from Marquette's zip code (49855). The other 79 customers surveyed came from 33 different zip codes from around the country, including 15 from outside of Michigan. The mMarket is primarily serving locals, but also serves as an attraction for visitors to Marquette from across the United States. Along with attracting various customer types, Tthe market is also attracting people to the downtown area and supporting area vibrancy. Seventy-three percent of those surveyed came to the area specifically for the market, and 68% plan to do additional shopping, eating, or other activities in the area on the day they visited the market.

- Estimated Average Visitor Count Per Market Day: 1,640
- Estimated Annual Visitor Count: 47,650
- 87% of Surveyed Visitors used a Personal Vehicle to get to the Farmers Market
- 67% of Visitors Surveyed Purchased Produce
- 35% of Visitors Surveyed Purchased Prepared Foods (baked goods, hot foods/ready-to-eat, coffee)
- 27% of Visitors Surveyed Purchased Plants and Flowers<sup>11</sup>
- 40% of Visitors Surveyed Shop at the Farmers Market Frequently (weekly or more) at the Farmers Market
- 73% of Visitors Surveyed Came to the Area Specifically for the Farmers Market
- 68% of Visitors Planned to do Additional Shopping, Eating or Other Activities in the Area
  - Based on spending estimates madereported by visitors completing a survey, an estimated \$7,200 was spent by farmers market customers in the surrounding community the day of the market.<sup>12</sup>



**68%**

**of visitors**

*plan to spend money at neighboring businesses on market days.*

*Local businesses benefit from customers drawn to the area on market days.*

<sup>10</sup> 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/](http://www.smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/)

<sup>11</sup> This number represents the percentage of people who reported buying food in a specific category through the customer survey and claimed to buy produce, prepared foods, and plants and flowers, who claimed buying plants and flowers, produce and prepared foods.

<sup>12</sup> 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

During the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market 2016 season, 237 visitor surveys were collected. From these surveys, we were able to identify average customer sales, 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 the vendor documentation of sales and the customer reports of purchases demonstrates a clearer understanding of the sales conducted at a market.

Throughout the season, customers reported spending anywhere between \$0 and \$111 on a market day, with an average of about \$22<sup>13</sup> per market visit. The median amount customers reported spending at the farmers market was \$20. The amount of spending most frequently reported by customers was \$20 per visit. Customers who came to the market also reported shopping outside the market. Through surveys, customers indicated they spent between \$3 and \$400 at other downtown businesses, with an average of \$60 spent in the area surrounding the market per customer.

Based on visitor 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.

- Estimated Total Annual Sales (inference based on reported customer spending): \$1,503,000
  - Cash Sales (by vendors reporting sales): 65% of total sales
  - Credit/Debit (by vendors reporting sales): 30% of total sales
  - SNAP Benefits (by vendors reporting sales): 5% of total sales
    - 436 SNAP Transactions in the 2016 market season
    - Total SNAP sales<sup>14</sup>: \$8,166
- Estimated Total Annual Sales (based on vendor daily reporting<sup>15</sup>): \$834,000
- Total Vendor Fees Collected in 2016: \$11,720



**\$1,503,000**  
**in estimated sales**

*directly to the vendors' local  
farms and businesses.  
Returning 3x more of their sales to  
the local economy than chain retailers.*

Sales data was collected through vendor reports and customer surveys. Vendors who sold at the Downtown Marquette 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 each market day and how many of those vendors reported their daily sales. On average, about 48% of vendors at the market would report sales daily.

<sup>13</sup> The average was calculated based on customers who reported spending a dollar amount at the market on the customer survey.

<sup>14</sup> Total SNAP sales are voluntarily reported by the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market based on reimbursements to vendors for SNAP currency.

<sup>15</sup> Not all vendors reported sales daily. This information was based on data from the sample of vendors who reported sales at the market.

# SUMMARY

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 led to the adoption of use of the Farmers Market Metrics Portal<sup>16</sup>.

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 these processes will allow MIFMA to understand the scope of impacts that 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.

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<sup>16</sup> 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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480 Wilson Road, Room 172  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
Ph: 517-432-3381 | Fx: 517-940-4522  
[www.mifma.org](http://www.mifma.org)