

Peas n' News

Newsletter of the Farmers Market Coalition

January 2008



Farmers Market Summit Convenes in Baltimore

The air was chilly in Baltimore's scenic Inner Harbor on November 7th through the 9th, but the atmosphere at the first ever Farmers Market Summit was warm with excitement. The event was the result of a collaboration between the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Farmers Market Consortium, a public/private partnership including a variety of federal and nonprofit groups dedicated to supporting farmers markets.

The purposes of the Summit were to: a) Identify farmers market needs, b) Prioritize future research and technical assistance initiatives in support of farmers markets, and c) Provide guidance to policymakers on priorities for the use of resources.

The 76 Summit participants, coming from 31 states and the District of Columbia, included representatives from farmers markets associations, individual markets, nonprofit partners, and state and federal agencies involved with agricultural, economic development, and health issues.

In his opening remarks, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Associate Administrator Kenneth Clayton expressed his hope that the

Summit deliberations would help to identify and set priorities for developing national policy for farmers markets. The Summit discussions were led by a professional facilitator and a team of assistants, and were organized into four major sessions designed to identify issues and opportunities, priorities, strategies, and opportunities for collaboration.

The first session used the 'World Café' group process, in which all participants identified the universe of possibilities regarding the issues and opportunities facing farmers markets. Through three 20 minute rounds of small group brainstorming, the facilitators reported several recurring themes. These included a uniform means of collecting data on the economic, nutritional, and ecological impacts of markets; more training opportunities for both managers and growers; consumer education; more farmer-vendors; successfully managing Electronic Benefits Transfer; and helping farmers critically evaluate their costs and returns. Some of the opportunities identified in this session included: establishing national farmers market policy; supporting professional development for farmers, managers and sponsors; positioning farmers markets to respond to the growing interest in local food, community health issues, and community economic development.

Based on these these needs and opportunities, new sets of small groups reported on top priorities, which were then combined into the following (in no particular order):

Define and Promote Farmers Markets through a national promotional campaign.

Grow Farmers, with a focus on immigrant, minority, women, youth and new farmers; establish a "farmers market university"; and identify constraints on the availability of land.

Define Farmers Markets as the Centers of Communities based on local involvement

Identify Funding and Resources from diverse stakeholders as a means to develop capacity and leverage additional funding for market start-up and technical assistance.

Support Business Planning & Sustainability to ensure that farmers markets and individual farmers operate with sound business plans that can accurately account for expenses and income.

Promote Healthy Communities by helping FMs serve an integral part in a wide spectrum of health and nutrition initiatives.

Support Professional Development through capacity building opportunities, networks and/or professional associations for market managers, sponsors, farmer-vendors.

Define Farmers Markets as the Centers of Communities based on local involvement and values.

Clarify and Revise Regulations at federal, state and local levels and in several domains (health, safety, zoning, etc.) oriented toward the needs, conditions and opportunities for direct sales at farmers markets.

Increase Low Income Access by addressing EBT, WIC, FMNPs, and a wide range of concerns related to transportation and the availability of produce.

Speak with One Voice on behalf of farmers markets nationwide while building upon local and state programs.

Expand and Improve Research Efforts to document and share what works (and what doesn't), as well as the economic, nutritional, and ecological benefits of farmers markets.

Serve as the Building Block of Local Food Communities using relationships with retailers, food co-ops and buying clubs such that farmers markets successfully promote the availability and accessibility of food grown locally and/or regionally.

(continued on page 2)

In this issue:

Farmers Market Summit	1-2
A Letter from the President	2
Free Magazine Subscriptions	2
New Executive Secretary	3
23 FMPP Grants Awarded for 2008	3
New Consumer Web site	3
Sustaining Farmers for All Seasons	4-5
How Sweetwater Went Year-Round	5
New FM Handbooks Available	6
Chicago Farm Forum	6
Grants Available for PA Markets	6

A Landmark Year in Review and a Look Toward the Future

by Don Wambles, FMC President

Welcome to the Winter 2008 edition of the Farmers Market Coalition's online newsletter. This newsletter is only one of the changes you'll be noticing as we move forward into 2008. As we close the book on 2007, I would like to highlight a few of the FMC's accomplishments.

On October 23rd, the Internal Revenue Service approved FMC's application for a 501(c)(3) organization. This process actually began in June of 2006, when the FMC filed for non-profit status just after its incorporation.

After a nationwide search, the FMC Board contracted with Stacy Miller for part time services as executive secretary. Stacy will handle daily operations of the FMC as well as be responsible for member outreach, best practices documentation, program development and other duties.

