



Extension

FARMERS MARKET CONSUMERS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE



by
Alberto B. Manalo
Gail McWilliam Jellie
Nada Haddad
Wendy Stevens

2017

Executive Summary

A survey of 513 New Hampshire residents conducted in February 2017 has revealed that about 84 percent of respondents have shopped, and close to 16 percent have never shopped, at New Hampshire farmers markets. Support for local agriculture and quality of products were the main reasons customers gave for shopping at farmers markets. The absence of farmers markets and lack of awareness of such markets in their area were the reasons provided by those who have never shopped at farmers markets. Product quality, market location, and product variety were very important factors in customers' decisions to shop at farmers markets.

The results of a survey of 369 customers of New Hampshire summer and/or winter farmers markets conducted in March-April 2017 indicate that in general, there were more shopping trips by respondents in 2016 than in 2015; however, a small number of shoppers made fewer visits. Many of those who made fewer visits to summer farmers markets in 2016 reported that they shopped at farm stands instead, and some said that they found the farmers market hours of operation inconvenient. Those who shopped less at winter farmers markets in 2016 indicated that limited product selection and inconvenient market location were the reasons for the change. One hundred fifteen respondents did not shop at winter farmers markets at all in 2016. They cited the absence of a market in their area or inconvenient location as reasons.

The survey participants said that the desire to support local agriculture and the quality of products were their main reasons for shopping at farmers markets. They also said that location, greater product variety, hours of operation, and organic produce were very important factors in making a decision to shop more frequently at farmers markets.

Farmers Market Consumers in New Hampshire Report

© 2017

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension

AUTHORS

Alberto B. Manalo, Associate Professor of Environmental and Resource Economics, Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of New Hampshire

Gail McWilliam Jellie, Director, Division of Agricultural Development, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food

Nada Haddad, Field Specialist, Food & Agriculture, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, Rockingham County

Wendy Stevens, President of the Board,
New Hampshire Farmers Market Association



University of New Hampshire

Cooperative Extension

Taylor Hall

59 College Road

Durham, NH 03924-2621

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.

UNH Cooperative Extension provides New Hampshire citizens with research-based education and information, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions that strengthen youth, families and communities, sustain natural resources, and improve the economy.

Introduction

In February–April 2017, The New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets, & Food, University of New Hampshire (UNH) Department of Natural Resources & the Environment, UNH Cooperative Extension, and the New Hampshire Farmers Market Association conducted two surveys to obtain information on people’s shopping experiences at, and opinions and attitudes related to summer and winter farmers markets in New Hampshire. Such knowledge will be helpful in farmers markets’ efforts to meet customer needs and remain viable in the future.

The first survey was conducted as a component of the Granite State Poll (GSP) in February 2017. The Granite State Poll is a survey of a representative sample of New Hampshire (NH) residents, conducted every quarter by the UNH Survey Center. A major purpose of this survey was to estimate the proportion of New Hampshire residents who either shopped or have never shopped at farmers markets in the state, and the reasons for their shopping behavior.

The second was an online survey of customers of New Hampshire farmers markets. The objectives of this study included determining if there had been a change in the frequency of shopping by customers in summer and winter markets from 2015 to 2016, and identifying the reasons for such change, if any. The survey also aimed to determine the factors that would encourage customers to shop more. This report includes selected results from both surveys.

A. Results of the GSP Survey

Five hundred thirteen individuals participated in the Granite State Poll in February 2017. The respondents provided answers to several farmers market-related questions on their shopping experience, the reasons why they shop or do not shop in those markets, and the importance of selected factors in their decision to shop. A summary of their responses is presented below.

Shopping Experience at NH Farmers Markets

Three hundred fifty-two of the 513 survey participants (68.6 percent) indicated that they have shopped at a New Hampshire farmers market in the past 12 months. Eighty respondents (15.7 percent) stated that they had shopped before but not within the past 12 months, and 78 individuals (15.2 percent) indicated

that they have never shopped at a farmers market in the state (Figure A.1). These numbers imply that more than 84 percent of the respondents have shopped at NH farmers markets.

