Farmers' Market Relations

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FARMERS’ MARKET RELATIONS

Analyzing the relationships Farmers’ Markets in Tennessee have with their communities.

Olivia Tumlin
Chancellor’s Honors Program Undergraduate Thesis
Abstract

Today, farmers’ markets exist as a community event, where farmers and customers congregate. While these markets may appear casual, they require structure and support. This support may come from non-profit support, public extension services, or the local municipality. Without communication and collaboration, these relationships may fall short of potential. This research surveyed Tennessee farmers’ market stakeholders to determine how they view their relationships. Common problems markets may face are a lack of marketing aid, challenges with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and difficulties with space and facilities to operate the market. Solutions include municipal funding and coordination in marketing strategies.

Keywords: Farmers’ Markets, Community Development, Community Relationships, Rural Development
Introduction

In the last ten to fifteen years, farmers’ markets have seen a spike in popularity across all ages, areas, and walks of life (Ekanem et al. 2016). While the idea of a common agricultural market is not new, the recent surge in popularity requires more research to measure the social, economic, and environmental effects. As seen in Figure 1, between 2000 and 2017, the number of farmers’ markets across the country tripled from approximately 2,800 to 8,500 in 2017 (Staisey et al. 2018). With an increase in popularity, came an increase in structure and planning for these markets. Markets once operated informally by a group of farmers or residents are suddenly receiving governmental support or are being formed into 501(c)-3 non-profit organizations (Ekanem et al. 2016). The structure and management of markets greatly impacts a community and these markets have a huge potential to bring food security, healthier and more sustainable options to consumers, and increased economic flow to consumer sales, which supports the overall regional economy (Brinkley 2017; Maples et al. 2013).

In Tennessee alone there are 133 farmers’ markets, according to the United States Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA AMS) (Farmers Market Coalition 2019). Markets differ by management and structure. Because of their effect on communities and economies, healthy relationships between markets and the local area are important to understand.
The relationship between a market and its community can easily fall short of its potential and underutilizes resources and opportunities to improve community relationships (Brinkley 2017). A common issue found in this research and other publications is the asynchronous nature of the relationship between local government and a farmers’ market (Brinkley 2017). The goal of this research is to evaluate whether a mutually beneficial relationship between local municipalities and farmers’ markets can improve the community as a whole through access to healthy nutritious food, support of local businesspeople, and increased economic flow in the regional economy (Sadler et al. 2015).

Farmers’ markets have economic, environmental, and social impacts on their surrounding area (Leiper and Clark-Sather 2017). Understanding and fulfilling the needs that markets need to thrive enriches these relationships. However, a farmers’ market cannot exist in a vacuum without any producer or consumer relationships. To protect both parties, a potential solution is a structured market, which in turn requires staff and support from organizations. Municipalities desire the communal aspect of markets, while markets need the support and space to operate. If a local municipality does not support the local farmers’ market, then the market does not thrive—meaning neither the market nor local government benefits. Understanding the needs of both is the key.

This study focuses on collecting data about farmers’ markets from non-profit and municipal market managers, vendors, UT Knoxville Extension employees, and municipal employees working with non-profit markets. This study further how each stakeholder views:

- the customer and how to meet their demands through the farmers’ market
- defines a successful market
- opportunities and challenges associated with running a farmers’ market
• communication with other stakeholders

By making the common challenges, opportunities, and resources of markets across Tennessee known, local government sees avenues for improvement and opportunities for development, while markets identify efficiency. Survey respondents across Tennessee highlighted the need for increased funding, access to their cities’ marketing networks, and other physical resources. This research seeks to call attention to the ways communities, governments, and farmers’ markets come together to improve communication and cooperation, as well as evaluate the structure of farmers’ markets, for the improvement of society as a whole.

**Literature Review**

**Introduction**

In 2008, the Farm Bill pledged to support the rapid growth of farmers’ markets (Senate 2008). This potential for such a positive impression, as well as an increase in popularity for local food networks, has led researchers across the country to spend time writing about these unique, communal spaces. This review focuses on the literature about the rise of local food networks, the stakeholders and structures of farmers’ markets, and the community impacts of these markets.

**Rise of Local Food Networks**

The Farmers’ Market Coalition, a non-profit that works to support and strengthen markets across the US, defines a farmers’ market as a public space where farms sell products directly to consumers. The ultimate goal is to remove intermediate agents between farmers and consumers. A local food network is a broader term that includes farmers’ markets. While there is no general consensus on the definition of ‘local,’ the 2008 Farm Bill defined local food as being “less than 400 miles from its origin or within the state in which it is produced” (Senate 2008, Ekanem et al. 2016). However, some farmers’ markets, like Market Square Farmers’ Market in...
Knoxville, Tennessee (among others) defines “local” as being within 150 miles. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA ERS), local food networks can be defined both geographically, as in the 2008 Farm Bill, but also by the supply chains that link producers and consumers.

