

CHAPTER 5

Addressing Access to Farmers' Markets

This section provides ideas on how farmers' market operations can support an increase in participation by SNAP-eligible customers.

Topics covered are Fresh Stop Markets, Community Markets, Mobile Markets, Hours of Operation, Parking, Transportation Options, Visibility, Handicapped Accessibility. There are evaluation tools to measure the impact(s) of farmers' market access at the end of this section.

Of study participants, 68.4% listed “not easy to get to” as a barrier to shopping at the farmers' market. An issue with many SNAP-eligible customers is lack of or limited transportation. There are many ways farmers' markets have handled this around the country. Two major ways are either finding transportation to bring customers to the market or bringing the market to the customers.

“A lot of people don't have transportation and there is — elderly people that's out there — some people might not have it... the car, the wheels or anything.”

— Focus group participant

Finding transportation is usually an easier option in metro areas that already have a public transportation system. Some cities provide specific bus routes to the farmers' market location during the market season. The Columbia, Mo., farmers' market



received USDA funding for a new bus route to the market during operating hours, and the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, provides a free shuttle service to its market. (<https://www.cedarrapids.org/economic-alliance-events/downtown-farmers-market>) Others plan the location of the farmers' market to be within walking distance of an existing bus stop.

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Finding community partners such as churches or other local organizations with buses that could transport community members is a possibility in both rural and metro areas. Other community partners, such as a hospital, might be willing to subsidize the cost of transporting community members from limited-resource housing areas to the market. Make sure the various options in your community for getting to the farmers' market are clearly posted in locations that are likely to be viewed by limited-resource community members.

“Yeah, but to me, the one (farmers’ market) we have here is inconvenient for a whole lot of people because it’s at one end of town.”

— Focus group participant

Farmers' markets strategically located in neighborhoods with underserved populations have been successful for some communities. These are located in easily accessible spots, such as school or church parking lots, parks, near community clinics and government offices that are often visited by SNAP-eligible populations. A good example of this is Augusta, Ga., Veggie Park Farmers' Market, located in an inner-city community. It is a small market with about 14 vendors. Now in its sixth year, many of the vendors and market staff are from the community. Some farmers' markets operate in locations where limited-resource persons are likely to be during strategic times. For instance, the Lexington Farmers' Market provides pop-up markets at Lexington-Fayette County Health Department sites.

Fresh Stop Markets

Fresh Stop Markets operate similarly to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), but produce is subsidized for limited-resource patrons

by those who can afford to pay a little more for high-quality, fresh produce. In 2023, there are eight “fresh stop” pop-up markets in Louisville, Ky. The LouisvilleKy.gov website describes its Fresh Stop Markets as follows:

New Roots is a nonprofit organization igniting community power for fresh food access. Fresh Stop Markets (FSM) — New Roots' main initiative — are run by volunteer leaders in a grassroots food justice movement that operates from the belief that fresh food is a basic human right. New Roots helps to orchestrate the markets in tandem with our community leaders. FSMs are volunteer, community-driven farm-fresh food markets that pop up biweekly at local churches, community centers, and businesses in fresh food insecure neighborhoods. “Shareholders” are not just “customers.” They are the volunteer leaders that run and sustain each and every FSM.

Shareholders commit to pay two weeks ahead of time, on an income-based sliding scale, for a “share” of produce. Payments are set up using automatic, recurring payments. A share is a selection of nine varieties of seasonal, local, organic, and chemical-free produce you'll pick up during the scheduled two hour “pop-up” you choose, at your choice of eight different Kentucky and southern Indiana markets in the Louisville Metro area. Each FSM pops up biweekly in the same location for the 22-week growing season, from June through November. That's 11 pickups over the growing season. Shareholders are pooling their resources together in a form of cooperative economics, building enough buying power to purchase at wholesale prices from the farmers, and even influence which seeds they will plant for next year.

New Roots' Fresh Stop Markets are open to everyone, and community leaders create, lead, and sustain them. Most Fresh Stop Markets reserve 75% of all shares for people identified as having limited resources, according to the WIC eligibility guidelines (185% of poverty or less). Fresh Stop Markets also

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accept SNAP EBT. For more information, visit the New Roots website at <https://newroots.org/fresh-stop-markets>.