The FMC participated in the USDA/AMS sponsored National Farmers Market Summit in November. This national gathering, the first of its kind, was designed to identify priorities and strategies for strengthening farmers markets. There was agreement among the 76 participants that a national organization (i.e. the FMC) was needed to inform consumers as well and to provide tools for farmers, managers, and organizers. Final proceedings from the Summit will be published in early 2008.



New Magazine Offers Free Subscriptions

Premiering in June 2007, *Farmers' Markets Today* has recently published its third issue. Free subscriptions are available to managers of farmers markets, market vendors and direct market farmers who sell through CSAs, pick-your-own farms or farm stands, or directly to restaurants, grocers, co-ops, institutions or other organizations.

The new trade magazine offers information to help farmers and farmers markets be more successful and profitable in selling their products direct to customers. The magazine shares stories about what growers, artisans and farmers markets are doing to promote their businesses, reach new customers and develop value-added products. Learn more by visiting www.scissortailproductionsllc.com/FMTHome.htm, or by calling 800-959-3276.

We have worked very closely with the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) to educate members of Congress about the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) and its positive effect on the physical, nutritional and economic health of rural communities and the success and benefits of the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP). Along with the success of both programs comes the reality that they could be so much more if funded appropriately. At the present time, the Farm Bill has been adopted by both Houses of Congress. However, the House and Senate versions differ significantly; a Conference Committee has the task of reconciling the differences between the two before final passage. Based on reports from the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, the SFMNP needs funding of \$25 million for 2008, \$30 million for 2009, \$35 million for 2010, \$40 million for 2011 and \$50 million for 2012.

The House version only provides level funding of the SFMNP at \$15 million annually for the life of the Bill (2008-2012). However, the Bill does 'authorize' \$20 M for 2008, \$30 M for 2009, \$45 M for 2010,

\$60 M for 2011 and \$75 M for 2012. Sound good? Not yet. The word 'authorize' does not appropriate one dollar. It only authorizes that monies can be expended. The FMPP is funded at \$5 million annually in years 2008-2010 and at \$10 M annually for years 2011-2012 for a total funding of \$35 million.

The Senate version of the Farm Bill funds the SFMNP at \$25 million annually for the life of the Bill (2008-2012). Though an improvement, this is still \$50 million short of meeting needs. The Senate also provides additional funding for the FMPP as follows: \$5 million annually (2008-2011) and \$10 million for 2012 totaling \$30 million. The Conference Committee needs to adopt the Senate version of the SFMNP funding and make the necessary authorized funding from the House version mandatory to meet the needs as documented by the NAFMNP.

As we all stay tuned to the Farm Bill and its implications, please accept our warmest wishes for a wonderful 2008!

Farmers Market Summit, Cont'd.

The final round of small group discussions was organized such that members of each of the groups represented at the Summit could get together to identify specific actions that could be taken and the opportunities for collaboration with other groups.

Jim Bingen, Professor of Community, Food and Agriculture at Michigan State University and Farmers Market Coalition board member said that the event should be recognized as a watershed event in the US farmers market movement. "The energy throughout the Summit was palpable. There was a very clear call for a national group to begin carrying the banner for farmers markets. Given the uniform concern for so many issues, the challenges will be setting priorities and concrete actions that address these priorities at the appropriate federal, state and local levels."

According to the organizers, the Summit far exceeded USDA's expectations and now it will be critical to assure the translation of the Summit's ideas into supportive priorities, policies and programs. Stay tuned to www.farmersmarketcoalition.org to view the Farmers Market Summit proceedings as they become available.

FMC Announces Executive Secretary

Please join the Board of Directors in welcoming Stacy Miller to the position of Executive Secretary of the Farmers Market Coalition. In the last eight years, she has occupied several roles in the farmers market community: grower, vendor, manager, researcher, and consumer. In 2005, she graduated with an M.S. in Agricultural and Environmental Education from West Virginia University, where she studied the characteristics and educational needs of vendors and managers throughout the state.



As Executive Secretary, Stacy will be assuming responsibility for communications, member outreach, and best practices documentation, as well as assisting the board with grant management and program development. Stacy looks forward to working with managers, farmers, economic developers, and others in the farmers market sphere to develop a resource database which will allow the diverse market community to share ideas, assessment tools, success stories (and failures), and other resources. For more information about how you can be a part of the Coalition's resource database and take advantage of the opportunity to learn and share with other farmers market professionals, contact Stacy at stacy@farmersmarketcoalition.org or 304-685-2669.

