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Farmers' Markets
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On Farm Research



Bringing Home the Harvest

Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Newsletter

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Farmers' Market Is My Favorite Place

By Barbara Arnold, *Nothing But Herbs*, Hayden, Idaho

On our family bulletin board is a faded button that reads "Farmer's Market is my favorite place." That about sums it up for me. I was raised on an acre in a small town in northern California and spent summers on my uncle's ranch in the San Joaquin Valley. At any rate, I've always felt more comfortable outdoors, whether working or playing.

After 10 years of working in offices in San Francisco and West Texas, my husband and I put a "For Sale" sign on the house, got in the car and drove until we found someplace we liked. We ended up on a large farm in Athol Idaho, with 100 acres under cultivation and 250 in trees. We raised hay and grain crops, purebred sheep and dairy goats. While Jim was at work, I gardened and raised children.

Before long, I wanted to play with something besides tomatoes and cucumbers, so I planted my first herb plants and garlic. Garlic did well there and I soon began selling at the Farmers' Market in Sandpoint. Soon, I was making wreaths from my herbs and selling them also.

Then we moved to town (Hayden). With my kids in school, I begged land to garden and joined the Kootenai County Farmers' Market in its second year of existence. I kept to my original format of herbs and dried flowers. Finally, frustrated by the lack of room, we bought five acres, still in Hayden, and began farming **Nothing But Herbs** in earnest.

Growing Nothing But Herbs

My business, **Nothing But Herbs** consists of selling 220 varieties of herb plants wholesale to local retailers, from April through June. In May, I begin selling these plants at the Kootenai Farmers' Market, along with the colorful hanging baskets and planters that I can't resist making. In May, we also begin planting three acres to annual herbs and flowers. The herbs are sold fresh or dried, in mixes and in vinegars. We sell the flowers fresh and dried at the Market. We also provide fresh flowers for weddings and other local functions.

From May through October, we have "Thursday at the Farm," which opens **Nothing But Herbs** to visitors. We offer tours and classes, but are fairly low key because we are located in a residential area and do not advertise. In the fall, we offer dried flower arrangements, wreaths and bouquets, indoor herbs for winter and dried herbs. At Christmas, we make hundreds of evergreen wreaths for local groups and host an open house with refreshments, classes and lot of fun things to look at and buy. In December, we start plants for the next season, and it all begins again.

Bringing Home the Harvest is a quarterly newsletter of the Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Task Force and is published jointly by the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension, the *Palouse-Clearwater* Environmental Institute and Washington State University Cooperative Extension.

Bringing Home the Harvest shares the knowledge and experience of people working in community food systems and the opportunities and challenges facing small acreage farmers and market gardeners in the Inland Northwest. In addition to sharing information and resources, **Bringing Home the Harvest** helps make connections between producers and consumers in northern Idaho and eastern Washington, encourages sustainably produced foods, and works to enhance the economic viability of small scale producers and the communities where they live.

Articles for publication and letters to the editors are welcome and must include the name and address of the author. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of UI, PCEI or WSU.

Editors
Colette DePhelps
Community Food Systems Program
Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute
208/882-1444 dphelps@pcei.org

Vickie Parker-Clark
Small Farms/Crops/Horticulture
University of Idaho Cooperative Extension
208/667-6426
vparkerclark@uidaho.edu

Peggy Adams
Community Food Systems Consultant
peggy931@uidaho.edu

Cinda Williams
Sustainable Agriculture Support Scientist
University of Idaho Cooperative Extension
208/885-7499 cindaw@uidaho.edu

Throughout all this, my husband has been teaching at North Idaho College. My children are both in college, with the financial help of my business. There is no doubt that I work harder than I would for the same amount of income at an office job. But I honestly can't imagine being inside. My bills and paperwork don't get done until we have a rainy day. Our four greenhouses ease me through winter and make me feel I am outside all year long.

Going to Market

Central to the success of our small business is the Kootenai County Farmers' Market. The first year we lived in town coincided with the first year of the Market. That year, my walking partner and I went downtown every Saturday, bought what we could, then found coffee and sat on the curb soaking in the atmosphere.

The next year, I joined the Market and contributed what little I could from my borrowed land. The Market lost its downtown home that year and ended up moving to a scruffy piece of property across from the county jail. The next year, the Market managed to rent a nice piece of property on Highway 95. We were off and running. Now, ten years later, we are at our second location on Highway 95 and are, cross our collective fingers, successful.

The Success of the Market

The Kootenai County Farmers' Market now consists of 50 members, with an additional dozen day tables rented each week. We operate from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays mid-May to mid-October. Our success, I think, can be attributed to several things:

- ❖ *People.* We have a group of dedicated growers at the Market, several of whom depend on the Market for much of their livelihood.
- ❖ *It is a true Farmers' Market.* Everything must be grown or produced by the vendor. No exceptions.
- ❖ *It is an All-Volunteer Market.* We do not operate under the auspices of the city, county or any private enterprise. We rent land on an annual basis and hire a market manager to make Saturdays run smoothly. Other than that, we do all the administration, promotions and grunt work ourselves.
- ❖ *Growing Numbers of Customers.* The population in our county has grown tremendously during the market's existence, providing us with a growing market base. There is also a growing interest in the value of natural and organic foods.

