

CHAPTER 12

Acknowledgements and Formative Research

Acknowledgements

The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service (UKCES) Farmers' Market Toolkit was developed by a team of UKCES Nutrition Education Program staff members, in collaboration with an advisory group comprised of stakeholders including Extension staff from multiple disciplines, farmers, representatives of public and private organizations, and community members.

Authors

- **Jackie Walters, M.B.A., R.D.N.**, retired Extension Specialist Senior for Nutrition Education Programs
- **Lola Adedokun, Ph.D.**, Extension Specialist for Evaluation
- **Caroline Durr, M.S.**, Extension Specialist
- **Jann Knappage, MPH**, Food System Specialist
- **Paula Plonski, M.A.**, Evaluation Specialist for Nutrition Education Program
- **Bethany Pratt, M.S.**, Food Systems Specialist
- **Katie Schoultz, J.D.**, Marketing and Media Specialist
- **Martha Yount, M.S.**, retired Regional Specialist for Food and Nutrition, Southeast Kentucky
- **Michele West**, Marketing and Media Specialist

Formative Advisory Group

- **Melanie Blandford**, Executive Director of Marketing, Kentucky Proud, Office of Agricultural Marketing and Product Promotion
- **James Cochran**, Farmers' Market Support Program Manager, Community Farm Alliance

- **Chad Conway**, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Knott County
- **Sarah Fannin**, Farmer/Vendor, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Morgan County
- **Josh England**, Market Manager, Lexington Farmers' Market
- **Leitha Harris**, Human Services Program Branch Manager, Cabinet for Families and Children
- **Dianne Hayward**, Nutrition Education Program Assistant, Cumberland County
- **Tim Hughes**, Deputy Executive Director, KY Proud, Office of Agricultural Marketing and Product Promotion
- **Wayne Long**, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Jefferson County
- **Ted Mason**, Executive Director, Kentucky Grocers Association/Kentucky Association of Convenience Stores
- **Kim Minter**, Policy Analyst, Cabinet for Families and Children
- **Babette Overman**, Owner/Farmer/Bluegrass Farmers' Market Board Member, Overman's Bluegrass Fruits and Vegetables, Maiden America
- **Jeremy Porter**, former Director, Tweens Coalition
- **Ashton Potter-Wright**, Executive Director, The Food Connection
- **Martin Richards**, former Executive Director, Community Farm Alliance
- **Jackson Rowlett**, Farmer/Vendor, Think Little CSA, Community Farmers' Market, Bowling Green
- **Drew Shackleford**, former Fresh Stop Community Organizer, Tweens Coalition

KENTUCKY FARMERS' MARKET TOOLKIT

- **Arif Shahriyar**, Manager, Lexington East End Market
- **Sharon Spencer**, Director, Division of Agritourism, Kentucky Department of Agriculture
- **Margie Stelzer**, Community Farm Alliance
- **Rebecca Wallace**, Development Director, God's Pantry
- **Tim Woods**, Extension Faculty, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service
- **Joel Worth**, former Nutrition Education Program Assistant, Jefferson County

Revision Advisory Group

- **Amy Aldenderfer**, Horticulture Agent, Hardin County
- **Jennifer Bridges**, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Meade County
- **Carla Carter**, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Franklin County
- **Lisa Dodson**, 4-H Agent, McCracken County
- **Sharon Flynt**, Horticulture Agent, Scott County
- **Marsha Hagler**, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Nelson County
- **Leitha Harris**, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- **Margie Stelzer**, Community Farm Alliance

This toolkit is the result of the UK NEP Farmers' Market Social Marketing Project. The project gathered input from current research, Extension agents, farmers' market managers, farmers, community organization members, Kentucky Department of Agriculture representatives, and Nutrition Education Program assistants. Limited-resource Kentuckians willing to discuss their experiences with farmers' markets also provided input via surveys and focus groups held across the state. The quotes sprinkled throughout the toolkit are from these focus groups.

Why should members of farmers' markets be concerned about increasing the patronage of limited-resource Kentuckians?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides more than 41 million limited-resource Americans with monthly benefits that can be used to buy most foods and beverages. Of the \$74 billion of SNAP benefits spent by Americans in 2020, only \$33 million went to farmers' markets. During fiscal year 2022, over half a million Kentuckians (12% of the population) received SNAP benefits, providing limited-resource households in Kentucky \$1.27 billion to spend on food. In Kentucky in 2022, only 48 out of the 170 farmers' markets (28%) located in 115 Kentucky counties accepted SNAP benefits. (United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)) This is true in spite of encouraging participants in the USDA's Women, Infants and Children and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition programs and Double Dollar programs available in Kentucky.