FMPP Awards 23 Grants for 2008

At the end of October, acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner announced 23 grants totaling \$900,000 under the Farmers Market Promotion Program. The awards will aid local governments, nonprofit and economic development corporations and agricultural cooperatives in 16 District of Columbia. Funds will support projects that establish, expand and promote farmers markets and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. "Farmers markets are increasingly becoming a larger and more integral part of our rural and urban communities," Conner said. "We support this community spirit that helps increase farmer revenues, and provides consumers with fresh, local farm products."

The Farmers Market Promotion Program is designed to provide assistance to local farmers markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture in an effort to increase domestic consumption of agricultural commodities and improve farmers' income. The grants are authorized under the amended Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976, and the new Farm Bill, upon passage, would authorize \$5 M annually through 2012.

In this second year of funding, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) granted awards in Arkansas, California, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and the District of Columbia. Congratulations to all the grantees, and stay tuned as we bring you more information on the progress of this diverse crop of innovative projects. If you are interested in learning more about the FMPP, visit www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets, where you can also download a revised version of the 'Farmers Market Resource Guide,' which outlines activities of the 2006 FMPP projects and references several other funding sources.

OnlyatFarmersMarkets.com a New Tool for Consumers

Farmers market patrons eager to spread the word about the myriad pleasures of farmers markets now have a new tool at their fingertips. A new web site, www.OnlyatFarmersMarkets.com, will contain unique content featuring exemplary markets, timely tips, market trends, health and nutrition facts, recipes, farming methods and a social networking blog. Each month, the site's staff will visit farmers markets – from Bethel, Maine to Monterey, California – with recorders and cameras. Videos on the web site allow consumers to listen to farmers, learn about free-range chicken and organic sustainability, mingle with the loyal customers and chefs as they select the best in-season, locally-grown produce available in their communities.

OnlyatFarmersMarkets.com seeks to be a clearing-house for customers and growers, creating a virtual community that supports farmers markets nationwide. With an emphasis on the consumer, the site will appeal to those enthusiastic for the locally-grown produce and dialogue available only at farmers markets. When fully implemented, founder Mike Lee says the site will "help farmers markets grow and prosper by offering feature stories of exemplary markets and a social-networking forum where opinions can be expressed."

The site will target five categories of consumers, including food enthusiasts, chefs, market managers, farmers, and artists/entertainers. Lee hopes that market managers can use the site as a promotional and educational tool for both loyal and would-be market patrons. Every month, the site distributes FreshNews, an eNewsletter that promotes the unique attractions found at farmers markets. It is available at no charge to anyone who signs up.

Lee is optimistic about the role markets can play in building more sustainable communities, "We see great synergies with the Farmers Market Coalition and look forward to collaborating as we learn together how to get the most from the Farmers Market experience."



OnlyatFarmersMarkets.com

Sustaining Farmers for All Seasons: One Market's Steps to Winter Success

It's easy to wax poetic about the August heirloom tomato or the crisp October apple, but lyrics about the blue-green beauty of December kale or the immaculately overwintered butternut are scarce as a snowplow in Florida. For many communities, the local food scene, as vibrant as it may be in the summer, goes into hibernation for at least a few months each year. Even the loyal market patrons savvy enough to can and freeze throughout the summer can be seen making occasional but reluctant pilgrimages to the produce aisles of the supermarket.

For some vendors, this time of year provides a much needed rest, but as many producers extend their seasons and markets broaden their offerings to include meats, cheeses, breads and other value-added products, there are fewer and fewer reasons to 'close up shop' in the colder months. Across the country, there are many markets that operate in the 'off-season,' using a variety of models. While some, like FreshFarm Markets Dupont Circle Farmers Market in Washington, DC operate every Sunday "in rain, snow, or shine," others occur biweekly, some monthly, and some only a couple times each season. Here we highlight just one of the many producer-only winter markets in northern climates.

Seacoast Eat Local, in Dover, New Hampshire, just finished its first year sponsoring two holiday markets, strategically scheduled on the Saturdays before Thanksgiving and Christmas, respectively. The organization, which began about a year and a half ago by developing a local foods directory and sponsoring an 'Eat Local Challenge,' offers participants support and tips for adopting a 100 mile diet.

The idea began when Sara Zoe Patterson, then a full-time Library Science graduate student, got increasingly involved in the local agricultural community and recognized the need for more year-round local food purchasing opportunities. "No matter how much produce I had managed to freeze and can to prepare for winter, I was always devastated when the farmers market ended in November."

