



Connecting our urban communities with Victoria's farmers.
No wholesalers. No big business.
Just real food direct from the people who produce it.

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Melbourne Farmers Markets (MFM) is celebrating 20 years of the Abbotsford Farmers Market – the very first farmers market to be established in Melbourne. A celebration morning tea will take place at Abbotsford Farmers Market on Saturday 22 October 2022

The farmers market has a rich history, initially part of the collective effort to oppose the residential development and boutique hotel proposal in St Heliers Street, which threatened to close the Collingwood Children's Farm and steer the Abbotsford Convent in a very different direction to what the community cherishes today. Community opposition to the development was successful, with then Premier Bracks announcing the site gifted back to the people of Victoria on a farmers market morning in 2005. In 2013, the financial impact of the monthly farmers market was publicly acknowledged by the Collingwood Children's Farm Manager for saving the Farm.

MFM took shape on founder Miranda Sharp's kitchen table, and the October 2002 press release reads: *"Unlike anything else in Melbourne, the Farmers Market brings a slice of rural life to the city and provides Saturday morning shoppers with an intimate and unique market experience. Producer meets consumer direct."*

"Stallholders have a simple philosophy; that their goods are grown, made and known by those who sell them, and that the quality of produce is of the utmost importance. There'll be no craft stalls or jumping castles to distract from a seriously good food expedition!" Over 7000 people showed up to the first market and demonstrated a lasting desire from Melburnians to know where their food comes from.

MFM now operates four weekly markets at Coburg, Carlton, Alphington and, continuously, in St Heliers Street Abbotsford. Hundreds of small Victorian food businesses credit MFM for launching and supporting them and none more acutely than through the COVID years when MFM's frontline staff managed over 200 public events, providing essential food service and community gathering places for locked down Melbournians.

"We have worked with MFM for 20 years and so appreciate all the challenges faced by them to support us. Quite honestly, I don't think many of us would have survived the dark days of the pandemic without their unwavering tireless commitment to keeping markets open and providing a safe place to sell our produce. You have been a voice for us, and we are so grateful for your work and vision. Thank you for providing us the opportunity to launch and grow our business as you have done for so many producers"

- Anne-Marie Monda from Holy Goat Organic Cheese

MFM now also focusses on broader access of fresh food direct from growers through projects in food security, circular economy, waste minimization, urban agriculture and local procurement. In August 2022, MFM won the national Outstanding Farmers Market 'Community Initiative' award recognising their food relief projects established during the lockdown years at their Alphington Community Food Hub base.

The future for MFM is as clear as it was in the beginning; championing a strong local food system for Victorian farmers and creating opportunities for the community and industry to connect directly. Everyone who shops at our markets plays a part in the future of local agriculture.

For more information:

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