The Kootenai County Farmers' Market has gone through growing pains, and without the dedicated support of a dozen growers, we would not exist now. Some have moved on, most have stayed. Many of us who were casual vendors, have become regular, accountable vendors. Personally, half the money I make from my herb business comes from the Farmers' Market. Like many of the vendors at our market, my business has grown and expanded in direct proportion to the success of the market.

With few exceptions, our market vendors have peak seasons at the Market. Growers who plan well, and with whom Mother Nature cooperates, do well all season. Vendors like me have ebbs and flows in our sales -- first the home gardener, then summer people, then the tourist, then locals again. Like most farmers' market surveys suggest, our typical customer is well-educated, upper middle class and in the 35 to 60 age group. There are always exceptions. Ever changing your product line to anticipate the buyer is exhausting, but it pays off.



Suggested Herb Resources

Books:

Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs, Claire Kowalchik and William Hylton Eds. Rodale Press, 1987.

Growing Your Herb Business, Bertha Reppert, Storey Publishing, 1994.

Potential of Herbs as a Cash Crop, Richard Miller, available through Acres U.S.A., 1-800-355-5313.

Herb Farming Entrepreneur Business Guide #1282, Small Business Administration Call (714) 261-2325 for more information on this loose-leaf notebook, or check with your local SBA office.

Websites:

New Zealand's Crop & Food Research <http://www.crop.cri.nz/broadshe>
This website gives information on numerous herbs - uses, production, pests and diseases, harvest, quality, marketing, seed sources, and references.

The Herb Growing and Marketing Network <http://www.herbnet.com>
This website has information on herb associations, businesses, etc.

Newsletters:

The Business of Herbs, bimonthly newsletter published by Northwind Publications. Subscription is \$24/year. Tel. (505) 829-3448 or e-mail at HerbBiz@aol.com This publication covers topics such as industry trends, evaluating whether herb production is for you, marketing and customer relations techniques.

Balancing Produce and Crafts

We strive to be a **growers** market, but it is difficult at times to have enough produce. Many, many times we sell out of produce as early as 10 a.m. which can be an absolute death-knell for a market. Several non-vegetable growers are trying to fill in the slack with a crop or two. Extension is offering a Small Acreage Farming and Market Gardener class this fall, aimed at encouraging growers. At the same time, we have to keep educating and expanding our customer base so that growers do not take their produce home at the end of the day. This is all being fine tuned on an on-going basis.

Crafts, their quality and role at the Market are our most time consuming problem. We have not fully resolved the issue, but for the present our rules and philosophy are thus: agricultural vendors can sell their crafts as long as they conform to the Market's Artist Review Committee (ARC). Crafters who are not agricultural cannot exceed 20% of the market membership. They may however, sell on a daily basis, provided their crafts meet with the approval of the ARC. It is complicated and cumbersome, but we have yet to find something better. Many markets have prohibited crafts, but we think a smattering of crafts adds to the ambiance of the overall market.

Finally, our Kootenai County Farmers' market is now comfortable enough that we can put more energy into becoming a solid member of our community. We have started a *Friends of the Market* program, with donations going towards expanding entertainment at the Market and long-range planning. We have also set aside tables for children to sell their own crafts or produce and for community groups to disseminate information.

The Allure of the Market

It is not only the local musicians and the park-like setting that create the Kootenai County Farmers' Market's attractive ambiance. Part of the allure is the personal contact with growers and crafts people who look forward to being at Market early on Saturday morning. This holds true for fellow vendors as well as customers. Like I said before, the Farmers' Market is my favorite place to be!



First Steps Toward a Farmers' Market

Liza Rognas, Greystone Foundation, Pullman, Washington

Community gardens and farmers' markets go together, it seems. Or that was the opinion of the Greystone Foundation (GF) board of directors this year. We've operated a small, organic community garden in the heart of Pullman, Washington, on the site of an old dairy farm for seven years. Though the idea had been reviewed by the board almost annually for a while, this year marked the first time the board felt it had the human and financial resources to attempt opening a farmers' market at the farm. Our interest was invigorated last year when we began meeting regularly with the Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute and with some area service agencies to promote food security awareness in our area.

Our first steps toward creating a farmers' market at **Koppel Farm** included attending some workshops and conferences related to farmer's markets and food security. With the advice and support of the owner of a small, organic, CSA north of town (Jim Bauermeister of Kamiak View Farm), we decided to embark upon a pilot project, three months long.



