



Farmers Markets Count when it comes to Farmers

Interim results from a global campaign to measure how and by how much farmers markets affect rural development and the livelihoods of family farmers.



Credits: Nairobi Farmers Markets

What: A census of the in farmers markets

Where: 34 farmers markets in 11 countries

When: The week of World Rural Development Day, 6 July 2025

Who: Local farmers market managers surveyed the markets they manage, where farmers sell directly to consumers on recurring bases.

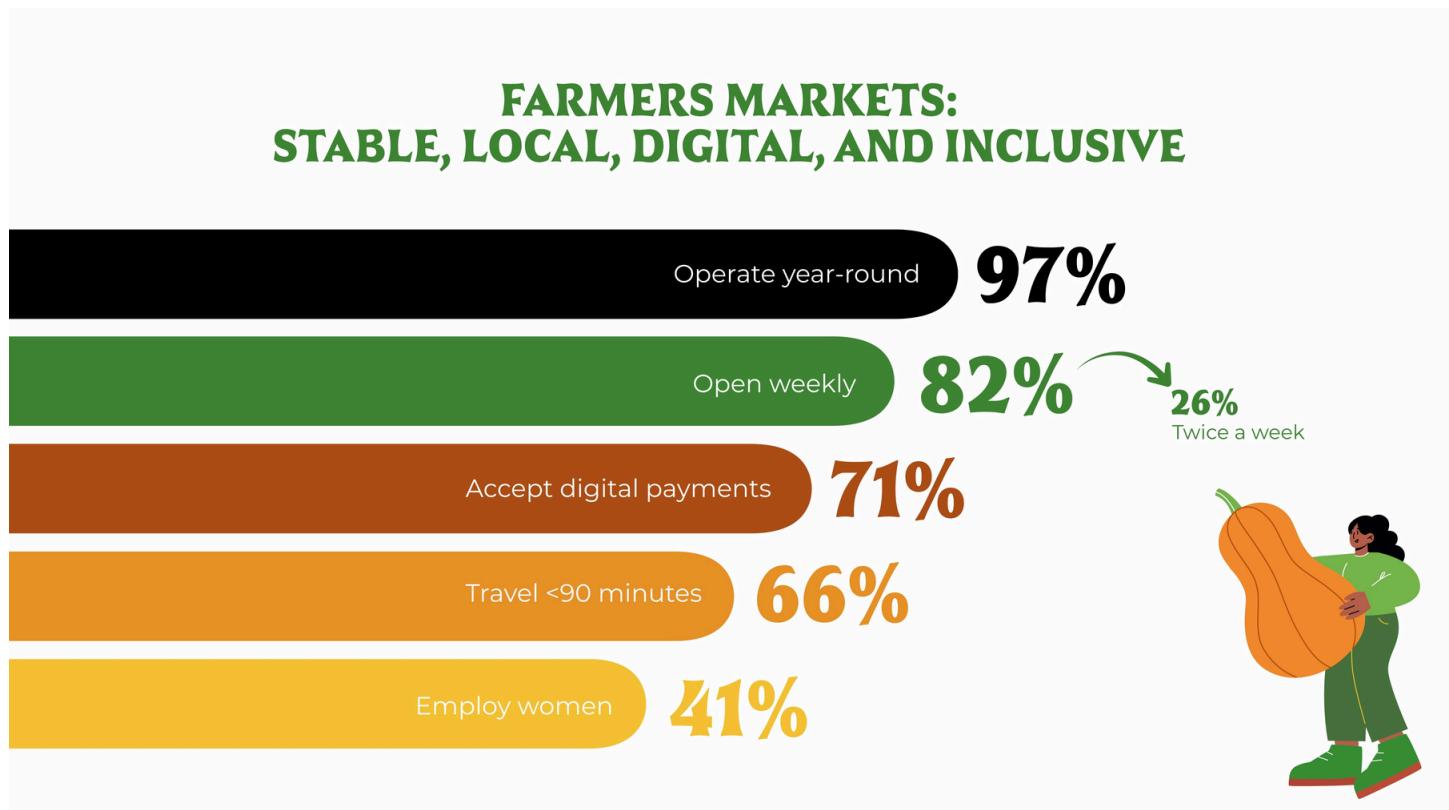
Why: Objectives are three-fold

1. To take a snapshot of how farmers markets serve farmers' quest for economic development in World Farmers Market Coalition members' markets;
2. To cultivate a culture of evaluation among farmers market managers (who are often preoccupied with the miracle of staging recurring farmers markets with limited resources);
3. To demonstrate how and that farmers markets contribute to the livelihoods of farmers.



