



PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION

THIRTY FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE



In 2023, PCFMA is marking our 35th year of operations and service to the San Francisco Bay Area and California farmers. [Farmers' Market Week](#), which runs from August 6 to 12, 2023 seems an appropriate time for us to announce and celebrate this anniversary. It is also a great time to reflect on PCFMA's history and future.

The Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association was founded by a group of farmers and their supporters to establish a permanent, multi-day-per-week public market similar to Pike Place Market in Seattle. However, in the first year, in 1988, the markets struggled to attract enough customers to make daily operations viable for the farmers selling there. The following year, PCFMA switched to operating weekly farmers' markets, and the community response proved it was the right move. A number of the farmers' markets that PCFMA opened in 1989 are still in operation today.

Throughout the past 35 years, PCFMA has implemented instrumental changes as a result of responding to shifting customer demands. The organization has experienced tremendous growth – briefly topping 70 farmers' markets per week – before choosing to reduce its footprint to a smaller, more manageable number of farmers' markets. In 2023 we are proud to operate 35 weekly farmers' markets across six bay area counties. PCFMA has become a proven industry leader by implementing and sharing consumer insights gleaned through regular customer surveys, helping to implement matching of CalFresh benefits as one of the first partners in the effort that is today known as Market Match, and building state-of-the-art tools and processes that have allowed PCFMA to support its markets while making its staff more efficient.

The faces behind PCFMA have also changed over the years. While one of PCFMA's original founding Board members remains, the others have retired from the [Board of](#)

[Directors](#) and new leaders have stepped up. Today, the average tenure of a PCFMA staff member is 6 years, with 25 staffers joining the organization since 2020. That means a fresh set of eyes on many of our communities, learning how to best recover and grow our markets post-pandemic. While we hate to see great people leave the PCFMA team, it is exciting to see what they accomplish as they continue their careers. Former PCFMA staff members have gone on to work with other farmers' market organizations, started farms, led the statewide Market Match Consortium, and taken on national industry leadership at the Farmers Market Coalition.

The past several years have presented many challenges both to the industry of agriculture as well as community-driven weekly events like farmers' markets. Between wildfires that wreaked havoc on Bay Area air quality, the pandemic occurring amidst an ongoing drought, and a winter of non-stop rain and flooded fields, circumstances have proven that it is impossible to accurately predict the future. One of the significant disruptions PCFMA experienced during the pandemic was the sudden severing of its longtime relationships with healthcare institutions – Kaiser Permanente, Veterans Administration hospitals, and UCSF – as all three began to limit activities on their campuses to help prevent the spread of COVID. As a result, the number of markets in which PCFMA operates dropped from more than 50 before the pandemic to 24 during the pandemic. When the pandemic began to lessen and hospitals were again willing to welcome farmers' markets, many of our farmers were short of crops due to their lack of water or short of staff due to the economic challenges that impacted so many employers. As a result, PCFMA's hospital partnerships are today just a fraction of what they were before the pandemic.

Another lingering pandemic disruption that PCFMA is still feeling is the removal of ancillary services and activities from its farmers' markets. At the height of the pandemic, many local authorities required PCFMA to limit our farmers' markets to produce sales, without the sale of food to be eaten on site. With many businesses being affected by the pandemic, priority was given to brick and mortar foodservice businesses within communities to ensure their survival. As a result, we could no longer offer space in many markets to some farmers' market favorites like roasted and stuffed potatoes, grilled chicken on a stick, orchards, or knife sharpening. Now that those restrictions have been lifted, we are actively trying to attract those vendors back into our markets.

Many other PCFMA-sponsored activities – such as crafts for kids, music, and product sampling – were also suspended during the pandemic. Many of those activities have begun to return and a big part of PCFMA's focus over the coming years will be about bringing these fun activities back to our farmers markets to help them again become family-friendly outings, not just food shopping errands. These events, and the return of Master Gardeners, local nonprofits, and businesses from the surrounding area, help reinforce farmers' markets as a center of community life and a gathering space for friends

and neighbors. Reinforcing the ties between the farmers' market and the communities they serve is a high priority for PCFMA in the coming years.

As we move forward into the next 5, 10, and 35 years of service to the San Francisco Bay Area, we do so with optimism, pride in our history of service and success, and a commitment to continue to uphold the values that guide the pursuit of our mission.

We send our sincere thanks to all those whose efforts helped to bring PCFMA to this point – farmers, food producers, funders, staffers, supporters, and customers. We look forward to continuing to work with you to sustain PCFMA's farmers' markets as essential food access points for communities and essential sales outlets for California farmers.

We are excited to see what the future holds for PCFMA, and we are confident that, with the support of our community, we will continue to thrive for many years to come!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allen".

Allen Moy
Executive Director

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