

King County Farmers Markets: 2023/2022

By: Colleen Donovan, Washington State Farmers Market Association

Date: September 30, 2024

Contract: King County MOU, 2024

For more information: 206-706-5198 or info@wafarmersmarkets.org

This report and other farmers market data is available at www.wafarmersmarkets.org

Farmers Markets Overview

This report provides primary data on farmers markets in King County, Washington, quantifying their important roles in local food economies, community life, and as a key partner in food access programs. Data is collected by the Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) through an annual membership application and secondary online survey for farmers markets that are not currently members. The data source is the Washington State Farmers Market Association unless otherwise noted. Reported data is presented for King County as a whole and disaggregated for farmers markets in the City of Seattle and those that are in King County but outside of Seattle

Number of Farmers Markets. In 2023, there were 39 farmers markets in operation in King County and there are 40 in 2024 (Appendix 1). A farmers market is defined as a temporary event at a unique location with an average of at least 5 farm vendors over the season. Keeping the focus on agriculture, most of the aggregated vendor sales at a farmer market should be from farms and processors using agricultural ingredients grown/harvested in WA¹. Currently, 87% of farmers markets in King County are members of the Washington State Farmers Market Association.

Farmers Market Organizations. The 39 farmers markets in King County are managed by 25 independent organizations or municipalities; 69% are nonprofit organizations, while 21% are run by a government agency such as a city or Public Development Authority, and a smaller proportion (10%) are for-profit entities (Figure 1). How a farmers market is incorporated has a direct relationship to its mission, its capacity for staffing, physical infrastructure, and ways in which operational funds are raised.

Farmers Market Sizes. Farmers markets have a wide range of market days per year, numbers of vendors, and number of shoppers. To compare market size, the “number of vendors on a typical market day during peak season” is used and serves as a proxy for the market footprint and management needs. King County has a range of farmers market sizes, from “very small” with 10 or less vendors, to “large” with 51 to 100

¹ Informed by the WSFMA’s [Roots Guidelines](#), this definition aligns with the Farmers Market Nutrition Program WAC and the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board RCWs.

vendors and “very large” with over 101 vendors on a typical day during peak season (Figure 2). The size of a farmers market has a direct relationship to the management structures and complexity it needs, as well as its ability to recruit and retain vendors.

Figure 1. King County Farmers Markets by Type of Organization, 2023 (n=39)

