POSITION PAPER - PART ONE



WORLD FARMERS MARKETS COALITION

MOVING TOWARDS A PUBLIC ADVOCACY STRATEGY FOR FARMERS MARKETS: STITCHING TOGETHER A CANOPY OF COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY



This document is a culmination of an extensive international interactive process with farmers market leaders and researchers led by the World Farmers Markets Coalition Academy to define farmers markets. While farmers markets may vary greatly depending on context and scale, they also hold intrinsically similar characteristics. This definition is intended to serve as a useful reference for designing farmers market programs internationally.

ABOUT THE WORLD FARMERS MARKETS COALITION

The World Farmers Markets Coalition (**WorldFMC**) is the largest global organization representing farmers markets. Based in Rome, this non-profit works closely with UN food agencies and other partners to amplify farmers voices and strengthen local food systems. **We connect farmers and consumers**, promoting sustainable production, thriving communities, and care for the environment.

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By defending local food systems, we ensure fair livelihoods, access to nutritious food, and preservation of traditions. Farmers markets foster relationships, **fair prices, and dignity within the food chain.** Supporting farmers also restores biodiversity, protects ecosystems, and preserves agricultural heritage.

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Publication date: October 2026

ABSTRACT

Farmers markets are uniquely positioned to provide farmers and consumers with opportunities to do business, whilst also animating public spaces that transform the public imagination about local food, local priorities, and wider local national, regional and global agri-food policies. And yet, their insurgent nature places them on the outside of most European debates about food system transformation. Can we change this? In 2026 and in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Farmers Markets Coalition (WorldFMC) surveyed farmers market associations to identify challenges and opportunities faced in the current regulatory environment. In order to unleash their potential as strategic actors affecting food systems transformation in their immediate locations across different geographical and institutional contexts, it is important to better understand these emerging institutions that straddle commerce and community development. This paper provides findings from discussions with practitioners, just as it provides a framework to improve efficacy at the municipal, regional, national, and supranational levels.



INTRODUCTION

In this historical moment, farmers markets are emerging as newly revived institutions. Both familiar and yet also strangely new, they are regularly scheduled and organised spaces where farmers, or their representatives, sell agricultural products directly to consumers, enabling direct commercial and social interaction. While location, scale, ownership, and governance may vary from place to place, they share common characteristics, challenges, and opportunities. At one level, they are a form of agile commercial infrastructure providing multiple benefits to primary and secondary participants: farmers, consumers, in addition to the residents and businesses adjacent to pop-up markets. At another level, they serve as experiential platforms for agrifood systems transformation. They achieve this transformative purpose through design. The presence of multiple independent producers, each directly managing their own sales and transactions with consumers, provides consumers with agency and more opportunities for social interaction. They also achieve it through their ability — despite often undercapitalized — to curate the experience with purposeful ends. These include food access, recognition for peri-urban and rural farmers and their communities, cultural preservation, urban placemaking, biodiversity, and climate mitigation. Despite these tangible attributes to begin these and other urgent conversations in pluralist settings, they face major hurdles to flourish and to reach all segments of society. This should be connected to the needed policy support to make local, healthy and sustainable food accessible to all (nutritional incentive programmes). Local regulatory environments are often hostile, with municipal agencies unsure as to how best to handle not only the farmers but also the social enterprises of the markets themselves. Zoning, permit processes, and practical challenges like parking, waste management, and street closures often dominate management priorities, thus preventing many positive opportunities from being acted upon: engaging citizens to rethink food waste, healthy eating, territorialism, social cohesion, and more. While many of these markets run specific activities (often self-financed) and communication outreach strategies aimed at guaranteeing wider inclusivity, structural challenges that make sustainable and healthy food not accessible to all, undermine the opportunity for these institutions to reach all levels of society. In 2026, in partnership with the FAO, the WorldFMC conducted facilitated discussions (recognised in this document as “Co-Labs”) with farmers market leaders around the world to identify their experiences in public advocacy, the urgency of their concerns, and strategies that are working.

In this paper, we share insights from practitioners on the ground, just as we provide recommendations on which investments can be made to build the capacities of farmers markets to play these dual roles as practical commercial infrastructure and triggers for deeper and wider food systems transformation. Investments should also be made to improve municipal and subnational governance in order to enable farmers markets to operate with improved ease, so as to unleash their potential for civic engagement, entrepreneurship in agriculture, and improved food environments for urban dwellers.

BACKGROUND

The World Farmers Markets Coalition (WorldFMC) is a Rome-based international association of farmers market practitioners, advocates, and related support entities that span the community of interest from farmers to consumers, urban to rural, agriculture to public health, and biodiversity in over 80 countries. Founded in 2021 during the prepcoms for the United Nations Food Systems Summit, it provides a voice of advocacy for local food systems transformation, delivers direct technical assistance, and cultivates a community of practice devoted to evidence-based action. In 2025, we approved and published two position papers during our annual General Assembly held in Rome, Italy in order to provide an international definition of farmers markets and to make the case of farmers markets as strategic points of leverage to envisage local food policy around the mutually beneficial linkage of urban, peri-urban, and rural linkages.

During this period, in the framework of the Letter of Assignment with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's “Technical Assistance to Strengthen Farmers’ Markets Associations”, we conducted an extensive survey of 86 farmers market associations to learn more about their capacities, weaknesses, successes, and points of view — recognizing that no single model can simply be applied to every setting. To sum up, associations share much in common as they face existing policy frameworks that favour economies of scale, commitments to food as fuel, and a general disregard for family agriculture, proximity in relations between town and country, and civic imagination that animates public spaces.

In short, the farmers market renaissance that is currently underway encounters considerable and broadbased support; however, it also encounters hostility from local authorities at worst and unprepared regulatory systems that never anticipated their arrival to town squares, piazzas, and carparks around the world. In surveys with farmers market practitioners, 70% identified local public advocacy as a major or considerable challenge.

For this reason, we facilitated conversations with farmers market leaders to learn more about their successes, frustrations, and recommendations for activities that are not central to their operations as commercial retail infrastructure — specifically the public advocacy required in order to simply operate, learn, and innovate in local food systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Four strategic priorities were initially identified through the WorldFMC European Co-Lab and subsequently discussed in Rotterdam during the in-person regional meeting in April. Their relevance extends beyond the European context and provides a useful framework for a global public advocacy position. These priorities are therefore proposed for consideration across the WorldFMC network and by its partners at local, subnational, national, regional and international levels:

STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE, COORDINATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION.

Network Priority: To move from a collection of individual markets to a recognizable collective entity capable of stable political dialogue to position the farmers market strategy as one that understands the pop-up activities as the most visible aspect to far deeper commitments to agri-tourism, public health, and economic development infrastructure. One of the strategic partners identified by a number of market organisations as critical to achieve greater recognition is academic institutions — to utilise their research capacities and to gain public support for farmers markets as legitimate undertakings.

