

UC Berkeley

Cal-in-Sac Undergraduate Research on Diversity and Entrepreneurship

Title

The Benefits of Farmers Markets

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/67b4t08j>

Author

Nguyen, Cindy

Publication Date

2022-09-29

CAL-IN-SACRAMENTO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, FALL 2022

DIVERSITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CALIFORNIA

Title: The Benefits of Farmers Markets

Author: Cindy Nguyen



In the spring of 2021, IGS launched a two-year Diversity and Entrepreneurship Fellowship as part of the Cal-in-Sacramento Fellowship program. Now in year two, IGS and the Matsui Center are proud to showcase students' original research on the challenges and opportunities facing women- and POC-owned small businesses and diverse entrepreneurs in California. This series includes op-eds, blog posts, policy briefs and other research products. Learn more at <https://igs.berkeley.edu/matsui-center/fellowships/cal-in-sacramento>.

Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley
109 Moses Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720-2370



The Benefits of Farmers Markets

By Cindy Nguyen

The average cost for a pound of white nectarines at the grocery store is \$3.50. At the Florin Road Farmers' Market located in Sacramento, CA, it is \$1 per pound.

Grocery stores are currently facing price inflation - with food-at-home prices expected to increase between 3% and 4% by the end of 2022, according to a recent [U.S. Department of Agriculture forecast](#). As prices continue to increase, some have been turning to farmers' markets to get their shelves stocked for affordable prices. Farmers have also been facing the impacts of inflation, and have shared that they're trying their best to keep their prices down.

Shopping at our local farmers' markets is beneficial on all fronts. Here are more reasons why we should be shopping at farmers' markets, while also supporting our local farmers:

The farmers' market provides easy access to healthy, nutritious produce, eggs, meat, bread, and dairy products, while facilitating personal connections and bonds of mutual benefits between farmers, shoppers, and communities each week. By selling directly to shoppers, farmers receive more of our food dollars and shoppers receive the freshest food in their area, further contributing to the prosperity of our local economies.

The difference between shopping at the grocery store and the farmers' market is not only in food prices but also health benefits. Farmers' market produce typically goes from the farm to a market booth within 24 hours, retaining maximum nutritional value. At the Moua Farms booth, you'll find a range of organic vegetables such as cabbage, cucumbers, and yams, all carefully grown and picked the day before selling. Since Moua is able to interact with her customers, some of which are regulars, she is able to gain a sense of their cultural and culinary tastes, which help guide her farming decisions.

By contrast, supermarket fruits and vegetables take much longer to arrive on the shelves, especially produce that is grown from far-away locations. Out of season foods typically have additives that keep them fresh for longer periods of time. Nutrients in fruits and vegetables oxidize over time, losing nutritional value during transportation. Local foods from small farms usually undergo minimal (if any) processing. When purchasing from the farmers' market, you don't have to worry about any toxins or waxes on the food for it to stay fresh during travel.

The farmers' market brings diverse people and cultures together in one public space. Some farmers' markets sell crops that are associated with various cultures that you usually won't find at the grocery store. For example, the Florin Road Farmers' Market is located in Sacramento's

Little Saigon area, home to a large Vietnamese-American community in the city. Here, you'll find many Vietnamese farmers selling cultural crops such as Thai chilies, herbs, bittermelon, and durian. Many shoppers have shared that they prefer the farmers' market over grocery stores because of the range of produce they're able to find in one place, and how they're able to speak with the farmers about the foods they're purchasing to eat. Renee Zapata shares that after talking to a farmer and learning more about their story, she felt a better connection with her food, making her meal more enjoyable. Knowing where our food comes from, the stories behind the farmers, and the hard work it takes to harvest, helps us build a better connection with the farmers and our food.

Thanks to Alchemist CDC, a non-profit organization located in Sacramento, CA dedicated to connecting communities to land, food, and opportunities, recipients of CalFresh assistance can use their benefits at the farmers markets. CalFresh is the name for California's federal program also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Recipients are given up to \$250 per month for groceries on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. Alchemist CDC is the only organization in Sacramento that operates the Market Match Incentive Program, where CalFresh customers can swipe their EBT cards and choose how much they want to spend at the farmers market on that day. At most markets, customers can also receive additional incentives of up to \$10 each week to spend on fruits and vegetables. This helps make fresh local produce more affordable and allows customers to spend more at the farmers market.

There is no surprise that Sacramento, CA is the state's Farm-to-Fork capital. While farmers provide us with access to healthy, nutritious foods, we can support them by going out to the local farmers markets and purchasing as much as we can. At the end of the day, everyone benefits, and this contributes to a stronger, healthier community.