Castlewood Community Market

Similar to the Fresh Stop model, the Castlewood Community Market in Lexington, Ky., is a community-run cooperative market connecting neighbors with local farmers to aggregate and buy locally grown produce as a cooperative. Neighbors, called “shareholders,” buy produce shares two weeks in advance of the pickup day. Shares are available on a sliding scale depending on self-reported income. Shareholders who are SNAP recipients pay \$14 per share using their EBT card and non-SNAP shareholders pay up to \$25 per share. Shareholders pick up produce on a biweekly

basis from June to late October. During the share pickup, each shareholder receives 10 to 12 different seasonal vegetables. For additional information on the Castlewood Community Market, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/castlewoodcommunitymarket>

Mobile Markets

Another option for making farm-fresh market products available to limited-resource Kentuckians is mobile markets. Individual farms, farm collaboratives and local organizations can organize these markets. Mobile markets can apply to accept SNAP payments. However, according to the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, mobile markets often require ongoing subsidies of as much as 60% of their operating budgets.

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“The CFM Mobile Market, designed and built by Rustic Nail & Co. in 2013, was the first satellite farmers’ market in the great state of Kentucky specifically designed to increase fresh local food access to underserved areas of good ol’ Bowling Green. The project was made possible through a Local Food Promotion Program Grant from the USDA in partnership with Western Kentucky University.”

— Community Farmers’ Market Website,
[https://www.communityfarmersmarketbg.com/
mobile-market.html](https://www.communityfarmersmarketbg.com/mobile-market.html)

The Community Farmers’ Market in Bowling Green established a mobile market to reach underserved areas in its community. The effort was funded through a Local Food Promotion Program Grant from USDA and was implemented through a partnership with Western Kentucky University. The mobile market accepts WIC and SFMNP vouchers and EBT payments, and it offers Double Dollars. According to Jackson Rolett, Community Farmers’ Market member, community partnerships have been essential to developing a self-sustaining mobile market. “Every year, we have taken what we learned and tweaked the program a little.” He offered the following lessons learned:

It is essential to work with community leaders, both formally and informally, in advance of visiting a new neighborhood or location. They can provide insights to help position the mobile market for success, and they can raise awareness of the mobile market and let people know the market accepts EBT payments, Double Dollars, and WIC or SFMNP vouchers. They can tell you where to hang flyers for

maximum exposure. He also suggested working with organizations serving children, such as the Boys and Girls Club, to send flyers about the market, home with kids.

Location is everything. The Community Farmers’ Market Mobile Market has been most successful when located near sites providing resources. For example, they have located near the health department when WIC vouchers were being distributed and across from the Department for Community Based Services office, to serve those receiving SNAP benefits. Work with service coordinators to arrange location and raise awareness about the availability of the market.

When starting a new mobile market or adding locations to an existing market, work with Kentucky Department of Agriculture (502-782- 4127) to make sure the locations are listed on their website. Keep in mind, establishing a new market takes time and patience. Communication, consistency, and patience are key.

Hours of Operation

“I’d probably buy more if they were open more.”

— Focus group participant

Another aspect of accessibility is market hours. If the market is only open on Saturday afternoons, customers who must work Saturday afternoon cannot shop there for fresh, local food. Some markets have had great success in opening one late afternoon or evening a week to serve customers as they commute home from work. These additional market hours may not include the full complement of participating vendors but may be worth trying. You should advertise any changes in days and hours of operation by various means and in locations where the intended audience is likely to view it. Consistent hours of

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operation are important. People who have limited transportation and other resources cannot afford to invest time, effort, and money to shop unless they know the market will be open.

Parking

*“That one is the location.
It’s hard getting in and out of.”*

*“I don’t like going to the farmers’
market because I can never find a
place to park, the traffic is horrible
out there.”*

I cannot open the door at one.”

— Focus group participants

Parking can be another access issue if the market is downtown or in another area with limited parking. If customers cannot park near enough to the market to walk to it safely and easily, or if they do not feel they can safely enter and exit the lot, they may give up on the idea of shopping there entirely. Community partnerships may be instrumental in solving problems such as these. Nearby businesses might be willing to allow market patrons to use their lots on certain days or at certain times, for instance. See page 48 of the “Kentucky Farmers’ Market Manual and Resource Guide” for traffic safety

(https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/documents/FM_Manual_and_Resource_Guide.pdf).

Handicapped Accessibility

*“Some people’s health that they can’t
walk from stand to stand to stand,
or stand a long time to go around the
whole thing, so they wind up missing
out on some of the items because they
only go so far, and then have to leave.”*

— Focus group participant

Access for individuals in wheelchairs, seniors with scooters, and young families with strollers are other considerations. Ensure that it is possible to maneuver a wheelchair from the parking lot to the market area and there is adequate space for customers with these needs to maneuver around booth areas. Displays should not obstruct the flow of traffic through the market. A unique answer to these access problems that some farmers’ markets use is a drive-thru market lane where customers can make transactions without ever leaving their vehicles. Traffic cones may be useful to direct traffic flow.