Rationale: The sixth of July is a day established by the UN General Assembly to highlight the challenges rural communities face, such as poverty and food insecurity, and to promote inclusive rural development for global sustainability. The day serves as a call to action to invest in rural areas, empower women and youth, improve infrastructure and digital inclusion, and ensure that no one is left behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

How the campaign works: During the weeks leading up to World Rural Development Day, we trained more than 150 farmers market leaders to conduct a scientific survey of farmers attending the farmers market on the day of their measure. From these, 34 markets successfully conducted the study. Equipped with a clipboard, digital camera, pen and paper, surveyors selected from the many vendors in attendance, only the farmers (who work the land) to survey and to conduct one in-depth interview per market. The ideas and results are broadcast to the wider world of food through social media, using the #FMCOUNT.



What we are finding in these interim results: There is a popular misconception that farmers markets are haphazard and informal interventions into family agriculture (also a sector that is perceived to be informal). This is remarkable, considering that family farmers feed 80% of the planet's population. Instead, we find farmers markets to play a strategic and durable role in the development of rural livelihoods:

- **82%** of farmers markets operate year-round, thus providing farmers with an opportunity to address a common challenge: cash flow during both prosperous and lean seasons.
- **71%** of farmers markets are open to the public at least once per week, with 26% operating twice weekly, providing farmers with recurring

opportunities to cultivate their customer bases. Unlike other markets, farmers markets cannot operate daily. They must provide time for farmers to cultivate and harvest the land.

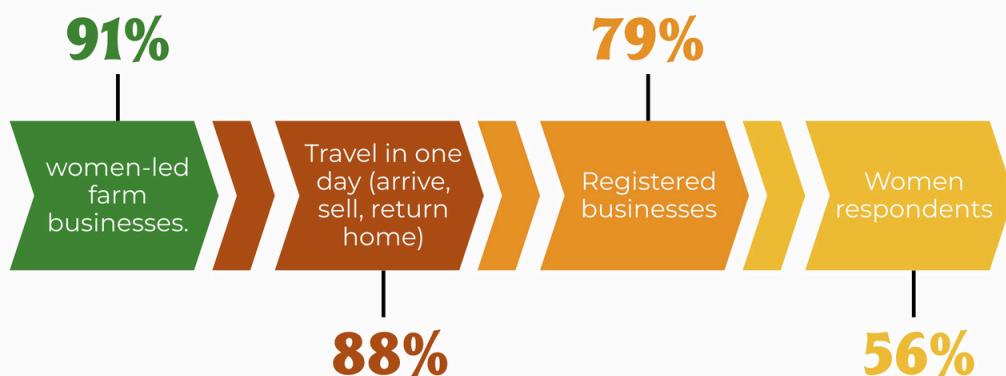
- **97%** of farmers markets accept digital payments. This finding contrasts sharply with the narrative that family farmers are informal hobbyists who suffer from financial illiteracy. We must begin to accept that, instead, participating farmers possess the professional capacity to maintain banking accounts and/or at least relationships with banks in order to accept digital payments. In some cases, the digital payments are managed by the farmers market organization, thus helping farmers to formalize their operations.
- **66%** of farmers travel less than 90 minutes to the farmers market. This means that farmers markets draw heavily from nearby peri-urban communities. These are the very communities that experience the negative and uneven effects from rapid urbanization: land-consuming settlements, fragmented governance, and environmental degradation that leaves family farmers on the defensive.
- **41%** of farmers in small farmers markets employ women in their production, processing, and selling. This number is twice the number in medium to large farmers markets. This data point should help us to readjust our understanding of smaller institutions. A successful farmers market may not always be the larger market, especially if the smaller size enables greater access to marginal enterprises to participate (in this case women who farm).

In each farmers market, we dove deeper into the experiences of farmers by conducting 1:1 interviews to better understand the decisions they make to attend farmers markets. Not only did we observe little difference between farmers markets in the Global North versus the Global South, we identified relative consistency across the size of farmers markets (with some of the exceptions already noted). In these 1:1 interviews, we learned that:

- **88%** of respondents travel to the farmers markets in one day. They arrive, sell at the farmers market, and then return home. This tells us that the proximity of the markets do not require overnight accommodation. This is important for the long-term survival of farmer/market relationships.

