



**FARMERS'
MARKETS**
of Nova Scotia

Annual Report

2023

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ABOUT FMNS

Founded in 2004, Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia is a non-profit cooperative of farmers' markets, for farmers' markets. With over 40 unique members across the province, our cooperative is the unified voice of our region's farmers' market sector. Learn more about our members by [clicking here](#).

- Vision (updated in 2023)
 - Vibrant and diverse communities that are welcoming, economically prosperous, and food secure.
- Mission (updated in 2023)
 - Our cooperative advances growth and prosperity for our members and their communities through support, programs, advocacy, marketing, and engagement.
- Our Core Values (updated in 2023)
 - Buying Local: Farmers' markets exist to develop the capacity of communities to support individuals and small enterprises that grow, make, and/or bake goods and products for local consumption. We are transparent and accountable for that focus.
 - Economic Development & Incubation: We believe in a buy local philosophy and actively work to ensure our cooperative and its members are doing their part to drive and support local economic activity.
 - Support & Education: We believe that advocacy, sectoral marketing, and storytelling, are foundational to support the advancement of our cause.
 - Food Access: We believe that access to safe and nourishing food is an inherent right, and we are passionate about overcoming barriers that limit access.
 - Community: We believe that collaboration, inclusion, representation, cooperation, and accessibility are necessary components of community, and we strive to support them.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Our Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia Cooperative is approaching its 20th anniversary. In 2004 a small group of Nova Scotia farmers' market organizers recognized the need for our sector to have greater coordination, partnerships, and representation with government. Over that almost 20-year history our cooperative, and sector, has grown and matured into an internationally recognized group.

Please get ready for some celebrating in 2024. This annual report highlights the impressive work of our people over 2023 – a new strategic plan, promoting our sector, on-going programs, and partnerships. As always, our focus is how best we can serve our members and farmers' market community.

As the new president of our volunteer board of directors I am excited about where our cooperative is heading and how our local farmers' markets are getting more recognition for their community impact. The updated vision statement in our new strategic plan reflects how we see the impact of our cooperative and individual farmers' markets.

*“Vibrant and diverse communities that are welcoming,
economically prosperous, and food secure.”*

We know that our local farmers' market create community, welcome everyone, are apart of the backbone of a strong local economy and a major component in ensuring our food security as well as food sovereignty.

I invite you to learn more about Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia in this annual report. A huge thank you to our committed staff, Justin, Alicia, and Emily, for their always impressive work. A huge thank you to our volunteers, partners, and funders. Finally, a huge thank you to our farmers' market members. Everyone who makes, bakes, and grows, as well as the managers, who make our local markets happen. It would be impossible for our cooperative and sector to be where it is now without our people.

See you at the market.

Ashley Marlin
President

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Over the past year, FMNS has experienced productive changes, a new strategic plan, growth in our membership, and a renewed confidence that our sector has never been more important than it is right now. As we wind down the year, I think it's important to remind ourselves of the incredibly hard work that the folks involved in Nova Scotia's farmers' market sector have contributed to continuing to grow our movement. From our market managers, to the staff and volunteers who make them run, and to the vendors: the farmers, producers, artists, and crafters—thank you. Thank you for stepping up and for digging your heels into the community that you so deeply believe in.

I'd also like to personally thank Margaret Ells, our outgoing President, and to Robin Johnston and Pauline Singer, who have ended their Board terms. A massive thank you to Rebekkah Hyams, our outgoing Administrative Lead, who sets her sights on Ontario. And a thank you to our current Board of Directors and our staff, Alicia and Emily, who have helped us grow FMNS and our sector.

I also think that it's imperative that we take a moment to appreciate just how difficult a year it's been for our farmers. A polar vortex in early 2023 wiped out a significant portion of our stone fruit crops before the growing season even began. The spring was uncharacteristically dry, resulting not only in pressures on our farmers from drought, but from record-setting wildfires as well. Then came massive flooding and stubbornly persistent wet conditions as we moved into the growing season, wiping out significant portions of our farmers' crops, and causing a litany of challenges for our meat producers. From reduced yields to feed shortages, our farmers have continued to valiantly push on in an effort to continue to provide healthy local food to Nova Scotians.

