

ST. NORBERT, MANITOBA

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Le Marché St. Norbert Farmers' Market

In 1988, on a sunny day in July, eight vendors met on a lawn in St. Norbert to sell their wares. Since that modest beginning, this “make it, bake it, grow it” market has grown into a non-profit co-operative with 130 full-time vendors and as many as 50 casual vendors.

For 22 years, Manitoba’s farming families have brought fresh fruit, vegetables, meats, honey, baked goods, handcrafts, jewelry, art, flowers and much more to sell to the thousands of people who attend the St. Norbert Farmers’ Market each summer.

The idea of a farmers’ market for St. Norbert, the birthplace of Manitoba located near the south end of Winnipeg where the Red and LaSalle rivers meet, came out of discussions within the Heritage St. Norbert community group. Heritage St. Norbert was formed in the mid 1970s to protect and promote the rich French-Metis heritage of St. Norbert. The primary reason for setting up the market was to find a public use for public land that was otherwise destined to become a strip mall or some other private

venture, and to find a way to bring people into the community.

Based on a similar model in Saskatchewan, the vendors in St. Norbert organized themselves as a non-profit co-operative. Vendors who are members elect representatives to the board of directors, where decisions are made in governing the Farmers’ Market. Vendors can apply to become members of the co-operative after being casual vendors for at least one year.

St. Norbert Farmers’ Market has a strong commitment toward the environment and waste →



→ reduction, and does not provide disposable bags for market customers. Instead, the Farmers' Market encourages shoppers to bring re-usable cloth bags that reduce the amount of garbage that is generated by market activities. Many vendors also sell their meals and drinks in compostable containers, and composting bins, as well as composting information, are provided on-site. Recycling is also strongly encouraged and facilitated for other containers and products.

According to the Farmers' Association of Manitoba, the impacts of Farmers' Markets include:

- An important supplement to farm family income
- A way for vendor families to work together on a common task
- An avenue for retired producers and families to stay involved in local food production
- Direct marketing opportunity for crafters and artisans
- A sense of identity and community
- An opportunity for the public to interact with food producers and to learn about food
- The development of entrepreneurial skills, and incubation of small businesses
- A reduction by 7-9 times in the energy required to transport food "from farm to plate"
- Fresher food for the consumer, likely picked or produced within 24 hours of a sale

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The economic impact of the St. Norbert Farmers' Market is most certainly felt by the many farm and artisan families that earn income through the market. But beyond that, there is also a calculated economic multiplier of at least three when taking into consideration the other economic activities generated for every dollar spent directly at the market. In addition to market sales, there is the money that is then spent by the local producers on their local suppliers, by the market itself to operate, and then by the local vendors when they spend the money that they have earned through the market. There is also

the economic activity generated at enterprises near the market as the thousands of customers traveling to St. Norbert also spend money at other businesses on their way to and from the market.

Given the significant social, environmental, and economic impacts

that the St. Norbert Farmers' Market creates, and given that Manitobans still purchase \$2.7 billion of food each year from outside the province, there is a significant opportunity to continue scaling up the Market and its impacts if even a portion of this revenue becomes redirected locally. There would be a greater return to farmers, a reduced ecological impact from our food system, more money circulating in local economies, more local employment, and stronger support for local businesses.