



FARMERS MARKETS

FARMERS MARKETS DEFINED



A farmers market is a food market in which farmers sell products from their farms directly to consumers. Farmers markets often include vendors with fruits and vegetables, but also vendors who sell meat, dairy, and bakery items. Some markets also have arts and crafts vendors as well as different forms of entertainment.

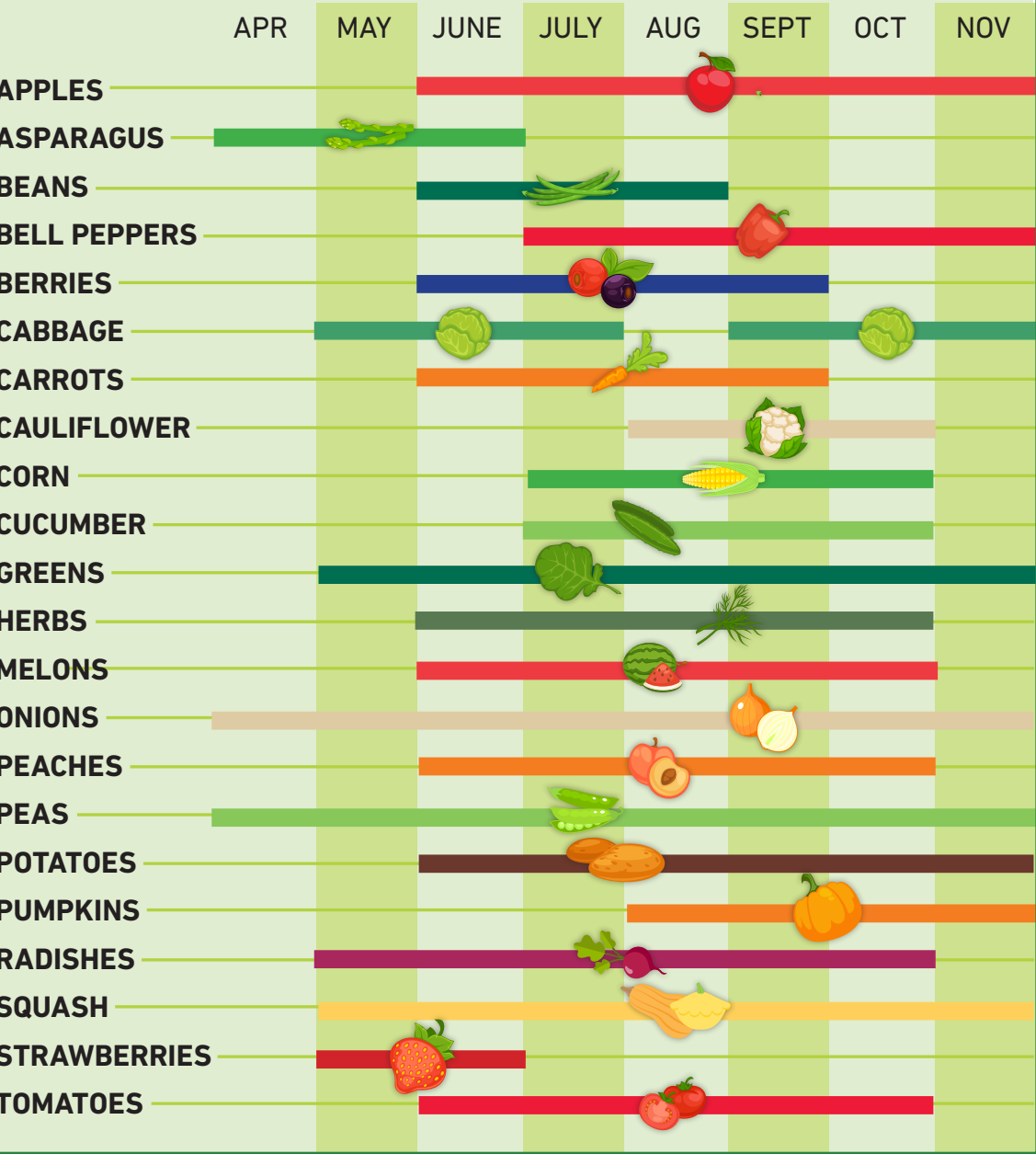
Farmers markets are an important link among urban, suburban, and rural communities that allow farmers to communicate directly with the people who eat their food. The popularity of farmers markets continues to increase throughout the United States. Today there are over 8,000 farmers markets across the country!

