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PB1771-Direct from Tennessee Farmers Markets - Observations, Quotes and Data from Market Managers,

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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Direct from Tennessee Farmers Markets:

Observations, Quotes and Data from Market Managers, Vendors and Customers





This publication was made possible in part by an agreement with USDA Rural Development and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture with funding assistance provided from the sale of agricultural specialty license plates (the “Ag Tag”). Funds generated from “Ag Tag” sales are returned to the agricultural community in the form of grants for youth programs, market development projects and other agricultural activities. Additional information about Tennessee agricultural products and the “Ag Tag” is available at the Tennessee Department of Agriculture’s promotional Web site, www.picktnproducts.org.

Direct from Tennessee Farmers Markets:

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June 2007

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CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Acknowledgments.....	4
Results of Inquiry with Tennessee Farmers Markets	5
In Their Own Words – Observations and Quotes from On-site Visits to Tennessee Farmers Markets	14
Summary	19

FOREWORD

This publication represents a summary of information obtained during months of telephone inquiries and on-site visits with the managers, vendors, leaders and customers of community farmers markets across Tennessee during the 2006 marketing season. The telephone inquiries sought operational information about specific markets from the market managers and market leaders. Operational information included years in operation, types of facilities, types of vendors/products, number of vendors, days and hours of operation, vendor fee structure and other issues. The on-site visits provided opportunities to experience the culture of different markets, take photographs and capture quotes from vendors, customers and managers. Visits were made to farmers markets across the state. We have studied, witnessed and experienced farmers markets to develop this educational publication and its companion publication, “A Guide for Considering and Developing a Farmers Market in Tennessee,” UT Extension PB 1770.

We appreciate the great partnerships that exist between the *Center for Profitable Agriculture*, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and USDA Rural Development. A special thanks is extended to TDA and Rural Development for the assistance provided in the development and printing of this publication and “A Guide for Considering and Developing a Farmers Market in Tennessee.”

We intend for the publication to be used in tandem with “A Guide for Considering and Developing a Farmers Market in Tennessee” by those who are considering a new farmers market or attempting to revitalize an existing market. It provides an overview of the variation that exists in operational issues among the farmers markets across the state and provides interesting quotes and observations in the words of actual vendors, customers and market leaders.

Rob Holland and Megan Bruch
Center for Profitable Agriculture

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Appreciation is extended to Joe Gaines, Assistant Commissioner Tennessee Department of Agriculture; Paul Nordstrom, Chief of Marketing Services, Tennessee Department of Agriculture; and Joe Pearson, Director of Commodities, Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation; for their leadership in the initiation of the project that launched the development of this publication. Funding for the development and printing of this publication was provided through an agreement with USDA Rural Development and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture with funds provided from the sale of agricultural specialty license plates (the “Ag Tag”).

Special thanks is extended to the many market managers, board members and county Extension agents who provided specific market operation information to be included in this publication. We also extend thanks to the market managers, vendors and board members who reviewed this publication prior to printing and provided input and suggestions.

Special appreciation is extended to Kim Martinez, Ben Sanders and Amanda Ziehl for their assistance with the on-site visits and their various contributions to this document. Special appreciation is also extended to the following members of the team that provided the professional peer review of this educational publication:

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Michael Wilcox – UT Extension, Agricultural Economics

Finally, special recognition is extended to Wanda Russell and Kim Stallings for their dedicated service to the editing, layout and graphic design of this publication.



Results of Inquiry with Tennessee Farmers Markets

Background

Farmers markets vary significantly in their operating procedures and characteristics. For example, some are loosely organized with no written guidelines and no designated person in charge, while others have written bylaws along with a board of directors and a paid market manager. Some farmers markets are held in parking lots with goods sold directly from vehicles, while others are held in permanent structures. The differences are numerous.

It may be helpful to learn about and understand some of the differences and similarities in operating procedures and characteristics of Tennessee farmers markets. This information may be useful for those who are forming or improving farmers markets to see how others are doing things. It may also be helpful to educators and public agencies in determining the resources needed by farmers markets in the state.

During the summer of 2006, the *Center for Profitable Agriculture* conducted inquiries with 55 Tennessee farmers markets (Table 1). Extension agents were first asked via e-mail whether or not there was a farmers market in their county. Agents indicating there was a farmers market(s) were then called to determine the best contact person for the market.

Table 1. Tennessee Farmers Markets by County, City and Market Name

	County	City	Market Name
1	Anderson	Oak Ridge	Oak Ridge Farmers Market
2	Bedford	Wartrace	Wartrace Farmers Market
3	Bedford	Shelbyville	Bedford County Farmers Market
4	Benton	Camden	Benton County Farmers Market
5	Blount	Maryville	Maryville Farmers Market
6	Bradley	Cleveland	Bradley County Farmers Market
7	Cannon	Woodbury	Cannon County Farmers Market
8	Cheatham	Ashland City	Ashland City Open-Air Market
9	Coffee	Manchester	Coffee County Farmers Market
10	Cumberland	Crossville	No name
11	Davidson	Nashville	Nashville Farmers Market
12	DeKalb	Smithville	Smithville Farmers Market
13	Dickson	Dickson	Dickson County Farmers Market
14	Fayette	Somerville	Fayette County Farmers Market
15	Franklin	Sewanee	Sewanee Gardener's Market
16	Franklin	Winchester	Southern-Middle Tennessee Producers Association
17	Gibson	Trenton	Trenton Gin's Farmers Market
18	Giles	Pulaski	Farmers Market