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Summary

Access Barrier	Strategies	Resources
Lack of transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange public transportation to and from market. • Arrange transportation by partners. • Relocate market to limited-resource neighborhood. • Relocate market to site within walking distance of public transportation or site of a community organization serving limited-resource audiences. • Try mobile markets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transportation system, community partners • Churches, health-care organizations, assisted living organizations, etc. • Neighborhood organizations and businesses • Public transportation system, health-care and other community organizations, public assistance offices, other businesses • Market vendors, business partners
Cost of produce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Supported Agriculture • Acceptance of WIC and Senior Farmers' Market benefits or EBT • Incentive programs such as Double Dollars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members, organizations and communities with both low- and high-resource members and a common goal of healthy communities • KY Department of Agriculture KY Department for Public Health (See "Accepting Nutrition Program Benefits" section) • See "Developing Incentive Programs"
Hours of operation	Consider opening the market during times when limited-resource patrons are less likely to be working or locating it along commuting routes.	Vendors, market leaders, community members and organizations, marketing tools
Lack of parking, traffic safety	Organize the market and parking for safety and convenience, work with owners of nearby properties to secure access to parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky Farmers' Market Manual and Resource Guide • Community members, businesses, and organizations
Lack of handicapped accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure space to maneuver strollers, wheelchairs, and other aids from the parking lot and among booths. • Add drive-thru market lane. 	Kentucky Farmers' Market Manual and Resource Guide

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Addressing Farmers' Market Access Evaluation

If you would like to assess the results of your activities, the following table may be useful in evaluating a program or project from the Farmers' Market Toolkit, either as the result of a work plan created after implementing the Assessment Tool worksheet or for a predetermined activity.

For Extension agents, this table provides examples of ways to evaluate a program or project from the Farmers' Market Toolkit and construct measures to determine outcomes for success stories, KERS, and PSE activities reported via the Food Systems Impact survey.

Examples of related success stories copied from KERS follow the table below. The highlighted sections in the stories show how specific results were reported.

Action	Type of PSE Change	Indicators	Outputs
Make changes to parking or location of farmers' market to improve access	Environmental change	Increased amount of parking for farmers' market	Report increases in number of attendees or increase in overall sales.
		Improved location for farmers' market	Report increases in number of attendees or increase in overall sales.
Make changes to transportation to farmers' market or distribution of farmers' market produce to improve access	Systems change	Increase in number or type of customer transportation options to farmers' market	Report increases in number or type of transportation options and resulting increased number of attendees or increase in overall sales.
		Number of distribution systems for farmers' market produce (such as food banks, mobile markets, drive-thru markets, etc.)	Report number and type of distribution systems and number of clients benefitting.
	Environmental change	Add physical structures to enhance transportation options such as bike racks or sidewalks to farmers' market	Report increases in number or type of transportation options and resulting increased number of attendees or increase in overall sales.

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Make changes to farmers' market policies to improve access	Policy change	Increase in hours and/or days of operation	Report increases in hours and/or days and resulting increase in number of attendees or increase in overall sales.
		Increased size of farmers' market from zoning changes	Report increases in number of vendors, attendees or increase in overall sales.
Promote changes to farmers' market to improve access	Promotional change	Number of flyers distributed at FM advertising access changes	Report the number of flyers distributed to show PSE reach.
		Number of flyers or posters posted advertising FM access changes	Report the number of flyers or posters posted to show potential PSE reach.
		Number of locations where flyers or posters advertising FM access changes were posted	Report the number of locations flyers or posters posted to show geographic scope of promotion (neighborhoods, sq. miles, etc.).
		Number and type of media advertising farmers' market	Report media reach (newspaper subscribers, mailers, radio listeners) to show PSE reach.
		Number and type of websites that are promoting farmers' market changes	Report type of websites and number of website hits promoting changes.

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Market Access Success Stories

All stories reported below were accessed from the Cooperative Extension Reporting System (KERS).

