



Will the Real Farmers' Markets Please Stand Up?

by Sarah F. Berkowitz and Suzanne Welander

Finding the best place to shop for produce can be tricky when the goal is fresh, organic, local and affordable. Sustainably conscious consumers are becoming more aware of the benefits of supporting local farmers directly, an investment that goes straight into the ground for the benefit of next year's crop.

Atlanta is blessed with several neighborhood farmers' markets, yet Georgia is still at rock bottom when it comes to the number of markets per capita. Local small family farms are chronically underserved when it comes to outlets they can use to sell their products directly to consumers.

Large supermarkets that sell vast amounts of produce from all over the world are certainly convenient, but they may undercut and hurt the profits of local farmers. Making the choice to choose local and buy direct from farmers will bring about farm growth and sustainability and increase

demand for additional farmers' markets.

There's more than just the opportunity to support farmers and get the freshest tomatoes when neighborhood farmers' markets move in. Jonathan Tescher of East Atlanta Village Market shares some of the effects farmers' markets can have on neighboring businesses.

"For the East Atlanta Village (EAV) Farmers' Market, our mission is to support healthy lifestyles and local economies. This starts with the farmers offering food grown with materials and practices beneficial to people and the environment. It extends out into all our relationships." EAV Farmers' Market is located at Village Hardware, the local Ace Hardware that is working to replace harmful chemicals from their store and offer environmentally friendly products. The EAV Farmers' Market, a non-profit corporation, banks with BOND Credit Union, a nonprofit financial institution that is also one of their sponsors. The Glenwood, a neighboring restaurant, will have a monthly chef demo and incorporate local food into its menu. The EAV insurance policy came from the Galish Group who live and work in the neighborhood. Tescher adds, "When we work together with people in our neighborhood that share our values, all boats will rise."

The farmers' market, by its very nature, develops into a relaxed social scene that is enjoyable, profitable and a great way to keep Atlanta's communities healthy.