STRENGTHEN FARMERS MARKETS’ SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FUNCTIONS BY "CAPTURING PUBLIC IMAGINATION"

Network Priority: position markets as territorial and political food infrastructure, rather than as marginal, temporary or folkloric initiatives.

Whereas many decision makers think of infrastructure in terms of physical investments (i.e., buildings, roads), it is important to convey the durability of social infrastructure investments in management, governance, and leadership development.

IMPROVE LOGISTICS AND THE COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION OF SUPPLY

Network priority: transform farmers markets into efficient and cooperative local hubs, capable of increasing logistical and organizational efficiency while preserving direct sales, producer identity, agricultural diversity, multifunctionality and the social value of short supply chains.

STRENGTHEN SKILLS, TRAINING, AND LEARNING NETWORKS

Network Priority: Invest in human and organizational capital to prevent the isolation and fragility of individual markets. Integrated investment in skills, coordination, and network governance to enable farmers markets to evolve from isolated initiatives to structural pillars of territorial food systems.

These recommendations are informed by the practitioner engagement conducted earlier this year in a WorldFMC Co-Lab (Collaborative Laboratory, a facilitated conversation to better understand the policy advocacy posture of farmers market associations in Europe) and the insights drawn from promising practices and innovative policies developed elsewhere in and with our global network. The practitioner engagement is described below, followed by these recommendations in greater detail.

The sum up priorities and how a network can respond to them, these are as follows:

PRIORITY	WHY IT IS CENTRAL TO A NETWORK
Governance and Advocacy	Enables stability, recognition, and scalability
Social and Cultural Role	Legitimizes markets as public food policies.
Logistics and Organization	Increases real economic impact.
Skills and Learning	Makes the system resilient and autonomous.





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PRACTITIONER ENGAGEMENT

During the first half of 2026, we facilitated digital and in-person meetings with members to identify the public advocacy strategies that work and the challenges faced. While many similarities are apparent, it also became clear that the launch of programmatic initiatives may have done more to impress upon decision makers that farmers market leaders possess important insights valuable to territorial health in food. These insights were gleaned during online Co-Labs and in-person territorial meetings.

Across both exercises, one message emerged consistently: farmers markets are increasingly recognised by citizens as valuable economic, social, and cultural assets, yet they remain inadequately recognised within regulatory and policy frameworks. Most respondents reported some form of interaction with municipalities, particularly regarding access to public space, licensing procedures, and basic administrative support. However, these relationships are often transactional rather than strategic, focusing on permits, fees and access to space rather than on joint planning, long-term investment or the contribution of farmers markets to local food policies. In many cases, farmer markets continue to be treated as temporary events or commercial activities rather than as permanent components of local food systems and public infrastructure.

A significant number of practitioners highlighted the absence of clear legal categories specifically designed for farmers markets. Existing regulations often place them within frameworks intended for street markets, festivals, temporary events, or conventional retail activities. As a result, market operators face administrative burdens, planning uncertainties, and costs that do not reflect the public value they generate. This challenge was identified across diverse geographical contexts, suggesting that the issue extends beyond national legislation and reflects a broader lack of institutional understanding of the farmers market model.

Practitioners also emphasised that institutional support remains uneven and largely dependent on local political leadership. While some municipalities actively collaborate with market organisers through access to public spaces, promotional activities, technical assistance, and joint planning processes, others remain indifferent or even sceptical. Several respondents noted that successful collaboration is often linked to committed individuals within public administration rather than to stable public policies.

This dependence on personal relationships makes support vulnerable to political change and limits long-term planning.

At the same time, respondents consistently highlighted the broader contribution of farmers markets to public objectives. Beyond their commercial function, markets were recognised as tools for strengthening local agriculture, supporting rural livelihoods, improving access to fresh and traceable food, reinforcing community identity, and creating opportunities for social interaction. Practitioners argued that these contributions are rarely reflected in public investment decisions or in the design of urban food policies.

When asked how institutional relationships could be improved, several priorities emerged repeatedly. These include stronger official recognition of farmers markets as essential local food infrastructure; clearer and more coherent regulatory frameworks; simplified administrative procedures; stronger communication channels between authorities and market organisers; and greater public investment in infrastructure, promotion, logistics, and technical support. Respondents also called for more formal opportunities to participate in policy discussions concerning food systems, agriculture, public health, and urban development.

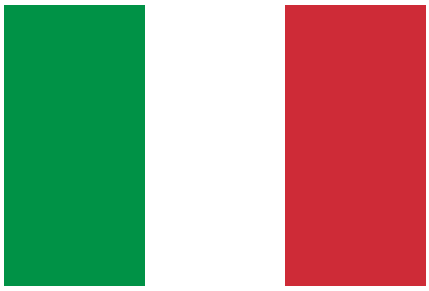
The European Co-Lab further demonstrated that these challenges are experienced differently across countries but are connected by common underlying themes. Experiences from Italy underline the importance of political recognition and long-term institutional investment in multifunctional agriculture. Cases from the Netherlands, Poland, Norway, and the United Kingdom illustrate the consequences of regulatory ambiguity, fragmented governance, and the continued need to justify the public value of farmers markets within decision-making processes. Despite these differences, practitioners shared a common aspiration: to move beyond a survival-oriented relationship with public authorities and towards genuine partnerships capable of strengthening local food systems.

Taken together, the Co-Lab discussions and the international survey reinforce the four strategic priorities identified in this paper. They demonstrate the need for stronger governance and institutional recognition, more effective communication of farmers markets' social and cultural contributions, improved organisational and logistical capacities, and greater investment in learning, leadership, and network development. Most importantly, they highlight that farmers markets are not asking simply for permission to operate. They are calling for recognition as strategic partners in building healthier, more resilient, and more sustainable local food systems.



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE WORLDFMC CO-LAB

ITALY



WorldFMC's founding organisation, Fondazione Campagna Amica (FCA), operates within a policy framework that it helped to shape. Through the 2001 Modernisation of Agriculture Law, FCA contributed to the institutional recognition of multifunctional agriculture as a legitimate strategy for aligning farmers' entrepreneurial aspirations with an enabling legal and policy environment at the local, regional, and national levels.

FCA's experience demonstrates that Italy not only hosts one of the largest networks of farmers markets in Europe, but also considers food diversity a strategic national asset. By promoting traditional knowledge, reinvesting in rural economic development, and strengthening social cohesion, FCA has positioned farmers markets as a response to a society that has become increasingly urbanised and progressively more dependent on ultra-processed foods and fast-food consumption. Today, the Campagna Amica network extends across the entire country through nearly 20,000 access points, including farmers markets, farms, agritourism businesses, educational and social farms, farm shops, and restaurants promoting Italian agricultural products and short supply chains. At the heart of this ecosystem are more than 1,000 Campagna Amica farmers markets, bringing together exclusively Coldiretti member farmers who sell their own products directly to consumers, guaranteeing Italian origin, seasonality, traceability, and short food supply chains. This makes Campagna Amica the largest organised farmers market network and direct-selling experience in Europe. Although other organisations operate farmers markets in Italy, none does so at the scale achieved by FCA.

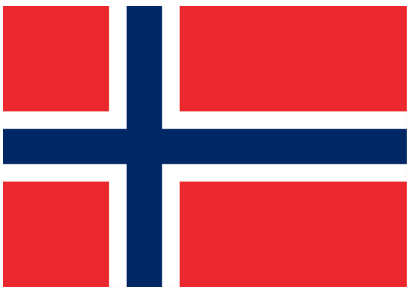
The decision by Coldiretti, Italy's and Europe's largest farmers' organisation, to invest strategically in farmers markets predates the establishment of its extensive network of outdoor and indoor markets, launched in 2008. Rather than emerging as a stand-alone commercial initiative, the farmers market strategy was built upon a broader political vision rooted in the concept of multifunctional agriculture.

While the multifunctional agriculture framework does not solve every challenge facing the agricultural sector, it provides farmers with a shared conceptual and political language through which they can understand their role within a system that rewards quality, production integrity, entrepreneurial adaptability, and policy coherence across all levels of government. This long-term political project has taken decades to become embedded in Italy's institutional and public imagination, but today it offers family farmers a clear sense of identity, purpose, and direction.

Compared with other European approaches, Italy represents perhaps the most explicitly farmer-centred strategy for developing farmers markets. Within the WorldFMC network, the closest points of comparison can be found in the United Kingdom, France, and Croatia. Far from representing a limitation, this strong farmer focus constitutes one of the model's principal strengths. Nevertheless, it raises an important question: to what extent are consumers actively engaged in this broader project of multifunctional agriculture?

Consumer research conducted consistently by Coldiretti's think tank, Centro Divulga, indicates that Italian consumers exhibit high levels of awareness of, and trust in, the Campagna Amica network, recognising it as the organisation that connects farmers directly with consumers through high-quality agricultural products. This widespread public recognition highlights an important opportunity to further engage and mobilise consumers in support of future innovations that can expand food access, strengthen social cohesion, and reinforce the societal value of multifunctional agriculture in Italy.

NORWAY



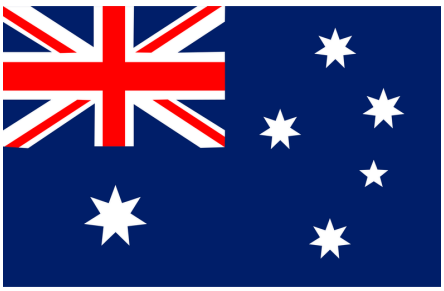
In Norway, a Nordic nation of approximately 5.66 million people with a challenging climate and terrain for agriculture, the existence of a national organization for farmers markets has been a critical factor in the successful development of direct marketing. Established in 2003, the national foundation Bondens Marked Norge owns the trademark and concept Farmers' Market in Norway and coordinates a network of 15 local farmers markets, organized as cooperatives and collectively covering the entire country. These local cooperatives operate under Norway's national Cooperative Act and are bound by a common set of rules, including the use of a shared brand identity, logo, colours, and market infrastructure such as tents, making farmers markets easily recognizable to consumers. Most markets operate on Saturdays, with several cooperatives managing multiple market locations.

Because agricultural policy is primarily determined at the national level, Bondens Marked Norge also operates nationally, coordinating activities that individual markets cannot easily undertake alone. These include managing the national website, coordinating marketing initiatives, conducting policy and advocacy work, maintaining dialogue with the Norwegian Food Safety Authority, and supporting local markets in navigating regulatory requirements. Local cooperatives obtain permission from municipalities, or in some cases, private landowners, to use market spaces. Depending on local circumstances, markets may pay reduced fees as non-governmental organizations or standard commercial fees for the use of public space.

While Bondens Marked Norge has achieved considerable influence in national discussions on local food, it also operates within a food system where industrial food interests remain highly influential. Nevertheless, there is broad political consensus across the Norwegian Parliament that local food is important for preserving traditions, biodiversity, national identity, and food security. This consensus has resulted in a national commitment to double the availability of locally produced food by 2030. Although this target provides strong political legitimacy for the work of Bondens Marked Norge, the organization continues to pursue this objective largely through its own efforts and partnerships with like-minded organizations, often without adequate long-term public investment or institutional support.

Norway's national commitment to local food illustrates this paper's second recommendation: the importance of capturing public imagination. Rather than framing local food primarily as a health issue, which could provoke contentious evidence-based debates with powerful processed food industries, Bondens Marked Norge deliberately focuses its communication on themes that consistently resonate with both policymakers and consumers. These include fostering pride in farmers, strengthening pride in place, and celebrating traditions, shared memories, and social cohesion. The organization also trains farmers to tell their own stories, positioning them as the protagonists of local food preservation. This narrative approach mirrors strategies adopted elsewhere in Europe, including by the Association of Croatian Markets (Udruga Hrvatskih Tržnica), which provides branded signage that enables farmers selling in municipal markets to distinguish their locally produced goods from those offered by resellers, reinforcing both authenticity and consumer trust.

AUSTRALIA



Established in 2004, the Victorian Farmers' Markets Association (VFMA) is a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation dedicated to strengthening Victoria's local food system through a robust, independently governed accreditation program. The vision is to support and lead an inclusive network of accredited farmers, makers, and farmers markets that contribute to thriving, sustainable communities and long-term food security. The VFMA accredits farmers, value-adders, and markets to ensure authenticity, transparency, and direct farmer-to-consumer relationships. Accreditation is underpinned by a certified trademark registered with the ACCC, supported by clear rules, governance structures, and an independent Accreditation Advisory Panel.

Today, the VFMA network includes 32 accredited farmers markets operating across Victoria's urban, peri-urban, regional, and rural communities. Markets run weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, predominantly on weekends, with one accredited mid-week (Wednesday) market. Stallholders at VFMA Accredited Farmers markets include the VFMA Membership Network of over 650 producers, makers, bakers and value adders.

MARKET LOCATIONS & MANAGEMENT MODEL

VFMA-accredited farmers markets operate in a diverse range of community settings across Victoria, including schools, churches, public open spaces, local government precincts, and harbourside waterfront locations. Each market is managed by a dedicated market manager, who may operate independently or be engaged by a Farmers' Market Management Committee. These committees typically comprise community members, producers, and stallholders, ensuring strong local ownership, transparent governance, and alignment with VFMA accreditation standards. This mixed-model approach supports both grassroots community leadership and consistent operational quality across the VFMA network.

Collectively, VFMA-accredited markets welcome an estimated 100,000 shoppers each month, providing reliable access to seasonal, locally grown food and supporting hundreds of Victorian farm businesses.
The VFMA's regulatory framework includes:

- A certified accreditation system ensuring producers grow, raise, or make what they sell;
- Market accreditation requirements (75–90% accredited stallholders depending on region);
- Clear governance through an elected volunteer committee and formal subcommittees.
- Compliance with Victorian food safety, animal welfare, and privacy legislation.

Through accreditation, advocacy, and sector leadership, the VFMA strengthens farm viability, builds community resilience, reduces food miles, and protects Victoria's food sovereignty.

SEYMOUR COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP – 2026

In 2026, the VFMA is partnering with Seymour College to launch Victoria's first VFMA-accredited farmers' market operated by a student community. This pioneering model embeds farmers' market operations directly into the College's curriculum, with learning outcomes integrated across agriculture, horticulture, catering, business planning, art and design, hospitality, and the social sciences. The market will serve as a practical, real-world extension of the College's agricultural program and support the development of its campus farm, providing students with hands-on experience in food production, enterprise management, and community engagement. This initiative represents a new benchmark for education-based farmers' markets and demonstrates how VFMA accreditation can strengthen local food systems while building future industry capability.

THAILAND

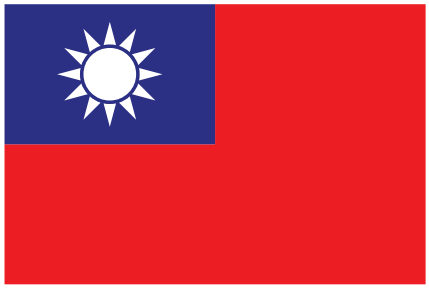


The Green Markets Network in Thailand is a collaborative community of Green Market farmers, market coordinators, and institutional partners that secure market spaces in community centres, municipalities, hospitals, and schools, linking these individual markets into a cohesive regional movement. The network represents more than 30 years of alternative food system development in Thailand, encompassing three historic, overlapping, and ongoing phases led by different actors. The Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University (INI), and its predecessor organizations have been actively involved in the movement since 2000. Today, the network includes approximately 80 Green Markets across the country. In addition, INI has established four Green Markets in collaboration with the Nonthaburi Food Policy Council, which it directly manages, coordinates, and supports. Three of these markets operate weekly, while one is held monthly, each typically hosting between 5 and 15 vendors and attracting approximately 100 to 200 consumers per market day.

INSTITUTIONAL SCALING, POLICY ADVOCACY, AND GOVERNMENT INTEGRATION

A defining feature of the Thai Green Markets Network has been its emphasis on institutional scaling and policy integration. Rather than remaining an isolated alternative food initiative, the movement has actively engaged with public institutions to expand its reach and influence. This approach culminated in the adoption of the Green Market framework by the Ministry of Public Health, which established a national policy to promote Green Markets throughout the country. As a result, more than 300 Green Markets have been established in sub-district hospitals nationwide, demonstrating how grassroots market initiatives can be successfully embedded within public policy and government institutions to support local food systems.

TAIWAN



In Taiwan, the Taipei Culture Exploration Association, a non-profit organization operating within the same ecosystem as the Green Dining Guide (GDG) and Green Media, coordinates two complementary organic market initiatives that promote direct marketing while advancing sustainable food systems and low-carbon consumption. The association manages the Water Garden Organic Farmers Market, one of Taipei's longest-established 100% organic farmers' markets, and the Green to Go Market, an innovative transit-based retail model developed in collaboration with the Agriculture and Food Agency (AFA) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how farmers markets can diversify their operating models to reach different consumer groups while strengthening market opportunities for organic producers.

The Water Garden Organic Farmers Market evolved from the former NTU Organic Farmers Market. Following the closure of the original market in 2012, local organic farmers reorganized and invited the Taipei Culture Exploration Association to assume responsibility for its management.

After initially operating at Taipei Water Park, the market returned in 2019 to Royal Palm Boulevard on the National Taiwan University campus, near Gongguan MRT Station. Today, it operates every Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. as a flagship organic market, typically hosting between 10 and 20 certified organic vendors and attracting families from the Greater Taipei area, National Taiwan University faculty and students, and consumers committed to sustainable and organic food systems.

To complement this weekly market, the association launched the Green to Go Market in 2024 under the guidance of the Agriculture and Food Agency as an innovative extension of its direct marketing activities. The initiative pioneers a low-carbon purchasing model by bringing certified organic farmers directly into public transport hubs, enabling commuters to purchase fresh produce immediately outside MRT stations as part of their daily journeys. Operating daily through pop-up stalls located at Shuanglian, Beitou, Shilin, and Shipai MRT stations, each location typically hosts three to four vendors and primarily serves commuters along the Tamsui–Xinyi Line, nearby residents, and daily station users, making organic food more accessible while reducing travel time and associated carbon emissions.

The operation of both markets is supported by Taiwan's Organic Agriculture Promotion Act and associated regulatory frameworks under the supervision of the Agriculture and Food Agency, while the Taipei Mass Rapid Transit Corporation serves as the venue partner for the transit-based markets. Participation is restricted to producers holding official Organic Certification or Organic In-Transition Certification issued by government-approved certification bodies, with some vendors also holding Green Conservation Badges. To further strengthen consumer confidence, the Taipei Culture Exploration Association conducts monthly random pesticide residue testing, establishing an independent quality assurance mechanism that exceeds statutory requirements.

Together, the two market models provide a stable and diversified marketing network for approximately 60 partner organic farms across Taiwan, combining the high-volume sales opportunities of a flagship weekend farmers' market with the frequent retail exposure offered through daily transit-based pop-up markets. Beyond food retail, the initiatives contribute to a broader sustainability ecosystem by working closely with the Green Dining Guide to connect organic producers with environmentally conscious restaurants. Regular seasonal events, agri-food education activities, workshops, and community gatherings hosted at the Water Garden Organic Farmers Market further position the markets as important hubs for environmental education, sustainable consumption, and stronger relationships between farmers and urban consumers. Collectively, these initiatives illustrate how farmers' markets can evolve beyond traditional market spaces by integrating with urban transport infrastructure, supporting small-scale organic producers, and advancing wider public policy objectives related to sustainability, climate action, and healthy food systems.

BRAZIL



Founded in 2014, Junta Local is a Rio de Janeiro-based organization dedicated to strengthening local food systems by supporting a community of small-scale farmers and local food entrepreneurs. Over the past twelve years, it has become one of Brazil's leading initiatives promoting short food supply chains, connecting producers directly with consumers through carefully curated farmers' markets and food-related cultural activities.

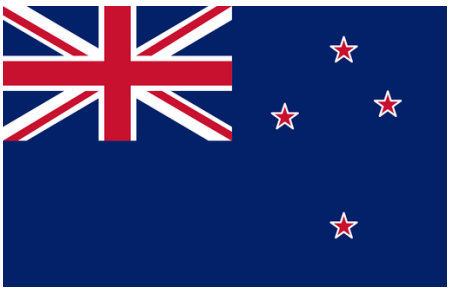
Junta Local currently coordinates five farmers' markets across Rio de Janeiro. Its flagship market in Laranjeiras operates every Saturday, while additional monthly markets take place in Botafogo, Tijuca, and at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM), creating a regular network of direct-to-consumer sales opportunities throughout the city.

Although legally structured as a privately owned for-profit company, Junta Local operates through a participatory governance model. Producers can become formal members of the organization and actively participate in decision-making processes, including voting on market locations, operating formats, participation fees, and other strategic matters. This governance structure reflects the organization's commitment to democratic market management and producer-led development.

Today, Junta Local brings together approximately 120 permanent farmers and local food entrepreneurs. Its markets receive an average of 500 visitors per event, reaching roughly 4,000 consumers every month. Collectively, these markets generate around USD 150,000 in monthly sales for participating producers and food businesses providing an important source of income for family farmers while expanding access to fresh, locally produced food for urban residents.

Beyond market management, Junta Local advocates for stronger local food systems by fostering closer relationships between producers, consumers, chefs, researchers and public institutions. Its work demonstrates how well-governed farmers' markets can strengthen local economies, promote sustainable agriculture, preserve food culture, and contribute to a more democratic and resilient food system.

NEW ZELEAND



Farmers' Markets New Zealand is a national membership organization established in 2006 to support, strengthen, and advocate for farmers' markets across the country.

Legally registered as an Incorporated Society, the organization is governed by an executive committee of six volunteers and operates without paid staff. Its core objectives are to define and protect the concept of a farmers market, facilitate the development of a national network of markets, support the establishment and long-term viability of both new and existing markets through the provision of resources and knowledge sharing, and advocate on behalf of its members at the national level.

The organization currently represents 26 of New Zealand's approximately 30 farmers markets. All member markets operate on a weekly basis throughout the year, with most taking place on Saturdays or Sundays, although three markets operate on weekdays. In addition, three member organizations manage two separate markets held on different days and in different locations. Most markets were established during the early 2000s and typically host between 15 and 70 vendors each week.

Collectively, Farmers' Markets New Zealand estimates that its member markets provide weekly marketing opportunities for approximately 1,000 vendors and attract around 50,000 consumers. While individual markets operate with varying degrees of authenticity, the organization promotes a common standard through its "Three Golden Rules": markets should sell food only, sourced from a defined local region, and sold directly by the grower or producer. These principles underpin the organization's efforts to maintain the integrity of the farmers market model while fostering consumer trust and supporting local food systems.

EGYPT



Alexandria Farmers Markets is a pioneering initiative established in 2024 under the leadership of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, with the support of the Mediterranean and African Markets Initiative (MAMi), implemented by CIHEAM Bari and the World Farmers Markets Coalition.

The initiative was created to strengthen the connection between local farmers and urban consumers by providing direct marketing opportunities, promoting healthy food systems, and supporting small-scale producers. It also seeks to create vibrant public spaces where commerce, education, health, and community engagement come together.

Since the opening of its first farmers market in October 2024, Alexandria Farmers Markets has experienced continuous growth. Building on the success of the initial market in Saad Zaghloul Square, the organization has expanded with the opening of a second weekly market in the Zizinia district, demonstrating the increasing demand for direct farmer-to-consumer markets in Egypt.

The markets operate on a weekly basis, bringing together local farmers, food producers, women entrepreneurs, and artisanal businesses. Beyond food sales, they include educational activities, children's spaces, and health awareness initiatives, making them true community hubs rather than simply commercial venues.

Alexandria Farmers Markets operates through a partnership between the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, local authorities, and institutional partners. As in many emerging farmers market systems, the initiative functions within Egypt's existing commercial and public-space regulations while contributing to the development of a dedicated farmers market model.

The second market opened to the public in June 2026, marking another milestone in this vibrant initiative. It demonstrated that, despite environmental challenges, logistical constraints, limited local policy support, the distance separating many farmers from the city, and a lack of political interest, Alexandria Farmers Markets continues to find its way forward.

The organization places particular emphasis on empowering women and young entrepreneurs, strengthening local food value chains, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Under the leadership of Dr. Eman Seif, Alexandria Farmers Markets has quickly become a reference model for the development of farmers markets in North Africa and the Mediterranean region, illustrating how strong local partnerships and community engagement can successfully establish new direct marketing systems.

LEBANON



The Lebanon Farmers Markets Coalition (LFMC) is the national organization coordinating and supporting farmers markets across Lebanon under URBAN FARMERS brand since 2017. Officially, established in 2023, it was created to strengthen local food systems, provide direct market access for small-scale farmers, and promote sustainable agriculture through community-based markets.

Despite Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis and political instability, the LFMC has developed a network of farmers markets that connect producers directly with consumers while preserving fair prices, transparency, and trust. The Coalition also represents Lebanon internationally as a founding member of the World Farmers Markets Coalition.

Today, the LFMC coordinates four regular farmers markets, including three year-round markets and one seasonal market, with additional markets under development in different regions of the country. Markets operate on a weekly basis, creating more than 180 market days annually. The Coalition currently works with approximately 120 local producers, of whom around 75% are women, reflecting its strong commitment to women's economic empowerment and inclusive rural development. Thousands of consumers visit the markets every month to purchase fresh, local, and seasonal food directly from farmers.

Lebanon has no specific legal framework governing farmers markets. Markets therefore operate through partnership agreements with municipalities, schools, NGOs, and private institutions, while complying with existing regulations concerning public spaces, food safety, and commercial activities. Beyond market management, LFMC provides training, technical assistance, governance support, and advocacy for local food systems. It actively collaborates with municipalities, the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO, CIHEAM Bari, Campagna Amica, and other national and international partners.

The Lebanese experience demonstrates that farmers markets can become essential community infrastructure, strengthening local economies, supporting family farming, improving food security, and creating social cohesion, even in highly challenging economic and political environments.

NEW ZELEAND



In Vietnam, HealthBridge Vietnam contributes to strengthening the enabling environment for farmers' markets and sustainable local food systems through policy dialogue, technical support, research, and knowledge sharing. While HealthBridge does not directly operate or manage farmers' markets, it works with relevant stakeholders to promote greater recognition of farmers' markets and support the development of direct marketing channels between farmers and consumers.

HealthBridge Vietnam has more than a decade of experience working with government and local partners to improve traditional markets as important sources of fresh food, livelihoods, and community life. Its work has contributed to protecting local markets, improving market infrastructure and management, and demonstrating more inclusive and community-oriented approaches to market development. Drawing on this experience, HealthBridge contributed evidence and technical recommendations to the development of Decree No. 60/2024/ND-CP on Market Development and Management, helping bring practical perspectives from local markets into the national policy process. Building on this experience, HealthBridge has also supported Slow Food Community Hanoi developing and piloting of farmers' markets in Vietnam, providing practical lessons on the opportunities and challenges of establishing direct connections between farmers and consumers in urban settings.

HealthBridge is now working with relevant stakeholders to strengthen the recognition and development of farmers markets and other short food supply chains in Vietnam, with the aim of creating a more supportive institutional environment and favorable conditions for their development.

