

Census of MI Farmers Markets Evaluation

This document is part of the MI Farmers Market Census series. More available at mifma.org/census



Michigan markets are committed to data collection and evaluation

BACKGROUND

Since 2015, MIFMA's work has contributed to a culture shift in the value that market managers place on data collection. Our vision is a farmers market sector whose approach to data and evaluation effectively:

- Shares promising practices
- Finds efficiencies
- Leverages individual and sector-wide support
- Demonstrates markets' community impact
- Builds market sustainability

For more information on our efforts, please visit <https://mifma.org/for-markets/metrics/>.

We know that data collection...

HELPS MARKETS FUNCTION SMOOTHLY

Census results show that Michigan markets excel at collecting operational data that contributes to smoothly functioning markets. A common tool, used by 70% of managers, is a Daily Market Log. Managers commonly track the number of vendors (85%), vendor attendance over time (81%), food assistance transaction logs (66%), the mix of vendor types present each market day (54%), and number of vendors selling SNAP-eligible products (49%). About 60% collect customer counts, and most of this group (82%) do so each market day. All of this information helps managers make decisions and track trends over time.

One quarter (24%) of managers collect vendor sales information. Knowing this can be a sensitive topic, about one third of these managers offer the option of anonymous reporting.

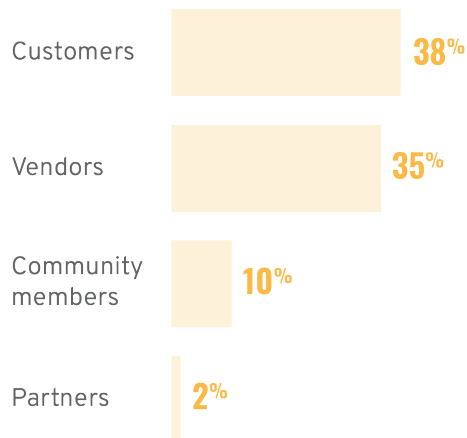
Michigan markets excel in comparison to their national counterparts in tracking...

	Michigan	Nationally ¹
Customer counts	60%	19%
Vendor sales	24%	11%

HELPS MARKETS TELL THEIR STORIES & PLAN STRATEGICALLY

While markets are very dedicated to collecting operational data, fewer collect information that helps managers gain a more detailed understanding of how they serve their communities. This is not surprising, given managers' limited capacity: 20% of managers volunteer in their positions, and the average manager works just 14 hours weekly during peak season. Still, some markets are dedicated to this more in-depth data collection.

Some collect feedback from the following audiences using surveys:



A small number take on intensive data collection during market days: 11% use dot surveys while 6% perform full Rapid Market Assessments², an intensive snapshot evaluation tool used across the farmers market sector to give markets real-time feedback about topics like shopper behavior and market performance.

¹ National Agricultural Statistics Service, National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (2020). Retrieved from https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/nfar0820.pdf.

² Brewer, L., Lev, L., & Stephenson, G. (2008). Tools for Rapid Market Assessments. Retrieved 2023, from <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/sr1088.pdf>.

For most, data collection is a manual process

80%

manage data in spreadsheets

13%

use the Farmers Market Metrics Portal

Formerly provided by the Farmers Market Coalition³

2%

use commercial market management software

Most popular: Farmspread and MarketWurks

Collecting more data requires greater capacity

When asked if they could do more data collection than they currently do, 29% of respondents said they would not collect any more data. This aligns with other research findings, which suggest that market managers require more capacity in their roles in order to carry out these tasks.⁴

Respondents who wished to collect more data said they would like to evaluate:

- Credit/debit transactions (29%)
- Food assistance transactions (23%)
- Range of products sold at market (21%)

³ At the time of the Census, MIFMA was subsidizing the use of this software through a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant.

⁴ Warsaw, P. et al. (2022), “Manager and vendor perceptions of farmers’ markets’ impacts on communities: evidence from Michigan”, International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 42 No. 7/8, pp. 712-726. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-10-2021-0268>