

# Introduction to the Census of Michigan Farmers Markets



The Census of Michigan Farmers Markets was conducted by the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) in the spring of 2021. The Census asked questions about both the 2019 and 2020 seasons.

## The goals of the Census were to:

- Understand how Michigan markets operate and serve their communities
- Identify market needs for managers, vendors, and shoppers
- Guide MIFMA's programmatic and advocacy efforts to best support the future of Michigan farmers markets
- Understand how COVID-19 impacted market operations

## DEFINITION



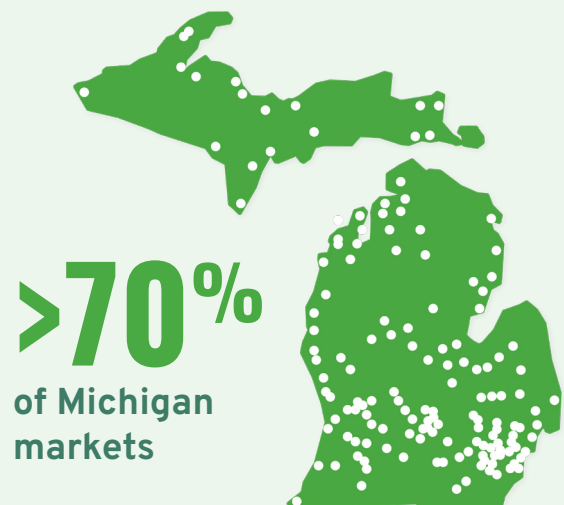
### Community-based farmers market

A public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling direct-to-consumers food and items they have produced themselves. In addition, markets 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. Not included in the Census were farms stands or retail outlets that sell aggregated products on behalf of farmers.

## The Respondents

Respondents were typically managers who understood operations and had access to information about their markets. Each received a \$50 stipend and a discounted registration to MIFMA's annual conference.

The excellent response rate (157 organizations, representing 176 markets) is a testament to the strength of MIFMA's relationship with market managers, as well as our state's commitment to data collection and sharing. MIFMA will conduct a regular Census to track sector changes over time and guide future decision-making.



# Michigan Farmers Market Profile

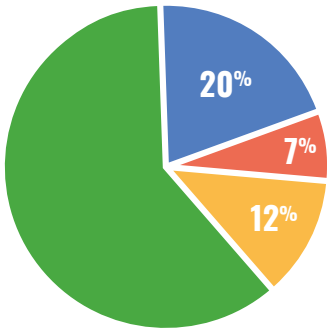
## SIZE

Market size is categorized by the number of vendors. Markets range in size from 2 to 229 vendors on an average market day.

Half of these markets began in 2010 or later.

61%

Small  
9-30 vendors



**Micro**  
5-8 vendors

**Large**  
56+ vendors

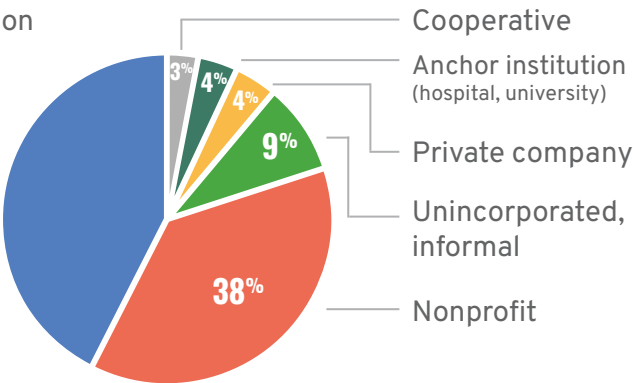
**Medium**  
31-55 vendors

## STRUCTURE

Many organization types oversee markets.

43%

Local government



Cooperative

Anchor institution  
(hospital, university)

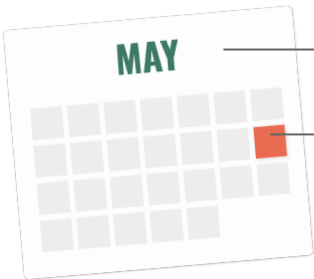
Private company

Unincorporated,  
informal

Nonprofit

## TIME

Somewhere in Michigan, a market is open any given day of the week. Most operate one day per week (80%).