PRACTITIONER ENGAGEMENT

1. STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE, COORDINATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

(An enabling priority)

Farmers markets suffer from a fragmented regulatory environment not designed for their revival, characterized by significant differences between countries and a heavy reliance on local regulations.

Consequently, sector operators, social entrepreneurs and farmers have to find creative solutions to reconcile these popular institutions with an incomplete regulatory context.

These activities are therefore strategic:

- Create a general regulatory framework starting with a formal recognition of farmers markets as key instruments for shorter and resilient food supply chains and local food systems.
- Support the development or improvement of enabling and proportionate regulatory frameworks in interested countries and territories, and facilitate access to relevant agricultural, rural development, local economic development and food-policy instruments including, where relevant, instruments such as the European Union Common Agricultural Policy;
- Share concrete examples of positive farmers market policies to be replicated;

A network, therefore, plays a crucial role to:

- Develop shared principles and advocacy positions on permits, access to public space, food safety and hygiene, taxation, producer eligibility, product origin and the direct-sales identity of farmers markets;
- Engage in structured dialogue with Municipalities, Regions, and national institutions, preventing individual markets from having to negotiate in isolation;
- Contribute to the definition of shared minimum criteria, in line with Short Food Supply Chains (or SFSC) and regional regulations, for the formal recognition of farmers markets.
- Strengthen the capacity of market organizations to translate policies into practice, including through investment in staffing, technology, compliance systems, farmer support, and community outreach

Network Priority: To move from a collection of individual markets to a recognizable
collective entity capable of stable political dialogue.

2. STRENGTHEN FARMERS MARKETS' SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FUNCTIONS BY "CAPTURING PUBLIC IMAGINATION"

Farmers Markets as Local Infrastructures: More Than Places of Sale

Farmers markets are not simple marketing channels, but public spaces where the relationship between city and countryside, production and consumption, and citizens and policymakers is rebuilt. Thanks to their open and accessible nature, they make visible and tangible the relationships we would like to see in everyday life: shorter supply chains, direct trust between producers and consumers, greater awareness of food and local areas.

In this sense, farmers markets capture the public imagination because they embody, in concrete form, a first step toward reclaiming territorial control over our food-related lives.

Political attention may initially focus on practical constraints, permits, regulations, taxation, zoning, but, if adequately supported, it tends to broaden to deeper issues concerning people, places, and production models.

For a farmers market network, it is therefore essential to:

- make visible the political and social value of markets (access to healthy food, nutrition education, safety, and social inclusion);
- Promote nutritional incentive programmes that strengthen both access to healthy food and the economic viability of farmers markets, increasing purchasing power for lower-income consumers while expanding market opportunities and revenues for regional farmers;
- Developing shared narratives through coordinated communication, shared campaigns, and the generative use of data;
- Supporting food and civic education activities, combined with transparency, which strengthen direct trust between producers and consumers and consolidate the public role of markets.

While remaining, first and foremost, tangible points of sale for farmers, farmers markets are not designed to solve all the critical issues facing agricultural and food systems on their own. Their strength lies precisely in being immediate, accessible, and flexible tools, capable of impacting daily life by adapting to the context in which they develop. For this reason, advocacy often addresses seemingly ordinary yet increasingly crucial issues. Since many market managers lack the necessary skills to address them, the role of social entrepreneurs and the need for stable alliances with universities, associations, and public institutions and other local stakeholders emerge, stimulating the opportunity to expand the reach of farmers markets and the accessibility of healthy and sustainable diets to all segments of society through targeted support programs and nutritional incentives.

With stable and predictable operating conditions, the focus can shift from survival to growth, unlocking the full potential of farmers markets as a lever for transforming food systems. Precisely on this point, the relationship with supranational institutions and the resulting networks clearly emerges.

Network priority: Position farmers markets as local food infrastructures, and not as marginal or folkloristic initiatives, capable of offering replicable models of positive relationships between city and countryside and of addressing, in a structured way, the social and economic constraints that currently limit their development in Europe.

3. IMPROVE LOGISTICS AND THE COLLECTIVE ORGANISATION OF SUPPLY

Logistics is a key function of short supply chains and farmers markets, particularly in overcoming the structural fragmentation typical of small-scale agriculture. Unlike intensive production models based on economies of scale, the development of agricultural markets is based on a logic of variety, proximity, and multifunctionality, prioritizing quality and diversification over quantity and uniformity.

This "despecialization" of production phases allows farms to allocate their labor not only to cultivation activities, but also to product promotion, participation in farmers markets, and nutrition education initiatives aimed at schools, citizens, and consumers. However, small-scale production often leads to significant discontinuity and logistical inefficiency, which limits the full economic and territorial potential of short supply chains.

In this context, the size of the network is crucial and allows intervention where individual markets cannot operate effectively. Through market coordination, the network can:

- Concentrate local supply based on seasonality, production specializations, and socioeconomic contexts;
- Encourage the sharing of logistics solutions (transport, storage, waste reduction);
- Strengthen connections with local restaurants, local businesses, and systems for recovering and redistributing surplus food.

Structured farmers markets thus serve as hubs for local production, optimizing not only logistics but also communication, marketing, training, and food education activities. In this way, they become regional hubs of reference for restaurateurs, retailers, and local communities, strengthening the integration between production, consumption, and local areas.

Reducing the length of the supply chain in all its components ultimately leads to a more equitable distribution of value, generating direct benefits for both producers, through greater recognition of agricultural labor, and consumers, in terms of quality, transparency, and access to local food.

Network priority: transform farmers markets into efficient and cooperative local hubs, capable of increasing logistical and organizational efficiency without losing the value of agricultural diversity, multifunctionality, and the social dimension of short supply chains.

4. STRENGTHEN SKILLS, TRAINING, AND LEARNING NETWORKS

In recent years local farmers markets have been increasingly recognized by scientific and institutional literature as strategic actors in local food systems, and not simply as commercial infrastructures. They serve a connecting function between rural producers, urban consumers, and territories, contributing to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of local communities.

Despite this recognition, many markets and small producers operate in conditions of organizational fragility. The growing complexity of regulation, governance, innovation, communication, and managing relationships with increasingly informed consumers requires skills that are often unavailable. These functions are sometimes performed by key figures such as social entrepreneurs, but remain vulnerable when approached individually. **This highlights the need to explicitly recognize experienced farmers market operators as technical-assistance and implementation partners, drawing on their practical knowledge of farmers engagement, consumers participation, compliance, community partnerships, and the operational barriers that can determine whether public policies succeed at market level.**

In this context, the network dimension emerges as a key enabling factor. Networks help strengthen human and organizational capital through continuous training (regulatory, organizational, and digital), the exchange of best practices, and collective learning. European capacity-building initiatives and the experience of the World Farmers Markets Coalition demonstrate that innovation and political influence depend on the ability to build stable coalitions, rather than on individual isolated markets. Coordination between markets is central both in structured organizational contexts and when producers and consumers come together to collectively organize purchases and sales. In particular, vertical coordination along the supply chain takes on a strategic role, as citizens who consciously choose farmers markets pay close attention to the origin of products, production methods, and environmental, social, and economic impacts.