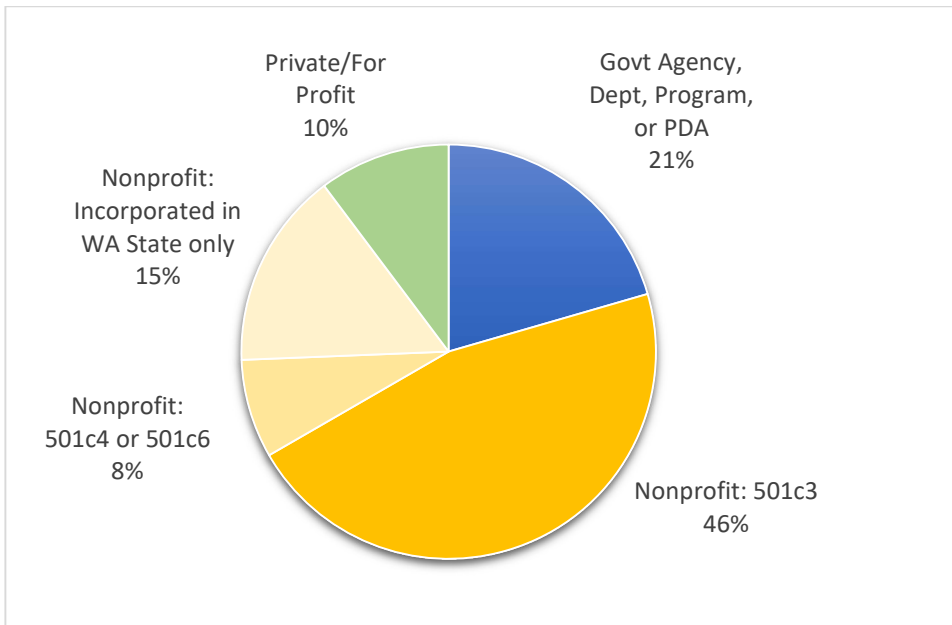
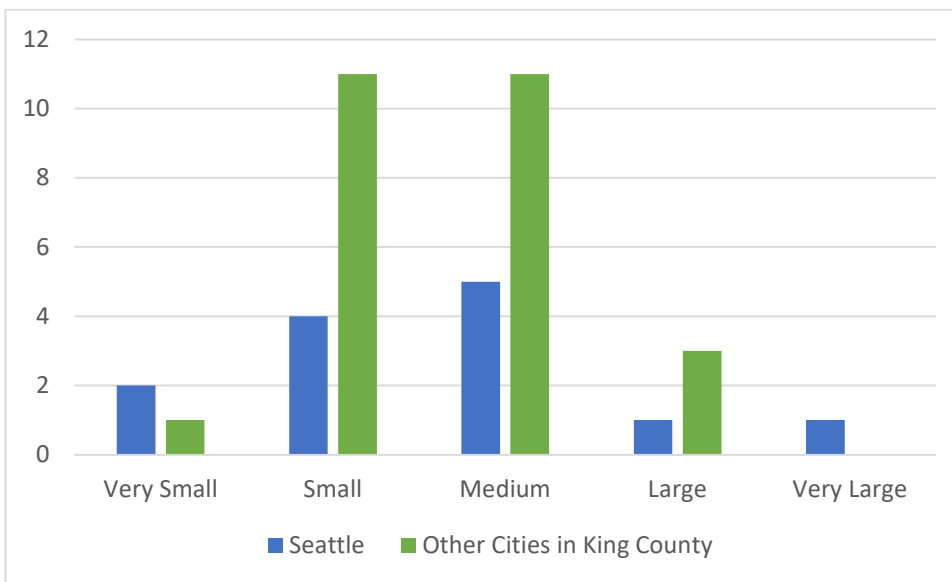
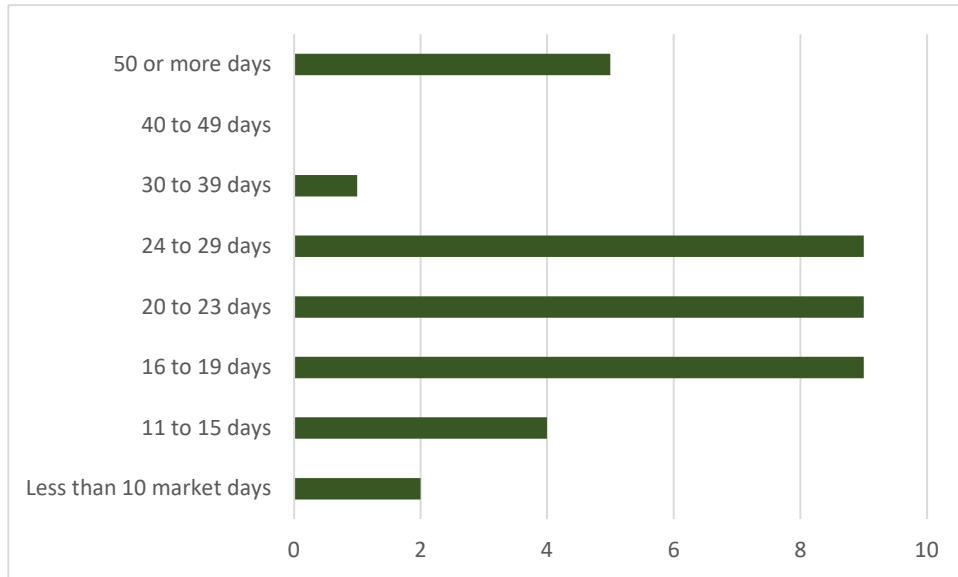


Figure 2. King County Farmers Markets by Size, 2023 (n = 39)



Market Days. In King County, farmers markets were open, on average, 24 days a year with all but one farmers market operating one day a week. Pike Place Market operates 7 days a week; however, it is classified as a Public Market and not a farmers market. Pike Place Market hosts seasonal satellite or express markets in nearby neighborhoods which are classified as farmers markets.