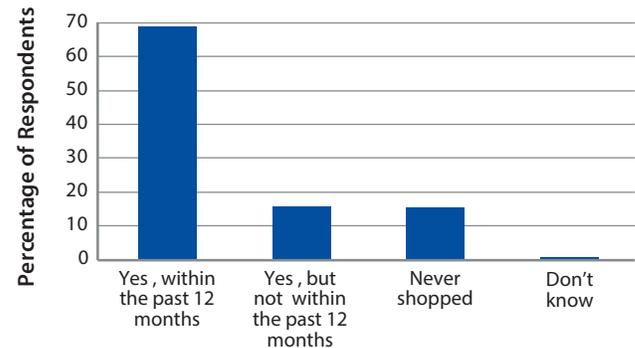


Figure A.1. Shopping experience at New Hampshire farmers markets (n = 513)

Reasons for Shopping at Farmers Markets

The 352 individuals who said that they have shopped at a NH farmers market in the past 12 months provided reasons for their shopping behavior; many of them provided multiple reasons. Figure A.2 shows that supporting local agriculture or businesses was the most-frequently mentioned (by 192 respondents) reason, followed by quality of products, which was cited by 187 survey participants.

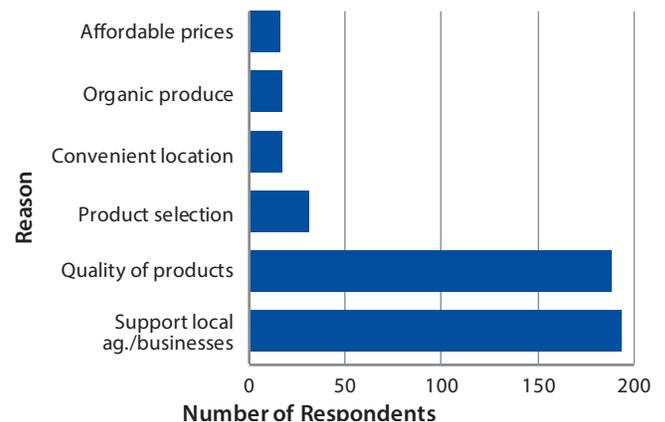


Figure A.2. Reasons for shopping at farmers markets (n = 352)

Reasons for Not Shopping at Farmers Markets within the Past 12 months

The 80 respondents who said that they had shopped at New Hampshire farmers markets before but not in the past 12 months gave their reasons for staying away from the markets. Many respondents provided more than one reason. Fourteen respondents said that there was no farmers market near where they live, and eight survey participants reported that they had no time to shop at farmers markets (Figure A.3).



Figure A.3. Reasons for not shopping at a farmers market in New Hampshire in 2016 (n = 80)

Reasons for Having Never Shopped at a Farmers Market in New Hampshire

Seventy-eight respondents indicated that they have never shopped at a farmers market in New Hampshire. Figure A.4 shows the distribution of the reasons given by the respondents for their non-patronage. Several survey participants provided more than one reason. Nine respondents said that there were no farmers markets where they live; the same number of participants reported that they were not aware of the existence of farmers markets in their area.



Figure A.4. Reasons for having never shopped at a farmers market in New Hampshire (n = 78)

Importance of Selected Factors in Consumers' Decision to Shop at Farmers Markets

The survey respondents were asked about the importance of several factors in their decision to shop at farmers markets. Table A.1 shows the distribution of the responses. Product quality was the factor that was reported as most important by the greatest number of respondents (86.4 percent). Market location and product variety were the other factors that the greatest proportion of respondents considered very important. Hours of operation, prices, and reviews from family and friends were rated as somewhat important by the highest number of survey participants.

Table A.1. Importance of selected factors in consumers' decision to shop at farmers markets

	Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat Important	Very important	No. of respondents
	Percent				
Product quality	0.5	1.5	9.6	86.4	507
Market location	2.4	10.3	38.6	47.3	507
Product variety	1.9	7.9	41.4	46.3	507
Hours of operation	5.3	14.1	44.6	32.9	507
Prices	5.6	16.2	45.0	31.0	508
Reviews from family & friends	11.8	18.6	38.8	27.6	506

B. Results of the Survey of Farmers Market Customers

The survey of customers of New Hampshire farmers markets was conducted in March and April 2017. The UNH Survey Center administered the data collection. Individuals on the customer email lists of farmers markets were sent invitations through email to participate in the study. Information about the survey and invitation to take part in it were also featured in agriculture-related websites and publications. Three hundred sixty-nine people responded and participated. The results of the survey are presented below.

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Gender - A large majority (83.5 percent) of 366 respondents who provided gender information were female; 14.8 percent were male.

Age - Three hundred sixty-four survey participants provided age information. The greatest proportion of respondents (29.1 percent) were in the 55-64 category, and 21.7 percent were in the 45-54 age group. (Figure B.1).

Education - Three hundred sixty-six respondents reported their highest educational level (Figure B.2). About 78 percent had a college education or higher, 15.6 percent had some college education, and 4.4 percent had a high-school education or less.

Income - The 2016 household income was \$100,000 or more for 27 percent of the 319 respondents who supplied income information (Figure B.3). Approximately 23 percent were in households earning \$50,000 to \$74,999 a year; 21.6 percent earned \$75,000 to \$99,999, and 19.1 percent had income between \$25,000 and \$49,999. Slightly less than 10 percent of respondents were in households with income under \$25,000.

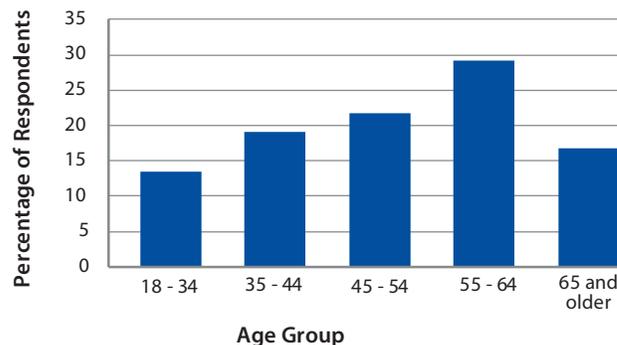


Figure B.1. Age of the survey respondents (n = 364)

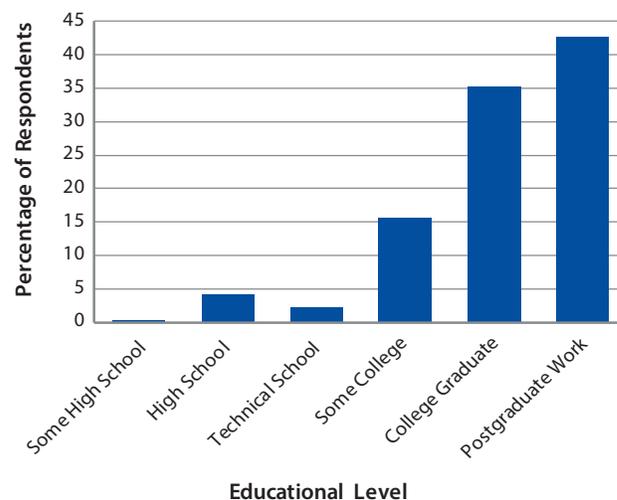


Figure B.2. Educational level of the survey respondents (n = 366)

