

# MEASURING MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS

## VISITOR COUNTS



## HOW TO COLLECT YOUR DATA

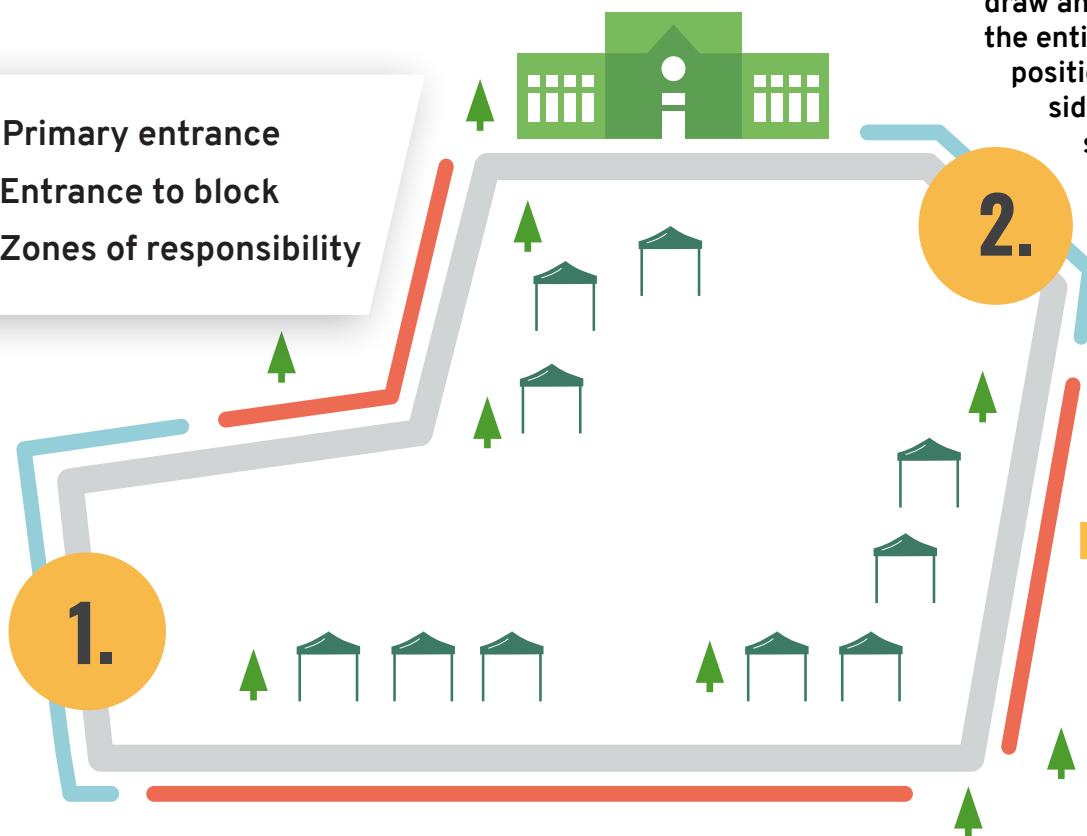
### 1. Determine responsibility zones

To count incoming visitors, you'll need to have a market staff member or volunteer positioned at each market entrance. Not all farmers markets have clear entrance(s), so you might need to get creative with where you position your data collectors.

Start by drawing a map of your market and identifying all of the ways in which visitors enter the market space.

If your market does not have clearly defined entrances, draw an imaginary box around the entire market space and position counters at each side or corner of that box separating the market perimeter into zones.

- Primary entrance
- Entrance to block
- Zones of responsibility



The number of zones will depend upon how many volunteers you have, how big the box is, and how far a single volunteer can see.



Some data collectors might be able to monitor more than one entrance at a time, depending upon visibility. Provide clear instructions for each person counting as to where their responsibility starts and stops to avoid duplication in the counts.

## 2. Decide on a data collection method

There are a few different ways to collect visitor counts at the farmers market. Full counts are encouraged when possible, but based on your market staff, volunteers, foot traffic, etc., this might not be feasible for your market.

