



BC ASSOCIATION OF FARMERS' MARKETS



Selling at BC Farmers' Markets

A Profile of Farmers' Markets

Not all farmers' markets are the same. The information in this profile will help you to understand important differences among BC farmers' markets. You can use this information to assess how well each type of market matches with your business goals and operations.

For more information please refer to:
***Selling at BC Farmers' Markets:
A Guide for New Farmer Vendors***

This supplementary guide will help you to interpret the information presented in this profile and to understand the business case for selling at a farmers' market.

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Canada

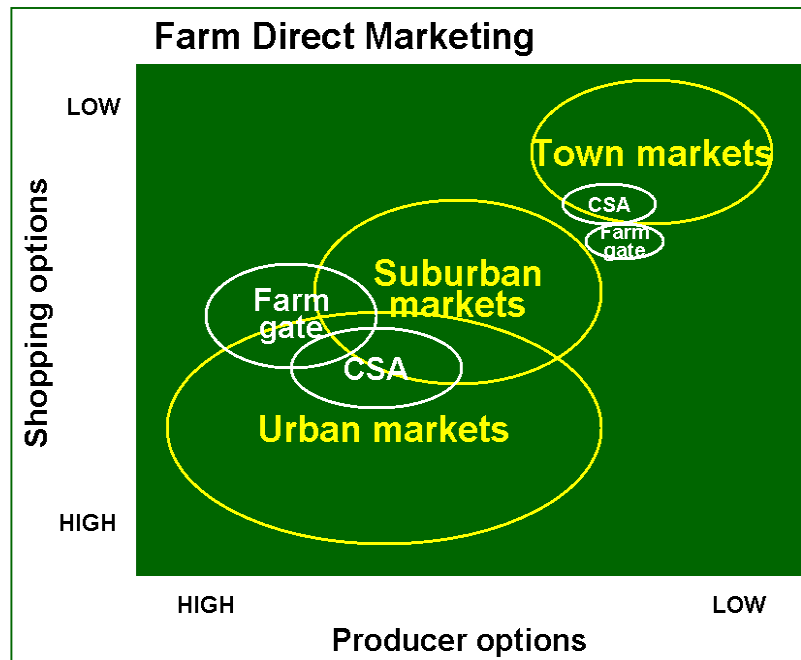
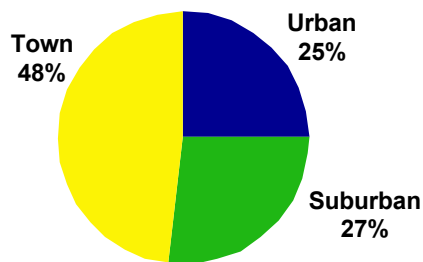


bcfarmersmarket.org

The farmer-market-shopper match

Farmers' markets offer producers a consistent, low cost, low risk, and viable method to market, display, and distribute BC farm products directly to customers. The key to being successful as a market vendor is understanding how markets connect vendors and customers.

Types of markets



For an up-to-date list of farmers' markets, visit www.bcfarmersmarket.org

Producer and consumer options

The success of a market depends on the match between farmers, a farmers' market, and shoppers. Farmers must sell enough products at the right price and shoppers must be able to buy what they want at the right price. The market is the medium for this exchange to take place, and the market works when it has enough vendors and enough customers – and when everyone walks away happy.

To understand the success of a particular market one must start by viewing the market as one marketing channel among many options. Farmers' markets compete with each other to attract both customers and vendors. They also compete with other farm direct marketing channels such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), U-pick, and farm gate sales. And most importantly, customers always have the option of going to grocery stores and health food stores, both of which are increasingly focussing on local foods.

In this context, both farmers and shoppers have options to consider, and this is why the dynamics of a market's location is such an important factor for understanding what makes each market successful.

As illustrated in the above chart on the right, and explained in more detail on the facing page, the options available to both customers and farmer vendors vary by location. Urban, suburban, and town markets each **present** a different set of options for farmer vendors. The set of options is highest in urban areas and lowest in towns and rural areas. Understanding these sets of options is a key to understanding the success of a particular market, why it works for its vendors, and why it might work for you.

Three types of farmers' markets

There are general but important differences among urban, suburban, and town markets, as presented below. However, it is also important to recognise that the combination of producer and consumer options can play out differently in different locations. The following should be viewed as a guide for understanding the general dynamics of three types of farmers' markets.

URBAN

Description: Located in high population centres. Includes all markets in Vancouver and Victoria and small cities such as Kelowna, Kamloops and Prince George. May also include markets in larger suburbs in the southwest region.

Consumer options: Have access to a variety of other direct marketing channels (CSA, food box delivery, U-pick) that offer a convenient, alternative outlet to purchase local food direct from farmers. Also have access to many retail establishments.

Producer options: Farmers have access to a broad spectrum of customers and marketing options; ranging from restaurants through to specialty retail establishments and institutions.

