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Farmers Markets New Zealand

Strategic Plan

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Background

Farmers Markets New Zealand became an Incorporated Society in November 2005.

The set up of the national body coincided with an agreement with, and seed funding from New Zealand Trade and Enterprise to establish a network of Farmers Markets around New Zealand.

The agreement also involved building a Farmers Markets website and developing a Market handbook for how to establish and run a Farmers Market.

One year on, this work is now complete, with 24 affiliated Farmers Markets in the network, 4 outside the network, and 12 more in the development stages. The website is running, and the handbook is complete and in use.

So it this strategic plan is the “what now” for FMNZ.

This document has been drafted following a half-day workshop with FMNZ committee members (Chris, Jenny, Ian) and other invitees (Angela, David).

Mission

Farmers Markets New Zealand’s mission is to:

foster the ongoing development of farmers markets in New Zealand

As part of this overall purpose, the national organisation (FMNZ) exists to:

- Spread passion for fresh, local, authentic food, by educating people and groups and engaging with (or lobbying) local government or national bodies.
- Protect and develop the Farmers Market brand, and brand values of authenticity, local, fresh food produce.
- Act as a mentor to local Farmers Markets, sharing knowledge and information.
- Progress the common interests of FM members.
- Facilitate excellent communication between markets and with consumers.
- Support local market managers to help local markets be successful.

Vision

Our vision is to...

develop a national network of around 50 authentic Farmers Markets, drawn together by a shared passion for and commitment to fresh, locally produced, authentic food direct to consumers.

For FMNZ specifically, this means:

- Working towards certification - showing each market does indeed meet the definition and standards of a “Farmers Market”.
- Being a source for member Markets looking for quality help, information, resources, advice etc.
- FMNZ being established on a professional footing – with a paid coordinator (in time), and paid contractors delivering specific project outcomes.
- FMNZ taking on the overall role of PR and marketing the “Farmers Market movement” – but this does not in any way negate the local efforts to promote a specific market.
- FMNZ taking on national responsibilities around internal communication (across the network), liaising with Economic development Agencies, funding sources and national organisations with like interests.

Values

Farmers Markets in New Zealand believe in sustainable, authentic, locally produced, fresh food.

As well as these “food” elements, we value:

- Building and strengthening the social capital in our communities
- Educating people on flavour, how to select produce, how cook real food, nutrition.
- Value for money
- Sustainable, self-sufficient Farmers Markets.

Current Issues

The following comprises the strategic issues that need attention to enable FMNZ to fulfil our mission and progress our vision. These are listed in order of importance...

1. Protecting the authenticity of Farmers Markets, and adherence to the definition of what a Farmers Market is.

Farmers markets have been set up around the country in good faith and not all are strictly adhering to the definition. This can cause friction between vendors (fairness issues) and confusion amongst consumers (“*why are you selling bananas?*”)

This raises the question of certification, standards and policy, and use of the Farmers Market brand which needs to be addressed.

Related to this is whether we can register the definition of “Farmers Markets” with the Intellectual Property Office, or create and trademark (and license) a common brand/logo.

2. We need to move beyond a totally volunteer-based structure and organisation. Eventually people need to be paid for the contribution they are making. There may be scope for a paid coordinator, or to use contractors for specific projects.
3. The need and desire to keep FM members beyond the first year, by staying relevant to them, adding value through clear benefits and supports.
4. Communications issues
 - a. The Farmers Market principles do not always flow through to being fully understood and applied.
 - b. Not all members use the same communications channels (e.g. some don't have or use email).
 - c. In-person communication and support from FMNZ is by far the most effective, and we need to allow for this in our planning and budgeting.
5. Organisational structure is an issue, in that there is a structure on paper, but the roles are not all filled, and national coordination is still largely the domain of Chris, Jenny and Ian.
6. Something to stay mindful of is that the position of NZ as an exporter of food is contrary to the Farmers Market principles of “eat local”.

Opportunities

The Farmers Market movement is being very well received in New Zealand from locals and visitors alike. Media coverage has been very positive, and the markets are growing in popularity. Established markets are increasingly becoming part of the social fabric of the community and looked upon favourably by local authorities, Economic Development agencies and the like.

This presents a number of opportunities, and will continue to do so. Some of the opportunities identified are listed here:

- Improve networking and communications between existing markets. Set up good communication channels that will cope with further expansion of the FM network. Better support new Markets in set up phase. For example allow for a visit and onsite advice.
- Foster good working relationships with Australian Farmers Markets, and look for opportunities to work internationally with like-minded organisations. There may be an opportunity to share or sell our model into other countries in future.
- Position Farmers Markets (in the minds of consumers) as a role model, source of knowledge or influencer regarding healthy lifestyles (by association with fresh, local, authentic food). There will be opportunities to access funding sources for projects.
- Engage in research to explore how Farmers Markets impact local communities:
 - Social capital
 - Economy
 - Purchase behaviour of consumers
 - Etc.

This knowledge will also open up opportunities to further develop Farmers Markets, collaborate with community/govt agencies and access funding.

- Work towards being a self sufficient, viable organisation.
 - A funded coordinator
 - Funded contracts, delivered by contractors to FMNZ.
- Investigate a licence/franchise concept for the use of the Farmers Market name and branding. This implies Certification, and establishing a (simple) set of standards.

Medium Term Goals and Priorities

Over the next two to three years, FMNZ plans to achieve the following. These are again in order of priority.

1. Better support members in a practical way.

Visit (or revisit) all Farmers Markets over this current season, and set up for ongoing visits.

- a. Collect information for sharing (e.g. best practice)
- b. Incorporate ongoing education into visits – maybe via a workshop after the Market.
- c. In-person mentoring and support.

Also ensure the Market Managers' handbook is read, understood and applied by all Market Managers.

Encourage Managers to be actively using the website.

- 1= Complete the stallholders manual (immediately)

2. Address the organisational structure of FMNZ.
 - Get people into roles
 - Canvas people to become involved
 - set AGM date, and organise.
 - Do we need to establish regional clusters?

Move beyond a purely volunteer model. Look at the options to fund a paid coordinator. Agree specific projects and seek funding for paying contractors to deliver them.

- 2= Commission research (pending obtaining funding) on the social and economic impacts of Farmers Markets. Also look at international research already available.

3. Create a Certification standard (or set of standards), and this includes revisiting the definition of Farmers Markets. But keep it simple!

4. Engage with non-member markets and encourage them to join.

Define the member benefits and create a membership pack (contractor project?)

5. Develop a web-enabled database of vendors and products and customers.
 - Later on, not a high priority now.

Budget

All of the activities above involve cost, although specific actions and projects have not been defined and costed in detail.

The job of costing the above work is yet to be done, funding sources identified and specific proposals developed. This will need to happen as a next-step after this strategic plan has been agreed upon.

Appendix - Strengths and Weaknesses of FMNZ

Strengths

- Passion and energy
- National network & Association
- 2-yearly conference
- Positive media coverage
- Website
- Management handbook
- Stall holders manual
- Existing members – show strong buy-in (x24)
- Board acts as a facilitator, keeping the group together.
- Government buy-in to FMNZ – MED, MSD, NZTE etc.

Weaknesses

- Time constraints
- Funding
- Distance between members – hard to get together
- Lack of recognisable brand
- Lack of cohesion of members – authenticity issue
- Weak organisation – the message and the principles can be undermined through misunderstanding. No “teeth”.
- Lack of implementation
- Mixed understandings of what a FM is all about.
- No defined media strategy at a national level.
- No paid coordinator.