Local Farmers' Market Finds a New Home

- **Collaborators:** Glen Roberts, ANR agent; Terry Bertram, ANR assistant; Danny Adams, KSU Small Farms Program; Cassie Munsey, FCS assistant; farmers' market vendors; county judge; and customers
- **Situation:** The Downtown Farmers' Market Facility could not comply with CDC guidelines. We moved to property owned by the Wayne County Extension District Board. They own a former Do-It Center lumberyard with lots of covered buildings and concrete. It took a lot of 12-hour days and an industrial-sized dumpster to get the new facility ready, but we made it happen. *One nice perk of the new facility is that it has excellent public restroom facilities whereas the old one had portable toilets. It is also level with plenty of parking and no curbs or steps to cause accidents. The vendors could pull in the 48 feet deep bays and only unload what produce they needed to display for sale. They could easily replenish their tables because their produce was right behind them. The old location had Main Street running right in front of it with speedy traffic whereas the new location was one block off Main Street with a much safer traffic situation and much safer parking too. We had plenty of room for social distancing. The number of customers was much higher partly due to a more intense demand to buy local food and an improved customer-friendly facility.* Vendors were fewer, but we knew they would be. We anticipate a few more vendors this year, but still way below pre-COVID numbers.

One side effect of using an Extension-owned facility was that agents or assistants pretty much had to be there. We both enjoyed it, but it makes Monday come pretty quickly.

Farmers' Market Expansion

The Metcalfe County Farmers' Market Agriculture Development Grant expansion project has finished phase 1, with the completion of the new much larger Farmers' Market Pavilion. The farmers' market was able to use the new pavilion beginning in August 2020, but because of COVID restrictions, has not yet been able to hold a "grand opening" event.

Phase two of this project was turning the old farmers' market pavilion into a community teaching and commercial kitchen. It was stalled because of a shortage of construction supplies and waiting for a local construction company to develop a pro-bono build plan. Metcalfe County Extension District has received a six-month extension for phase two, from the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board. We are moving forward with the pro bono specs/build plan in early May 2021, we will then advertise for bids and begin to move forward to completion.

The Metcalfe County Farmers' Market had a highly successful 2020 season. For the first time, they operated on Fridays from April 3, 2021, past the end of October, through Friday, Dec. 18. The 2020 season vendor-reported income was the highest ever, exceeding the 2019 total reported vendor income by nearly \$16,000. In addition, 82.55% of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition program vouchers distributed to seniors with limited resources and 32% of the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition vouchers distributed were redeemed. Metcalfe County Farmers' Market provided \$3,464 in a match on vouchers and SNAP benefits through participation in the Kentucky Double Dollars program, and \$160 in food aid through a locally-funded farmers' market voucher program in partnership with the Metcalfe County Schools Family Resource Youth Service Center staff.

Eight new vendor producers were added, who paid to participate in the 2020 Metcalfe County farmers' market season. One new farmers' market was started in downtown Tompkinsville on Third

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Street on Saturdays, by one of the longtime MCFM producer members with technical assistance from Metcalfe County Extension agents.

The Metcalfe County Extension office coordinated grab and go bag pickups for Fridays, during peak market season during market times, with 50 or more bags going out each Friday in April through August 2020. The agent for FCS Education advertised pressure canner lid testing at the Extension office and distributed the Plate It Up! Kentucky Proud (PIUKYP) Meal Plans and additional relevant Extension food safety and preservation publications to farmers' market customers and producers in a COVID-safe manner during the 2020 peak season. Seven different pressure canner dial gauges were tested, and all of the meal plans provided by UKFCS Specialist Heather Norman-Burgdolf were distributed through the market to customers and producers.

Cumberland County Farmers' Market

The Cumberland County farmers' market had a wonderful 2018 season. Three vendors now have multiple high tunnels each. This allows them to extend their market season. *The market offered four new programs this season: POP Club, Prescription Program, Pantry Program, and Summer Feed. POP, Prescription, and Pantry were all in conjunction with the Cumberland County Health Coalition. POP Club started in April. This program was designed once a month for kids to attend the market, complete*

an activity, and do a tasting of fruits and vegetables in season. If they completed both, they received two \$2 vouchers (\$4 total) to spend at the market that day. The guardian who brought them also received a \$5 voucher to spend that day. This program brought in on average 29 participants (adults and kids) each month (April through August).

For the prescription program, the market worked with a local pharmacy. The pharmacy referred patients who were borderline diabetic or had a family history of diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure to the Extension office to pick up packets of vouchers to spend. The packet consisted of six vouchers, two per month (June, July, and August) worth \$5 each. The market had 16 of 19 complete the program. One major success from the program was a gentleman diagnosed as prediabetic, and with diet changes, he was able to stay off of medication and lose more than 30 pounds.

The Pantry Program was led by the SNAP-ED assistant. Market vendors were able to sell fruits and vegetables directly to the local food pantry for them to offer to clients. The program lasted eight weeks and had 109 clients. The program served a total of 352 meals.

Lastly, the Summer Feed program was conducted at the elementary school during the summer months. Vendors were able to sell directly to the school board. Students enjoyed 194 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables. For all of these programs, a total of \$2,336.53 went back into the market.

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