Figure 3. King County Farmers Market by Number of Days Open, 2023 (n = 39)



King County Farmers Markets are Growing

In 2023, King County farmers markets collectively reported a record of over \$40 million in sales, an increase of 18% from the prior year. These are aggregated sales from all vendors and represent direct, retail sales for hundreds of independent, small businesses. While aggregated sales at farmers markets in Seattle are greater, sales at farmers markets outside of Seattle reported a greater year over year increase of 26%.

The total sales of farm vendors (businesses that raise or grow everything they sell or make into value-added products) at King County farmers markets was over \$22 million in 2023, an increase of 12%. Most (75%) farm vendor sales are at farmers markets in Seattle; however, farm vendor sales at farmers markets outside of Seattle increased 15%, greater than the county-wide and Seattle rate.

In 2023, King County farmers markets reported record number of market days. The combined number of market days totaled 945, an increase of 5%. Each farmers market day is an opportunity for shoppers to buy directly from vendors, and for vendors to connect one-on-one with shoppers and create real-time, retail sales. More and more farmers markets are adding a harvest, holiday, or winter market to extend their seasonal schedule. The farmers markets' sales averaged \$ 42,782 per market day in King County, an increase of 12%;

While difficult to reliably estimate, King County farmers markets collectively reported over 2 million shoppers in 2023. This is an increase of 9% and shows that more people love their farmers market every year.

King County Farmers Markets are Vital to the Local Food Economies

Farm vendors collectively represent the largest portion of King County farmers market sales (55%). The total reported number of farm vendors selling at King County farmers markets in 2023 was 839, an 11%

increase from 2022. This represents the number of direct sales opportunities for farm businesses created by farmers markets.

For many of the over 2 million shoppers, their only real contact with farmers is at their farmers market. Farmers markets are on the frontlines of teaching people, one by one, where their food comes from and helping them to create personal connections to farmers and specific places. Farmers markets help people care about food, farming, and agriculture.

Farmers markets help launch beginning farmers who are learning to manage food production, marketing, and running a business. New farmers get direct feedback from their customers (their “blacktop R&D department”) every week about what they like, how much they will pay, and how to set up the best presentation in the booth. Farmers market managers and other vendors also offer a built-in network to share resources, problem-solve issues, and offer help when life intervenes as well as celebrating the season’s victories.

As with other forms of direct marketing, farmers markets allow farmers to decide for themselves which varieties of crops to grow or livestock breeds to raise, helping to keep heirloom varieties and heritage breeds in production and in the marketplace. At farmers markets, shoppers can still find their favorite varieties and try varieties that are not available in grocery stores.

King County Farmers Markets Support Small Businesses & Entrepreneurship

Farmers markets range widely in terms of the number of small businesses they serve. The total reported number of all vendors selling at King County farmers markets in 2023 was 2,323, a 13% increase from 2022. This represents the aggregate number of direct sales opportunities small business created by farmers markets and the scale of impact that they are making.

Farmers markets are low-risk ways for farmers, who have their resources spread thin, to launch a new business. With a booth and minimal infrastructure, farmers and other entrepreneurs learn about food safety, risk management, signage requirements, weights and measures, food access programs, and payment options. The farmers market’s organizers do the back-end work to attract shoppers, secure the location, provide public safety, and create a fun atmosphere.

Among the 160 microenterprises in King County that have a Cottage Foods Permit from the WA State Department of Agriculture, farmers markets are an important sales outlet for bakers and other home-based food processors. Being able to work from home and part-time allows passions and talent to grow into a meaningful income stream. It also allows people to adjust their schedule to other demands on their time, keep costs down, and know they are in full compliance with food safety and labeling standards.

King County Farmers Markets are Essential Food Access Partners

Farmers markets do much of the back-end work so that farmers can participate in SNAP, SNAP Market Match, and the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). This includes training, promotions, following USDA regulations, and a lot of accounting. In 2023, there was a major transition from paper checks to an electronic benefit for WIC and Senior FMNP participants. Farmers market staff

and volunteers do much of the one-on-one training and shopper education so farm vendors can focus on farming and selling.

In 2023, statewide, WA families used over \$4.3 million in food access benefits to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, and other staples directly from farmers and food businesses at farmers markets. This is a win-win-win for local families, businesses, and markets.

