



What Skills Do Vendors Develop at Farmers' Markets?

In a study conducted by Cornell University, Iowa State University, and the UC Davis in 2000, a sample of farmers' market vendors in each state were asked how much they thought that their entrepreneurial skills or abilities had been improved as a result of their farmers' market experience (Range: 0="None" to 4="Very Much"). The results are in the table below:

Rank of Skills Developed by Farmers' Market Vendors

TYPE of SKILL	Avg.	No.
Customer relations	2.7	523
Merchandising (display) skills	2.5	524
Self-confidence in business	2.5	518
Pricing skills	2.4	517
Cooperating with other businesspeople	2.4	519
Marketing (advertising and signage)	2.1	502
Ability to assess and take risks	2.1	508
Packaging techniques	2	509
Financial management/business planning skills	1.8	503
Skills scale (mean of the above)	2.3	504

In this study, the three top skills improved as a result of participating in their farmers' market were (1) customer relations; (2) merchandising (display) skills; and (3) self-confidences in business. These results support of idea that farmers' markets can contribute to entrepreneurship and microenterprise development.

For more results of the study, see:

Hinrichs, C.C., G.W. Gillespie, and G.W. Feenstra. 2004. Social learning and innovation at retail farmers' markets. *Rural Sociology*, 69:31–58.