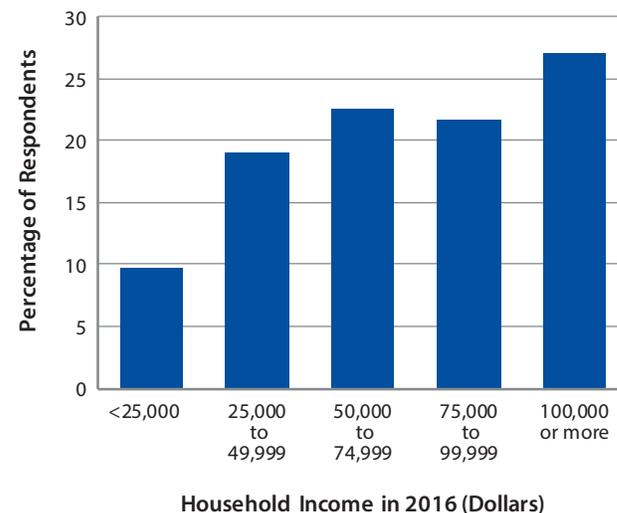


Figure B.3. Household income of the survey respondents in 2016 (n = 319)

Location (county). Data on the New Hampshire county where the participants resided were determined for 355 respondents who provided their zip code. Figure B.4 indicates that 23.7 percent of the respondents were from Merrimack County, 21.7 percent were from Rockingham, and 14.6 percent were from Hillsborough County. Coos and Sullivan were the least represented counties in the sample.

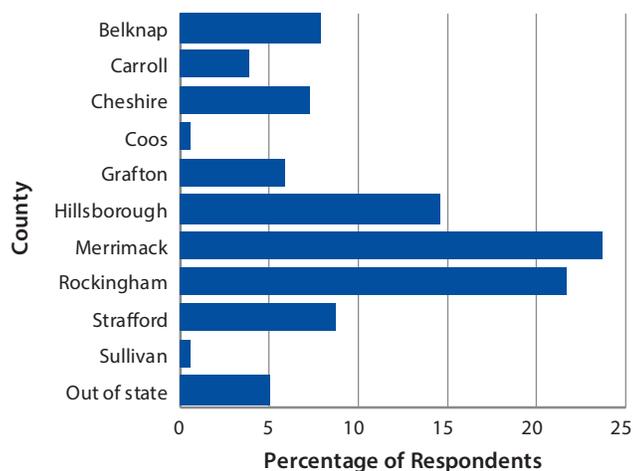


Figure B.4. Distribution of the survey respondents by county (n = 355)

Shopping Habits at Farmers Markets in 2016

About 60 percent of the respondents indicated that they shopped at both summer and winter farmers markets in 2016. Thirty-two percent reported that they shopped only at summer farmers markets, and 11 respondents (3 percent) said that they shopped only at winter farmers markets. Five percent, or 19 survey participants, indicated that they did not shop at farmers markets in 2016 (Figure B.5). The responses mentioned above imply that about 92 percent (339 respondents) shopped at summer farmers markets in 2016, and 62.9 percent (232 respondents) shopped at winter farmers markets.



Figure B.5. Shopping habits at farmers markets in 2016 (n = 369)

Most-Visited Summer Farmers Markets

Table B.1 shows the summer farmers markets where the respondents shopped most frequently in 2016. Many participants reported more than one market. The Salem, Concord, and Portsmouth markets were the most frequently-visited markets.

Table B.1. Summer farmers markets where respondents shopped most frequently in 2016

Summer Farmers Market	Number of Respondents	Summer Farmers Market	Number of Respondents
Salem	48	Lee	5
Concord	41	Merrimack	5
Portsmouth	24	Tamworth	4
Exeter	17	Warner	4
Keene	14	Weare	4
Contoocook	13	Wilmot	4
Plymouth	12	Hopkinton	3
Barnstead	8	New Boston	3
Canterbury	8	Rochester	3
Durham	8	Bedford	2
Manchester	8	Gilford	2
Henniker	7	Lancaster	2
Laconia	7	Newport	2
Winchester	7	Peterborough	2
Wolfeboro	6	Stratham	2
Dover	5	Other*	14

* There was one respondent for each of the following markets: Bethlehem, Canaan, Hanover, Lebanon, Lisbon, Littleton, Nashua, New London, Nottingham, Ossipee, Rindge, Somersworth, Wakefield, and Washington.