In Illinois, we import 97% of the food we eat. Farmers markets are a great way to purchase locally grown food and products that don't need to travel long distances to get to the final customer. The food purchased at farmers markets is fresh, nutritious, and convenient. Many farmers markets have unique items that cannot be purchased in a grocery store.



ILLINOIS...WHAT'S IN SEASON?

When you go to the grocery store, you can buy products from all over the world. Many fresh fruits and vegetables are shipped from very long distances so consumers can enjoy these foods even if they cannot be grown locally. In Illinois, farmers can only grow certain crops during certain times of the year. The outdoor growing season in our state is typically from April to November. Visiting your local farmers market is a great way to better understand what is in season at different times of the year. Shopping for fresh produce at your local farmers market is also good for the planet! Food that is grown and sold locally doesn't need to be shipped long distances, reducing pollution, energy costs, and more. Check out these popular seasonal finds at a local farmers market here in Illinois!



Fun Facts



Illinois ranks third in the U.S. in the number of farmers markets in the state.



Aurora is home to Illinois' oldest farmers market, founded in 1912.

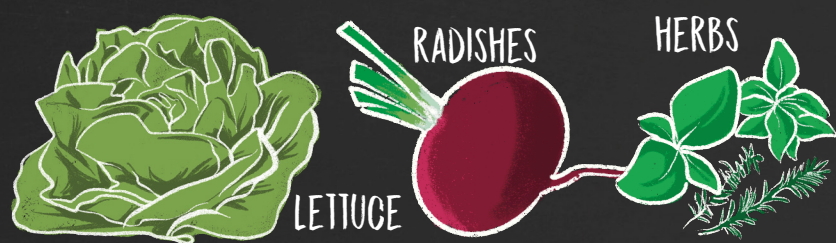


National Farmers Market week is celebrated the first week of August.

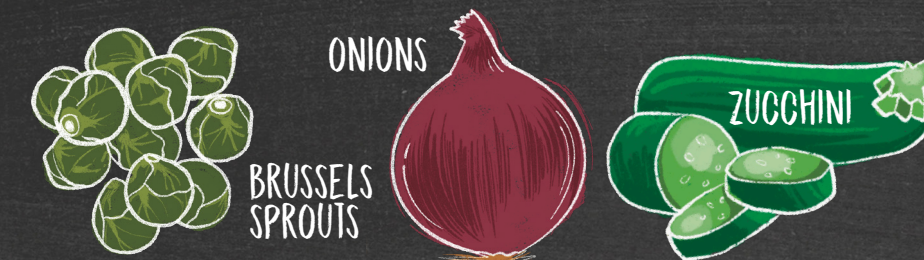


Saturday is the most popular day of the week for farmers markets.





IL FARMERS MARKETS



SHARON GRIMM
Peoria RiverFront Market Manager

Describe your job responsibilities.

I work for the Peoria RiverFront Association, a non-profit group of business owners and local businesses that support the growth of Peoria's downtown. Part of my job includes managing the RiverFront Market, which has grown a lot over the past 19 years.

What is the community impact of your farmers market?

We currently have between 75 and 115 vendors at each market and see around 5,000 people attend the market each week. As a producers only market, all items must be grown, made, or created by the person selling them and made or grown within the state of Illinois. For many of our farmers and vendors, this market represents a large portion of their income. Since we bring so many people into our downtown, we are also helping to support local restaurants, shops, bakeries, and other businesses.

What is your favorite thing about the market?

My favorite thing is that each week is a little different. We start the season with greens, asparagus, and strawberries, then move into the heart of the season with sweet corn, peaches, tomatoes, and more, and then into fall with root vegetables, apples, and pumpkins. The market always has something new to look forward to!



EVAN BARRY
Down River Farm

Crops/products sold: Vegetables, herbs, and flowers.

What is your favorite crop to grow?

It all kind of depends on the season and weather. But I love growing carrots, tomatoes, and onions.

What is your favorite tool on the farm?

It changes often, but probably our BCS Walk Behind Tractor. Lately I've been using the power harrow implement with the tractor. A power harrow is similar to a tiller, but instead of inverting the soil layers, the harrow just mixes the top inch of soil. This method is better for soil health and brings fewer weed seeds to the surface.