Additionally, limited-resource Kentuckians need the fresh, nutritious foods available at farmers' markets. Kentuckians bear a disproportionate burden of chronic diseases associated with poor nutrition. From 2011 to 2021, the number of people living with diabetes in Kentucky increased 28%. (Kentucky Health News, 2023) The highest percentage diagnosed with diabetes are in Appalachia where many limited-resource Kentuckians live. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Kentucky, while stroke is the sixth-leading cause of death. (<https://www.cdc.gov>) Again, incidence of heart disease is disproportionately higher among limited-resource Kentuckians. Yet, in research conducted by the University of Kentucky Nutrition Education Program (UK NEP), SNAP-eligible participants who reported shopping for fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and pick-your-own produce farms in addition to grocery stores ate an average

KENTUCKY FARMERS' MARKET TOOLKIT

of one serving more of fruits and vegetables per day than their counterparts who reported shopping for fruits and vegetables only at grocery stores. Clearly, shopping for local fruit and vegetables at farmers' markets is a strategy for improving diets and quality of life for limited-resource Kentuckians. Results of UK NEP research indicate that many SNAP recipients would like to shop at their local farmers' market.

What do we know about marketing for the limited-resource audience?

The UK NEP Farmers' Market Social Marketing Project gathered data by conducting a literature review, holding focus groups, and administering written surveys with 81 SNAP-eligible Kentuckians in eight counties across the state. Sites and participants were selected to reflect even geographic distribution and even distribution between metro and non-metro locations. The results provided interesting information about reasons limited resource Kentuckians choose not to shop at farmers' markets, their perceptions of shopping at farmers' markets, and features that encourage them to shop at farmers' markets. An executive summary follows:

In descending order, survey participants perceived the following as barriers to shopping at the farmers' market:

- No coupons (80% agreement)
- Too expensive (75% agreement)
- Not easy to get to (68.4% agreement)
- Inconvenient hours (45% agreement)
- No EBT available (37% agreement)

Three of the five greatest perceived barriers related to affordability.

In descending order, survey participants perceived the following as motivators for shopping at the farmers' market:

- To buy fresh food (98.7% agreement)
- To enjoy the variety (98.7% agreement)
- To support farmers (97.3% agreement)
- To know the origin of their food (97.3% agreement)
- The food tastes better (93.4% agreement)
- Friendly service (92.1% agreement)
- Social environment (80.5% agreement)
- Activities for kids (57.8% agreement)

In focus group discussions, the most frequently cited reasons for shopping at the farmers' market were:

- Quality
- Variety
- Buying locally
- Healthier food
- Affordability
- Social aspects
- Convenience
- EBT acceptance

Asked to describe the ideal farmers' market, the top 10 qualities identified were:

- Advertising and awareness (62 mentions)
- Location (37 mentions)
- EBT accepted (32 mentions)
- Hours of operation (27 mentions)
- Incentives such as Double Dollars, samples, etc. (24 mentions)
- Convenience such as access, parking (23 mentions)
- Quality (22 mentions)
- Price (20 mentions)
- Friendly vendors (20 mentions)
- Variety (19 mentions)

KENTUCKY FARMERS' MARKET TOOLKIT

Barriers to shopping at the farmers' market mentioned during focus groups are listed in descending order:

- Food safety
- Lack of cleanliness
- Inconvenient days or hours
- Lack of selection
- Lack of awareness
- Unwelcoming vendors
- Safety concerns
- Child safety
- Crowds

Shown pictures of farmers' markets and asked to identify characteristics that might inhibit them from shopping there, the following additional barriers were mentioned:

- Unwelcoming vendors
- Safety issues
- Child concerns
- Crowds
- Vendor appearance
- Produce appearance
- Lack of or confusing signage and labeling

Clearly, the most important issue for the limited-resource population is knowing about the farmers' market. With limited transportation, they need to know exactly where it is, what days and hours it will be operating, and if they can afford to buy the products when they arrive. Participants from non-metro counties mentioned electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card acceptance more often (25 to 7). They also mentioned hours of operation (20 to 7) and friendly vendors more often (15 to 5). In metro counties, extras such as entertainment, chairs, and prepared foods were mentioned more often (15 to 4). Packaging and labeling were also mentioned more by participants from metro counties (10 to 1).

The marketing tools, tips, and resources found in this toolkit are included specifically because they address the results of our formative research.

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, physical or mental disability or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Reasonable accommodation of disability may be available with prior notice. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating.