

BRINGING A FARMERS MARKET TO YOUR PARK AND RECREATION SITES!

So, you are interested in the possibility of bringing a farmers market (FM) to your park and recreation (P&R) site! That's great news – fresh, colorful, nutritious foods from your local farms' bounties will help everyone you serve and your staff have greater access to local, fresh foods!

P&R sites are a perfect place to start a FM, which will support local growers and increase the availability of fresh foods to people in your community. Many of your sites have parking lots, lawns and storage areas – all of which can be put to good use for farmers who want to sell their produce to local communities. You also have “captive” audiences – all the children and their families who attend your programs, others who come to work out and play, and those who come to gather and be social. Think about “bringing the farm” to all of these folks!

But, just how do you do it? How do you create opportunities to have a regularly-occurring, institutionalized farmers market, or a “pop-up” farmers market that is available on a more periodic schedule, at your P&R site? This guide provides some suggestions for getting started.¹

1. Find out what your clients want in a farmers market in their community.

The first thing you may want to do when examining the feasibility of a FM at your P&R site is talk with your clients about what they would want in a FM in their community. Ask parents as they drop off/pick up their children, ask older children who participate in your activities, work with teens to create a short survey to give to everyone who comes to your P&R site to find out what everyone wants, and consider asking (surveying) people who live nearby, if they would be interested in a FM located at your P&R site! You may be saying, “What are some of the questions I should ask of all these people?” Think about what you like about a FM and craft some questions that would provide you with more information about the desires of your community members.





Here are a few to get you started:

- ◆ Would you like to buy fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers when you pick up your child; when you come work out; when you come to senior activities; etc.?
- ◆ What produce would buy most at a farmers market here at our P&R site?
- ◆ Would you want to buy other local foods/items that are not fruits and vegetables at a farmer’s market? If so, choose which of the following:
 - ◆ CHICKEN
 - ◆ BEEF
 - ◆ PORK
 - ◆ CHEESE
 - ◆ EGGS
 - ◆ HONEY
 - ◆ FLOWERS/BOUQUETS
 - ◆ OTHER [specify what you would buy]: _____
- ◆ Would you want to use some of your SNAP dollars to buy foods at a farmers market at our P&R site? (You may be able to get matching funds for SNAP dollars for the purchase of produce. See below for brief info on SNAP match possibilities.)
- ◆ Would you want to learn how to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables available at a farmers market by attending a cooking or food preparation demonstration here at our P&R site?

2. Experiences from other P&R sites that have farmers markets.

The next step you may want to do when considering a FM at your site is to find out the experiences (positive and negative) of other P&R sites that have done this! There are a few sites in our Commit to Health (CTH) network that already have FMs (or Community Supported Agriculture [CSA] programs), so reach out to them for some advice.

Some of the CTH partners that have FMs or CSAs are

- ◆ City of Farmington Parks and Recreation, NM;
- ◆ City of Davenport Parks and Recreation, IA; and
- ◆ East Orange Recreation & Cultural Affairs, NJ;
- ◆ Grow Appalachia, KY.
- ◆ NORD/Market Umbrella, LA;

3. “Regular” FM or “pop-up” FM – choose the right type for your P&R site.

Another thing to think about is what model of FM would be best at your site. If you have available space and there are no existing FMs nearby, perhaps you should create a full-fledged, regular type of FM! If your community already has a thriving FM near your P&R site, you can approach them and see if all or some of the farmers/produce distributors would be willing to periodically host a smaller-scale “pop-up” FM at your P&R site, say every other Friday at noon, or during “Nutrition Education Wednesdays” or on some other schedule. Space considerations may also come into play, you may not have enough room for a full-fledged FM, so a “pop-up” FM may be ideal. But think out of the box. Use the parking lot and/or yard/grassy field (mowed). If it rains or during winter months (yes, you can continue some aspects of FMs all year), think about where you can offer the FM – in the gymnasium or even in a conference room or under a picnic shelter. Be creative to fit the type of FM to the needs of your community and P&R site!

4. Identifying good FM partners.

Once you get a pretty good idea of what type of FM your P&R site wants to pursue and determine space for the FM, you need to start thinking about partners who can help you pull it off!

Potential partners include

- ◆ suppliers of produce and other items to sell (farmers; distributors; artisans such as soap makers, honey makers, flower growers; etc.).
- ◆ community partners who may be able to help get donated or reduced-price supplies (tables, pretty baskets for displays, cooking demonstration equipment, etc.).
- ◆ volunteer organizations to help with staffing the FM if the farmers do not do it themselves (consider local 4-H clubs, USDA Master Gardeners, churches, etc.).
- ◆ Cooperative Extension (nutrition educators who also have lots of connections to farmers).
- ◆ USDA SNAP² administrators,
- ◆ other USDA nutrition programs,³
- ◆ and others!

5. Identifying good FM partners.

It may be the case that people may not know what to do with the produce sold at your FM. Many don't know how to clean, prepare or cook fresh produce. Think about ways your P&R site can be the "nutrition education and fun" solution! Utilize the CTH tools that can help you lead this type of activity – check out the summer months materials of the CTH Foods of the Month program (www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/foods-of-the-month) for newsletters to hand out, activities for kids (maybe make a Foods of the Month booth), and recipes (maybe have cooking and/or non-cook food demonstrations). The new CTH Summer Fresh materials (www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/foods-of-the-month) focus on foods that likely would be at your FM, so seek these out! Get your teens and seniors involved as "nutrition education fun ambassadors" and teachers invested. Partner with your local Cooperative Extension nutrition educators for extra support in education and cooking classes. There are lots of fun ways you can help educate your community on how to prepare and eat the nutritious foods sold at your FM!

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PROJECT!

Remember to get the word out, promote your FM so lots of people will know to come get fresh, nutritious fruits and veggies at your P&R site!

Some helpful FM promotion hints can be found at

<http://bit.ly/FMPromotion>.

¹Also check out a NRPA Issue Brief: <http://bit.ly/NRPAMagFM>.

²Some FMs accept SNAP/EBT. This is a great way to make the produce at your FM more affordable for many people! Consider making SNAP/EBT part of your P&R FM. Also, some FMs, such as the Winooski Farmers Market in Winooski, VT have programs that provide "matched dollars" with SNAP/EBT purchases. At this FM each SNAP dollar is matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$10 through a program called Crop Cash, "so benefits can be spent at the market on fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to help families continue healthy eating habits at home." (<http://bit.ly/VTFMMatch>). Check out the possibility of doing this in your community!

³The USDA sponsors nutrition programs for low-income seniors (Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program) and women, infants and children (WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program) which allows them to use coupons at FMs to buy fresh, local fruits and vegetables.

FARMERS MARKET FUN FOR KIDS! COME TO OUR FARMERS MARKET!

For kids in grades Pre-K through 4:

Farmers markets are a great place to buy colorful, nutritious fruits and vegetables grown (mostly) by farmers who live near us! Have you been to a farmers market or outdoor fruit/vegetable stand? Look for some this summer and buy fruits and vegetables from the farm! In the meantime, color the farmers market shown below. Can you name some of the fruits and vegetables? Write them down on the back of this sheet!

COME TO OUR FARMERS MARKET!!!

Day:

Time:

Location:



For kids in grades 5 through 8+:

Farmers markets are a great place to buy colorful, nutritious fruits and vegetables grown (mostly) by farmers who live near us! Have you been to a farmers market or outdoor fruit/vegetable stand? Look for some this summer and buy fruits and vegetables from the farm! In the meantime, break into groups of two to three and come up with 10 fruits and vegetables that you can buy at a farmers market. Write them down on the lines below. Then, color the farmers market image below. There's lots of detail in the image, so it may be challenging!

COME TO OUR FARMERS MARKET!!!

Day:

Time:

Location:

