

Timaru Farmers Market

Steve Earnshaw

Timaru Farmers Market (TFM) operates a vibrant Sunday morning market at Caroline Bay, year round, where local farmers, growers and producers sell direct to our local community. Managed by a not-for-profit committee the market is also a community focal point for ideas, dialogue and activities supporting sustainable living.

TFM is organised by a voluntary committee. It is a not-for-profit venture born out of think-tank discussions around local sustainability. It is a project of Transition Timaru. At the inception of the market the question people asked was “How do we get to eat all the great food that is grown in our own backyard? It’s fresh, has next to no-food miles, and yet most of it is sent to larger centres or exported”

TFM was launched on Nov 8th 2009 and grew rapidly, with a loyal customer base and a surprising number of community initiatives using the market as a hub.

Economic Development

- 85 different producers over 38 weeks.
- Five of these were new start-up ventures
- 1500 customers daily, during peak season.
- Market Manager employed after only 6 months to ensure efficient running of the market
- Repaid start up loan.
- Increased selling opportunities for local producers, boosting the local economy.
- TFM has survived our first winter, increasing confidence for producers to invest in expanding their produce quantity and range.
- Price comparisons during December 2009 revealed staple product prices were comparable to supermarkets.
- Many existing stallholders plan to increase production for the coming season e.g. Strawberry Divine and Atherton Vegetables are planting more, Raspberry Cottage purchased more hens for free-range eggs.
- Attractive market ambience created by sourcing quality buskers, providing a café sit-down area, free children’s table and utilising the Caroline Bay environment.
- Stallholders have begun sourcing products within the market, e.g. Delish baking buys from Havoc Pork and Strawberry Divine, Island Streams Hazelnuts use Huttons Honey with their nuts and Tin Kitchen use Island Stream Hazelnuts in their bread.

Sustainable Living

TFM has been open and encouraging of ideas that promote sustainable living. Activities include:

- Community stall: where people can sell excess fruit or vegetables from their home gardens. Manned by Lions Club volunteers
- Jar bank: unused preserving jars are donated and made available for reuse.
- Harvest group: Anyone with excess fruit & nuts can contact the group who pick the fruit and share it out making excess available at the community stall.
- Workshops on bread-making and cheese-making, which are consistently sold-out.

Timaru Farmers Market has achieved unprecedented success within our first 9 months of operation. We are a unique social enterprise in which a not-for-profit community group is running a thriving commercial business. TFM is providing the Timaru district with enormous social, economic and environmental benefits. We have many exciting plans and events for the upcoming year which will ensure that the market continues to grow.