	County	City	Market Name
19	Greene	Greeneville	Downtown Farmers Market
20	Hamblen	Morristown	Morristown Farmers Market
21	Hamilton	Chattanooga	Chattanooga Market
22	Hancock	Sneedville	Hancock County Farmers Market
23	Hawkins	Rogersville	Rogersville Farmers Market
24	Henry	Paris	Henry County Farmers Market
25	Hickman	Centerville	Hickman County Farmers Market
26	Humphreys	Waverly	Humphreys County Farmers Market
27	Knox	Knoxville	Knoxville Farmers Market
28	Knox	Knoxville	Market Square Farmers Market
29	Lewis	Hohenwald	Farmers Market at Hohenwald
30	Lincoln	Fayetteville	Fayetteville Farmers Market
31	Loudon	Loudon	Loudon Thursday Farmers Market
32	Macon	Lafayette	Macon County Farmers Market
33	Madison	Jackson	West Tennessee Farmers Market
34	Maury	Columbia	Columbia Fresh Farmers Market
35	McMinn	Athens/Etowah	McMinn County Farmers Market
36	Montgomery	Clarksville	Montgomery County Farmers Market
37	Morgan	Wartburg	Wartburg Farmers Market
38	Overton	Livingston	Livingston/Overton County Farmers Market
39	Putnam	Cookeville	Cookeville Community Farmers Market
40	Rhea	Dayton	Rhea County Farmers Market
41	Rutherford	Murfreesboro	Rutherford County Farmers Market
42	Shelby	Memphis	Agricenter Farmers Market
43	Shelby	Memphis	Memphis Farmers Market
44	Smith	Carthage	Smith County Farmers Market
45	Sullivan	Bristol	State Street Farmers Market
46	Sullivan	Kingsport	Kingsport Farmers Market
47	Tipton	Covington	Mid-South Farmers Market
48	Warren	McMinnville	Warren County Farmers Market
49	Washington	Grey	Appalachian Fair Farmers Market
50	Washington	Johnson City	Johnson City Farmers Market
51	Washington	Jonesboro	Johnson City Farmers Market
52	Weakley	Martin	Martin Area Farmers Market
53	White	Sparta	White County Farmers Market
54	Williamson	Franklin	Franklin Farmers Market
55	Wilson	Lebanon	Lebanon/Wilson County Farmers Market

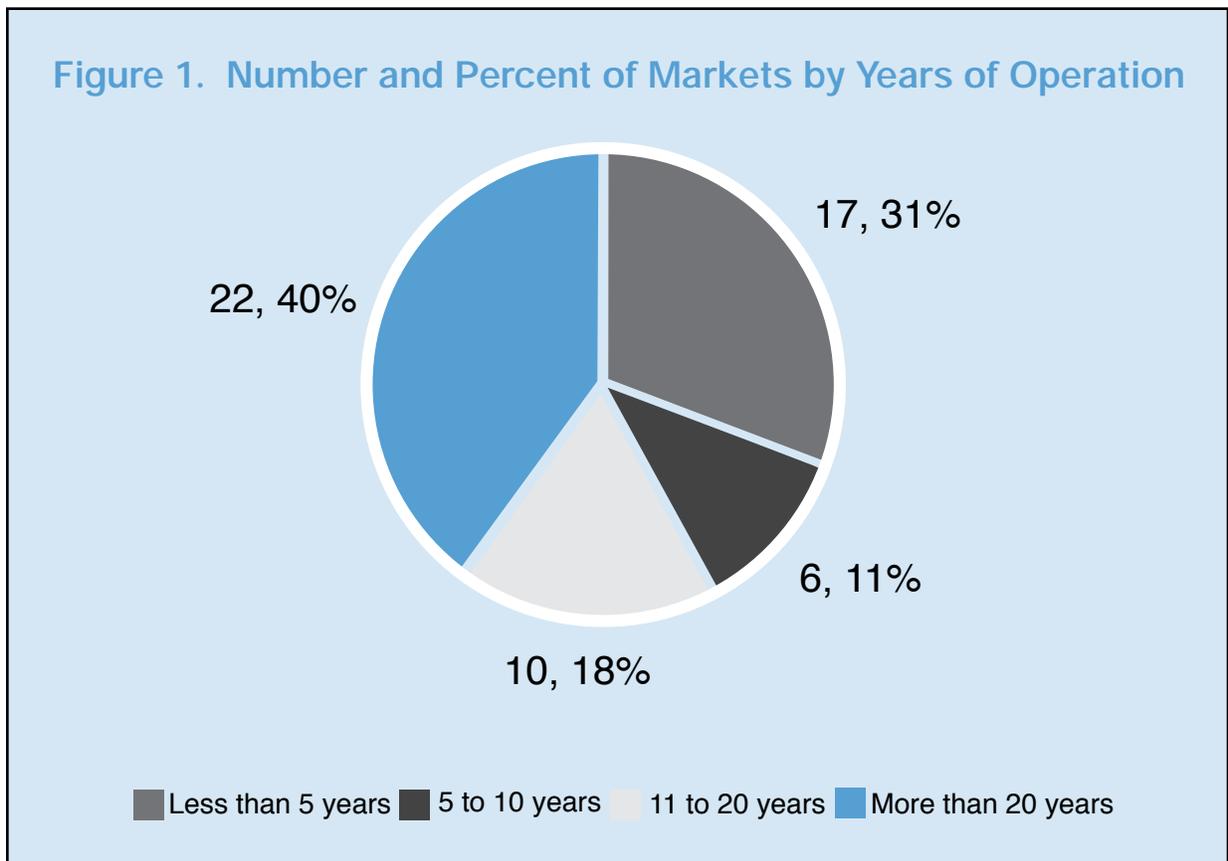
Market contacts then were telephoned to discuss operating procedures and characteristics. It should be noted that these contacts were diverse in their occupations and roles with the markets. The contacts included Extension agents and other staff, Chamber of Commerce representatives, USDA employees, downtown organization employees, farmers market managers and others. The contacts also varied in the amount of detail known about the market, especially when discussing characteristics of the market, such as the number of vendors or customers. Much of the information they provided were “educated estimates.” Therefore, while the information learned through conversations with market contacts and summarized below may be interesting and helpful in several ways, the data and information presented should not be considered scientific results.

