



## 1. Participants

Approximately 30 people joined in this teleconference presentation and discussion session. Participants included organizers of existing farmers' markets in Newfoundland and Labrador, community group representatives interested in starting new farmers' markets across the province, representatives of Regional Economic Development Boards, representatives of public health, municipal administrators, producers, vendors, and consumers interested in purchasing goods locally at farmers' markets.

Participants were from both rural and urban areas of the province, including:

Clarenville	Labrador West
Conception Bay South	Marystown
Corner Brook	Pasadena
Codroy Valley	Port Saunders
Deer Lake	St. John's
Elliston	St. Phillips
Happy Valley-Goose Bay	Torbay
Heart's Content	Trinity
Holyrood	Woody Point

## 2. Introduction

After a round of introductions of all on the line, Kristie Jameson of the [Food Security Network](#) provided some introductory comments and information on:

- **The Food Security Network NL (FSN)** as a membership based non-profit organization with the mission to actively promote comprehensive, community based solutions to ensure physical and economic access to adequate and healthy food for all.
- **Food security** as existing when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. Food security also means that the people who produce foods are able to earn a living wage.
- **The importance of fostering a healthy, sustainable food system** which focuses on local, seasonal foods, the health of the population, building communities, local economic development, and supporting local producers, processors, distributors and retailers.

## 3. Keynote Presentations

**Carolyn Wheeler, Project Coordinator of the West Coast Farmers' Market**, provided a brief overview of the experiences of the [West Coast Farmers' Market](#). Key points included:

- The West Coast Farmers' Market is operated by the [Western Environment Centre](#) (WEC)
- It runs every Saturday from July to October from 10am to 2pm outdoors on the Majestic Lawn in Corner Brook using tents and canopies
- On a typical Saturday you will find: fresh seasonal produce, homemade preserves, jellies, jams and chutneys, honey, baked goods, handmade hats and wood crafts, local artisans' displays, coffee and tea, and live entertainment
- WEC provides information about energy and water conservation and details about their community garden project
- A Green Team provided weekly workshops and public education opportunities
- The market began as a way to bridge the gap between local producers and consumers to help local producers to prosper in the area
- The market has become a community gathering place where people are able to network and build relationships and to foster community communication
- WEC hired a project coordinator for the project
- The market is focused on addressing the three Wellness priorities of healthy eating, environmental health, and social health

**Colin Green, Chair of the Friends of the St. John's Farmers' Market (SJFM)**, provided a brief overview of the experiences of the [St. John's Farmers' Market](#). Key points included:

- History of the SJFM
  - Oct 2007 – First Farmers' Market at the Masonic Temple (downtown)
  - Nov/Dec 2007 – Pilot markets averaging 500+ visitors
  - Jan 2008 – Formed Steering Committee
  - June - Nov 2008 – First season at the Lions Club. More vendors, averaging 750+ visitors
  - 2009 – formed Friends of the SJFM
  - June - Nov 2009 – averaging 1000+ visitors, hired market manager
  - 2010/2011 – Formed Cooperative
- The SJFM began as a pilot project organized by a local farmer with extra vegetables to sell and a few other interested vendors
- It was well received in the community and a group formed to try to make it a permanent event
- In 2010 the SJFM was able to sustain itself and the pay of a market manager through revenue from table sales and the coffee stand
- The new SJFM Co-op will run the regular operations of the market while the non-profit group Friends of the SJFM works on fundraising and solving some of the markets problems, like finding a permanent venue
- The Co-op will be made up of representation from both vendors and consumers

- The SJFM provides fresh produce, prepared foods, locally made arts and crafts, baked goods, preserves, workshops, musical entertainment and buskers

#### **4. Key Themes and Information from the Following Discussion**

Following the Keynote Presentations, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues important to them. Some key themes that emerged from this dialogue include the following:

