



Farmers Markets, Local Food Systems and the Social Economy

A Thematic Literature Review

by

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Exchange is, “one of the purest and most primitive forms of human socialization” the sociologist George Simmel wrote in 1900; it creates, “a society, in place of a mere collection of individuals” (Cited in McMillian, p. 9)

Introduction

According to O’Hara & Stagl (2001), *alternative food systems*, often drawing heavily on local and ‘embedded’ markets, have emerged as a response to the dissipating connection between food systems and ecological systems brought about the globalization trend. These alternatives seek to “re-establish direct links between producers and consumers and to re-establish some control over a food system that has become distant and anonymous” (p. 544) as well as “centre around attempts to reclaim some power and legitimacy in food production–consumption” focusing on food’s aesthetics, the ecological, social and economic conditions of its production. (Miele and Murdoch 2002; Morgan et al. 2006 cited in Holloway and Kneafsey, 2007, p. 2).

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, food cooperatives as well as Farmers Markets (FM) are in one sense, methods employed by producers and consumers to “soften the unacceptable face of food capitalism” (Heasman and Lang¹) and assist in reorganizing production, processing and consumption relations of food. As Hinrichs (2000) notes, “[d]irect agricultural markets promise human connection at the place where production and consumption of food converge, an experience not available either to consumers shopping at “superstores” or “hypermarkets” or to farmers selling through conventional wholesale commodity markets” (p. 295).

Within the context of these direct agricultural markets, the increasing numbers of FM in particular demand further attention. The purpose of this report is to explore the FM literature and examine a number of themes and questions that pertain to the role of farmers markets in furthering the development of the social economy and local food systems. Feagan et al (2004) claims “The local food systems literature contends that direct marketing can help a community move beyond the narrow economic transaction by providing sites conducive to social interaction and a broadening of the values located in food decisions” (p. 247). Shaping the social economy and developing local food systems within it begs consumer/producer innovations such as this.

According to Govindasamy (1998) “farmers markets have a unique advantage over the other forms of direct marketing because they are readily moveable to densely populated consumer locations” (p. 1) and this advantage has served them well indeed. The popularity of farmers markets cannot be overlooked. The “one million customers a week” reported at US farmers markets alone (US Department of Agriculture cited in O’Hara and Stagl, 2001) represents at least some desire on the part of both producers and consumers to “resocialize and respatialize food” (Renting, Marsden and Banks, 2003, p. 398). Farmers markets are a key component in the development and support for such alternative production/consumption relationships. From one perspective “[t]he farmers market is considered a means of taking back control from the multinationals and contributing to local communities revitalization” (Sanderson et al, 2005, p. 12).

¹ <http://auspace.athabascau.ca:8080/dspace/bitstream/2149/991/1/MW170212.pdf>

A given local communities revitalization is aided by a number of factors including the focus on face-to-face interactions or personal relationships that assist alternative food systems (Kneafsey and Holloway, 2006) or the emphasis placed on social networks, rather than traditional market relations, as the glue of Short Food Supply Chains (Renting, Marsden and Banks, 2003). The socially charged relations of food exhibited by a number of alternative food system models are particularly relevant to a study of farmers markets since in addition to providing significant economic and community benefits to the people involved and places where they operate, these markets are key sites for “shopping, socializing and culture” (Connell, 2006, p.1), Hinrichs (2000) echoes this point, noting that Farmers Markets “...cause people to congregate and associate” (p. 298)

Furthermore, the ‘public’ aspect of farmers markets is a key pillar in strengthening community food systems at a general level. What Lyson (2000) calls “Civic agriculture”, or “agricultural activities that are tightly linked to a communities economic and social life” relies heavily on “public and collective work” (DeLind, 2002) in which FM can play a vital role. Indeed as Hinrichs notes, “Farmers’ markets are arguably the flagship of civic agriculture, given their widespread distribution throughout the US and their longstanding role both as community interaction and sites for small business development” (Hinrichs, 2000; Warner et al; 1999 cited in Hinrichs, 2000, p. 32). The public and participatory nature of truly civic agricultural systems make farmers markets extremely relevant and definitely worth exploring within the context of the larger movement towards “creating space” (Feenstra, 2001) for a variety of different food systems to emerge.

It is imperative to note that the interaction between FM and local food systems is a mutually constitutive process. Rather than simply seeing FM as the driver of local food systems, the process of interaction is key. As Morris and Buller (2003) note,

“[T]he concentration of output volumes in sales at the farm and at farmers markets suggests that the growth of the local food sector has been largely contingent upon the emergence and multiplication of such new nodes of producer-consumer interchange. Second, it is significant that the dynamic for establishing these new outputs is coming essentially from the food producers themselves and not from other actors in the food chain. Third, the relative abandonment of the more conventional output channels, such as wholesalers and food processors, implies that the local food sector is becoming increasingly independent of them, operating within its own organizational food-chain framework” (p. 562).

This process identifies producer-consumer interaction, the innovation of food producers (in many cases assisted by consumer preference and feedback) as well as the creation of a unique and mostly independently controlled organization for food production and distribution. These three things are at the root of advancement in the local food sector.

Overall, categorizations such as alternative food systems (Kneafsey and Holloway), civic agriculture (Lyson, 2000), Short Food Supply Chains (Renting et al, 2003; Ross; 2007) all attempt, in some way, to describe, map and measure the variety of production, processing and consumption relationships emerging in response to the host of problems associated with the industrial, global agricultural system. In their myriad of forms and occupying a vast range on the spectrum between small/local and large/global, these models share the common goal of reducing the distance and anonymity that is central to the globalized food system by reconnecting agricultural activities to the social, economic and ecological wellbeing of a given community.

Farmers markets appear to be a significant component of these models. As will be explored throughout the course of this paper, further research related to a number of pressing questions will assist in evaluating the extent to which FM can capitalize further on the numerous advantages they have.

Structure of the paper

The first section outlines some of the many definitions given to the FM. Key themes will be identified. Following this, a brief discussion of the market concept, the history of selling in public spaces as well as a brief look at FM in other places around the world will help situate FM as a part of history and current times as well as touch on their existence as a global phenomena.

Section two seeks to outline the investment in Farmers Markets; more specifically, public and private contributions to the things farmers markets need most: access to land and buildings, infrastructure, administration. Furthermore, this section seeks to explore what role the farmers/vendors themselves have in this investment and whether or not it is a grassroots or top down approach to the procurement of the necessary operating resources. In addition, some insight into which group is driving this investment, producers or consumers, will be presented.

Section three examines key themes emerging from the literature around FM. These themes help situate the benefits and challenges of the FM structure in relation to producers, consumers, communities, municipalities, food safety and small business.

Section four offers a brief look at the third sector, the social economy and explores the emergence of FM within the context of a social economic development initiative. The chapter continues on to define community food systems and offers a look at the role of FM working with strong CFS. The chapter concludes with some suggestions for future research to explore the role of FM in driving CFS.

Section five examines the FM in specific settings; in British Colombia and Alberta. The origins, structures, functions and other related features are explored.

Section six offers reflections on what has not been written about in the current literature; such things as the ambiguity of employing social capital as means to map and measure the social benefits of FM, debates about FM as features of agro tourism, the urban phenomena of direct marketing as well as the limited accessibility of local agricultural products.

Farmers markets: Definitions

Defining a dynamic and context specific phenomena such as a FM is always a difficult endeavor. With the wealth of studies about FM in recent years, constructed categories generated by researchers often mean that differing elements are emphasized. From one perspective, this further complicates the defining process.

Tunbridge (1992 cited in Tiemann, 2004) identifies four different types of urban farmers' markets and points out that the spaces they occupy are very different. These are *traditional*, *public*, *festival* and *farmer's* markets. These four different categories 'locate' the markets in different places (*traditional* markets in "un-revitalized portions of the city versus *public* "in new or refurbished buildings or part of urban revitalization" compared to *farmers*, "usually" at the edge of a city and often in an open space compared to *festival* markets "aimed at tourists...where the farmers stalls blend into conventional retailing and boutiques") as well as accord them

different objectives (i.e. aimed at tourists versus traditional retailing of vendor produced items to local consumers) (p.45).

Drawing from this categorization, Tiemann (2004) separates farmers' markets into two kinds, also with different spatial arrangements and differing objectives. He refers to these two types as "indigenous" and "experience" markets. Tiemann claims that this distinction comes from observed differences in the "economic functions" of the two types of markets as well as the differences in "self governing rules and different enforcement mechanisms" (p. 46).

In addition to categorizations such as the ones above, simpler definitions of FM do exist in the literature. Payne (2002), for example, employs a very straightforward definition:

"A farmers market is defined as a common facility or area where multiple farmers/growers gather on a regular recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and other farm products directly to customers" (p.173).

Halloway and Kneafsey (2000) offer this description that includes 'the idea' of the market as part of the definition:

"FM in the UK are specialist markets trading in 'locally produced' products, focusing largely on food (rather than crafts for example) which is either locally grown or incorporates locally grown ingredients [...] generally food must be sold by the producer, or a family member or employee. The idea is to promote 'face-to-face' interaction between producers and potential consumers" (p. 286).

In a M.A. thesis exploring local food systems in Vancouver, CA, Jacobsen (2001) offers this definition, one that explicitly 'separates' FM from other types of markets.

"A farmers market is a food market with the primary function of providing a direct marketing outlet for local farmers and food processors. Farmers markets are typically open-air markets, operated on a seasonal and weekly or bi-weekly basis. Farmers markets by this definition may be distinguished from public markets, which serve primarily food retailers, and are operated on a more permanent (year-round, daily) basis. (Jacobson, 2001, p 10).

According to the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, a farmers market is:

"A common area where farmers and other producers gather on a regular, recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, baked and processed food and local handcrafts directly to consumers."²

What makes defining farmers markets complicated is the diversity between different forms of traditional produce markets; wholesale markets, so called 'green-grocers', or producer-only markets. Debates about what criteria makes a FM an 'authentic market' and a desire to maintain a space for such markets have led some organizations to develop societies or groups which certify markets according to certain criteria (FARMA in the UK, BCAF in British Columbia).

² <http://www.iaig.ca/buybc/farmers.htm>

If a market exhibits the characteristics and is approved, it can become a member. This method of FM branding may help the public differentiate between the various retail forms of farm products.

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (AARD) defines farmers' markets as, "Common facilities or areas where several farmers/growers gather on a regular, recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and other farm products directly to consumers." (AARD 2003a: 1). A more general definition, from Watson and Studdert (2006: 3) reads:

...markets are key sites of public space for many localities, and potentially offer opportunities not only for local economic development and employment, but also for social interaction and connection, social inclusion, the mingling of different cultures and the building of a sense of local community.

Indeed, the latter definition brings to bear a recurring sentiment in the literature on FM: that "in addition to being a place to find local, seasonal food, farmers markets [are] also places to come together to build community" (Connell et al. 2006: 14). Thus, attributes that draw consumers and vendors to engage in local markets, include the friendliness of the vendors, the social atmosphere in the market, live music, meeting friends, and activities available for children (AARD 2003a).

Other key elements that permeate the variety of definitions include the role of "direct sales" from producer to consumer. This is a key tenant of FM definitions. Also, the recurring nature of the event. Although some definitions specify weekly or bi-weekly meetings, I believe it is enough to note that it is a recurring event without having to offer strict days of operation. This separates FM from a random one-day, informal sale of produce in a city park and captures, to a certain extent, the important ritual inherent in market days. Lastly, the fresh or 'local' character of the products is almost always emphasized. This part of the definition attempts to locate and promote the FM as 'alternative' or unique from the dominant methods of food procurement for most urban dwellers. It is both a promise of 'quality' and marketing strategy.

These three themes paint a fairly solid picture of what a FM is. However, Lawson and Guthrie (2004) feel that although most definitions imply it, through the emphasis on community and local linkages, it is essential to note that FM are also "the domain of small business" (p. 12). They compete against 'big business' by their adaptability, diversity and flexibility; all characteristics of most FM. According to the authors, a holistic definition of FM would place specific emphasis on the small business side of the operations.

Although definitions may vary within the literature, it would be a stretch to claim that definitions are *contested*. Indeed, as it is clear from the thematic analysis above, there are more commonalities than discrepancies. [A more 'contested' definition worthy of debate would revolve around what counts as 'local' in terms of the pool of producers attending markets although this may be beyond the scope of this paper].

Section 1: From Street Markets to Farmer Markets

"From the consumers point of view the local market was the cheapest, most popular and most convenient way of buying food not produced by the family in the garden or allotment or the pigsty in the backyard. The growing number of retail shops met the daily requirements especially of the suburban household, and supplemented the markets in town [...] It was not until the latter

half of the nineteenth century that the larger business unit in the wholesale and retail trades began to control a sizeable proportion of the trade in meat and vegetables” (Blackman, p. 97)

The ‘market’ concept

As McMillian writes in the opening pages of his book *Reinventing the Bazaar: A Natural History of Markets*, “Markets have been around as long as history and have been incessantly reinvented” (McMillian, p. 5). This ‘reinvention’ makes the task of tracking the evolution of this traditional form of commerce quite challenging regardless of the country of study. To get a general sense of the market concept, McMillian presents the very idea of the ‘market as participatory’. He writes:

Participation in the exchange is voluntary; both buyer and seller are able to veto any deal. They are separate entities. Controlling their own resources, the participants in a market, in deciding how those resources are to be used, are not obliged to follow others orders. They are free to make decisions- to buy, to sell, to exert effort, to invest- that reflect their own preferences. Their choices are not completely free though; they are constrained by the extent of their resources and by the rules of the marketplace. If people lack autonomy, then their dealings are not by this definition, market dealings. Where an authority relationship exists- one party is in charge of the other or a higher authority is in charge of them both, than any transactions are of some other category; they are not market transactions (p. 5-6).

Although McMillian’s proposition comes from a traditional economic perspective, it is clear that the emphasis on the voluntary exchanges shed some light on the modern concept of the farmers market. Farmers are not obliged to sell their produce to consolidated wholesalers at set prices because they obtained seed from a company that is vertically integrated. Likewise, customers cannot expect prices to remain constant, since fluctuations in seasonal climates and various other environmental factors can influence the pricing and/or availability of products. Products are not sold on a speculative basis and consumers are free to not purchase products they feel do not meet individual needs for standards and quality. In one sense, the farmers market is a ‘market’ in its purest form- producers and consumers selling and buying voluntarily according to their own needs and desires.

However, on the other hand, farmers markets are not markets according to this understanding because, at the most basic level, the farmers and the consumers are not merely “separate entities” simply controlling their own resources. As Kirwan (2006) writes, “the human level interaction between the producers and the consumers concerned leads to some form of mutual commitment” (p. 304). It could be argued that producers and consumers at farmers markets often see themselves as intimately connected; two points in a food system or food cycle. The choices and actions of one party do affect the other party. In fact, the two parties *rely* upon the actions of the other to make the market what it desires to be; an alternative food system model offering a different form of traditional buyer and seller market relations.

A general web search will yield various claims about the history of farmers’ markets. These statements suggest such things as, “farmers markets have always existed even since mankind farmed the land”³ or “Farmers’ markets are one of the oldest forms of direct marketing

³ <http://www.farmers-markets.co.uk/>

by small farmers⁴. “Farmers’ markets belong to an ancient tradition of urban food retailing⁵” or “A weekly market day is a part of normal life in villages and town squares throughout the world”.⁶ Proclamations such as these beg important questions about whether a historical exploration of farmers markets actually calls for a two-fold examination; the history of selling produce in public spaces and the history of the ‘modern’ farmers market.