Frequency of Visits to Summer Farmers Markets

The 339 respondents who indicated that they shopped at summer farmers markets were asked to report the frequency of their visits. One hundred forty-two participants (41.9 percent) said that they shopped one or two times a month, 36.9 percent indicated that they shopped once a week, 14.7 percent said that they shopped one or two times a season, and 5.9 percent indicated that they shopped more than once a week (Figure B.6).

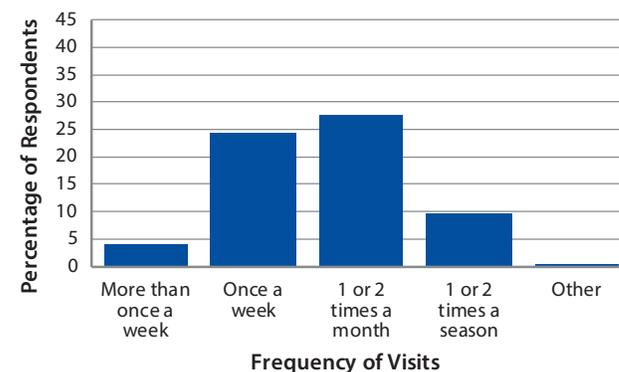


Figure B.6. Frequency of visits to summer farmers markets in 2016 (n = 339)

Comparison of 2015 and 2016 Visits to Summer Farmers Markets

The shoppers at summer markets were asked to compare the number of their shopping trips in 2016 and 2015. Close to 54 percent of 338 respondents said that the number of their shopping trips was about the same for the two years. About 29 percent indicated that the number of their shopping trips was higher in 2016 than in 2015, and 59 respondents (17.5 percent) said that they made fewer shopping trips in 2016 than in the previous year (Figure B.7).



Figure B.7. Number of shopping trips to summer farmers markets in 2016 compared to 2015 (n = 338)

Reasons for the Decrease in the Number of Shopping Trips to Summer Farmers Markets

The 59 respondents who reported that they visited summer farmers markets less frequently in 2016 than in 2015 were asked to provide their reasons for the change. Many participants cited more than one reason. The reason that was given by the highest number of respondents was that they shopped at farm stands (Figure B.8). The second most frequently-cited reason was that the hours that the farmers market was open were inconvenient.



Figure B.8. Reasons for the decrease in shopping trips to summer farmers markets in 2016 (n = 59)



Reasons for Not Shopping at Summer Farmers Markets in 2016

The 11 survey participants who indicated that they shopped only at winter farmers markets in 2016 provided reasons why they did not shop at summer farmers markets that year (Figure B.9). Four respondents reported that they shopped at farms stands; the same number of participants indicated that farmers markets' hours of operation were inconvenient. Three respondents said that the days of the week when the markets were open were inconvenient.

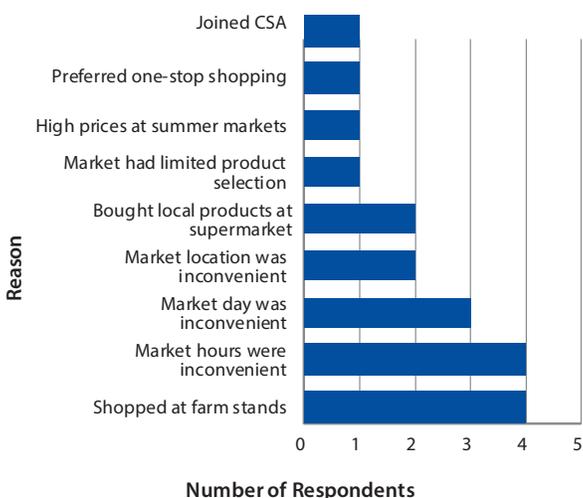


Figure B.9. Reasons for not Shopping at summer farmers markets in 2016 (n = 11)

Most-Visited Winter Farmers Markets

Two hundred thirty respondents provided information on the winter farmers markets they visited most often in 2016. Many of them reported more than one market. Table B.2 shows that the Concord, Salem and Rollinsford (Wentworth Gardens) markets were the most frequently visited winter markets.