Information Learned through Conversations with Market Contacts

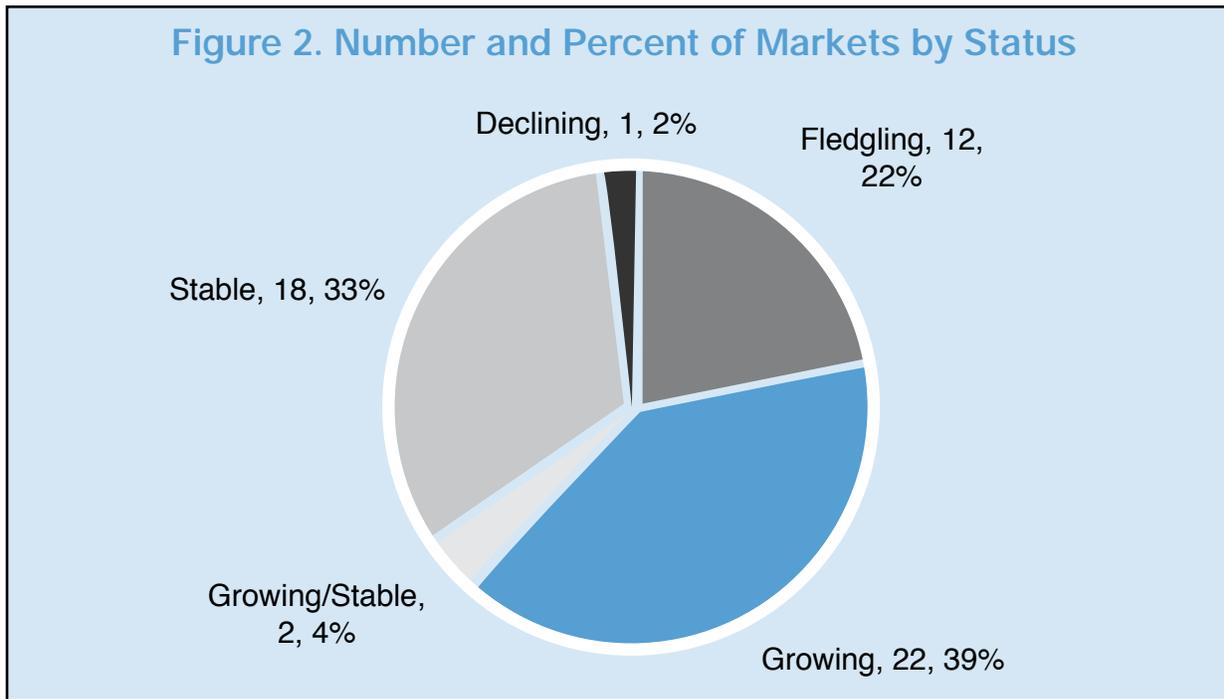
Through conversations with market contacts, information was gathered regarding characteristics of Tennessee farmers markets. A summary of several topics follows, including years of operation and market status; operating policies and management; months, days and hours of operation; vendors, vendor fees and product availability; farmers market customers; and special events at markets.

Years of Operation and Status

The 55 Tennessee farmers markets contacted varied widely by the number of years they had been in operation. Interestingly, six markets were in their first year of operation, while one market reported a history of 221 years. Seventeen markets (31 percent) had been open for less than five years, and another six markets (11 percent) had been open for 10 or less years (Figure 1). Ten markets (18 percent) had been open between 11 and 20 years, while 22 markets (40 percent) had more than a 20-year history of operation.



The farmers market contacts were asked to classify the status of the market as “fledgling,” “stable,” “growing” or “declining.” Forty percent of the contacts (22) described their markets as “growing” and a third of markets (18) were described as “stable” (Figure 2). Two other markets (4 percent) were described as “growing/stable.” Twenty-two percent of markets (12) were classified as “fledgling.” Only one market was described as “declining.”



Operating Policies and Management

Those considering the formation of a farmers market are often curious about how operating procedures are defined and how a market is managed. Contacts for 46 of the markets (83.6 percent) indicated they had written policies, bylaws and/or procedures. Nine farmers markets (16.4 percent) did not have written policies, bylaws and/or procedures.

Tennessee farmers markets are managed by a variety of individuals and groups of individuals (Table 2). A manager and board of directors are responsible for the management of 14 (26 percent) of the 54 market contacts responding. A manager, director or coordinator is responsible for management of 10 markets (19 percent). Six markets (11 percent) are managed by an Extension agent, in combination with another official(s) from the Chamber of Commerce, city government, Board of Directors or volunteers. Five markets (9 percent) have no official management and another five markets are managed solely by the county Extension agent. A board of directors or vendors manage four markets (7 percent), and another four markets are managed by a government agency employee such as from the city, county or an agency of USDA. A private market owner manages three markets (6 percent), and a Chamber of Commerce or merchants association manages two markets. One market is managed by volunteers.

Description of Management Official(s)	Number of Markets	Percent of Markets
Manager and Board of Directors	14	26
Manager/Director/Coordinator	10	19
Extension Agent and Others (Chamber, City, Board or Volunteers)	6	11
None	5	9
Extension Agent	5	9
Board of Directors/Vendors	4	7
Government Agency Employee (City, County, USDA)	4	7
Private Owner	3	6
Chamber or Merchants Association	2	4
Volunteers	1	2
Total	54	100

In conversations with market contacts, it was clear that the term “manager” was related to a wide range of compensation or benefits received by that person in return for his/her services. Compensation ranged from none (volunteer) to a formal salary or a percentage of fees. Though some managers did not receive any pay, some enjoy perks such as using the best stall or booth space if the manager is also a vendor at the market.

Months, Days and Hours of Operation

The months, days and hours of operation also varied widely. Many of the contacts stated that the market operation was based on product availability and offered a “typical” schedule of operation. Of the 54 markets providing information on operation times, seven operated year-round. Three of these were open seven days a week, while another three were open Monday through Saturday. One year-round market was only open on Saturday. Six of the year-round markets were open all day, while one opened only in the afternoon hours.

