



Farmers Markets Count when it comes to Shoppers

Interim results from a global campaign to measure how and by how much farmers markets count when it comes to providing food access to consumers.



Credits: Urban Farmers, Lebanon

What: A census of shoppers in farmers markets

Where: 23 farmers markets in 10 countries

When: The week of World Food Day, 16 October 2025

Who: Local farmers market managers counted and surveyed shoppers attending their markets, where farmers sell directly to consumers on recurring bases.

Why: Objectives are three-fold:

1. To take a snapshot of how farmers markets serve consumers' quest for fresh, healthy, and local food in World Farmers Market Coalition members' markets;
2. To cultivate a culture of evaluation among farmers market managers (who are otherwise preoccupied with the miracle of staging recurring farmers markets with limited resources);
3. To demonstrate how and by how much farmers markets shape the food environment for consumers.



Rationale: The sixteenth of October is a day established by the UN General Assembly to highlight hunger and malnutrition. The international day serves as a call to action to invest in a sustainable food future. A key feature of farmers markets is their recurring public nature. This expands consumers' food environments by facilitating the presence of local farmers to actively educate the public, whilst selling products.

How the campaign works: During the weeks leading up to World Food Day, we trained more than 70 farmers market leaders to conduct a scientific survey of shoppers attending the farmers market on the day of their measure. From these, 23 markets successfully conducted this study. Equipped with a click counter, clipboard, pen and paper, and/or smart

phones and tablets, surveyors intercepted shoppers upon departing the market with a few pertinent questions. Results are broadcast to the wider world of food through social media, using the #FMCOUNT.

What we are finding in these interim results: Farmers markets play a strategic and durable role in shaping and reshaping consumer preferences. The architectural design of farmers markets enables shoppers to select their purchases from different farmers. Whether the competitive value is price, quality, or growing practices that motivates shoppers, the direct contact between farmer and consumer provides both with social interaction and educational insights. These benefits are increased when repeated often. This was one of the findings that stands out. Shoppers are loyal repeat visitors.