Table B.2. Winter farmers markets where respondents shopped most frequently in 2016

Winter Farmers Market	Number of Respondents	Winter Farmers Market	Number of Respondents
Concord	50	Milford	3
Salem	40	Plymouth	3
Rollinsford	32	Stratham	3
Exeter	14	Tamworth	3
Keene	9	Warner	2
Winchester	8	Bedford	1
Wolfeboro	8	Canterbury	1
Gilford	5	Enfield	1
Hopkinton	5	Lancaster	1
Danbury	3	Lee	1
Greenland	3	Weare	1
Merrimack	3		

Frequency of Visits to Winter Farmers Markets in 2016

Figure B.10 indicates that about 48 percent of 230 survey participants who shopped at winter farmers markets visited the markets one or two times a month, 31.3 percent shopped one or two times a season, and 16.5 percent visited once a week.

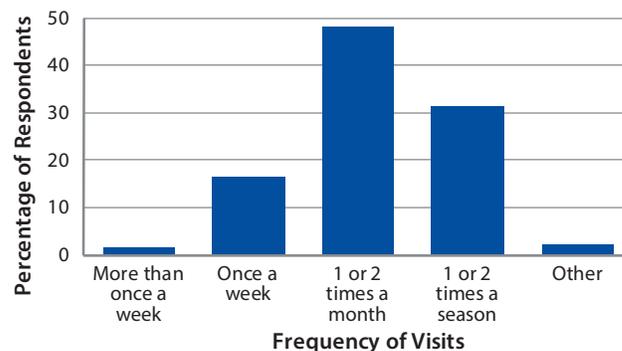


Figure B.10. Frequency of visits to winter farmers markets in 2016 (n = 230)

Comparison of 2015 and 2016 Visits to Winter Farmers Markets

Two hundred thirty-one respondents who shopped at winter farmers markets provided information on the number of their shopping trips in 2016 compared to the number for 2015. About 58 percent said that the number of their shopping trips in 2016 was about the same as in the previous year. About 29 percent indicated that the number of their shopping trips in 2016 was higher, and 13 percent (30 respondents) said that they made fewer shopping trips in 2016 than in 2015 (Figure B.11).

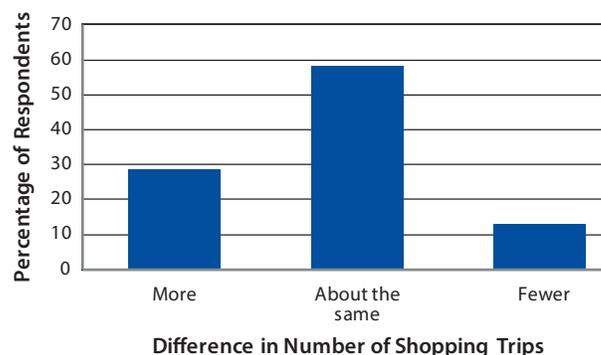


Figure B.11. Number of shopping trips to winter farmers markets in 2016 compared to 2015 (n = 231)

Reasons for the Decrease in the Number of Shopping Trips to Winter Farmers Markets in 2016

The 30 respondents who indicated that they visited winter farmers markets less in 2016 than in 2015 reported the reasons for the change (Figure B.12). Several survey participants provided more than one reason. Ten survey participants said that winter farmers markets had limited product selection, and eight indicated that the market location was inconvenient. Seven respondents mentioned that the days the winter farmers markets were open were inconvenient, and seven reported that the winter farmers-market hours were inconvenient



Figure B.12. Reasons for the decrease in the number of shopping trips to winter farmers markets in 2016 (n = 30)

Reasons for Not Shopping at Winter Farmers Markets

One hundred fifteen respondents indicated that they shopped only in summer farmers markets in 2016. They were asked to state their reasons for not shopping in winter farmers markets in that year. Many respondents gave two or more reasons. Figure B.13 shows their responses. The absence of a winter farmers market in their area or the inconvenient location of the markets was the most frequently-stated reason. Twenty-five survey participants indicated limited product selection as a reason for their staying away from winter farmers markets.