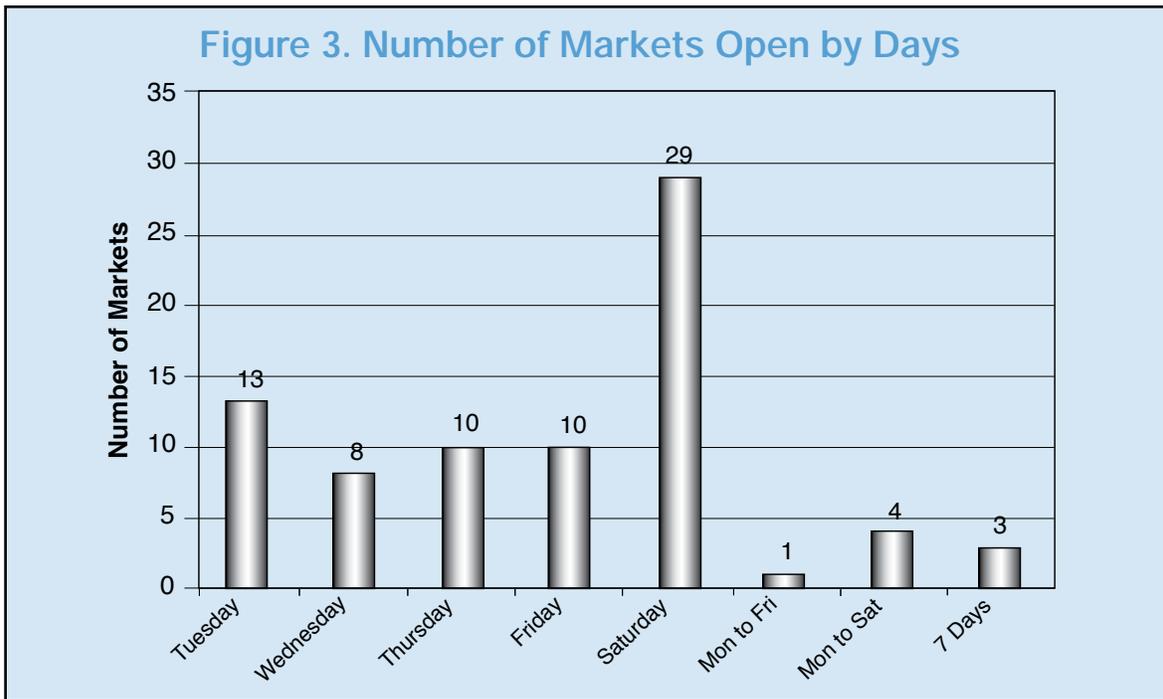
The remaining 47 markets are seasonal in nature and these markets vary by the months of opening and closing (Tables 3 and 4). The most frequent month for opening markets was May with 22 markets (41 percent). June was the second most popular month to open with 17 (31 percent). Six markets (11 percent) opened in April, and two markets opened in March.

October saw the closing of the majority of markets (30 markets or 56 percent). Eight markets (15 percent) closed in September, and seven (14 percent) closed in November. One market closed in August, and one closed in December.

Table 3. Number and Percent of Seasonal Markets Opening by Month		
Month Market Opens	Number of Markets	Percent of Markets
March	2	4
April	6	13
May	22	47
June	17	36
Total	47	100

Table 4. Number and Percent of Markets Seasonal Closing by Month		
Month Market Closes	Number of Markets	Percent of Markets
August	1	2
September	8	17
October	30	64
November	7	15
December	1	2
Total	47	100

Markets are open from one to seven days each week. Some markets vary the number of days they are open across the season. The most frequent day for markets to be open is Saturday, when more than half of the markets are open (Figure 3). Almost a quarter of markets are open on Tuesday. Ten markets (19 percent) are open on Thursday and Friday. Eight markets are open on Wednesday. Four markets operate Monday through Saturday, and three markets operate all seven days of the week. One market operates Monday through Friday.



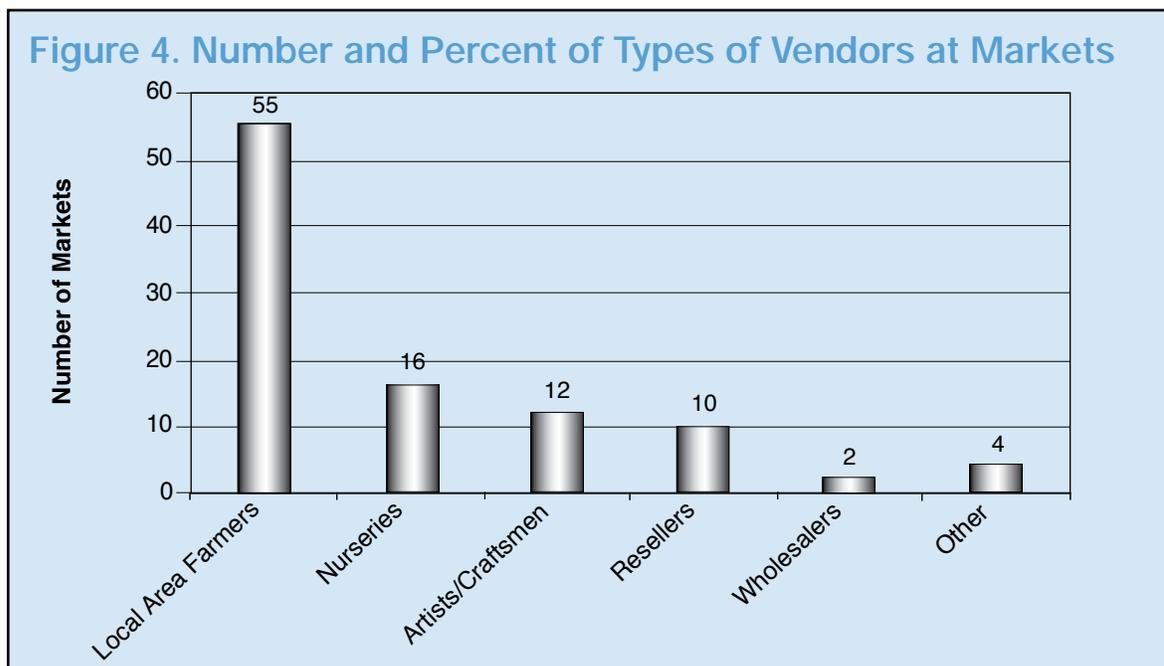
Determining specific operating hours was difficult. Contacts often described operating hours as some variation of “whenever the vendor arrives until they are sold out.” Almost 70 percent of markets (37), however, were open in the morning hours. Fifteen percent (eight markets) were open afternoons, and 17 percent (nine markets) were open all day.

