

Susan Martin, District 9 Representative – NYFB State Promotion & Education Committee
Consumer Article

There is a lot of talk about supporting local agriculture and the source of that food. One of the best ways to support local agriculture is to shop at farm markets.

Farm markets have expanded from beyond just a wide variety of vegetables. They include butter, cheeses, ice cream, eggs, and a diversity of meats ranging from beef to pork. Many of the farmers of these expanding products also have a year-round supply to buy from or you can order your food choices in advance.

You can find these markets and farmers through a variety of sources. Newspapers and radio advertise when markets open, another way is to simply watch for farm market signs. Cornell Cooperative Extension also can provide consumers a list with markets and farmers. Many of these direct farmer marketers also have web sites and face book pages to alert their customers to what and when products are available. Some towns and Chambers of Commerce have a list or web pages to direct consumers to farmers and farmer markets in their area.

Most dairy farmers do not direct market their product due to lack of labor and the high capital cost to set up a milk plant. You can help these farmers through the purchase of dairy products that have the REAL Seal on them. This means the dairy product comes from milk from American dairy farmers. American dairy farmers have more food safety and health regulations that they follow than farmers in other countries in the world.

Also keep an open mind when you read food safety stories in the media. Unless it comes from a long standing organization such as the American Medical Association or from US Department of Agriculture, many of these stories exaggerate or use misleading or selective information by organizations or individuals with political agendas to scare people and policy makers into do what they want.

All farmers take pride in the products they grow and raise and consume their own fruits of their labor. Farmers live on the land they produce the food on and do not want to harm or hurt their families, neighbors, livestock or land by bad management practices.

Save a farmer, buy local!