MEASURING MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS
VENDOR SALES

HOW TO COLLECT YOUR DATA

1. Communicate with your farmers and vendors.

Documenting the sales of your vendors can show the impact of your market on their businesses and on the local and statewide economies. Being able to communicate your market's impact to funders and partners can be critical in helping you advocate for your market such as securing your market's location and receiving both monetary and in-kind support.

Additionally, having access to daily market sales can help market managers make better-informed decisions about the market such as determining the type of market programming that positively impacts sales. **However, vendors may be hesitant to share their sales information with you if they don't understand why you are collecting this data and how it will be used.**

Communicate with your vendors before the start of the season and prior to asking your vendors for their sales information to explain how you will be using the data including that their sales will be kept confidential and that numbers will only be shared at the market level.

Possible ways to communicate the need for sales data could include:

▸ Sending a letter to your vendors prior to the market season.

▸ Discussing the need for data at an annual vendor meeting.

▸ Setting aside time for vendors to ask questions and discuss any concerns they may have.

Use MIFMA's <u>Vendor Letter</u> as a starting point to guide your vendor communications.

2. Prepare for data collection

Before you start collecting data, determine the process vendors should follow to report their sales. **It is recommended for vendors to report their sales on a per-market basis rather than provide an end-of-season total to give you a richer data set.** For example, being able to calculate market day totals will allow you to analyze the sales impact of specific events and outreach activities.

One method to track vendor sales is to distribute a vendor sales slip to every vendor each market day and have them fill out the sales slip at the end of the market. Having vendors break out their sales by payment method accepted at your market will allow you to analyze your market sales by payment type.

MIFMA's Farmers at the Capitol Vendor Sales Slip and the Farmers Market Coalition's Vendor Sales Slip are great resources to get you started!

Additionally, the vendor sales slip can serve as a method to track reimbursement for any food assistance programs or alternative currency your market distributes. If your market distributes credit/debit and/or SNAP Bridge Card tokens and also has vendors who process these forms of payment on their own point-of-sale device, be sure to include a way for vendors to distinguish between the two on their sales slips. Printing your vendor sales slip on carbon copy forms will allow both the market and the vendor to keep a copy.

Instead of paper slips, markets could use an **online tool such as Google Forms to build the sales slip electronically.**

At the market, vendors can use their own device or smartphone to **fill out the online sales slip by following a provided QR code or website link.** Electronic sales slips will minimize the need for data entry later!

3. Start tracking vendor sales

At the beginning of each market day, distribute a sales slip to each vendor with a reminder to fill it out before the end of the day and the location to turn in their completed sales slip such as a box at the market manager's table or other central location. **Until vendors familiarize themselves with the process, it may be helpful to walk the market and remind vendors at the end of the day to turn in their sales slips.**

Some markets may face hesitation from their vendors to report their sales each week and may have some vendors who push back.

The following are some best practices markets in Michigan have followed when collecting vendor sales:

▶ SET EXPECTATIONS IN YOUR MARKET RULES

Include the expectation of collecting vendor sales and outline the process of collecting the data in your market rules. This way, there should be no surprises and you can refer to your market rules when receiving any pushback.

▶ VENDORS ANONYMOUSLY REPORT SALES

Having vendors anonymously report their sales may make some vendors more comfortable with the process and ease any fears around markets using or reporting on their individual data. However, it is still recommended to have some sort of list for vendors to mark off their name when turning in their anonymous vendor slips so you know who is and who is not reporting.

> Alternatively, the St. Louis Farmers Market includes a **vendor number on their sales slip instead of the vendor's name,** so only the market manager knows to whom each sales slip belongs.

▶ SHARE YOUR DATA WITH VENDORS

If vendors see how you are using and reporting on the data they provide, they may be more likely to happily participate. Showing vendors how data is being shared at the market level and that their individual data is being protected may help them become more comfortable with sharing their data in the future.

▶ DOUBLE THE PURPOSE OF THE VENDOR SALES SLIP

Use your sales slip as a double purpose such as tracking food assistance reimbursement requiring vendors to turn in a vendor sales slip in order to receive a reimbursement check.

▶ MAKE YOUR VENDOR SALES SLIPS FUN

Mount Pleasant Farmers Market includes relevant and fun market day information on the back of their sales slip such as event programming for the day, who the food trucks are, and so forth. This way vendors want to pull out their sales slip to read all the market happenings!

HOW TO STORE, AGGREGATE, AND ANALYZE YOUR DATA

Store your data

If you collected paper sales slips, we recommend that you enter the data as soon as possible into an electronic file as paper is susceptible to being lost, damaged, or accidentally discarded.

An Excel or Google spreadsheet works well for storing this data. If you used an online sales slip, then your data should already be entered into an electronic file.

Try using MIFMA's Data Entry Excel Template for data storage.

Aggregate your data

At the end of the season, calculate the total market sales for each market day and the overall total for the season. Additionally, average market sales per week and per vendor can also be calculated.

If vendors reported their sales by payment type, then totals and averages for each payment method your market accepts can be calculated as well. Using an Excel spreadsheet can help make these calculations easier. Examples of 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. Did total vendor sales increase throughout the market season or compared to last year? What days were vendor sales the highest? Did you run a special event that day or perform any increased promotion during that time period? Were vendor sales what you expected? What results surprised you?

Creating graphs and/or charts of your data can be helpful when identifying trends. Use your analysis of market sales to make informed market decisions to improve the market in the future.

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 or what you are asking of them and build your report based on the audience you plan to share it with. Please note that getting 100% of vendors to report their data is nearly impossible for most markets. That said, it is absolutely acceptable to share partial data, as long as it's done in a clear, transparent way. For example, you could say "with 80% of vendors reporting, total vendor sales for the season were $100,000". Knowing the percentage of vendors reporting can also help explain unexpected changes in your data!

Try using MIFMA's report and/or infographic templates to share your data.

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