

Oregon Small Farms Technical Report



Oregon Market Assessment Highlights

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Oregon Farmers' Market Assessment Highlights, Summer 2002

As a part of the Northwest Direct Project, the OSU Small Farms Extension program and the Oregon Farmers Market Association (OFMA) conducted three Rapid Market Assessments in 2002. A total of 41 individuals representing 21 markets and organizations participated in the research effort. This report provides highlights from the consumer information and market assessment sections of those RMAs.

The participatory RMA process delivers four outputs:

1. Accurate consumer information (numbers, spending etc.) for individual markets.
2. Detailed outside assessments of market infrastructure, vendors, and atmosphere.
3. Training in low cost and simple research methods that the markets themselves can use.
4. Improved exchange of ideas among farmers' markets across the state.

Since 1998, OSU has used this process to study 14 Oregon markets. No two Oregon markets are the same. The RMA process celebrates the uniqueness of each market while also suggesting areas for improvement. Detailed reports and a comprehensive explanation of the RMA methods are available at:

<http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/techreports.htm>

Selected Shopper Traits and Trends

Corvallis Wednesday Market July 23, 2002: 1500 shoppers and 45 vendors

- Established 1981
- Average shopper spending increased 12% from 1998
- The typical market patron is very loyal, has been coming for many years, likes the market just the way it is, and uses the market as his/her primary source of agricultural produce during the growing season.
- 81% indicated that they had actively recruited others to shop at the market; most had used the quality of the products as the main selling point.

Beaverton Market Saturday August 10, 2002: 10,200 shoppers and 100 vendors

- Established 1988
- 41% of the shoppers came from Beaverton.
- Had the highest average spending per shopping group (\$24.60) for any market in the state that has been studied.
- Seventy percent of the shoppers have been coming for more than 2 years.
- Most of the newer shoppers (less than 2 years) indicated that they learned about the market through **word of mouth**.

Hillsdale Market Sunday August 11, 2002: 2100 shoppers and 26 vendors

- Established 2002
- Has succeeded as a brand new neighborhood market; 3 out of 4 shoppers polled live within 2 miles of the market
- The vast majority (80%) of Hillsdale customers shopped at other markets last year. More than 60% have shopped at other markets this year.
- About 40% of the shoppers are more likely to shop at other local merchants as a result of patronizing the market.

Why each market is worth a visit

All three markets provide a broad array of excellent quality local products, sold directly by producers. In addition, each market has certain elements that set it apart.

The Corvallis Wednesday Market:

- Low-key, friendly, “old-time” atmosphere.
- Superb rural site: on grass and shaded by tall trees.
- Excellent farmer access to market stalls (can pull their vehicles right in).

The Hillsdale Farmers’ Market:

- An additional Sunday market option for metro Portland shoppers and farmers.
- Neighborhood atmosphere.
- Although in its first year, functions like a “veteran” market.

The Beaverton Farmers’ Market:

- Rich profusion of products and marketing strategies.
- Orderly layout and wide aisles accommodate the many shoppers.
- Diversity of customers.

Areas of concern and suggested improvements that came out of the set of three studies:

- More in-market seating so customers can stay longer.
- Additional educational and children’s activities.
- Improved vendor signage, displays and placement of vendors in the market.
- Improved placement of music & demonstrations in the market.
- Ensure that all sampling and food safety regulations are observed.