This has all been set to a current backdrop of statistics that are hard to bear: 22% of Nova Scotians experienced food insecurity in 2022, while we received the lowest score of any province on Food Banks Canada's poverty indicators report this year. Meanwhile, the Government of Canada's very own Competition Bureau found that the big grocery store chains are causing everyday consumers to directly bear the brunt of increased food prices. Our farmers' markets can and must continue to step up and play a central role in offering a new way forward. One rooted in community.

Whether it's adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, helping to promote food security, or building inclusive, fair, and community-based economies, I truly believe that farmers' markets will play a pivotal role in moving toward FMNS' new vision of "vibrant and diverse communities that are welcoming, economically prosperous, and food secure". We need to let go of status quo thinking, and embrace a new path forward that focuses on investing in and leveraging our local producers, food systems, and scale-appropriate regional infrastructure to build prosperity for all.

Our growing farmers' markets sector is an ideal launchpad for these much-needed changes, because our farmers' markets already provide so many opportunities, services, and impacts. Our markets have continued to play an increasingly important role as social, cultural, and community hubs, bringing people together during a time where so many of us are facing social isolation and a lack of community cohesion. Our markets are playing an increasingly prominent role as small business incubators and job creators, further enmeshing themselves into a small business ecosystem. Our markets have been economic engines, providing local food, goods, and economic activity directly to our communities. And our markets are fostering transparency, community, neighbourliness, and camaraderie in a time where the public is losing trust in the industrial food system.

Here at FMNS, as we look towards celebrating our twentieth anniversary as a cooperative next year, we're working to further build on these core elements that make our markets so special. We've been developing and will be launching our brand new Taking Root program, which will provide support directly to entrepreneurs from equity deserving communities and equip our markets with the opportunity to grow their vendor base. We'll be publishing the results of a brand new economic impact analysis of our sector, helping our member farmers' markets better tell their stories with the help of concrete economic figures. We'll continue to grow our membership and our marketing and promotions efforts, driving more people to our markets. We'll launch more resources and offer more online training opportunities. And we'll continue to work with the government to ensure that more funding is provided to our Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program, in a time where such help has never been more needed.

While 2023 has been marked by difficult experiences, one thing that keeps me hopeful and driven is the fact that so many of the solutions required to the challenges we're facing are found at the heart of our farmers' markets. The very strengthening of our movement and our community is the balm to so many of our challenges. So as we take a moment to reflect and catch our breath, I urge each and everyone of you to put a hand on your heart and give yourself a big old thank you. We've got this.

Warm regards,
Justin Cantafio
Executive Director

MEET THE TEAM (BOARD + STAFF)

Board of Directors

- Kristi Russell, President
- Ashley Marlin, President
- Gareth Winsor, Treasurer
- Rachael Browne, Secretary
- Therese Cruz, Member at Large
- Rhonda Johnson, Member at Large
- Shawn Crouse, Member at Large
- Steph Osberg, Member at Large



Staff

- Justin Cantafio, Executive Director
- Alicia Steeves, Membership & Programs Lead
- Emily Lawrence, Communications & Creative Lead



COMINGS & GOINGS

This past year marked changes for both our staff and our Board of Directors. Our team was sad to say goodbye to Rebekkah, who left us this past summer alongside her family (including a new family member, baby Noa!) as they moved to Ontario. Rebekkah joined us in the spring 2022 in an interim role, and then stayed on as Administrative Lead, helping us complete several key projects. A huge thank you to Rebekkah, who brought wonderful ideas, warmth, and enthusiasm to her role at FMNS, as well as a sincere love of local food (specifically pastries).

Our Board of Directors also saw changes this past year. We said farewell to Margaret Ells, our outgoing President, and Robin Johnston, each after having served two generous 3-year terms, and Pauline Singer, who graced us with three helpful years. All three of these humans have been instrumental in shaping FMNS into the organization it is today!

We welcome Kristi Russell, our new Vice-President, onto the Board, alongside Stef Osberg and Shawn Crouse. These three have already made a huge impact on our organization in short order!

Lastly, we welcome a familiar face, Ashley Marlin, back to the role of President. Welcome back!

MEMBERSHIP

Our cooperative had 44 member farmers' markets across the province in 2023!

This year, we were happy to have welcomed eight farmers' markets into our cooperative:

- Clarence Country Market
- Isle Madame Public Market
- Kingston Farmers' Market
- Middleton Farmers' Market
- Old School Markets - Barney's River Station Museum
- Portapique Market
- Sackville Farmers' Market at Acadia Park
- Springhill Farmers' Market

Please [click here](#) for an interactive map and information about our member markets.