Local food networks include more than just farmers’ markets and can potentially include more intermediate agents between the producer and consumer, like direct-to-retail systems with restaurants and small, local grocery stores (Martinez et al. 2010). Direct-to-retail systems mean that the farmers sell products to retailers, rather than to the consumer directly. Whether the retailer is a grocery store produce section, or a producer making value-added products, the consumer does not interact with the farmer. However, despite these general definitions, the general public tends to create their own definitions of local food networks depending on the population density and geography of the area (Brinkley 2017; Martinez et al. 2010). A local food network in a city like Detroit is going to look vastly different from one in agriculturally rich California. Steve Martinez et al. of the USDA-Economic Research Service (ERS) referenced this as “flexible localism” (2010). Direct-to-consumer marketing has more than doubled since 1997, and the percentage of direct-to-consumer sales continues to take up a larger portion of total agricultural sales (Martinez et al. 2010). The connections built between producers and consumers in local food networks tend to look somewhat different. In an 2017 article called "Visualizing the Social and Geographical Embeddedness of Local Food Systems", Catherine Brinkley describes the relationships as “local embeddedness. Embeddedness describes the non-economic logic of how markets yoke together two separate geographies through shared economies and social values” (2017). The values of the producer and consumer are important and are highlighted in local food network marketing. These shorter supply chains make it easier to preserve values too.
In Brinkley’s article, she highlights the importance of social involvement outside of direct marketing for the growth of a network. The primary relationships highlighted are schools (for educational purposes), food banks, and restaurants (Brinkley 2017). The economic power of these networks has motivated researchers everywhere to study their social, economic, and geographical impacts on communities.

**Farmers’ Market Stakeholders**

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) defined a farmers’ market as “a retail outlet in which two or more vendors sell agricultural products directly to customers through a common marketing channel” (Ragland and Tropp 2006). Some farmers’ markets grow organically, and some are started when a need is recognized by the community. The type of management often determines the type of market (Govindasamy 1998). This paper focuses on two different types of farmers’ markets: non-profit operated and municipally-operated. Markets can, however, fall under the common business structures of partnerships, LLCs, sole proprietorships, cooperatives, etc (Farmers Market Coalition 2019). Non-Profit operated farmers’ markets are often under umbrella organizations that seek to improve a community. For example, the Market Square Farmers’ Market in Knoxville, TN, operates under the management of Nourish Knoxville, a non-profit that operates multiple markets. Similarly, Jonesborough Farmers’ Market exists under Jonesborough Locally Grown, which also started a year-round grocery store and kitchen with locally-sourced products. Non-Profit operated markets then follow a non-profit business structure and operate through a mixture of volunteers and paid staff for the operation of the market and the various events. In many cases, a board of directors function as an executive leadership team, and often include a mix of community leaders and
farmers. While not usually involved in the daily operations of a market, a board aids in the strategic planning of the market’s future.

A municipality may also see a demand or need for a structured market as well. Efforts to organize farmers’ markets generally arise out of a desire for increased food security, nutrition benefits, and community and economic engagement (Farmers Market Coalition 2019). In Kingsport, TN, this city-run farmers’ market grew out of a need for alternative market access for farmers and local producers in the area. Municipality operated markets often fall under special events coordination, community health initiatives, parks and recreation, etc. Marlie Wilson et al. in their 2018 study found that community type affected the management structure. In the case of metropolitan Wisconsin farmers’ markets, the majority were non-profit run. In suburban areas, however, the majority were run by municipalities (2018). Wilson et al. explained that the level of support available largely dictates the type of management. In more urban areas where there are more resources to encourage non-profit work, farmers’ markets operated by non-profits were more common. More suburban or rural areas relied on local government for the resources to operate a market (Wilson et al. 2018). These resources include meeting spaces, marketing support, organization help, and sometimes funding.

In most cases, the role of a market manager as a primary point of contact is important (Govindasamy et al. 1998). Market managers act as liaisons between the community, advertisers for the farmers, and planners for the market and other related events. Based on a study in 1998 in New Jersey by Ramu Govindasamy et al., 37.5% of market managers were employed by a local municipality and 29.2% were employed by “downtown revitalization or special improvement district organizations, farmers’ markets, a business association, a local Chamber of Commerce, a non-profit organization, or worked as a social worker,” while another 29.2% were volunteer
Market managers (1998). Market managers look slightly different for every market. Employment status, number of working hours, time of working hours, previous experience, and age are all variable. Edward Ragland and Debra Tropp of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service conducted a 2006 survey, including a description of rule development in farmers’ markets. Figure 2 describes which powers develop the rules and regulations in the farmers’ market. 36.6% of respondents say that the market manager develops the rules, with the next highest choices being the board of directors (32%) and municipal government (20.6%) (Ragland and Tropp 2006). These market managers become the face of the market and are often the ones that liaise between internal and external stakeholders.