- **56%** of respondents were women. This is encouraging, since **91%** we interviewed own farms. This sheds important light on the role of farmers markets as instruments for women-owned businesses.
- **79%** of businesses are registered with a local or national authority. This is an important indicator that the family farmers selling at farmers markets are more than just informal hobbyists, but legitimate enterprises seeking a formal foothold in the local food economy.

STRUCTURED, INCLUSIVE, AND LOCAL: FARMERS MARKETS IN ACTION

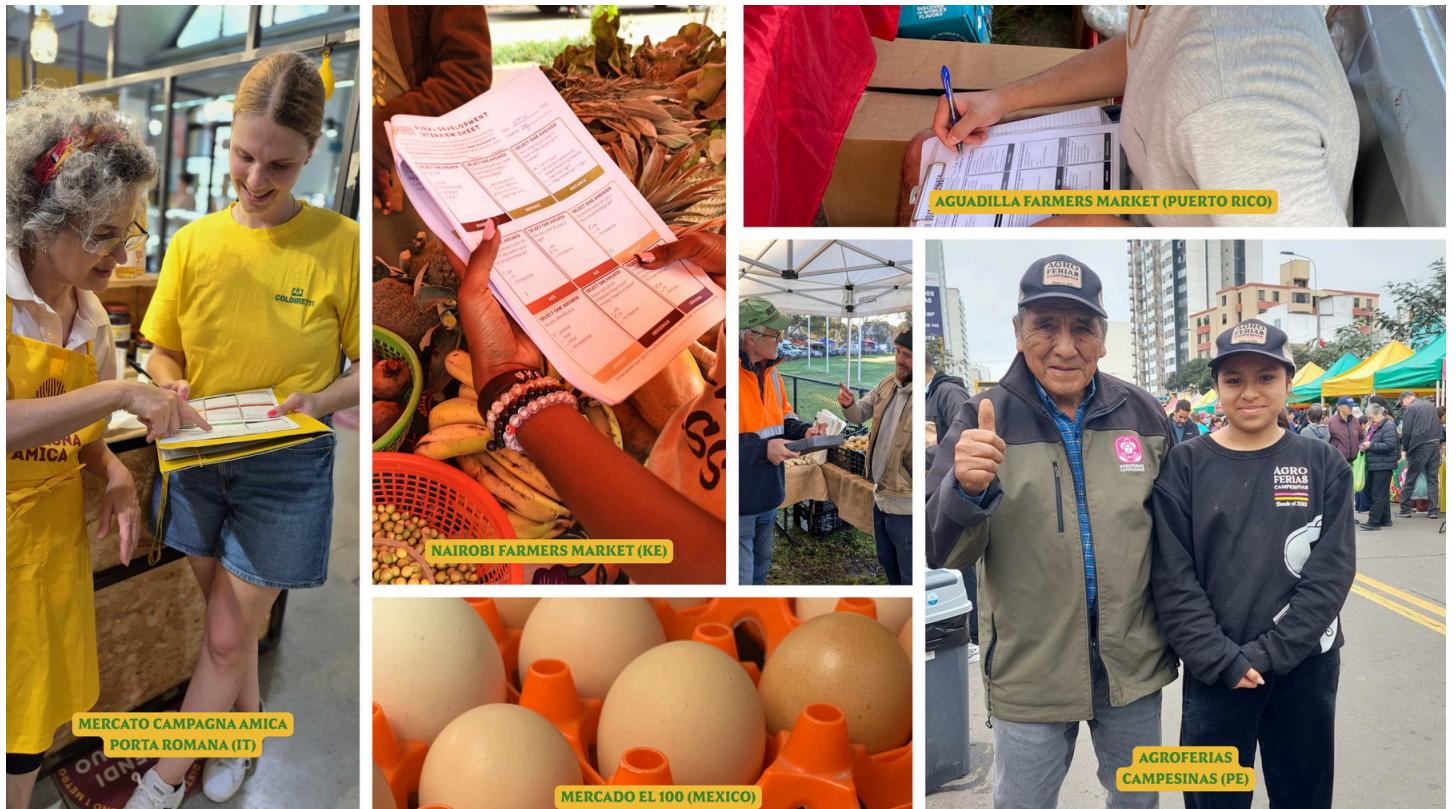


About the World Farmers Markets Coalition: Founded in 2021 during the United Nations Food Systems Summit preparatory meetings in Rome in response to weaknesses in the long chain supply system experienced during the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war, Italy's Campagna Amica national network of 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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