

# A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE WHO SHOP AT THE SULLIVAN COUNTY FARMERS' MARKETS

## FARMERS' MARKET SURVEY RESULTS SUMMER 2006

A Buy Local Program was initiated in the autumn of 2003 as a result of a grant aimed at teaching Extension Educators how to conduct farmer driven research projects. Seth Wilner, Sullivan County UNH Cooperative Extension Agriculture Educator, received a large grant to train Extension Educators who wanted to learn how to work with farmers to conduct research projects. Farmer Driven Research means that farmers generate the research ideas, implementation methods, and take leadership for the project. Extension Educators assist the producers with experimental design and technical expertise. The funding allowed for 10 projects in New Hampshire.

Post cards were sent out asking growers in Sullivan County for project ideas. Two project ideas received large responses, researching the effectiveness of compost tea as an organic fungicide, and researching ways to increase support for buying local agricultural products. This report is about the Buy Local Project.

A group of producers and consumers with a desire to support local agriculture (The Sullivan County Ag Supporters) came together to research how they could effectively increase the amount of local agricultural products sold in Sullivan County through low cost marketing efforts. To get started the group decided to hold a workshop to learn about existing efforts already being conducted by other agencies and organizations. Participants heard presentations from a Massachusetts non profit leading the nation in such efforts called, "Communities Involved in Supporting Agriculture" (CISA), the NH Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets, a local non-profit working in this area, "Vital Communities" and the NH Farmers' Market Association.

Through this workshop it was learned that radio advertisements were the most cost-effective way to increase the general public's awareness about local agriculture. As a result, the Sullivan County Ag Supporters decided to pursue radio advertising as the means of promoting the benefits of buying locally grown produce and the three Sullivan County Farmers' Markets.

In order to pursue radio ads, more financial resources were necessary. Seth wrote two additional grants, a NH Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets Agricultural Promotion Grant, and a NH Farm Bureau Agricultural Promotion Grant. Sullivan County Farm Bureau also donated money to the project as well. In all, Seth wrote three grants and solicited other funds to raise close to \$10,000.

With financial resources secured, Allan Reetz, a broadcast marketing specialist from Meriden NH, was hired to work with group. Allan developed six radio ads and aired them on seven local radio stations during the spring and early summer of 2006.

In an attempt to evaluate any impact from the radio ads, and to gather information for future marketing efforts, a farmers' market survey was developed. Extension staff surveyed patrons from all three Farmers' Markets throughout the market season. The Claremont Farmers' Market was surveyed three separate times on July 13<sup>th</sup>, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, and September 8<sup>th</sup>. The Newport Farmers' Market was surveyed on July 7<sup>th</sup>, August 4<sup>th</sup>, and September 8<sup>th</sup>, and The Cornish Farmers' Market was surveyed twice on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and August 5<sup>th</sup>.

The survey tool was designed to collect information on why people shopped at the markets, how far they traveled, how they learned about the markets and the average amount they spent. A summary of the survey results are featured below.

## CLAREMONT

65 Participants 10 Male      55 Female

### Age:

- 18% (12 people) were over 60 years old
- 20% (13 people) were between 50 - 59 years old
- **30% (20 people) were between 40-49 years old**
- 18% (12 people) were between 30-39 years old
- 12% (8 people) were under 29 years old.

### What are the primary reasons you shop the farmers' market?

*Patrons were asked to circle all the choices that applied and thus the percentages below do not total to 100.*

- **64% (42 people) said that *Product Quality* was a primary reason they shopped at farmers' markets.**
- 33% (22 people) said *Supporting Growers* was a primary reason for shopping at farmers' markets.
- 10% (7 people) said that *Location* was a primary reason for shopping at farmers' markets.