##### **Procedure around food safety**

- Prepared food served at a farmers' market needs to be made in a licenced kitchen
- Food at the market should be kept appropriately hot and cold. The SJFM purchased chafing dishes to ensure hot foods stay hot.
- Food safety regulations are provincial in NL and can be found on the [Department of Health and Community Services website](#)
- There are no regulations specific to farmers' markets so the SJFM is trying to develop their own guide to food safety procedure
- Baked goods and preserves don't fall under the NL licenced kitchen regulations
- The SJFM subsidized a food safety course for vendors to attend that was hosted by College of the North Atlantic
- Western Farmers' Market has not yet introduced prepared foods but plans to look into the possibilities and the food safety requirements

##### **Attracting and keeping vendors**

- Getting farmers to the markets can be very difficult; they're very busy
- The SJFM offers first time farm vendors the opportunity to have SJFM volunteers staff their table. Ideally it is better if someone from the farm is present to staff the farm's table so that accurate information can be provided and because consumers like connecting with the farmers directly.
- A market could take a co-operative approach to farm vending by pooling producer products together and then having one stand that is staffed by co-op staff on commission rather than needing representatives from all the farms to attend. WEC purchased produce in bulk in advance from one producer and sold it with a commission when that producer wasn't able to attend the market
- Vendors themselves sometimes organize to share tables so that they can give each other breaks or have a higher profits to table fee ratio
- Generally if you can get farmers to attend once, then they'll see the value and keep coming
- Approach producers with a solid plan and dates and responsibilities outlined. Create a list of all local producers and make first contact by calling them or talking in person.

- SJFM has a 15% discount when vendors book and pay their full or half season fees up front
- Western Farmers' Market has a \$10/week vendor fee with no prior signed commitment. Vendors receive a weekly reminder and pay when they arrive.
- SJFM has a \$25/week indoor and \$20/week outdoor vendor fee. Spaces are usually reserved in advance and vendors are still asked to pay if they don't show up. Outdoor vendors usually provide their own tables or retail from their vehicles.
- It is difficult to attract fish vendors. There are rules against fishers retailing directly to customers. SJFM has had one fish vendor only. Western Farmers' Market does not have the electrical supply available at present to allow for fish or meat vendors.

### **Tips for running a market**

- Promote youth musicians as buskers
- Try not to get producers enthusiastic if you haven't got the consumer demand confirmed yet, and vice versa don't excite a community until you have your producers lined-up
- Try hard not to cancel markets. Reliability is very important so that consumers will build the market into their routines. Try to have the market every week if possible, but barring that have it on consistent dates, like the third Saturday of every month for example.
- Markets are very dependent on good weather for vendor comfort and consumer attendance. Tents are horrible in the wind. On windy days tie them down well or opt out of using them at all. It is better to push through a market on a bad weather day than to cancel.
- Liability insurance is not always required but it is highly recommended. The SJFM has Board, basic liability and location insurance. They also recommend that their vendors get insurance appropriate to their operations. SJFM is using the [Cooperators](#).
- Consider advertising your market in the [NL Tourist Guide](#). Listings are free but are due in May for the following year.
- Consider once you have an established location getting a highway sign directing drivers to the market

### **Resources**

- When the SJFM has drafted Food Safety regulations for the Market they can share those with others
- FSN has developed a Farmers' Markets Best Practices Toolkit which will be available for distribution through the provincial government soon and provides information on starting a farmers' market
- Sarah Crocker is working with Northeast Avalon Regional Economic Development Board to produce an [Avalon Region Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map](#) that will link producers and consumers. If you would like to participate as a producer, advertiser, or just to find out more contact her at [sarahc@nearedb.ca](mailto:sarahc@nearedb.ca) or 753-5554

- The SJFM Cooperative will be having an Annual General Meeting soon and would like to welcome interested folks to attend
- FSN offers a variety of resources that can help farmers' markets and potential farmers' markets, such as the monthly [E-news](#) that has updates on market schedules and events, the [Food Security Initiative Inventory](#) which lists contact information for markets province-wide, and the [Root Cellars Rock!](#) project, which promotes and showcases local food initiatives and NL food heritage.
- There is potential for FSN to assist markets to put together a press release together for the next market season, highlighting the growing number of markets and the consumer interest across the province to try to garner some media attention