Top Ten Marketing Tips From Eric Gibson's "The Hot 50 Farm Marketing Tips"

Farmers' markets are uniquely dependent on close contact between producers and customers, so they can be exciting places to experiment and refine product marketing strategies. Not only can you be as innovative as your schedule allows, you can also learn directly from your customers and your neighbors. The time and effort you put into marketing your products can mean the difference between financial success and failure, so you need to choose your marketing strategy carefully. The following marketing tips are excerpts from "The Hot 50 Farm Marketing Tips" based on the book *Sell What You Sow! The Grower's Guide to Successful Produce Marketing* by Eric Gibson.

1. **Your farmers' market stall should be "theater."** Display, layout, signage, composition, color, contrast, structures and lighting, as well as the products and service you offer customers and how you talk to them, all come together to tell your story. What makes you unique? Well-stocked displays, for example, convey abundance and attract attention, as do creative display ideas such as a "waterfall" of potatoes made by an inclined board covered with spuds of all shapes and colors. Simple themes work well, too, such as interspersing product displays with leaves, herbs or flowers, or stringing balloons or chili peppers around the canopy or entranceway.

Our goal is specifically to support local agriculture so no artisans or crafts people will be invited to participate. Beginning in July, we will sponsor a mid-week farmers' market at the farm on Wednesday afternoons from 3 to 7 p.m. We chose this time for two reasons: to avoid competing with the successful and well supported Saturday farmers' market in Moscow, Idaho (our neighbor across the state line a mere 8 miles to the east) and to avoid conflict with the fledgling Pullman public market, also on Saturdays. From the start we've enjoyed widespread support for our idea, especially from the organizations that manage the two public markets. A mid-week market, we felt, would be of interest to area growers who have excess produce during the week. Additionally, a weekday afternoon/early evening time slot was easier to manage for our volunteer board members. It also coincides with some community events that will have folks out and about on the day of the market.

After attaining promises of support from a handful of local area growers and with the hope that our community gardeners will use this opportunity to sell some of their produce and/or support the market as consumers, we began a small advertising campaign. This consisted of ads in the local newspaper and in some of the smaller free papers encouraging grower and backyard gardener participation. Posters and fliers and press coverage will announce our intentions to the greater community over the course of the next month.

The efficacy of these promotional efforts will have to be assessed as we go along. So will our decision to charge vendors \$5 per day or \$50 for the three-month season. GF's own produce pricing scheme and board management responsibilities will also have to be reviewed. Our goal is to promote awareness and support for local growing operations and to encourage more. As a non-profit group, the board has decided that if the market will pay for itself the first year, we'll be satisfied.

The Greystone Foundation now awaits the first day of the market. Hopefully the produce the board is growing at the farm and that grown by other gardeners will be ready for harvest and sale. We purchased a small tent to shade vendors and customers from the late afternoon heat. Next year the Bill Chipman Palouse Trail, a bike path extending from Moscow through Pullman, will come through the Koppel Farm, so we expect more public traffic through the market site. Some area youth groups will use this opportunity to sell cool drinks to customers, and vendors and we hope some area musicians will gift us with a few tunes upon occasion.

If the market is a success and can be self-sustaining, our next step will be to determine if we should expand the market next year to run June through October. In order to do that and in order to provide a better and more permanent shelter for the market (our tent must be assembled and disassembled every week) and for our spring and fall fairs, we will be reviewing the need for market-oriented fundraising and hiring a farm/market coordinator or general farm manager.

So our first steps are small. We realize the strong potential for this market to encourage our community to support local growers and to look to the Koppel Farm for access to locally grown food. And we're cautious about the time our board members will have to devote to this along with the on-going responsibilities of the Koppel Farm Community Garden (2+ acres), and our small grain field. The Greystone Foundation also subleases 8 acres to a native plant restoration project. In all, we have 13 acres to manage and 13 board members. Sometimes an acre seems like an awful lot of space to care for. Care to pull weeds and pick produce? We guarantee good company and great food!

2. **Educate your customers.** The more people know about your product and what went into growing it and how to use it, the more they are willing to pay a premium price. Ways to inform customers about your products or services include point of purchase educational brochures and flyers, on-farm demonstrations and workshops, free recipe sheets, product information labels, educational articles or columns in the media, and a regularly published newsletter.

3. **Offer free samples.** According to *Guerrilla Marketing* author Jay Levinson, sampling is the most effective marketing method available. Hand a customer a small paper cup of cider, and they'll probably want to purchase a gallon -- that's inexpensive promotion! Product sampling is especially important for introducing a new product or new varieties of a product. *Once they try it, they'll buy it!*

4. **Invest in a logo.** Your logo is one of the best promotion and advertising expenditures you will make. Use your logo on road signs, packaging, letterheads, containers, business cards, brochures and direct-mail pieces, as well as on all advertising that you do. In seeking graphic design help, look for barter arrangements: one flower grower supplied an advertising agency with fuchsias in exchange for half her bill. Keep your logo simple, clean and crisp.

5. **Use your information resources.** To make sound marketing decisions, you need up-to-date, accurate and reliable information. Information resources include your local cooperative extension office, economic development groups or community colleges, local libraries, chambers of commerce, farm and other trade journals, trade associations, and farm marketing conferences. It is frequently expressed at conferences that if you go home with one new idea it will pay for the cost of the conference.

