

PROMOTING WEEKLY FARMERS' MARKETS IN INDIA





IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING FARMERS' MARKETS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Farmers' Market is a new concept piloted by ESAF Foundation in Kerala to uplift small and marginal farmers by directly connecting them to the consumer through the setting up of temporary farmer's markets in residential complexes or neighbourhoods. Farmers' markets are a fundamental part of the urban-rural interface, they have continued to grow in popularity, mostly due to the growing consumer interest in obtaining fresh products, especially produce directly from the farm.

Farmers' markets allow consumers to have access to locally grown, farm-fresh produce, enable farmers to develop personal relationships with their customers, and cultivate consumer loyalty with the farmers who grow the produce. By cutting out middlemen, shoppers receive the freshest and most flavourful food in their area and local economies prosper. Each farmers market defines the term "local" according to the agriculture of its region and regularly communicates that definition to the public. Some markets concentrate on produce, while others carry everything from fruits and vegetables to baked goods, meat, eggs, flowers, and dairy products. Some may carry locally made crafts or prepared foods as a complement to the agricultural products they sell. As the number of markets grows, so does the variety of foods available.

ESAF Foundation has established weekly farmer's markets in Malappuram, Ernakulam, Kozhikode, and Trivandrum districts of Kerala with the help of respective city governments. With a steadfast commitment to enhancing community health and well-being, ESAF takes center stage in fostering a vibrant environment that brings home-grown products within the reach of every individual.

In championing this initiative, the ESAF Foundation actively contributes to the realisation of sustainable development goals, aligning with a broader vision for a resilient and self-sufficient community. The weekly farmers' market is an example of the strength of community-driven initiatives, highlighting their potential to improve the local economy and build connections between producers and consumers.

WHO WE ARE

ESAF Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation formed as a response to the various development gaps in society. Driven by the vision to build a just and fair society, our interventions are based on an integrated development model focusing on creating livelihood opportunities for the underprivileged. Through its various social organisations, ESAF has influenced the lives of almost 3.5 million people since its founding in 1992. It has also given birth to eighteen entities that are revolutionising the lives of the underprivileged and disadvantaged populations across India.



OBJECTIVES OF FARMERS' MARKET

- To provide not only more demand avenues but also a regular and stable income for farmers through Farmers' Markets
- To empower small and marginal farmers by increasing their income substantially and transforming them into entrepreneurs, who are not dependent on the middlemen or any other such intermediaries to reach the market.

BENEFITS OF WEEKLY FARMERS' MARKETS

A weekly farmers market serves as a catalyst for a sustainable and vibrant local food ecosystem, promoting economic, environmental, and social well-being. This initiative can offer a multitude of benefits for both farmers and the local community, which are:



DIRECT FARMER-CONSUMER INTERACTION

- Facilitates direct communication between farmers and consumers, fostering trust and transparency.
- Consumers can learn about the farming methods, production processes, and even receive advice on cooking and storage.



SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ECONOMY

- Keeps money circulating within the local economy by directly supporting local farmers and producers.
- Boosts the overall economic health of the community by creating jobs and stimulating related businesses.



ACCESS TO FRESH, SEASONAL PRODUCE

- Provides consumers with access to fresh, locally grown produce that is often harvested at its peak ripeness.
- Encourages a diet based on seasonal availability, promoting diversity in food consumption.



PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

- Encourages farmers to adopt sustainable and organic farming practices due to consumer demand.
- Supports biodiversity and reduces reliance on intensive farming methods.



FAIR PRICES FOR FARMERS

- Eliminates middlemen, allowing farmers to receive a fair price for their produce.
- Enhances the economic viability of local agriculture and contributes to the financial stability of farmers.



CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SOCIAL HUB

- Creates a community space where people can gather, fostering a sense of belonging.
- Facilitates cultural exchange and celebration, often featuring local crafts, music, and food traditions.
- Fosters a sense of community as residents come together regularly.
- Strengthens social ties and relationships among farmers, consumers, and local businesses.