King County typically reports the highest total redemptions in the state for the Women Infants and Children (WIC) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program. In 2022, \$613,340 in WIC and Senior FMNP benefits was spent by low-income shoppers at King County farmers markets, representing over 35% of the statewide total. Unfortunately, 2023 data by county for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program is not yet available due to the transition from paper checks to electronic benefits. Available FMNP data reports that:

- Statewide, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program grew 13% in 2023. Low-income seniors receive \$80 to spend on fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey at authorized farmers markets and farm stands.
- Statewide, the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program grew 2% in 2023. Families received \$28 to \$84 to spend on fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs at authorized farmers markets and farm stands.
- For the first time in 2023, WIC participants were able to use their “Fruit and Vegetable Benefits” at farmers markets, totaling \$47,312 in direct sales to farmers statewide.

The Washington State Department of Health is able to report the total sales for authorized growers by county where they are located and by year. (Data does not indicate where the sales were made.) Collectively, King County growers’ FMNP sales were nearly \$150,000 in 2023, a 46% increase from 2022.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was accepted at 31 King County farmers markets and Pike Place Market in 2023. The total sales of SNAP at farmers markets in 2023 was over \$511,269, a decline of 11%. The statewide SNAP Market Match program, which matches SNAP up to \$25 at participating farmers markets and farm stands, declined 10% in 2023 to \$498,998. Anyone with SNAP can use SNAP Market Match to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, cut herbs, mushrooms, and food-producing plants starts at farmers markets.

The City of Seattle runs an additional food access program called “Fresh Bucks.” Farmers markets in Seattle accept Fresh Bucks, along with other retail partners such as farm stands, independent grocers, and supermarkets. Publicly available data for the Fresh Bucks program is not broken out by farmers markets and not included in this report. Please see <https://www.seattlefreshbucks.org/> for more information.

In addition, many farmers markets and vendors give generously to their local food banks or pantries. The total number of pounds donated in 2023 increased 1% to over 136,000 pounds from 42 farmers markets. This does not include markets that did not track donations, partnered with gleaning organizations, or if donations were made by vendors directly to the food bank or pantry.

King County Farmers Markets Bring Communities Together

Nearly 70% of farmers markets are run by community-based nonprofit organizations. The market manager, seasonal staff, and volunteers ensure compliance with food safety, insurance, and other financial responsibilities, as well as administering food access programs, planning farmers market promotions, managing vendors, and ensuring the smooth market day operations.

In 2023, King County farmers markets reported a total of 1,151 volunteers, representing an increase of 62%. Farmers markets outside of Seattle are far more reliant on volunteers to support their operations and organizations. This shows both the need for continued support and the dedication of community members to contribute to their farmers market.

King County Farmers Markets Data

Number of Farmers Markets	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Number of Farmers Markets Open	39	39	0	0%
Number of Farmers Markets Reporting	39	38	1	3%
% FMs reporting	100%	97%	3%	3%

Farmers Markets' Days	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Aggregated Number of Market Days	945	897	48	5%
# of Year-Round FMs (>40 weeks/year)	5	5	0	0%
Average # of Market Days	24	24	1	3%
# FMs reporting	39	38	1	3%

Farmers Markets' Vendors	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total of All Vendors Selling at FMs	2,323	2,053	270	13%
Average # of Vendors per Farmers Market	60	57	3	4%
# FMs reporting	39	36	3	8%
Total of All Farms Vendors Selling at FMs	839	758	81	11%
Average # of Farm Vendors per FM	22	20	1	5%
# FMs reporting	39	37	2	5%

Farmers Markets' Sales	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total Sales for All Vendors	\$ 40,428,973	\$ 34,379,913	\$ 6,049,060	18%
Average All Vendor Sales per Farmers Market	\$ 1,063,920	\$ 1,011,174	\$ 52,746	5%
Average All Vendor Sales per Market Day	\$ 42,782	\$ 38,328	\$ 4,454	12%
# FMs reporting	38	34	4	12%
Total Sales for All Farm Vendors	\$22,230,431	\$19,830,969	\$2,399,462	12%
Average Farm Sales per Farmers Market	\$585,011	\$600,938	\$(15,927)	-3%
Average Farm Sales per Market Day	\$23,524	\$22,108	\$1,416	6%
# FMs reporting	38	33	5	15%
% of All Vendor Sales from All Farm Vendors	55%	58%	-3%	-4%