### How often do you shop at the market?

- 40% (26 people) shop the market weekly
- **49% (32 people) shopped irregularly**
- 9% (6 people) shopped monthly

### How did you hear about the farmers' market?

- **43% (28 people) said they learned of the market as a result of *driving by*.**
- 24% (16 people) said they saw *signs* for the market.
- 22% (14 people) said they heard about it from *friends*
- 3% (2 people) learned about the market from the *newspaper*

### How far did you travel to visit the farmers' market?

- **77% (50 people) traveled less than 10 miles to the market.**
- 17% (11 people) traveled between 10 and 19 miles to the market.
- 5% (3 people) traveled more than 40 miles to the market.
- 1% (1 person) traveled between 20 and 29 miles to the market.

### How much do you expect to spend at the farmers' market today?

Of the 65 people who filled out the surveys 57 people provided a dollar amount they expected to spend at the market that day. The **average** amount they expected to spend was **\$15.00**, with the highest figure being \$40.00 and the lowest amount listed as \$5.00. The median dollar amount was \$14.00.

Of the 65 people participating in the Claremont survey 49 answered the question, “**What is your favorite radio station?**”

- **22% of respondents cited National Public Radio as the station they listened to most.**
- 12% listened to Q106.1 FM
- The remaining 65% split their listening time between; 93.9, 97.1, 101.7, and 104.3 FM.

### What other products would you want to see available at this Market?

Only 38% of survey participants said they would like to see other products. The products mentioned included; more *artisans, cheese, prepared foods, music, fibers, candy, flowers, and clothing.*

## NEWPORT

**99 Participants**      18 Male      81 Female

### Age

- 20% (20 people) were over 60 years old
- 26% (26 people) were between the ages of 50-59 years old
- **29% (29 people) were between 40-49 years old**
- 12% (12 people) were between the ages of 30-39 years old.
- 8% (8 people) were between the ages of 20-29 years old
- 4% (4 people) were under 20 years old.

### What are the primary reasons you shop the farmers' market?

*Patrons were asked to circle all the choices that applied and thus the percentages below do not total to 100.*

- **78% (78 people) said that Product Quality was a primary reason they shopped at farmers' markets.**
- 36% (36) said *Supporting Growers* was a primary reason for shopping at farmers' markets.
- 21% (21) said that *Location* was a primary reason for shopping at farmers' markets.
- 11% (11) said that *Service* was a primary reason for shopping at farmers' markets.

### How often do you shop the market?

- **51% (51 people) shop the market weekly**
- 34% (34 people) shop the market irregularly
- 10% (10 people) shop the market monthly

### How did you hear about the farmers' market?

- **32% (32 people) said they learned of the market as a result of *driving by*.**
- 19% (19 people) participants said the *signs* attracted them to the market.
- 16% (16 people) said they heard the market from *friends or family*
- 7% (7 people) learned about the market from the *newspaper*

The rest of those surveyed marked *other*.

### **How far did you travel to visit the farmers' market?**

- **63% (63 people) said they traveled less than 10 miles to the market.**
- 22% (22 people) traveled between 10 and 19 miles to the market.
- 10% (10 people) traveled greater than 40 miles to the market.
- 3% (3 people) traveled between 20 and 29 miles to the market.

### **How much do you expect to spend at the farmers' market today?**

Of the 99 people who filled out the surveys 61 people provided a dollar amount they expected to spend at the market that day. The **average** amount they expected to spend was **\$16.00**, with the highest figure being \$30.00 and the lowest amount listed as \$5.00. The median dollar amount was \$15.00.

### **Two thirds of the survey respondents provided a radio station when ask to list their favorite.**

- **47% stated New Hampshire Public Radio as the station listened to most often.**
- The remaining 53% split their listening time between 101.7, 103.1, 104.3, and 106.1.

### **What other products would you want to see available at this Market?**

Only 43% of survey participants said they would like to see other products at the market. The products they wrote down included; *elephant ears, pickles, dinner options, crafts, music, cheese, candles, and antiques.*

## CORNISH

**39 Participants**      10 Male      29 Female

- 15% (6 people) were over 60 years old
- **41% (16 people) were between 50 - 59 years old**
- 23% (9 people) were between 40-49 years old
- 20% (8 people) were between 30-39 years old

### What are the primary reasons you shop the farmers' market?

*Patrons were asked to circle all the choices that applied and thus the percentages below do not total to 100.*

- **74% (29 people) said that Product Quality was a primary reason they shopped at farmers' markets.**
- 61% (24 people) said *Supporting Growers* was a primary reason for shopping at farmers' markets.
- 35% (14 people) said that *Location* was a primary reason for shopping at farmers' markets.

