



Hamilton Farmers Market is thriving despite the economic downturn.

The HFM has just passed a notable milestone celebrating its 3rd birthday recently and is thriving. Having launched initially with 12 stall holders in February 2006, the market has grown to a peak of 46 stalls selling fresh, honest local produce.

The HCC contributed initial funds to enable a manager to be employed for the first six months, and the WINTEC generously provided the use of their Collingwood & Tristram St car park as a rent free venue. The market held on Sundays, was initially operated twice monthly and moved to weekly in October 2006. More recently, the HFM has expanded to the CIVIC SQUARE for the summer months and operates a mid-week farmers market from 12-4pm on Thursdays. The demand for this additional market comes from growers and food producers who want greater opportunities and from customers who want more frequent access to fresh seasonal produce.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are the main drivers of successful farmers markets; potatoes, onions, carrots, tomatoes, beans, seasonal fruits and plants being the majority of sales. Meat, fish, honey and value added products, such as cheese, preserves, ice-cream, Cornish pasties, bread and pastries all add to the variety of wonderful locally produced food at the HFM.

A steady increase in customer numbers, from around 700 to more than 1200, has matched the increase in stalls, and customers can now complete the bulk of their weekly shopping at the market. The Hamilton Farmers' Market is the only shopping venue in the city where people can buy direct from the person who has grown or made the product, which is helping to restore the link between producer and consumer.

The Hamilton Farmers' Market is an active member of the umbrella organisation Farmers Market New Zealand, with our Chairman being an executive of FMNZ, and our manager the regional co-ordinator. There are now 6 farmers' markets in the central north island. Much can be gained through mutual support and discussion. Recently, HFM & Cambridge Farmers' Market merged to form a single Trust enabling the sharing of costs, resources and management.

With the advent of supermarket monopolies and industrially produced food which can be high in additives, fillers and preservatives, farmers markets have grown from a consumer demand for fresher, locally produced food. A farmers' market is defined as a food only market where local growers, farmers and artisan food producers sell their wares directly to consumers. Vendors may only sell what they grow, farm, pickle, preserve, bake, smoke or catch themselves from within a defined local area. Consuming local produce is beneficial in that it strengthens the regional economy. Money flows to the producers and is not exported away from the local economy the way it does with supermarket shopping.

Fresh food with a direct link to producers is the driving force behind the success of the HFM. Customers can ask questions about their products and be offered a unique shopping experience. Almost all stalls offer samples of their products for tasting. The farmers' market is a place of activity, commerce, social gathering, and the sharing of



knowledge, and this all adds richness to the cultural environment of our city. It is also a wonderful business incubator; the complete focus on local small business enables the start-up operators to run a really successful business without the big guys dictating price, thereby stimulating the local economy.

The home of the Sunday market is the WINTEC car park and whilst a fantastic location in summer, the lack of shelter can mean gusty winds as well as wet customers and stall holders on winter mornings. Proposals from the HFM strategic plan are being implemented with the aim of improving the location to further build on the success of the market. With the increase in stalls and customers, car parking has occasionally been a problem at the Sunday market.

Spokesperson Jonathan Walker, Hamilton Farmers' Market Trust Chairman.