

NATIONAL FARMERS' MARKET NETWORK

Farmers' markets are one of the most important links between growers of fresh, local foods and the widening range of people seeking it. Nearly tripling in number since 1994, some 4,400 markets today are leading outlets for the broader emerging local food segment, which is expected to increase from \$5 billion in overall U.S. sales in 2007 to \$7 billion in 2011 .

The challenge and the opportunity with this growth are in building supply to meet the demand. Specifically, the need is to continue developing markets – and market vendors – in a way that benefits the farm and food businesses involved, the communities that host the markets, the families who buy healthy foods and multitude of others that patronize farmers' markets for both good food and fellowship.

The National Farmers' Market Network is an initiative for providing valuable, practical information to the many, mostly grassroots organizers of markets and to the vendors and communities with whom they work.

OBJECTIVES

The Network's primary objective is to reduce the learning curve for farmers who direct market through farmers' markets and the market managers who serve them. The Network operates through peer-to-peer training and outreach by sharing successful strategies and best practices that allow producers to use farmers' markets as a means to mitigate marketing and production risk by utilizing alternative marketing channels. Farmers' markets are an ideal risk mitigation tool as they provide increased incentives and rewards for farmers who diversify their products, provide low entry barriers for small volume producers, and help farmers diversify their income streams.

ACTIVITIES

The Wallace Center currently coordinates the Network with the Farmers' Market Coalition as a collaborative effort of market leaders and practitioners from around the country. The Network reaches thousands of farmers and hundreds of market managers and is a geographically and organizationally diverse group. Participation in the Network is open to leaders of regional, state and local market networks who currently provide outreach to their members. In 2007, the Wallace Center and the Network collaborated to develop a pair of handbooks, "Getting Started with Farmers' Markets" and "Recruiting Vendors for a Farmers' Market". Both publications are available at www.WallaceCenter.org.

Today the Wallace Center and the Network continue to be actively engaged in developing resources that benefit the farmers' market community. In 2008 the Wallace Center is developing a Risk Management Toolkit for direct-marketing farmers that will include information on food safety, post harvest handling, marketing, crop and liability insurance, and market governance, among other topics. The Wallace Center and the Network will also host a series of regional conferences on farmers' markets for both farmers and market managers.

If you or your organization has resources that would be relevant to our work, the Wallace Center requests that you submit them through the Farmers' Market Coalition website at <http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/submit-resource/>. We encourage you to check back with us regularly as we post new resources, strategies and information for the farmers' market community at www.WallaceCenter.org.

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The Wallace Center supports entrepreneurs and communities as they build a new, 21st century food system that is healthier for people, the environment, and the economy. The Center builds and strengthens links in the emerging chain of businesses and civic efforts focused on making good food – clean, green, fair, affordable food – an everyday reality in every community. Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.

