



Cultivating Community at the Farmers' Market

Successful initiatives, as shared by managers & boards

Kelly J. Hodgins

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Prelude:

In conducting master's thesis research, I surveyed a selection of farmers' markets managers across British Columbia over the summer of 2014. The research works to identify opportunities and barriers to providing low-income consumers access to fresh, local, healthy foods. With that, I queried market managers on strategies they use to engage, attract and reach out to potential customers. Throughout, managers communicated real interest in the ideas, and curiosity about others' answers. Such was the enthusiasm to share ideas that I felt it necessary to aggregate, summarize and disseminate their responses; resulting in this publication.

The examples that follow arise out of conversations with markets large and small province-wide. Naturally, the suitability of ideas will vary depending on your market's context. It is hoped that you will gain new ideas, or modify them to your benefit. Where permissible, I have shared the market's name in an effort to provide you an understanding of their context, and to give you the ability to connect if you are interested in getting tips or sharing ideas.

A dominant theme emerging from the most successful community-oriented markets was collaboration: collaboration with the city, with non-profits, with volunteers, with businesses and funders, and with other agricultural or food organizations. It is in that spirit that I share this resource: to spread good ideas, inspire the growth of new ones, and encourage connection and conversation market-to-market.

As a farmers' market vendor myself, I admire the work of the British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) in these pursuits. As an academic, I hope that this document will build on the strong work they carry out.

Thank you to those who contributed to this project.

Thank you to the Social Sciences and Humanities and Research Council for funding the research.

And finally, thank you to all readers for the important work you carry out strengthening our local food systems,

Sincerely

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Consumers in the BC Food System

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A Note on Organization: This document is arranged into nine categories. Many of the ideas overlap, or could be combined or modified to achieve different objectives. Where participants have reported encountering stumbling blocks, I have shared them to help others avoid those problems. Sharing failures *and* successes is the best way to create successful programs, and that is the aim of this resource. Hyperlinks were current at the time of publishing.

1. Education for Consumers:

As the public becomes increasingly excited about local food, providing education at the market creates a double win: it attracts customers, but also equips market-goers with new knowledge and skills to foster their own food security at home.

Successful Ideas:

CHEF STAGE: Once established, a weekly chef's stage does not take enormous energy to operate, and attracts a following of dedicated customers, as well as drop-ins. See a chef in action at the Penticton Farmers' Market in this beautiful [video](#).

This can be expanded to a sign-up-only group tour with a chef. Extroverted chefs lead customers on a personal tour through the market, buying ingredients from various farmers, before getting on-stage and making a show of crafting them into a dish for everyone to watch.

If a weekly chef stage is too logistically challenging, try coordinating an occasional "Chef Challenge" like the popular one at the [Prince George Farmers' Market](#). Chefs from local restaurants get creative with market ingredients, while guests buy tickets to sample and cast votes to determine the prize-winning dish and chef.

To take full potential of the chef stage, Eileen Dwilies of the Haney Farmers Market says, "we might have a vendor that wants to talk about something. The garlic fellow likes to do that, so sometimes they'll do it in tandem: the chef makes a garlic soup and then the garlic fellow gets up and talks about the different garlics that he grows."

MARKET TOURS: At the [Vancouver Farmers Markets](#), a nutritionist leads market tours. In "Meet your Maker" tours, the nutritionist uses a multi-ingredient recipe to lead customers on a tour to various vendors to procure ingredients. This provides the opportunity to explain the health benefits of the ingredients and describe the vendors' personal stories. They offer similar "Nutrition Tours," where the nutritionist focuses the tour around certain themes, such as "Eat Gluten-Free at the Market" or "Eat Local and Organic on a Budget."

Chef involvement encourages restaurants to consider patronizing the market and also gives customers ideas for recipes with market products. Photo courtesy of the Prince George Farmers' Market.