The vendors of a farmers’ market are the local producers enacting direct-to-customer marketing, rather than selling solely to grocery stores, restaurants, etc. A healthy social and economic relationship between vendors and customers is important for the economic health of both the vendors and the market itself in the region. As of November 1st, 2019, the average farmer or rancher only receives $0.14 per dollar that consumers spend on food according to the National Farmers Union on “The Farmers’ Share” (2019). At farmers’ markets, however, farmers are able to receive ~90 cents for every dollar (Farmers’ Market Coalition 2019). Vendors often sell at multiple farmers’ markets on different days of the week. In a survey of 754 Iowan vendors, the average number of markets vendors visited was two (Otto and Varner 2005). Vendors in Iowa also assigned “much importance” to the social interactions with customers.

![Figure 2: “Who Develops Rules at Farmers’ Markets” Ragland and Tropp 2006.](image)
Multiple resources cite the necessary relationship between vendors, customers, and the success of the farmers’ market. Without a healthy number of vendors, a farmers’ market attracts fewer customers. Without customers, vendors are unable to justify going to a farmers’ market where their products go unsold (Govindasamy et al. 1998; Wilson et al. 2018). Without vendors to sell products there is no market or products to buy.

The other part of this vital relationship is the customers. Chelsea Leiper and Afton Clarke-Sather wrote for Local Environment that farmers’ markets have begun to function as “moral economies” in reference to the choices consumers make to shop at farmers’ markets rather than the traditional agri-food system (2017). These consumers make choices in support of perceived increased freshness, nutritional quality, food safety, sustainability, and local economic support by shopping at farmers’ markets (Leiper and Clarke-Sather 2017). Customers are drawn to a metropolitan or suburban area for a farmers’ market for both the experience and the products (Wilson et al. 2018; Leiper and Clarke-Sather 2017). The 2006 USDA survey reported that the average number of customers reaches into the hundreds and thousands on a weekly basis (Ragland and Tropp 2006). The number of consumers seeking alternative options to traditional grocery stores continues to increase (Hardesty 2010; Ragland and Tropp 2006). Leiper and Sather describe the relationship between the vendors and the customers as a “moral economy of localism” (2017).

**Farmers’ Markets’ Impact on Communities**

The 2008 Farm Bill arose out of the desire to increase the benefits of local food by increasing “support for small farmers, increased economic activity in rural communities, reduced energy consumption and pollution, and improved human health” (Hardesty 2010; Senate 2008). Many researchers have studied the use of local or alternative food networks to combat the
separation of geography/place and agricultural products (Leiper and Clarke-Sather 2017). This separation between producer and consumer affects the economy and environment of an area. Between 2000 and 2005, total sales at farmers’ markets exceeded $1 billion and grew at an annual rate of 2.5%. The USDA-AMS also found in their survey that the national average revenue per market was $31,923 for older markets, while it was $15,078 per month for younger markets (Ragland and Tropp 2006). On the environmental side, customers are able to question and have a relationship with producers, meaning the customer has more control over how they support sustainable agricultural practices (Sadler et al. 2015). The global agri-food system contributes to emissions in the atmosphere and have a reliance on fossil fuels (Ekanem et al. 2016; Brinkley 2017). More local markets mean less emission-heavy travel. The social benefits of the farmers’ market also attracts more customers to a central downtown area, increasing economic activity of the whole community. In 2010, Easton Farmers Market in Pennsylvania reported that 70% of customers at the farmers’ market also shopped at other downtown businesses (Farmers Market Coalition 2019). The social interactions at a farmers’ market helps to keep dollars in the local community and region (Onyango et al. 2015).

According to Debra Tropp and Jim Barham of the USDA-AMS, the results of the 2008 Farmers’ Market Summit found that, amongst farmers’ market stakeholders, the priorities for improvement were promotional initiatives, professional training and development, and partnerships within the community (Tropp and Barham 2008). Some of the key issues in the development of markets was growth, policy, professional development, and economic sustainability. A successful farmers’ market requires more than increasing vendor size or customer counts, but also increasing sales per vendor (Staisey et al. 2018). Other successful markets in these studies pursued relationships with other community members, whether they
were local businesses or governmental agencies. The literature on farmers’ markets agree that outside relationships and support are often necessary for a successful farmers’ market.

### Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brinkley 2017</td>
<td>Local food networks rely on social networks within communities. Understanding their relationship allows policymakers to provide more equal opportunities to networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekanem et al. 2016</td>
<td>There is a growing demand for local food in the US. Local food markets fulfill this demand and positively benefit society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govindasamy et al. 1998</td>
<td>Farmers' markets benefit consumers, farmers, and municipalities. Management type and level of support affect the success of the market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardesty 2010</td>
<td>Some regulations and governmental policies can harm local food networks. Focusing on the consumers' desires allows management and governments to better assess their markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leiper and Clarke-Sather 2017</td>
<td>As a result of a dissatisfaction with the modern food system, more and more people turn to alternative food networks when shopping. In trying to create a more reciprocal system, customers focused on fairness and justice in the local food system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maples et al 2013</td>
<td>There is an increase in demand for locally grown food. Because of this, understanding and educating the consumer is important for safe development of local food systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onyango et al. 2015</td>
<td>Farmers' Markets affect local economies but are often &quot;underused.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragland and Tropp 2006</td>
<td>Coordination between farmers’ market stakeholders and local municipalities can establish a successful market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadler et al. 2015</td>
<td>Farmers' Markets and local municipalities have the opportunity to work together to create healthier communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staisey et al. 2018</td>
<td>It is important to analyze customer data and how local policies affect the success of a farmer's market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson et al. 2018</td>
<td>Farmers' market success depends on management, technical support, and community type. Therefore, support must be uniquely tailored for each market.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship between a farmers’ market and its community is often a large indication of the success of the market. In grocery stores, there is no relationship between the producer and consumer, but in local food networks and farmers’ markets, the interactions between a customer and a farmer dictates the success of the market. For a market manager, understanding how customers, vendors, local businesses, and local government all interact with the market affects the power of a market. Researchers agree that farmers’ markets do have power in their...
communities. They effect the environmental practices of both producer and consumer, the economic health of an urban or suburban area, and the professional development of small to medium sized farms across the country. Understanding these relationships and management practices is critical for the understanding of how a farmers’ market interacts with local municipalities.

**Research**

**Survey**

In order to understand how various stakeholders viewed these topics, five different surveys were emailed out to different groups: managers of non-profit operated farmers’ markets, managers of municipality operated farmers’ markets, municipal employees who work with non-profit operated farmers’ markets, vendors, and University of Tennessee Extension employees. All survey recipients are involved in farmers’ markets across Tennessee. Each survey contains similar questions about the farmers’ market the respondents interact with regularly. While all five surveys are different, they evaluate the level of involvement the recipient has with the market, how they view the market, and their opinions on its effects on the area. Every survey had a question on what a successful farmers’ market looks like that allowed the respondent to type in a free response. This question, along with questions on resource availability, hopes to gather data on the common needs of markets. All surveys also shared the question “Do you believe the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you believe the farmers' market's relationship with local government presents more challenges or opportunities?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opportunities</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Do you believe the farmers' market presents more challenges or opportunities for the city?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Example Questions from Surveys
farmers’ market presents more challenges or opportunities for the area/city?” and 4 out of 5 asked “Do you believe the farmers’ market’s relationship with local government presents more challenges or opportunities?”

Depending on which box the respondent chose, a drop-down box allowed them to provide examples of challenges or opportunities. Recipients were also asked what local policies they believe most affect the market, and what resources would help to improve it. These questions seek to discern the engagement of the market stakeholders, whether that engagement be with customers, vendors, local government, the community, or the economy.

*Non-Profit Operated Farmers’ Market Relations Survey (See pages 25-31)*

One survey went out to market managers employed by non-profit operated farmers’ markets and was named “Farmers’ Market Management: Non-Profit and City Relations.” This survey had 21 questions about their background with the farmers’ market and its operations, its impact on the community, and its relationship with customers, vendors, and local government. The survey also included questions about the market managers working relationship with local government.

*Municipally Operated Farmers’ Market Relations Survey (See pages 32-37)*

The second survey went out to market managers employed by the local municipality. This 21-question survey included numerous questions similar to the non-profit management survey concerning operations and its relationship with the community. Even though the relationship between these farmers’ market and the local government is straightforward, the market manager was still asked to comment on its relationship with the city, hoping to gain insight on opportunities the close relationship may bring.

*Municipality and Farmers’ Market Relations (See pages 38-43)*
The third of the five surveys sought to evaluate the other side of the relationship between farmers’ markets and local government. The recipients were municipally employed and found using public government websites. While this survey only had one respondent, it asked questions about their level of involvement and understanding of the farmers’ market, and how they view the relationship between the farmers’ market, the community, and their local government.

*Vendor and Farmers’ Market Relations* (See pages 44-47)

Vendors were also asked about how they view the relationship. Five recipients responded to nine questions about their history with the market and the challenges, opportunities, and successes of their farmers’ market.