Customer intercept survey results

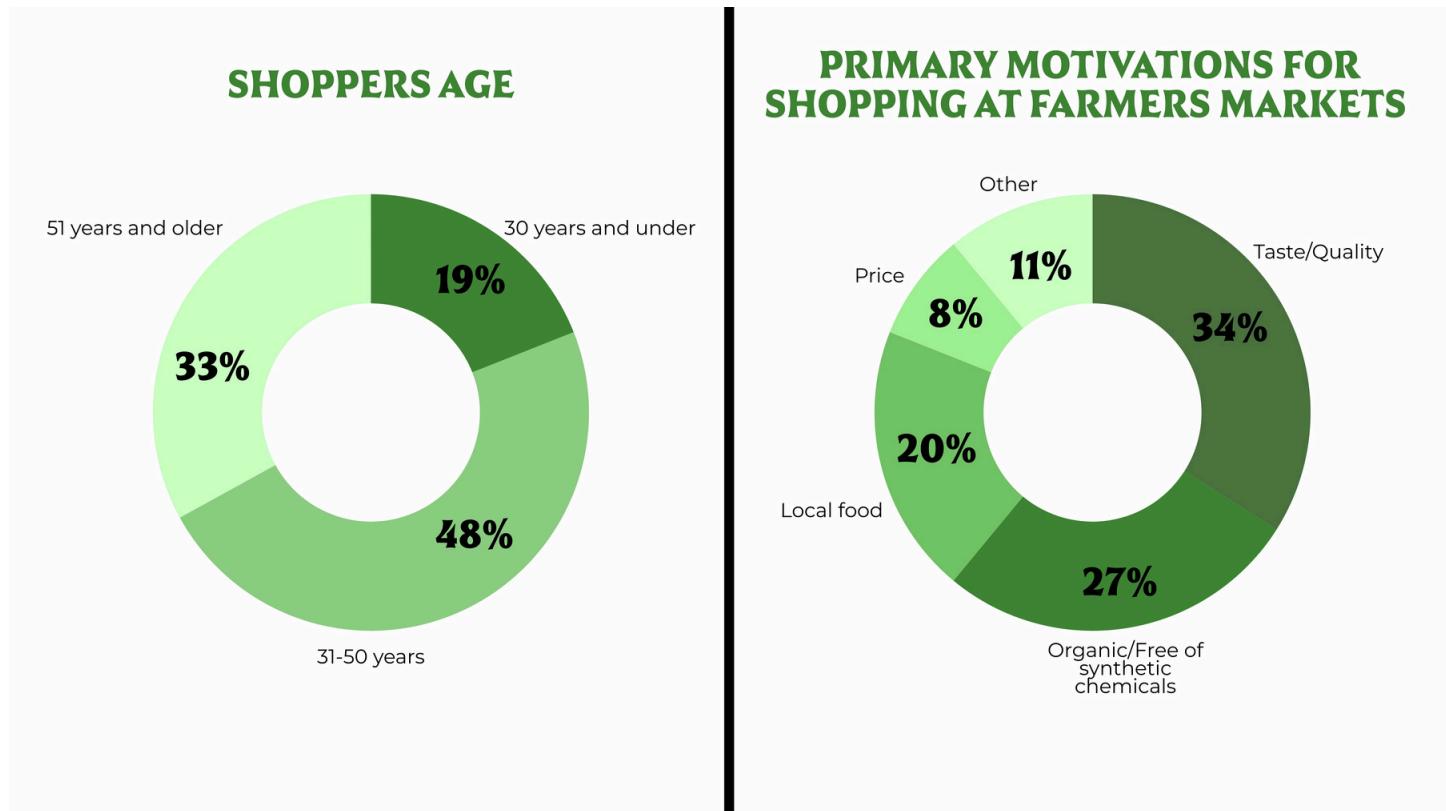
- **88%** of farmers markets shoppers are repeat shoppers. When you compare this figure to what retail analysts describe as the desirable benchmark of 30% for physical retail repeat shopping, farmers markets are garnering the high levels of consumer loyalty that drives farmers market success.
- **60%** of shoppers describe themselves as (at least) weekly farmers market shoppers. In many cases, markets operate several times a week. Another 18% describe their attendance as monthly. Interestingly, only 18% describe themselves as occasional shoppers.

- **48%** of shoppers are between 31-50 years of age, meaning that almost half of shoppers occupy this important demographic — one that represents years of both high earnings and high household spending. During the early years of the farmers market revival in North America (pre-2000), the caricature farmers market shopper was perceived to be a retired foodie. Findings here point to an evolving customer base: While 33% are 51 years of age and older, an impressive 19% are 30 years of age and under.
- **34%** of shoppers identified “taste/quality” as the prime motivator for their decision to shop at farmers markets, whereas 27% identified food that is “organic and/or free of synthetic chemicals” as the primary reason for choosing the farmers market. Another 20% selected “local” as their motivator. There is more. Only 8% identified “price” as their motivating purpose to shop at farmers markets. The perplexing nexus between price and value deserves more research.

While farmers markets have a reputation as “expensive” venues, the picture is more complex. Nearly all are organized to remove the “middlemen” between farmer and consumer relationships. The direct connection between farmers and consumers provides each with value. Whether the results are lower prices and/or fresher quality goods for consumers, farmers expand their clientele and improve profitability. Herein lies the issue of value for both farmer and consumer: opportunities for learning. For shoppers, the prices on offer for high volume crops harvested during peak season tend to be of great value: low prices and (due to freshness) little spoilage. In other instances, small batch value-added products may cost more to consumers, since the economy of scale favors large industrial kitchens over small family-based businesses. In these products, it is quality and taste that governs success. Market observers recognize that pricing in farmers markets remains a moving target; however, affordability is important to expand consumer support.