Describe how you prepare for the market each week.

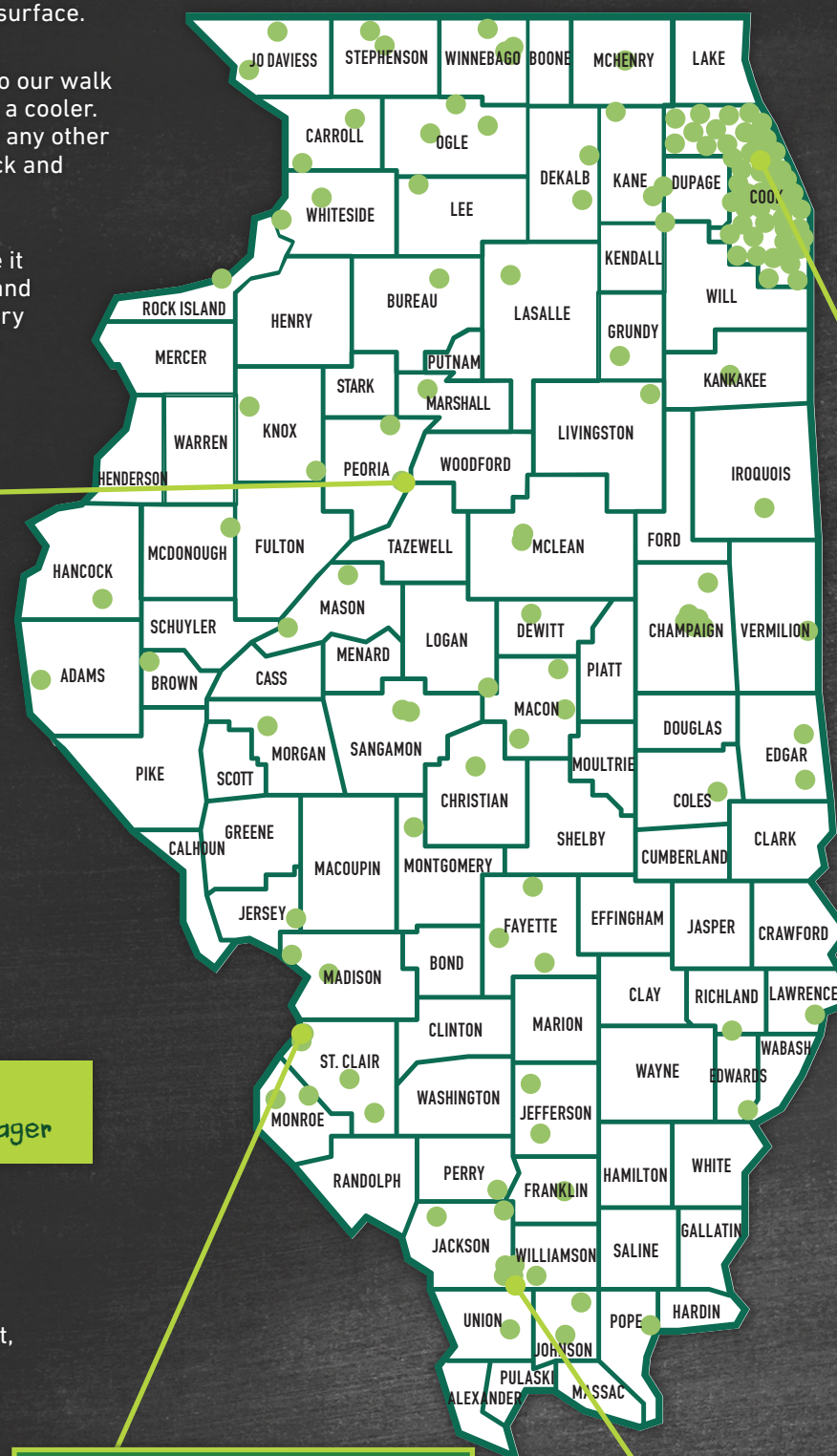
Crops are harvested, then washed and packed and put into our walk in cooler, which is an enclosed trailer that I converted into a cooler. Then I load my truck with tents, tables, display boxes, and any other items needed. Then I hook up the trailer and drive the truck and trailer right to the market on Saturday morning!