*Extension and Farmers’ Market Relations* (See pages 48-53)

Finally, the fifth survey went to University of Tennessee Extension employees who work with farmers’ markets in their county. Extension employees offer a unique view of the relationship between farmers’ markets and the local government because UTIA Extension’s goal is to provide support to local farmers and communities, which is also the goal of farmers’ markets. This 14-question survey also asked questions about their level of involvement with the market, their view of the market/government relationship, and the opportunities, challenges, and successes associated with the relationship.
Table 2: Demographics of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Demographics</th>
<th>Cheatham</th>
<th>Fayette</th>
<th>Knox</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Shelby</th>
<th>Sullivan</th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>Williamson</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Sample Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>40,667</td>
<td>41,133</td>
<td>470,313</td>
<td>22,039</td>
<td>937,166</td>
<td>158,348</td>
<td>129,375</td>
<td>238,412</td>
<td>19,972</td>
<td>228,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50.30%</td>
<td>50.80%</td>
<td>51.40%</td>
<td>50.90%</td>
<td>52.50%</td>
<td>51.40%</td>
<td>51.10%</td>
<td>50.90%</td>
<td>50.70%</td>
<td>51.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.70%</td>
<td>49.20%</td>
<td>48.60%</td>
<td>49.10%</td>
<td>47.50%</td>
<td>48.60%</td>
<td>48.90%</td>
<td>49.10%</td>
<td>49.30%</td>
<td>48.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>95.20%</td>
<td>70.20%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>98.10%</td>
<td>41.10%</td>
<td>94.90%</td>
<td>91.40%</td>
<td>88.70%</td>
<td>97.40%</td>
<td>84.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>27.70%</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
<td>54.20%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6.50%</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>3.60%</td>
<td>4.90%</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>3.34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>5.80%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
<td>6.30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>22.20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24.30%</td>
<td>24.90%</td>
<td>19.30%</td>
<td>19.00%</td>
<td>27.20%</td>
<td>21.70%</td>
<td>22.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21.40%</td>
<td>15.80%</td>
<td>16.80%</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td>21.90%</td>
<td>18.30%</td>
<td>13.20%</td>
<td>18.30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$ 58,641</td>
<td>$ 59,017</td>
<td>$54,437</td>
<td>$35,453</td>
<td>$49,782</td>
<td>$43,442</td>
<td>$46,752</td>
<td>$109,026</td>
<td>$41,352</td>
<td>$55,322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

The United States Census Bureau reports the population of Tennessee to be approximately 6.8 million in 2019. The median household income level as of 2018 was $50,972, with 15.3% in poverty and an unemployment rate of 3.4%, according to the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development in 2019. The total number of individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in January 2020 was 865,718 at $103.9 million issued. Table 2 displays demographic information for each county represented in the survey response. The respondents represented across the Western, Central, and Eastern Region. The Western Region is made up of 21 counties and ~1.5 billion inhabitants (26% of total). The Eastern Region has 33 counties and ~2.3 million people (37.25% of total). The Central Region is largest both on a geographical and demographic basis, making up 36.38% of the population (2.1 million inhabitants) (TN.gov 2020; Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development 2020).

According to the United States Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA AMS), as of January 22, 2020, there are 133 farmers’ markets in Tennessee (Local Food Directories 2020). University of Tennessee Extension published in 2007 “Direct
from Tennessee Farmers Markets.” Thirteen years ago, 40% of farmers markets (22 of the 40 responses) had been in operation over 20 years. The various farmers’ market relations surveys were emailed out to 61 managers, municipal employees, extension employees, or vendors across Tennessee. In total there were 16 responses indicating a 26% response rate. Three were completed by Extension agents, five were completed by vendors, three were completed by city-operated farmers’ market managers, and three were completed by non-profit farmers’ market managers.