For more information or to join our cooperative, [click here](#).



FMNS STRATEGIC PLAN

By the end of 2021, we'd practically hit all our Strategic Objectives outlined in our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan! Starting in the fall of 2022, FMNS started working with Third Sector Enhancement to begin a new 3-year Strategic Plan that we officially kicked into gear this February!

Here are our 2023-2026 strategic priorities from our new Strategic Plan:

- A. Organizational Capacity Building
 - Rationale: To become a mature, well-funded, sustainable organization and employer of choice, so that we can make greater strides towards our vision of success. The growth of FMNS as a regional, national, and international leader creates an opportunity to increase staff involvement in managerial and financial issues and opportunities. There is both a willingness and capacity to engage staff more fully. Equally, this growth enables a realignment of board composition.
 - Approach: We will put our core values into practice while reviewing policy gaps, clearly defining our roles and responsibilities and establish succession plans for all levels of the organization. We will be creative in defining our procedures and processes with a focus on financial sustainability. This will be a combined staff and board activity.
- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access
 - Rationale: FMNS and the markets they serve, need to be more representative of the communities they serve. FMNS now has the capacity to be more proactive in its ability to address the diversity gaps in FMNS and our member markets. We know that greater diversity leads to more vibrant and engaged communities.
 - Approach: We will undertake our own policy review, identify barriers for FMNS and individual markets, identify community partners and seek to expand the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon program.
- Member Capacity
 - Rationale: As a member driven co-op, FMNS is designed to serve the needs of member markets. FMNS can only succeed if local markets succeed. Together they support economic prosperity and create positive community impact. FMNS is well-positioned to help member markets optimize their operational capacity.
 - Approach: We will provide training and upskilling to member markets for free or at discounted rates. We will evaluate the impact and desirability of our programs and projects.

FMNS STRATEGIC PLAN

- Strategic Relationships
 - Rationale: FMNS contributes to many aspects of vibrant communities, including food security, local economic development, enhancing cultural awareness, and broadening the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It is incumbent on FMNS to draw on the strengths of others to identify similar visions and goals and join forces for mutual benefit, to reduce redundancies thereby and increasing impact.
 - Approach: We will identify and explore like-minded organizations and undertake an environmental scan of the local food, entrepreneurial, and community development ecosystems. We will seek to identify donors and sponsors with a commonality of purpose. We will actively engage our staff with an attitude of abundance.

- Advocacy & Engagement
 - Rationale: The enhancement of local community capacity is important if rural communities are to thrive and survive. As a sector leader, FMNS can mobilize and connect partners through advocacy, engagement, and education. Its connectivity to a broad range of partners and influencers enables FMNS to be a credible lead advocate. It is incumbent on FMNS to advance the ability of markets to act as a contributor of an enhanced and sustainable community fabric and resiliency.
 - Approach: We will identify and prioritize sectoral opportunities, gaps, and barriers. We will create relevant relationships to increase the reach of our marketing and promotional efforts for the sector. We will disperse important messages in a digestible format for consumption by the public, delivered primarily through our well-established and growing online presence. In order to continually improve, we will monitor and evaluate our reach on an ongoing basis.

OVERVIEW OF KEY 2023 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

- **Advocacy and government relations**
 - Worked with the NS Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to provide sector-specific feedback for the upcoming [Nova Scotia Food & Beverage Strategy](#).
 - Lobbied the Government of Nova Scotia to increase provincial funding support for our [Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program](#).
 - Worked with the NS Department of Agriculture on their proposed institutional procurement strategy and [Buy Local campaign](#).
 - Continued to work directly with the NS Department of Economic Development to prototype and assess the feasibility of the [Nova Scotia Loyal](#) concept.
 - Actively participating in an [ongoing national campaign](#) requesting the Government of Canada to create a dedicated fund to support provincial farmers' market nutrition coupon programs.
- **Marketing & promotion**
 - FMNS continues to grow our social media following by a significant margin, working to build our audience and increase the number of Nova Scotians who shop locally, while highlighting important topics such as: showcasing our member farmers' markets, marketing and promoting the farmers' market movement, and drawing attention to food system related issues.
 - We are now up to over 40,000 followers between our Instagram, Facebook, and X accounts.
 - On July 27, we made a post on social media ([view it here](#)) about the harsh realities facing our farmers that went viral. The post was also accompanied by a press release, which resulted in significant press coverage, including radio. This press coverage also enabled FMNS to play a central role in laying the groundwork for CBC to dedicate its episode of *Maritime Connection* (an Atlantic Canada-wide call-in radio show) on Sunday, August 6 to farmers' markets, and featured farmers' markets and vendors from our cooperative—great press coverage.
 - FMNS, as a founding organization of Canadian Farmers' Markets, helped to secure funding from Agriculture & Agri Food Canada's AgriCommunications Grant, which enabled the creation of a national farmers' market marketing campaign.
 - Note: for more information about our marketing activities, please review our Marketing Report on page 17.

OVERVIEW OF KEY 2023 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

- **Training & professional development**
 - Hosted 8 webinars through our 2023 *Training Tuesdays* webinar program in April and May, 2023.
 - All 2021 through 2023 Training Tuesday webinars are available for FMNS members and their vendors in our password-protected resource library by [clicking here](#).
 - We will be continuing the Training Tuesdays webinar series in 2024, and you can have your say in the proposed topics by participating in our upcoming 2023 Annual Membership Survey!
 - Provided “Farmers’ Market University” to 15 farmers’ market managers. Administered by the Halifax Brewery Market’s very own Alison Lynes, this was a 10-day, 40-hour course for new and existing farmers’ market managers, resulting in provincially-recognized professional accreditation from the NS Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration.
 - This will also result in a brand new *Market Manager’s Handbook*, which will be distributed throughout FMNS in the spring of 2024.
 - FMNS has continued to grow and maintain our *FMNS Market Managers & Staff* private Facebook group, which allows managers to communicate with one another, ask questions, and share best practices. If you’re a manager and you’d like to join this group, please email info@farmersmarketsnovascotia.ca.
- **Halifax Regional Food Hub**
 - FMNS is a founding member of the Halifax Regional Food Hub, which is now incorporated.
 - The Halifax Regional Food Hub is an active and emerging project that seeks to build and strengthen Nova Scotia’s local food system by connecting local producers throughout mainland Nova Scotia to wholesale buyers in Halifax, Dartmouth, and adjacent communities.
 - The Hub will provide services that include aggregation, storage (dry, cold and frozen), online ordering and payment processing, order fulfillment and delivery, and a rentable commercial kitchen. Wholesale buyers will include community organizations, institutions and independently-owned food businesses.
 - The Halifax Regional Food Hub has been shortlisted for the [Nova Scotia Community Economic Development Fund](#), and the results of our application will be made public in February 2024.

- **Resources**

- Launched [How to Start and Grow Your Business at a Farmers' Market](#), a comprehensive 60-page guidebook, available online and in print (distributed to community partner organizations across Nova Scotia). This guidebook was made available thanks to funding provided by the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.
- We've continued to add elements to our members-only [password protected resource library](#). All staff, managers, board members, and vendors of FMNS member farmers' markets can get their own unique password to our library.
- Email info@farmersmarketsnovascotia.ca if you don't have your password yet.

- **Rapid Market Assessment**

- FMNS has undertaken a province-wide analysis of the economic impact of the province's farmers' market sector for the first time since 2013, enabling a ten-year comparative analysis of our impact, as well as personalized impact profiles for participating FMNS member farmers' markets.
- The final report will be ready in early 2024.

- **New merchandise and marketing elements**

- Continuing our exciting partnership over the past few years, we're thrilled to have had the chance to work with [Kat Frick Miller](#) who designed our brand new [Hodge Podge Mini Tote Bag](#) and [bumper sticker](#), as well as more illustrations for us to use in our marketing, promotions, and branding activities.
- Our own in-house creative genius Emily also created two exciting [new bumper stickers!](#)
- Email info@farmersmarketsnovascotia.ca if you're a farmers' market seeking to purchase FMNS merchandise at a wholesale discount.

- **Simply Seasonal Cookbook**

- Our first ever cookbook, Simply Seasonal, features 11 recipes, lots of food photography, and tips for adapting the recipes by the season.
- The function of the cookbook was to gain more newsletter subscribers, build brand awareness and inspire people to try new recipes with local ingredients.
- We plan on creating more cookbooks in the future, and exploring print options.
- [Click here](#) to view our new cookbook!

