Farmers Market and Retail Price Reporting Front Range Region

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Farmers markets are important for many agricultural producers because they provide a consistent location for generating revenue, interacting with their customers and testing business strategies, including pricing.

However, product pricing, units of sale and production claims differ greatly across markets, and this information is difficult to obtain except through direct observation. Greater access to farmers market price data allows producers to understand how product pricing differs from one market to another, and to use this information in calculating other retail pricing such as for farm stands sales and Community Supported Agriculture share values.

To help producers price their products more competitively, and to evaluate differences in market performance along the Front Range, we collected farmers market and retail-level pricing data, and built a database that supports and informs farmers, ranchers, and other supply chain intermediaries. We posted this information online, presenting the data in minimum, maximum and average prices.

In addition, it is a common perception that farmers market prices are much higher than those found in retail stores. To test this hypothesis, we collected similar price data from four grocery stores in our study area.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

To collect and publish weekly farmers market price information on meat, fruits, vegetables, and egg products at farmers markets along the Front Range. Enhanced price discovery at farmers markets enables:

- **Farmers** to be better informed about regional and local retail market prices for similar products;
- Farmers market **managers** to support their vendors' pricing strategies by using these data for comparative purposes;
- **Market Intermediaries** to adjust their retail market price expectations and purchasing and selling behavior in a timely manner; and
- **Consumers** to access current farmers market prices to inform their buying decisions

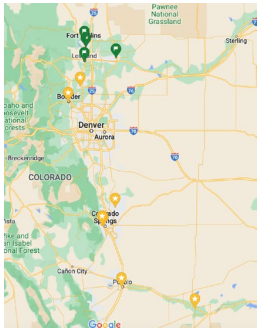
APPLICATION TO FUTURE EDUCATION

Through this summer internship program, I learned about agricultural product pricing methods and farmers market marketing practices. I gained a greater knowledge of the role of farmers' markets in agricultural marketing, which allows me to:

- Understand more about regional agricultural business trends and the role of farmers markets in the direct marketing of agricultural products;
- Gain experience in collecting primary data and deepen my interest in the field of food systems; and
- Clarify future career options and affirm my interest in agriculture.

WHAT WE DID

- Visited four farmers' markets in Larimer and Weld Counties weekly and collected price data for meats, fruits, vegetables, and eggs from May through September 2022.
- Compiled price data from 7 other farmers markets along the Front Range.
- Collected and posted weekly price data from each farmers market on the CSU Food Systems website for farmers and other stakeholders to access (https://foodsystems.colostate.edu/market-prices-and-information/).
- Collected price data from four grocery stores in Fort Collins corresponding to farmers markets products as part of a price comparison study.
- Communicated with vendors about their price adjustment strategies after they obtained price data posted online.



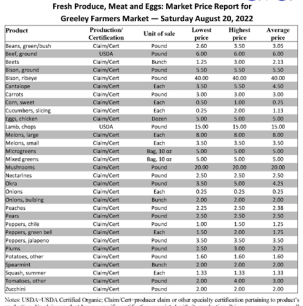
Data collected weekly from farmers markets:

- Old Town Fort Collins Farmers Market
- Fort Collins Harmony Road Farmers Market
- Loveland Farmers Market
- Greeley Farmers Market
- Colorado Springs Farm and Art Market
- Pueblo Southern Colorado Farmer's Market
- Rocky Ford Farm Stands
- Boulder Farmers Market
- Longmont Farmers Market
- Old Colorado City Farmers Market
- Black Forest Market

Data collected from grocery stores in Fort Collins:

- King Soopers
- Whole Foods
- Sprouts Farmers Market
- Safeway

PRICE COLLECTION STRATEGY



Fresh Produce, Meat and Eggs: Market Price Report for Greeley Farmers Market — Saturday August 20, 2022