How do you attract people to your booth at the market?

I put a lot of thought into a nice display. We follow the "pile it high and watch it fly" philosophy. I try to alternate colors and textures and make it look as abundant as possible. I also try to have a lot of diversity of crops so we can be a "one stop shop" for our customers.

PEORIA RIVERFRONT MARKET

Peoria, IL



MANDY MOORE
Green City Market Manager

What is the community impact of your farmers market?

The impact of Green City Market is huge! We connect over 50 vendors with over 270,000 customers every year. We also expand food access through the market by having triple matching benefits for all SNAP benefits.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part of my job is to experience the palpable joy of connecting farmers with those they feed; to know that I am fortunate enough to be a part of the food system that helps folks nourish themselves and that supports the sustainable future of food is a dream.

What is the most curious thing you've seen sold at your market?

I love seeing cucamelons at market – a very cool and curious little fruit that looks like a watermelon but tastes more like a cucumber.

What is your favorite thing about the farmers market?

The community, for sure! Farmers markets are for everyone, and anything we can do or say to help encourage folks to come out and experience the market for the first time is important.

GREEN CITY MARKET

Chicago, IL



MIRA CAMERON
Star Farm

Crops/products sold: A full variety of organic produce, as well as jams and pickled products made in-house, and sourced grains from local vendors.

What is your favorite crop to grow?

My favorite crop to grow is beans. They produce at such rapid quantities that when harvesting them, you can spend 5 minutes picking from just one plant. You'll think you're done but then look from another angle and be blown away at how many are left. Some of our beans this year were planted next to corn, a co-cropping practice used for centuries, and this led to crawling through the cornfield to harvest the beans beneath. For me, this was a very beautiful experience that felt like childlike play.

What is your farm known for at the market?

At the market, we're known for blowing customers away with the full scope of what Star Farm does within our community. We often end up talking about what we do beyond growing crops, which includes cooking demonstrations and nutritional guidance, a composting program, sustainable landscaping, and job and skills training for youth and community members with developmental disabilities.

What is your favorite job as a farmer?

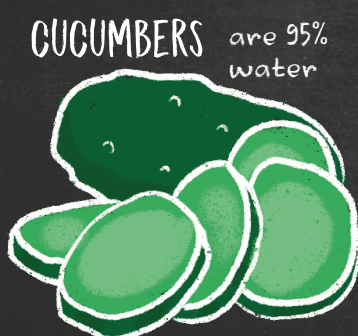
I enjoy harvesting and tending. There is something special for me being in direct contact with the plants. It can be quiet or raucous and full of conversation, but it is peaceful for me, regardless.

How did you get started as a farmer?

I grew up in a farming community and it's always impressed me as a determined but kind way of life. I started getting interested in food justice work when I was 20 or so and have spent the last 6 years participating in various ways. During the summer of 2020, I built and ran a mid-scale community garden that distributed food through mutual aid efforts, and this really solidified my love of it. I joined Star Farm in May as part of a fellowship with the Mansfield Institute of Social Justice and was very impressed with the organization; I quickly wanted to stay.



PEACHES are in season June-September



CUCUMBERS are 95% water



STRAWBERRIES strawberry season starts in June



SARAH BURTON
Vine Street Market Manager

Describe your job responsibilities.

I attended a farmers market conference in California this spring. They had a t-shirt for sale that perfectly sums up a market manager's job; it says, "My job is weird!" As a Farmers Market Manager, I am a jack of all trades. On any given day I am an event planner, logistics coordinator, crowd control manager, social media manager, supervisor of vendors, staff, and volunteers, and so many more things. You have to be a problem solver above all else to be a market manager.

What does a typical day look like for you in this position?

5 a.m. I determine vendor locations and write their names in chalk in their assigned stalls.

6 a.m. I have a quick meeting with the other market staff members and then meet with volunteers and assign them jobs. Vendors begin arriving at this time.

7 a.m. I take vendor attendance.

8 a.m. The market opens. I make a quick video for social media, then I check on staff to see how I can assist them.

9 a.m.–12 p.m. I answer questions, help vendors with issues, check to make sure trash cans are not overflowing and bathrooms are clean, and I assist other staff with their assignments.