- **Taking Root incubation and acceleration program**

- Thanks to generous funding from the NS Department of Agriculture, FMNS has begun the process of developing a province-wide program specifically aimed at increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for equity deserving entrepreneurs to sell at our member farmers' markets.
- We've partnered with Overstory Consulting, to assist with program development and evaluation.
- We've secured partnerships with social organizations across Nova Scotia.
- We will launch our first cohort of program participants in May of 2024.

- **Advocacy**

- FMNS has continued to advocate on behalf of our sector, our member farmers' markets, and our vendors.
- This includes a spring and fall press campaign (backed by social media calls to action) regarding the Province's decision to reduce the amount of funding made available to our 2023 Nourishing Communities program, compared to 2022.
- FMNS, as a founding organization of Canadian Farmers' Markets, is actively involved in orchestrating a national campaign calling on the Government of Canada to create a dedicated fund to support provincial nutrition coupon programs. This campaign includes paper petitions collected at over 50 farmers' markets across Canada, a press campaign, and requests to meet with the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.
- Justin Cantafio, on behalf of FMNS, was called to present in person to every Deputy Minister with the Province of Nova Scotia on October 30, 2023.

- **Partnership with Dalhousie University**

- FMNS has partnered with Dr. Phoebe Stevens and others from Dalhousie University.
- We are assisting with a Canada-wide analysis of the cost of various foods at supermarkets and farmers' markets.
- This will enable FMNS to determine whether price increases have been higher in national food chains versus localized farmers' markets, enabling us to better tell the story of the importance of promoting local food systems.

- **Website optimization**

- FMNS secured \$15,000 in funding through [Digital Nova Scotia's](#) Tourism Digital Assistance Program.
- This enabled us to work with a local firm, [Ralli Marketing](#), to optimise the user interface and SEO of our website and improve our marketing efforts.

- **FMNS Donor Strategy**

- FMNS has developed a tiered donor strategy to attract individual, small business, and corporate sponsorship dollars that will support our core activities and programming and contribute to increasing the impact of our *Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program*.
- Donors have the option to receive up to 50% of the value of their donation back to them as food bucks at a market of their choice.
- For more information about our Donor Strategy, please [click here](#).

- **Regional collaboration**

- FMNS was a key organizer of the [Dig In Atlantic Food Systems Summit](#), which took place during November 2022 in Debert, Nova Scotia. FMNS is a founding member of the Atlantic Food Action Coalition (AFAC), an Atlantic Canada-wide charitable organization dedicated to building food security and food sovereignty across the region. AFAC was incorporated in 2023.
- FMNS continues to grow our partnership base with social organizations throughout the province through our Nourishing Communities program, as well as new partnerships through our Taking Root program.
- FMNS is a founding member of the Halifax Regional Food Hub, which is now a registered cooperative in active consideration for funding from the provincial government.
- FMNS continues to represent Nova Scotia's farmers' market sector through the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Commodity Roundtables meetings.

- **National & international collaboration**

- FMNS' Executive Director Justin Cantafio is the Co-Founder of Canadian Farmers' Markets, Canada's national farmers' market coalition. Canadian Farmers' Markets was founded in November of 2020 and federally incorporated as a non-profit society in July 2022. Justin Cantafio continues to serve as the President of Canadian Farmers' Markets.
- Canadian Farmers' Markets was a member of the planning committee for the 11th International Public Markets Conference, which was held in Toronto in June of 2023.
- Justin Cantafio was a member of the conference's opening plenary, and also led a conference session on farmers' market nutrition coupon programs.
- Canadian Farmers' Markets is a founding member of the World Farmers' Markets Coalition (WFMC).
- Justin Cantafio, on behalf of FMNS and Canadian Farmers' Markets, attended WFMC's inaugural General Assembly in Rome in May 2023, providing opening plenary remarks.

NOURISHING COMMUNITIES FOOD COUPON PROGRAM UPDATES

2023 marked Year 5 of our program, where we worked with 33 farmers' markets across the province thanks to generous funding provided by Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage Nova Scotia, supported by Nova Scotia Young Farmers, the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission, and funding generated through FMNS fundraising and donor efforts.

Due to a reduction in funding from the provincial government (\$422,400 invested from the NS Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage in 2023 compared to \$494,800 in 2022) and the phasing out of the federal Emergency Food Fund, FMNS was forced to reduce the number of participants in our program by 25% compared to 2022.

