

MiSustainable Holland

About this series

The MiSustainable Holland column is a collection of community voices sharing updates about local sustainability initiatives.

This Week's Sustainability Framework Theme:

Quality of Life: The community, through governmental, religious, business and social organizations, makes decisions that contribute to its own well-being.

Farmers markets offer more than just yummy food

By Morgan Anderson
Ottawa Conservation District

Michigan is a magical place, especially in the summer. The lake is warm, the days are long, and I always visit the local farmer markets to see what's in season. Not only is there an abundance of local produce, but farmer markets also [support environmental, social, and economic sustainability](#).

The local focus of farmers' markets minimizes the distance food travels from farm to table. Most food from retail stores [travels 1,000-plus miles](#). At the Holland Farmers Market, most vendors travel less than 70 miles to the market.

Some farmers' markets innovate ways to reduce food waste. Locally, Community Action House is a non-profit striving to build a community where all our neighbors have what they need to thrive, and no one faces challenges alone.

The Holland Farmers Market collaborates with Community Action House's [Lakeshore Food Rescue](#) program. On Wednesdays, Community Action House sets up a booth where shoppers can donate produce. On Saturdays, volunteers go to vendors at the end of the day to collect produce the vendor no longer has a use for.

Through its Lakeshore Food Rescue program, Community Action House turns excess food into direct access to fresh, nutritious food for those who might not otherwise get it. In 2023, it was able to glean 47,803 pounds and received 1,901 pounds of produce donations!

For folks who experience food insecurity, access to local food via farmers' markets is important and resilient. In another benefit, Holland Farmers Market Manager Kyle Johnson explained, "Recipients can get an extra \$20 per market day," by matching \$20 SNAP tokens for an extra \$20 of Double Up Food Bucks tokens through the Fair Food Network.

As stated by the [Fair Food Network](#), Double Up Food Bucks enables "45 million pounds of healthy food to be purchased and supports about 800 local farmers every year" in Michigan since 2009. To navigate what benefits can be utilized at your local market, check out the MI Farmers Market Association's [Food Assistance Eligibility Guide](#).

Community is further sustained at farmers' markets by getting to know the folks who produce the food. Farmers want you to ask them questions about how they grow their food, how to prepare it, and so on. Additionally, supporting our farmers is especially important. According to the [USDA](#), from 2017 to 2022 the number of acres in the United States operated by farms has reduced by over 20 million acres, almost the size of Maine.

By supporting your local farmers' market, local farmer, and local shopper, you are helping to build community and food sovereignty. "Food sovereignty is a holistic, healthy and sustainable approach for communities to address chronic food insecurity," as explained by the [Detroit Black Food Sovereignty Network](#).

Stop by the Holland Farmers Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Or find your local farmers market at <https://mifma.org/find-a-farmers-market/>.

- *Morgan Anderson is a produce safety technician, housed at the Ottawa Conservation District and servicing nine counties total within West Michigan.*