The average number of years spent working with farmers’ markets was 7.8 amongst stakeholders, with vendors having the highest average at 13.2 years. Based on their experience, the respondents were asked why they believe customers visit at farmers’ markets given these choices: fresh food, craft items, value-added products, experiences, or other. Fresh food was chosen most, at 67% of the 16 respondents. Two-thirds of non-profit market managers chose other, citing all of the above list, as well as customer loyalty, tradition, food transparency and other reasons. Because farmers’ exist to aid both the farmer and the consumer, available resources can make a difference in the effectiveness of said market. Six out of the 12 questioned respondents cited marketing aid as a resource that could improve the operation of their market. In Tennessee, 75.4% of households have internet, and, therefore, provide a large target for online marketing. The resources markets need are often tied directly to municipal resources (land, buildings, regulations, etc.). One survey respondent claimed that their market’s relationship with
the city government improved significantly when offered a municipally funded market pavilion. This exhibits the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship. Local city officials know that they market provides opportunities for the city, but the market space was “in the way.” The solution meant that the city funded a pavilion for the farmers’ market to meet, benefitting both parties. Figure 6 shows the results asking Non-Profit operated market managers about the usual topic of conversation with municipal employees. Respondents who chose ‘other’ included coordination with other events, budget, and media. There was only one respondent to the survey for municipal employees that coordinate with the farmers’ market, who responded “other” to this question claiming special events were the usual topic of conversation. Ultimately, the relationship a market has with local government can present opportunities and challenges. When asked about the challenges, 100% of non-profit employed market managers and the municipal coordinator said that the relationship between the market and local government presented more opportunities for both. One of the four respondents to the survey for municipally employed market managers responded that the market’s relationship with local government presents more challenges because of the “lack of interest by county government.” Building usage and customer education were amongst some of the challenges stated by vendors and extension employees. Respondents also cited community and economic development as opportunities that the mutual relationship provides. The final

![Figure 6: Usual Topic of Conversation between Non-Profit Market Managers and Municipal Employees](image-url)
question of all the surveys asked what a successful farmers’ market means to the respondent. 10 of 16 responses mentioned increased customer and vendor satisfaction.

**Conclusion**

As the number of farmers’ markets in the US continue to grow, it is important to understand that these markets impact communities. The relationships between management, vendors, and municipalities have an effect on the markets. The results of this survey show that stakeholders believe Tennessee farmers’ markets primarily provide fresh food to the community, but that the economic benefit for producers and the social effects in these communities are also signs of a successful market. Maples et al. found that:

Study findings reinforce the need to develop and deliver Extension programming aimed at producers interested in targeted direct marketing strategies that incorporate consumer educational components which emphasize food safety benefits, encourage lifelong healthy eating habits and promote awareness of agricultural production practices (2013).

Extension is just one example of how local support can affect a farmers’ market. While the majority of respondents believe that a farmers’ market’s relationship with local government presents more opportunities, there is room for improvement.

Common challenges amongst stakeholders are facilities, SNAP funding and development, and marketing aid. Table 3 describes these issues. Some respondents explained that their municipality provides funding help and space for the market. However, funding and market space can also be challenges. For example, one respondent said, “access to county facilities” is an opportunity, while another said, “our building was donated to us by the local government and payment of utilities and maintaining building is an expense we always struggle to meet.” Consistent and clear advertising is important to attract customers. For 10 out of 16 stakeholders, a heightened customer experience is essential to market success. However, numerous respondents cited needs for additional volunteers stated that they were the only
employee/manager of the market. In most cases, personnel are limited and heavily reliant on local support. Out of 10 respondents, six markets accepted EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer; used for SNAP) as payment. However, even though SNAP is a government funded program, three out of four markets managed directly by the city/county did not accept SNAP, which was the highest percentage compared to the other surveys. One municipally employed market manager said, “SNAP benefits would benefit our market. We have a lot of low-income families in the area.” By contacting markets from across Tennessee, local governments and markets can see the common challenges and opportunities. Stakeholders agree that the relationship between local municipalities and farmers’ markets serve each other, however there is room for improvement.
## Table 3: Common Challenges and Solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Challenges</th>
<th>Listed Solutions</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space to hold the farmers’ market/Cost of facilities.</td>
<td>Local government pays for/donates a building* or pavilion.</td>
<td>*one respondent claims that, even with the donation of a building, the upkeep costs are inhibitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBT and SNAP processing issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local grants provide free EBT machines. Funds made available through grants, municipal support, or fundraising for an internet/phone connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple market managers claimed they either did not have SNAP funding, or were unable to process EBT cards because there is no phone/internet connection for the machine</td>
<td></td>
<td>“SNAP benefits would benefit our market. We have a lot of low-income families in the area.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Aid</td>
<td>Farmers’ Market itself became a place to advertise for vendors. Another market operated by the city credits the wide advertising reach of the city with increased attention.</td>
<td>Courses taught on marketing, funded through small business grants, local funds, extension etc. Planning special events to around the farmers’ market and utilize the crowds for both events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Works Cited


Onyango, Benjamin, Ramu Govindasamy, and Clydette Michelle Alsup-Egbers. “Uncovering Success Attributes for Direct Farmers’ Markets and Agri-Tourism in the Mid-Atlantic Farmers’ Market Relations


Farmers Market Relations Survey

INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study about farmers market relations. The purpose of this study is to understand public and private opinions on farmers market relations with their local government.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
You will be administered an online survey. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The online survey results will only be accessible by the researchers. Your answers are completely anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. All data will be kept in password protected devices to maintain confidentiality.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks involved with participating in this research.