Street Markets

Tiemann suggests “informal markets generally occupy the space between the formal and illegal economies in ways that are more flexible than possible in the formal economy (Cross, 2000, cited in Tiemann, 2004, p 44). This is, in one sense, an advantage for farmers markets that are often used by small producers and consumers interested in circulating food dollars into local economies. Tiemann (2004) goes on to note that although most literature about street markets “concerns markets in the third world, farmers and flea markets in the first world are also mentioned as informal markets that operate in ways similar to third world street markets” (p. 44). It is clear that global street markets, often given the association with the ‘black market’ or the ‘informal economy’ may in fact serve many of the same functions as the modern farmers market held in a grassy field or parking lot. However, rules, regulations, order and organization, traits which characterize farmers markets in many countries around the globe often serve as the means of making the distinction between ‘genuine’ farmers markets and other food markets. According to the UK directory of FM⁷, the simple criteria for genuine markets are; producers must be local, producers must sell only their own produce and local produce must be the norm. In addition to a criteria checklist, semantics and perception also influence what counts as a ‘genuine market’ and what does not.

Town Markets

Exploring the history of traditional, town markets may offer some insight into the waves experienced by ‘farmers markets’ based on changes in food production, distribution, and customer preference

In a key article exploring the changes in food supply in Sheffield, England during the industrial period, Blackman (1962) chronicles the new structures that developed around fruit, vegetable and meat industries. She claims that in the early years, the town market provided the only opportunity for sales, in essence, making this market structure a necessity rather than an alternative food-trading model. As Blackman notes, at the time of early industrialization and the food requirements for growing urban populations, “Any other system of trading in the essential items of diet was impossible before the extensive use of preservatives, packaging and refrigeration lengthened the period available for distributors” (p. 84). In the case of fruit and vegetables, “there were virtually no intermediately manufacturing or processing stages for the middlemen to operate; cleaning, grading, and packing were rudimentary until the very end of the

⁴ <http://www.localharvest.org/>

⁵ <http://www.answers.com/topic/farmers-market>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmers_market

⁷ <http://www.farmersmarket.co.uk/>

nineteenth century and usually done by the grower and his family. There were two major problems of distribution: the perishable and the seasonal nature of most of the commodities” (p. 92). These ‘problems of distribution’ created challenges for producers and began to give the competitive advantage to middlemen in the emerging wholesale sector. For example, the cost of producers bringing one or two carts of produce to the market needed to be weighed against the costs of selling to larger wholesalers that were beginning to dominate food exchanges. “...retail units were beginning to mobilize their superior capital resources to take advantage of these changes in the wholesale section and to bring the consumer a wider variety of goods to choose from” (p. 91).

On a similar plane, Scola (1975) suggests that historical data for the fruit and vegetable trade in Manchester markets in the mid 1800’s is difficult to gather. Early directories may have overlooked the fruit and vegetable vendors since many of them “were farmers and market gardeners who came into Manchester, mainly in the summer to sell their own produce” as well as the numbers being “supplemented by a number of casual sellers” (p. 164). However, Scola claims that up until the 1850’s “this sort of produce was mainly retailed from market stalls” (p. 164) Further theorizing by Scola suggests that fruit and vegetables sellers in particular continued to use market stalls as their main retail outlet until conditions enabled them to set up a shop. Certainly by the early 1900’s the majority of them had moved to small retailing outlets.

Both of these studies suggest that in terms of food sales ‘shifting’ from markets stalls to more formal retail outlets, fruit and vegetable sales held out the longest. It is also clear that fruit and vegetable vendors in the mid 1800’s faced many of the same challenges that small producers face today; those of seasonality or the perishable nature of fresh produce; questions about the ‘cost’ of bringing small lots to the market and sitting with it all day versus selling to a wholesaler for a slightly lower price but reducing time spent in sales.

Farmers markets: North America

According to Sanderson (2005), “the tradition of public markets was brought to North America from Europe and spread across the continent with European settlement” (Spitzer and Baum, 1995, cited in Sanderson, 2005, p. 2) and the first documented farmers market in America occurred in the 17th century”. (Sommer, 1980 cited in Sanderson, 2005, p.2). Shakow (1981) reports that “municipal markets” followed urban settlement of colonial America, the Boston market opening in 1658 and New York in 1656. By 1918, it was reported that 128 markets were operating in 237 cities with populations over 30,000. According to Shakow, of 237 markets in the early 1900’s, 233 of these incorporated direct sales, while the rest did include some wholesaling. In addition to the municipal markets, cities such as New Orleans and Baltimore operated “neighborhood markets” catering to the specific needs of individual communities. Shakow claims that in 1930’s, Baltimore farmers had to drive less than 10 miles to the city center “and still less to various neighborhoods” (p. 69).

Brown (2002) reports that, “the growth in popularity of farmers markets has been variously attributed to factors of changing consumer interest and the changing economies of agriculture” (p. 167). In addition, what Sanderson (2005) refers to as the “market culture” (p.12) and all the associations that this culture carries with it, in one sense, hearken to an intimate connection between the past and the present. Indeed, Hinrichs notes, “Retail farmers markets in the US are not a new phenomenon. Indeed this was the way farmers marketed most food to consumers

before the rise of the modern grocery store and large supermarket (Atkinson and Williams, 1994; Clancy, 1997 cited in Hinrichs, 2000, p. 298)". Global, or at least continental wide food procurement and distribution following WWII meshed nicely with the purchasing power of supermarket chains (Maggos, 1987, cited in Hinrichs, 2000) essentially displacing direct marketing, promoting its 'inefficiencies' in comparison to the complicated commodity chains moving food products around the globe. Gale (1997) contends "direct selling was once a common marketing method in the United States, but declined in importance as the Nation urbanized and increased its consumption of processed foods (p. 19). Shakow (1981) also adds the development of refrigeration, suburban development schemes and the conversion of market districts to initiatives with high tax value. As a result of the decline of "producer oriented markets" coupled with the shift toward of "consumer oriented markets servicing a much wider area and reflecting the growing domination of food distribution by chain outlets" prices for fresh fruit and vegetables experienced a significant rise (p. 69-70).

Despite the fact that "fewer than 100 markets survived the supermarket explosion of the 1970 and 1980's (Govindasamy, 1998, p.1), today, farmers markets in North America are flourishing. Gillespie et al (2006) note that the changing "social climate" of the last thirty years; a climate emphasizing healthfulness and freshness has 'rebirthed' the farmers' market movement. Coster (2004) refers to these as "new generation farmers markets". In addition, the Farmer to Consumer Direct marketing Act of 1976 in the United States contributed significantly to their renewed vigor (Hamilton, 2002, cited in Gillespie et al (2006).

An accurate count of the number of farmers markets in the US is difficult to make since according to Brown (2002) wholesale markets and farmers markets are often grouped together in counts without distinction. The USDA website for agricultural marketing⁸ puts the number of farmers markets in the US at 4,685 as of August 2008. According to Payne (2002) slight differences in counts may be in part due to surveys that do not capture "some informal markets that do not meet on a regular recurring basis" (Payne, 2002). For the purposes of this paper, the national directory of farmers markets (USDA- AMS marketing services division, 2008) will be taken as the most accurate count. This directory notes exponential growth in farmers' markets in the last 14 years. From 1,755 in 1994, the number now stands at 4,685 with an increase of 6.8 percent in the last two years⁹. Feagan et al (2004) reports that Canada has seen significant growth as well, with 425 markets double that of 1980 (p. 235).

UK markets

Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) note that FM are a recent phenomena in the UK, with the first opening in Bath in 1997" They suggest that the name "Farmers' Market" originated in the United States...but that the concept is little different to that of the 6,000 or so weekly markets in France.. In effect, FM represent the re-establishment of an old tradition that almost died out in Post-War Britain" (MAFF/FRCA, 1999 cited in Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000, p. 286).

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<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5072472&acct=frmrdirnkt>

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateS&navID=WholesaleandFarmersMarkets&leftNav=WholesaleandFarmersMarkets&page=WFMFarmersMarketGrowth&description=Farmers%20Market%20Growth&acct=frmrdirnkt>

According to Christie et al (2003), a mere six years after the opening of the first market in 1997, there are now 450 farmers markets in the UK, doubling in the past two years with “.an approximate annual turnover of £166.3 million, more than double that reported in 2000 (NFU, 2002, 2000 cited in Christie et al, 2003, p. 201). According to a UK web publication¹⁰ linked to the National Farmers Retail & Market Association (FARMA) there are now (2008) reported to be over 500 farmers markets in the country, with over half of those markets certified according to the criteria of locally produced products, direct sales from producer to consumer and other common features of most farmers markets.

Asia and India

Rengasamy et al (2003) study of farmers market in three Indian states points out that “access to markets is essential for increasing agricultural production and farmers incomes” (p. 27) since traditional vegetable marketing “revolves around central markets where commission agents act as middlemen and retain 10% of all transactions [...] producers are highly dependent on commission agents” (p. 25). The launching of state initiated farmers markets in three Indian states in 1999 challenged this dependency. According to Renegasamy et al (2003) “By 2000, 95 such markets had been established in towns and cities and over 75,000 farmers had been issued cards authorizing them to sell their produce in the markets” (p. 25). Support for the program comes in various forms from the state. Rengasamy reports that construction costs for market development are covered by the state and that at the beginning of the venture, “farmers initially benefited from free transport for their vegetables on state corporation buses which were re-routed to provide early morning direct connections between feeder villages and their designated market” (p. 27). Although a change in government has discontinued this bus service and in fact has put the whole farmer’s market initiative on hold due to questions about its “cost effectiveness” and whether or not the markets benefit their “primary target groups- producers and consumers” (p.27), it appears that in addition to the motivations of small farmers to have access to direct markets, the support of the state really enabled 95 markets to be established and operational within a year. Furthermore, regardless of the selling aspect of the farmers markets, “there is no doubt that farmers’ markets have had a positive impact on producers’ practices” (p. 28). The influence on production practices as a result of participation in the market can be attributed to the emphasis placed on markets as sites of cultural and knowledge exchange. As Rengasamy notes:

Experience sharing and communication among farmers is stimulated by farmers markets and includes information on cultivation techniques and crop varieties, exchanging information on demand for specific produce and setting up *chit* (rotating savings) groups. These relationships expand farmers’ social networks and increase their access to financial and non financial peer support, which is especially important for small and marginal producers (p. 28).

Furthermore, this study of farmers markets in India offers a look at the multiple factors that affect marketing and food procurement decisions. Three distinct marketing channels exist; the central market, local traders and farmers’ market. “Producers tend to use all three, but at

¹⁰ <http://www.farmersmarkets.net/>

different times of the year and in different combinations depending on the volume of their production” (p. 28).

Latin America

As Schneider (1945) notes in a study of marketing methods in Peru before, during and after the Second World War, “The municipal market was the meeting place where producer sold direct to consumer. There was very little sales promotion. In fact, the sale itself was often incidental. The market was a social institution, a place to visit, and an opportunity to get away from loneliness...” (p. 262).

In more recent times, Reardon & Berdegue’s (2002) study of supermarkets identifies four types of food retailers in Latin America. These are independent small service stores, small self-service stores (smaller than supermarkets) and supermarkets/hypermarkets. In addition to these ‘stores’ there are also

‘Traditional markets’ (open-air or covered) that vary from ‘plaza markets’ in the centre of towns or neighborhoods that have rows of small retailers or a mix of retailers and wholesalers, to ‘street fairs’. The latter come under a variety of names depending on the country, roughly translating into public access, open-air street fairs and mobile markets: *feira livre* in Portuguese and *feria libre* in Spanish, or *tianguis* in Nahuatl in Mexico. Street fairs are essentially smaller versions of plaza markets, but focused on perishables, that move from neighborhood to neighborhood or village to village on a regular schedule” (p. 372).

They suggest that supermarkets/hypermarkets, together with large-scale food manufacturers, have significantly changed agri-food markets in the region, noting the supermarket’s dominance. “By 2001 they had a population-weighted average of 60% of food retailing” in most of the largest/highest income countries in the region while they capture between 20-40 percent in lower income countries (p. 373). As a result of these changes, especially in the last decade, “the losers have been the small traditional stores and plaza markets” (p. 374).

In a study that documents the inspiration for farmers markets in Costa Rica, Diaz Knauf et al (1992) suggests that low prices offered to producers in the late 1970’s, lack of distribution channels for growers, an overabundance of crops not meeting industry standards and of course, market monopolies by intermediaries (p. 111) all spurred the 31,000 oranges sold on a street corner in San Jose, 1979. As of 1992, there were reported to be 38 farmers markets countrywide with 6,000-8,000 growers serving over 100,000 customers (p. 111). This emphasizes the fact that some FM begin as, or still are, “reactionary spaces” (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000). Their root inspiration stems from the numerous challenges facing small to medium sized producers the world over. FM can offer them an alternative space where all the unique aspects of FM are emphasized (direct sales, different grades of product, an appropriate marketing channel for small producers) rather than using these aspects as the means for exclusion.

Section 2: Investment in Farmers Markets

Food System Infrastructure

Gillespie et al (2006) refers to “Food System Infrastructure” as the “material phenomena, both natural and built, organizations and enterprises, individual skills and knowledge, and social relations and networks” (p. 67). Although they locate FM under “organizations and enterprises”, FM are characterized by a certain degree of each of these four interacting elements. They require built infrastructure, assist in the transfer of skills and knowledge as well as demand the integral formation of social relations and networks that are part of their very operating structure. Therefore, exploratory studies of FM as inspiring, generating and supporting their own ‘food system’ infrastructure may lend insight into a host of other alternative arrangements.

Location, Land, Buildings

Three key themes will be addressed with regards to the investment of physical space.

- 1) Leases
- 2) Donated space
- 3) Access to indoor services (washrooms, electricity, etc.)

These three things are important investments that communities and municipalities can make into FM operations.

Administration

Three levels of administration are commonly found in the FM structure. These could be referred to as ground level, organizational level, and collaborative level. A paid or unpaid site manager would fulfill the requirements of first level, a voluntary, vendor based board of directors the second, and the connection to a larger FM organization (e.g. BCAFM) would cover the collaborative level of operations. Although Payne (2002) points out that the majority of the US FM surveyed in 2000 have a vendor operated board of directors [and most or all would have a site manager] “smaller markets were also operated by paid managers, government agencies, and nonprofit groups” (p. 174). This finding suggests that smaller markets may require not only the financial, but also the administrative support drawn from resources outside of the FM vendor community.

State support

According to Connell (2006), “relations with municipal governments, insofar as municipal governments can play a key role for securing market location are critical to the success of farmers’ markets” (p. 9). Connell goes on to note that projected increases in market size and

popularity must be supported by city officials or FM risk being moved from location to location. Although Connell's emphasis is on the role of government in assisting with issues surrounding location and tenure, financial support from municipal, state or provincial governments, or in kind support (such as funding educational programs for vendors and managers) can also make a significant impact towards the stability of FM. For example, in the United States, initiatives such as the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) and the Farmers Market Consortium are both supported by the USDA agricultural marketing service (although the consortium is a public private partnership). The National Farmers Retail and Market Association (FARMA) in the UK and the British Columbia Association of Farmers Markets (BCAFM) all represent coalitions working towards developing and/or strengthening FM through networking, advocacy and education. However, the extent to which financial support is given is not explicitly noted.