Rivalry among vendors: Competition is typically higher and the threat of new entrants is a concern. Producers face a wide range and large number of customers with high purchasing power. Space at urban markets is limited and regulations are strict.

Customer loyalty: Urban markets tend to have more people visiting their markets but they also have a smaller proportion of core customers. Loyalty is important for the core but vendors have an opportunity to attract other customers through competitive pricing and niche products.

Challenges: Allocation of spaces in urban markets tends to be limited and controlled. Access requires advance planning and dedication. Stall fees tend to be higher. Consistent production and attendance, innovation, price and product presentation are very important to attract and retain customers.

SUBURBAN

Description: Located within a short drive of urban centres. Includes many areas in the Lower Mainland as well as around Victoria; also present around smaller cities. Suburban locations have a variable range of producer and consumer options.

Customer options: Often compete with CSAs, farm stands, and U-pick operations which tend to be located in suburban areas. Specialty and retail outlets offering local food are not as prevalent as in urban centers.

Producer options: Being located closer to areas of production, producers at suburban markets often use the market as a promotional tool to attract business to local farm stands. However, the prevalence of suburban "farm markets" that stock out of season and cheap products offers a distinct challenge to producers in terms of pricing and convenience.

Rivalry among vendors: Can be significant as new entrants expanding their market circuit often focus on suburban markets. Slow growth of the customer base may increase rivalry.

Customer loyalty: While customer numbers tend to be lower than in urban markets, suburban markets do have a core base. Loyalty is important for the core but vendors also have an opportunity to attract new customers through competitive pricing and niche products.

Challenges: Suburban markets are often located within range of other markets and many operate on the same day and during the same hours, distributing the customer base to a number of sites.

TOWN

Description: Located in small towns or isolated areas with few or no other markets nearby. Rural areas such as the Central Interior, most of Northern BC, areas of the Kootenays, the North Coast, and the Rockies operate town markets. Town markets make up almost half of the markets in the province. Town markets provide the smallest range of options to both producers and consumers.

Consumer options: While many town markets have a committed customer base, town markets provide one of the only access points for farm products that meet consumer ideals. Although the profile of alternative direct marketing options is rising, town markets tend to be the primary point of contact between consumers and local agricultural products.

Producer options: For vendors, town markets often serve as the only available marketing channel for small-scale production. Market power is restricted by the lack of economically viable marketing options.

Rivalry among vendors: Generally low due to ideals of mutual support and encouragement. New entrants are not often seen as a threat and instead provide a welcome increase in supply.

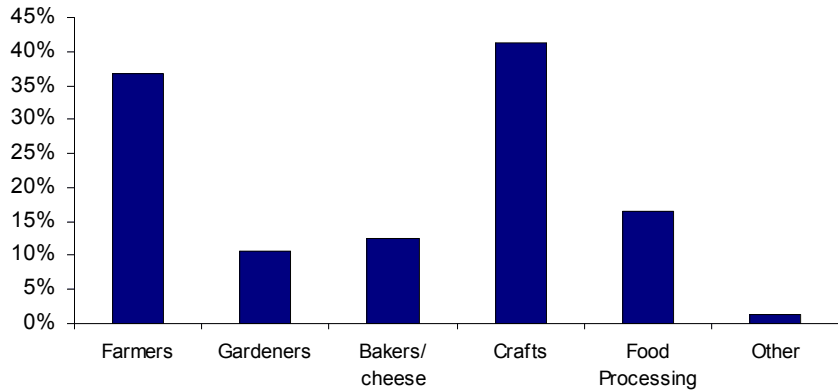
Customer loyalty: The availability of comparable substitutes is low since local products are mainly distributed through markets. Loyalty is very important for the core customers.

Challenges: Face challenges with building and maintaining a consistent base of primary producers with a wide range of product offerings. Consistency and quality of products are central to market growth and stability.

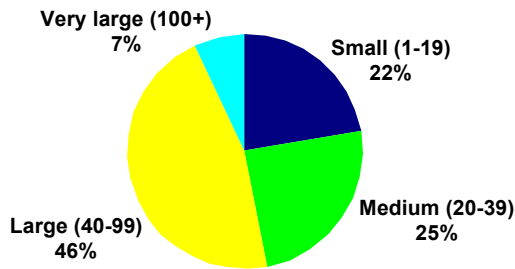
Operations

The size of a market and its mix of vendors may influence whether a farmer wants to sell at a particular market. The information on this page provides a general view of the range of market operations in BC.

Types of all market vendors



Size of markets (# of vendors)



Types and sizes of markets

	Small (1-19)	Medium (20-39)	Large (40-99)	Very large (100+)
Town	15	12	15	1
Suburban	4	7	11	3
Urban		2	13	2
Total	19	21	39	6

Trends over past five years



Market managers