Farmers Markets' Food Access	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total SNAP EBT redeemed at FMs participating in SNAP Market Match Source: WS Dept of Health, Fruit and Vegetables Incentives Program/GusNIP Project	\$ 511,269	\$ 572,585	-\$ 61,316	-11%
Aggregated Total Number of Transactions	17,862	16,916	946	6%
Average SNAP EBT \$ per Transaction	\$ 28.62	\$ 33.85	-\$ 5.23	-15%
Average SNAP EBT per FM	\$ 15,977	\$ 19,086	-\$ 3,109.01	-16%
# FMs reporting (includes Pike Place Market)	32	30	2	7%
Total SNAP Market Match Redeemed Source: WS Dept of Health, GusNIP Project	\$ 498,998	\$ 555,635	-\$ 56,637.00	-10%
Average SNAP Market Match per Farmers Market	\$ 15,594	\$ 18,521	-\$ 2,927.48	-16%
# FMs reporting (includes Pike Place Market)	32	30	2	7%
Farmers Market Nutrition Program: WIC & Senior King County Growers Source: WS Dept of Health, Grower Redemption Report by County	\$ 148,105	\$ 101,324	\$ 46,781	46%
FMNP WIC	\$ 9,408	\$ 5,348	\$ 4,060	76%
WIC Fruit & Vegetable Benefit (CVB)	\$ 1,889	n/a	n/a	n/a
FMNP Senior	\$ 136,808	\$ 95,976	\$ 40,832	43%
Total number of pounds of food donated by farmers market and vendors	136,055	75,682	60,373	1
Average per Farmers Market	8,003	4,205	3,799	1
# FMs reporting >0#	17	18	-1	-6%

Farmers Markets' Shoppers	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total Number of Shopper Visits for Season	2,002,617	1,842,991	159,626	9%
Average # of Annual Shopper Visits per Farmers Market	55,628	48,500	7,128	15%
# FMs reporting	36	38	(2)	-5%

Farmers Markets' Human Resources	2023	2022	Difference	% change
% of Market Managers that were Paid	100%	95%	0	6%
# FMs reporting	39	38	1	3%
Aggregated Number of Farmers Market Volunteers	1,151	709	442	62%
Average # of Volunteers per Farmers Market	35	19	16	87%
# FMs reporting at least 1 volunteer	33	38	(5)	-13%

Seattle Farmers Markets Data

Farmers Markets Open	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Number of Farmers Markets Open	14	14	0	0%
Number of Farmers Markets Reporting	14	14	0	0%
% FMs reporting	100%	100%	0	0%

Farmers Markets' Days	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Aggregated Number of Market Days	427	400	27	7%
# of Year-Round FMs (>40 weeks/year)	4	4	0	0.0%
Average # of Market Days	31	29	2	7%
# FMs reporting	14	14	0	0%

Farmers Markets' Vendors	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total of All Vendors Selling at FMs	783	726	57	8%
Average # of Vendors per Farmers Market	56	52	4	8%
# FMs reporting	14	14	0	0%
Total of All Farms Vendors Selling at FMs	407	399	8	2%
Average # of Farm Vendors per Farmers Market	29	29	1	2%
# FMs reporting	14	14	0	0%

Farmers Markets' Sales	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total Sales for All Vendors	\$ 27,295,703	\$ 23,961,957	\$ 3,333,746	14%
Average All Vendor Sales per Farmers Market	\$ 1,949,693	\$ 1,711,568	\$ 238,125	14%
Average All Vendor Sales per Market Day	\$ 63,924	\$ 59,905	\$ 4,019	7%
# FMs reporting	14	14	0	0%
Total Sales for All Farm Vendors	\$ 16,670,130	\$ 14,992,626	\$ 1,677,504	11%
Average Farm Sales per Farmers Market	\$ 1,190,724	\$ 1,070,902	\$ 119,822	11%
Average Farm Sales per Market Day	\$39,040	\$37,482	\$ 1,559	4%
# FMs reporting	14	14	0	0%
% of All Vendor Sales from All Farm Vendors	61%	63%	-1%	-2%