SHARING FOOD IDEAS:

The Powell River Farmers' Market employs cross-promotion strategies to give customers recipe ideas for using farmers' market products. Juhli Jobi, market manager, encourages prepared meals vendors to source their meats and breads from other vendors and an artist vendor was commissioned to paint the market's signage. This strengthens vendor relationships but also the mission of the market, "because our vendors who are asking people to buy local are also buying local" she says.

Other suggestions:

- When hosting special market events, procure ingredients from the vendors.
- Encourage the bakers to source the fruit and herbs they use from other vendors

A summer student ran a "Try It; You'll Like It" booth at the Haney Farmers Market. Each week, she would offer samples of a vegetable or fruit, along with some research about it and recipes to take home. Having a person to interact with is much more appealing than merely a table with informational literature.



Try some cross-promotion. For vendors doing value-added products, ask if they will use ingredients from the farmer vendors. This gives customers good ideas about how to bake, preserve, or cook with raw vegetables and fruits that they buy from the farmer vendors.

WHAT ELSE COULD I DO?

Offer a free community table to non-profit community organizations. At the Coquitlam Farmers Market, non-profits within the areas of agriculture, environment, and health are welcomed to showcase their organization to the farmers' market community.

Other markets offer community education opportunities on a less structured schedule. They reach out to customers by offering special workshops or events as the board or volunteers has energy to plan them. Collaborating with other community groups is a good way to have educational events without burdening your board or volunteers with planning.

For example, partner with:

- Horticulture Clubs: for gardening presentations, an "ask an expert" table, or plant giveaways
- Beekeepers Associations: for Honeybee Days with presentations, demonstrations and honey-themed treats from vendors (like at the [Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market](#))
- Woodcarvers/Woodturners Guilds: for DIY birdhouse building or other small garden projects

EDUCATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA:

Use your social media platforms as a space for education: videos and articles about farmers, local news stories, and recipes are good ideas. A diverse Facebook feed attracts different types of followers and encourages people to share posts, helping your posts reach others who may not be "fans" of your page. The [North Saanich Farm Market](#) and [Coquitlam Farmers Market](#) provide great examples of active, engaging, and appropriate Facebook pages, websites, blogs, and Twitter feeds.

Barriers:

Many managers report that a community organization already provides food/farming education programs, implying that for the market to embark on such initiatives would be a duplication of effort. In other cases, they strike up a partnership with a food related agency in the community to collaborate on what is existing already.

Some say they have offered chef demonstrations or cooking/nutrition workshops, but report it being too much work with little take-up. Challenging logistics include providing water, power and space, as well as sourcing ingredients and a reliable chef. You may have to apply for a temporary food permit for every event too, which adds considerable work if hosting weekly chef demos.

2. Agri-Tourism & Farm Tours:

Farmers' Markets are already a form of agri-tourism, and many markets have an explicit goal to enhance public awareness about farming. Hence, capitalizing on the potentials offered by agri-tourism, or offering farm tours is logical, if feasible.

Successful Ideas:

FARM TOURS COORDINATED AT THE MARKET: One market partners with one farm at a time to offer farm tours. A sign-up sheet is posted on market Saturdays for tours taking place on a participating farm the following Monday. These require a deposit and are limited to 10 attendees. The participants must drive themselves to the farm, and the farmer will open up her/his farm to a tour and questions for a maximum of 1.5 hours. These are the basic guidelines, but modifications occur at the request of the farmers participating. Profits are seen as a donation to the market and to the farmer for her/his time. The market acts as a facilitator for this consumer education, and earns some money from each tour.



Farm tours are a great complement to the farmers' market. A tour helps customers learn about the farmer who sells at your market. It also encourages customer loyalty to that farmer, and by consequence, the market.

CYCLING FARM & MARKET TOURS: Another idea suggested is a partnership with the community's cycling association and tourism board to create a cyclist-friendly farm-to-farm tour (including a stop at the farmers' market). This could be designed as self-directed with a brochure map, or as a special one-day event (see examples from the annual [Fraser Valley Slow Food Cycle Tours](#) or [Pemberton Slow Food Sunday Cycle](#)).

CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH TOURISM: Respondents emphasized that a relationship with the local tourism board is very important. The tourism board has more funding than most farmers' markets, existing advertising campaigns which the market may fit into, creative staff and summer students working on specific projects, and a keen interest in stimulating agri-tourism. They could be an ideal collaborator on agri-tourism initiatives (creating something like the popular [Circle Farm Tours](#)). Of course, if tourism staff are familiar with the market, they are more likely to send visitors there as well.

GUIDED MARKET TOURS: One market offers a guided tour of the market at 11am every Sunday. A volunteer meets interested customers at a designated spot. This talented and compelling volunteer narrates a captivating story of the market history, its colourful character, and interesting or funny stories about the producers, while leading the group around and answering questions. The [Kamloops Farmers' Market](#) has been offering market tours for years, and attracts a small group each week.



Pemberton Slow Food Sunday Cycle. Image: Dave Steers Photography© Coordinating with your local cycling organization, food security group, tourism board, food co-op or other relevant groups to create cycling tours is a way to highlight local agriculture and introduce cyclists on the tour to your market

Barriers

The idea of offering farm tours is still young and it seems many markets are still figuring out how to offer them. One reported barrier exists in the fact that many small farmers associated with farmers' markets are time-constrained. They don't have time to welcome visitors onto the farm and they feel that they get enough face-to-face interaction with consumers at market days.

3. Sharing Meals:

Recognizing that celebrating food is a concept central to farmers' markets, a few markets have tried to further that idea by providing opportunities for the public to dine together communally.

Successful Ideas:

LONG-TABLE “FARM TO FORK” DINNERS: In 2014, a long-table dinner on a farmers' farm raised profits for the [Powell River Farmers' Market](#) to expand the reach of the BCAFM [nutrition coupon program](#). The dinner showcased vendors' products (farmers' produce and meat, but also value-added products: coffee, beer, kombucha, and baking). This was a collaborative effort, with energy from the nutrition coupon community partner, the farm owners, and a community member who volunteered to undertake the event planning. It will become an annual event, and its success attracted corporate sponsors for next year. Contact this report's author for information.



“Farm to Fork” fundraiser to expand the BCAFM Nutrition Coupon Program in Powell River, BC.

Image courtesy of Valerie Hodgins©

MEALS AT THE MARKET: As special events, the [Haney Farmers Market](#) hosts occasional “Chef at the Market” events. These events provide a variety of benefits: for example, when they host a blueberry pancake breakfast, they draw a big crowd from the community, show off vendors' berries and give out recipes for other blueberry dishes, bringing in \$5 for a plate. This is similar to the cooking demonstrations above, except that its purpose is to foster community by encouraging customers to sit and dine together over a common meal. The women who run it are seniors, and it gives them an opportunity to have a role at the market, building a community.

At the Coquitlam Farmers Market community groups have the opportunity to make money by partnering with the market to host local food events. For instance, the firefighters help put together a salmon barbeque using market-procured ingredients (including condiments and drinks), and a portion of the proceeds is then donated to their fundraising campaign.

In the winter, one market facilitates potlucks to foster community around sharing food.

A well-received activity is a “stone soup” party where customers can contribute ingredients to a community soup, cooked on-site by a chef.

By charging a small fee, these events can be successful fundraisers; if free, they are still important for attracting customers.

OTHER IDEAS:

One market joined forces with the community hall to host a community dinner fundraiser for the hall. This is another way that collaboration can raise the profile of the market and the vendors.

Barriers:

Some managers pointed out that by offering meals at the market, their prepared-food/concession vendors would suffer. Most report that they do not have the resources (physical or human) to organize this. Nevertheless, it is cited as a good way to bring people to the market who don't attend regularly, and to raise money. Most see it as feasible if done in collaboration with another organization in the community, and possibly off-site.

