



**Michigan Food &
Farming Systems-MIFFS**
Bringing Farmers & Communities Together

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 2, 2007

CONTACT:

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The Michigan Farmers' Market Association Kicks-Off by Welcoming Charter Memberships

On Friday, April 20, 2007, the Michigan Farmers' Market Association (MIFMA) celebrated its Membership Kick-Off and hosted a Market-Style Resource Fair in East Lansing, Mich. with more than 100 farmers' market managers, farmers, vendors and friends.

This membership kick-off has been months in the making, from the organization's inception in the summer of 2006 to this month's event. MIFMA was developed nearly a year ago and has grown in leaps and bounds through hard work, great ideas and partnerships throughout the state. Project for Public Spaces, an organization supporting farmers' markets, parks and other gathering places granted Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS), in partnership with Michigan State University (MSU), money to develop MIFMA, a state-wide association to promote local food consumption in Michigan by connecting more farmers to consumers through farmers' markets.

Keynote speakers Jim Farr, President of the Farmers' Market Federation of New York, and Diane Eggert, Executive Director of the Federation, began the day by addressing why a statewide association for farmers' markets makes sense and how it can provide great benefits, services and resources to its members. Based on their experience working with the Federation, Jim and Diane offered words of wisdom and examples from the state of New York. The work they have done and accomplishments they have made set the tone for what MIFMA can and will do for members.

Dan Keane, who is a member of the MIFMA project leadership team spoke to why a statewide association for farmers' markets makes sense in Michigan.

"The development of MIFMA is a timely endeavor," said Keane. "I am happy to be a part of this association as both a beekeeper selling my honey at the Hemlock Farmers' Market and as a representative of the Downtown Saginaw Farmers' Market."

Elaine Brown, Executive Director of MIFFS, and Dru Montri, MIFMA Project Manager, presented the organizational structure, governance, membership and member benefits of the newly developed Michigan Farmers' Market Association. Information regarding membership and member benefits is available at www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu.

Attendees spent the afternoon visiting with exhibitors and gathering resources to help kick-off their own market season, picking up useful information and networking with people from other markets. MIFMA will continue to serve farmers' markets in the state



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by making useful information available and providing networking opportunities to farmers' markets stakeholders.

When asked what participants felt the most valuable part of the day was, many responded that it was either picking up useful information or networking with people from other markets. MIFMA will continue to serve farmers' markets in the state by making useful information available and providing networking opportunities to farmers' markets stakeholders.

"I was delighted to see how many respondents put their priority on markets working together toward common goals as the most important part of MIFMA. I think this should help us focus strongly on work that really does bring together markets, help them clarify and set common goals, and also focus on enhanced communication," said Susan Smalley, who serves on the MIFMA project leadership team and has done a multitude of work with Michigan farmers' markets through the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Agriculture at MSU.

On the day of the event, MIFMA welcomed 23 new charter members including six farmers' markets, six farmers and 11 individual members. The list of current charter members is attached.

Some of the benefits of being a member include: reduced rates at MIFMA sponsored workshops and events; a 10% discount on purchases made at Eat Local Food, a merchandising and art design company focused on farmers' markets; reduced rates on Rapid Market Assessments and market evaluation services; and a great network of resources and collaboration with MIFMA members. Members will also be highlighted on the online farmers' market directory on the MIFMA web site at www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu.

Many more benefits for MIFMA members are in the works. The leadership team is currently pursuing discounts and reduced insurance for farmers and markets along with developing seminars, electronic benefit transfer training for low-income areas and policy support for members.

Exhibitors present included MIFFS, the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at MSU, Food Bank Council of Michigan, Eat Local Food, Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance, Michigan Department of Community Health, WIC and Senior Project FRESH, Michigan Department of Human Services, United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, ACS Governmental Solutions, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Select Michigan, and the Michigan Food Policy Council.



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For more information about the event, the resources provided, or becoming a charter member of MIFMA please visit www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu or contact Dru Montri at (517) 432-3381 or dnmontri@msu.edu.

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This project is supported by a grant from Project for Public Spaces, Inc., with funding provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Founded in 1998, MIFFS is a statewide membership organization (501c3) whose purpose is to promote diverse efforts that foster and sustain food and farming systems that improve economic, ecological and social well-being. MIFFS has been effective at establishing successful partnerships among producers, markets and institutions that have created more profitable, environmentally friendly food systems in Michigan.

The organization's vision is based on the premise that agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan's rural and urban communities. To learn more, please visit www.miffs.org or call (517) 432-0712.



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The Michigan Farmers' Market Association welcomes its first charter members at the Membership Kick-Off and Market-Style Resource Fair on April 20, 2007.

Michigan Farmers' Market Association Charter Members:

Farmers' Markets:

Almont Farmers Market
DeWitt Farmers' Market
Downtown Saginaw Farmers' Market
Frankenmuth Farmers Market
LeRoy Farmers Market
Western Michigan Environmental Action Council's Southeast Farmers' Market in Grand Rapids

Farmers and Vendors:



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Yolanda Blissett, Homestead Acres
Lylene Hillman and Frank Blissett, Bliss Hill Farm
Richard (Cousin Don) Hobson, Hickory Hill Farm and Aunt Annie's Waffles
Dan Keane, Wee Bee Farms
Allen Little, A & M Affordable Elegance
Leanne Roman, Lavender & Peonies, LLC

Friends of MIFMA

Dietrich Bronner, Frankenmuth Farmers Market
Elaine Brown, Michigan Food and Farming Systems
Ron Campbell, Architect
Heidi Enge, Frankenmuth Farmers Market
Elaine Ferris, Mason Farmers Market Association
Laurajeanne Kehn, Frankenmuth Farmers Market
James Dale McCreight, Michigan Department of Human Services
Dru Montri, Michigan Farmers' Market Association
Kate Nault, Allen Street Farmers' Market
Jan Peterson, Lawrence Farmers' Market
Susan Smalley, Michigan State University Extension