### How often do you shop the market

- **61% (22 people) shop the market weekly**
- 38% (15 people) shop the market irregularly
- 5% (2 people) shop the market monthly.

### How did you hear about the Cornish Farmers' Market?

- **33% (13) survey participants said they heard about it from family or friends**
- 20% (8) stated they stopped at the market because they were *driving by*.
- 20% (8) participants said the *signs* attracted them to the market.

The rest of those surveyed marked *other*.

### How far did you travel to visit the farmers' market?

- **85% (33 people) said they traveled less than 10 miles to the market.**
- 8% (3 people) traveled between 10 and 19 miles to the market.
- 8% (3 people) traveled between 20 and 29 miles to the market.

### **How much do you expect to spend at the farmers' market today?**

Of the 39 people who filled out the surveys 33 people provided a dollar amount that they expected to spend at the market that day. The **average** amount they expected to spend at the Cornish Farmers' Market was **\$16.00**, with the highest figure being \$50.00 and the lowest amount listed as \$5.00. The median dollar amount was **\$14.00**.

Of the 39 people participating in the Cornish survey 36 answered the question, **“What is your favorite radio station?”**

- **42% of the respondents stated National Public Radio as the radio station most listened to.**
- The remaining 58% split their listening time between 92.3, 100.5, 103.1, 104.3, and 106.1.

### **What other products would you want to see available at this Market?**

Only 46% of survey participants said they would like to see other products at the market. The products they wrote down included; ***cheese, hot food, baked goods, goat cheese, quilts, flowers, pesto, and music.***

### **General Survey Trends:**

Although radio ads have been found to be cost effective methods for promoting local issues and businesses, the grand majority of people surveyed in this project said they learned about the farmers markets by driving by or through signs. The radio ads did not show themselves as impacting people to go to the farmers' markets.

Of the 163 people who answered the question, **19%** said they heard the radio advertisements promoting local agriculture and the farmers' markets. Speaking to people in the radio industry, this is a good response rate, yet the impact of these ads remains hard to judge. It does not appear to be how they learned about the markets.

This might suggest that market managers with limited budgets try to locate the markets in high traffic areas and also use visible signs to advertise the markets. The Sullivan County Farmers' Markets are located in such areas and the Claremont Farmer's Market makes great use of signs.

Driving by and seeing signs as ways people learned about the markets also correlated well with the fact that the overwhelming majority of people traveled less than 10 miles to the market. There people who traveled over 40 miles, but the clear majority lived or worked close to each market they attended. Likewise, the majority of the people surveyed at all markets shopped the markets weekly, which suggests a very loyal customer base.

In terms of why people shopped, two reasons were consistent across all markets; because of

product quality (**74%**), and to support local growers (**41%**). The consistency bodes well for the continued success of Sullivan County's farmers' markets.

The average amount people spent was also consistent for all three markets with Newport and Cornish averaging \$16.00 per customer and Claremont averaging \$15. The overall customer average was \$15.66. The ranges were consistent too across all three markets, ranging from \$5.00 to \$40.00. It seems that people do not do all of their food shopping at the markets, but instead buy only select items. This may be an area where markets could increase revenue through strategies that increase the number of sales per customer.

When asked what other product people wanted to see at the farmers markets, *cheeses, hot food, baked goods, artisans, quilts, candles, flowers, pesto, clothing and music* were common requests.

### **Conclusion**

This was a three year project that originated as a farmer driven experiment examining how low cost marketing efforts could promote local agriculture in Sullivan County, NH. Although this phase of the project has been completed, the Sullivan County Ag Supporters will use the information that was learned and pursue other efforts to support local farmers in the county.