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**Cooperative Extension Service, Arkansas Department of Agriculture kick off Arkansas Farmers Market Week**

By Ryan McGeeney
U of A System Division of Agriculture

**Fast Facts:**

* Arkansas Farmers Market Week is Aug. 1-7
* Arkansas hosts more than 112 farmer’s markets, spread across more than 60 counties
* Arkansas MarketMaker can connect consumers, producers with market opportunities at <https://ar.foodmarketmaker.com/>

(422 words)
(Newsrooms: With art at <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmWj5AFT>)

LITTLE ROCK — Farmers markets, long thought of as a niche affectation of suburban parking lots or roadside stands, truly came into their own over the past year. As many food retailers struggled to deal with supply chain bottlenecks and indoor capacity restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the typically outdoor farmers markets thrived as sources of fresh and local produce and other products.

On Thursday morning, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward visited the campus garden at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock campus to deliver a proclamation from Governor Asa Hutchinson, declaring Aug. 1-7 Arkansas Farmers Market Week. The week coincides with National Farmers Market Week.

A 2020 survey, conducted by universities across the United States, found that farmers markets enjoyed a 3 percent increase in first-time consumers — equating to about 36 million households.

Ron Rainey, extension economist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said farmers markets will likely represent an increasing share of the sources from which most consumers get their food.

“As the survey reveals, farmers markets continue to serve a dedicated and growing segment of consumers,” Rainey said.

Rainey has also been instrumental in promoting Arkansas MarketMaker, a free online marketing portal promoting farmers markets and other food producers with searchable maps of local food providers. To use or join the program, visit <https://ar.foodmarketmaker.com/>.

According to the governor’s proclamation, there are more than 112 known farmers markets in Arkansas, with more than 80 percent of the state’s 75 counties featuring at least one farmers market.

“Access to healthy foods is a priority of the Healthy Active Arkansas Initiative to reduce obesity rates in the State of Arkansas, and through efforts of initiatives like these, the number of Arkansas Farmers Markets has nearly doubled in the last decade,” the proclamation reads in part.

Jeremy Adams, executive director of the Arkansas Farmers Market Association, accepted the proclamation from Secretary Ward at Thursday morning’s event, and spoke briefly.

"This has been a challenging season for Arkansas farmers markets, due to cooler and wet weather conditions, but farmers markets are in full swing,” Adams said. “Arkansas farmers markets have seen high traffic counts again this year, post-COVID, and it appears more people than ever are interested in local food.”

Adams said many markets have seen an increase in the number of vendors selling products and produce under the “Arkansas Grown” and “Arkansas Made” moniker, an Arkansas Department of Agriculture program that promotes locally grown produce and locally made products.

To learn more about farmers markets in Arkansas, visit <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/farm-ranch/economics-marketing/experience-arkansas-agriculture/>.

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**About the Division of Agriculture**

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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