Facilities

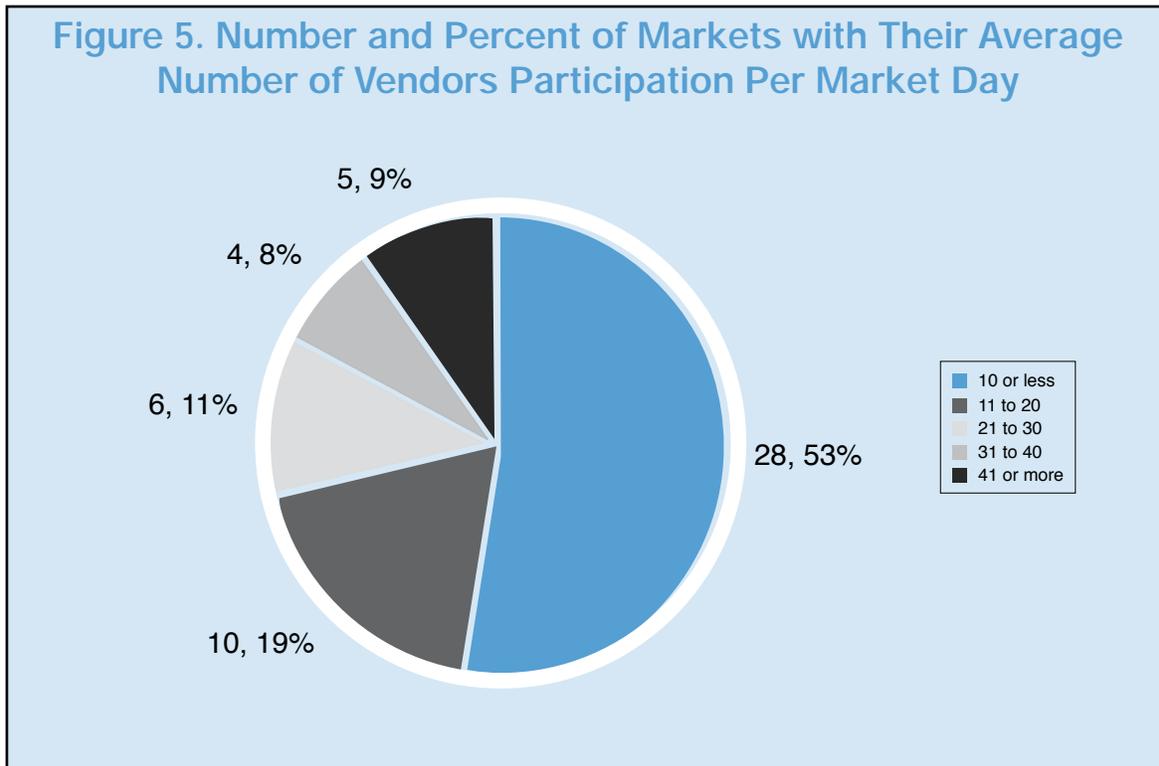
Facilities, or lack thereof, also distinguish farmers markets from one another. A majority of Tennessee farmers markets were held in the open air, such as in parking lots, vacant lots and parks. Thirty-six of the 55 markets contacted (58 percent) were held in “uncovered” locations. Other Tennessee farmers markets were held in structures such as buildings, sheds or pavilions. Nineteen markets (35 percent) were held in these types of “covered” facilities.

Vendors, Vendor Fees and Products Available

Farmers markets would not be possible without vendor participation and product availability. Some markets limit vendors to local-area farmers, while others are open to other sellers. All of the markets in this inquiry included local area farmers as vendors (Figure 4). Sixteen markets (29 percent) also included nurseries. Artists and craftspeople were present in 12 markets (22 percent). Resellers sold at 10 markets (18 percent), and wholesalers sold at two.



The number of vendors offering products for sale can greatly impact the success of a farmers market. More than half of the contacts responding (28) had an average of 10 or fewer vendors per market day (Figure 5). Ten markets (19 percent) averaged between 11 and 20 vendors. Six markets (11 percent) averaged 21 to 30 vendors per market day. Four markets (11 percent) averaged 31 to 40 vendors, and five markets had 41 or more vendors on average per market day.