Seacoast Growers Association, which operates other farmers markets in the area, is a 25 year old organization that Patterson says is 'self-admittedly lumbering' and was grateful to have a volunteer organize a 'trial' winter marketing outlet, which may have taken longer for them to get off the ground alone. "The farmers really put their faith in me that this could really work." After many apologetic rejections from local churches and other potential indoor sites, Patterson began to lose hope in finding a site in time for farmers to prepare. That's when Jim Gallivan, Director at the McIntosh Atlantic Culinary Academy, responded within five minutes to her e-mail inquiry. "Jim's a guy who totally gets it. He tells me 'give us the weirdest food, and we'll show people how to use it.'" At this year's two holiday markets, the academy offered cooking demonstrations, ice carving, and other attractions. They have since revamped their curriculum to offer courses in sustainable agriculture.

Because winter markets tend to rely more heavily on processed products, it's important to become familiar with the state and local regulations before recruiting vendors, particularly for items like wine and certain baked goods. A market in one town may permit home-made jams and a market in another may not, since municipalities can have more strict standards than the state itself. Patterson's advice? "Meet the health inspector first, and don't assume that another market's laissez-faire experience with regulators is going to be a green light for you." As many market managers can attest, health inspectors themselves do not always know precisely how their rules are supposed to apply to farmers markets. This can be an obstacle, or it can be an opportunity for education. Seacoast Eat Local's Holiday Markets now have a blanket health approval, so that each individual vendor does not need to individually pursue the permitting process. *(continued on page 5)*



Does your market operate
between November and March?
Tell us about it!

Visit www.farmersmarketcoalition.org and click on 'Submit'. There you can join us in creating the most comprehensive resource available on farmers markets. By sharing and learning from our successes and stumbling blocks, we can help every market reach new heights.



Boulder County FM
Boulder, CO

Sustaining Farmers for all Seasons, cont'd.

They allow no crafters, but have baked goods, spices, meats, and a variety of other foods. When vendors apply, they agree to sell only their own products. When one local vegetable vendor wanted to supplement his crops with produce from Maine, they politely said 'no'.

Both holiday markets had customer counts of approximately 1,200, with the vegetable vendors selling out completely. At the December 22nd market, one farmer sold 200 six ounce bags of arugula, all of which had been grown in a greenhouse heated with vegetable oil. Knowing that the farmer's surrounding fields were meanwhile blanketed with four feet of snow is reward enough for Patterson, whose says she will continue to volunteer as the organization's Coordinator. "It's feast or famine for most farmers, and around here nearly all of them get winter jobs with which they're miserable. I just want to help provide a viable outlet so that they can do what they love all year long." The group is already planning for several additional winter markets next year. Learn more about Seacoast Eat Local at www.seacoasteatlocal.org.



With any luck, the word 'off-season' may become as rare as the love song to the supermarket tomato.

How Sweetwater Local Foods Market Went Year-Round

By Chris Bedford, President and Co-founder, Sweetwater Local Foods Market

When the Sweetwater Local Foods Market first opened in July, 2005 we began as a seasonal farmers market operating from early June to the end of October. By the end of the first season, we decided to go year-round beginning in 2006. This happened for five reasons.

- 1) Our market was dedicated to growing food locally in harmony with nature's nutrition and energy flows. This meant that, from our beginning, the Sweetwater Local Foods Market had farmers who sold humanely raised meat, eggs, and cheese. Animals and their waste form a critical component of an organic farm's nutrient flow. We wanted to continue to sell their animal products to our growing customer base.
- 2) Our customers demanded access to the healthy, humane, homegrown food year-round.
- 3) One of the market's founding board members was both a Board Certified Internist and an Ayurvedic doctor. In the Ayurvedic tradition people eat seasonally to build and maintain good health. This doctor often stressed that people's diets do not have to be the same in every season. If our market didn't have local strawberries in February, that was not only good ecologically, but good physically for humans as well.
- 4) We secured a grant for three hoop houses for three of the market's farmers. These unheated greenhouses extend the vegetable growing season by as much as four months, allowing us in the winter of 2006 to have fresh greens for all but three months of the year.
- 5) We formed a partnership with Hackley Health, which opened a new facility in 2006. We operated a second Wednesday farmers market in their parking lot that summer. In November 2006, they opened the three story atrium of their Lakes building to us to use as a winter farmers market location.