Farmers Markets' Food Access	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total SNAP EBT redeemed at FMs participating in SNAP Market Match Source: WS Dept of Health, Fruit and Vegetables Incentives Program/GusNIP Project	\$ 395,887	\$ 442,061	\$ (46,174)	-10%
Aggregated Total Number of Transactions	12,828	11,672	\$ 1,156	9.9%
Average SNAP EBT \$ per Transaction	\$ 30.86	\$ 37.87	\$ (7.01)	-19%
Average SNAP EBT per FM	\$24,743	\$29,471	\$(4,728)	-16%
# FMs reporting (includes Pike Place Market)	16	15	1	7%
Total SNAP Market Match Redeemed Source: WS Dept of Health, GusNIP Project	\$ 397,483	\$ 438,351	\$ (40,868)	-9%

Average SNAP Market Match per Farmers Market	\$24,843	\$29,223	\$(4,381)	-15%
# FMs reporting (includes Pike Place Market)	16	15	1	7%
Total number of pounds of food donated by farmers market and vendors	99,004	62,132	36,872	59%
Average per Farmers Market	11,000	6,904	4,097	59%
# FMs reporting >0#	9	9	0	0%

Farmers Markets' Shoppers	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total Number of Shopper Visits for Season	1,289,103	1,215,964	73,139	6%
Average # of Annual Shopper Visits per Farmers Market*	92,079	86,855	5,224	6%
# FMs reporting	14	14	0	0%
Farmers Markets' Human Resources	2023	2022	Difference	% change
% of Market Managers that were Paid	100%	100%	0	0%
# FMs reporting	14	14	0	0%
Aggregated Number of Farmers Market Volunteers	242	506	-264	-52%
Average # of Volunteers per Farmers Market	24	36	(12)	-33%
# FMs reporting at least 1 volunteer	10	14	-4	-29%

Data for Farmers Markets in Other King County Cities (Excluding Seattle)

Farmers Markets Open	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Number of Farmers Markets Open	25	25	0	0%
Number of Farmers Markets Reporting	25	24	1	4%
% FMs reporting	100%	96%	0	4%

Farmers Markets' Days	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Aggregated Number of Market Days	518	497	21	4%
# of Year-Round FMs (>40 weeks/year)	1	1	0	0%
Average # of Market Days	21	21	0	4%
# FMs reporting	25	24	1	4%

Farmers Markets' Vendors	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total of All Vendors Selling at FMs	1,540	1,327	213	16%
Average # of Vendors per Farmers Market	62	55	6	11%
# FMs reporting	25	24	1	4%
Total of All Farms Vendors Selling at FMs*	432	359	73	20%
Average # of Farm Vendors per FM	17	15	2	16%
# FMs reporting	25	24	1	4%

Farmers Markets' Sales	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total Sales for All Vendors	\$ 13,133,270	\$ 10,392,774	\$ 2,740,496	26%
Average All Vendor Sales per Farmers Market	\$ 547,220	\$ 433,032	\$ 114,187	26%
Average All Vendor Sales per Market Day	\$ 25,354	\$ 20,911	\$ 4,443	21%
# FMs reporting	24	24	0	0%
Total Sales for All Farm Vendors	\$5,560,301	\$4,838,343	\$721,958	15%
Average Farm Sales per Farmers Market	\$231,679	\$201,598	\$30,082	15%
Average Farm Sales per Market Day	\$10,734	\$9,735	\$999	10%
# FMs reporting	24	24	0	0%
% of All Vendor Sales from All Farm Vendors	42%	47%	-4%	-9%

Farmers Markets' Food Access	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total SNAP EBT redeemed at FMs participating in SNAP Market Match Source: WS Dept of Health, Fruit and Vegetables Incentives Program/GusNIP Project	\$ 115,382	\$ 130,524	-\$15,142	-12%
Aggregated Total Number of Transactions	5,034	\$5,244	-\$210	-4%
Average SNAP EBT \$ per Transaction	\$ 22.92	\$24.89	-\$1.97	-8%
Average SNAP EBT per FM	\$ 7,211	\$8,702	-\$1,490	-17%
# FMs reporting (includes Pike Place Market)	16	15	1	7%
Total SNAP Market Match Redeemed Source: WS Dept of Health, GusNIP Project	\$ 101,515	\$ 117,284	-\$15,769	-13%
Average SNAP Market Match per Farmers Market	\$ 6,345	\$7,819	-\$1,474	-19%
# FMs reporting (includes Pike Place Market)	16	15	1	7%
Total number of pounds of food donated by farmers market and vendors	37,051	13,550	23501	173%
Average per Farmers Market	4,631	1,506	3,126	208%
# FMs reporting >0#	8	9	-1	-11%