BENEFITS
This research will help us understand the relationship between farmers markets and local government in order to support both more efficiently.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information you provide will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No references will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to this study. Identifying information will not be collected.

FUTURE RESEARCH
Your information may be used for future research studies or shared with other researchers for use in future studies without obtaining additional informed consent from you. If this happens, all of your identifiable information will be removed before any future use or sharing with other researchers.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Olivia Tumlin, at oltktumb@vols.utk.edu, or the faculty advisor, Sreedhar Upendram, at supendra@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed.

CONSENT
By clicking the NEXT button, I acknowledge that I am:
· At least 18 years of age
· Have read the above information, and
· Agree to participate in the study.

Farmers Market Management: Non-Profit and City Relations
What is the name of your farmers’ market?

How many years have you been employed by the farmers’ market?

Why do you believe customers shop at the farmers’ market?
- Fresh food
- Craft items
- Value-added products (coffee, breakfast, etc...)
- Experience (visit downtown area, etc...)
- Other

Explain:

Is your farmers’ market held on land donated by or leased from local government?
- Leased from local government
- Donated
- Other

Explain:

Does your farmers’ market charge a vendor fee?
- Yes
- No

If yes, how much per season?
Are you a paid employee of the farmers’ market (or non-profit that manages the market)?

- Yes
- No

Are there other employees working with you during operating hours for the farmers’ market?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, how many?

What is the average number of volunteers during operating hours for the farmers’ market?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

Does your farmers’ market accept EBT as payment?

- Yes
- No

If yes, do you have EBT machines?
What are some operational challenges at your farmers' market that you believe are in greatest need of improvement?

What resources could improve the operation of your farmers' market?

What policies do you believe most affect operations of your farmers' market?

Rate the availability of the local city employee(s) you regularly work with for farmers' market activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Never Available</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often do you communicate with the local government employee(s)?

- Rarely
- Once a season
- A few times a season
- Monthly
- Weekly
How often do you communicate with other government organizations (ex: health department about SNAP)?

- Rarely
- Once a season
- A few times a season
- Monthly
- Weekly

What is the usual topic of conversation when communicating with the local government employee(s)?

- Land
- Facilities
- Policies
- Regulations
- Safety
- Other
- Examples?

What is the average number of customers at the farmers’ market (if recorded)?

What is the average number of vendors at the farmers’ market?

Do you believe the farmers’ market's relationship with local government presents more challenges or opportunities?

- Challenges
Do you believe the farmers’ market presents more challenges or opportunities for the city?

- Challenges
- Opportunities

Can you give examples of challenges?

Can you give examples of opportunities?

What does farmers’ market success mean to you?
Farmers Market Relations Survey

INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study about farmers market relations. The purpose of this study is to understand public and private opinions on farmers market relations with their local government.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
You will be administered an online survey. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The online survey results will only be accessible by the researchers. Your answers are completely anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. All data will be kept in password protected devices to maintain confidentiality.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks involved with participating in this research.

BENEFITS
This research will help us understand the relationship between farmers markets and local government in order to support both more efficiently.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information you provide will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No references will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to this study. Identifying information will not be collected.

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CONSENT
By clicking the NEXT button, I acknowledge that I am:
- At least 18 years of age
- Have read the above information, and
- Agree to participate in the study.
What is the name of your farmers’ market?

How many years have you been employed in your current position?

How long have you managed the farmers’ market?

Are you the only employee that manages the farmers’ market?
- Yes
- No

How many other people help manage the farmers’ market?

Why do you believe customers shop at the farmers’ market
- Fresh food
- Craft items
- Value-added products (coffee, breakfast, etc...)
- Experience (visit downtown area, etc...)
- Other

Does your farmers’ market charge a vendor fee?
- Yes
No

If yes, how much per season?

What is the average number of volunteers during operating hours for the farmers' market?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

Does your farmers' market accept SNAP as payment?

- Yes
- No

Does the farmers' market have EBT machines?

What are some operational challenges at your farmers' market that you believe are in greatest need of improvement?

What resources could improve the operation of your farmers' market?
What policies do you believe most affect operations of your farmers' market?

How often do you communicate with other government organizations (ex: health department about SNAP)?
- Rarely
- Once a season
- A few times a season
- Monthly
- Weekly

What is the average number of customers at the farmers' market (if recorded)?

What is the average number of vendors at the farmers' market?

Do you believe the farmers' market's relationship with local government presents more challenges or opportunities?
- Challenges
- Opportunities

Can you give examples of challenges?

Can you give examples of opportunities?
Do you believe the farmers’ market presents more challenges or opportunities for the city?

☐ Challenges

☐ Opportunities

Can you give examples of challenges?