12 p.m. The Market closes and we begin to tear down our gear, load it into trucks, and drive it back to storage. Then I prepare invoices for all the stall fees at the market that day.

4 p.m. My day at the market is done and I can start my weekend!



LIZ DERUNTZ
Little Egypt Alliance of Farmers Manager

What is LEAF?

LEAF is a farmer-owned cooperative, meaning that we ask each farm member to help in the process of distribution, marketing and in other ways to get things done each week. Some farmers will work at events, our pop-up market, at the Vine Street Market, make deliveries to customers, and deliver to pick-up locations. Although I run the website and all day-to-day operations it takes a group effort to make LEAF successful. Our store is open from Fridays at noon until Tuesdays at 8 p.m., customers can login during that time and place their order. We then pack and distribute all orders on Thursdays.

How does LEAF help farmers market their crops?

We post to Facebook and Instagram five days a week and send our customers a weekly newsletter with upcoming events, recipes featuring different farm fresh ingredients each week and a showcase of any new products. We also attend events each year that allow us to meet new potential customers and have loads of marketing material available at these events.

How do you keep track of all the products from so many different farms?

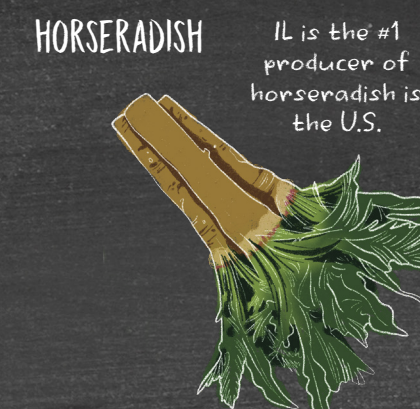
We use a software called Local Food Marketplace, it is designed for supporting online farmers markets (like LEAF). It will track all products sold each week and send a pick-list of items to each farm. Most farms have their own login, so they can monitor it, make changes, and add items. I can generate reports of all kinds, as there is so much data stored, we use this information each year to determine if we need to make changes to our growing plans. It has been a lifesaver!

VINE STREET MARKET

O'Fallon, IL

CARBONDALE FARMERS MARKET

Carbondale, IL



HORSERADISH IL is the #1 producer of horseradish in the U.S.

CHRISTMAS TREES

evergreen trees take 6-8 years to grow to "Christmas Tree" size



WINTER SQUASH



LIBBY ERVIN
Assistant Director, Food Works

Describe your job responsibilities.

I was the Carbondale Community Farmers Market Manager for two years. My current job with Food Works focuses on food access. I manage the Southern Illinois Link Hub, which supports eight markets in Southern Illinois with creating and running SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) so that a wider group of people can have access to fresh food at these farmers markets.

What is the community impact of your farmers market?

The Carbondale Community Farmers Market is the only winter market in our area. We moved the market to the mall, so now we have a lot more space and can continue to increase the number of vendors at the market. Attendance continues to increase over time, and now that the market offers SNAP EBT and Link Match, more people in the community are able to shop at the market each week. This means more income for the farmers and more fresh produce and fruits being eaten by customers in our community.

Why are jobs like yours important to farmers?

Markets provide farmers with an outlet to sell their products, as well as a social outlet and a sense of community among farmers and the wider community. Many farmers are not tech savvy, so having a Market Manager who is skilled in this area helps the farmers to get their names and products out there. By offering Link Match at markets, farmers get even more money in their pockets at the end of each market day.



KURT SWEITZER
Sweitzer Farms

CROPS SOLD: Strawberries and vegetables from A to Z.

What is your favorite crop to grow?

Cabbage

What is your favorite tool on the farm?

One row cultivator

Describe how you prepare for the market each week.

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday we pick our crops, wash them, box them, and load them into the cooler. Then on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday we sell our crops at market.

How did you get started as a farmer?

I was raised on our farm. In 1987, I purchased the farm from my parents. I have been selling at farmers markets since 1987.



