

FARMERS MARKET: AN OLD TRADITION INTO MODERN AGRICULTURE

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The less it travels the more beautiful it is, with this motto behind farmers market is place wherein farmer with varied produce and from different farms gather at a single place to sell their produce locally. At first, the farmers market appears to be a simple place where farmer gather just to sell their produce to earn extra profit. However, when the layers of farmers market are unfolded it reveals that it is a micro economy integrated with numerous sustainably supported practices and have environment friendly approach.

According to an article by Luke Denne, a CBC News journalist "A farmers market is a physical marketplace intended to sell food directly by farmers to consumers. These markets can be indoors as well as outdoors." Typically, farmer used to sell their farm produce which can fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, dairy and sometimes even value-added products like jams, breads, cookies, etc. Also, the USDA defines farmers market as "a multi-stall market at which farmer-producers sell agricultural products directly to the general public at a central or fixed location, particularly fresh fruits, and vegetables (but also meat products, dairy products and/or grains)."



As discussed above, farmers market has sustainably backed practices within its layers, let's discover one by one each practice to know their potential in building a resilient circular economy.

Biodiversity:

Purchasing vegetables and fruits at the farmers market or at the departmental store would not seem any different for consumers and even for the producers as well. However, it does a lot of difference when biodiversity is put into picture. While shopping of fruits and vegetables at the supermarkets or departmental stores promotes only production of one or two economic cultivars of each fruit or vegetable and in general a limited range of varieties. On the other hand, shopping from the farmers market will help to promote native varieties of crops as well as promote a wide range of local produce. The importance of biodiversity is well known to the world and various measures are adopted globally to conserve and enrich this biodiversity. Therefore, by simply shopping from the local farmers market will help people conserve the native species vanishing from the earth and will also promote to foster an enriched agricultural biodiversity.

Resource conservation:

Optimum resource utilisation is a must for any economy to operate sustainably and the farmers market is one such micro economy which fits perfectly into this definition. Farmers market usually operate on the farms or in the proximity of the farms thereby reducing transportation cost as well as fuel. It reduces the use of refrigeration and cold storage to minimum and helps conserve the fuel and electricity used to run them. Moreover, the processing of the produce is almost negligible unless there are value added product which make only a small amount of the farmer's market. In these ways production of tons of packaging materials can be reduced which might end up in land fill and cause pollution.

Strengthens local economy:

When shopping is done from the farmers market instead of the departmental stores it becomes evident that the money will circulate within the local economy which ensures that the local producers are promoted and sustained in the long run. In addition to this shopping at the farmers market also promotes local farmers and more precisely the small-scale farmers who

cannot afford to export their produce.

Farmer's sustainability:

Sustainability of farmers is one such area which gets overshadowed whenever a sustainable agricultural economy is discussed. However, it is the farmers only upon whom the sustainability of Agri-ecosystem is decided. On one hand where new people are joining agriculture through hydroponics, rooftop farming, permaculture, aquaculture, and many more newly introduced practices while on the other hand farmers who are barely surviving with their conventional agricultural practices are driving their younger generation out of agriculture for a better alternative. By shopping at the local farmers market, it will be ensured that the farmers are real profit holder and hence will continue their interest in farming.

Environment sustainability: Since the practices involved in and around the farmers market reduces resource utilisation and need of packaging materials to the minimum possible. Therefore, it is evident that operation around and related to farmers market put almost negligible pressure on the environment and hence promotes environmental sustainability.

Scientific approach: Farmer's market is not only an economic business model but also a scientific approach to agricultural practices. At farmers market a lot of heirloom varieties as well as traditional and wild cultivars are sold which could not make to the supermarket shelves due to the cosmetic reasons. Since, these varieties are grown for sale at the farmers market it ensures that the genetic pool is maintained within the natural ecosystem and hence offer enormous opportunity to scientists for breeding.

Integrates producers and consumers:

Initially consumer-producer relationship seems to be just a marketing strategy however in case of farmers market it is a lot more than that. By purchasing regularly at the farmers market consumer often tends to develop a strong bond to the farmers and in turn gets involved more into the agricultural settings. Regular customers of the farmers market also visit the nearby farms occasionally. These visits

of customers with their family and friend sow the seeds of future famers in their children and even themselves. Therefore, alongside developing loyal customers for producers the farmers market also fosters the seedlings of future farmers in their customers.

Better for both consumers and producers:

The farmers market tends to offer the farmers a better remuneration against the usual supply chain which offer comparatively lesser profit for their produce. While for the consumers at first, they used to get a produce at the farmers market which is super fresh, nutrient packed and with negligible processing. Moreover, they get to taste native varieties as well as produce

which they might never get to taste because of the export norms in the supply chains.

As a rule, it is suggested that whenever something new is introduced for being into the mainstream, its credibility must be tested based on how easy it makes the human life. However, the fact is that farmers market at first is not new and second that it is not at all easing human lifestyle. The origin of farmers market can be traced back to Egypt, over 5,000 years ago. Farmers along the Nile came together to sell their fresh produce. The first ever known farmers market in the USA appeared in Boston in 1634. This evidence suggests that farmers market is not new. And for the ease part, shopping at farmers market is a bit difficult because people must travel longer for groceries

however the consumer experience makes this issue insignificant. The produce which the consumer gets at the farmers market are super fresh as compared to produce available at supermarkets. They get a wide variety of produce to choose from. Moreover, they get to purchase a lot of native produce which is rarely available at the grocery stores or supermarkets. And above all, consumer gets to taste produce which are immensely rich in their flavour notes as they are picked when they get completely ripened and are packed full of nutrients. For instance, the flavour of heirloom tomatoes varies with its colour. In general, they taste sweeter than the hybrid varieties while a dark coloured heirloom tomato have smoky flavour as well. Nothing can be perfect and always have a room for improvement and the same does apply to the farmers market as well. Mentioned below are some of the areas which can be improved in the practices of farmers' market.

Awareness: A simple way to make a concept reach to the masses is through awareness and in this digital era it has become way simpler. Farmers can make small video about their day at the farmers market and post it online. Moreover, farmers can even go creative with this and voice over the video and explain the benefits of shopping at a farmers' market. **Useless packaging materials:** Farmers can use the same harvesting bin as their transport container which will reduce the production of plastic containers there by making farmers market more sustainable and environment friendly. Moreover, paper and cloth bags could substitute the plastic carry bag.

Composting: A lot of compostable waste is generated every day at the farmers market which might end up into dumping grounds. However, what farmers can do is take back this waste in the same container which they used for carrying their produce and then compost it to make manure which can serve as a fertilizer for their crops. Hence making a more efficient use of the harvest.

Digitalization: Farmers could even convert a section of the farmers market to online platform. This section will consist of their regular and loyal customers as they already know about their produce. However, the physical market should be continued to add more consumers to the farmers market family.

Organic farming: The farmers market can be taken a step ahead in its sustainable practices if all the farmers taking part in the farmers market switch to organically mediated agricultural practices. This will make farmers market more climate resilient and sustainable. As expressed, farmers market is not only a simple marketplace where people gather to sell and purchase produce but an essence of integrating people through pure, fresh, and local produce. Shopping at local farmers is not just an alternative to grocery stores and supermarkets however a commitment. A commitment to nurture environment, to support local producers, to strengthen the local economy, to enrich biodiversity, to foster future farmers and above all a commitment to consumers satisfaction by choosing for oneself the groceries which are way fresher than the supermarkets ones, have superior flavour and more nutrient.

