

# As Farmers' Markets Grow, So Should Management, Indicates OSU Study

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Farmers' markets are rapidly growing in number in Oregon and throughout the United States and a key to their potential success can be found in how they approach growth and management, according to new research at Oregon State University.

OSU College of Agricultural Sciences researchers polled 53 Oregon farmers' market organizers of varying sizes about how they manage their markets. The results are published in new report from the OSU Extension Service, "Understanding the Link Between Farmers' Market Size and Management Organization."

The study indicates that organizers of successful farmers' markets are those that plan ahead for future growth, explained Garry Stephenson, associate professor in the OSU Department of Crop and Soil Science and co-author of the report.

"We learned that the most successful farmers' market managers need to be careful to avoid outgrowing their management structure," said Stephenson. "To be ready for future growth, organizers should plan or implement appropriate management practices to match an anticipated market size. Plus, markets that have reached their goal for size should be using size-appropriate management tools."

Stephenson, a small farms specialist, and his colleagues Larry Lev, professor of agricultural and resource economics and Linda Brewer, faculty research assistant in horticulture, collected management

information on markets ranging in size from micro (eight or fewer vendors) to large (55 or more vendors).

"We saw an increase in number of management tools and an increase in management complexity as markets increase in size," said Stephenson.

Their key findings include:

- Markets of different size categories use different management tools. As they grow, smaller markets add structures like the use of site maps and boards of directors. Larger markets add management complexity as they grow such as additional employees and sophisticated planning and budgeting.
- Matching management tools to current or anticipated market size makes best use of valuable resources and may reduce internal management problems.
- There is an important transition between small sized-markets of nine to 25 vendors and medium-sized markets (26-55 vendors). Small markets anticipating growing into a medium-sized market should be prepared and add a salaried manager, rather than a volunteer, to handle market operations.

"Keeping farmers' markets open and operating efficiently is important both for the farmers that sell at these markets and the communities these markets serve," said Stephenson.

The report, "Understanding the Link Between Farmers' Market Size and Management Organization" (SR 1082-E) is available online at no charge at: [extension.oregonstate.edu/cata.../pdf/sr/sr1082-e.pdf](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/cata.../pdf/sr/sr1082-e.pdf)

Source: OSU

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