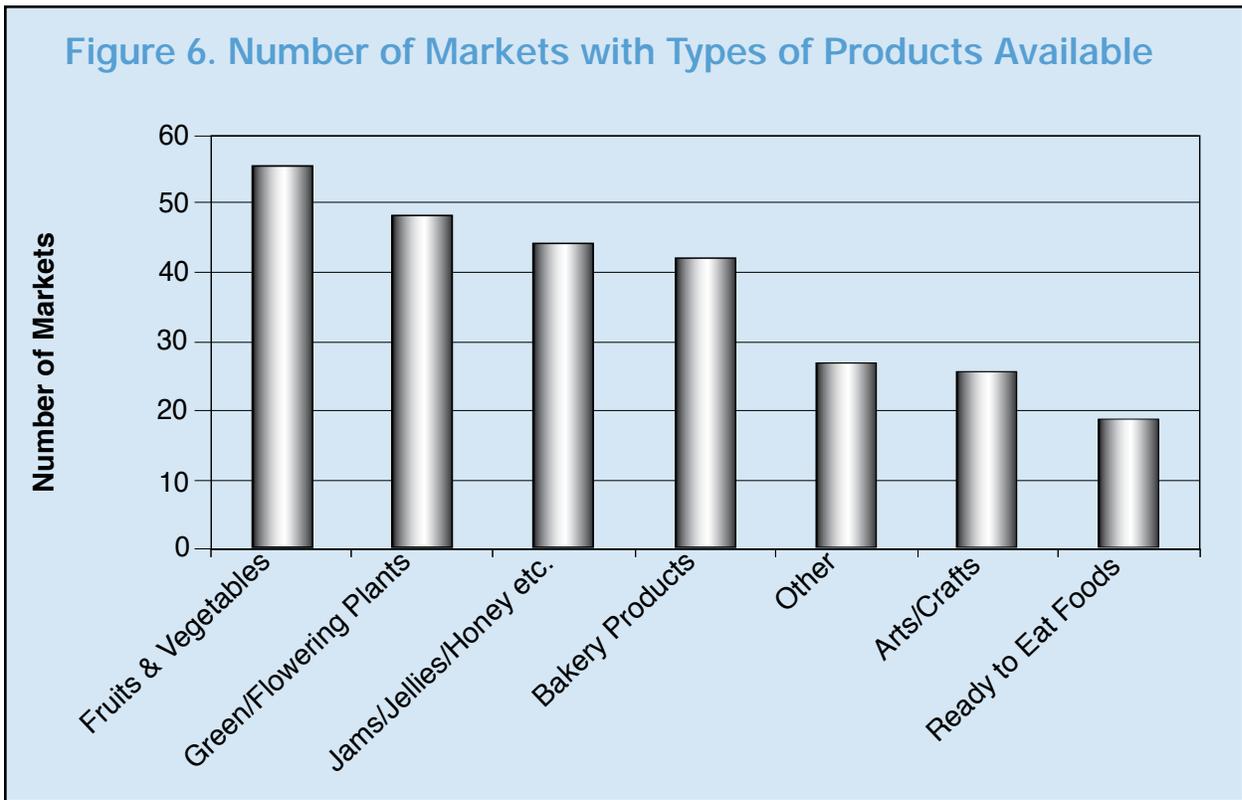
Several types of fee schedules for farmers market vendors were used across the state. Thirteen markets required an application or membership fee of between \$5 and \$20. The average application or membership fee was just less than \$15. In addition to an application or membership fee, five markets charged a percentage of sales, with four markets charging 4 percent and one market charging 8 percent of sales. In addition to a membership fee, eight markets charged a flat fee between \$1 and \$10 per day, with an average of \$4.50 per day.

Markets that did not charge membership or application fees also had various pricing methods. Fees were charged by the day, week, month and/or year/season. Daily rates ranged from \$2 to \$20. Weekly rates ranged from \$5 to \$20. Monthly rates ranged from \$30 to \$255, and yearly rates ranged from \$15 to \$250.

Some markets charged higher fees for vendors who were not from the county or state. These out-of-county/state fees were as much as double the fee for in-county or in-state. Higher fees were also charged in some cases for vendors who reserved a space or for craft versus food vendors. Some markets, however, charged no fees at all. Twenty-one markets (44 percent) had no fees for vendors.

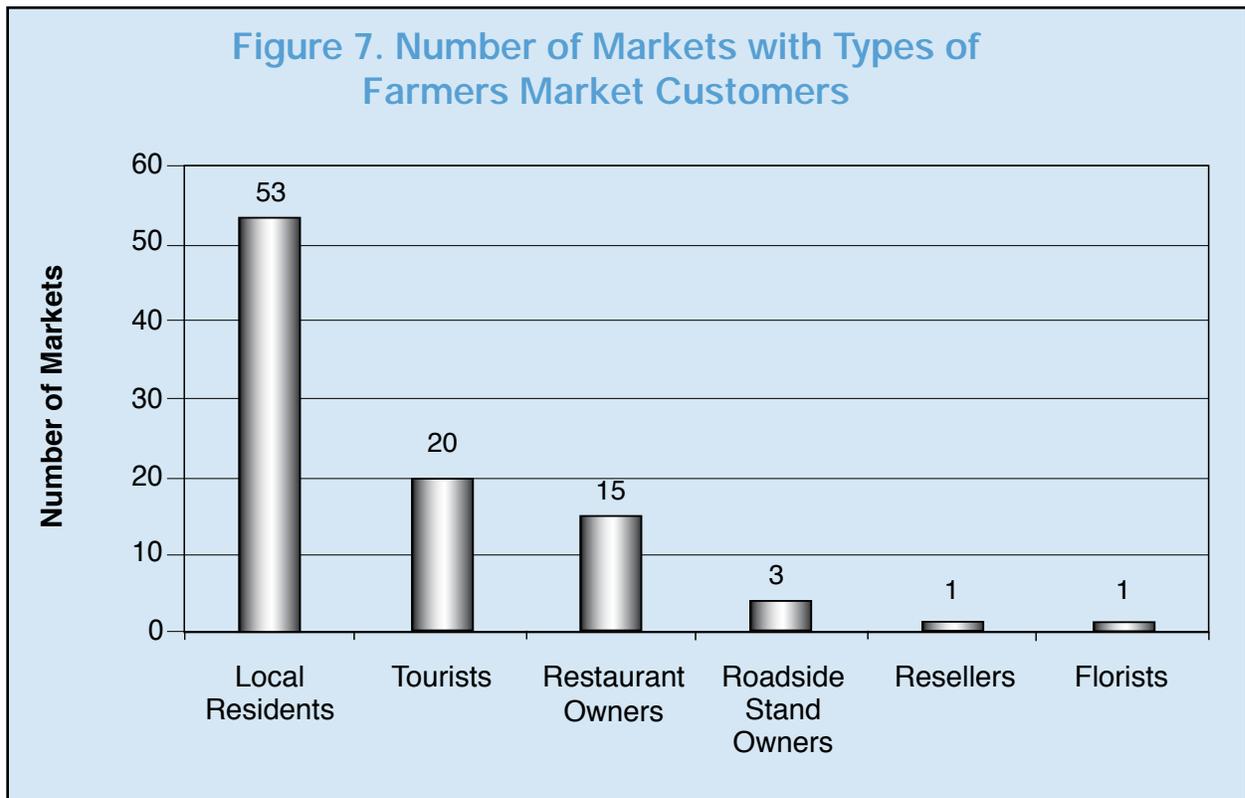
Farmers market vendors in Tennessee offered a variety of products (Figure 6). As would be expected, all 55 markets offered fruits and vegetables. Green or flowering plants were offered at 48 markets (87 percent). Forty-four markets (80 percent) offered jams, jellies, honey, etc., and 42 offered bakery products for sale to customers. Art and crafts were sold at 26 markets (47 percent), and ready-to-eat foods were offered at 19 markets (35 percent).¹

¹ It should be noted that concern was expressed by some market contacts about regulation of value-added food products such as jams and jellies, canned goods, honey and baked goods. Market contacts may not have included these products in their list of products offered when in fact some of these products are offered at the market; therefore, numbers of markets offering these products for sale may be understated. Regulations at the time of these conversations prohibited the sale of processed foods made in home kitchens. Processed food products had to be made in commercial, inspected food processing facilities using specified Good Manufacturing Practices.