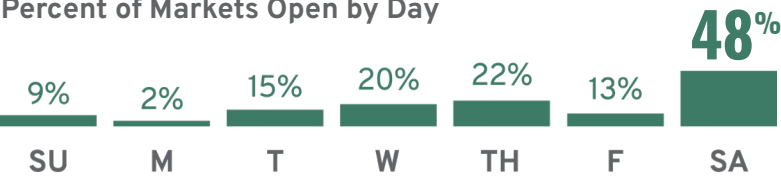


Most popular months  
**May - October**

Most popular day  
**Saturday**

Peak season  
**June - October**

Percent of Markets Open by Day



### DEFINITION



## Types of Operating Structures

Many organizations oversee farmers markets. Operating structure can impact staffing, funding, and even philosophical missions behind market operations. The census identified the following organization types:

- Local government (including Downtown Development Authorities)
- Nonprofit
  - Market operated by an umbrella organization
  - Market is its own nonprofit
  - Chamber of Commerce (501(c)6)
- Private company
- Anchor institution (hospital or university)
- Cooperative
- Unincorporated, informal group

# Michigan Markets...

## ARE CRITICAL ACCESS POINTS

**100%**

**of MI counties**  
send vendors to a market

**4,900+**

**vendor stalls**  
open each week

**102,500+**

**visitors**  
each market day



3 counties avg per market



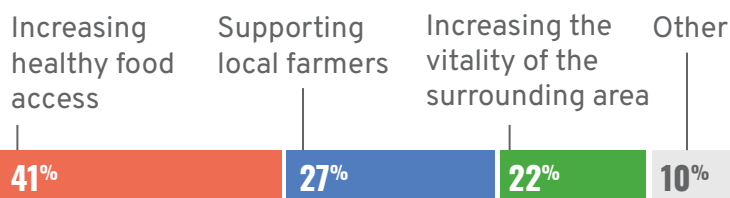
18 median per market



225 avg per market

## ARE MISSION-DRIVEN

Markets exist for a variety of reasons, and address many issues in their communities. Their top goals are:



## OPERATE ON SMALL BUDGETS

**22%**

of markets have no operating budget

**50%**

operate on \$6,000 or less in annual revenue

**Market Managers** wear many hats, play many roles, and are most often unpaid or underpaid women.

**25%**

are unpaid

**79%**

are women

**\$6,000**

median salary

## Increase Food Access



Michigan is the tenth-largest state by population, but the strength of its farmers market food access programming is shown in this data from USDA:

- 160 SNAP-authorized farmers markets. Ranks third in the nation.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.5 SNAP-authorized markets per 100,000 people. Ranks 14th in the nation.
- \$1.6 million in SNAP/Double Up/ Senior FMNP/WIC FMNP. Ranks 5th in the nation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> *Farmers Markets Accepting SNAP Benefits.* (2023, January). U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. Retrieved June 27, 2023, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/farmers-markets-accepting-snap-benefits>

## Markets rely on a network of peers convened & supported by MIFMA



MIFMA plays a key role in:

**Professionalization of the field:** Fifty percent of market managers have been trained and credentialed through MIFMA's Market Manager Certificate program.

**Guidance in a crisis:** During COVID, markets turned to MIFMA for guidance vetted by Michigan's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). Seventy one percent of markets said MIFMA resources were essential or important in helping determine if and how to operate a market in 2020.

**Advancement of the field:** Respondents said the four most valuable MIFMA offerings were:

- COVID-19 guidance and support
- Advocating for state and federal policies that support farmers markets, vendors and shoppers
- Support for accepting food assistance benefits
- Market Manager Certificate Program

## RELY ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT

**29%**

rely on subsidies from operating organizations to stay afloat

**650+**

volunteers contribute 4,000+ hours to markets across the state annually

**Vendor fees** are purposefully kept affordable to support small food businesses; they rarely cover operating costs. Three quarters of markets require revenue beyond vendor fees to operate.

**Community partners** support markets in many ways. Most common supports include:

- Funds (from financial institutions and healthcare)
- In-kind & promotion (from nonprofit and government)
- Programming (from MSU Extension, nonprofits, and/or healthcare)

## RESPOND TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

**83%**

stayed open during COVID

**19%**

are open during winter months; some move to indoor locations

## Learn More

This is the first in a series of Census publications. We'll dive deeper into Food Assistance & Payment Processing, Evaluation, Market Manager Compensation, Market Operations, Vendors & Products, Market Locations & Amenities, and COVID-19 Impacts & Response. All Census briefs can be accessed at [www.mifma.org/census](http://www.mifma.org/census).