4. Special Events:

Special events are important for bringing the market greater exposure and attracting new customers. Some also cite it as a way to engage low-income customers who feel the market is an exclusive place, as festivals are open to all, and present no obligation to spend a lot of money. They can also offer something fun for the hard-to-attract 9-18 year-old demographic.

Successful Ideas:

FESTIVALS: Monthly festivals seem to be the most popular. As one manager said, once-a-month festivals strike a balance, wherein they ensure “we don’t turn our board members into full-time volunteers” but they are frequent enough that they “help move the brand of the market forward and give customers some fun.” Markets with fewer resources typically offer just one festival, usually celebrating the autumn harvest. Valuable as this is, it may attract first-time customers at the end of the season, when it would be more worthwhile to introduce them to the market in the spring.

At the [Comox Valley Farmers’ Market](#), a monthly “Food Fest,” hosted in partnership with the North Island Culinary School, highlights an in-season ingredient. For instance, in August, they prepared fried green tomatoes, bruschetta, pasta sauce, and sundried tomatoes. They offered samples and hosted a tomato tasting competition. The tomatoes were donated by vendors, who were marked with a red balloon to encourage customers to visit. Some offered a special price on tomatoes. Another market celebrates tomatoes with more interactive activities for greater customer engagement: deseeding competitions and a salsa competition. See more tomato, corn and berry festival activity ideas from the [Rossland Mountain Market](#).



Food Fest at the Comox Valley Farmers’ Market, with chefs giving samples and recipe ideas.

Another tip is to use other special events in the community to promote your market. For instance, at an Environmental Week celebration that their city was hosting, one clever market had volunteers give out \$1 market coupons. Their goal was to incentivize these Environmental Week celebrants to come to the farmers’ market, perhaps for the first time.

If there is room, encourage sharing of space with other festivals. The Moss Street Market receives enormous traffic when the Victoria Art Gallery holds its annual Moss Street Paint-In art festival

along the entire street. The Haney Farmers Market shares its home during National Aboriginal Day, Earth Day and other celebrations. The market and another organization each take half of the park, and visitors enjoy both attractions. The market already has insurance, a contract for the park rental, and other related licences. Their willingness to integrate other organizations within that existing administration makes it easy and attractive for other special events to co-locate, to the benefit of both parties.

OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS IDEAS:

- Bring in a well-known speaker to deliver a lecture, or split the cost with other markets or organizations in the region to host a speaker tour.
- Get involved with special events hosted by others in your community (on-farm dinners, music festivals, Farmers' Institute or Agriculture Organization events, 4-H shows) to gain exposure, attract new customers, or offer farm/food education.
- Sponsor farming/food related screenings of films if a film festival comes through your town.
- Have an email sign-up list at the Market Information tent to provide you the ability to email your customers to announce special events.
- Click on these hyperlinks to see how other markets create special events during:
 - Bike to Work Week: Bike workshops, tune-ups and bike-blender smoothies for cyclists
 - Mothers' Day: Tea and a treat at the Prince George Farmers' Market (BYOTC: Bring your own tea cup)
 - Summer Solstice: Extended market hours, special musicians, and additional food vendors for an enormously popular "[Midsummer's Night Feast](#)" at the Powell River Farmers' Market
 - Labour Day: [Back-to-school themed market](#), including free brown-bag sample school lunches at the Vernon Farmers Market
 - Other excuses for themed markets: Fathers' Day, Canada Day, BC Day at the [Prince George Farmers' Market](#)

Contests and games that promote food literacy are natural complements to the farmers' market. The Artisan Markets in Burnaby, Ambleside and Lonsdale Quay have an activity of this nature almost every week. The squash guessing contest pictured here also offers takeaway recipes for various types of squash.



5. Kids' Activities & Engagement:

As one manager so aptly put it, "in 10 years, the kids at my market will be the household's grocery shoppers," so she wants to offer opportunities to attract children and youth, and to make them familiar and comfortable with the market.

Successful Ideas:

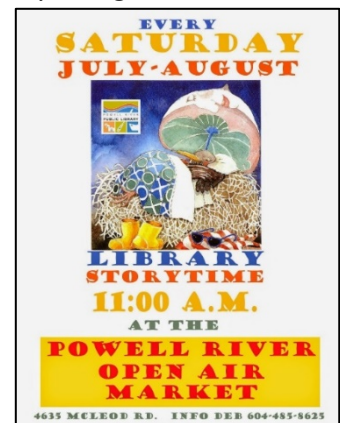
CHILDREN'S TENT: Make an intentional effort to create a kid-friendly space. Many markets have a hired or volunteer children's coordinator. Usually, they have a tent with colouring, market scavenger hunts and playdough, in addition to a specific, different craft each week.

-Respondents emphasized that any children's tent or activity is not a babysitting service.

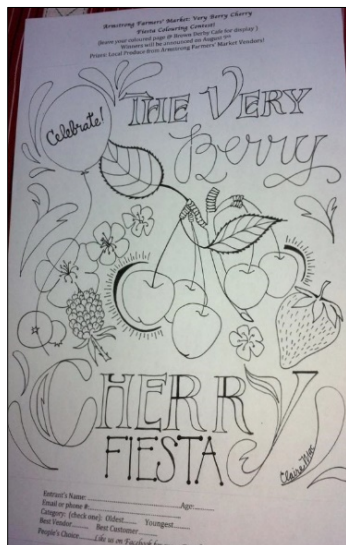
Some require the parents to stay with the children; others have a 10-minute activity maximum, where parents may leave to shop, but they must return to pick up their child after 10 minutes.

-If resources are constrained, ask for volunteers or for donations to purchase craft supplies (try Montessori school or private schools, the Agriculture Association, Farmers' Institute, or seek volunteers from students in teaching programs at university).

Each week, offer a taste of a vegetable at the children's tent. If children try the vegetable, they earn a sticker that says "I love veggies!"



At the [Powell River Farmers' Market](#), the public library hosts a weekly story-time tent. The lively librarian brings puppetry, finger plays, sing-alongs and storybooks to entertain toddlers, preschoolers, and their parents and grandparents.



The [Fernie Mountain Market](#) partnered with the Fernie Heritage Library as well as several other businesses to create [Bibbity Bobbity Boo Fun Fest](#), a kid-friendly event that brought BC kids' performers together at the farmers' market.

FUN, ONE-OFF ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS: Some ideas mentioned: egg-dying with natural dyes, scavenger hunts, plant-identification games, flower planting, seed-matching, zucchini races, [Teddy Bear Picnics](#), [dog shows](#), Halloween dress-up contests, pumpkin carving with seed-roasting/snacking, recipe contests, kids' cooking stage with a chef, colouring contests.

Provide kid-friendly activities for special events, such as colouring contests at the Armstrong Farmers' Markets' Very Berry Cherry Fiesta. Photo courtesy of the Armstrong Farmer's Market.

LONGER-TERM CHILDREN ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES: The Prince George Farmers' Market gives seed potatoes to children in the first weeks of the season and encourages them to grow them over the summer. In September, the children harvest their plant and compete to have the most numerous potatoes, the heaviest yield, and the heaviest single potato. The same could be done with pumpkins (heaviest pumpkin grown), or sunflowers (tallest sunflower).

Encourage vendors to package "snack packs" of cherry tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers etc. to provide parents a healthy alternative to cookies or baking for their children at the market.

Provide a designated "Young Vendors" booth, where young entrepreneurs can use space to sell jewelry, crafts, plants, vegetables, etc. Or do it once per season, like the Abbotsford Farm and Country Market, with special swap-meet for children to "buy, sell, [and] swap crafts, unused and unwanted items."

The Abbotsford Farm and Country Market encourages children to get engaged at the market

by hiding "Abbie" the market mascot teddy-bear in a vendor's booth. Keen-eyed kids get a prize for spotting her.



Get children involved behind the scenes at the market!
Image courtesy of Dave Steers Photography©



Pumpkin growing contests can be a fun idea for children and adults alike.
Image courtesy of Dave Steers Photography©

6. Growing Food:

As farmers' markets make an effort to engage with the public along the entire food supply chain (farm tours to learn about production, community meals to share in consumption), another avenue to explore is showcasing the growing of food.

Successful Ideas:

LOCATION AT A FARM: The [UBC Farm Market](#) is located at the UBC Farm and a volunteer leads tours. Their unique location allows this, but other markets are hindered by their “pop-up” nature, located on closed-off streets or in city parks.

The Haney Farmers Market sets up on a nearby farm once a year, promoting the event highly and drawing large crowds for this special occasion.

COMMUNITY GARDENS: [Port Moody Winter Farmers Market](#) has partnered with the Port Moody Police Department Green Team to build a community garden. The intent is to offer market-goers and wider community a space to grow food, with a direct connection to the farmers' market. They also offer children's programs in the summer led by the garden coordinator.

OTHER IDEAS: While many markets highlight “what's in season now” to guide customers (see image), consider encouraging the public to try their hand at growing food. One suggestion is to provide an



informational whiteboard or calendar telling customers “What to Plant Now,” along with some informational take-home literature on companion planting, fall/winter gardening, deer/rabbit resistant plants, easiest-to-grow plants for beginners, or others. This is especially useful if the market has vendors selling seeds or plant starts. Providing this information encourages customers to consider growing their own food, or at minimum helps raise awareness about seasonality and the cycles of local food.

For those who keep an apple or pear tree, the [Cedar Farmers' Market](#) has a cider-pressing company visit the market during their late-September Apple Festival. Market-goers can have their fruit pressed into juice while they shop, and anyone can purchase the pulp for animal feed.

7. Partnerships with Emergency Food Providers:

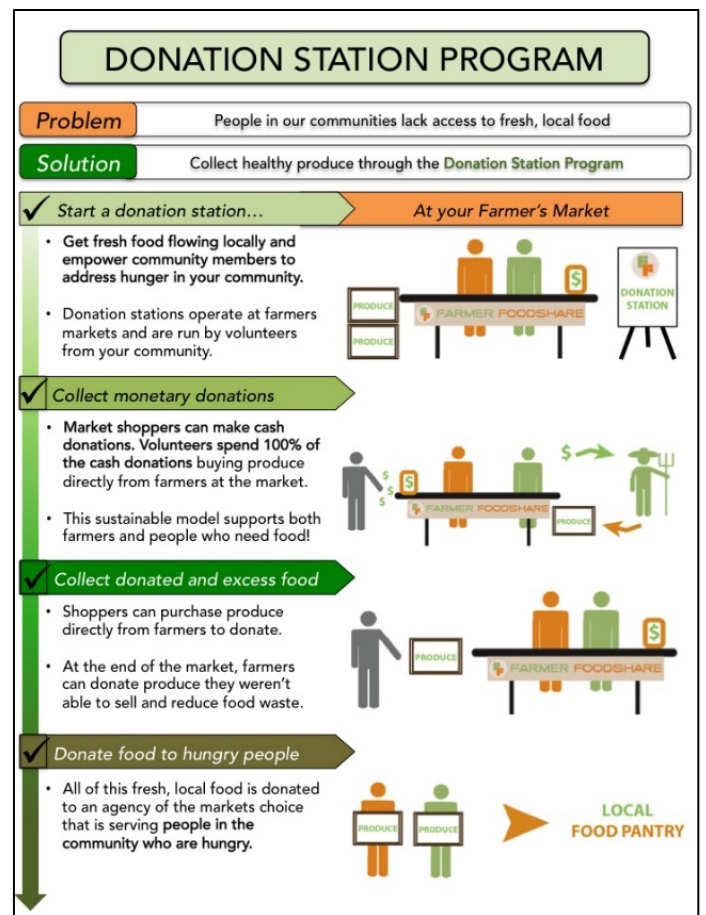
In the spirit of food security, a principle by which most farmers' markets operate, it is important to consider reaching out to low-income, marginalized individuals and families who may lack the ability to shop at your market.

Successful Ideas:

DONATION BINS FOR FOOD PURCHASED AT THE FARMERS' MARKET: Three of the Vancouver Farmers' Markets and many other markets around the province set up a "Donation Station" at each market. Customers are encouraged to purchase a little extra from their favourite vendor to donate to a charity, food program, crisis-centre, food bank, etc.

PICK-UP BY FOOD BANK VOLUNTEERS: The vast majority of markets report some degree of relationship with their local food bank or community meals provider. Usually, a representative will come at the end of the market to pick up unsold produce that vendors wish to donate; other times, vendors do this privately, dropping off donations on their way home.

BOOTH SPACE FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: Some markets offer a community booth, so that each week a different non-profit can have a space to reach out to consumers. One offered space for the sale of preserves made by a social enterprise employing disadvantaged youth. Another sells applesauce made by their community's fruit-tree gleaning project (this program donates 1/3 of its fruit to the food bank, gives 1/3 to the pickers and processes 1/3 into applesauce). By helping these organizations, they are indirectly supporting food-insecure neighbours in their community.



Infographic from Farmer Foodshare, an organization born out of a farmers' market in North Carolina

Barriers:

Some food banks are only open limited days of the week or do not have the capacity to store perishable product.

It is worth discussing possibilities with these organizations though. In one town, a local business donates the use of their cooler space to hold farmers' unsold produce after a Sunday market until the food bank can distribute it on the following Tuesday.

Don't limit yourself to thinking only about partnerships with food banks. Churches, social enterprises, community kitchens or other groups might offer fruitful relationships where good food can be made accessible to more community members.

Some managers report some trepidation: they worry that vendors will resent being asked to donate food at the end of the market, will feel pressured to donate instead of using it for feed for their livestock, or will request to be paid at least at-cost for the food. Markets that have this practice in place, though, largely report that their vendors accept and endorse the routine, donating very generously.

8. Access for Low-Income Consumers:

With the same motivation of providing “good food for all,” some markets are trying to directly reach out to low-income individuals, rather than (or in addition to) partnering with emergency food providers (as described in Section 7).

Successful Ideas:

EXPANDING THE BCAFM COUPON PROGRAM: Markets that have had success with the Nutrition Coupon Program have indicated their interest in expanding it. There are a number of reasons for this:

- they don't receive sufficient funding to meet the demand from community members
- they want to be able to change some of the rules to accommodate specific circumstances in their community and at their market
- they want the program to be more resilient, not wholly based upon government funding
- their market runs in the winter too, so they wish to help families with coupons year-round.

As mentioned above (see “Sharing Meals,” Section 4), annual fundraisers can help raise this money.

The [Squamish Farmers' Market](#) has successfully partnered with their local credit union, Squamish Savings, to allow more than 20 families and seniors to [get involved in the coupon program](#). They use the BCAFM model, simply injecting the donated funds and piggybacking on the existing program infrastructure.

A few markets are asking local businesses for funds, framing the approach as “sponsorship.” That is, the business is asked to donate money to offer a season's worth of coupons to one or more families. They have asked the BCAFM to improve the program by offering a sponsorship package which would make approaching businesses easier.

OTHER IDEAS: For markets that offer “market dollars” or “market tokens,” encourage customers to donate these to a jar for a charity that can give them to low-income consumers.

For markets that have a POS system to exchange debit or credit for market dollars, consider charging a \$1 fee or having a “tip” option. Use the money gained from this to support food-insecure individuals in your town (for example: use the accumulated dollars to purchase farmers' produce for the food bank or to donate market vouchers to social-service organizations).

The Haney Farmers Market has a \$15 membership program for customers where “[Friends of the Market](#)” receive a book of coupons, discounts on monthly Member Appreciation Days, and a newsletter of special events. The Vancouver Farmers’ Market offers a [similar program](#), with different membership sizes, and the [North Saanich Farm Market](#) offers another set of member benefits to provide you some examples.

The Vancouver Farmers’ Markets host “[Seniors Days](#)” offering discounts for seniors, as well as a nurse to provide blood pressure checks and a dietician to give dietary advice and answer questions.

Pay your musicians with products donated from vendors (see image for how well this works at the Comox Valley Farmers’ Market); or offer market vouchers/tokens to start-up videographers, photographers, or artists in exchange for promotional material for the market.

The [Celistia Hall Farmers’ Market](#) is giving every elementary school student in the small local school a five-dollar coupon for the market. This is partly a way to make fresh products more affordable, but also, says Patsy Alford, market manager, “a way to encourage families to come to the market for the first time, to educate children about local food, and to invest in the market vendors.”



ACCESSIBILITY: Some markets have been able to work with their municipality or regional district to get public transportation to the market. Another idea for markets where transportation poses challenges is to facilitate a ride-share program, either through sign-up at the market, or online through a tab on the market website, or via a heavily-trafficked site such as Facebook.

9. Social enterprise or business incubation initiatives:

Surprisingly, many market managers reported that this was a topic that they and their boards had discussed and were keen to pursue, though not sure how. On average, they ranked providing “more opportunities for small farmers” as their 2nd priority on a scale of 7 regarding motivations guiding their market growth.

Successful Ideas:

A FEW IDEAS TO HELP FARMERS WITH FINANCES:

One has partnered with their local credit union to offer a start-up grant to a food or farming social enterprise.

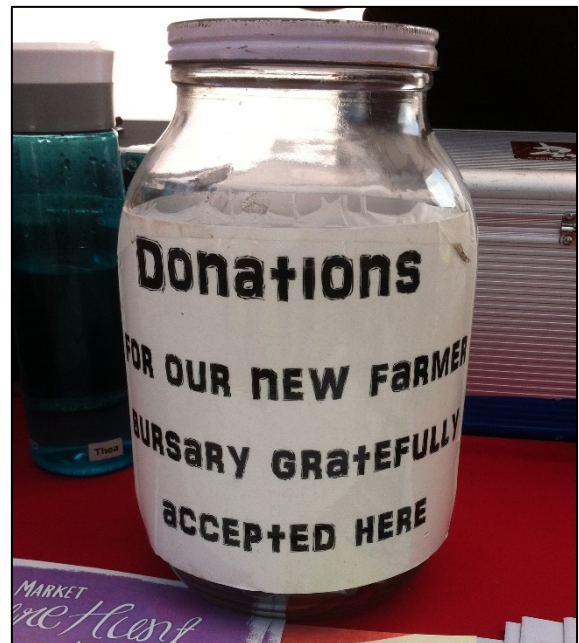
Another offers discounts to new farmers/businesses, acknowledging that they are vulnerable but that having a space at the market is an important incubator for their embryonic young businesses.

A similar suggestion is to allow farmers to volunteer some hours on market projects in exchange for lowered membership/stall fees.

The Comox Valley Farmers’ Market has a donation jar where market-goers can contribute to their “new farmer bursary” program (see image).

Barriers:

WE NEED MORE IDEAS! Most participants reported that they want to support or encourage the establishment of new businesses or farms, but need ideas for viable ways to do so.



Thank you:

Dr. Evan Fraser

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

University of Guelph Geography Department

Dave Steers

Abbotsford Farm and Country Market

Armstrong Farmers' Market

Burnaby Farmers' Market

Cedar Farmers' Market

Celista Hall Farmers' Market

Comox Valley Farmers' Market

Coquitlam Farmers Market

Fernie Mountain Market

Haney Farmers Market

Kamloops Regional Farmers' Market

Kitsilano Farmers Market

Moss Street Market

North Saanich Farm Market

Penticton Farmers' Market

Powell River's Open Air Farmers' Market

Port Moody Farmers Market

Prince George Farmers' Market

Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market

Squamish Farmers' Market

UBC Farm Market

Vernon Farmers' Market