FLOWERS



ASPARAGUS

crowns can continue to produce for 20 years or more



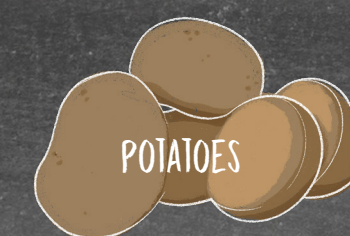
HONEY IL beekeepers maintain over 30,000 honeybee hives

TOMATOES

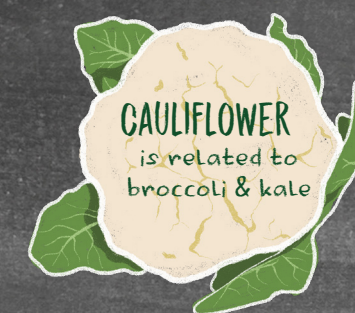
there are over 10,000 varieties of tomatoes

SWEET CORN

2% of corn grown in IL is sweet corn



POTATOES



CAULIFLOWER is related to broccoli & kale

CAREERcorner



Janie Maxwell
Executive Director, Illinois Farmers Market Association

Describe the responsibilities of your job.

I manage ILFMA, including coordinating the work of the ILFMA Board of Directors and committees, solicit funding, manage current grants, and apply for new grants. ILFMA works at the state level with partner organizations on expanding SNAP and Link Match at Farmers Markets, Farm to Food Bank program, Farm to School, and Buy Fresh Buy Local-Illinois. We also coordinate and provide training for farmers market managers and vendors on best practices for managing farmers markets, promote farmers markets and the value of local food, and advocate for policy and

legislative changes to address issues identified by farmers market managers and vendors.

What makes you passionate about your work with ILFMA?

Local food is truly important. It provides a livelihood for our growers/vendors, and an opportunity for the community to buy the freshest, best tasting and highly nutritious food.

What benefits does ILFMA provide to IL farmers?

ILFMA provides training and connections. We work at the state level on systems, policies, and legislation that address the barriers farmers may face. We work to make sure consumers know about how to find local food and the benefits of local. We talk about farmers markets as more than events; as food access, as business incubators, as having positive impacts on health and economies.

What benefits does ILFMA provide to IL consumers and families?

We help consumers find local food and connect with farmers markets and local food and farm businesses. We stress the benefits and importance of local food and provide resources for families. ILFMA also partners with Link Up Illinois to spread

the word that Link cards are accepted at many farmers markets, and many participate in Link Match. Link and Link Match are great ways for lower income families to stretch their food dollars and have access to amazing food.

What is your favorite product to buy at the market?

I buy what is in season, from asparagus at the beginning to the winter storage crops at the end of the season. I know local tastes best and I use that to plan cooking and entertaining. I also enjoy cottage food products such as meat and cheese, bakery goods, flowers, and more.

What do you wish you could tell someone who has never been to a farmers market?

Farmers and farmers markets matter. Illinois imports 97% of its food. In addition to great taste, freshness, etc. farmers markets provide a short, local supply chain of food. Local food is critical in providing food we all need. Going to a farmers markets and supporting markets and farmers isn't just fun, it makes an impact.

Farmers Markets In Action



Farmers markets offer an amazing variety of fresh food. Look back through the Ag Mag. How many of these fruits and vegetables do you recognize? How many have you tried? Which new foods would you like to try?

Pile it High & Watch it Fly!