### FULL COUNT

**Counting every adult** who enters the market for the entire market day.

### ESTIMATED COUNT

Another method for collecting visitor counts is to perform an estimated count. To do so, a data collector would be positioned at each market entrance and would count every adult visitor entering the market for the second **20 minute window** of each hour that the market is open. The first count should start 20 minutes after the market opens. For example, if your market opened at 9 AM, you would count visitors from **9:20 - 9:40**, then **10:20 - 10:40**, and so on. At the end of the day, multiply **each count by three** to get your estimated count for that hour of the market, **then add each hourly count together** to get the estimated visitor count for the market day.<sup>1</sup>

The following is an example calculation for a market open from 9 AM–12 PM

9:20 - 9:40	24 adults x 3 = 72	<b>72 + 105 + 114</b> <hr/> <b>291</b> total visitors
10:20 - 10:40	35 adults x 3 = 105	
11:20 - 11:40	38 adults x 3 = 114	



If your market is, for example, 4.5 hours long, it is up to you if you'd like to count customers for the last thirty minutes of your market. If you do choose to count those customers, be sure to note that when calculating your visitor counts for the full market day.

When counting customers, you should always differentiate between adults and children. When you use a customer count to calculate estimated market sales or economic impact, that number should be based on the number of adult visits as it is primarily adults who spend money at the market. If you have a purpose for counting children (for example, to document the impact of a youth program your market hosts on attendance rates), then always keep a separate count following the same method for children entering the market.

<sup>1</sup> This methodology was developed by Larry Lev, Linda Brewer, and Garry Stephenson of Oregon State University (see <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/sr1088.pdf>) and has been adapted for use in Michigan.

### 3. Select survey dates



If your market is not conducting visitor counts each market day, then it is recommended to collect visitor counts on the following days<sup>2</sup>:

- 3RD MARKET DAY
- AN AVERAGE MARKET DAY
- A BUSY MARKET DAY (holiday, special event, etc.)
- 3RD TO LAST MARKET DAY

If your market runs multiple days a week:

- Collect visitor counts **four times a season** for each day the market is open.

If you operate a year round market, then it is recommended to do one of the following:

- Conduct your visitor counts over four days during the indoor season and four days during the outdoor season.
- OR
- Over four market days during the Winter/early Spring, and four market days during the Summer/Fall

### 4. Prepare for data collection

It's important to have an organized way to record your visitor counts before it's time to collect the data.

[The Farmers Market Coalition's Visitor Count Record](#) is a great resource to help keep your data organized.



**Before you begin collecting visitor counts, be sure to provide each data collector with a visitor count record and a handheld clicker. We recommend putting the record sheet on a clipboard and providing a pen or pencil too. If clickers aren't available to you, data collectors can also keep a hand-written tally of visitors on their visitor count record.**

Be sure that your record sheet indicates the time the data was collected and from which entrance in order to provide richer data analysis options. Ensure that everyone who is counting knows what location to go to and when to count. Be sure that they have a watch or phone and recommend that they use the stopwatch or alarm feature on their phone if it has one to track how long they need to count.

### 5. Perform your Visitor Counts!

Position data collectors at your predetermined entrances or zones and begin counting visitors. Remember that children and adults should be counted separately. Be sure to not count vendors or visitors that are re-entering the market.

**If you are performing a full count, record the visitor count at the end of each hour and total your counts at the end of the market day. If you're performing an estimated count, record each visitor count and the end of the 20 minute counting period.**



<sup>2</sup> Recommended collection days developed by Farm 2 Facts in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin - Madison:  
<https://farm2facts.org/>

# HOW TO STORE, AGGREGATE, AND ANALYZE YOUR DATA

## Store your data

The paper record logs that were completed at the market are susceptible to being lost, damaged, or accidentally discarded. We recommend transitioning the data to an electronic file as part of your market day close-out activities. An Excel or Google spreadsheet works well for storing this data. Whether you're using a total or estimated count, record your counts, including each hourly count and count location, for the market day by date in the spreadsheet or table.

Try using [MIFMA's Data Entry Excel Template](#) for data storage.

## Aggregate your data

At the end of the season, calculate the average of your final counts to determine the average number of visitors per market day, then multiply that by the number of days your market was open to estimate the number of customers that visited your market for the entire season. Using an Excel spreadsheet can help make these calculations easier. These calculations are pre-populated in [MIFMA's Data Entry Excel Template](#).

## Analyze the data

Take a look at your market data at the end of the season and try comparing it to other data you've collected to identify trends. How was the weather on days with fewer visitors? Did you see an increase in visitor counts when certain vendors were present or during special events? How did visitor attendance compare this year to last year? Creating graphs and/or charts of your data can be helpful when identifying trends.



# HOW TO PRESENT YOUR FINDINGS



## Report your findings

Consider publishing your data in a report to share with a variety of audiences. Think about what information your sponsoring organization, market sponsors, vendors, market shoppers, etc. might like to know and build your report based on the audience you plan to share it with.

Try using [MIFMA's report and/or infographic templates](#) to share your visitor count data.

**Share your data! Share your report and/or infographics with your target audience and congratulate yourself on a job well done!**