The Vendors of Sweetwater Local Foods Market
Muskegon, MI

We now operate our Saturday market year-round from either their parking lot or their building. It has been a successful partnership.

On February 3, 2007 we had the Sweetwater Saturday market in the middle of a blizzard. It was snowing so hard that we couldn't see the lamp posts 100 feet from the entrance to the atrium/lobby where we had our market set up. Yet, by my count, almost 250 customers braved the storm to come to the market because of their dedication to the food values the market represents.

The Sweetwater Local Foods Market has become a community of farmers and consumers who know and trust each other, who honor our common commitment to a food system that works with nature. The spirit of the market is something to behold.

The Sweetwater Local Foods Market operates 9 am-1 pm every Saturday from May to the end of December and every other Saturday in the Winter until May.

For more information, visit www.sweetwaterlocalfoodsmarket.org or contact Diana Jancek, Market Manager at dijaan@charter.net.

New Farmers Market Handbooks Available

The Wallace Center has recently released a pair of handbooks that “use plain language and abundant photography to help farmers and market managers to be more successful.” The handbooks are part of a nationwide outreach campaign that begins this winter. According to Matthew Kurlanski, the Research Associate working on the project, “this outreach campaign also includes two regional workshops—hosted by the Wallace Center—on creating and sustaining successful farmers’ markets. The Wallace Center is developing new resources to address other issues for farmers’ markets, including risk management, insurance, food safety and business incubation.”

‘Recruiting Vendors for a Farmers’ Market,’ is a guide for market managers which includes information about planning, as well as about working with farmers and community partners. The guide also shows how other market managers diversify their vendors and their customer bases to build successful markets for the future. Designed for vendors and potential vendors, ‘Getting Started with Farmers Markets’ presents some simple solutions for addressing common challenges to successful farmers market sales.

You can request a copy of either handbook by calling the Wallace Center at 703-525-9430 or download it yourself at www.wallacecenter.org.



Chicago Farmers Forum Scheduled February 6

The City of Chicago is actively recruiting more farmers to serve the citywide Chicago Farmers Markets system. The Chicago Farmer Forum is scheduled for Wednesday, February 6, 2008 at the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. Doors open at 8:00 a.m. Forum hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The forum is designed to answer questions and inform new and existing farmers and producers how they too, can participate in Chicago’s well attended program. The City of Chicago is seeking farmers from Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois, in particular producers of foods in high demand, such as organic fruit and vegetables, artisan cheeses and specialty foods that are staples in the diets of some Hispanic and African-American communities.

The Farmer Forum will also cover the following topics: Selling at Market in Chicago; What About Meat and Eggs?; Trucking and Storage Options; and Grant Writing and Growing Your Farm. Special invited guests include Michael Fisher, Director of New Marketing at Country Insurance. Fisher and his team will be on hand to discuss health insurance and other farm/risk insurance needs.

Pre-registration is required. For more information and to register, call 312-744-9493 or email Sheri Doyel at chicagofarmforager@yahoo.com.

Grants Available for Pennsylvania Markets

On January 9th, Pennsylvania announced the availability of grants up to \$10,000 for farmers market development and expansion. Farmers Market Development Matching Grant Program for eligible farmers, nonprofit organizations, local government units and businesses or associations that manage or operate farmers markets.

“Farmers markets play an important role in our agricultural economy, providing a direct relationship between producer and consumer,” said Governor Rendell. “Farmers Market Development Grants promote the development and expansion of markets throughout the state, boosting agritourism and helping to provide consumers greater access to fresh, quality produce from Pennsylvania farmers.”

Applications will be accepted through Feb. 6. Completed applications may be mailed to Geoffrey Dunaway, director, Bureau of Food Distribution, Department of Agriculture, 2301 N. Cameron St., Room 401, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408. For more information about the grant program or to download an application, visit www.agriculture.state.pa.us and select the link for “Farmers Market Grant Development Program” under “What’s New,” or call 1-800-468-2433.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Don Wambles, President ● Alabama

Richard McCarthy, Vice President ● Louisiana

Diane Eggert, Secretary ● New York

Sharon Yeago, Treasurer ● Florida

Mike Bevins ● Iowa

Jim Bingen ● Michigan

Janel Leatherman ● Texas

Jeff Cole ● Massachusetts

Andrew Stout ● Washington

CONTACT US:

INFO@FARMERSMARKETCOALITION.ORG



farmers markets are good for everyone ...
farmers | consumers | communities
join us to make them even better!

www.farmersmarketcoalition.org