Farmers Market Customers

Customers are a vital component of a viable farmers market. Local residents were identified as customers at all of the responding markets (Figure 7). Tourists were identified as customers at 20 markets (38 percent). Fifteen markets (28 percent) had restaurant owners as customers, and roadside stand owners were customers at three markets. Resellers were customers at one farmers market, and florists were identified as customers of one market.



The average number of customers visiting the responding Tennessee farmers markets per day varied widely (Table 5). Four markets reported the average number of customers being less than 20 per day. Fifteen markets (28 percent) reported between 20 and 50 customers per day. Six market contacts indicated average customer numbers could reach more than 1,000 per day.

Table 5. Average Number of Customers at Markets		
Number of Customers	Number of Markets	Percent of Markets
Less than 20	4	8
20 to 50	15	28
51 to 100	5	9
101 to 200	8	15
201 to 300	6	11
301 to 400	3	6
401 to 500	2	4
501 to 1000	4	8
More than 1000	6	11
Total	53	100

Marketing Strategies

Market contacts were asked about the use of two marketing strategies at their farmers markets --Web sites and special events. Web sites are not used widely by Tennessee farmers markets as a marketing tool. Nine contacts (16 percent) indicated that their farmers market had a Web site. The remaining 46 markets (84 percent) did not have their own Web site. Some contacts indicated that their farmers markets are mentioned or listed on other sites but did not have their own site.

Special events can help draw customers to farmers markets or show appreciation to vendors or other market supporters. Fifteen markets (27 percent) reported holding special events for vendors or customers.





In Their Own Words – Observations and Quotes from On-site Visits to Tennessee Farmers Markets

In the summer of 2006, representatives from the *Center for Profitable Agriculture* conducted on-site visits to 12 Tennessee farmers markets. The purpose of these visits was to observe happenings at the market, view facilities and talk with vendors and customers about their experiences. This chapter provides quotes from vendors and customers as well as personal observations on several topics including market location and facilities, days and hours of operation, management and rules, farmers market marketing, product availability, why vendors market at farmers markets and why customers shop at farmers markets.



Location and Facilities

“The facilities were very nice. A covered, attractive shed provided shelter. There were ample and convenient parking spots, and separate entrances for vendors and customers. A nice bathroom facility is also on the premises. The local Master Gardeners maintained the grounds with nicely manicured lawns and lush flower beds.”

“I sell at this market because of the shade and the facilities. The market in my home county is a parking lot. The produce is no good there after sitting in the hot sun for half a day.”

“Some say we need a facility rather than this parking lot. I’m not sure it’s necessary.”

“The purpose of the pavilion is for the farmers market; however, it is used for many other events that are approved by the city.”

“We think that the parking at the market actually influences purchases. If the customers must walk too far, they do not buy as much.”

“Vendors come the night before the market or as early as 2:00 a.m. to reserve a spot under the building.”

“It’s a matter of location – it’s what it amounts to. The market must be visible from the road. Signs help a little.”

“Finding a suitable location for the market is a challenge. It may be here next year, or it may be somewhere else.”

“Bathroom facilities are really a necessity at a farmers’ market – both for the vendors and the customers.”

“We need a permanent location that is in a high-traffic area. We have a good setting here but the location is not ideal. We need more traffic.”

“I think a permanent structure/pavilion would be good for the market and great for the community.”

“Parking is a big issue. I think we lose some customers because of our parking problems.”

“We can only do so much with signage. Location is the number one factor.”



Days and Hours of Operation

“This market works pretty well. You’ll see three times as many people here on the weekends as during the week.”

“I’d say that 80 percent of my sales are on weekends and 20 percent are during the week.”

“Our Wednesday market gets mighty slow at times.”

“Friday evening works well, especially if something is drawing a crowd near or at the market. I thought a lot of folks would drive by the market after supper in the town (6:30-8:00 p.m.), but this was not the case. Our traffic is good on Friday afternoon, but it dies about 6 p.m. Lots of these folks come by after work and go home for the weekend.”

“Saturday traffic dies by noon.”

“I wish they would open the marker earlier than 8:00 a.m.”

“We have gotten some complaints from a few vendors that say the Friday evening market diluted the Saturday morning sales. They probably diluted individual sales, but by adding the Friday evening opening we increased total market sales.”

“Our new pavilion is liked because of improved lighting and the breeze. It feels like the old traditional farmers market.”



Management and Rules

“Leadership is really the key to getting a market going and keeping it going. We have had a good and patient leader. We’ve been struggling for five years and still only have about eight good vendors. It’s been really slow, but we’ve got a good market.”

“We really do not have any authority or person that sets policy or enforces it. We need some rules, and they need to be enforced.”

“Our philosophy is based on the thought that what’s good for the farmer is good for the market.”

“A big problem with the market is that middlemen [vendors that buy products elsewhere and resell at the market] are allowed to sell even though it is against the rules. What is the point of having rules if they are not enforced?”

“This market works and is a success but not without constant issues and decisions.”

“Part of the fees go to marketing and part to savings.”

“We have a good set of understandable rules and policy – not too wordy and not too polished, just straightforward and to the point.”

“I would recommend that you allow growers from around the region to sell at your market. They may bring different products to your market and competition is key – there will be opportunities for your local growers as well.”

