

The Role of Farmers' Markets in Stimulating Rural Entrepreneurship: a Case Study of Feilding Farmers' Market, New Zealand

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Abstract: *A phenomenon in small business food retailing in recent years has been the growth of farmers' markets. The reasons for the re-emergence of farmers' markets include nostalgia, increasing demand for fresh, local produce, distrust of supermarket power, concern over industrialised food production, desire to help local producers, and rural town regeneration. Farmers' markets are now an integral part of the 'real food' revolution. Although farmers' markets have increased rapidly in number in New Zealand little research has been conducted on their contribution, actual or potential, to rural entrepreneurship. Case study methodology was used to explore the role a farmers' market in a provincial town. It was found that the market acted as a launching pad for opportunity entrepreneurs who produced value-added goods. It also acted as a landing pad for necessity entrepreneurs, particularly small-scale fruit and vegetable growers squeezed out of the mainstream food supply chain. The weekly market also helped to bring vibrancy and visitors to a battling rural town.*

Keywords: farmers' markets, rural entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

Farmers' markets have become one of the fastest-growing innovations in food supply in recent years (Bentley, Hallsworth, & Anna, 2003). They have developed as part of the transition to direct marketing schemes which aim to reduce the adverse effects caused by centralisation and specialisation of the agro-food system (La Trobe, 2001). Farmers view direct marketing at farmers' markets as an alternative way to capture more of the consumer's dollar, while consumers welcome the opportunity to get fresher, higher quality produce (Govindasamy & Nayga, 1996). In spite of the growing importance of farmers' markets in providing alternative shopping options, little research has been conducted on vendors' entrepreneurial capabilities in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of such markets.

REVIEW OF PRIOR RESEARCH

An authentic farmers' market is defined as a common facility where farmers, growers and producers gather on a regular basis to sell fresh fruit, vegetables and other farm products directly to customers (Payne, 2002). Such markets are also known as producer-only or growers' markets. These markets differ from produce and flea markets in four main ways. Producers must sell what they grow and grow what they sell. Only local food or added-value food products are sold. Crafts are disallowed. Markets are generally owned by the community rather than private enterprise. However, few farmers' markets achieve such perfection of purpose and any categorisation of markets must recognise that hybrids are more common than pure types (Sommer, 1989). Several countries have now developed a system of certified farmers' markets to brand them more clearly.

Farmers' markets have developed due to major shifts in food growing and retailing. Since time immemorial farmers' markets were the usual way of buying and selling rural produce. With the advent of supermarkets, farmers' markets all but disappeared in many nations. However, in countries such as France and Italy, which place a high priority on food provenance and regional specialisation, farmers' markets continued without a break, partly due to them having mechanisms to identify and promote locally grown foods (Erlich, Ruth, & Wahlqvist, 2005).

Farmers' markets first started to reappear in the 1970s in the USA from where they have spread to other nations such as the Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand.-These have been called 'new generation' farmers' markets (Coster, 2004). In New Zealand farmers' markets reappeared in 1998 and quickly become an integral part of the retail structure for fresh produce (Guthrie, Lawson, & Guthrie, 2004; Jacobs, 2004). Much of this growth has occurred in the last few years (See Table 1). Rather than being a passing fad farmers' markets are now seen a meeting new customer needs in traditional ways (Cameron, 2005a). A sign of the growing maturity and importance of farmers' markets was the formation of a New Zealand Farmers' Market Association in 2005. In New Zealand farmers' markets tend to be a regional phenomenon as they have been established mainly in the smaller provincial centres. Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch do not have farmers' markets, although they do have produce and flea markets.

Table 1: New Zealand Farmers' Markets: Location, Establishment Date and Type of Ownership

1.	Whangerei	1998	Community
2.	Black Barn (Havelock North)	2000	Private
3.	Hawkes Bay (Hastings)	2000	Community
4.	Marlborough (Blenheim)	2001	Community
5.	Albany	2003	Community
6.	Central Otago (Cromwell)	2003	Community
7.	Orewa	2003	Community
8.	Tauranga	2003	Community
9.	Bay of Islands (Keri Keri)	2004	Community
10.	Lindale (Paraparumu)	2004	Private
11.	Matakana	2004	Private
12.	Napier	2004	Community
13.	Otago (Dunedin)	2004	Community
14.	Felding	2005	Community
15.	Lyttleton	2005	Community
16.	New Plymouth	2005	Community
17.	Hamilton	2006	Community
18.	Tokoroa	2006	Community

Reasons for Re-emergence of Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets have re-appeared for a number of interlocking reasons. Supermarkets have become the dominant players in food retailing and are able to exert considerable downward price pressure on suppliers (Young, 2004). Farmers can often receive higher net returns by selling directly to customers at farmers' markets. This makes it easier for farmers to resist development pressures and to stay in farming (Bruhn, Vossen, Chapman, & Vaupel, 1992). Conversely, supermarkets find it uneconomic to deal with small producers, who are forced to either get bigger or get out (Flagler, 2005). Farmers are often passionate about their products so are proud to meet customers face-to-face. This helps reconnect consumers with food production and leads to growth of farmers' self-esteem and work satisfaction

(Thomas, 2002). For many farmers the market is a social function where they can meet other sellers as well as customers, who over time often become friends. Market day can be a break from the isolation of rural living.

Consumers expect the quality of produce at farmers' markets to be better, the variety wider and the prices lower than at other retail outlets (Govindasamy et al., 1998). However, consumers are also prepared to pay a premium price in order to know where their food has come from and how it has been produced (Paul, 2003). There is a growing demand for good food produced by identifiable people (Whybrow, 2005) as part of a 'real food' revolution (Adams, 2002). Traditional, open-air shopping that contrasts with the air-conditioned uniformity of supermarkets has become more popular. There is increasing concern about 'food miles'. Food that is transported over long distances to central distribution points loses freshness, entails frequent handling, is often harvested before ripeness, and involves high fuel consumption (Halweil, 2004). Farmers' markets encourage the buying of local produce. This keeps money circulating in the district and allows the development of regional specialities. Some small food producers see future growth in supplying local quality products to local people sold through farmers' markets and other independent retailers (Cruikshank, 2004). Increasing awareness of obesity and its link to the fast food culture has created a growing demand for better quality food and healthier diets (Schlosser, 2001). Greater public concern over food safety issues relating to use of insecticides, pesticides and preservatives have created a growing demand for organic and minimum spray food. As a result, knowledge about food provenance is no longer confined to a narrow body of interested parties but is now demanded by a much wider pluralistic constituency including environmental bodies and, most importantly, consumers themselves (Burnett & Danson, 2004).

Communities welcome farmers' markets because of their role in revitalising town centres (Bentley et al., 2003; Festing, 1996). Due to rural depopulation, many small towns have become empty, forlorn and run-down. Local councils have supported the introduction of farmers' markets to help redress this trend, (Spitzer & Baum, 1994). Farmers' markets can play an important role in reclaiming public spaces such as town squares, parks and agricultural showgrounds (Altman & Zube, 1989). Such is the political and public sympathy for farmers' markets that rents and insurance are often reduced to encourage their survival and growth. Some unspoilt rural towns are now being promoted as 'food towns' by emphasising past times "when food shopping was more considered, more sociable, perhaps even a more pleasurable experience" (McCann, 2005, p. 462). Farmers' markets increasingly feature in travel and tourist literature due to their ability to add to an area's distinctive appeal.

The main factors influencing farmers' markets can be summarised as:

- Encouraging local and seasonal food consumption
- Connecting consumers to food production
- Reshaping the relationship between small suppliers and large purchasers
- Reducing the distance that food has to travel between producer and consumer, i.e. 'food miles'
- Increasing interest in sustainable agriculture
- Allowing food provenance to be better identified
- Encouraging of artisan production
- Connecting town and country
- Conserving peri-urban land
- Increasing consumer choice e.g. through heritage and heirloom plant varieties
- Promoting regional cuisine and specialisations
- Stemming rural depopulation and enhancing rural entrepreneurship
- Adding to visitor and tourist attractions
- Encouraging easy-entry, easy-exit business incubation

Rural Entrepreneurship and Farmers' Markets

Although rural entrepreneurship is well recognised as an important component in local economic development strategy, it is limited by a lack of information on rural entrepreneurs such as who they are, why they have gone into business, what kind of businesses they have started, and what problems they have encountered (Buss & Popovich, 1988, cited in Tanner, 1999). Entrepreneurship can be defined as any attempt at new business or new venture creation such as self-employment, a new business organisation, or the expansion of an existing business by an individual, a team of individuals or an established business (Reynolds, Hay, & Camp, 1999). Enterprise, entrepreneurship and small business are intimately interconnected in farmers' markets. Small business entrepreneurs have been categorised as artisans, managers or classic entrepreneurs to try to identify those who are more likely to grow the business (Bridge, O'Neill, & Cromie, 2003).