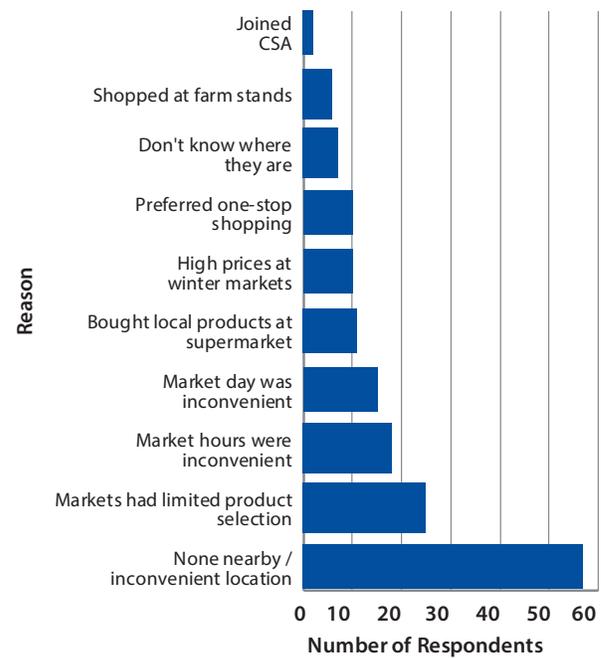


Figure B.13. Reasons for not shopping at winter farmers markets in 2016 (n = 115)



Reasons for Not Shopping at Farmers Markets in 2016

The 19 respondents who indicated that they did not shop at a farmers market (summer or winter) in 2016 gave their reasons for their behavior (Figure B.14); some participants indicated multiple reasons. The top three reasons, each cited by seven respondents, were related to the inconvenience of the markets' location, days of operation, and hours of operation. Six survey participants said they shopped at farm stands, and five cited the high prices at winter markets.

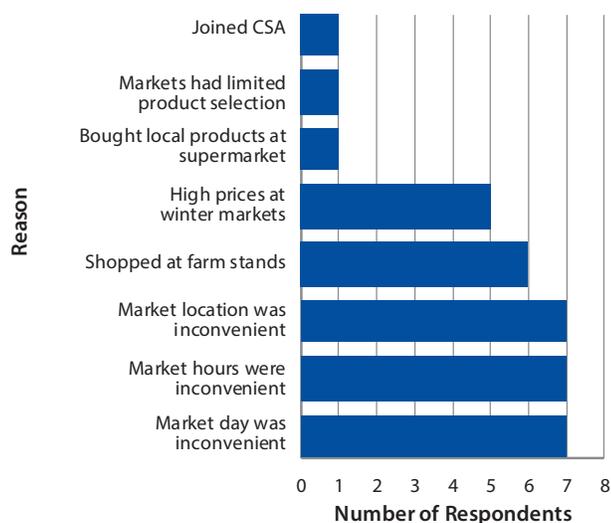


Figure B.14. Reasons for not shopping at farmers markets in 2016 (n = 19)

Reasons for Shopping at Farmers Markets

The 350 survey participants who shopped at farmers markets (summer or winter) in 2016 were asked to give the main reasons for their patronage; 336 respondents provided the information, and many of them gave more than one reason. As shown in Figure B.15, the most frequently-mentioned reason, given by 254 participants, was support for local agriculture and businesses. Two hundred twenty-one respondents reported the freshness or quality of the products. The other most-frequently mentioned reasons were: going to farmers markets was fun (48 respondents); product selection (45 respondents), and organic produce (44 respondents).



