

DOUGLAS COUNTY FARMERS MARKET PROFILE

PERRY-LECOMPTON MARKET

Located in the parking lot of Fast Trax convenience store, about 20 minutes from downtown Lawrence, the Perry-Lecompton Farmers Market has been in operation since 2007. Though not formally a producer-only market, the small group of vendors selling produce, meats, honey, fudge and other products for the most part produce what they sell. Vendor fees are \$5 per market day or \$40 for the season. The volunteer Market Manager, Eric Youngquist, works with a committee of two to three other people to strengthen and promote the market. Customer traffic is low at the Perry-Lecompton market, though the numbers did increase over the course of the 2016 season and have inched up slowly over the last few years. Produce quality is generally good, but quantity and diversity is limited.



Opportunities – The location of the market assures that hundreds of cars pass by every Friday evening, as Highway 24 is a major artery between Lawrence and Topeka, while Ferguson Rd. takes people towards the lake. Despite good visibility on both road fronts, neither signage nor the interior design of the market currently take full advantage of the location's potential. Improvements in road signage, plus signs and banners on

the back of vendor tents, would contribute to greater visibility and likely induce more people to stop. There is also the chance for special promotional activities geared to take advantage of lake traffic, as well as catching people on their way home from work on a Friday evening. The customer base is quite small, partly because of the low populations of Perry and Lecompton (just over 1500 for both). However, because the numbers nearly doubled between our June and September site visits, it appears that having more and better products earlier in the season would help build a larger and more consistent customer base (Produce available on June 10th was still very limited).

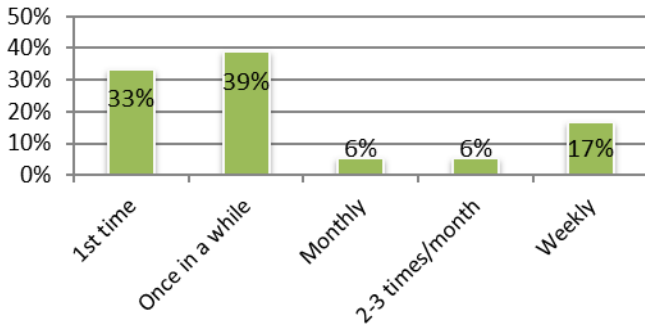
Challenges – The Perry-Lecompton market faces the classic “chicken or the egg” dilemma, with a very small customer base and not enough vendors or products to rapidly build a bigger group of shoppers. Though most vendors appreciate the management and comradery of the market, their sales numbers are for the most part very low. In spite of the conspicuous location, it is too easy for cars to pass by with the presentation the market currently makes. There is also the challenge of attracting shoppers from the local communities of Perry and Lecompton. It is unlikely, in the manger's view, that there are many 'locavores' in these communities, meaning that this market must appeal to a broader demographic.

MARKET QUICK FACTS

- **Market season:** Mid-May – Mid-October
- **Market day/hours:** Fridays, 4 – 6:30 pm
- **Location:** Fast Trax parking lot, Hwy 24, Perry
- **Current number of vendors:** 8 –12
- **Estimated number of shoppers:** 40 –80 / market
- **Market manager:** Eric Youngquist, volunteer

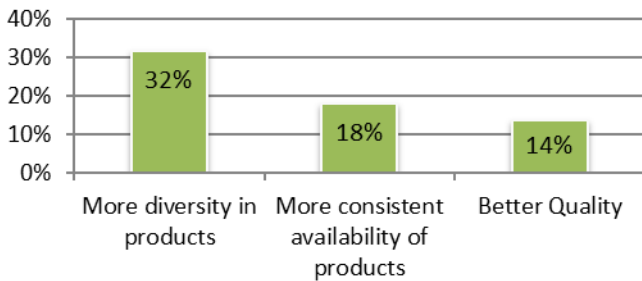
THE MARKET IN THE CUSTOMERS' EYES

How often do you shop at the Perry Lecompton farmers market? (18 res)

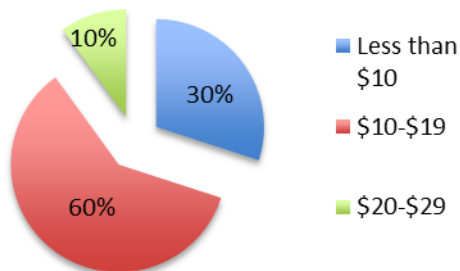


With only 23% of shoppers identified as “regulars” (2 – 3x/month or weekly), and with 90% spending \$19 or less on average, the Perry Market lacks a reliable base of customers whose purchases are substantial. Clearly, a combination of greater product diversity, quality and consistency is needed to help build this group of shoppers.

What changes would be likely to get you to shop at the Perry Lecompton market more often?



How much do you spend at the Perry Lecompton Farmers Market? (20 res)



MARKET RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recruit and secure 2 – 3 more vendors and work with existing vendors to increase the diversity, quantity and quality of produce, particularly in the earlier part of the season (May and June). This recruitment can be undertaken with help from Cooperative Extension and through direct outreach to experienced farmers by the market manager or other vendors.
2. Encourage one or more vendors to trial 'ready to eat' meals that customers can take with them to the lake or home on a Friday evening.
3. Build on the current promotion and marketing efforts by building a customer email/subscriber list, and sending them weekly updates of product availability, on Wednesdays or Thursdays. Note that this will require cooperation from vendors to regularly supply this information.
4. Improve the 'look' of the market, especially on the Hwy 24 side, by having banners on the back of vendor tents (making it clear that they're selling produce, honey, meats, etc), and through improved signage.
5. Work with local tourism and economic development leaders in Douglas and Jefferson county to promote local foods and especially farmers markets to residents. Such a campaign should include the off-season as well.
6. Consider shortening the season to the best 16 -18 weeks, when more produce is available. This will save the vendors some time and should help improve the perception of the market among customers.