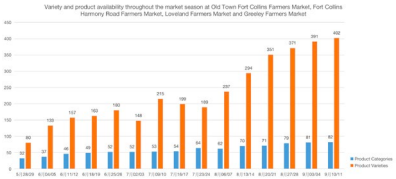
Product	Production/ Certification	Unit of sale	Lowest price	Highest price	Average price
Beans, green/bush	Claim/Cert	Pound	2.60	5.50	5.05
Beef, ground	USDA	Pound	6.00	6.00	6.00
Beets	Claim/Cert	Bunch	1.25	3.00	2.13
Bison, ground	Claim/Cert	Pound	5.50	5.50	5.50
Bison, ribeye	Claim/Cert	Pound	40.00	40.00	40.00
Cantaloupe	Claim/Cert	Each	3.50	5.50	4.50
Carrots	Claim/Cert	Pound	3.00	3.00	3.00
Corn, sweet	Claim/Cert	Each	0.10	1.00	0.71
Cucumbers, slicing	Claim/Cert	Each	0.25	2.00	1.13
Eggs, chicken	Claim/Cert	Dozen	5.00	5.00	5.00
Lamb, chops	USDA	Pound	15.00	15.00	15.00
Melons, large	Claim/Cert	Each	8.00	8.00	8.00
Melons, small	Claim/Cert	Each	3.50	3.50	3.50
Microgreens	Claim/Cert	Bag, 10 oz	5.00	5.00	5.00
Mixed greens	Claim/Cert	Bag, 10 oz	5.00	5.00	5.00
Mushrooms	Claim/Cert	Pound	20.00	20.00	20.00
Nectarines	Claim/Cert	Pound	2.50	2.50	2.50
Okra	Claim/Cert	Pound	3.50	5.00	4.25
Onions	Claim/Cert	Each	0.25	0.25	0.25
Onions, bulbing	Claim/Cert	Bunch	2.00	2.00	2.00
Peaches	Claim/Cert	Pound	2.25	2.50	2.38
Pears	Claim/Cert	Pound	2.50	2.50	2.50
Peppers, chile	Claim/Cert	Pound	1.00	1.50	1.23
Peppers, green bell	Claim/Cert	Each	1.50	2.00	1.75
Peppers, jalapeno	Claim/Cert	Pound	3.50	3.50	3.50
Plums	Claim/Cert	Pound	3.50	3.00	3.75
Potatoes, other	Claim/Cert	Pound	1.60	1.60	1.60
Spearmint	Claim/Cert	Bunch	2.00	2.00	2.00
Squash, summer	Claim/Cert	Each	1.33	1.33	1.33
Tomatoes, other	Claim/Cert	Pound	2.00	4.00	3.00
Zucchini	Claim/Cert	Pound	2.00	2.00	2.00

Notes: USDA=USDA Certified Organic; Claim/Cert=producer claim or other specialty certification pertaining to product's production; No claim=product has no specific certification associated with its production. Prices are average across all vendors selling each product.

- Collect price data at the same time every week (e.g. as the market opens for the day) to ensure consistency and greatest product variety.
- Collect price information for every type of meat, fruit, vegetable, and egg sold by all vendors with those offerings.
- Develop a uniform unit of measurement for each product sold by most vendors (e.g., beef/pound, chard/bunch, melon/each, eggs/dozen).
- Distinguish between products sold with any special production claims such as USDA certified organic, other 2nd or 3rd party certifications, or no differentiating claims, when possible

WHAT WE LEARNED

Chart 1: Variety and product availability throughout the market season



As the season progressed, there was more variety in the total number of items offered for sale (from 32 to 82 products) and in the types of items for sale (from 80 to 402 varieties), across 4 markets.

Chart 2: Price comparison at grocery stores and farmers markets

Except for ground bison, the average seasonal prices of the other four products at the farmers markets are higher than the prices in grocery stores.

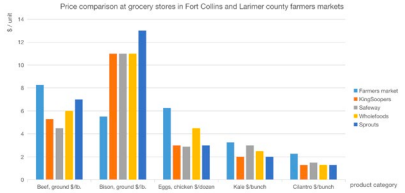
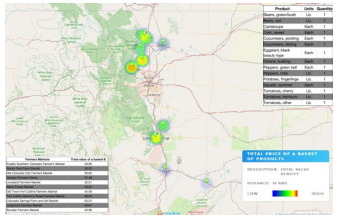


Chart 3: "Bundled price" of a basket of products of all farmers' markets



- The heat map visualizes the relative cost, in each market, of a standard market basket of goods.
- On average, Pueblo's Southern Colorado Farmers Market and Craft Fair reported the lowest cost for the market basket, while the Boulder Farmers Market had the highest.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS

- Generate summary information for each market over the season, to show variability over time and in the number of vendors selling each product.
- Explore additional methods for communicating price data to farmers and other price data users.
- More systematically collect, organize and analyze the price adjustment strategies and behaviors made by vendors after assessing the market prices of their products.
- Survey farmers' market consumers on product preferences and purchase adjustment responses, form recommendations and communicate them to farmers.