Public/Private Partnerships

In some cases, public/private partnerships are an attractive option since they attempt to balance community needs and accountability to governments. An example of such support is The Farmers Market Coalition in the U.S.:

“The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) was created in response to requests from a rapidly expanding industry for information, resources and representation at state and federal levels. We applaud the decentralized growth of farmers markets. However, we recognize that many operate solely with volunteer and part-time staff, lacking the fiscal infrastructure to sustain themselves over the long haul. Moreover, they navigate through a patchwork of local, state, and federal policies that serve to undermine their growth. And yet, farmers markets continue to proliferate because farmers, consumers, and communities want more choices in their food system” (USDA agricultural marketing services website)

Civic Institutions and the Social Economy

In some cases, FM must reach to civic institutions and community groups for financial support. According to Stephanson et al (2008), planning to avoid market failure can include smaller or shrinking markets seeking out operating revenue in the form of governmental support or financial contributions from civic institutions like faith groups, health organizations and environmental groups. In some cases like the Quesnel FM, Connell (2006) suggests that ‘local development agencies’ can provide significant support for FM. Organizations within the social economy can play a significant role in, among other things, financial support for market start up or to ‘boost’ markets on the verge of disappearance. It's important to note that markets do not have to wait until they are in a crisis to seek out such support. A market partnering with a social economy initiative from its origins may put a committed market population at ease. This ease may come from knowing that they have secure financial support to fall back on. This assurance can help them through the first few years where vendor numbers and sales figures may make these new markets incapable of being self supporting economic entities.

Role of Farmers/Vendors in FM Investment

An important idea to explore is what role farmers themselves can play in the investment process and what resources they can offer. Connell (2006) points out that since most FM managers are paid to focus on the day-to-day operations and organizations of the market site; *market development* falls to volunteer members of the market board (p. 7). This market board is most often composed of dedicated vendors, many of them farmers themselves. According to Connell, the successes of FM might be related to the commitment and interest showed by volunteers devoted to the idea of furthering support for FM. Furthermore, since many farmers markets have remained “independent from provincial and federal agricultural organizations”, Connell contends that this has driven vendors to find out their own information about product or marketing diversification (p. 7). This search for ‘need specific information’ adds a dimension of strength to FM planning. Farmers ‘investment’ in FM in this sense is more knowledge intensive than it is capital intensive. Despite the innovations taken by vendors and producers alike, Connell suggests, “independence and resourcefulness are recurring themes in relation to producer operations as well as farmers’ markets but these qualities seem to have been developed to some degree out of necessity” (p. 9). Whether or not, or to what degree farmers/vendors should seek a larger role in FM investment (e.g. capital- perhaps purchasing shares in the market thus transforming it to a sort of producer retail cooperative or via knowledge intensive methods i.e. whether or not farmers should actively seek connections with provincial and federal agricultural organizations to assist with marketing and/or product development strategies) is a looming question based on the Connell’s observations above.

Section 3: Themes Emerging from the Literature

“No supermarket will ever be able to compete with a farmers’ market in terms of freshness, aesthetics and community ties” (Halweil, 2004 cited in Smith, 20076, p. 852).

Social Learning, Innovation and Product Testing

In a study that attempts to reach beyond the motivations of consumers and vendors at retail farmers markets, Hinrichs, Gillespie & Feenstra (2004) focus their attention on “how farmers markets shape the business practices and enterprise development of vendors” (p. 32). They argue that FM are good venues to encourage social learning and innovation by vendors mostly because FM ‘produce’ constant interaction with, and inspiration from other vendors and customers. The social aspects, as well as new marketing strategies that result from such innovation make farmers markets key institutions in generating collective knowledge about how to adapt marketing practices to best suit the dynamic climate of current food systems. “With growing industrialization and concentration in the food and agriculture sector, local and direct marketing, although not strictly “new” represents a form of innovation. Products may be innovative in their nutritional, ecological, and aesthetic departure from the standardized, globally sourced fare of supermarkets” (Hinrichs, 2004, p. 35).

Despite this contention, they suggest that the modest levels of social learning and innovation observed in their study stem from a number of factors. These are the knowledge about

innovation or marketing held by vendors before their experiences at the market, the time consuming nature of shifts in marketing strategies especially for vendors who are not simply full time farmers, an outright rejection of innovative practices based on “personal disinclination” (p. 53) or because economic interests are overshadowed by the enjoyment of the market as simply a social event. They suggest that FM can encourage innovation that is not simply driven by economics and that with the support of market associations, markets spaces can become active sites of progressive learning, both for vendors and consumers alike. Instead of “farmers being reduced to *workers* whose primary tasks are to follow production procedures outlined from above (Lyson & Guptil, 2004, p. 372), the various levels of exchange at the FM situate the role of farmers/vendor/consumer interaction in a different light.

In a similar vein, Rengasamy et al (2003) suggests that farmers markets have an important advantage in their ability to provide economically ‘safe’ opportunities for product testing. During fieldwork in three Indian states, Renegasamy (2003) notes that:

Farmers’ markets provide the opportunity to sell vegetables previously not marketed, either because they were considered as “weeds” in the villages as in the case of greens, or because the production volume was so small that they were used only for household consumption. Hence, even the farmers with little access to resources have been able to increase their incomes” (p.29).

This evidence suggests that FM can provide ample opportunities for ‘market research’ that is not ‘sterile or anonymous’ but instead is constantly re-negotiated through the everyday producer/producer/ or producer/consumer relations.

The importance of ‘clusters’, or geographically proximate groups linked through competition and collaboration can also be seen as a key tool in progressive learning for clustered companies, or FM vendors in the case at hand. According to Porter (2000) “Proximity, arising from the co-location of companies, customers, suppliers, and other institutions, amplifies all of the pressures to innovate and upgrade” (p 21). FM stand out as both a cluster on their own and part of a larger scheme of cluster development which is beneficial for local economic development. The clustered locations of competing yet complementary businesses (i.e., individual vendors at a FM) inspire innovation because new buyer needs can be directly observed as well as the fact that changes in technology or distribution methods are openly displayed (p. 21-22). However, Porter also cautions against seeing clusters as inevitably producing high levels of social learning. He points out that:

“Under certain circumstances, however, cluster participation can retard innovation. When a cluster shares a uniform approach to competing, a sort of groupthink often reinforces old behaviors, suppresses new ideas, and creates rigidities that prevent adoption of improvements. Clusters might not support truly radical innovation, which tends to invalidate the existing pools of talent, information, and infrastructure (p. 22).

This dual role of clusters highlights the importance of reflexivity on the part of the individual companies and good communication with the other clustered elements. Constant reflection, analysis, visioning and strategic planning is key to recognizing the signs of progression or the symptoms of regression.

Another aspect of learning is the fact that FM provide an opportunity to help diversify the roles of the producer. According to Sanderson (2005), “the producer performs all supply chain functions, including storing, grading, marketing, and retailing” (p. 5). Furthermore, the exposure for consumers also makes innovation exciting. The ‘business incubation’ inherent in the FM structure can make interactions “an adventure” for consumers as well (Sanderson, 2005, p. 9) since they become actively involved in the day-to-day dialogue and progression of ideas and products.

Market Classification

How can markets be categorized? What can these categorizes tell us about what space markets occupy?

Based on a study of 61 markets in California, Tiemann (2004) employs the categories of “indigenous” markets and “experience” markets. There are economic differences, differences in regulations, differences in motivation and different demographics of both vendors and customers. Indigenous markets are generally smaller, selling seasonal produce at low prices, organized by vendors and serve the economic function of “providing low priced, seasonal produce to people who grew up in households with large gardens but who no longer garden themselves” (p. 48). Experience markets on the other hand are geared towards a different customer set and include craft vendors, larger crowds and “have responded to changes in the market for fresh, local produce by offering ‘more sophisticated produce’ and promoting more leisure activity than indigenous markets” (p. 50). The vendors and customers are generally younger, the prices are higher and the variety of products offered is greater. In general, the classification schemes of markets seem to depend on the function of the market and the intentions of the market. The function or use of the market is a key theme to examine.

Uses of the Market: Marginality and Functionality

Smithers, Lamarche & Joseph (2008) approached their study of Ontario farmers markets with questions about the uses of the market; “particularly with reference to the fundamental distinction between basic provisioning for staple foods and the consumption of ancillary or amenity items” (p. 343).

Employing a shopping list as one indicator, Smithers et al (2008) found that around half of the customers had prepared such a list while a large portion of consumers took a ‘wait and see’ type approach that was influenced by weekly supply and “in recognition of the social dynamic where a lively conversation with a vendor, or a sudden inclination based on the appearance of a food item might trigger (or inhibit) a purchase” (p. 343), They report ‘intentionality’ in the shopping but claim that it played out as needs based or the commitment to a certain vendor.

Key questions such as the one noted by Smithers et al (2008) above connect to a number of other concerns in the literature, mostly having to do with the ‘marginal’ status of farmers markets or the consumption of the market experience, rather than the products alone, being a driving force behind consumers choices to engage with FM.

Hinrichs (2000) identifies the fact that while it is assumed that direct marketing schemes, such as FM and CSA programs are inherently socially embedded practices and thus not governed

by purely economic or personal motivations; Hinrichs suggests that all transactions are to a certain extent influenced by economic factors as well as personal concerns. Indeed, “sometimes what producers are selling to consumers at farmers markets is, in part, the aura of personal relations and social connection. Embeddedness itself then becomes some of the value added in the farmers’ market experience” (p. 299).

Echoing this, Miele (2006 cited in Smithers et al 2008) suggests that in some cases, the novelty of “shopping with friends in a friendly atmosphere” transforms the FM experience itself into a commodity (p. 340). Furthermore, Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) contend, “the role of FM in new forms of consumption may be associated with leisure and lifestyle [...] ‘a process of positional consumption’ due to their relative expense” (p. 298).

This recurring sentiment implies that concerns surrounding not only *why* consumers attend farmers markets but also *what they hope to consume* is a key question. This question is intricately related to the how FM can move from a position of marginality, often touted as a ‘weekend novelty’ to a more dominant and routine venue for the purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Another thing to consider is that two groups of people (consumers and vendors) interact in the FM setting, often with differing roles, expectations and motivations. According to Kirwan (2006), while most vendors in his study “invariably said that they enjoyed the experience of selling at FM’s, none lost sight of their underlying commercial motivation for attending” (p. 309). Whether or not producers, in the hopes of future sales cultivate personal relations cannot be confirmed. Kirwan (2006) admits that although such dynamics may exist, consumers tended to focus on the social interactions, perhaps “suspending their understanding of the commercial realities in order to create an aura of home-made or bucolic exchange, in which non-commercial values [are] also of significance” (p. 311).

The Importance of the Public Sphere

Gillespie et al (2006) suggest that the role FM play in making local food more visible is at the root of re-establishing local food systems. “Beyond just making the local food supply visible, farmers markets make local food *suppliers* visible so they can be more valued by community members” (p. 78). They claim that FM are “grounded in public life” (p. 70) in an open and accessible way compared to a supermarket. Furthermore, the weekly and seasonal ritual of the market punctuating public life contributes to the education of consumers and observers about the “limits and possibilities” of local food (p. 71). These observations underscore the crucial role played by public space in FM success, as well as some larger values associated with the public sphere in general.

In a good example of this, Tiemann (2008) contends that it is important to not lose active public space, which FM are a part of because they teach people things like common courtesy, patience and respect. Although seemingly a small detail, he also suggests that since FM are kept clean and neat by vendors, consumers experience public places that are clean and neat and this may help inspire such values for other public places. Indeed, “Since many grower-only markets are held one or two days a week in places that have other uses on other days, the shoppers become only one of a number of groups that adopt that place as theirs. Realizing that others also use their space will increase shoppers’ awareness of the complexity of their community (p. 480)”. In some way then, purposeful interactions in public space cannot be detached from

community values.

Beyond values, there is also the social component of public space. The public nature of the FM is connected to a long history of social interaction in ‘the commons’. Town squares and civic participation are an integral component of social history and public life. Indeed, the social exchanges that are an inevitable part of market transactions suggest that public markets are akin to “civic spaces-the common ground where citizens and government struggled to define the shared values of community” (Tangires, 2003, cited in Gillespie et al, 2006, p. 77). This makes farmers markets both material spaces and symbolic spaces.

Meaning of Farmers Markets

Smithers et al (2008) suggest that because of the FM’s role as “a venue for negotiated meaning in the local food landscape [...] it also becomes a convenient laboratory in which it is possible to examine how certain contested and contingent notions of local, quality, authenticity and legitimacy find expression in the communications and transactions around food” (p. 338).

The different meanings accorded to FM can have a large impact on consumer spending as well as vendor participation. In a study of British Farmers Markets, Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) claim that an act of purchase at the FM is ‘layered with different meanings concerning trust quality and morality, tied into the notion of localness’ (p. 296). According to their study, FM can be mediated by different understandings of the consumption space dynamics; both as an alternative space and as a reactionary space simultaneously.

First, as an ‘alternative’ space, the FM “can be seen as a space in which producers and consumers can circumvent the consumption spaces constructed by powerful actors in the food chain- an ephemeral space ‘in between’ the dominant production-consumption networks” (p. 293).

Second, as a reactionary space, the market attempts to recall tradition, appealing to “notions of place and identity”: (p. 294). As a reactionary space, notions such as ‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’ become not only attributes of food, but become associated with rural life. The authors claim that in an age of GMO, the search for local is in a sense, the search for identity, “an attempt to fix identity or build a sense of community within a context of perceived threats to local identities and communities in the face of the power of multi-nationals associated with food retailing” (p. 295).

Despite these contentions, Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) go on to note that the ordered and regulated organization of the physical layout of the market and the regulations that apply to products and producers may in fact mean that the “FM may to a great extent serve to reproduce dominant spatial and social orderings, with the notion of ‘alternative’ restricted to the bypassing of, for example, supermarkets” (p. 295). Themes emerging from the study and comments from participants suggest that the FM can be seen as both alternative and reactionary at the same time. If all transactions for both producers and consumers are thus layered with meaning, this opens up numerous avenues for future studies.

Social and Economic Benefits to Producers

It is clear that the economic and social benefits to producers involved in farmers markets often overlap and as such, influence and inform one another. In many cases, these 'intertwined benefits' are recognized as such and make separating them quite difficult. "Many farmers participate in farmers' markets *both* because of the premium they get over wholesale prices and because they enjoy the market experience as a social event" (Davis, 1978 cited in Hinrichs, 2000, p. 298). In other cases, social or economic benefits may not be at the root of farmer motivation. According to Griffin and Frongillo (2002) in many cases the decision for farmers to participate in FM is simply "a response to existing fruit and vegetable marketing outlets" (p. 192). The structure of the existing channels, their complications and restrictions make FM a simple and attractive option. Once involved in the FM setting, they then realize and can capitalize on its numerous advantages.

In terms of specific economic advantages in the FM setting, the market provides an opportunity for farmers to retain higher returns that would otherwise be lost to wholesalers and or distributors within an extended food supply chain (Sanderson, 2005, p. 4). One such study reports a 40-80% increase in returns to farmers using the FM as their distribution channel (Lencucha et al, 1998, cited in Sanderson, 2005, p. 5). Sanderson also points the benefits of "cash based sales" which remove the worry of collecting delayed payments from wholesalers (p. 9). Cash in hand at the end of the day can be a major selling feature for small farmers who are not relying on large loans or capital investment.

In addition to exposing themselves more directly to the market and learning customer preferences directly through experience (Feenstra and Lewis, 1999, cited in Sanderson, 2005, p. 9), or in other words providing opportunities for "the fostering of entrepreneurship" (Brown and Miller, 2007, p. 21). Verhaegan & Van Huylenbroeck (2001) point out that higher revenues for farmers also result from the higher value that farmer's receive for products that would have counted as "second class" in an industrialized arrangement. This 'differing grading scheme' may be one of the key strengths of direct sale channels of quality products. Farmers retain control over grading schemes based on their experience, informed by consumer feedback, rather than being subject to inflexible, uniform standards. Griffin and Frongillo (2002) also point out the large number of customers as a motivating factor.

From the producer side, there is also another thread that could be called the 'regional thread'. This involves seeing benefits farther out than the simply the market and its customers. The farmers market is a set of relationships in one area that forms relationships with its surrounding environment According to Morris and Buller (2003) in addition to trust, support for small business and developing a sense of community, producers also report a sense of "contributing to regional landscapes and identity as well as keeping traditional foods and food knowledge alive" (p. 564).