A Time to Act

Cinda Williams, Univ. of Idaho Cooperative Extension, Sustainable Agriculture

The USDA National Commission on Small Farms' report - *A Time to Act* – should be on every small acreage farmer's 'must read' list. I'll admit this report is not as captivating as a good novel, but it IS real life drama that may affect you directly in the future. By commissioning this report, the US Department of Agriculture took the most significant step to acknowledge and support small farms in the past decade. *A Time to Act* lays the groundwork for the *action* needed to 'recognize the small farm as the cornerstone of our agricultural and rural economy.'

The commission listens – The 30-member commission, appointed by Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, held public meetings at seven places around the country, between July and September of last year. They heard from 200 farmers at meetings attended by over 800 people. They listened to concerns about loan programs, credit availability, access to government conservation programs, and the need for farmer-owned cooperatives. The commission's report addresses many of the issues brought forth at these public meetings.

A Time to Act describes a 'Vision for Small Farms in the 21st Century' and outlines eight policy goals for a national strategy for small farms. The policy goals are:

- Recognize the importance and cultivate the strengths of small farms
- Create a framework of support and responsibility for small farms
- Promote, develop, and enforce fair, competitive, and open markets for small farms
- Conduct appropriate outreach through partnerships to serve small farm and ranch operators
- Establish future generations of farmers
- Emphasize sustainable agriculture as a profitable, ecological, and socially sound strategy for small farms
- Dedicate budget resources to strengthen the competitive position of small farms in American agriculture
- Provide just and humane working conditions for all people engaged in production agriculture

Goals are great, but on to the nitty gritty - The policy goals may, at first glance, come across as very general and just 'plain common sense.' But read on and you will discover that under each policy goal there are specific recommendations to USDA about how to accomplish the various objectives. There are details on specific ways to support farm credit and lending programs that do not discriminate against small-scale, minority, or beginning farmers. Other recommendations include plans for developing marketing opportunities and enhancing small-scale producers' ability to be farm advocates. The Commission also recommends refining grants like the Fund for Rural America and the Rural Business Enterprise Grants to meet the needs of small-scale producers. Suggestions to redirect the research priorities of ARS (Agriculture Research Service) will better serve the needs of small farms. Still other recommendations are very basic: develop lists of small-scale producers and ask for their input regarding research needs. Overall, this list of 146 recommendations covers every aspect of how we can take action to promote, encourage and support America's small acreage farmers.



6. *Contribute to your community.*

Contributing to your community earns you the kind of reputation that money can't buy. Community involvement means joining the chamber of commerce or the Farm Bureau, or donating fresh vegetables or holding a benefit sale for a charitable organization. Contribute bags or boxes of your product, and include a sales brochure-- recipients will show up later at your farm or market stall. Sponsor a local high school club that is community-minded. Club projects might include reading and running errands for residents of a nursing home, or rounding up gifts or food for the underprivileged during holiday seasons.

7. *Don't compete with everyone else.* The name of the game is niche marketing. Look for ways to differentiate your product not only by what you grow, but by how you grow it (i.e., organic); what you do with it (i.e., "added value"); or how you package or market the product. Ordinary spinach, for example, which is triple-rinsed, cut and placed in plastic bags as ready-to-eat salad becomes a specialty item! Some other ways to differentiate your product might include a service such as washing your lettuce or home delivery of products; giving information such as recipes or workshops; creating an image such as "country," "healthy" or "natural"; providing recreation, such as a weekend outing in the country.

What's a small farm? In preparing the report, the Commission refers to small farms in the 'broadest' sense. *Small farms are those earning less than \$250,000 in gross receipts annually, on which the day-to-day labor and management are provided by the farmer or farm family, who owns or leases the productive assets.* To most of us, a quarter of a million gross is 'no small potatoes.' However, in comparison with current large-scale industrialized agriculture, the 'small farm' ends up representing operations with a wide range of acreage and varying income potential. The basic goals of the report are the same whether you farm 10 acres of vegetables, 100 acres of wheat or raise 100 head of cattle. *A Time to Act* is urging that we level the playing field by changing current policies and systems that favor large-scale corporate agriculture.

A bit of history - In 1979, Bob Bergland, Secretary of Agriculture, initiated a study of our agricultural system, which led to his report, *A Time to Choose*. Bergland warned "unless present policies and programs are changed so that they counter, instead of reinforce or accelerate the trends towards ever-larger farming operations, the results will be few large farms controlling food production in only a few years." Bergland's report went unheeded. In fact, policy choices since then have led to fewer and larger farms and fewer and larger agribusiness firms.

Did you know? Today we have 300,000 fewer farmers than we did in 1979. Farmers are receiving 13 percent less for every consumer dollar spent on food than they did in 1980. Four firms now control over 80 percent of the beef market. About 94 percent of the farms in this country are 'small farms', but they receive only 41 percent of all farm receipts. (What is wrong with this picture?)

