

LARIMER COUNTY FARMER'S MARKET: MORE THAN JUST A PLACE TO BUY LOCAL

Larimer County - Emilia Ravetta

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Organized and managed by Colorado State University Extension staff and Colorado Master Gardeners, the Larimer County Farmer Market has been part of the Northern Colorado community since 19754.

One of the goals of the market is to be a vibrant place in the community for growers and producers to connect. The market has not only a social but also environmental and economic role in the community that the organizers seek to continue developing and improving.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

This internship's main goal was to understand how community members value the Larimer County Farmers' Market and the role of the market in the community of Fort Collins. The qualitative approach helped us to understand how the market functions as a community resource and community space. This internship connects extension programmatic areas in community development; food systems; individual, family, and community well-being; nutrition, food safety, and health.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO MY PhD STUDIES

- I applied skills learned in the first year of my PhD in Sociology in a new and applied setting.
- Internship goals directly relate to my research interests in community-based approaches, applied research, and environmental sociology.
- Since I plan to pursue an applied career, I benefitted from networking and professional development with the local community.
- I also learned to work with different stakeholders and how to communicate my findings to diverse audiences.

FINDINGS – CODES AND THEMES

We first coded the responses of each group separately (visitors, vendors and volunteers) and then compared responses for each group. Then, we combined them and identified four main codes or themes about what people value about the market: Community, Location, Organization, and Produce and products.

In general, across all three groups, the research reveals that the market is "working well" as a community resource. We want to show which are the factors that people value the most and would be important to maintain and even deepen in the future. We consider that understanding what is working and why people value these characteristics of the market is important to continue working towards the sustainability of it.



DATA COLLECTION

We use qualitative methods to gather data:

- 1) Participant observations
- 2) Informal conversations/interviews
- 3) Dot survey

We approached visitors, vendors and volunteers to ask "What do you value about the market?" We coded those responses to identify patterns that we then used in a dot survey where participants voted on three questions: What do you value about the market? What do you prefer? How did you learn about the market?



OUTPUTS

- 1) Executive report for the Extension market organizers with main findings and recommendations
- 2) Video for website to share our findings with the participants and market community
- 3) Poster to present at the Market

LIMITATIONS AND BARRIERS

Couldn't conduct formal interviews or focus groups due to lack of time and IRB approval.

NEXT STEPS

We recommend that future research is conducted to continue understanding the hidden realities of the communities that still don't participate at the Market and how to improve diversity and inclusion.