

Kellie Sebastian: 2022 served as big year for the Franklin County Farmers Market

By Kellie Sebastian Guest columnist
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CELEBRATE 2022
AT THE FRANKLIN COUNTY
FARMERS MARKET

74 DOWNTOWN EVENTS
kids activities + music + cooking demos + more
winter + tuesday + saturday + holiday markets +
food shares = tens of thousands of annual visits

RECORD \$615,000 IN SALES
of local products from over 60 producers + over 100
opportunities to shop and sell-including online ordering,
curbside pickup, and delivery to 12 local workplaces

FIRST 'CELEBRATE KSU! MARKET'
welcoming KSU students and staff downtown +
showcasing KSU's work to the wider community

\$45,000+ FRESH FOOD INCENTIVES
increasing access to fresh food for folks with limited
income is a win for families, farmers & our community

 WWW.FCMARKET.ORG

As I reflect on the 2022 Franklin County Farmers Market season, it is the eve of the Winter Solstice and a blizzard is blowing across the Midwest. There's a fire in the wood stove and roasted butternut squash and frost-kissed kale cooking for dinner. Our farmers are ordering seeds, making repairs and planning for next year while still tending animals and winter crops.

This year, when you add up our winter markets, Saturday and Tuesday markets during the regular season, the Holiday Market, and the 10 South Frankfort Food Shares on Tuesday evenings, we had 74 market events to draw people together around fresh food in downtown Frankfort.

There's an old chestnut of a research study that found people have 10 times more conversations shopping at a farmers market than at the grocery store. We see that in action each market day. Over the course of this season, we had tens of thousands of people visit the market.

Those face to face conversations among our market community (a glorious mix of producers, folks who have lived in Frankfort for their whole lives and visitors here for the first time, citizens who get their news from wildly different sources, community leaders and kids, people who can afford to shop anywhere and others who currently don't have a place to live or enough to eat) is as essential to weaving — and repairing — the fabric of a healthy community as our producers' food.



Kellie Sebastian

In addition to the 74 in-person market events mentioned above, we also had 32 online order markets that offered curbside pickup or delivery to 12 local workplaces on Thursday mornings from mid-April through late fall. Sixty-five local producers sold at the market this season and total reported market sales reached a new record high of just over \$615,000. These are dollars that are quite likely to get invested back into our community — sometimes as quickly as when a baker walks across the market to buy a leg of lamb or down the street to buy a book.

Market sales have increased each year since 2017, and we have celebrated each increase. We at the market also celebrated the opening of Locals Food Hub in 2021, but we also wondered how it would impact the market. This year's sales numbers, both at Locals and the farmers market, show that we can work together to grow our local food economy while connecting more and more people with fresh local foods and putting more of our food dollars in local producers' pockets. We are everlastingly grateful to be part of this wonderful community of folks committed to local food and producers.

Fresh food access is a big focus for the market, and this year we had even more programs to make it easier for people with limited income to eat more fresh food. We'll talk more about all those programs in our next article, but, when you put it all together, over \$45,000 of fresh locally produced foods found traveled from local farms to people's tables because of these market programs.

That is huge, both for community members with limited income and access to fresh food and for local producers. We are so grateful to all the organizations and individuals who supports the market's work to make fresh food available to everyone. Thank you! If you would like to make a year-end donation to support this work, visit the market website at www.fcmarket.org.

Speaking of fresh food access, we are partnering with the Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky to hire a Community Services AmeriCorps Member to work on housing justice and food access programming like Kentucky Double Dollars, the South Frankfort Food Share and Fresh Rx for Moms at the Market. You can learn more about that position on our website, too, and we encourage you to check it out.

We are looking forward to coming back together for the first Winter Market of 2023 on Saturday, Jan. 7, from 10-11:30 a.m. at the Market Pavilion at River View Park. We will have Winter Markets every other week at the same place and time — here are the dates if you want to mark your calendars now: Jan. 7 and 21, Feb. 4 and 18, March 4 and 18, and April 1 and 15.

There will be winter veggies, meats, eggs, baked goods, honey, coffee and teas, artisan crafts, and more and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Kellie Sebastian is the marketing manager for the Franklin County Farmers Market. She can be reached at local@franklincountymarket.org.