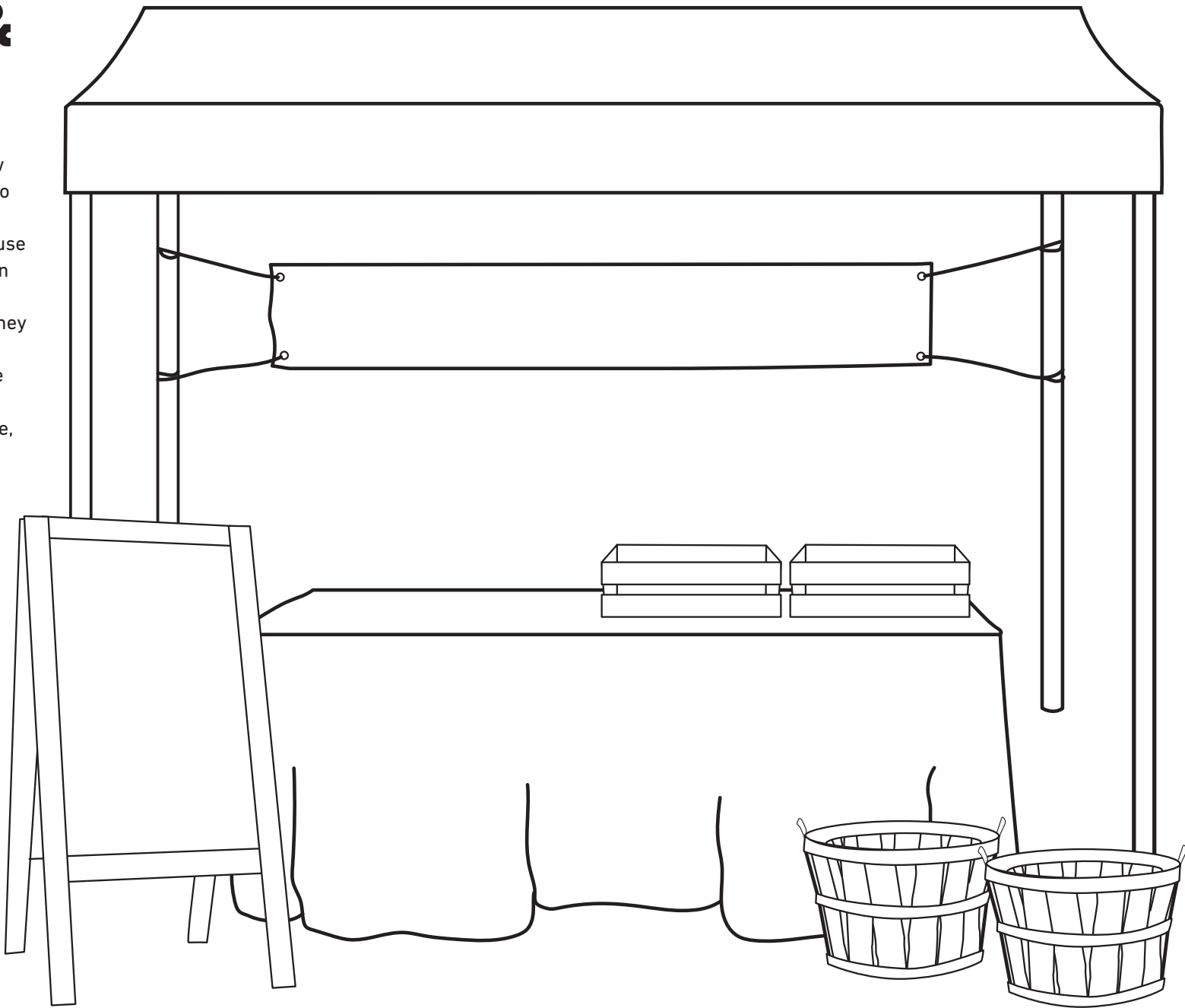
Many farmers put a lot of thought into how they design their farmers market booths to attract shoppers and make their shopping experience as easy as possible. Farmers use tents to keep their produce nice and cool in the shade. They use signs and banners to advertise the crops they are selling, and they find creative ways to show off their fresh produce. Many of these farmers follow the “pile it high and watch it fly” mantra. This means that they pile up their crops in large, colorful piles to show the abundance of what they have grown. Market customers are attracted to these bright displays, and then the farmers can “watch it fly” from their booths as customers buy their food and take it home to enjoy.

Can you design a farmers market booth to attract customers?

Use the outline to the right to design your own booth.

In your drawing you should:

- Create a farm name.
- Choose which crops your farm will grow.
- Design an eye-catching booth that customers can't resist!



Find local farms and a farmers market near you by visiting the IL Specialty Growers Association at specialtygrowers.org and the IL Farmers Market Association at ilfma.org.

This issue of Ag Mag has been provided by:



This Ag Mag complements and can be connected to the following educational standards:

Common Core State Standards: ELA-Literacy – RI.4.2; RI.4.4; RI.4.7; RI.4.10; W.4.7-4.9; SL.4.1; SL.4.4; L.4.1; L.4.6

Next Generation Science Standards: 3-5-ETS1.B; 3-LS3-1; 3-LS4-3; 5-ESS3-1

IL Social Science Standards: SS.G.3.3; SS.G.3.4; SS.G.2.5, SS.EC.1.3

To learn more about Agriculture visit us at agintheclassroom.org, or contact your County Farm Bureau® office or Agriculture in the Classroom, Illinois Farm Bureau®, 1701 Towanda Avenue, Bloomington, IL 61701.