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Michigan Food and Farming Systems brings partners together for its first Michigan Farmers' Market Association planning session

East Lansing, Mich. - On Monday, July 31, 2006, a group of 20 interested partners met to plan for the establishment of a Michigan Farmers' Market Association (MIFMA). MIFMA is a statewide association that will promote farmers' markets and assist market managers, vendors, and supporters to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products. Its organizational structure is currently being developed by Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS), bringing farmers and communities together.

The purpose of this preliminary session was to plan a statewide visioning session that will be held in mid-September to help define MIFMA. The group discussed the overall purpose of the visioning session, session components, and desired outcomes. They then began brainstorming to develop an invitation list. Many in the group were excited by what the future holds.

"Today is the beginning of a much larger conversation," said Chris Bedford, president of the Sweetwater Local Foods Market in Montague.

The establishment of MIFMA comes at a time when momentum surrounding farmers' markets and local food issues is constantly growing. Approximately 150 farmers' markets are currently active in communities across the state of Michigan and more than 3,800 farmers' markets exist nationwide. For additional information about MIFMA and Michigan farmers' markets, visit the MIFMA website at www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu.

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, Michigan Food and Farming Systems is a statewide membership organization (510c3) 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. To learn more, visit www.miffs.org, call (517) 432-0712, or send an e-mail to miffs@msu.edu.

Project leaders include the Michigan State University CS Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems, the Saginaw Farmers' Market, and the MSU Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies.

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a non-profit organization founded in 1975 dedicated to creating and sustaining places that build community. PPS provides technical assistance, education, and research through programs in [parks, plazas and central squares](#); [buildings and civic architecture](#); [transportation](#); and [public markets](#). PPS has worked with communities in 48 states and in 20 countries around the world. Please visit www.pps.org for more information.

The [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) was established in 1930 “to help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.” Its programming activities center around the common vision of a world in which each person has a sense of worth; accepts responsibility for self, family, community, and societal well-being; and has the capacity to be productive, and to help create nurturing families, responsive institutions, and healthy communities.

The individuals who came together for this session represented a diverse group of partners from farmers’ markets, restaurants, and agricultural, food and health organizations. For a local perspective of the planning session, feel free to contact any of the participants listed below.

Participants included:

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