Figure B.15. Reasons for shopping at farmers markets in 2016 (n = 336)

Importance of Factors in Making a Decision to Shop More Frequently

All survey participants were asked to indicate the importance of certain factors in their decision to shop more at farmers markets. Table B.3 shows the responses. The factor that was cited most frequently as very important (63.1 percent) was location. More than half of the respondents indicated greater product variety, hours of operation, and organic produce as very important. Less than 20 percent cited price as very important.

Table B.3. Importance of selected factors in making a decision to shop more frequently at farmers markets

	Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat Important	Very important	No. of respondents
	Percent				
Location	0.0	1.4	35.5	63.1	366
Greater product variety	0.0	4.9	41.2	53.6	364
Hours of operation	1.4	7.7	37.9	53.0	364
Organic produce	6.3	10.1	27.6	55.7	366
Lower prices	8.0	26.2	47.5	17.1	362

Conclusion

The purpose of these surveys was to obtain information from consumers on their shopping experience at and attitudes toward farmers markets in New Hampshire. The results of the surveys may be used to help farmers markets meet the needs of their customers and remain economically viable. The following paragraphs contain selected survey results and their implications.

It may be concluded from the survey done in conjunction with the Granite State Poll that a majority of New Hampshire residents have shopped at farmers markets in the state, but some did not shop in the past 12 months. Moreover, some residents have never shopped at a New Hampshire farmers market. For them, the absence of a farmers market close to where they live and/or their lack of awareness about the location and other information related to farmers markets are the main reasons. An increase in the number or coverage area of efforts to promote farmers markets may encourage those residents to visit.

The results of the survey of customers of NH farmers markets indicate that more than half of them had the same number of shopping trips to both summer and winter markets in 2015 and 2016. The number of respondents who took more trips to farmers markets in 2016 than in 2015 was higher than the number of survey participants who took fewer trips. These figures suggest that in general, there were more visits by respondents in the markets in 2016 than in 2015. The numbers in specific markets may vary from this generalization.

One of the top reasons mentioned by those who shopped at summer markets less frequently or did not shop at all in 2016 was the inconvenience of the hours when the markets were open. It may be worthwhile for summer farmers markets to consider extending their hours, delaying the market closing in particular, to provide people who work during the day more opportunities to shop.

Limited product selection was a frequently-cited reason by respondents for either not shopping or having fewer shopping trips to winter farmers markets in 2016. Winter farmers markets might wish to explore the possibility of increasing the diversity of products that they offer.



The desire to support local farmers and businesses was the main reason why customers purchased at farmers markets. The quality, especially freshness, of the products sold at farmers markets was the second most frequently mentioned reason. These two factors should be emphasized in efforts to promote farmers markets. Consumers should also be made aware that they are the farmers' partners in making sure that local agriculture remains viable and sustainable in New Hampshire.

More than half of the respondents in the customer survey mentioned the availability of organic products as a very important factor that could encourage them to shop more at farmers markets. For markets with vendors selling organic products, making people aware of the availability of such products may help them attract more shoppers.

Many respondents indicated they come to farmers markets because the experience was fun; they enjoyed seeing and interacting with people in those places. Farmers markets should consider providing, at least once a season, activities or events that people are likely to enjoy; entertainment for adults, children and families, demonstrations and contests are worth exploring. Many people would appreciate opportunities that will allow them to know the market vendors better and to meet new people. Activities that encourage people to engage with each other might be such an opportunity.

The full report can be downloaded from the following partners websites:

- NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
www.agriculture.nh.gov
- NH Farmers Market Association
www.nhfma.net
- UNH Cooperative Extension
extension.unh.edu

This research was made possible through a
successful partnership among these organizations.

New Hampshire
Farmers Market
Association

New Hampshire
Department of Agriculture,
Markets & Food

 **University of
New Hampshire**
College of Life Sciences
and Agriculture

Making life **better** in New Hampshire



Extension

extension.unh.edu

© 2017

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension