



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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WSDA, Washington State University offer new tool to support farmers markets

OLYMPIA – With the start of spring, fresh food enthusiasts are anticipating their first visit of the year to one of Washington’s 120 farmers markets. With today’s increasingly competitive food and agricultural markets, more farmers are turning to direct market sales at rural, city and neighborhood farmers markets.

Market board members and market managers are using a new tool this year to boost farmers’ sales and nurture consumer interest to support a successful 2008 season for farmers markets.

In cooperation with the Washington State University (WSU) Small Farms Program, the Washington State Department of Agriculture is distributing a 90-page [Washington State Farmers Market Manual](#) that has everything one needs to know to run a successful farmers market. The collaborative project included support from members of the Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA), WSU and other university specialists, market managers and outside experts.

The first copies of the manual were distributed at a recent conference of the WSFMA. WSDA used a specialty crop grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to support the manual’s production.

“It’s a ‘how to’ manual that’s suitable for market managers, board members and community members interested in improving their farmers market or starting a new market,” said Marcy Ostrom, director of the WSU Small Farms Program. “We received lots of requests to package this sort of information into a useful handbook.”

The manual elaborates a step-by-step process for establishing a new farmers market, best market management practices for existing markets and a strategic planning process to strengthen existing markets.

The growth of farmers markets is driven by consumer demand. Statewide, farmers markets reported \$38 million in sales in 2006, the latest figures available. Market managers report they often hear customers saying they value gathering with friends and family at a farmers market. Benefits include being out in the fresh air, discovering new products, meeting farmers and learning more about how the food was produced.

“There is room for more farmers markets in Washington and several communities are planning new markets,” said Patrice Barrentine, direct marketing coordinator with WSDA’s Small Farm & Direct Marketing Program. “The manual is a valuable tool to support the viability of any existing or new farmers market.”

To download a copy of the manual, go to <http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm> on the WSDA Web site or visit the WSU Small Farms Program Web site at www.smallfarms.wsu.edu.

MORE

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Copies of the farmers market manual are available from WSDA by calling Patrice Barrentine at (360) 902-2057 or send an e-mail to smallfarms@agr.wa.gov.

For a list of farmers markets throughout Washington, go to the Washington State Farmers Market Association Web site at <http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com/>.

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