Will the message be heard this time around? Things will not change overnight. The National Commission on Small Farms will meet again this fall (nine months after the report was submitted) to evaluate progress. Indications from recent changes in the USDA Small Farm program are positive. A Small Farm Specialist has joined their staff and another National Small Farm conference is being planned for next year in St. Louis, Missouri (October 12-15, 1999). In general, there is a stronger focus and more interest in this area throughout extension and other USDA agencies than there was a few years ago. Efforts to change policy and allocate budget needs will take longer due to the legislative process.

INWCFS on the right track - As a member of the Inland Northwest Community Food Systems (INWCFS) task force, I found this document **very** interesting. It validates what the INWCFS task force has set out to do. The report recommends that Cooperative Extension and other USDA agencies form partnerships with local non-profit groups. These partnerships should work with small farm producers to identify their needs, provide them resources, and provide educational opportunities related to marketing and sustainable production techniques. It also suggests these partnerships will help promote and foster local food systems featuring farmers markets, community gardens, CSA's and direct marketing to school lunch programs. We are already doing many of these things. Looks like the INWCFS taskforce is ahead of its time!

Copies available - Write to the National Commission on Small Farms, P.O. Box 2890, USDA, Washington, DC 20013 or contact Jennifer Yezak Molen at 202-720-0122 or by email at smallfarm@usda.gov. The report is also on the USDA Small Farm web site [<http://www.reeusda.gov/agsys/smallfarm/>].



8. Price for quality. Offer a unique, high-quality product that customers can't get elsewhere. Stress quality, freshness and uniqueness rather than "cheap food." Package expensive specialty items in smaller units. Sell berries, for example, in pint, rather than quart sizes-- this makes it easier for the customer to buy and try out a new or expensive product. Price competitively for common items, but slightly above the market for unusual or hard-to-find items where competition is less intense. Also, if and when you do make upward price adjustments, make them a little as needed rather than all at once.

9. Consider value-added products. Dry it, pie it or put it in cider -- "value-added" products make sense. Fruit that may be worth cents per pound as a fresh market product, for example, may be worth dollars per pound as processed jam! Value-added products create additional products for you to sell, enable you to market less-than-perfect produce as processed products, provide a source for year-round sales, and generate off-season work.

10. Consider using a brand name. A brand name is one key to getting high prices for quality food products. In a market of mass-produced, no-name products, stamping your personal identity on your product builds trust and confidence. You don't have to be Sunkist or Chiquita. Even the smallest farmer can utilize branding to maximize his/her advantage over competitors. Remember, however, that "the quality goes in before the name goes on." Consistent quality is crucial to branding your products

To order the book, *Sell What You Sow! The Grower's Guide to Successful Produce Marketing*, by Eric Gibson, send \$22.50 + \$2.50 shipping and handling to New World Publishing, 3085 Sheridan St. Placerville, CA 95667. Credit card orders should call (916) 622-2248.

Direct Marketing Poultry

By Jim Bauermeister, Kamiak View Farm, Colfax, Washington

Chicken used to be something special. Poultry was reserved for Sunday dinner and other special occasions. A half century ago chicken was more expensive than pork or beef.

Chicken is cheap and plentiful today. The discovery of vitamin D allowed poultry production to be moved indoors. Nutrition and breeding enable a four pound fryer to be produced in 7-8 weeks.

Yet a growing number of consumers aren't interested in cheap chicken. They are more concerned about quality, flavor and food safety. Some don't want to support an industry that pollutes surface and ground water and raises an eye-watering stench. Others see the factory farm system as needlessly cruel and inhumane. These consumers are looking for an alternative to vegetarianism.

This creates a specialty market for the small farmer. By some quirk in law and regulation small poultry producers are exempted from the stringent inspection requirements that govern red meat marketing. A farmer can slaughter and sell up to 1000 chickens (or 250 turkeys) a year directly to the consumer (no middlemen allowed) with no inspection or licensing. A state license is required to process and sell 1001-19,999 chickens, but the USDA won't want to inspect your operation until you're processing 20,000 fryers or 5000 turkeys.



Jim Bauermeister explains his portable pen



Farmers' Markets: Food, Fun and Community

Commentary by Deloris Jungert Davisson,
Veggies Organic Farm, Clarkston,
Washington

The alarm sounds early. It's Saturday morning; the truck is loaded. It's Farmers' Market Day on the Palouse and in the Clearwater Valley. The Moscow, Lewiston, and Kooskia markets are bustling. Saturday is Farmers' Market Day in any number of towns and cities across the country. Farmers' markets tell us a lot about local farmers, our communities and ourselves.

For centuries farmers gathered to sell their produce on the apron of cathedrals or town halls. The market was a community resource and enjoyed local support. That practice remains in many cities throughout the world today. A "sustainable" farmers' market provides farmers with a regular place and opportunity to sell locally produced foods, hopefully for a fair price. It offers community members fresh, wholesome food in a county fair atmosphere.

Many of the farmers at the market are small farmers, marketing their products locally, and in some cases regionally. Farmers selling at farmers' markets are looking for community support, patronage and a fair price. They offer in return, fresh, seasonal, nutritious foodstuffs - without the additional cost of the packaging and the hype. Local moneys spent locally re-

Local health departments may have something to say about how you sell your poultry in local markets. I sell frozen fryers out of ice chests at the Moscow Farmers Market which is cool with the local regulators. The birds stay frozen even on the hottest summer days. I am convinced the poultry I sell is safer than anything you can buy in the supermarket branded with the USDA seal of approval.

I raise the birds in 8x8 foot portable pens that are 26 inches tall. Half of the pen is covered with corrugated sheet metal and the other half with poultry netting. I put 50 birds in each pen. The pens are moved to fresh pasture every day. The chicks spend their first 3-4 weeks in a brooder house under heat lamps that are gradually raised as the birds grow and replace down with feathers. The brooder must be free of cold drafts that can kill baby chicks, but still have good air circulation. Air quality in the brooder is very important.

While the chicks are in the brooder house I feed them a unmedicated commercial ration. Once they move to the pasture I gradually switch them to a 70-25-5 percent whole wheat-soybean meal-alfalfa pellet ration. While they probably grow slower on this all-vegetable diet, it is considerably cheaper than commercial feed and doesn't contain any rendered animal products, preservatives or other nasty stuff.

Almost all commercial fryers are of one breed: Cornish Cross. These superchickens are made to grow. They grow so fast that they often develop leg problems. Their little tickers can't handle stress and they will often keel over from heart attacks. They are not good foragers and will get sunburned outside because they have been bred to have fewer feathers to pluck.

I raise another breed, Dark Cornish. These birds are double-breasted and fat-thighed like the white Cornish Cross, but they are considerably hardier and smarter. Although they grow slower than Cornish Cross, they are ready for market in 8-10 weeks. Their varied, very beautiful plumage indicates considerable genetic diversity in their parentage. I have tried raising old fashioned breeds such as Barred Rock for market. These birds take 12-16 weeks to reach five pounds liveweight; they are consummate escape artists and very hard to recapture. They produce very lean, but flavorful meat, that requires more chewing than the Cornish breeds. Some customers prefer them.

My fryers are processed by gentle Hueterite women at Harder's Hatchery near Ritzville, WA. This is also where I obtain my chicks. Phinney's Hatchery in Walla Walla provides the same service (see resources). Many small poultry producers do their own processing. A rubber fingered feather picker is essential to this operation. A temperature-regulated scalding (to loosen the feathers) also makes things go smoother.

A good chicken is hard to find. Throughout the country small poultry producers have no problem marketing their products as customers discover chicken can still be something special. **Resources:** *Harders Hatchery, Rt. 1, Box 316, Ritzville, WA 99169; 509-659-1423. Phinney Hatchery, 1331 Dell Avenue, Walla Walla, WA 99362-1023; 509-525-2602. For information on the portable pen system see **Pastured Poultry Profits** by Joel Salatin.*



circulate in the local community longer and thus help sustain the local economy. Moneys spent in chain markets largely leave the community at the end of the business day. So farmers' market growers must realize a fair price and community support to be sustainable.

Small farmers display the community-based entrepreneurial spirit on which our American economic system is based. Farmers all have a story to tell. They are creative, industrious, and responsible. Farmers think it is important to see the fruits of their labor. They follow their foodstuffs from seed to feed, from the stable to table. They are involved in the whole process -- planning, administration, management, labor and marketing. And small farmers are the primary working ecologists.

Farmers are gregarious. Farmers like getting together after spending long days and hours on the land. They like celebrations after bringing home the harvest. Farmers participating in farmers' markets enjoy providing the foodstuffs in the celebration or theatre of the farmers' market with its live music, carnival air, and educational booths. It was no accident that the farmers' markets historically took place on the apron of the cathedral.

Culture and agriculture are closely related. They both stem from the same root word colere: to cultivate and to worship. Culture is the result of concepts, habits, skills, instruments and institutions of a given people in a period of civilization. Remember that the long-lived Moscow Farmers' Market operates under the auspices of the Moscow Arts Commission. We come from agrarian roots; our culture has been largely agrarian through the last generation. Ask anyone how many generations they are removed from being farmers - an occupation not even listed in the U.S. Census today.

What do farmers' markets tell us about community? Communities are places and resources which promote interaction and support for their residents needs and wants.



Earth Market's Spring plant start sales are brisk

Newport's Earth Market Continues to Grow

Jim McGinty, Higher Ground Farm, Newport, Washington

Is there a phrase more descriptive of homegrown produce and handmade crafts than "Earth Market?" Every Saturday from early May to Fall's first frost, Newport, Washington is home to the Earth Market, where growers, crafters, and consumers meet to exchange insults, viewpoints, and much more.

Originally a loose collective of local gardeners, and craft people with a desire to sell their overabundance, the Earth Market is one of Washington State's oldest farmers' markets, operating continuously since May 1979.

Market manager Robert Karr says the Earth Market Association seeks to provide high quality produce, plant starts, and handmade crafts at reasonable prices. According to Karr, all items offered for sale at the Market must be locally produced and handmade; the market Association guidelines specifically forbid the offer or sale of used or commercially grown or made items.

Every Saturday, the grass-covered corner lot is festooned with the colorful market umbrellas and gazebos of about twenty vendors, serving a summer crowd numbering in the hundreds.

The Earth Market is located on one side of U.S. Highway 2, a main thoroughfare in downtown Newport, and the route of choice for summer vacationers on their way "to the lake," in Pend Orielle County and northern Idaho. Karr estimates that thousands of cars and recreational vehicles drive through Newport each weekend, though tourists comprise only about 25 percent of the Earth Market's customers. Middle-aged and elderly customers, mostly from the surrounding community, are in the majority on a typical market day; this customer base, according to Karr, has the time, desire, and experience to prepare and cook meals from raw ingredients.

The Earth Market Association is seeking to expand the number of summer visitors and long-term vacationers shopping at the Market, with ideas ranging from more and better signs to offering menus and recipes for consumers starved for fresh food. Newport's Earth Market continues to grow, adding new vendors here, providing more varieties of hot peppers there - satisfying customers every market day.

Paradoxically, community is about supporting and celebrating the individuals who are reliant on the community for their human needs. By definition, sustainability for any sector of a community implies support and shared values and responsibility by the whole. If any part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. The individuals in a community take responsibility for the quality of life in its community or the community doesn't work. Family farms need viable communities to sustain local markets.

All of us need communities. We are gregarious. We like happenings and celebrations. We may be getting tired of mass-produced culture and agriculture. We still have a choice, we have options. We like talking to the people who raise our meat, bake our sticky buns and provide fresh strawberries and spinach for our tables. We like listening to live musicians who are our friends and neighbors. Viable communities support the people in the community, and people must support the community to keep it viable.

On the local level, farmers' markets are markets. They are a community resource and a cultural (and agricultural) event. Farmers' markets are community capital, which (along with Arts Commissions and others) provide fresh beautiful foodstuffs, live entertainment, people and dogs in all shapes and sizes, culture, and a forum to hear our neighbors and discuss how the world fares.

So the bottom line is: will our communities - Moscow, Pullman, Kooskia, Lewiston, and Clarkston, choose to sustain local resources, such as farmers' markets, and keep local control of these resources? On the global scale, Wendell Berry asks us "How should we live? How should we keep house? How should we provide ourselves with food, clothing, shelter, heat, light, learning, amusement, rest? How, in short, ought we to use the world?" Part of the local answer can be found at the farmers' market.

Inventing a Farmers' Market

Cindy dePaulis, Rathdrum, Idaho

Want to meet some great people??? Enjoy great produce, maybe even be tempted to try something like mizuna?? or bok choy?? These are some of the adventures you can have when you become involved with a Farmers' Market. You will find that people who grow veggies or make soap or carve beautiful furniture have interesting lives and stories and advice. You will find tips on how to grow great tomatoes and broccoli and how to cook that new and different veggie.

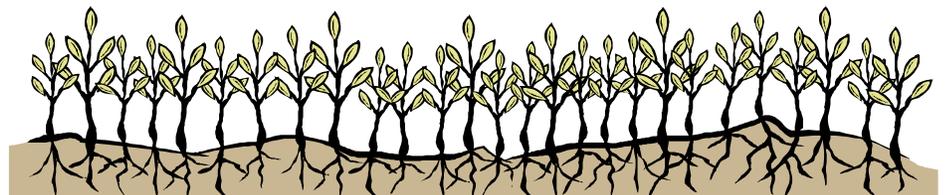
Have you ever wondered how a Farmers' Market starts? Usually a group of people gets together and decides to start one. The Farmers' Market in Coeur d'Alene was started by a group of about 8 people. A Board of Directors was elected and the market was incorporated by the State of Idaho. The post office ruined the first set of incorporation papers and a second set had to be prepared. The City of Coeur d'Alene barricaded one Downtown street for 5 hours on Saturday morning and the vendors sold from their vehicles. The Market is born!!

The location for the Market has an interesting history - from the warm asphalt streets in downtown Coeur d'Alene to a chain-link fenced dirt parking lot across from the county jail to the present location at Hwy 95 and Prairie - it has been an interesting decade.

I decided that Rathdrum had grown enough to support a Farmers' Market - after all we now had two traffic lights in town with the rumor of a McDonald's coming. I verbally surveyed the members of the Coeur d'Alene Market to see if vendors would support a Rathdrum market on Tuesday afternoon. There was support for a midweek market. I chose to have a Tuesday Market for two reasons. The Coeur d'Alene market is on Saturday and the vendors would naturally support this Market. Secondly gardens could be harvested midweek and vendors would still have produce for the Saturday Market. I had commitments from 8 vendors - 2 crafters, 3 plant vendors and 3 produce vendors. This seemed to be an ideal mix.

The Board of Directors of the Coeur d'Alene Market had agreed to back the Rathdrum Market. The next step was to approach the City Council of Rathdrum.

When you appear before the City Council it involves public speaking. If I speak to more than one person at a time I consider it a challenge - in other words panic time. I carefully wrote down all the important points and entered the council room at 7:00 pm. When I was called up to the podium, my jellyfish legs somehow worked and then I promptly forgot all my very important points, but the council members were very understanding and I was granted permission to use the City Park on Tuesday afternoon from 3:00 - 6:00 pm. Hooray!!





Farmers' Markets Survey Results

Beth Malouf

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Services Division surveyed 1,755 farmers' markets, listed in the National Directory of Farmers' Markets in 1994. This directory was compiled in 1994 and revised in 1996 by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service's Wholesale and Alternative Markets Program. Only markets listed as active by State departments of agriculture were included. While many of the survey questions were answered by only subsets of the responding market managers, the USDA was able to report some interesting findings

Of the 772 responding farmers' markets, 50% were small markets, serving between 1 and 19 farmers. About 30% were medium sized markets, serving between 20 and 49 farmers. About 13% were larger markets, serving 50-500 farmers. One market reported serving over 500 farmers.

The total number of individual farmers served by these 772 farmers' markets was 20,496. Over 6,500 of those farmers used farmers' markets as their sole outlet. The larger markets attracted farmers from a greater distance. Among the very small markets (1-9 farmers), only 54% of the farmers drove 11-50 miles to market, while 84% of the farmers in the larger markets drove 11-50 miles to market.

The medium to large markets (20-500 farmers) made up only 43% of the markets surveyed, but attracted 81% of the customers. They also accounted for 76% of total sales and 78% of farmers served. Farmers participating in the medium to large markets had higher average sales than those in the smaller markets. (see Burns, A.F., 1996, *Farmers' Markets Survey Reports*, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service).

The City Park was located on the road into Rathdrum from Spokane. Commuters from Spokane would be coming home and could stop for produce and baked goods for dinner. This seemed like an excellent location.

Next step - posters in Rathdrum and Spirit Lake businesses announcing the opening of the Market. The merchants were happy to display the posters and were enthusiastic about the Market.

Opening day and the vendors came and set up using the picnic tables at the City Park. We had shelter from the weather and things looked promising. The first few market days were slow which is expected for a beginning Market. We had signs made for the road to increase visibility for the Market. We started getting a few regular customers.

By the end of the season we had decided to try this Market again. A few changes were proposed. One was to extend the hours from 3:30 to 7:00 as the commuters were just getting into Rathdrum when we closed at 6:00 pm. Another change was to open earlier in the season for the vendors selling plants. Produce would be unpredictable that early in the season, but it was decided that this change would be tried.

Year two started out promising. The City Council again approved the Market with the extended hours. I gave a short talk about the Rathdrum Market at the first members meeting in the Spring and almost a dozen vendors signed up. We were off to a great start. Then things started going downhill - fast.

Opening day and only three vendors showed up - and only two customers. I called the vendors on the list. Several had now decided not to support the Market for varied reasons - no customer support, too far from the vendor home. After discussing the situation with some of the vendors I made the decision to suspend the Market for the present.

Looking back on this experience, I would make a few changes. First would be to find produce and craft vendors that live in the area of the Market for the initial years. The expense of transportation to a Market is a consideration. When a Market is established and customers come and support the Market the income is there - not so when you have a beginning Market in a small population area. Second and vital is community support.

Publicity goes along with the community support as this generates interest in the Market and entices people to support the Market. Local vendors bring friends to the Market and this helps to build the Market.

Would I do this again? YES!! Participation in a Farmers' Market is a unique experience and well worth the time and effort required. Want to start your very own Farmers' Market give me a call - I'll be right over.





**Palouse-Clearwater
Environmental Institute**



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Inland Northwest Food and Farming Calendar

Ongoing: Koppel Farm Wednesday Evening Farmers' Market. Every Wednesday 4:00- 7:00 pm, Pullman, WA.
Contact: Liza Rognas, 509/335-3916

August 15 Sandpoint Farm Tour, Sandpoint, ID; details to be announced
Contact: Peggy Adams 208/882-1444

August 20 Eating on the Palouse/Racial Justice Picnic, Pullman, WA
Contact: Peggy Adams 208/882-1444

August 27 Community Kitchen workshop, Cougar Depot, Pullman, WA
Contact: Peggy Adams 208/882-1444

We need your input! Please send items for the calendar, letters, commentary, articles, or ideas. Drop us a line (be sure to include your name and address)
INWCFS-PCEI
PO Box 8596
Moscow, ID 83843
or email us at dephelps@pcei.org

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Environmental Institute
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