In addition to these regional implications, "the value social interactions" (Smithers et al, 2008, p. 344) and our previous discussion about higher profits at FM, Griffin and Frongillo (2002) also point to the "psycho-social benefits" farmers report, such as a sense of fulfillment, increased confidence and overall accomplishment.

Furthermore, Hunt (2007) points out that independence and control of their own businesses were commonly cited reasons for vendor participation. Farmer control over their own decisions is a key motivating factor. In addition "promotion and proximity of their farm to the market" (Hunt, 2007, p. 60) is another selling feature. Indeed, as Griffin and Frongillo (2002) found, roadside stands become a more attractive option to those farmers not located near market areas.

Whether or not the desire for social interactions stems from purely social motivations or is influenced by potential economic prospects cannot be easily determined. Nevertheless, the fact according to Hunt (2007), 95% of FM farmers “feel more involved with the community since they began selling at the farmers’ market” (p. 60) speaks once again to the intertwined social and economic benefits accorded to vendors through their participation in the FM environment.

Benefits to Consumers

It is obvious that the “quest for fresh products has made farmers’ markets popular with consumers” (Sanderson, 2005, p. 6) but in addition to procuring local food products, consumers also express an array of motivating factors that influence their decisions to shop at FM.

Brown and Miller (2007) point out that external factors such as “concerns about farmland protection [and] small farm viability” (p.20) also contribute to consumers’ desire for FM participation. In a similar fashion, Hunt (2007) claims that there is the search for “attributes not found in globally produced commodity goods”, such things as “authenticity and a sense of local community” (p. 54). Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) suggest that other contributing factors such as the search for “organic conditions”, the welfare of animal products (p. 286) as well as a focus on “specialty and unusual products” (p. 287), gives the products an ethical and environmental dimension that is attractive to consumers. Furthermore, issues around food safety, variety and diversity (Sanderson, 2005, p. 7) also motivate consumers to search out their local FM.

Despite the contention that high prices are always restrictive, Stephanson and Lev (1999) found that while most consumers expressed the commitment to paying a premium for local agricultural products, 50% of customers were willing to pay up to a dollar more for such products in the FM environment (p. 213).

From a different vantage point, Smithers et al (2008) points out the distinction between *philosophical* and *instrumental* considerations in motivating customers to routinely shop at FM. According to Smithers et al (2008), such common desires as support for local farming and farmers are inherently linked to “a belief that a social good was being achieved by their shopping decision” while in other cases such actions are linked to “nostalgic considerations” such as tradition and beliefs about the relationship between farming and social life. On the more instrumental side, people simply need to buy food and there is the belief that food products of a higher quality are available at the FM. Smithers et al (2008) notes that these instrumental considerations contribute to an understanding of ‘people just shopping’, not directly seeking the FM as an oppositional space, but simply employing this channel as a regular part of a “mixed shopping strategy”. Interestingly enough, market managers see this type of patron as crucial to the success of FM as a viable commercial enterprise (p. 344). I feel that differing motivations deserve further exploration within the context of the contributions made by FM to larger food system changes.

The value of social interactions may be in fact more important for consumers than for vendors. According to Hunt (2007) more than half the people surveyed in his study claimed they “had fun” at the market and over 80 percent of customers encounter people they know at the market other than vendors (p. 60).

Benefits to Areas Where Markets are Held: The Marketplace and the Market Area

Tunbridge (1992) makes the distinction between the ‘marketplace’ and the ‘market area’, suggesting that the revitalization of a ‘marketplace’ inevitably branches out, creating a ‘market area’. This idea of the ‘market area’ should be key in planning alongside existing or new FM.

If clustering brings this harmony between cooperation and competition (Porter, 2000) to a given ‘economic region’, there should also be a vision towards developing other local food initiatives in this market area. The benefits of the ‘spillover’ or ‘multiplier’ effect of business transactions occurring in the market place are key to symbiotic growth. If money is going to surrounding business during the market day, a greater proportion of locally owned and/or locally operated businesses means ‘guiding’ some of that spillover capital into a more local economy. As a result of this, there is the increased possibility of the *market area* transforming into a hub for a more festive and local food community or neighborhood.

Cluster Development

Michael Porter defines a cluster as “a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities” (1998a: 199). However, although they are geographically bounded, there is no quantitative standard to the size of a cluster (Davies & Larkin, 2001; Jacobs & De Man, 1996). Cluster policies “are based on the recognition that firms and industries are inter-related in both direct and indirect ways” (Miller, 2006: 22) thus clusters are characterized by collaboration between the various companies, services, suppliers, customers, manufacturers and governmental and other institutions (e.g., universities, training institutions, trade associations and collaborative research institutes) that can support a given industry (Davies & Larkin, 2001; Porter, 1998a).

Clusters can be vertically or horizontally integrated. A vertical cluster refers to buyer-seller relationships while a horizontal cluster describes collaboration in the production phase – relating to resource requirements in the production process, labour needs, and technology (Davies & Larkin, 2001; Lockie & Kitto, 2000). The vertical / horizontal distinction has been elaborated upon, taking into consideration geographic clustering of economic activity, the common reliance on a central actor (i.e., a university or government program), the extent to which networks are used and the prevalence of cooperation among firms (Jacobs & De Man, 1996). Finally, the size of the cluster, its contribution to the economy, its strategic importance, and the range of goods and services used and shared are also useful factors by which to characterize the cluster (Rosenfeld, 1997).

The benefits of clustering to the industries involved include “economic gains for participating businesses; ...bottom-line profitability and ...overall industrial growth and competitiveness” (Davies & Larkin, 2001: 4). Further, clusters provide improved access to suppliers, joint marketing, competition, complementary products, and access to public institutions (Porter, 1998b). The presence of multiple and similar industries in one area can draw more business and supporting infrastructure than one firm could achieve (Porter, 1998b). In short “clusters are the building blocks of the economy” (Davies & Larkin, 2001: 5). Well-known rural

sociologist Fred Buttel wrote that “the future of agricultural sustainability movements will ... lie in the nature and extent of coalitions they are able to form with other movements and groups” (1997: 357).

Previous definitions of clustering emphasize the importance of technology and research institutions to the success of a cluster. However, recently there has been a new theme emerging:

Social capacity building and community participation to create sustainable communities is now seen as an essential element of the cluster process i.e. local clusters for local people – the bottom up approach of encouraging micro-business to contribute to economic development and overall business growth (Davies & Larkin, 2001: 9).

Social capital is “an essential part of the glue that holds clusters together” (Wolfe, 1998: 15). Social capital involves trust among firms, networks of firms, and firms’ civic engagement in their community (Porter, 1998a; Wolfe, 1998).

As measures of social capital are difficult to capture in surveys and other quantitative techniques, qualitative methods are more suited to the assessment of the role of clustering in the social economy, and the role of the social economy in clustering (Davies & Larkin, 2001). Indeed, as Maskell and Malmberg (1999: 175) write, “Very little is known about the specific nature of learning and the transfer of knowledge within and outside the regionally embedded clusters of firms, and more empirical work is certainly needed.” Thus research that takes an exploratory stance and strives to collect in-depth data will likely yield greater understanding of the role of clustering in British Columbian and Albertan farmers’ markets.

Given the rich discussion of clusters, it is surprising that there is little verification as to whether or not clustering is evident in local food systems. As Marsden, Banks and Bristow state, “...we can see that the farm-based and local impacts of short food supply chain developments may be positive in terms of value-added, what is less clear is the degree to which such rural development initiatives can be *sustained and developed both over time and space*.” (2000: 456, emphasis in original). Marsden, Banks and Bristow argue that to understand the successes and failures of rural development, “we need to progress theoretically the concept of *rural development clustering*; that is, the degree to which [local] initiatives...can be built upon through the growth of farmers’ capacity to interface with other supply chain agents over time and space.” (2000: 456).

Producer Only Markets: Food Importation, Reselling Issues, What is Local

Dealers and distributors can have major impacts on FM for customers and farmers alike and hence, the emphasis by some markets to become ‘producer only markets’. Producer only markets restrict dealers and distributors from attending. The majority of FM in North America operate as producer only markets. Examples of markets in Metro Vancouver that allow dealers would be the New Westminster and Lonsdale Quay public markets and the Granville Island public Market (although the Granville Island market also shares the outside space with a producer only market during the spring and summer months)

According to Griffin and Frongillo (2002) some farmers report that both the “poor quality and early arrival” (p. 195) of food products brought by dealers have the possibility “to ruin the

reputation of the market” (p. 195). Poor quality produce stains the emphasis held by FM on quality and freshness and while customers wait patiently for seasonal produce to arrive, ‘early produce’ from out of state [or out of country] brought in by dealers cuts the high prices normally received by farmers with the same product that is now seen as ‘late’.

FM that are seeking to uphold the value of producer to consumer direct sales and support for local farmers either begin as, or transform to, producer only markets. To a certain extent, the ‘producer only’ designation is what keeps FM alternative and unique. Even in a public market that allows dealers and/or wholesalers, although the social relationship is present and may very well be amicable, part of the ‘context’ of the produce (i.e. its origins or seasonality) is still absent. Producer only markets, although not without their challenges, tend to carry the social relations that customers have come to enjoy as well as contextualize the produce by adding the missing dimension; that of the conditions of the food being sold.

FM that Fail

Despite the promising future predicted for FM in the US, Hamilton (2002) highlights factors that can contribute to a market’s decline and eventual closure. He identifies issues such as lack of vendors or products for purchase, complaints from surrounding businesses (traffic congestion, competition) disputes with managers as well as security issues.

Stephanson, Lev and Brewer (2008) also offer some insight into the reasons for market failure. They contend that small market size, lack of farmer vendors, those markets without much administrative revenue, markets operating with low paid or voluntary managers as well as the high rate of manager turnover in some markets all contribute to market failure.

Farmers markets must manage a complex relationship between supply (vendors) and demand (customers). This relationship is different for farmers markets than for most retail outlets. A viable farmers’ market must have enough farmer vendors to attract customers and it must have enough customers to be attractive to farmer vendors. If the market is out of balance, it may enter a downward spiral (Stephanson and Lev, p. 195).

Although this may seem like a simply issue of supply and demand, Stephanson et al (2008) show how lack of farm products leads to few customers, leading to lower vendors sales and no possibility to attract new vendors. Markets become smaller and small until they cannot sustain themselves economically. Small markets, shrinking markets and in fact, new markets are susceptible to greater rates of failure than old, larger markets. They suggest that planning new markets is integral to ensure their success. Planning can include studying the area where the planned market will take place, setting yearly goals for revenue size and vendor growth as well as providing training programs for managers and boards of directors.

Interestingly enough, Hamilton (2002) also suggests that FM can “suffer from their own success” (p. 41). Issues such as large crowds that make attending ‘inconvenient’ for shoppers as well as the fact that FM can decline “by losing their original focus as a true farmers’ market – a place where shoppers can buy fresh produce from farmers –and instead become more focused on entertainment, prepared food and a festival atmosphere (p. 41) are important things to consider when it comes to balancing rapid growth with sustained vision.

Challenges

Management

“Some market managers (particularly those that are paid) provide formal or informal training for vendors in business management or direct marketing” (Hinrichs, 2004)

Tenure of Location

Economic Provisioning

A USDA report from August 2000, reports that “82 percent of markets are self-sustaining; market income is sufficient to pay for all costs associated with the operation of the market (not including grant or in-kind support)”. This means that 18% of FM in the United States are surviving due to support from other levels (municipal, donors, non profits, foundational support, and government).

Calculating the Costs and Benefits

According to Ross (1999) there is a range of concerns and criticisms regarding the efficacy and certainty of such farmers’ markets outcomes and benefits. The aging demographics of the customer base at farmers’ markets may belie the future potential of such processes, while the potential for drawing more customers to direct marketing of food in the face of expediency motivations (Ross et al., 1999) is a very real problem. That is, how realistic is it to expect fundamental changes in consumer food transaction behavior based on more than the price signal, and convenience (p. 239-240). Despite the array of benefits consumers typically note at FM, in some cases rational cost benefits scenarios may reveal future challenges for FM.

Health Regulations:

“It is not obligatory in law for all stallholders at farmers’ markets to have attended hygiene courses but all food handlers must have a level of hygiene awareness that will enable them to ensure the safety of the food they provide (Worsfold, 2004, p. 117).

According to Black (2005)¹¹ the enforcement of health regulations can be key challenges to markets operations. Historically, the traditional market was a dirty place due to the masses of people and the disease spread by animals. In fact, according to Black (2005) in 1834, the largest

¹¹ <http://aof.revues.org/document157.html>

market in Turin was forced to move to its present location to escape a cholera epidemic. Black notes:

Sanitation policies and stringent new regulations have an impact not only on the physical structure and location, but also on the social and economic life of markets. This is not only a historical issue but something that has risen to the forefront due to preoccupations with the contamination of the food supply and other concerns about the overall safety of food in Europe and North America.

New health regulations, as well as other new regulations governing economic exchanges can affect both the physical attributes of the market as well as the market culture, often built through a history of interaction in shared space. Alterations that seem necessary are framed by discourses of sanitation that emerge alongside changing cultural norms often conflicting with traditional patterns of buying and selling. Black goes on to note that:

Markets are important social spaces in cities where public spaces are disappearing and contact between city dwellers is limited. If markets become sanitized and controlled spaces, there is the risk that this will have an impact on the social function of markets. Farmers' markets offer a unique opportunity for people who live in cities to have an exchange with the people who grow their food and live in the surrounding countryside: this is one of the few links left between the urban and rural. When do regulations cross the line from protecting citizens to destroying historical institutions?

In British Columbia, regulations for the sale of prepared foods at temporary markets (i.e. farmers markets) require an application to a local health officer. However, the distinction between "low risk" foodstuffs and "high risk" food stuffs outlaws certain products without the possibility for negotiation. Such high-risk foods may include dairy products, fish and meat, processed beans, and tofu among other things¹².

According to BC farmers' markets health regulations page¹³, "these guidelines are not binding, but rather provide the health authorities a framework from which they can assess their local circumstances. They have however proven to be an effective tool in enhancing consistency around the province". However helpful in many cases, stringent health regulations can also restrict markets and market vendors from capitalizing on cooking demos with local food, breakfast and lunch foods, as well as a range of high value added products. Hamilton (2002) suggests that although high value added products like dairy, poultry, meat and eggs raise the most concerns at FM,

...there are a number of important reasons why markets need to allow them to be sold. First, consumers want them, especially when they can buy them from the farmers who raised the animals and who may have used special production practices, such as "free-range" poultry or natural beef. Second, farmers want to sell the products, especially when direct sales at farmers' markets provide the opportunity to charge retail prices and receive more of the value of the products

¹² <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/pdf/foodsaleguidelines07.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/healthreg.htm>

than if they were sold as commodities. Third, the sales are good for markets because they increase the variety of products available and thereby increase the economic value of the markets for vendors (p. 35).

Appropriate rules can enable these products to be a key feature at FM. “The key point for farmers’ market rules is not how many rules there are or how detailed they are, but how well the rules address issues arising in the market. It is just as possible to have too many rules as it is to have too few – the key is having a process to resolve the questions and disputes which inevitably may arise” (p. 11). The demand for ‘local’ foods extends beyond simply fresh fruit and vegetables. In one sense, changes in consumption patterns and food trends must be involved in the process of regulatory negotiation. Hamilton’s (2002) study suggests that effective FM rules are understandable, are only used when necessary and discarded when they become unnecessary, rules must be complete and keep the rules ‘market oriented’. He contends that with regards to the last characteristic:

An important consideration to remember is why the market was created in the first place. If the goal was to create a venue for farmers to sell their products, to give consumers the opportunity to buy fresh local food, to give folks a place to have fun, and to help revitalize the neighborhood, then the rules should help make this possible. It is important to make sure the rules don’t get in the way of what the market plans to achieve (p. 25).

