

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Sullivan Catskills Farmers Markets Launch NATIONAL FM WEEK

SULLIVAN COUNTY, NY— The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has declared the first full week in August as National Farmers' Market Week. The celebration comes to the Sullivan Catskills with a full week of special market activities. Each market is individually operated and will plan at least one special event: from cooking demos to live music, vendor samples to children's activities. Check with each market or visit [www.homegrownwithheart.com/catskills-farmers-market-week](http://www.homegrownwithheart.com/catskills-farmers-market-week) for more details as they become available.

The Sullivan Catskills Farmers' Market collective is also sharing ten reasons why shopping farmers' markets is good for everyone: individuals, families, farmers, and the Catskills economy. The community is invited to pledge to "Spend Ten" at the markets. As a thank you for pledging, supporters can pick up a free gift at select markets during Farmers' Market Week – like a tote bag or magnet.

"Farmers' markets are inclusive and welcoming, and it starts with the friendly farmers. 92% of shoppers enjoy meeting farmers. That connection adds even more value to their purchase. Our goal is to prove that markets are affordable by asking everyone to spend \$10. It's amazing to see what you can really get for just \$10, especially since we are in peak produce season right now," said Melinda Meddaugh, agriculture and food systems leader of Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County.

"When the Sullivan Catskills Farmers' Markets say 'everybody', they mean it. Recipients of SNAP, WIC, senior, and veteran benefits all are incentivized to shop at the local markets. WIC mothers and seniors over 60 that meet basic qualifications are able to receive \$20 in farmers' market checks, FREE. SNAP recipients are given \$4 free for every \$10 they spend in benefits."

More information and opportunities for Sullivan Catskills Farmers' Markets are online at [www.homegrownwithheart.com](http://www.homegrownwithheart.com) and [www.facebook.com/sullivancatskillsfarmersmarkets](https://www.facebook.com/sullivancatskillsfarmersmarkets). Promotions and events for the Sullivan Catskills Farmers' Markets are organized by Sullivan County Government, Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County, and markets in Sullivan County. Each farmers' market is independently operated.

In 2015, Sullivan County was awarded a Farmers' Market Promotion Project grant from the USDA. Funds were used to launch a research-based marketing campaign to improve the market. The first step was to

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benchmark established farmers market performance in 2016, implement strategies in 2017, and then measure the results.

- 78% of vendors reported an increase in sales
- Over half of shoppers increased the frequency of their visits
- Market attendance in July and August grew by 63%
- Promotions and campaigns reached 82% of shoppers
- 3x more benefits recipients shopping at markets

The campaign focused on launching cooking demos, interactive events, educational resources, recipes, and more. These efforts resulted in an overall boost in customer visits and spending at the market. In 2018, the markets continue to work together to launch collaborative events like Spend Ten, Senior Weekend, and National Farmers' Market Week.

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