

## **Extension Notes**

Personal Column for July 13, 2010

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director

### **Farmers Markets Offer Local Food and Economic Growth**

Have you been to your local Farmers Market? What a great time to find local foods and see all that our farmers can provide for your dinner table. You will be joining many others who have discovered the market as one of the fastest growing areas in the food economy.

Along with providing quality food, farmers markets have economic benefits. For many farmers selling locally is a significant supplement to their income, if not their entire income. Money spent on mass-produced foods generally leaves the community. However, buying local keeps the money in the community where it circulates and promotes even more economic growth. Restaurants often boast the location of their locally bought food on their menus and thus help promote local agriculture.

Here is an idea. When eating out take a minute to ask if the restaurant has any local foods on the menu. You will raise the awareness of local foods, get some healthy good tasting food and help the local economy.

Access to fresh food is important for health, which is why there are several national programs to help those in need buy fresh produce. The Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) gives vouchers to buy fruits and vegetables to women with children under the age of 5.

According to the Iowa Department of Agriculture there are 228 farmers markets in Iowa. To find out more about the market close to you just go to <http://idalsdata.org/IowaData/farmersMarket.cfm>. The website has location, dates, times and contacts for you to find the market for you. Have a great time at your local farmers market and enjoy all the great food they can provide.

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Contact: Gary Hall, 2023 S Federal Ave, Mason City, IA 50401, 641-425-3116,  
[garyhall@iastate.edu](mailto:garyhall@iastate.edu)