A final question with regards to health regulations relates to how consumers feel about the possible hygienic issues’ arising from any sort of food handling that occurs at FM. Although Worsford’s (2004) study contends that overall, the ‘traders’ knowledge of “food borne hazards and risk factors was poor” (p. 118) of all customers surveyed, none expressed any concern about food hygiene or food safety. Even when prompted, “86% had few or no concerns about the safety of the food on sale” (p. 114). Worsford continues by noting “The consumers in this survey appeared to be more interested in organic status, local production and traceability of the products than in aspects of food hygiene/ microbiological safety (p. 118). This may stem from a lack of awareness of the markets hygienic facilities and/or the risks involved in food handling. In addition, a sense of trust that vendors were trained in hygiene also contributes to these results.

Section four: Farmers’ Markets and Community Food systems

“Spurred by practical necessity and informed by the vision of sustainability, a new approach to local economic development has emerged gradually over the past ten to twenty years. Older approaches dependant on industrial recruitment, government grants or unsustainable resource extraction have proven increasingly unreliable because of global economic restructuring, prolonged fiscal stress in government, and environmental crisis. Replacing them is a new emphasis on homegrown, community based approaches that acknowledge natural constraints,

develop existing assets, plug economic leaks, capture added value and support local businesses (Campbell, D. ¹⁴)

The objectives of this section are twofold: first, a brief explanation of the social economy or the so-called “third sector” will help situate the discussion of FM within this project. Second, a simple understanding of community food systems (CFS) will need to be established in order to observe the links between the third sector practices and their influences on such CFS. Third, the importance of FM will be examined in relation to their [potential] role as third sector projects. An attempt will be made to show how such projects are linked to the objectives set out in CFS.

A Brief Discussion of the Social Economy

According to Mertens (1999) the social economy, or third sector, is a residual group often defined as a “collection of organizations which are neither capitalist nor run by the state”. Although there are many differences in these organizations, one thing that they share in common is that they do not fit into either of the traditionally recognized groups; those of the capitalist or the state. Interestingly enough, third sector organizations often share components of both the capitalist and the state sectors, making them essentially groups “which span the gulf between the two” (p. 502). Despite this, distribution strategies and rights of control can identify third sector organizations. According to Mertens, (1999) one of the most important distinctions is the distribution factor:

As a general rule, the goal of all economic entities is to distribute its residual surplus. Whereas for profit organizations are concerned, their activities are intended to earn investors a high return on the capital they have entrusted to the organization for an unlimited duration. As a result of their capital contribution, they enjoy a right in regards production, and consequently have a claim on any future surpluses once the other participants in the activity in question have been remunerated (p. 508)

Third sector entities differ in that a group apart from investor’s receives the role as beneficiaries as well as the fact that organizational power is detached from investor or state interests. In essence:

These areas are made up of organizations in which the beneficiary is a group other than investors and where control is in the hands of a group other than the public authorities. In this way the third sector is identified by two essential and adequate conditions (p. 509).

Mertens analysis and categorization of third sector entities is built on first “disqualifying” capitalist or state run organization based on certain criteria. What is left are these ‘bridges’ that connect the two but retain their distinct characteristic as part of the social economy.

Some well-known examples of organizations that fit into a social economy framework would be cooperatives and not-for-profit initiatives. Spears (2000) claims that in many cases, the

¹⁴ <http://auspace.athabascau.ca:8080/dspace/bitstream/2149/997/1/MW110317.pdf>

development of cooperatives [or other innovations geared towards the social economy more generally] is linked to three things. These three things, although well known by social economy advocates, are important to outline since they contribute to our understanding of FM as emerging within a social economy framework.

Firstly, the formation of such groups, societies or organizations may be reactionary; a reaction to the “excessive exploitation” of private capital, generally resulting from monopoly or oligopoly arrangements of power and control. This situation inspires the desire for arrangements that are more “trustworthy structurally and less exploitative [...] easier to self-finance and gain market entry” (p. 512). Spears (2000) asserts, “...cooperatives (by this theory) are formed to combat excessive market power through a spirit of self help by weak actors in the market” (p. 513). Social capital is particularly relevant in assisting groups forming from this perspective. Networks of trust can help build infrastructure and can help self-finance ventures. Spears himself includes FM that are organizing into producer owned cooperatives as beginning from this reactionary place.

The second motivation is that in cases where the state provides a good or service, groups may form due to a) disagreement with the quality of the good or service that is provided or b) disagreement with the minimum standards serving as the measure of quantity. What Spears (2000) refers to as “ideological organizations” are the most commonly formed in these scenarios. The ability of these ideological organizations (such as public faith groups, trade unions, ethnic groups) to draw from donations, lower tax bases and volunteer labor make achieving their goals much easier. Since the structure is almost always not-for-profit, there is little fear of employing ideology simply to increase profits (p. 513).

The third reason is related to “contextual or historical factors influencing institutional choice- i.e. the choice of organizational form” (p. 515). Things such as tax laws and other legislation, regulatory frameworks, development opportunities, quasi-markets and cultural factors (516) among others can effect and in some cases restrict, “the strategic possibilities of cooperatives” (p. 515). A mixture of these influences will determine the operations and potentials of certain social economic development initiatives.

While many social economy initiatives arise in response to one of these factors which Spears (2002) simplifies as coming from “the supply side, the demand side and institutional/contextual help” (p. 517), analysis suggests that FM are ripe to emerge and grow as social economy initiatives because of a critical juncture between all three of these factors.

FM offer an opportunity to circumvent powerful marketing regulations and challenge the excessive use of capital to determine outcomes and livelihoods. They also emerge as a people’s response to poor quality foods and highly processed foods- something that many consumers believe the government should support more of. The role of social innovation at FM is a key theme emerging from the literature. Furthermore, the array of contextual and historical factors (including the vast economic and environmental impacts of restructuring of agro-food systems, land use patterns, development and urbanization) makes FM a progressive, symbolic and contextual response to decreasing control over land and food systems.

Despite these responses, some of the aforementioned contextual factors (regulations, lack of support and land tenure) provide many challenges to the emergence and development of FM as tenants of the social economy. According to Spears (2000) however, norms, networks and trust, otherwise referred to as ‘social capital’ are a key strength to cooperative [and in our case, FM] development. The ability of FM to organize resources, lobby groups, secure some financial support or a permanent location are definitely aided by the trust and reciprocity characteristic of

most projects emerging within the social economic sector.

Community Food Systems

Feenstra (2001) contends that a community food system (CFS) is “A collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies – one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place” (p.100). Feenstra goes on to note that some goals of such a system are; improved access to quality food products, sustainable family farms, marketing and processing methods that improve the links between actors in the food system, improving living conditions, circulating dollars in local economies as well as the promotion of local production and processing practices (p. 100-101).

FM, the Third Sector and CFS

FM may in fact be considered third sector organizations or part of ‘the social economy’ based on a number of criteria. My intention in this brief overview was not be exhaustive, simply to outline the parallels between Mertens (1999) categories and Spears (2000) arguments for emergence in relation to the structure and intentions of most producer only FM. Investment, control, distribution (Mertens) and a combination of supply, demand and contextual factors (Spears) seem to be very basic ideas that offer some insight into FM development within the context of the social economy and CFS.

FM as Drivers of CFS

The important role of FM within strong CFS should be obvious by now. FM embody almost all of the characteristics noted by Feenstra above. In addition, the themes emerging from the literature speak to the integral role of FM in respecting and celebrating farmer-eater relationships, reassigning value to quality food products, the protection of farmland and local economies, as well as offering small farmers an exciting opportunity to regain control of what they love to do.

However, keeping all this in mind, certain questions such as Hinrichs (2001) attention to how much farmers markets contribute to “household livelihoods and to local or regional economies” are extremely important in theorizing about FM as components of such community food systems. Although Brown (2002) contends that 1-2% of food distribution in the United States moves through farmers market channels, further attention to how much of the household ‘food dollar’ moves through farmers markets every year could provide exciting avenues for future research. These avenues would contribute to a more holistic understanding of the relationship between farmers markets, local economies, shifting consumption patterns and CFS.

The food dollar

According to Statistics Canada¹⁵ in 2001 the average weekly household expenditure on food was \$123.76 for most provinces, with the Atlantic region spending \$108.76 and Quebec using \$118.47. Excluding food purchased from restaurants, \$86.24 was spent on food in stores. Between bakery products and vegetables, categories provided by the table, just over \$20 dollars of that \$86.24 is spent on these items. Interestingly enough, these are the very items commonly available at farmers markets. Coincidentally or not, numerous studies peg the average spending by customer at the weekly farmers market to be in the range of \$17-28 (Payne; 2002, Smithers et al, 2008). Smithers, Lamarche & Joseph (2008) found that on average, around %30 of a weekly food budget was spent at FM but they note that “In no case was anyone fulfilling more than %60 of their weekly food needs at the FM” (p. 343).

Despite this ‘neat ratio’ of food percentages and average weekly expenditures at FM, no category in the statistics exists for those spending a portion of their weekly food budget in direct sales such as CSA’s or Farm gate sales, or farmers markets. The growing interest in alternative food systems, “which contrast, rather markedly with the standardized, industrialized commodity markets of an increasingly globalized food and agricultural system” (Hinrichs, 2004, p. 32) merits further exploration into the big picture. This big picture attempts to calculate what percentage of food purchasing occurs at farmers markets for consumers (although spending numbers for other direct sale ventures would also be useful). Although it is apparent that seasonal fluctuations do occur since FM spending will be higher during the spring and summer months, even getting a ‘seasonal sense’ of how much of the consumer food dollar is ‘committed’ or ‘available’ to support FM and their role within CFS would give a sense of the financial resources available as consumer investment.

The farmer’s food dollar

How many farmers benefit from these direct selling opportunities? What percentage of food is sold via direct markets and more specifically, via farmers’ markets channels?

A USDA study in August of 2000 reported that of 66,700 farmers using farmers markets, 19,000 of these farmers employ only FM to sell their products (Payne, 2002). The fact that nearly 67,000 farms are involved in FM speaks to farmers desire to capture more of the food dollar for the work they do. In addition, the significance of 19,000 farmers using FM as a sole marketing outlet cannot be overlooked.

Since many active FM vendors farm close to market settings, proximity can be seen as a major strategy to getting higher returns. As Peters (1997) affirms, producing food far away from consumers has major impacts on the farmer’s share of the food dollar. In 1910, US farmers’ portion of “getting food to consumers” was 41%. In 80 years, that number has declined to 9%. (p. 956). When food dollars are dispersed to multiple players within conventional food chains, many farmers struggle to retain profit margins large enough to continue. Peters suggests, “many farmers would not be able to stay in business without the support of regional consumers” (p. 956). Direct marketing, a link to regional consumers, is in one sense a ‘lifeline’ for many small farmers. Brown’s (2006) study suggests that based on sales trends, extending the FM season and encouraging product diversification are key ways to increase sales for small farmers.

¹⁵ (<http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/famil27a.htm?sdi=food%20products>)

Challenges

The fact that only 67,000 of a current (2007) 2, 076,000 farms in the United States¹⁶ employ solely direct marketing outlets speaks to some of the challenges and drawbacks associated with such marketing channels. Gale (1997) reports that although farmers markets are the oldest method of direct selling, the reality is that “only a small minority of farms generates significant income from direct selling” (p. 24). There are clearly benefits, but these benefits are not always shared equally. Gale’s contention that FM are often urban or peri-urban phenomena contributes to these dispersed benefits. Govindasamy et al (1999) suggests that FM located in urban areas experience 12-16% higher direct sales in terms of profit than those in rural areas.

Another study by Henneberry and Agustini (2002) found that of 49% of FM vendors in Okalahoma, only 5% “claimed sales from farmers markets constituted their full time income [...] 43% considered income from farmers’ markets as part time income with another 27% considering it ‘hobby’ or ‘extra’ income” (cited in Brown et al, 2006, p. 21). Although the importance of half the vendors generating part time income from FM should not be downplayed, the 5% number expresses once again, only ‘glimpses’ or pockets of significant income from direct selling activities.

Furthermore, according to Feagan et al (2004) “there is justification in noting, as Hassanein (2003) has, that this kind of direct marketing will likely fall short of being a transformative mechanism, perhaps only ‘irritating’ corporate dominance of the food sector” (p. 250). Questions surrounding the greater influence of these arrangements need to be explored further within the context of large scale, food system transformation.

It is also important to note that producers and consumers are not always a homogenous group with similar interests and desires, especially with regards to direct marketing initiatives. In a study of Nebraska FM, Schneider & Francis (2005) compare consumer and producer preferences with regards to direct marketing channels. The channels listed are farm gate sales, sales to restaurants, sales to local stores and FM. They report that while 64% of consumers wanted to access local produce through FM channels, only 6% of producers had interest in using FM to market and sell their food (p. 258). Schneider & Francis point out that this ‘gap’ in interest may be related to a lack of producers and/or supply to meet local demand or due to the fact that the supply is in fact adequate for the interest expressed by consumers. Whether or not there may be other factors contributing to this gap merits further study.

The More Than Economic Advantages of Direct Marketing

In addition to the small economic impacts and perhaps even more importantly, Gale (1997) claims that direct marketing can be key in rural development and revitalization. This can happen by “supporting diversity in the farm sector, offering an alternative source of income for small farms, organic farms, and other alternative farms that in turn support other rural business” (p. 25).

Zografos (2007) examines links between social enterprises and rurality discourse in rural revitalization. Social enterprises are:

¹⁶ <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0883511.html>

Businesses with primarily social objectives- wider than employment provision and contribution to public revenue through tax- that reinvest the surplus of their operations in the business or in the community rather than seeking to maximize profit for shareholders and owners (p. 38).

From this perspective, FM might merit a social enterprise designation since they are built on invigorating local economies through their involvement in communities as well as building and/or rebuilding social relationships between farmers and eaters. . Within the case of rural revitalization, Zografos (2007) contends that how rural is talked about, how it is conceived and what rural regeneration means to rural people influences the level of support that social enterprises can offer in this capacity. In a similar way, how FM and CFS are talked about by both urban and rural people, how they are conceived of and what role FM have in regeneration and revitalization (urban or rural) help to outline the contribution that FM can make in this regard. It is imperative to make the connection between local Food supply chains and urban and peri-urban development as well. Since most FM are located in urban or peri-urban areas, Smith's (2007) contention that local food supply chains "are valued for their capacity to generate rural enterprise and regenerate rural communities, break agribusiness monopolies and create spiritual links between man and nature" (Pretty, 2002; 2004, Halweil, 2004 cited in Smith, 2007, p. 849) must equally apply to the towns and urban centers which host farmers markets in addition to rural farmland which contributes the bulk of the weekly supply.

Are FM More Sustainable: Food Miles, Outlets for Organic Produce?

To Connell et al (2008) "a local food systems package" (p. 181) contains notions of 'good food'; an idea that goes beyond quality and price into the environmental and social realms. Connell et al (2008) claims that FM's are part of the 'contents' of this package. The following elements may contribute to this package and deserve to be explored in turn as means to examine how sustainable FM are in comparison to other forms of food retailing, as well as in comparison to other direct marketing initiatives.

Food Miles

According to LaTrobe (2001) "Food miles are clearly less for food that travels to a farmers market than food that is sold in supermarkets" (p. 189). As urban centers become more populated, the increasing demand for products often means expanding the typical "trade area" (Hamilton, 2002, p. 27) radius for producers to more like 100 miles (Interesting note: in British Columbia, this trade area is most often set at 300 km's) LaTrobe suggests the development of more markets in between, in a sense reducing the distance that 'rural' producers need to travel. (p. 189). However, this begs questions about whether or not rural producers would even want give up the high sales volume associated with urban FM in favor of saving food miles by using closer outlets.