Despite this, roughly \$300,000 in anonymous but fully trackable complementary currencies ("market bucks") have been in circulation to over 400 low-income households experiencing food insecurity, in partnership with over 75 social organizations.

We intend to grow this program to over 35 member farmers' markets and to issue over \$500,000 in food bucks to over 1,000 households in 2024.

About the Nourishing Communities program:

The Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Project (NCFCP) involves FMNS working with our member farmers' markets and partner social organizations to increase food security, help break the cycle of poverty, and support individuals and families in need across Nova Scotia. The NCFCP allows project participants to use an anonymous alternative currency, or "food bucks", which can be redeemed at any vendor stall at participating markets.

Working with 1 to 3 partner social organizations, such as food banks, shelters, or senior care facilities, each farmers' market manager selects the partner social organizations based on those organizations' mandates and the individuals they serve. Partner organizations select individuals, couples, and families in need who will benefit from reduced food insecurity and increased social inclusion.

For more information about the program, including a report that demonstrates its incredible impact in 2022 (2023 report available soon), please [click here](#).

*** We look forward to further expanding this project in 2024! If you're interested in supporting this program, please [click here!](#) ***

MARKETING

- Social media followers
 - Instagram followers (annual growth = +13.2%)
 - December 2022: 12,100
 - December 2023: 13,700
 - Facebook followers (annual growth = +2.9%)
 - December 2021: 17,496
 - December 2022: 18,000
 - X (the trash bin formally known as Twitter) followers (annual growth = -0.4%)
 - December 2022: 9,455
 - December 2023: 9,415
 - Total followers on social media (annual growth = +5.3%)
 - December 2022: 39,051
 - December 2023: 41,115
- Market Vendor Connect
 - Market Vendor Connect is a private Facebook group that serves as an online community for FMNS to interact directly with farmers' market managers, staff, and most importantly, vendors. This online group is particularly helpful for farmers' market managers looking for new vendors. [Click here](#) to join.
 - Members (annual growth = +18.8%)
 - December 2022: 590
 - December 2023: 701
- I ❤️ NS Farmers' Markets
 - I ❤️ NS Farmers' Markets is a private Facebook group that serves as an online community for FMNS to interact directly with farmers' market shoppers. [Click here](#) to join.
 - Members (annual growth = 42.0%)
 - December 2022: 2,239
 - December 2023: 3,180
- Industry newsletter
 - Subscribers (annual growth = +1.7%)
 - December 2022: 749
 - December 2023: 762

- The Basket newsletter (public facing)
 - Subscribers (annual growth = +29.5%)
 - December 2022: 7,570
 - December 2023: 9,803
 - Open rate
 - 2022: 42.5%
 - 2023: 47%
- Website usage
 - Users (annual growth = +7.9%)
 - 2022: 43,109
 - 2023: 46,168
 - Website views (annual growth = 13.2%)
 - 2022: 97,871
 - 2023: 110,796
- Wholesale merchandise for members
 - We provide deep discounts on our merchandise to our member farmers' markets, allowing them to sell products at their markets and generate their own revenues.
 - Through orders from our member markets, we've calculated that there was a revenue for markets of \$25,765 for our members, compared to \$8,700 in 2022.
- Print maps
 - We distributed 45,000 map brochures across the province in 2023, up from 24,350 in 2022.
 - In 2023, our distribution expanded to a variety of locations, thanks in great part to Alicia's efforts!
 - 14,650 to member markets
 - 10,000 through Saltscapes
 - 1,200 to Halifax Airport
 - 4,400 to provincial VICs
 - 4,975 community visitor information centres
 - 8,170 to NS libraries
 - 650 to museums and cultural centres
 - 1,050 to small businesses
- Cookbook
 - Emily, our Communications & Creative Lead, created our first cookbook, *Simply Seasonal*, which was downloaded by 3,276 people in 2023.

OVERVIEW OF MAIN FUNDING SOURCES

- Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program Communities, Culture and Heritage
Nova Scotia graciously contributed \$422,400 towards our 2023 Nourishing Communities program (compared to \$494,800 in 2022). We also received \$500 from the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission and \$500 from Nova Scotia Young Farmers.
 - A minimum of \$422,400 has been permanently included in Nova Scotia's provincial budget for our Nourishing Communities program since 2021.
- Marketing and promotions
 - \$7,800 in funding was provided by the NS Department of Agriculture to help cover the costs of printing and distributing 45,000 print farmers' market map brochures across Nova Scotia
 - Note: While we secured \$47,300 in pre-approved funds from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture in 2022 to help us cover the cost of our marketing and promotions activities for our sector, including our Market(ing) Grant for our membership, digital and print ads, and a television and radio commercials, there was a very limited funding available from the province in 2023 due to a year-long delay in the announcement of Nova Scotia's Food & Beverage Strategy.
- Taking Root program
 - \$200,000 was provided by the NS Department of Agriculture for our Taking Root incubation program, which will move from the program development phase in 2023 to the piloting and evaluation phase in 2024.
- Rapid Market Assessment
 - \$40,600.00 was provided by the NS Department Economic Development towards our 2023 Rapid Market Assessment (RMA), which includes a 10-year analysis between 2023 and 2013, when we conducted our previous RMA.
- 2023-2026 Strategic Plan
 - Our brand new strategic plan was made available thanks to \$6,150.00 funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture's Business Advisory Services program and \$2,115.50 in funding through the Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development's Consultancy Advisory Services program.

OVERVIEW OF MAIN FUNDING SOURCES

- 2023 Farmers' Market University & 2024 Market Manager's Handbook
 - \$12,475.00 in funding was pre-approved by the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration to cover the costs of administering Farmers' Market University and in developing our upcoming new Market Manager's Handbook.
- Website optimization
 - FMNS secured \$15,000 in funding through [Digital Nova Scotia's](#) Tourism Digital Assistance Program.
- Annual membership dues
 - We received \$53,782.88 in membership dues from 44 member farmers' markets in 2023.
- Merchandise revenue
 - We generated \$25,765 in merchandise revenues from wholesale sales to our member markets and direct sales to the public.

COMING UP

- **2024 Training Tuesdays spring webinar series**
 - Just like the past three years, FMNS will feature 8 to 9 webinars spread out once per week during the spring of 2024.
 - Some webinars will be targeted towards farmers' market vendors, while others will be for farmers' market managers, staff, and board members.
 - The topics of these sessions are determined based on our annual membership survey and other feedback gathered throughout the year.
- **Growth of Nourishing Communities program**
 - We continue to work on securing more funding to grow and expand our *Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program* to at least 35 farmers' markets in communities across Nova Scotia in 2024.
 - Our objective is to help at least 1,000 low-income individuals to gain access to healthy local food and social inclusion at our member farmers' markets.
 - We will continue to work with the Province to request increased funding to grow our program, alongside our national campaign with Canadian Farmers' Markets to work with the Federal Government to create a dedicated national fund to support provincial nutrition coupon programs.
- **Collaboration with the Government of Nova Scotia**
 - FMNS will continue to work with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture's promotions arm to create printed maps of all the farmers' markets in Nova Scotia for 2024 and distribute them to tourism information hubs, community facilities, and businesses throughout the province.
 - FMNS will continue to work with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Department to ensure that our sector is prominently featured in and supported by the upcoming Nova Scotia Food & Beverage Strategy, which is expected to be launched in early 2023.
 - FMNS will continue to collaborate with the NSDA on their new *Nova Scotia Loyal* buy-local campaign that they will be launching in 2024, ensuring that our farmers' markets are strategically positioned in their new marketing and promotions strategy, and working collaboratively on projects to enhance the public profile of our sector.
- **Annual General Meeting**
- Our next AGM will take place in the spring of 2024 at the Truro Farmers' Market. Here you'll have an opportunity to have your voice heard, vote on FMNS affairs, connect with your peers, and enjoy lunch and snacks, including a repeat of the famous donuts and bubbly bar from 2023. Please stay tuned for updates in the New Year!

COMING UP

- **Taking Root incubation program**
 - We will shift from the program development phase to the program prototyping phase in 2024.

- **Updated Market Manager's Handbook**
 - We will launch a brand new, fully upgraded Market Manager's Handbook in early 2024.
 - This handbook will be available to our member markets, as well as aspiring farmers' markets.

- **Marketing**
 - We will expand our print market map reach through partnerships with businesses and through the creation of map posters for display purposes.
 - We will continue to experiment with reels format to bring more advocacy / information in a new engaging way. Develop a "reels cheat sheet" for me of go-to advocacy and content topics we can pull from when a meme goes viral.
 - We will continue to grow and build our newsletter, which is a big driver to our website! We will ensure that we maintain high engagement with the newsletter.
 - We will create a new cookbook to draw new customers.
 - We will celebrate the organization's 20th anniversary with a dedicated promotional campaign.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Don't forget! Being a member of the FMNS Cooperative has tremendous benefits for farmers' market managers, staff, board members, and vendors. Here is an overview of some of the benefits you can take advantage of at any time!

Not a member? You can join FMNS at any time by [clicking here!](#)

- Projects & Funding Opportunities
 - We're a community of practice, sharing resources and working collaboratively on projects. FMNS Cooperative members get a chance to work on group projects that benefit their market and their communities, securing free funding and resources to do so along the way.

- Training & Workshops
 - We're a North American leader in developing and delivering skill-building training programs and workshops for farmers' market vendors and personnel.
 - FMNS members get the opportunity to work one-on-one with our Communications and Creative Lead for targeted social media and marketing consults to improve the effectiveness of your social media channels and online marketing efforts. This service is offered free of charge to our members.
 - FMNS member farmers' market managers and staff can participate free of charge in our Training Tuesdays Webinar Series, and the only provincially accredited professional development series in Canada dedicated to farmers' market managers and staff.

- Resource Library
 - We carefully curate two constantly updated password-protected resource libraries full of helpful information, one for vendors, and one for market managers and staff.

- Marketing & promotion
 - We promote our member markets and their vendors through our large and ever-growing social media following.
 - We list all of our member farmers' markets in our online farmers' market map, which you can view by [clicking here](#).
 - We also include your market's information in our annual print map brochure, tens of thousands of which are distributed throughout the province!

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Discounted merchandise
 - We offer merchandise including canvas tote bags, button packs, stickers, and more at a wholesale rate to our member markets.
 - Our merchandise features the message "Shop Your Local Farmers' Market" along with original market-themed artwork by Dartmouth-based artist, Kat Frick Miller.
 - Selling FMNS merchandise at your market is a great opportunity to increase your revenue while offering beautiful products that promote the NS farmers' market sector.
- Group Liability Insurance Program
 - FMNS has brokered a deeply discounted group discount rate on farmers' market liability insurance through our relationship with the Cooperators. We also have specialized and customizable vendor liability options through our relationship with Duuo Insurance. You can learn about these two programs, exclusively available to FMNS member markets and their vendors, by [clicking here](#).
- Group Health Insurance Program
 - FMNS has also brokered a group discount rate for extended health insurance, providing a group rate for farmers' market staff, vendors, and vendor staff. This health insurance plan is exclusively for our farmers' market sector and is the only one of its kind in Canada. You can learn more about the group health insurance benefits rate by [clicking here](#).
- Community & Resources
 - Our monthly members-only industry newsletter is packed full of resources, important information, and opportunities for your market and vendors. It's the only one of its kind in Atlantic Canada.
 - FMNS also hosts several online communities through Facebook that you can use to connect with other FMNS farmers' market managers and vendors. We encourage you to join them right away:
 - You can view the *FMNS Market Managers & Staff* group by [clicking here](#). This group is for FMNS member farmers' market managers and staff only and is an active community for sharing best practices and asking questions to your peers.
 - You can view the *Market Vendor Connect* group by [clicking here](#). This group is for FMNS member farmers' market managers and for new and existing farmers' market vendors. It can be useful for vendor recruitment!

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Advocacy
 - With over 40 farmers' markets representing over 1,500 owner-operated businesses and growing, we're widely recognized by government and industry as the voice of the sector. We actively campaign to support our members and the sector. Our members get their voices heard and have the peace of mind knowing they're part of an industry association that can represent them at multiple levels.
- Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program
 - FMNS member farmers' markets are also eligible to participate in the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program, which involves FMNS member farmers' markets providing an alternative currency to low-income households. FMNS provides a cheque for an amount of money based on the size of your market. The value of this money is turned into "food bucks", an alternative currency that can be redeemed exclusively with your vendors. FMNS also provides an administration contribution and covers the cost of printing or producing your alternative currency. FMNS works with you to secure one to three partner social organizations such as food banks or shelters.

THANK YOU!

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Sign up for our Basket Newsletter by [clicking here](#)



**FARMERS'
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