



PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION

A LOOK BACK AT 2021 WITH PCFMA



As the year 2021 draws to a close and we wait for the ball to drop on another tumultuous year, it is important to stop and reflect upon what we have achieved – from simple survival to sensational successes – over the past year.

For me and my colleagues at the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association (PCFMA), the past year has moved us closer to our pre-2020 normal, but we recognize there is still a long way to go. In 2021 we had more farmers' markets open for longer seasons than in 2020 and were able to safely suspend many of the restrictive protocols that helped to keep everyone safe but that made farmers' market shopping less fun. With still a few days to go before the end of 2021, we have already welcomed over 1.5 million shoppers to our farmers' markets this year. Along the way, we provided sales opportunities for over 200 California farmers, more than 150 food artisans, and two dozen local crafters.

The year gave us many reasons to celebrate. In 2021, we welcomed the return of the [**Music & Market**](#) series to downtown Concord in conjunction with our Thursday night farmers' market and literally danced with joy when this popular community event returned. We welcomed farmers' markets in [**Los Altos**](#) and [**Fairfield**](#) to the PCFMA family which provided us with the opportunity to work with some new, incredibly passionate community leaders who have clear visions about how their local farmers' market can be part of their community's revival. And, just in time for Thanksgiving, PCFMA's [**Divisadero Farmers' Market**](#) returned to its home in the parking lot of the San Francisco DMV after several months in a temporary location at nearby City College.

Among the highlights for PCFMA in 2021 was the celebration of [**Farmers Market Week**](#) in August. Farmers Market Week is a national celebration, organized by the Farmers Market Coalition, that recognizes the unique role that farmers' markets play as food access points

and community gathering spaces. While every week at PCFMA is a farmers' market week, the official Farmers Market Week was extra special because it gave us the opportunity to highlight our farmers, team members, and community through a [series of videos](#) produced by PCFMA's marketing team.

The videos were a happy accident that arose out of one of the many disruptions of the pandemic. When it became clear that our farmers' market field trips for school children could not take place due to the pandemic, PCFMA, with the support of its funder, the CDFA Specialty Crop Block Grant program, pivoted to creating video content for school children and others interested in learning more about farmers' markets and the farmers who sell there.

That week we shared videos of some of our talented farmers' market managers cooking with mushrooms as well as a behind-the-scenes look at how those mushrooms were cultivated and harvested by [Mushroom Adventures](#). The week wrapped up with a tour of [Spade & Plow Farm](#) where the farmers shared how they grow an incredible variety of high-quality products, using organic methods, on a small plot of land and interviews with PCFMA team members sharing why they are passionate about farmers' markets.

In November, we learned that PCFMA was awarded a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant that will allow these video education and marketing efforts to continue for another three years.

While the past year has brought us many reasons to celebrate, the economic upheaval has continued to create struggles for many of our friends and neighbors. We have been proud to partner with other farmers' market operators around the state to help families in need access fresh, healthy, and affordable food, despite the current economic challenges.

PCFMA has been an active member of the statewide [Market Match](#) program since 2009. Market Match provides vouchers for the purchase of fruits and vegetables to customers who use their CalFresh-EBT public benefits at a participating farmers' market. This program is a win-win for both consumers and farmers. Consumers who are struggling financially get affordable access to healthy foods while farmers sell more of their harvest, generating the revenue they need to sustain their farms.

In the first 11 months of 2021, CalFresh customers spent over \$990,000 of their benefits at PCFMA's farmers' markets. This spending was matched with nearly \$760,000 of Market Match vouchers; increasing the buying power of the CalFresh customers by more than 75%.

The Market Match Program is funded through a USDA grant through the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program and CDFA's California Nutrition Incentive Program. The ability of Market Match to respond to the community's needs over the past year is due to the generosity of the funders and leadership of the program's coordinators at the [Ecology](#)

Center. Its success is also due to the contributions of volunteers who assist with customer service at the farmers' market information booth, and the hard work and dedication of PCFMA's market managers and office staff who have worked tirelessly to keep up with the increased demand.

Inspired by the success of Market Match, we worked with our partners at Coastside Farmers' Markets and Fresh Approach to also match Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers at local farmers' markets. FMNP is the only federal food support program that is designed to be used exclusively at farmers' markets. Families with children enrolled in the WIC program, and seniors with limited incomes can receive a booklet with four \$7 vouchers that they can spend at their local farmers' market. With the support of the California Nutrition Incentive Program, the three partners matched the value of those FMNP vouchers, allowing FMNP customers to purchase an additional \$106,000 of fresh fruits and vegetables.

In December, we embarked on a new food support effort in partnership with Fresh Approach and the City of San Francisco. Each week, PCFMA's market managers will pack 50-60 boxes of fresh produce at one of its farmers' markets and deliver them to a community center in San Francisco that provides support to low-income families. Over the next six months, these efforts will support hundreds of families while providing extra income to PCFMA's small farms.

All of these efforts reflect PCFMA's fundamental belief that farmers' markets, and the wonderful food sold there, should be available and accessible to everyone. Everyone at PCFMA is grateful to its funders and partners whose efforts help to make these programs possible.

As I write this message, I'm looking out my office window at gray skies and light rain. It may be a uniquely California experience, but after two years of drought and wildfires, the rainy skies and promise of more rain and snow to come is a very welcome holiday present for our farmers and all of us who support them. I truly hope that it is a sign of better days ahead.

As we prepare to embark on a new year, all of us at PCFMA wish you continued health, happiness, and prosperity with sincere hopes that in the new year, you will find plenty of silver linings behind the clouds and smile to see rainbows shining after the rain.



Allen Moy
Executive Director

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