- **64%** of shoppers describe that the farmers market introduces them to new ingredients. This figure speaks to the important role farmers markets play to educate consumers, and improve their food environments. Many market organizers are aware of this role for the market to educate consumers, and indeed organize special events, like tastings, and special programming, like seed swaps and biodiversity

grow-outs to protect and preserve traditional crops and to introduce new ones that are suited to climatic shocks, like flooding and drought. This data point is particularly important in order to understand the value of the farmers market as a physical place with key attributes that facilitate learning: each vendor maintaining their own transactions, and therefore conversations with shoppers, farmer independence, and competition. These contribute to dynamic places where products and knowledge are exchanged.



Customer count results

We also conducted a count of the number of shoppers who visited the farmers market on the day of counting. The results vary. After all, successful farmers markets are not necessarily larger markets. Rather, it is the consistency and volume of transactions that mark a successful farmers market for farmers, consumers, and the communities that host these pop-up institutions.

We rank farmers markets by size and by the number of vendors they have:

- Small (10 > 30 vendors)
- Medium (31 > 60 vendors)
- Large (61+ vendors)

From our own survey of World Farmers Markets Coalition members, 77% are mini or small farmers markets (with 30 or fewer vendors). In order to be successful at that scale, the number of shoppers needed to sustain a farmers market is far lower than what is needed for large farmers markets.

Below are examples of customer counts per size category:

Small:

- **Europe:** Denmark, Grønt Marked - 3776 counted shoppers
- **Asia:** Bangladesh, Ward no.1, Khilgaon Farmers Market - 246 counted shoppers
- **South America:** Colombia, Mercado Agroecologico Terra Viva - 280 counted shoppers

Medium:

- **Europe:** Malta, Ta' Qali - 2245 counted shoppers
- **Europe:** Poland, Targ Pietruszkowy - 2382 counted shoppers
- **Africa Sub-Saharan:** Kenya, Farmers Market Nairobi - 523 counted shoppers

Large:

- **North America:** USA, Dallas Farmers Market - 7240 counted shoppers
- **Europe:** The Netherlands, Rotterdamse Oogst - 6456 counted shoppers

Conclusion

This third phase of the 2025 Farmers Markets Count! campaign completes the *trifecta* of farmers market evaluation to determine if and by how much farmers markets count when it comes to biodiversity, farmers, and consumers. While it may be challenging to intercept shoppers before they leave the marketplace with heavy bags filled with products, it is important to learn from their experiences. Who are they? What motivates them to attend and return on a recurring basis? These questions are meant to glean insights that help to improve farmers market effectiveness, and to demonstrate to the wider community of agricultural policies that the

farmers market strategy can be deployed in populations centres that hunger for food and new food knowledge. Early in 2026, we will publish full findings from the campaign, and broadcast refinements for its deployment in the new year. Lastly, we thank farmers markets for taking part in a complex and important evaluation exercise for a field that is long on creative action, but short on disciplined evaluation.

About the World Farmers Markets Coalition: Founded in 2021 during the United Nations Food Systems Summit preparatory meetings in Rome in response to weaknesses in the long chain supply system experienced during the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war, Italy's Campagna Amica national network of farmers markets assembled farmers market leaders from around the world to identify promising practices ripe for replication and adaptation, to cultivate leadership, to facilitate peer-to-peer learning, and to influence public policies from the local to the global level to realize the potential of the purposeful reinvention of the ancient direct marketing mechanism that connects farmers to consumers whilst animating public space for public good.

About the Farmers Markets Count! Campaign: In order to test the theory that farmers markets contribute to biodiversity preservation and promotion, farmer livelihoods with a special eye on women and young farmers, and consumer food environments, we are activating farmers market leaders to measure their impact on three key dates in order to accrue evidence that farmers markets count and by how much:

- World Biodiversity Day, 22 May 2025
- World Rural Development Day, 6 July 2025
- World Food Day, 16 October 2025



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