This growing awareness requires small and micro-producers to develop new communication and interpersonal skills, often complemented by food education activities aimed at schools, families, and citizens.

These initiatives, while sometimes disconnected from political and institutional processes, play a crucial role in building relationships of trust, which represent the main intangible infrastructure of farmers markets. In this sense, although digital traceability tools offer interesting opportunities, in farmers markets the most effective form of traceability remains direct and human: the presence of producers, physical proximity, dialogue, and the openness of farms to the community.

Another strategic area of coordination concerns public procurement. Local procurement of school, hospital, and company canteens, if organized within local supply chains and integrated into territorial governance systems, can generate significant volumes capable of concretely supporting farmers market producers and strengthening short supply chains.

Literature and policy documents converge in recognizing multi-actor territorial governance as a fundamental enabling condition. Only coordinated action between local authorities, national institutions, civil society, universities, and professional networks can ensure continuity, predictability, and scalability. This approach is consistent with international frameworks such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which recognises the importance of local markets and multi-actor governance in the development of sustainable urban food systems.

Network priority: Invest in human and organizational capital to prevent the isolation and fragility of individual markets. Integrated investment in skills, coordination, and network governance to enable farmers markets to evolve from isolated initiatives to structural pillars of territorial food systems.



PRACTITIONER ENGAGEMENT

Across most countries worldwide, farmers markets are generally framed as:

- direct sales by farmers, fishers or small-scale producers;
- short food supply chains (SFSCs) reducing intermediaries;
- a form of local retail trade subject to:
  → food safety and public health rules;
  → national trade and consumer protection laws;
  → local government or municipal regulations.

Unlike the European Union, there is no single global legal framework governing farmers markets. Regulatory approaches vary considerably depending on agricultural policy objectives, local government structures and rural development strategies.

GLOBAL REGULATORY MODELS

MODEL	COUNTRIES
Agricultural development and smallholder support	Ghana, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand
Community-driven and social enterprise markets	Lebanon
Food safety and local market regulation	United States, Norway
Agricultural family farming and public procurement support	Brazil, Italy

GLOBAL CASE STUDIES

ITALY

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In Italy, farmers markets operate within the broader legal framework for direct agricultural sales and multifunctional agriculture. National legislation is complemented by regional provisions and municipal rules governing market organisation, public space and local operations.

REGULATION

- National agricultural legislation;
- Regional acts;
- Municipal regulations governing market operation;
- National implementation of EU food safety and hygiene rules.

KEY ELEMENTS

Strong integration between:

- agricultural identity;
- territorial products;
- agritourism;
- direct producer-consumer relationships.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Italy is among the few countries where farmers markets enjoy explicit recognition within agricultural policy and are closely linked to the concept of "filiera corta" (short supply chain).

NORWAY

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Norwegian farmers markets (Bondens Marked) operate under a nationally coordinated model while remaining subject to food safety legislation and local market authorisations.

REGULATION

- Norwegian Food Safety Authority regulations;
- municipal permits;
- producer certification requirements;
- national quality and traceability standards.

KEY ELEMENTS

Strong emphasis on:

- local provenance;
- transparency;
- seasonal production;
- consumer trust.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Markets are generally reserved for producers selling their own goods, creating one of the strongest producer-authenticity systems in Europe.

GHANA

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Farmers markets are developing primarily as instruments for strengthening local food systems and smallholder incomes, supported by public institutions and producer networks.

Farmers markets in Ghana as an emerging but highly underdeveloped institution with enormous potential to transform the country's food system. They are community-oriented, direct marketing platforms that connect smallholder farmers with consumers to improve farmer livelihoods, enhance local food and nutrition security, strengthen local economies, promote climate-resilient agriculture, and foster sustainable community food systems. They serve not only as marketplaces but also as institutional platforms for food system transformation through collaboration among farmers, consumers, local authorities, civil society, academia, and development partners.

KEY ELEMENTS

- farmer empowerment and inclusive livelihoods;
- reduced intermediation;
- local food security and healthy nutrition;
- community-based agricultural food system transformation;
- local economic development;
- sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture;
- consumer trust, food quality and traceability;
- strategic partnerships and community engagement.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Markets are viewed mainly as a rural development and food system innovation tool rather than as a distinct legal category.

Farmers markets are primarily viewed as instruments for rural development, local economic growth, and food system transformation rather than as a distinct legal or institutional category. Although they are increasingly recognized for their role in connecting smallholder farmers directly with consumers, improving market access, and promoting healthy and sustainable food systems, they are not yet explicitly defined or regulated under a dedicated national legal or policy framework.

LEBANON

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Lebanon has no specific legal framework governing farmers markets. Markets therefore operate through partnership agreements with municipalities, schools, NGOs, and private institutions, while complying with existing regulations concerning public spaces, food safety, and commercial activities.

KEY ELEMENTS

- preservation of food heritage;
- support for small farmers;
- community building;
- sustainable agriculture

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Farmers markets have developed through a hybrid NGO and social enterprise model rather than as part of a dedicated public agricultural policy. While this approach has enabled their establishment and survival, it is now reaching its limits in terms of scalability and long-term growth.

UNITED STATES

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Farmers markets are part of the broader system of direct-to-consumer agricultural marketing, regulated by a combination of federal, state and local rules.

REGULATION

- federal food safety requirements;
- state licensing laws;
- county and municipal ordinances;
- USDA support programmes.

KEY ELEMENTS

- traceability;
- producer verification;
- food safety compliance;
- local economic development.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

The "producer-only market" model is particularly widespread and often prohibits the resale of products purchased from third parties.

PHILIPPINES

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The KADIWA Program represents one of the most advanced examples of a government-supported farm-to-consumer marketing network.

KEY ELEMENTS

- food security;
- affordable food access;
- higher farmer incomes;
- reduced intermediary costs.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

The model combines physical markets, mobile markets, public sector involvement and digital sales channels under a unified national strategy.

BRAZIL

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Brazil represents one of the world's most advanced examples of integration between farmers markets, family farming and public food policy. Local markets (feiras livres and feiras da agricultura familiar) coexist with federal programmes supporting small producers.

REGULATION

- federal agricultural legislation;
- state and municipal market rules;
- food safety regulations;
- public procurement programmes for family farming.

KEY ELEMENTS

Strong integration between:

- family farming (agricultural familiar);
- food sovereignty;
- school feeding programmes;
- local economic development.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Unlike many countries where farmers' markets are primarily commercial spaces, Brazil places them within a broader framework of social inclusion, food access and rural development.

THAILAND

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Thailand does not have a dedicated national law specifically governing farmers markets. Farmers' markets operate within the broader framework of commercial, food safety, and agricultural legislation, with significant involvement from provincial and municipal authorities. In recent years, local governments have promoted "Farmer Market" initiatives aimed at strengthening direct sales between producers and consumers.

REGULATION

- National food safety legislation;
- Provincial and municipal market regulations;
- Oversight by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives;
- Public initiatives supporting product quality, traceability, and market access for farmers.

KEY ELEMENTS

Strong integration between:

- smallholder farmers;
- traditional local markets;
- urban direct-to-consumer sales;
- promotion of regional and fresh agricultural products.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Thailand represents a particularly interesting example of how traditional Asian market systems can evolve toward more organized and transparent direct-marketing models. Local authorities, especially in Bangkok, have promoted dedicated Farmer Market networks that connect urban consumers directly with local producers while preserving the social and cultural role of traditional markets.

VIETNAM

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Vietnam combines traditional wet markets with modern initiatives promoting safer and more transparent direct marketing channels between producers and urban consumers.

REGULATION

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development standards;
- food safety legislation;
- provincial and municipal market management systems.

KEY ELEMENTS

- urban food supply;
- traceable agricultural products;
- support for smallholder farmers;
- food safety modernization.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Vietnam is one of the most interesting examples of a transition from traditional market structures toward certified and traceable short supply chains, particularly around major cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

UPDATED COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK

PARADIGM	REPRESENTATIVE COUNTRIES
Rural development and food security	Ghana, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand
Community and social innovation	Lebanon
Market regulation, authenticity and food safety	United States, Norway
Family farming and territorial development	Brazil, Italy

COMPARATIVE INSIGHT

Globally, farmers markets have evolved according to different policy priorities and institutional traditions.

- **Italy** and **Brazil** illustrate how farmers' markets can become instruments of territorial development, family farming support, and local economic resilience.
- **Norway** and the **United States** demonstrate highly structured systems based on producer authenticity, traceability, and food safety oversight.
- **Lebanon** shows how civil society and social entrepreneurship can create successful farmers market networks even in the absence of dedicated public-sector frameworks.
- **Ghana**, **Vietnam**, **Thailand**, and the **Philippines** highlight the growing role of farmers markets in strengthening food security, improving smallholder incomes, and creating more resilient local food systems.

Among the most innovative international experiences, Brazil stands out for linking farmers markets to family farming and public food policies, the Philippines for its nationwide KADIWA farm-to-consumer programme, Thailand for modernising traditional market systems through direct-sales initiatives, Norway for strict producer-only standards, and the United States for its mature regulatory framework supporting direct agricultural marketing.

CONCLUSION

The evidence collected through the World Farmers Markets Coalition's practitioner engagement, international survey activities conducted with FAO, and the diverse experiences documented across Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, and Latin America point to a common conclusion: farmers markets are far more than commercial venues for food exchange. They are strategic civic infrastructures that strengthen the connections between producers, consumers, communities, and places, while creating practical pathways toward more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems.

Across remarkably different political, economic, and cultural contexts, farmers markets perform a similar function. Whether operating within Italy's framework of multifunctional agriculture, Norway's producer-authenticity model, Brazil's family farming policies, Lebanon's social enterprise initiatives, Ghana's local food system development efforts, the Philippines' KADIWA programme, Thailand's urban farmer market networks, Vietnam's modernization of traditional food markets, or the United States' direct-to-consumer agricultural system, farmers markets consistently create spaces where economic exchange is reinforced by trust, transparency, social interaction, and public participation.

The diversity of regulatory approaches observed throughout the world demonstrates that there is no single model for farmers market development. However, a common lesson emerges: where farmers markets receive stable institutional recognition, supportive governance frameworks, and long-term investment, they evolve from isolated commercial initiatives into essential components of territorial food systems. Conversely, where markets are treated merely as temporary events, informal trading spaces, or marginal economic activities, their broader economic, social, cultural, and environmental contributions remain largely unrealized.

Practitioners repeatedly highlighted that the value generated by farmers markets cannot be measured solely through sales volumes. Markets function as spaces for civic engagement, entrepreneurship, cultural preservation, food education, and community building. They help producers capture a greater share of value, provide consumers with meaningful access to information about how food is produced, and create opportunities for dialogue that rarely occur within conventional food distribution systems. In many cases, they also serve as entry points through which small-scale farmers experiment with new business models, adopt more sustainable production practices, strengthen direct customer relationships, and build the confidence necessary to remain in agriculture. In this respect, farmers markets contribute not only to economic viability but also to the long-term renewal of farming communities and future generations of producers.

The findings presented in this paper also suggest that food system transformation cannot be achieved exclusively through national agricultural policies or global sustainability strategies. Local and regional institutions play a decisive role. Municipalities, metropolitan authorities, and territorial governments represent the scale at which relationships between food production and consumption become visible, tangible, and actionable. Farmers markets provide these institutions with unique opportunities to engage citizens, farmers, retailers, educators, health professionals, and civil society organisations in shaping food policies grounded in local realities and shared priorities.

For this reason, the World Farmers Markets Coalition calls for increased and coordinated investment in farmers markets worldwide. Such investment should extend beyond market operations alone and include governance, infrastructure, training, logistics, public engagement, nutrition programmes, and institutional recognition. Equally important is the need to strengthen the capacities of public authorities to understand, support, and collaborate with farmers markets as partners in local development and food system governance.

The four strategic priorities identified in this paper, strengthening governance and institutional recognition, enhancing social and cultural functions, improving logistics and supply organisation, and investing in skills and learning networks, provide a practical framework for action across diverse contexts. While their application will necessarily vary according to local conditions, together they offer a shared roadmap capable of supporting farmers markets as both economic infrastructure and civic infrastructure.

Ultimately, farmers markets are both ancient and contemporary institutions. They draw upon longstanding traditions of exchange, reciprocity, and local identity, while simultaneously responding to some of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary societies: food insecurity, climate adaptation, biodiversity loss, rural decline, public health concerns, and social fragmentation. By creating places where farmers and citizens meet directly, farmers markets help rebuild relationships that industrialized food systems have often weakened or obscured. Their continued expansion and strengthening should therefore be understood not as a niche agricultural objective, but as a broader investment in more resilient communities, more democratic food systems, and a more sustainable future.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WE RECOMMEND

- Farmers Market Coalition (USA)'s Legal Guide to Farmers Markets toolkit
- HealthBridge study of nutrition incentive programmes, with special attention to ones launched in farmers markets
- ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) handbook on urban food markets
- IPES (International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems) report on territorial markets
- MUFPP (Milan Urban Food Policy Pact) report calling for improved (Italian) policies affecting farmers markets
- RLFSCA (Resilient Local Food Supply Chains Alliance) Handbook of Resilient and Sustainable Local Food Systems and Supply Chains report
- World Farmers Markets Coalition position papers
  → 2021 First World Report on Farmers Markets
  → 2023 White Paper on Strengthening Farmers Markets
  → 2025 Position Paper providing a Farmers Market Definition
  → 2025 Position Paper on Farmers Markets and Urban Food Policy



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