“We sell 20 of our 32 covered stalls as reserved stalls. I highly encourage this because it allows some vendors the opportunity to have the same market spot throughout the season and beyond. They don’t have to lineup at 3 or 4 a.m. for a booth. These folks will be those growers who plant and invest to sell at the market.”

“Vendors cannot sell until the bell rings at 8:00 a.m.”



Farmers Market Marketing

“We host many special events at the market throughout the year – gospel singing, corn boiling, storytelling.”

“We do very little advertisement, but we need to work on that.”

“To get farmers to market their produce in our facility, we contacted our county Extension agents in the area and surrounding counties. We also advertised through some brochures at rest stops and encouraged farmers to tell others.”

“We have found that the number one reason folks shop at our market is freshness – not price, but freshness.”

“The market manager sets up a table with brochures about the market and sells coffee to help support market expenses.”

“The goal for the market was to create an experience, not just a location. Live music and events such as an ice cream-eating contest are scheduled every week. A large area was set up with tables and chairs for people to eat and relax in. It was a festive atmosphere.”

“Vendors should put their farm name and location in as many places in their booth as possible.”

“The key to a successful farmers market is repeat customers – you’ve got to keep them coming back every week.”

“This has been a good year at the market. More publicity has been done than in the past that has brought in new customers.”

“The WIC program has helped to bring in more customers and younger demographics to the market. The Health Department gave the farmers market brochure to clients.”

“Sometimes we have the ‘Chef in the Market’ giving demonstrations on how to cook fresh produce.”

“We received a \$10,000 grant from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture for marketing. We developed a Web site, brochures, posters and T-shirts for permanent vendors. We also purchased newspaper ads.”



Product Availability

“Markets that have a variety of products like baked goods and jellies draw many more customers than the markets that only feature produce.”

“I’ve noticed that different customers want different products. I have to know my customers to meet their needs.”

“A good mix of products is essential for a successful farmers market.”

“Since there are not as many jellies and fried pies, the customers are a different mix.”

“We had a problem getting enough and a variety of produce early in the season, so we allow one reseller who has to display a ‘commercial vendor’ sign.”



Why Vendors Market at Farmers Markets

“I sell at the farmers’ market for four reasons: 1) You can work for yourself, 2) You come back to your roots, 3) It is the next best thing to retirement, and 4) It is rewarding knowing you are taking people’s money for healthy food. In general, I get satisfaction knowing that the fruits and vegetables I sell will be used for healthy eating.”

“Selling at the farmers market allows me to localize my specialty products.”

“I sell my surplus products here at the market. We put up a lot of produce in the freezer and cupboard, and I sell what’s left here. It pays for my seeds, fertilizer and fuel and gives me some extra spending money.”

“Everybody is so friendly here – customers and vendors alike. It’s a good place to get to know or get reacquainted with people.”

“This is a good market. I sell at three different markets in three different counties. Farmers markets are the only way for me to make a living farming – I’d go broke trying to sell at a roadside stand or wholesale.”

“I like selling at the farmer’s market. It allows me to sell my produce how I want to sell it because it is my stuff. I have a good working relationship with other vendors and a lot of repeat customers.”

“I love to sell fresh vegetables because we don’t get them but once a year. I love to be around people and make them smile.”

“The farmers market is ‘an affordable’ way for me to advertise and get my name out.”

“My home is not zoned for retail sales, and it is much less expensive to sell at the farmers market than to have a retail store. The market also provides a concentration of customers in a concentrated time frame.”

“I have sold here for three years. I sell here because it is ‘strictly’ a farmer’s market. I left a market because it had truckers and resellers.”

“I sell here because of the good products and the wide variety of products. I have sold here for 10 years. There is lots of business, the people are nice and I’m usually sold out in one hour.”



Why Customers Shop at Farmers Markets

“I shop at the farmers market three times a week. I like the way the produce is displayed. The food is always fresh, coming straight from the farm. Since it is fresher it tastes better. I also think the location is convenient.”

“I shop at the farmers market because I like the fresh vegetables and I can’t find cranberry beans at the regular store.”

“Farmers markets allow the consumer to have a connection to the produce they are buying – they become more aware of where their food comes from.”

“All the food is fresh and it’s a nice place to shop. I enjoy the local stuff.”

“I’m a long-time believer in ‘you are what you eat.’ Eat organic. Eat local – close to the source.”

“The products are fresh and ripe. Prices are comparable to Wal-Mart™. There are no real bargains here. These people need the money.”

“I shop at the market every Saturday and have for almost 10 years. Why? Because the quality of the produce is a treat and everything is homegrown. Even the rain doesn’t keep me away.”

“I come every week – I have since I moved to this area 10 years ago. I come to get my winter supply of food.”

“I come every week. I have come every week for three years—that’s when I moved to the area. Just at this vendor (bakery) alone, I spend an average of \$8 to \$16 each week. I buy here because of the freshness of the products and getting to talk with the farmers. The market is a place to socialize.”

“Here I can find produce that I can’t find in the stores – just so many things, so many varieties. There is a good selection and the freshness – like free-range eggs. I like the baked goods at this market. One thing I really like that they do at some markets is that the vendors are always in the same place – I can go right to them each time without having to relocate them. I hope they will start doing that here.”

“I want to help support the local farmers – keep the money in our local economy.”

“I can talk to the people and learn about their produce and how to use it; the convenient parking and being in the center of town; the large variety, and I love the meats and eggs.”

Summary

The information in this publication provides interesting insight and description about Tennessee's existing farmers markets and their vendors, shoppers and managers. The results of the telephone inquiries provide operational information about existing markets, including hours of operation, types of vendors, types of facilities and vendor fee structure. This information helps show the diversity of organization and operations for the markets in the state. It can also be helpful to start-up markets attempting to establish operating guidelines for a new market. The various quotes from on-site visits provide helpful and interesting observations and thoughts from vendors, shoppers, market managers and community leaders. The perspectives of these folks captured through their personal quotes often provide a deeper look into the feelings, attitudes and perceptions of the people involved with farmers markets. A close reading of these quotes can be a helpful part of the planning phase of new farmers markets.

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