

Preface

Interest in buying locally produced foods is a trend seen in many countries. In the USA, campaigns such as the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) *Know Your Farmer*, *Know Your Food* and *The People's Garden* and the operation of the USDA Farmers' Market in Washington, DC, have helped to market the "local food" movement. In 1994, there were 1755 farmers' markets listed in the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Farmers' Market Directory Listing. In 2016, there were 8669 markets listed. This represents an increase of almost 400% since the early 1990s. Similar trends can be seen in other countries as well with a 157% increase in markets in Australia between 2004 and 2015 and a range from 30% to 60% across several Canadian provinces in recent years.

In a 2011 report from the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), small farms selling less than \$50,000 in gross annual sales accounted for 81% of all farms reporting local food sales in 2008. The report stated that these farms were more likely to depend exclusively on direct-to-consumer sales at farmers' markets and roadside stands. In 2012, 70% of farms selling foods locally sold directly to consumers through farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture organizations (CSAs).

Although there have been few documented outbreaks or cases of illness attributed to farmers' markets, studies have identified a lack of food safety practices on small farms and in farmers' markets through both survey research and observational studies. The practices in use identified in these studies could increase consumers' risk for foodborne illnesses.

Studies from various countries examining why consumers shop at farmers' markets and roadside stands and through CSAs indicate that consumers want to meet and connect with the person who produced the food, to obtain higher-quality and fresher products, to have a healthier diet, to support the local community, to enjoy the social atmosphere of the farmers' market, to protect the environment, and to be safer from pesticides, added hormones, and foodborne illnesses.

The 2014 National Farmers' Market Manager Survey conducted by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) with 1400 farmers' market managers found that among 91% of those who managed markets in 2012 and 2013, over 60%

reported increases in the number of customers, increases in the number of repeat customers, and higher annual sales. Eighty-five percent of the managers surveyed were seeking to add vendors, with 62% of them seeking vendors selling different types of products, not just fresh fruits and vegetables.

Markets have increased interest in entrepreneurship and cottage food industries. Farmers' markets have become venues for products requiring various types of food safety training and licenses. Studies have found that requirements may vary from state to state or region to region and country to country. Some studies have identified a lack of awareness about regulations and a lack of knowledge about food safety principles that apply to foods being made and sold through very small businesses or under cottage food regulations, including knowledge about food allergens and labeling requirements.

Increasing numbers of customers buying locally in their quest for what they believe to be fresher, healthier, and safer foods create a challenge for food safety educators and for regulatory agencies. Farmers' markets offer unique shopping opportunities for consumers and meaningful opportunities for the farmer. It is important for public health and for the economic viability of farmers and farmers' markets to provide food using the best food safety practices. The purpose of this book is to provide an overview of potential food safety issues on farms and in markets and present best practices to enhance food safety at farms and farmers' markets both in the USA and internationally.

Athens, GA, USA

Judy A. Harrison

Food Safety for Farmers Markets: A Guide to Enhancing
Safety of Local Foods

Harrison, J.A. (Ed.)

2017, IX, 170 p. 34 illus., 26 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-66687-7