

**10 GREAT
REASONS
TO SELL
AT
FARMERS' MARKETS**

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THE FARM-to-TABLE LADY

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The best way to find out if you are cut out to be a market farmer is to begin selling at a local farmers' market close to where you live and farm or garden. This way you get your feet wet, so to speak, in how things work for you to grow and sell the products you raise.

My husband and I decided to turn our five acres into a market garden farm while still owning and operating a remodeling company. We had joined the Southwest Chapter of the Missouri Organic Association, and we found out so much great information that we wanted to see if we could make it work for us through the basic six-month growing season here in the Midwest. We weren't new to farming, as we had farmed 1,000-acres in West Central Missouri, after we were first married, and farmed with my in-laws raising grain, hogs and cattle, along with operating a custom silo filling operation when drought conditions caused the corn crops to not make decent ears, so we went in with the silage chopper and cut the corn stalks, ears and all into finely chopped corn and filled neighboring farms silos for them to feed their livestock during the winter months. Our family also had a custom hay baling operation, where we would cut, rake, and bale hay in bales the size requested for neighboring farmers. My husband and I were active in this form of farming for the first thirteen years of our married lives, until the economy became

too hard for many young farmers to hang on, with interest rates on borrowed money at 18%. We were no different. We had suffered some crop losses due to weather, etc. Making those expensive payments force my husband and me to go to town to find full time work and leave the larger farming operation. However, we have always had gardens, and I have always canned and frozen our fresh-from-the-garden produce to eat through cold winter months.

We were thrilled to find out that we could make money at the two Farmers' Markets where we sold! The greatest reasons to sell at Farmers' Markets are listed in the rest of this report.

Reason number 1: Self-employment. Being your own boss allows you many freedoms to enjoy. You no longer have a time clock to punch or click. However, since YOU are the boss, YOU now have all the responsibilities of running a business.

Reason number 2: Market farmers do benefit from having a higher education; however, a high-priced college education isn't required or necessary. If you love to garden or farm, and know or are willing to learn, then this way of selling to the general public may just be your niche.

Reason number 3: Your family; spouse and children, can be your employees. Everyone gets paid. Wages paid to your family are tax deductible. Market farming can help your kids earn money for their education by helping them have a garden of their own. They can work and sell the produce they raise at the Farmers' Market.

There isn't a better life than a farm life, and no better way to raise kids. This teaches children responsibility, strategic planning, animal husbandry, if you raise livestock, personality development if they interact with customers, and other vendors, time management, money management, etc. When you market farm, you can be out in fresh air up to several hours per day, several times per week enjoying nature. When you are outside tending gardens, livestock, etc., your children likely will be also; not sitting in front of the TV or on their electronic gadgets. That's a HUGE reward!

Reason number 4: This may sound odd to many, but you may be able to ditch the gym membership. Why? You will be so busy with working your market gardens and farms that you can combine workouts with many of the activities necessary to keep your garden and farm products weed free and get them harvested for market. Money saved from those memberships.

Reason number 5: Knowing you have a place to sell your crops and finished products provides a great feeling of security. It is great to know you have YOUR specific place to sell.

Reason number 6: Diversity of customers can be so interesting! Your customers can come from all walks of life, i.e. doctors, lawyers, health professionals, teachers, blue collar workers, college students, and EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) card users from low income families. They all like to eat great fresh food, so you will be very appreciated for selling at **their** Farmers' Market.

Reason number 7: Consistency. By selling at Farmers' Markets, it is always a sure thing that being consistent showing up every week at the market, you will develop some regular customers that look for you, your booth, and products.

Reason number 8: Networking and developing wonderful friendships with other farmers and vendors. Some will purchase items from you that they don't grow, or perhaps their crop of a like item didn't do so well. You will be able to purchase from each other. You don't have to make a special trip to the Farmers' Market to purchase something because you're already there!

Reason number 9: No middleman! The price you sell your farm fresh produce and products is the retail price you set. You are direct selling to your customers. There aren't any middle people involved to buy your products at a lower price then raise it to their customers.

Reason number 10: No invoices to deal with. When selling at the markets, you are paid on the spot, referred to as point of sale. Most sales are cash, or the farmer/vendor accepts a point of sale option such as with a SQUARE READER that you can subscribe to them for their credit/debit card swipe or chip reader that attaches to your cell phone. The funds from the sale are automatically deposited in your business bank account.

Even though we didn't enjoy selling at the Farmers' Markets, I certainly wouldn't dissuade anyone from selling at them. The Farmers' Markets are still a great way for many market gardeners to make a good living.

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