

NEWS RELEASE

CATEGORIES: Business and Economics; Health & Medicine / Nutrition/Obesity, Exercise and Fitness

Rutgers Food Innovation Center Releases Findings on Community Farmers Markets

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The Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC), a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station in Bridgeton, has released the findings of a recent study entitled *New Opportunities for New Jersey Community Farmers Markets*. The study, initiated in May 2007, was conducted in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, in order to assess best practices for community farmers markets.

According to Diane Holtaway, Associate Director of Client Services at Rutgers Food Innovation Center, "There has been significant growth in community farmers markets throughout New Jersey in recent years. Over 100 markets exist statewide, which answers consumer demand for fresh locally grown produce and locally made specialty products."

With support from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Rutgers Food Policy Institute, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and funding through a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant, the FIC conducted surveys, personal interviews and focus groups with New Jersey farmers and farm market managers to determine the issues they face, the various ways they overcome them, and the economic opportunities that are possible in a community farmers market. The findings were shared with New Jersey growers, specialty food marketers, farm market managers and potential sponsors in a series of three forums held in Northern, Central and Southern New Jersey.

Key findings of this study provide a clear picture of the actions taken by successful farmers market vendors and managers. The study found that seventy-one percent of farmers that participated in community farmers markets and other wholesale channels reported higher profits from community farmers markets, and one third of those participants surveyed reported that their sales at farmers markets represents at least fifty percent of their gross farm income. Participants overall valued the farmers market venue for its ability to give them a better sense of what the average consumer is looking to purchase. The study also took a look at average sales per week and the cost of participation for a vendor.

Much insight was also gained from farm market managers. The study found that many managers work on a part-time or volunteer basis and see their work as a form of public service in helping to preserve small family farms and providing access to healthy, fresh, locally-grown foods. This study as well as others cited within, have identified the market manager as a key factor to the success of any community farmers market. Markets must rely on a competent manager to organize and operate the market throughout the operational season. Key market manager duties include recruitment, site layout, stall assignment, contracting, risk management, promotion and many other tasks. Research was also done on the average size of a community farmers market and the average hours of operation.

This report should prove highly valuable to those involved, or looking to become involved, in community farmers markets, whether in a vendor or management position. Information is provided for vendors seeking to understand the financial and time commitment they will be

required to make, revenue estimates they might expect and what sort of products consumers are expecting to see at a market. Managers of community farmers markets can glean information regarding the process of starting a market, vendor fees, market promotion, creation of bi-laws, vendor management and much more.

To download the report, please go to <http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/FarmersMarketGuide2009.pdf>. For further information regarding the report, please contact Diane Holtaway, Associate Director, Client Services, Rutgers Food Innovation Center at 856-459-1900, ext. 4514 or at holtaway@njaes.rutgers.edu.

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About Rutgers Food Innovation Center

The Rutgers Food Innovation Center is a unique business incubation and economic development accelerator program that provides business and technology expertise to small and mid-sized food and agribusinesses in New Jersey, and utilizes its outreach capacity to reach the food industry throughout the nation. Clients include farmers and cooperatives, startup food companies, existing small and mid-sized food establishments and retail and foodservice markets. The center's new 23,000-sq.-ft. food incubator facility enables the marketing, development and distribution of new products for the center's clients, and the evaluation of new technologies and processes. FIC is a research and extension center of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. Further information can be found at www.foodinnovation.rutgers.edu.

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