Can you give examples of opportunities?


What does farmers’ market success mean to you?


Farmers’ Market Relations Survey

INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study about farmers market relations. The purpose of this study is to understand public and private opinions on farmers market relations with their local government.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
You will be administered an online survey. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The online survey results will only be accessible by the researchers. Your answers are completely anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. All data will be kept in password protected devices to maintain confidentiality.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks involved with participating in this research.

BENEFITS
This research will help us understand the relationship between farmers markets and local government in order to support both more efficiently.

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CONSENT
By clicking the NEXT button, I acknowledge that I am:
- At least 18 years of age
- Have read the above information, and
- Agree to participate in the study.
What is the name of the farmers' market you work with?

How many years have you worked with the farmers' market?

Why do you believe customers shop at the farmers' market
- Fresh food
- Craft items
- Value-added products (coffee, breakfast, etc...)
- Experience (visit downtown area, etc...)
- Other

Are you the only employee that coordinates with the farmers' market?
- Yes
- No
If no, how many other employees coordinate with the farmers' market?

What is the usual topic of conversation when communicating with the farmers' market?
- Land
- Facilities
- Policies
- Regulations
- Safety
Can you provide examples?

Do you consider farmers’ market coordination part of your primary workload?
- Yes
- No

Do you believe the farmers’ market increases foot traffic to the area?
- Yes
- No

Do you believe the farmers’ market increases economic development in the area?
- Yes
- No

Do you believe the farmers’ market's relationship with local government presents more challenges or opportunities?
- Challenges
- Opportunities

What are some challenges?

What are some opportunities?
Do you believe the farmers' market presents more challenges or opportunities for the area?

- Challenges
- Opportunities

What are some challenges?

What are some opportunities?

Does the farmers' market accept SNAP/EBT?

- Yes
- No

If yes, are you involved in the process?

What local policies do you believe most affect operations of the farmers’ market?

Rate the availability of the farmers’ market manager that you regularly work with for farmers’ market activities:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Never Available</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often do you communicate with farmers’ market management?

- Rarely

Working with the Farmers Market
Once a season
A few times a season
Monthly
Weekly

What does farmers' market success mean to you?
Farmers Market Relations Survey

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CONSENT
By clicking the NEXT button, I acknowledge that I am:
- At least 18 years of age
- Have read the above information, and
- Agree to participate in the study.
What farmers' market do you primarily sell at?

How many years have you sold at this farmers' market?

Do you sell at other farmers' markets?
- Yes
- No

If Yes, how many?

What is your average sales per week?

Why do you believe customers shop at the farmers' market
- Fresh food
- Craft items
- Value-added products (coffee, breakfast, etc...)
- Experience (visit downtown area, etc...)
- Other

Examples?

Are you ever in contact with local city employees about the farmers' market?
- Yes

Vendor Survey
No

If yes, what is the usual topic of conversation?

What resources could improve the operation of farmers’ market?

Do you believe the farmers’ market presents more challenges or opportunities for the area?

- Challenges
- Opportunities

What are some examples of challenges?

What are some examples of opportunities?

What does farmers’ market success mean to you?
Farmers Markets and Extension
INTRODUCTION
You are invited to participate in a research study about farmers market relations. The purpose of this study is to understand public and private opinions on farmers market relations with their local government.

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BENEFITS
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CONSENT
By clicking the NEXT button, I acknowledge that I am:
- At least 18 years of age
- Have read the above information, and
- Agree to participate in the study.
What is the name of the farmers’ market(s) you work with?

How long have you worked with the farmers’ market(s)?

Why do you believe customers shop at the farmers’ market

- Fresh food
- Craft items
- Value-added products (coffee, breakfast, etc.)
- Experience (visit downtown area, etc.)
- Other

Examples?

Are you the only extension agent that coordinates with the farmers’ market?

- Yes
- No

What is the usual topic of conversation when communicating with the farmers’ market?

- Land
- Facilities
- Policies
- Regulations
Do you believe the farmers' market increases foot traffic to the area?

- Yes
- No

Do you believe the farmers' market increases economic development in the area?

- Yes
- No

Do you believe the farmers' market's relationship with local government presents more challenges or opportunities?

- Challenges
- Opportunities

Examples?

Do you believe the farmers' market presents more challenges or opportunities for the area?

- Challenges
- Opportunities

Examples?
Example?

Does the farmers’ market accept SNAP/EBT?
- Yes
- No

What local policies do you believe most affect operations of the farmers’ market?

Rate the availability of any city employees that you regularly work with for farmers’ market activities

<table>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often do you communicate with farmers’ market management?
- Rarely
- Once a season
- A few times a season
- Monthly
- Weekly

Farmers Markets and Extension
What does farmers' market success mean to you?