Although there is a growing literature relating to farmers' markets, the relationship between farmers' markets and entrepreneurship is relatively unexplored. For example, a study of the entrepreneurial characteristics of farm women in the USA (Tanner, 1999) makes no mention of farmers' markets. A New Zealand study (Taylor, Little, & McClintock, 1997) of rural entrepreneurship investigated alternative farm-based enterprises. This study found that to survive many farmers had to engage in diversification and pluriactivity (a mix of economic activities involving both paid and unpaid

labour). However, the study made no mention of direct selling and predated by one year the re-establishment of farmers' markets in New Zealand.

The only major research study located that examines entrepreneurship in the context of farmers' markets was that instigated by the United States Department of Agriculture's Fund for Rural America. The aim of this study was to better understand how farmers' markets support local economic development and act as informal business incubators for farmers, food processors and small craft businesses. The study confirmed that farmers' markets were contributing entrepreneurial opportunities for growers (Feenstra & Lewis, 1999). The study also examined the size of market vendors' enterprises in relation to entrepreneurial capacity. It was found that the majority of stallholders at farmers' markets were small-scale enterprises and that, although they made smaller profits than their larger counterparts, farmers' markets may be one of the few options for small-scale entrepreneurs to maintain or enhance their market niche in a community (Feenstra, Lewis, Hinrichs, Gillespie, & Hilchey, 2003).

Farmers' markets have an important incubator function by allowing new businesses to become established at low cost and little risk (Cameron, 2005b; Feenstra & Lewis, 1999; Paul, 2002a). Farmers' markets can act as an incubator by providing an environment where products can be easily test marketed (Paul, 2002b). "Farmers' markets enhance business opportunities by promoting business start-ups, facilitating product development and diversification, creating opportunities to add value, and expanding the size and diversity of vendors' customer base as well as sales and income" (Hilchey, Lyson & Gillespie 1995, p.47, cited in Feenstra et al., 2003). Farmers' markets also have an important role as safety nets for businesses that are at the decline or downsizing stage of the business life-cycle. This has been called the 'reverse incubator' role (Cameron, 2005b).

Farmers' markets typically develop in three stages (Lloyd, Nelson and Tilley, 1987, cited in Andreatta & Wickliffe, 2002). The first stage is volatile and unstable. Farmers and producers find it too great a risk to sell at the market on a regular basis, and the limited number of stallholders and narrow range of products may fail to attract customers. In the second stage a mix of part-time and full-time commercial farmers supply the majority of products for sale at the market. The presence of these larger producers helps lessen the risk of failure. In the third stage customers shop on a regular basis that sustains a turnover of produce large enough to ensure the success of the market.

While there is a growing literature relating to farmers' markets, comparatively little research has been done, particularly in New Zealand, on the role of farmers' markets in stimulating rural entrepreneurship. Furthermore, a dominant discourse in the farmers' market literature is the role of vendors in creating business growth. However, less consideration has been given to the way in which they cope with the re-adjustment or decline phase of the business cycle.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this exploratory research is to examine the role of farmers' markets in stimulating rural entrepreneurship. Particular attention will be accorded farmers' markets both as business incubators and 'safety nets'. In addition, the stage of development of the farmers' market will be identified. The inquiry was conducted using the case study method using the Feilding farmers' market as the case. The case study method is the preferred method when the researcher seeks answers to how or why questions and when the object of study is a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context (Yin, 1994). A case can be selected because it is considered to be instrumentally useful in furthering understanding of a particular problem, issue or concept (Stake, 1995). The normal caveats relating to the non-generalisability of case study findings apply. The manager and eighteen stallholders of the Feilding farmers' market were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Additional information was obtained from secondary sources such as official documentation and media reports. Standard research protocols were observed.

Feilding is a rural town of 14,000 people in North Island, New Zealand. The town has experienced difficult times in recent decades due to agricultural reforms and closure of businesses. The Feilding farmers' market was started in April 2005 as part of the local council's strategy to help revitalise the town. Feilding's lack of development in recent years is seen as part of its attraction – it has no high rise buildings, traffic lights or parking meters, and is known as 'Friendly Feilding'. The town is an important centre for sheep and cattle sales. The farmers' market is held on Fridays all year round to coincide with the sheep and cattle sales. The farmers' market is centrally located in the town square next to the recently restored clock tower. The town retains a slightly yesteryear atmosphere and community leaders hope that the establishment of the farmers' market would add to this pleasant rural atmosphere while boosting the local economy.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Of the stallholders interviewed, a slight majority were female. Most of the vendors were in their 40s or 50s with smaller number in their 20s, 30s, or 60s. Almost half the vendors had dependent children. Almost 80 percent of stallholders had tertiary, professional or trade qualifications. Almost half the stallholders have been selling at the market since the day it

opened. But just less than half have been there for less than six months of which a small number have been there for less than one month. This indicates a fair degree of turnover of stallholders. However, the market has been able to retain most of its anchor stallholders, only one of whom has left, for personal reasons.

In keeping with the farmers' market model, all vendors must grow, raise or produce their goods in the region. More than half are within 30 minutes driving time of the market. The maximum driving time to the market for a vendor is 50 minutes, so all vendors live within a reasonable distance of the market, thus saving on the 'food miles' over which produce has to be transported. A variety of produce offered for sale. Market rules state that no more than three vendors of any type of goods are permitted to provide limited competition. The main products on sales were: fruit, vegetables, jams and chutneys, hand-made chocolates, bread, cakes, biscuits, pâté, mayonnaise, flowers, chickens, eggs, venison, pies, herb teas and lavender, plants, seedlings, hummus, pesto, tapenade, honey, and wine. A very high proportion of goods were grown, raised or produced by the stallholders. Vendors generally believed that consumers felt it important that products were locally produced. "Customers want to know where the products are made". This attitude applied particularly to value-added products. However, some vendors of staples, such as vegetables, took the view that customers were more interested in price. Registered kitchens were used for the preparation of food products. Most of these were in local businesses, such a rest home or café, or community facilities, such as a bowling club.

Some of the larger producers also sold through a variety of direct marketing methods such as farm gate sales, farm shops, road-side sales and festivals. Half of the stallholders also sold at other farmers' and produce markets. The fact that the Feilding farmers' market is held on Fridays helps these vendors to increase their sales by also selling at these other markets on Saturday and/or Sundays. Although customers come from all walks of life, there is a tendency for them to be elderly and female. There is also a sizeable proportion of young mothers who go to the market after having taken their children to local schools. The market also attracts the spouses and partners of farmers attending the sale-yards. The customer profile reflects the fact that the market is held on Fridays, a working day for most people. The market is deliberately held on Friday so as not to clash with the produce market held in nearby Palmerston North on Saturdays. The market is increasingly attracting visitors from nearby, larger towns, thus reversing the usual flow. The market also attracts people who are particularly health and food conscious. Stallholders who have been there more than a few weeks have regular customers, some of them on first name terms. One stallholder stated that she did not really make much profit but her customers would be disappointed if she gave up selling at the market.

In general the market attracts customers who value quality. Customers spend on about \$8 to \$10 at a stall, although this can vary considerably according to the product. For more than half of vendors sales have increased during the period of market attendance. For the remainder sales have held steady apart from one case where sales have declined. Only a few vendors obtained most of their income from selling at the farmers' market. Most of these were small part-time, start-up businesses and one had formerly been a larger business that was now being deliberately downsized. Conversely, vendors who derived only a small proportion of their total sales from the farmers' market had other sales outlets and used the market as a useful additional outlet. One third of the vendors were full-time producers, most of who sold at other markets. The other two thirds of vendors were part-time who either had other jobs or spent only a few hours a week producing produce for the market. A small number of vendors regarded their venture as more of a hobby than a business.

Seeking out and retaining suitable vendors is a major challenge when establishing a new farmers' market. In about one third of cases stallholders responded positively to a request by the market manager to set up a stall at the market. In the other cases vendors approached the market having learned of its existence from the media or by word of mouth. The perceived advantages of selling at the farmers' fall into four categories:

Business survival and growth

- lower overheads
- better returns
- cuts out middleman
- provides another sales outlet
- minimises travel costs
- allows self-employment
- can turn hobby into a business
- can scale down in a planned way

Better deal for customers

- desire to provide better food for consumers
- gives more choice and variety of produce
- gives public another shopping option

Marketing and promotion

- helps in exposure of business
- allows education of customers

- customer contact and feedback
- building up profile
- provides regular customers

Personal and social

- more control over own destiny
- able to indulge passion for the product
- facilitates meeting people
- allows working in a friendly atmosphere
- able to combine family and work: can bring baby
- provides extra income or pocket money
- uses spare time

These responses reflect different motives and life-cycle patterns of the vendors and their businesses. For one fruit grower the market was more enjoyable but involved extra work compared to sending produce out the gate in bulk to an exporter. However, local customers benefited by getting better fruit as previously the best fruit was exported, which necessitated more spraying. Another stallholder stated, "We wanted to control our own future and are much happier now because we are doing it for ourselves". These comments indicate a win-win situation for the seller and buyer.

The amount of experience and business knowledge that vendors bring to the farmers' market varied considerably. One third of the vendors had no experience of selling prior to starting at the market. Others had a wealth of business and professional experience stretching over many decades. With one exception, all vendors were of the opinion that their previous experience had helped them in selling at the market. Where the venture was a new start-up, stallholders stated that their entrepreneurial skills had increased. Stallholders who were involved previously in producing but not selling found that they had to learn new marketing skills. Those stallholders who had previous selling experience generally found that they did not have to acquire new skills, although in some instances had to hone up existing skills. The main improvements experienced by vendors were in presentation and communication skills, dealing face to face with customers, and the ability to 'read the customer', which in turn led to increased self-confidence. Most vendors took the view that they had to turn up every market day, regardless of other circumstances, in order to build up a loyal customer base and to ensure that regular customers were not disappointed. Being an open-air market the main disadvantage of selling at the farmers' market was the weather, particularly the wind. Interestingly, the weather was of less concern to fruit, vegetable and plant growers, who were more used to working outdoors.

ENTREPRENEURIAL FACTORS

Most vendors were opportunity entrepreneurs. Only a small number were necessity entrepreneurs, all of whom had been affected negatively by dominant buyers, squeezed margins or non-renewed contracts. Two thirds of the vendors can be categorised as artisans, with the remainder being a combination of artisan and entrepreneur. As a significant number of vendors are start-up enterprises, a key role for the market is to act as a business incubator. Over half of the vendors were of the opinion that the market acts as a good business incubator for them. In particular it was seen as a safe environment that was easy to enter, and also easy to exit if expectations were not realised.

One way of differentiating a small business person from an entrepreneur is the desire to increase the size of the business. Half of the vendors have increased their range of products since starting at the market. Only one vendor had decreased the range of products, due to the difficulty of making a full range of value-added products each week. The remainder were happy to maintain a steady product range. Sixty percent of the vendors wished to grow their businesses, thirty percent wished to maintain their present size, and ten percent wished to scale down. The main challenges to growing the business were the difficulty of raising additional finance and lack of time. Low rewards, lack of time, desire to retain independence, and getting older were the main reasons for not wanting the business to get larger. A small number of stallholders were concerned that the business should not outgrow their capacity to control it, having no wish "to create a monster".

In a small but significant number of cases the farmers market was seen as a safety net or landing pad. For one orchardist, the wheel has come full circle. This vendor started off by selling directly to the public, then sold to supermarkets, and has now reverted to selling directly again through markets. However, although a third generation orchardist, the vendor's children were not encouraged to go into the business as the rewards are too slender. "Sentiment does not pay the bills". Another orchardist, who previously supplied the export market, found that it involved too many middle people, leaving little margin for the grower.

A number of stallholders had attended seminars on ways to improve their skills from a local enterprise agency. In some cases it was the stallholder's spouse or partner who had attended business seminars and reported back useful points such as "fix the things you are apologising for".

EFFECT ON THE TOWN

Stallholders were generally of the opinion that the farmers' market has had a positive effect on the town by giving local residents and visitors a different, colourful shopping option. In addition, organisations such as service clubs increasingly make a visit to the farmers' market part of a day out. Compared to supermarkets, the main point of difference provided by farmers' markets is personalised shopping. Customers want to know all about the product and ask questions such as who made it, where the ingredients came from, and how it was made. A typical comment is "Just like grandma made it". The appearance and attitude of stallholders is important when selling is so personalised. Direct selling can bring out the individual personalities of stallholders, which helps to give the market its own character. According to vendors the farmers' market has "added something to the town" and "shaken it up a bit". The farmers' market is "almost like a time warp" and fits in with Feilding's image. The market is a slow shopping place that gives people the opportunity to go back to their roots. As Feilding is a small town, "it gives the local people something new to see and do." A general view is that the farmers' market is catching on and is becoming popular.

There are social as well as economic benefits for stallholders. The farmers' market gives them chance to meet and make friends with other sellers as well as customers. Vendors can not only meet other like-minded people but also develop a wider social circle. For the majority of stallholders market day is an enjoyable outing where they can have good fun, and laugh and joke with each other and customers. Altogether the market was found to have "a good buzz". The majority of stallholders state that selling at the market has been profitable (in some cases only just) and satisfactory. All the current stallholders state that they intended to continue selling at the market. However, one stallholder will only try it for another month, and another, only until winter starts. This indicates the 'churning' of numbers at the market, which is partly due to the seasonal nature of the venture. Some customers are keen not to buy at supermarkets if they have an alternative. The benefit of farmers' markets is that fruit and vegetables go straight from the grower to the customer, who thereby obtains the product at its best. An example given was that supermarkets wax apples to make them look more attractive but the heating process causes the fruit to lose some of its moisture. As a point of difference, some farmers' market vendors now label their fruit as un-waxed to indicate better quality.

The establishment of the Feilding farmers' market represented an entrepreneurial initiative by Feilding Promotion, the local council's enterprise arm. The presence of a farmers' market in the town centre along with the nearby cattle and sheep sale-yards gives the town a unique point of difference and helps to reinforce the rural, heritage nature of the town. The farmers' market is now seen not only as a local shopping point, but also increasingly as a tourist and visitor destination in the regional promotional literature. The farmers' market is not intended to be about cheapness but about obtaining good value for money while supporting local enterprises. One of the main challenges in managing the market has been convincing some of the vendors to accept the authentic farmers' market model, especially the non-desirability of crafts at the market. Crafts are discouraged because they can cause a tacky image and divert customer dollars away from food purchases. There are some signs that the market may be having a spin-off effect in making the town attractive enough to encourage other retailers to set up, such as an up-market bookshop, a butcher shop and a French bakery, all of which reinforce the more traditional type of independent, artisan retailing. The overall effect has been to raise the profile of the town as a different and pleasant place to shop.

CONCLUSION

The Feilding farmers' market has successfully survived the first stage of development, and is now in the second stage where it has a core group of anchor stallholders and regular customers that should allow its continued growth. As a result of selling at the market the confidence of many stallholders has grown, especially those who had not been involved in business before, or who had not sold directly to the public before. The market also facilitates active networking and sharing ideas among stallholders. Opportunity entrepreneurs were found to outnumber necessity entrepreneurs showing that people were willing to seize the opportunity to do business when the chance arises. Without the market, some businesses would not have started. In other cases the presence of the market has enhanced the chances of survival and growth of pre-existing businesses. While most vendors were artisans, some also exhibited manager and classic entrepreneur qualities. The market has stimulated entrepreneurship by encouraging self-reliance and a can-do spirit while at the same time supporting local, sustainable food production. In particular the vendors, especially those starting up in business, increased their entrepreneurial capacity in marketing, communication and cooperation. By playing to its strength as a centre for traditional shopping the Feilding farmers' market has successfully responded to consumers' demands for a different shopping experience. The policy implications for local government are that farmers' markets can have a useful role to play in revitalising rural towns. In addition, farmers' markets help to sustain the livelihoods of local entrepreneurial farmers, growers and producers, not only at the take-off stage but also at the decline stage of the business cycle. The evidence of business incubator activity supports the theory that farmers' markets often offer the only route into business for small-scale businesses (Feenstra et al., 2003). Equally importantly, the findings support the view (Cameron, 2005b) that the farmers' market provides a crucial safety net for producers who have been squeezed out of the supply chain. A limitation of the study is that the views of customers and retailers were not elicited thus opening up a fruitful area for future research. It can be concluded that the Feilding farmers' market plays a useful role in stimulating rural entrepreneurship, particularly for artisan small businesses.

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