Farmers Markets' Shoppers	2023	2022	Difference	% change
Total Number of Shopper Visits for Season	713,514	663,876	49,638	7%
Average # of Annual Shopper Visits per Farmers Market*	32,432	27,662	4,771	17%
# FMs reporting	22	24	-2	-8%

Farmers Markets' Human Resources	2023	2022	Difference	% change
% of Market Managers that were Paid	100%	92%	8%	9%
# FMs reporting	25	24	1	4%
Aggregated Number of Farmers Market Volunteers	909	428	481	112%
Average # of Volunteers per Farmers Market	40	18	22	122%
# FMs reporting at least 1 volunteer	23	24	-1	-4%

Appendix 1. King County Farmers Markets, 2024-2022

Farmers Market Organization	Farmers Market	2024	2023	2022
City of Auburn	1. Auburn International Farmers Market			
Seattle FM Association (SFMA)	2. Ballard Farmers Market^			
FM nonprofit	3. Bellevue Farmers Market			
Discover Burien	4. Burien Farmers Market			
Neighborhood FM (NFM)	5. Capitol Hill Farmers Market^			
FM nonprofit	6. Carnation Farmers Market			
Neighborhood FM (NFM)	7. Columbia City Farmers Market^			
Crossroads Bellevue	8. Crossroads Farmers Market *			
African Community Housing & Dev.	9. Delridge Farmers Market^*			
FM nonprofit	10. Des Moines Waterfront Farmers Market			
FM nonprofit	11. Duvall Farmers Market			
FM nonprofit	12. Enumclaw Plateau Farmers' Market			
FM nonprofit	13. Federal Way Farmers Market			
City of Issaquah	14. Issaquah Farmers Market			
City of Kirkland	15. Juanita Friday Market *			
City of Kenmore	16. Kenmore Farmers Market			
Living Well Kent and Kent Lions Club	17. Living Well Kent Farmers Market			
FM nonprofit	18. Kirkland Wednesday Market			
Neighborhood FM (NFM)	19. Lake City Farmers Market^			
Third Place Commons	20. Lake Forest Park Farmers Market			
Seattle FM Association (SFMA)	21. Madrona Farmers Market^			
Neighborhood FM (NFM)	22. Magnolia Farmers Market^			
FM nonprofit	23. Maple Valley Farmers Market*			
FM nonprofit	24. Mercer Island Farmers Market			
FM nonprofit	25. Normandy Park Farmers Market*	new	--	--
Mt Si Metro Parks	26. North Bend Farmers Market			
Neighborhood FM (NFM)	27. Phinney Farmers Market^			
Pike Place Market PDA ⁺	Pike Place Market - City Hall Plaza^	closed		closed
Pike Place Market PDA	28. Pike Place Market - First Hill^			
Pike Place Market PDA	29. Pike Place Market - South Lake Union^			
FM nonprofit	30. Queen Anne Farmers Market^			
FM nonprofit	31. Redmond Saturday Market *			
City of Renton	32. Renton Farmers Market			
Chamber of Commerce	33. Sammamish Farmers Market			
African Community Housing & Dev.	34. SeaTac Farmers Market*	new	--	--
FM nonprofit	35. Shoreline Farmers Market			
Food Innovation Network	36. Tukwila Village Farmers Market			
Neighborhood FM (NFM)	37. University District Farmers Market^			
Vashon Island Growers Assn	38. Vashon Island Farmers Market			
Seattle FM Association (SFMA)	39. Wallingford Farmers Market^			
Neighborhood FM (NFM)	40. West Seattle Farmers Market^			
FM nonprofit	41. Woodinville Farmers Market			

^ Farmers market is included in City of Seattle market data.

* indicates that farmers market is not a member of the Washington State Farmers Market Association in 2024.