HEALTHIER FOOD CHOICES

- Encourages healthier eating habits by offering fresh and unprocessed foods.
- Enables consumers to make informed choices about the source and quality of their food.



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Provides a platform for farmers to educate the public about agriculture, environmental stewardship, and sustainable practices.
- Offers workshops, demonstrations, and informational sessions on topics related to farming and food.



JOB CREATION

- Generates employment opportunities, not only for farmers but also for those involved in organising, managing, and supporting the market.
- Supports the growth of small businesses and entrepreneurs.

FARMERS MARKETS PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

Behind the rows of produce, busy vendors, and eager customers, farmers markets are a bustling hub of sustainability.

Local farmers deliver fresh, local food to a growing number of shoppers demanding food that is not only healthy, but environmental friendly. But farmers markets take sustainability a step further. They also ensure farmers can make a living off sustainably grown food, while providing an outlet where communities can find and purchase their products.

Sustainability is the overarching theme in this system. Farmers engage in sustainable farming practices to produce healthy food to sustain the local community, who in turn provide the money necessary to sustain the farmers. Each shares in the success of the other in a mutually beneficial relationship that has become a model for sustainability.



IMPACT OF WEEKLY FARMERS' MARKETS PILOTED IN KERALA



ERNAKULAM, KERALA

Established a weekly farmers' market in Edapally, Kochi with the support of Kochi Municipal Corporation, Department of Agriculture, and Farmers Interest Groups (FIGs). Started modestly, it is now a thriving Saturday tradition from 8.00 AM to 9.00 AM, featuring local produce and home-made items. Over ten farmers participate, attracting 100+ customers weekly and generating 15000 INR in commerce. Profits of 4000 INR to 5000 INR boost the local agricultural economy, fostering community and collaboration among residents.





KOZHIKODE, KERALA

Piloted a weekly farmers' market in Kozhikode district with the support of Chelembra Gramapanchayat, Department of Agriculture, and the Thushara Farmers' Group. With sales reaching 18,000 INR and profits ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 INR, this weekly market was a great success.





TRIVANDRUM, KERALA

The Department of Agriculture and the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Kerala (VFPCK) have supported us in organising a weekly farmers' market in Kerala's Trivandrum District since 2022. Run by farmers from Anad Grampanchayat, supported by Subhiksha Keralam, the market operates every Thursday from 3.00 PM to 6.30 PM near UIT Kuravankonam. With ESAF's infrastructural support, the market connects rural farmers with urban consumers, offering 35 to 40 product varieties and boosting farmers' income by 2000 INR to 5000 INR weekly.





MALAPPURAM, KERALA

Established weekly farmers' markets in Malappuram District under the supervision of Malappuram Municipality, Department of Agriculture, and Malappuram Agro Society. Over 200 local farmers cultivated and sold fresh produce with ESAF's support, generating a turnover of 155,000 INR and a profit of 43,000 INR. Soon, we will establish another farmers' market in the space allotted by Malappuram Municipality at Kottappadi to support local farmers.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY GOVERNMENTS

Weekly farmers' markets need to be established with careful planning and consideration of several aspects. The following suggestions will help the city government establish a successful farmers' market;

- The market can be placed at a centrally located area that is easily accessible to residents and nearby community divisions. Consider public spaces, parks, or community centers, etc.
- Provision of a storage space for farmers to keep canopies, banners, crates, and other necessary equipments.
- The initiation of these markets not only contributes to the growth of the local economy but also creates new avenues for livelihood opportunities.
- Encourage community involvement through events, live demonstrations, or workshops.
- Partnering with local schools or community groups to enhance the sense of community and educate residents about the benefits of buying local.
- Streamlining the permit application process for participating farmers.
- Promoting environmental friendly practices such as recycling bins and reducing single-use plastics.
- Establishing a feedback mechanism for both vendors and customers to continuously improve the market.



Farmer's market is also a place for children to come in and understand what sustainable development is and encourage the community to come together. It is not only about consuming; it is also about experiencing and connecting.



PARTNER AGENCIES





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