Other Environmental Concerns

In addition to food security concerns and the issues around food self-reliance, according to Sanderson (2005) the noted ecological and environmental concerns with the current global food system (such things as pollution from transport, ground water contamination, toxins in the soil, the declining number of farms) inspire consumers to seek out alternatives. Feagan (2004) suggests that by simplifying “cycles of food production”, direct marketing works towards sustainability through farmland and soil preservation and agricultural diversity. Furthermore, the environmental benefits include reducing energy inputs and increases in the diversity of food crops in agro ecological environments (p. 238-239). In terms of how FM can support or assist CFS, reflecting on the overall sustainability of the FM as an environmentally friendly alternative is a timely quest.

The belief that direct relationships between growers and eaters will facilitate more responsibility on the part of consumers to protect and preserve farmland and farming communities (Sanderson, 2005, p. 11) has a major role to play in mapping the ecological dimensions of FM. Can direct relationships really inspire consumers to take up what Dobson (2003) and Seyfang (2006) talk about as “ecological citizenship”? Dobson (2003 cited in Seyfang, 2006) suggests, “ecological citizens will feel a sense of environmental responsibility on a planetary scale” (p. 384) and this sense of responsibility will affect both beliefs about food procurement and consumption decisions. Despite this contention, it is clear that further studies are needed to test the assertion that such grand commitments can develop mainly out of direct relationships between farmers and patrons.

FM, Local Food Economies and Land Use Planning.

Connell et al (2006) suggests that any location that wishes to enhance its local food system needs to confront issues of land use planning head on. The protection of agricultural land is perhaps one of the most influential impacts on strengthening local food economies. Although commonsense assumptions refer to this protection in physical terms (i.e. ALR, zoning regulations, prevention of residential development etc) farmland protection also encompasses issues surrounding affordability, availability and accessibility for those farmers interested in increasing the supply of locally produced food. Initiatives such as the Community Farms Project in BC which seeks to preserve farmland for the continued purposes of active farming rather than simple land preservation, exhibits the type of “agricultural lens” (p. 14) which Connell (2006) claims makes planning decisions bigger than rather than simple residential or commercial expansion. Although these goals are often seen as incompatible, appropriate planning can meet the residential, commercial and agricultural needs of communities interested in developing local food economies. In fact, the development and/or strengthening of local food systems requires a holistic view of planning; the locations of residential and commercial enterprises need to be chosen in relation to the dynamics (physical and social) of local food systems planning.

Section Five: Farmers Markets in British Columbia and Alberta

British Columbia

Farmers Markets operate in every corner of B.C. Reflecting the communities they serves, markets vary in size and type from large, sheltered public markets to a few vendors clustered in a

local park or on a parking lot. You will find an array of fresh produce and fruit, processed foods, arts and crafts. Now that's fresh! (BC Association of Farmers Markets, <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/>).

Market Name	City	Days Open
Abbotsford Farm and Country Market	Abbotsford	SAT
All Organics Market	Salmon Arm	WED
Ambleside Farmers' Market	West Vancouver	SUN
Armstrong Farmers' Market	Armstrong	SAT
Ashcroft Farmers' Market	Ashcroft	
Bella Coola Valley Farmers' Market	Bella Coola	
Bowen Road Farmers' Market	Nanaimo	WED
Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market Association	Smithers	SAT
Burnaby Farmers' Market	Burnaby	SAT
Cariboo Direct Farm Market Association	Williams Lake	FRI
Cedar Farmers' Market	Nanaimo	SUN
Chase Chamber of Comm. Farmers' Market	Chase	
Chilliwack Farmers' Market	Chilliwack	FRI
Coquitlam Farmers Market	Coquitlam	SUN
Cottonwood Falls Market; Hall Street Local Market	Nelson	WED, SAT
Cranbrook Farmers' Market	Cranbrook	
Creston Saturday Market	Creston	SAT
Crofton Market	Crofton	SAT
Dawson Creek Farmers' Market	Dawson Creek	SAT
District of Hope Farmers' Market	Hope	
Dogwood Nursery	Aldergrove	MON, TUE, WED, THU, FRI, SAT, SUN
Duncan Farmer's Market	Duncan	SAT
Dunster Farmer's Market	Dunster	
East Vancouver Farmers Market	Vancouver	SAT
Errington Farmers' Market	Errington	SAT
Esquimalt Community Market	Esquimalt	WED
Falkland Country Market	Falkland	
Fernie Mountain Market	Fernie	SUN
Fort St. James Farmers Market	Fort St. James	FRI
Fort St. John Farmers' Market	Fort St. John	SAT
Fort Steele Farmers' Market	Fort Steele	

Franz's Trail Outdoor Market	Whistler	
Gabriola Island Farmers' Market	Gabriola Island	
Golden Farmers' Market	Golden	WED
Government Street Market	Victoria	
Grand Forks Farmers' Market	Grand Forks	TUE, FRI
Granville Island Farmers' Market	Vancouver	
Haney Farmers Market	Maple Ridge	SAT
Harvest - Quesnel Festival	Quesnel	SAT
Heartland Quality Foods and Farm Tours Co-operative	Kamloops	MON, TUE, WED, THU, FRI
Hornby Island Farmers' Market	Hornby Island	
Invermere Farmers' Market	Invermere	SAT
Jaffray - Baynes Lake Farmers' Market	Jaffray	SAT
James Bay Community Market	Victoria	
Kelowna Farmers and Crafters Market	Kelowna	WED, SAT
Kelowna Farmers and Crafters Market (Evening Market)	Kelowna	THU
Kelowna Farmers and Crafters Market (Indoor-Winter Market)	Kelowna	SAT
Kingfisher Farmers' Market	Enderby	
Kitsilano Farmers Market	Vancouver	SUN
Lake Country Farmers' Market	Lake Country	FRI
Lonsdale Quay Farmers' Market	North Vancouver City	SAT
Market in the Square - Duncan	Duncan	SAT
McBride Farmers' Market	McBride	
Mission City Farmers Market	Mission	SAT, SUN
Nanaimo Downtown Farmers' Market	Nanaimo	FRI
Nanaimo North Farmer's Market	Nanaimo	SAT
Naramata Community Market Society	Naramata	WED
Nechako Valley Farmers' Market	Vanderhoof	
New Denver Friday Market	New Denver	FRI
North Shore Farmers' Market	Kamloops	FRI
Osoyoos Market on Main	Osoyoos	SAT
Pender Island Farmers' Market	Pender Island	
Peninsula Country Market	Saanich	SAT
Penticton Farmers Market	Penticton	SAT

Port Alberni Farmers' Market	Port Alberni	
Port Moody Market	Port Moody	
Powell River Open-Air Market	Powell River	SAT, SUN
Quadra Island Farmers' Market and Bazaar	Quadra Island	
Qualicum Beach Farmers' Market	Qualicum Beach	SAT
Queen Charlotte Island Farmers' Market	Queen Charlotte City	
Quesnel Farmers' Market	Quesnel	SAT
Riley Park Farmers Market	Vancouver	WED
Rosswood Farmers' Market	Terrace	
Saltspring Island Market in the Park	Saltspring Island	SAT
Sidney Summer Market	Sidney	
Silverton Sunday Market	Silverton	SUN
Sooke Country Market Association	Sooke	SAT
Sorrento Village Farmers' Market	Sorrento	SAT
Squamish Farmers' Market	Squamish	SAT
Summerland Country Market	Summerland	
Sun Peaks & Region Farmers' Market	Sun Peaks	SUN
Surrey Urban Farmers Market	Surrey	WED
Texada Island Farmers' Market	Texada Island	
The Village Square Market	Quadra Island	
Tlell Farmers' Market	Tlell	
UBC Farm Market	Vancouver	SAT
Wasa Country Market	Wasa	
West End Farmers Market	Vancouver	SAT
Whistler Farmers Market	Whistler	SUN
White Rock Farmers Market	White Rock	SUN
Winter Farmers Market	Vancouver	SAT
Yaletown Farmers' Market	Vancouver	

Recent Studies on FM in B.C.

In a very pertinent series of collaborative studies between the University of Northern British Columbia and the BC Association of Farmers Markets, Connell et al (2006) reports on the economic and community impacts of Farmers Markets in B.C. Farmers markets create an estimated economic impact of 65.3 million dollars in British Columbia alone (p.1). This

undoubtedly frames FM as noteworthy economic contributors to the provincial economy. In addition to all the other social and community benefits of FM noted earlier in this report, the multi-faceted impacts of FM within certain settings demands a deeper exploration. This report now turns to some specific the trends around FM in British Colombia and Alberta respectively.

Origins

According to Statistics Canada, the number of Farms in B.C. sits at around 19, 844¹⁷ (2006) while the population currently sits at 85% urban and 15% rural¹⁸. This provides a large customer base for those farms located near densely populated urban areas.

The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture¹⁹ reports that many small organic vegetable farms in B.C employ some form of direct marketing. However, more often than not, these small producers utilize a combination of wholesale selling and a direct marketing initiative in based in their local community (p. 27). This balance between different selling methods speaks to the dual needs of enjoyment in sales and the economic viability for small industry. Although many small producers enjoy direct marketing as part of a diverse farm enterprise, it is clear that in all cases the board over, the current amount direct marketing opportunities may not provide for the economic needs of small producers in B.C. However, it is important to note that other factors such as a lack of direct marketing experience or knowledge, as well as stability issues (i.e. large steady contracts that pay the bills) may influence the decision to continue marketing some (or most of their produce) through conventional channels.

Locations

The table included above lists all the operational FM in the province of British Colombia. There are 105 registered farmers markets. Markets exist in small towns and larger cities alike. While large populations such as those in the city of Vancouver (pop estimate 600,000) can support five markets in different neighborhoods around the city, even small towns like Lytton (pop 235) operate a successful FM during the summer months. With the prevalence of FM in large cities and small town alike, it is clear that small populations are not necessarily a limiting factor in the *development* of a FM. However, as Gale (1997) notes, direct selling is often an urban or peri-urban phenomena, most effective at sites near large urban populations. This contention raises questions about the viability of FM in small towns versus the successes of FM in large urban centers and brings to light different context specific development choices that may need to be made

Another issue of location surrounds tenure and stability. In the 5 year strategic plan put forward by the BC farmers' market sector, issues around location (tenure, permanent locations, parking problems) were considered important challenges confronting the growth and visibility of FM in the province. The report simplifies these challenges as the "periodic or impermanent

¹⁷ <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/agrc25k-eng.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/demo62k-eng.htm>

¹⁹ http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/organics/organics_industry/BC_Organic_Industry_Overview_dec2007.pdf

character of most markets” (p. 11).

Connell (2006) reports that the FM in Quesnel, B.C has moved five times during its seventeen year run. He suggests that in the case of Quesnel, “the least aggressive rates of growth occurred when the market was situated in temporary parking lots” (p. 8). This situation is not unique and many other markets also suffer from this lack of stability. Hunt’s (2007) study revealed that less than half of farmers (38%) felt that the community was supportive of providing the market location, often a public space or privately owned parking lot (p. 60). This lends insight into the fact that part of the success of some older markets is related to the history of the market ‘place’ as expressive of some continuity.

According to Berry (1967) *centrality* is key to marketplace success. He claims “consumers who must visit the market place on a regular basis want a location that permits them to conduct their business with a minimum of effort and if a choice of location is available will always prefer the one which involves least effort” (p. 3). Although it is clear that a central location for FM have a significant impact on their successes (both to producers and to surrounding businesses within that central area) certain nuances about this statement inspire questions about the fundamental importance of centrality with regards to FM.

Most important to note, the FM is not always a ‘must’ on the agenda of shoppers. It is often a separate trip, a commitment to the values inherent in the social and economic exchanges and the FM ‘culture’ that leads consumers to the farmers’ market ‘place’. Many customers may have supermarkets much closer than a downtown FM and so the choice to patronize the FM becomes not one of convenience, or “the least effort” but representative of a commitment to FM as a supplier of food products and a symbol of growing local food economy.

Organization

“The British Columbia Association of Farmers Markets (BCAFM) was founded in 2000 to promote networking and communication between Farmers Markets in British Columbia (www.bcfarmersmarkets.org)

While some successful markets have achieved the status of community institutions, low visibility and poor advertising, coupled with a lack of the financial resources required to grow, have meant markets generally have a lower profile than they deserve. Fragmentation and inter-market competition were also seen as weaknesses in some areas of the province (BC farmers market strategic plan, p. 11).

BCAFM membership

In addition to operating as a networking and communication group composed of various actors, the BCAFM also acts as an informal regulatory body, keeping member markets in line with many of the features common to producer only markets. According to their website:

Members of the BC Association of Farmers' Markets are those markets whose vendors either make, bake or grow the products they produce. Only the farmer and/or the family are permitted to sell at a member market. Re-sellers are not

permitted. At member markets, our focus is on selling locally grown or processed farm-fresh foods, so only a limited number of crafters can be found at our markets. You won't find any imported products. Most of our foods travel from less than 300 kilometers away. (<http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/about.htm>)

The development of a strong and organized sector depends on the cooperation of state and civic interests.

As the voice for farmers' markets in the province, and a conduit for communication between them, BCAFM is seen as a way to gain more respect and credibility for the sector with both governments and the public. Thus, a strong central organization also means stronger individual markets (p. 11).

Functions

FM in BC embody many of the themes captured in the literature; themes surrounding increased social relations, making food systems more visible, the effects of revitalizing and restore feelings of community through food exchanges, providing avenues for obtaining quality food products and supporting local economies and furthering links between producers and consumers among other things. However, specific projects that are interwoven with the FM agenda do deserve mention at this point.

A most pertinent example of such a project is the "Buy B.C." program started in 1992 by the provincial ministry of food and fisheries. This project is intimately connected to the development of and support for, FM throughout the province. According to the Ministries website²⁰, the Buy B.C. programs is designed to "increase consumer awareness and build preference for B.C. food, fish and beverage and agricultural products within the province. [...] the buy B.C. program encourages cooperative marketing initiatives that contribute economic benefits to the B.C. agri fish food industries". Three strategies are identified with which the program attempts to meet the stated objectives. These are: B.C. product identification, increasing consumer awareness and building preference for B.C. products. FM offer significant support to these objectives and employ these strategies throughout their operations in a number of ways.

First, since most FM in B.C. are 'producer only' markets and stipulate the strict sale of 'locally' produced/processed goods, B.C. product identification becomes inherent in the distribution of goods. The product identification becomes both a natural selling feature of the market and in a sense; an assurance of B.C. farmer's commitment to promoting provincially produced agricultural products.

Second, many of the desired features of direct marketing initiatives (i.e. face to face exchanges, opportunity for dialogue between producers and consumers) facilitate either direct or indirect increased consumer awareness. In contrast to assumptions about vast transformations in the agri food sector and the inability of small farms to remain viable, B.C. residents learn through market exchanges that there still are small farmers producing quality food products. Furthermore, many of these market vendors see increasing consumer awareness a considerable objective of their operations.

²⁰ <http://www.iaig.ca/buybc/program.htm>

Lastly, building preference for B.C. products comes with the assumptions of quality and freshness often captured by FM discourse. Consumers learn to appreciate the quality of B.C food as well as value the industry that produces and distributes it. Although it is clear that preference is a matter of choice, According to BC ministry of agriculture and land and their Buy B.C. campaign, farmers markets must meet certain criteria to be eligible for support from the provinces farmers market program. The criteria include:

- The vendors “grow, make, bake or raise” the products they sell
- A majority of the vendors produce and sell B.C. farm products
- Processed food products should be made in B.C. and key ingredients should be B.C. grown.
- Craft items should be made in B.C and where possible B.C. products used
- A market must have at least six vendors and must operate for a minimum of three consecutive hours for 16 days per calendar year (<http://www.iaig.ca/buybc/farmers.htm>).

According to the 2006-2010 strategic plan developed by the BCAFM, three “Key Performance Areas” are explicitly identified. These are:

- Education and Training
- Farmers’ Market Visibility
- Sector Research and Development

These three areas identify avenues for strengthening the multiple and diverse benefits of British Columbia’s farmers markets. In terms of education, training course for vendors and workshops at the annual conferences are a few ways to further this goal. In terms of increasing the visibility of FM, branding FM with a province wide logo, making contacts with local media and providing brochures for tourist outlets are among the many methods proposed by the report. In terms of research and development, communication and cooperation with other institutions to help research the economic conditions of FM, enhancing the communication between existing markets to help support individual markets that lack resources, as well as developing a regulatory body to deal with the “threat” of health regulations all constitute some strategies used to meet the goals of this area. (p. 13-16)

Eat Local: Your local FM society

Eatlocal.org is another specific initiative worth noting because of its focus on a specific area; the networking of local eaters in the city of Vancouver. In addition promoting four summer FM and a monthly winter FM in the city, eat local in Vancouver also helps organize specific events at FM throughout the season. These include a variety of seasonal festivals, specific crafting and/or food demonstrations and live music to enhance the market experience. Furthermore, allocating spaces within the FM setting for community based organizations links FM projects with larger issues within specific communities. According to their website

Vancouver Farmers Markets (otherwise known as Your Local Farmers Market Society) is about people who love fresh food at festive gatherings. With the initial goal in 1995 to create the fun and value of weekly Farmers Markets in urban

settings, the Society and the Markets have become Vancouver plazas of fun, discovery, and connecting. The good feeling of the Markets gets even deeper. We produce our weekly Markets to create healthy food networks that sustain our land, our community, and our homes.

Although it is clear that promotion of the FM is paramount to this group's success, the emphasis placed on the role of FM in educating and advancing larger agricultural issues is key to their strategy. According to the society

Through the Markets and our special events, the Society spreads awareness of agricultural issues facing our largely urban society. These issues range from the truths about genetically modified foods, to fair pricing for agricultural products, to the glory of a variety of foods available with a locally-networked food system. If you have questions about how and what kinds of food arrive at your table, a visit to the Markets, and a tour of this website, will bring you some fresh answers. (<http://www.eatlocal.org/about.html>)

Current Support and Programs

In August of 2008, the Government of Canada gave an investment worth \$219,000 to B.C. farmers markets²¹. This investment is designed to support the growing number of FM in the province, legitimate the services that they provide and increase the opportunities for growth in the direct marketing sector. Evidence suggests that FM channels are strengthening the viability and sustainability of small farms and government support for such initiatives has been welcomed by the BCAFM.

The five-year strategic plan by the BC farmers market aims to enhance the visibility and viability of the farmers' market sectors. According to the report:

The execution of this plan will produce a provincial farmers' market sector that is larger, more visible and more professionally run—one that contributes significantly to farm incomes and to the economy of communities in which it operates (p.6)

In comparison to a province like Ontario, where large amounts of government support have strengthened the development of new markets, the FM sector in B.C. is in need of financial support if it is to grow and flourish without friction. In addition to being a visioning exercise, this strategic plan by the board of directors is also a funding proposal to the BC Agriculture Investment Foundation "in anticipation of establishing an Agri-Food Futures Fund for farmers' markets" (p. 6).

Alberta Farmers Markets

Origins

²¹ <http://www.marketwire.com/press-release/Agriculture-And-Agri-Food-Canada-892653.html>

Markets and Community

By many measures, FMs in Alberta are thriving. Their current popularity is mirrored in recent books on seasonal eating and local food initiatives such as *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (Kingsolver et al., 2007) and *The 100-mile Diet* (Smith & Mackinnon, 2007). Local food initiatives include organizations, activities, and businesses involved in the development of local food systems (Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000). FMs in Alberta have a rich history – a history that extends well beyond recent food trends. In this Alberta summary, we will discuss historical events relevant to the current status of FMs, introduce the location and functions of existing FMs, and describe the organizational structure in the province surrounding FMs, from the standpoint of governments, vendors, managers, and customers.

History of Alberta's Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets are enjoying a growth in popularity across Canada (CCA, 2008a), the United States (Hunt, 2007), and the United Kingdom (Marsden, 2000). The current popularity of farmers markets in Alberta is not unprecedented. Up until the 1900s, farmers' markets in Alberta were prevalent, serving as a site of interaction between rural and urban citizens (Gouglas, 1996; Sanderson et al., 2005). However, this popularity began to fade in the 1950s and 1960s as increased urbanization led to the movement of people from rural communities and to the arrival of urban 'lifestyles' (Lipton, 2006). Such lifestyles valued convenience and availability of exotic foods and out-of-season foods and were supported by improved transportation networks and technology (Sanderson et al., 2005).

However, since the 1970s, there has been a revival of interest in farmers' markets and other food cooperatives in the province (Goddard, 2002). Despite the success of the Edmonton City Market, which was established in Alberta's capital in 1900 and still exists today, the province did not see any significant increase in farmers' markets until recently. Provincially, the number of farmers' markets has increased from four in 1972 (Edmonton Journal, 2005), to 16 in 1974, to 35 in 1975 (Edmonton Journal, 2005; Lencucha et al., 1998). Currently there are 105 registered Alberta Approved farmers' markets (Goad and Kotowich, 2008). Alberta now supports the third largest number of community-supported agriculture or other direct-sales ventures in Canada, after Ontario and British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2008).

The initial expansion of farmers' markets in the 1970s was, in part, owing to Alberta Agriculture's grant program to support development of farmers' markets in 1973. The Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program (AAFMP) also arose in the mid 1970s. The grant program still exists today, and is described as follows:

The program creates an operational framework that facilitates direct market access for community-based entrepreneurs who make, bake, or grow the products they sell. Basic operating guidelines, provincial program-awareness initiatives, and the education of vendors, managers and consumers are the key components of this community-based program (AARD 2008:
[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620)).

Locations

Alberta lacks empirical evidence of clustering in local food initiatives. Farmers' Markets are located throughout Alberta, appearing to occur in geographical groups but whether or not markets are engaged in a cluster system is unknown. Agriculture Alberta promotes clustering and offers a number of resources that explain the concept, the benefits, and the process of initiating a cluster. They describe a cluster as "a group of like-minded stakeholders and operators who come together to increase the profile for their operations and geographic area" (AARD YEAR²²). Some have suggested that Actor Network Theory (ANT) may be methodologically useful in the study of clusters (Murdoch 1998), helping to "guide us as to what to study and how to study it" (Marsden 2000: 24). For instance, "we need to look at how different balances and value constructions are built up around social, political, and natural practices amongst key sectors and actors in the food networks" (Marsden 2000: 26).

The table below, from the Alberta Farmers Market Association²³ lists most markets in the province, by region.

Name of Market	Region
Andrew Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Athabasca Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Barrhead Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta
Bearspaw Lions Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Beaverlodge Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Bentley & District Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Berwyn Ag. Society Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Beverly Towne Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Bezanson & District Farmers' Market	Peace Country

²² [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa547/\\$FILE/agtour_booklet.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa547/$FILE/agtour_booklet.pdf)

²³ http://www.albertamarkets.com/Default.aspx?&gv540_gvac=1&gv540_gvpi=0&tabid=56

Blackfalds Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Bonnyville Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Bonnyville Tuesday Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Brooks Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Buck Lake	Central Alberta
Calgary Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Camrose & District Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Caroline Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Castor Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Claresholm Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Cochrane Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Cold Lake Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Crossfield Farmers Market	Central Alberta
Darwell Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta
Devon Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Didsbury Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Drayton Valley Evergreen Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta
Drumheller Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Edmonton Downtown Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Edson Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta

Fairview Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Gibbons Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Grande Cache Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Grande Prairie Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Grassroots Farmers' Market (Calgary)	Southern Alberta
Hanna Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Hinton Farmers' Market Society	Northwest Alberta
Innisfail Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Kikino Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Lac La Biche Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Lacombe Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Lakedell Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Leduc Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Lethbridge & District Exhibition	Southern Alberta
Manning Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Marketplace at Callingwood Tenants-Owners Assoc.	North Central Alberta
Mckenzie Towne Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Medicine Hat Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Millarville Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Millwoods Farmers' Market Society	North Central Alberta

Morinville Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Okotoks Kinsmen Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Old Strathcona Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Olds Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Oyen & District Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Peace River Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Provost Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta
Rimbey Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Rose City Farmers' Market Assoc. (Camrose)	Central Alberta
Rycroft Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Seba Beach Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Sherwood Park Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Smoky Lake Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Spruce Grove Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
St Albert Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
St. Paul Farmers' Market	Northeast Alberta
Stettler District Ag Society	Central Alberta
Stony Plain Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Strathmore Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta

Sundre Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Sylvan Lake Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Taber Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Three Hills Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Tofield Community Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Town & Country Farmers' Market - Rocky Mountain House	Central Alberta
Two Mile Corner Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta
Valleyview Farmers' Market	Peace Country
Vauxhall Farmers' Market	Southern Alberta
Vermilion Farmers' Market Society	Northeast Alberta
Westlock Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta
Westmount Farmers' Market	North Central Alberta
Wetaskiwin Farmers' Market	Central Alberta
Whitecourt Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta
Wildwood Farmers' Market	Northwest Alberta

Functions

Farmers' markets offer a unique site of commercial activity. There are numerous benefits to consumers, producers, and the community at large. Several advantages for consumers are

described in existing literature: quality of food, freshness of products, support for local farming, and the social atmosphere at markets (AFMA, 1998; CCA, 2008a; Connell et al., 2006; Feenstra, 2002; Hunt, 2007; Sanderson et al., 2005). Further, with greater concern over food safety, and recent widespread food security issues such as the *Listeriosis* outbreak at Maple Leaf Foods, local food is coming to be seen as a sensible staple rather than an upper-class urban luxury (Canada Food Inspection Agency, 2007; Sanderson et al., 2005).

The 2003 survey of Alberta Farmers' Markets (AARD, 2003) demonstrates that these advantages apply in Alberta: 61.7% of those consumers surveyed list quality of food as a reason to shop at FMs. The freshness of products (67.8%) and the opportunity to support local farmers (67.4%) are also frequently cited reasons. The social atmosphere of the markets is also appealing to consumers (AARD 2003: 68).

For the producers, markets offer the opportunity to inform consumers about the work involved in growing and preparing their food. Lencucha et al., (1998) found that this was the most commonly cited reason for producers to sell at a market. Other benefits described in the literature include higher returns to producers, testing of new products, and minimal costs for start-up, distribution, and overhead (Hunt, 2007). In fact, AARD's 2003 survey confirms that most of these benefits are perceived as such by Alberta FM vendors. Engaging with customers is the most frequently cited reason for selling goods at a FM (69.1%), greater returns are alluded to with respect to additional family income (43.7%), testing new products is less common (19.3%), and minimal costs are relevant (27.3%). Reasons not mentioned as frequently in the literature that attract Alberta vendors include recreation and the chance to sell surplus goods.

Finally, for the community, markets can play an important place in revitalizing urban centres and rural communities alike (Gratz & Mintz, 1998). In Giddings et al.'s (2005) report on sustainable cities, they write, "Often the best way to strengthen the centre of cities is to support the existing local people, business, activities and culture (Giddings et al., 2005: 26). The results of the AARD survey of farmers' markets (2003: 82) came to a similar conclusion: "Farmers' markets can be effectively used as a promotional tool by the community to create a general level of awareness, interest, and potential desire to travel there." Research in Alberta supports the notion that "communities with medium to large sized markets have derived varying degrees of benefit from successfully marketing these goals and vision." (AARD, 2003: 83). Farmers' markets serve as a site for community members to gather, and local businesses around the market may benefit from the influx of consumers and vendors; Alberta FMs add "economically through direct sales, as well as indirectly by supporting businesses" (AARD, 2003: 1). In their 1998 study of AB FMs, Lencucha et al. found that 61.4% of respondents indicated that they shop at other retailers in the area around the FM. A final point to mention is the environmental relevance of local food systems. By decreasing "food miles" (the distance food travels from where it is grown to where it is consumed), local food may use less energy (CCA, 2008a).

Part of the success of farmers' markets in benefiting consumers, producers, and communities is due to their renown. A 2004 study commissioned by AARD found that of all alternative agriculture markets, FMs are the most well-known. Only 13% of respondents in the study knew nothing about FMs or had never heard of them and nearly 60% (735,000 households) had purchased from FMs at least once during the period May 2003 – April 2004 (AARD, 2003a). Many households had made multiple visits; the average number of visits over the year was 8.7. The report estimated an annual rate of growth of new customers of 15% and an annual growth rate in market value of 24% (AARD, 2003a).

Who shops at AB farmers' markets?

The farmers' market customer ranges in age, with ages 45-54 being most likely to be found at a FM (AARD, 2003a). Nearly 20% of FM consumers are retired (Lencucha et al., 1998). These numbers mask the variability in ages of attendees to the market, a visit to any AB FM would likely reveal a broad spread of young and old, families with children and singles, and men and women. Lencucha et al. (1998) found that most FM shoppers were highly educated and to be found in the highest income group (> \$120,000), yet in the ten years since that study, issues of food security and the environment, and increased prices in conventional grocery stores may mean that the educational attainment and income ranges found at FMs are now more diverse. AB Ag's 2004 study also found that high income families are more likely to be frequent shoppers at FMs. The value that people spend at FMs is estimated to be \$35 per visit (AARD, 2003b), though this varies with household size, with larger households spending more money at the market.

Organizational structure

Capacity building

Community-level innovation around food is supported and achieved through food co-ops, farmers' markets, small-scale food businesses, and promotional programs (CCA, 2008). In Alberta, a range of institutional arrangements exists: incorporated societies, sponsored markets, and a next generation co-operative (which operates on a reduced profit basis). All Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets must be non-profit (Kotowich, *personal communication*, October 23, 2008). Many AB Farmers' Markets (75%) are sponsored by agricultural societies (47 markets), chambers of commerce (7 markets), towns (3 markets), clubs (6 markets), or other sponsors (14 markets). Aside from the Next-Generation Co-op in Calgary, the remainder of the markets are incorporated (Kotowich, *personal communication*, October 23, 2008). Because of the importance of co-ops in potential clustering policies, we will briefly outline the structure of co-operatives in Canada and Alberta.

Co-operatives

There are co-ops within multiple sectors of the Canadian economy; banking, insurance, housing, health, and agriculture. Agricultural co-ops exist to support supply, marketing, and processing (CCA 2008b). In addition to their role in connecting small and medium-sized producers and marketing small and medium-sized ventures, co-ops also serve "as effective tools for economic development, community-building and business longevity" (CCA, 2008b: 10).

With 40% of Canadians as registered members of at least one co-op, Canada has one of the highest proportions of co-op membership in the world (CCA, 2008b). In Alberta, 65% of the population is a member of a co-op; this is the second highest rate of membership in Canada, after Quebec. The United Farmers of Alberta, and other agricultural co-ops, can find support to "market their products, add value to their commodities, finance their businesses, and supply farm inputs such as fertilizer, feed, and seed." (CCA, 2008b: 2). Further, farmers view co-ops as

supporting their procurement of necessary infrastructure and locating and taking advantage of new business opportunities.

Co-ops provide immense support for small and medium-sized businesses. Such producers restrict large, corporate farms that have little interest in local matters from having even greater market share (CCA, 2008b). The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) guides the management of agricultural co-ops at the Canadian Co-op Association (CCA). In their 2008b (pp.6) report, the CCA makes seven recommendations to amending the existing APF. Two concern local food: (6) “Provide support to help local communities – rural and urban – organize food systems to distribute locally-grown and processed food.” And (7) “Develop a policy on domestic food sustainability that ensures we grow, process, and distribute more of our domestic food needs from Canadian sources”. Next generation (NG) co-ops are a type of processing co-op “which combines the purpose of adding value to produced goods with a contractual obligation to deliver a specified volume of raw product to the processing facility.” (CCA, 2008b: 10)

Infrastructure

None of the Alberta FMs own the building from which they operate (Kotowich, *personal communication*, October 23, 2008). In conjunction with sponsorship, sponsoring organizations often permit the use of their facility to hold the market at no cost, or with a nominal fee. When there is no building available at low-cost, markets will seek a location to rent, thus there are markets in “shopping malls, curling rinks/arenas/multiplexes, community halls, and senior's centres. Outdoor markets are found in parks, parking lots, and streets which are also rented from the town/city.” (Kotowich, *personal communication*, October 23, 2008). Three markets have obtained long-term lease agreements, which allows the market to operate on a year-round basis, with some vendors' signs in place all year.

Trends in Alberta

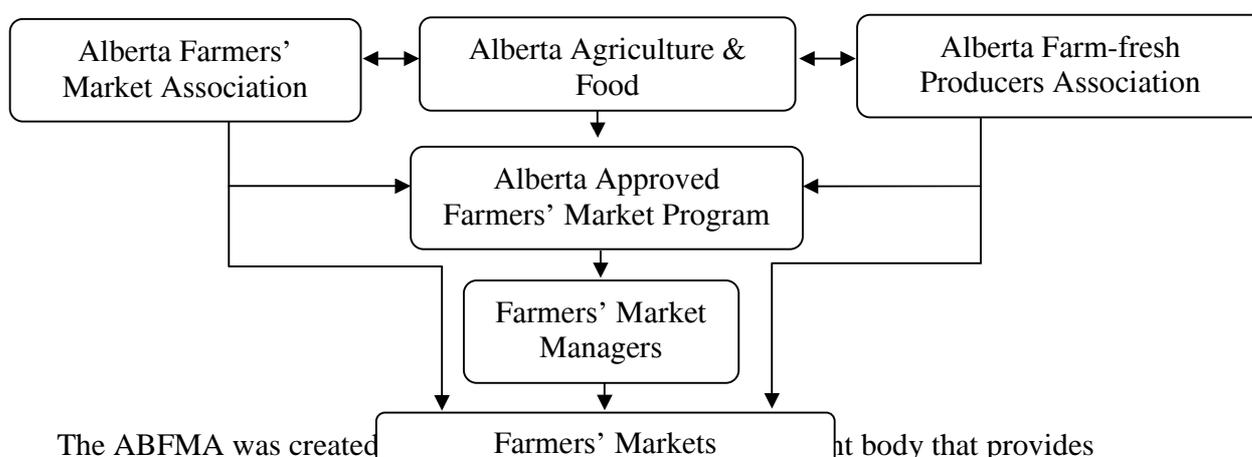
Both Lencucha et al.'s (1998) study and AB Ag's (2004) report make recommendations for increasing consumer spending at FMs. Lencucha et al (1998) focus on barriers to further growth, which include decreasing rural populations and difficulty in finding effective market managers; many managers work on a volunteer basis or are paid very little for their duties (AARD. 2003b). An Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development report (2004) recommends that more FMs shift to opening on a year-round basis or extending their operating season, and that further research be conducted to determine when and how individuals decide to shop at FMs and how they decide to purchase once at the market.

The Structure of Farmers' Markets in Alberta

Farmers' markets are most often held outdoors, in an arena, or in a community hall. The majority of markets are open on Saturdays (63%), but there are also markets open Sunday, Wednesday and Friday (AARD. 2003a). Markets are busiest in the summer months, from June to September, with January and February being the slowest months of the year (AARD. 2001). Still, managers often turn away potential vendors, often because the product is not locally grown or made, because there is not have enough space at the market, or because too many other vendors are already selling the same product (AARD. 2001).

Many markets (54%) have no formal application process for new vendors, although markets have some formal arrangements (AARD, 2001). Most markets (87%) have written rules and in nearly every case (92%), vendors are provided with a copy of the rules. Approximately half (52%) of the AAFMs are insured, with the sponsoring body covering these costs for most (84%) insured markets. Nearly three quarters of AAFMs are members of the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA). The size of farmers' markets in Alberta ranges from fewer than ten vendors to over 100 vendors.

The key players in administering farmers' markets in Alberta include the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (ABFMA), AB Farm Fresh Producers (ABFFP) Association, and Alberta Agriculture's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) (see Figure 1).



The ABFMA was created as a not-for-profit body that provides education, promotion, access to funding opportunities, and information on relevant provincial legislation to its members (AARD, 2003). The group does not have long-term funding, though they are certified by the Alberta government (Bogden, 2008) and contribute directly to market management by serving as the voice to the Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program (AAFMP). In the 2003 survey of farmers' markets, few vendors (18.5%) are members of the ABFMA and even fewer (11%) feel they are fully informed about the association (AARD, 2003a).

ABFFP Association is involved in farm-direct marketing, not solely farmers' markets. They are a non-profit organization that exclusively represents vendors. In contrast, the ABFMA would also represent market managers. ARD is a branch of Alberta Agriculture. Within the department there are staff members who work with the ABFMA to coordinate the administration of FMs in the province. There is a 50% overlap between ABFFPA and ABFMA members.

The Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program (AAFMP) is a program of Alberta Agriculture and Food that is administered by the Business Diversification Branch²⁴. The program offers information and guidelines about food regulation and market rules; to market managers they offer a resource manual that provides checklists, advice on starting a market, advice on how to coordinate a market, among other resources (Goat & Kotowich, 2008). They provide newsletters, publications, research, regulations and links and a map of the "AB approved farmers' markets with information on the location, dates and times of each market" (Bogden, 2008: 7).

²⁴ [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa6620](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa6620)

In 2001, the provincial government, through the Agriculture Food and Rural Development (AARD) office administered a survey to market managers (n= 88). Market managers are an integral component of the overall farmers' market structure (Figure 1). As stated in an Alberta Agriculture report, "market managers play a critical role in the success or failure of their marketplace. The manager's personae and leadership skills help to craft in the eyes of the vendors and consumers the character of the market and its relationship to the community." (AARD, 2001: PP).

Despite the importance of market managers, many (35%) work on a volunteer basis, with over half (64%) working fewer than 11 hours per week (AARD, 2001). These figures are seen in other jurisdictions as well (Watson & Studdert, 2006). The ABFMA report confirms that "Volunteer managers seem to be the norm; however, generally speaking, paid managers are more committed and resourceful in attracting vendors and developing a viable and sustainable marketplace." (AFMA, 2003b: 1). The market itself is often supported financially. In fact, roughly three-quarters of AB managers indicated that their market is sponsored by an agency or institution, most commonly an agricultural society or a non-profit association; there is little sponsorship from the business community (AARD, 2001).

The lack of support from the business community may represent an avenue for future advocacy. Much work on the contribution of FMs to the social economy highlight the surge in spending in local businesses surrounding the market (CCA, 2008a). Market shoppers indicate that they are often in the area around the market for the primary purpose of frequenting that market. However, the spillover effects to other businesses are significant (Connell et al., 2006). The estimated contribution of Alberta farmers' markets to the provincial economy between May 2003 and April 2004 was \$232.9 million and is projected to grow at a rate of 24% annually, with some estimating that FMs will be worth 1.7 billion by 2010 (AARD, 2003b). Farmers' markets are also the most popular agro-tourism destination in Alberta. However, reporting the economic contribution of farmers' markets clearly does not capture their value to local communities. As Connell et al. (2006) explain,

... farmers markets have a direct impact on how communities produce, distribute, consume, and share food...in addition to being a place to find local, seasonal food, farmers markets [are] also places to come together to build community (Connell et al. 2006: 13-14).

Section 6: Challenges, Issues to be Explored via Further Research

The Ambiguity of Social Capital

When it comes to analyzing how certain grass roots initiatives, such as FM, are structured and how to measure the cohesiveness of said initiatives, a common response is to draw from the discourse of social capital. Social capital however can be an ambiguous term, often used without consideration of the context.

One of the largest debates in the literature around Social capital has to do with who owns social capital, whether it is a community attribute or an attribute of the individual. From the community perspective, social capital is the "features of social organization such as networks,

norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits. (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). On the other side of things, individualistic definitions such as “the web of social relationships that influences behavior and thereby affects economic growth” (Pennar, 1997, p. 154) or “a resource that actors derive from specific social structures and then use to pursue their interests...” (Baker, 1990, p. 619) calls into question whether all actors involved in exchanges that build social capital plan to ‘invest’ the acquired resources in the same areas or to the same ends. Further questions such as how to measure the stocks of social capital and what are the rewards and consequences also permeate the very complex philosophical terrain surrounding the application of the term social capital as the most appropriate means to speak about, and measure, social connections.

Despite the numerous contentions, there are a few useful ideas in the literature that are particularly applicable to FM, in the case of strategic planning activities. The most important has to do with what can be understood as ‘reach-ability’.

Putnam (2000) offers the distinction between “bonding social capital” which denotes ties between people in similar situations and “bridging social capital”, which encompasses more distant ties of like persons. Furthermore, Woodcock (2001) suggests that “linking social capital” reaches out to people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community, enables members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community” (p. 13-14). While bonding and bridging social capital appear to be active and on the agendas of FM planners, linking social capital seems to be emphasized less. Linking social capital however, is where the power of the term becomes actualized.

Granovetter’s (1976) classic study suggested that “weak ties” rather than dense networks of solidarity and trust, benefit the transfer of knowledge and information better, and thus produce high levels of *widely distributed social capital*. The strength of weak ties comes from the fact that weak ties are more likely to connect different small groups than strong ties, which are often concentrated within particular groups” (p. 1376).

In some ways, FM are well positioned to ‘capitalize’ on the weak ties that come along with regular consumers. From the farmers’ perspective, the ability to reach out to other small farmers and assist them with transitions (such as those towards more sustainable methods, different marketing avenues, diversity in crop choices) relies on access to circles other than the one formed at the weekly FM. From the consumer’s point of view, a concerted effort is needed to speak with acquaintances about the value of local food, to ‘story’ the food they bring to potlucks or dinner parties. The focus needs to be not only on strengthening the trust, norms and reciprocity between farmers and consumers inherent in the weekly ritual that is the FM, but also on linking. As Pothukuchi & Kaufman (1999) suggest:” Although a number of dedicated organizations are involved in any city’s food system, one gets the feeling that the approach is decidedly piecemeal, with organizations basically pursuing their separate paths (p. 218). If one is to measure the social capital of FM based solely on the dense networks of producers and consumers active in the weekly transactions, it may prove to be quite high and indicative of strong social connectedness. However, strong and growing local food economies require widely distributed social capital in addition to the intensity and solidarity that is formed by FM exchanges. By focusing on *distributing social capital*, via links and weak ties, FM have the ability to become harbingers of collective social capital, bringing the strength of social connections out of the parking lots and side streets.

Farmers' Markets as Outlets of Agri-Tourism

As was discussed earlier on, the question of FM marginal status is very important. How the initiative is framed and discussed has major implications for how consumers interact with their local market and the values they accord it. One of the major issues has to do with the authenticity of the market. Questions surrounding what purpose it serves to consumers and communities are important and cannot be overlooked. According to Shakow (1981)

“A recurrent criticism of these efforts at revival is the charge that these new versions of the municipal market are ingenuine historical replicas which are oriented primarily to the tourist trade and dominated by craft shops, boutiques, and specialty greengrocers, and thereby lacking an egalitarian setting in which people come to buy real and essential things.” (p. 70).

According to a website designed to promote Agro tourism in B.C.²⁵, FM are clearly part of this agenda. Agro tourism:

...offers travelers unique and delicious tourism experiences. It's meeting the needs of farmers looking beyond traditional farm enterprises in these challenging and competitive times, and the demands of tourists looking for new and exciting hands-on, travel experiences”²⁶

In many other cases, agro tourism activities are specifically defined as those that happen on farm (festivals, u-picks, hayrides, farm tours or B &B's) as a way to diversify farming enterprises. In these cases, they are essentially 'value added initiatives'.

Important questions surrounding the influence of “moving beyond traditional farm enterprises” in either case need to be asked before this designation of FM as agrotourism outlets is criticized or applauded.

To move food production and consumption into a tourist framework begs questions about what tourism status does for food system relationships. Does it contribute to the 'novel' or 'marginal' terrain of food systems, framing them as components of vacations- or 'out of the ordinary' experiences? Does it offer such relationships as tourist attractions, making such relationships only accessible to those with the capital to invest in tourist type activities? On the other hand, does it offer a unique and competitive way for small farms to survive in a climate of heavy competition? Do such agro tourism experiences help consumers develop a reverence for farm landscapes and help to reassign values to home-grown, organic food which then are carried into their day to day transactions as consumers? These and other questions speak to the need for further exploration into the advantages and challenges associated with classifying FM as another stop on an agro tourism agenda.

FM: Good for Urban Farm Populations?

²⁵ <http://www.agritourismbc.org/markets.htm>

²⁶ <http://www.agritourismbc.org/operators.htm>

Govindasamy et al (1999) suggest that despite the drawbacks of owning farmland close to urban settings (higher land values and more intense regulatory requirements) ownership of this type of land brings farmers “better access to markets and the potential for higher prices” (p.81). According to statistics Canada, the urban farm population has increased from 9,370 (1996) to 9,995 (2001), a 6.7% increase. Is this increase related to the reemergence of localized food initiatives and the advantages of direct sales projects to increasing urban populations? Or is this simply a matter of sprawl engulfing what were once rural areas, making the communities in which the farms are now located ‘urban’ by statistical definition? Further studies into the patterns of urban or peri-urban farming deserve to be explored via further research.

Accessibility of Products

Last but not least, big questions about the accessibility of local food products deserved to be touched upon. According to the BCAFm website

“There are over 105 farmers' markets throughout British Columbia. In 70 of these you will find vendors who make, bake, or grow your food. Markets vary in size and sophistication from large, sheltered, year round markets to a few farmers with trucks parked on a lot once a week during the summer months.
(<http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/findamarket.htm>).

Although the number of markets listed is significant and speaks to an increasing supply of locally produced food products, of the 105 markets listed, only 9 of these are operating more than one day per week. There is clearly an interest in increasing sales at farmers markets, yet so few markets attempt a second day. Is this a supply issue? Is it a time commitment issue on the part of farmers? Is this attributable to a lack of demand generated by customers? Is this related to more organizational issues such as those surrounding market tenure/space/available days? These and other questions might provide a starting point for further exploration into the how access to local food products can be increased.

Conclusion

This report begins with a history of FM and attempts to cover some of the terrain related to FM and the social economy. Although clearly not exhaustive, the identification of common themes as well as some of the questions posed in the final section should provide an adequate starting point for further exploration into the exciting and dynamic phenomena of FM and how they inspire, inform, include and interact with some of the objectives posited by social economic initiatives. It is clear from this report that the diversity of FM structures and the many context specific challenges they face complicate the development and application of simple, uniform solutions. However, the emphasis given to the social role of FM (on the part of both producers and consumers) in helping to revive local food systems deserves special attention. It is this component that makes FM extremely compatible with the attention given to social objectives inherent in third sector agendas, in Canada and elsewhere. Furthermore, the numerous economic advantages in FM exchanges continue to provide support for the small farm sector. In depth case

studies will undoubtedly yield insight into further advantages and challenges facing individual FM and their contributions to the local food systems in which they are intertwined. The information provided in this report is an attempt to assist with the development of future research questions and interests.

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