

# **OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY**

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**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Farmers Markets Delight Picky People**

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. -- Fresh and flavorful fruits and vegetables are rolling into farmers markets across Oklahoma.

National Farmers Market Week is August 2-8 and our state's markets are ready for buyers who demand the best produce local farmers can grow.

Over 70 farmers markets are registered with the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF). Registration gives the markets the advantage of being listed on the state's website at [www.okgrown.com](http://www.okgrown.com) in addition to distributing recipe cards and OK Grown bags.

Registered market managers are eligible to apply for grant funds to promote specialty crops. A total of \$55,000 was shared by 23 markets this year to entice buyers to try fruits, nuts and vegetables.

Ashley Bender coordinates ODAFF's farmers market program and estimates that the markets bring in more than \$1 million in sales. Often, the weekly sales supplement a farmer's income and provide a seasonal boost to a farm family.

"You get fresh produce and you know where your food is coming from," Bender said. "You also know you're supporting a local farmer and keeping your money in our state."

Shoppers at the Tuesday afternoon market in ODAFF's parking lot look forward to the stories as much as the juicy peaches and sweet corn. Connie Whitmore, local farmer and elementary school teacher, told her buyers a family story about sand plum pie.

In the Depression era, her grandfather's cousin had guests coming to the house and no dessert to serve. The young housewife quickly stirred some sand plums into a cobbler and served it. Everyone loved the sweet and tart flavor, but they hated to spit the pits. "It was pioneer food," Whitmore said.

Tony Dennis, of Lindsay, OK, needed extra income while staying home to raise her three children. She started by selling extra vegetables from her garden and was surprised when it turned into a business.

“I went from selling extra to growing to sell,” Dennis said. Taking care of her greenhouse and farming her seven acres has become a full-time job.

Both growers agree that they get satisfaction from knowing they are feeding people the highest quality food they can grow.

Regular customer Lynne Rogers said, “I love my farmers. The food is just better.”

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Photo caption: Connie Whitmore, right, helps shoppers choose ripe tomatoes and zucchini squash from the vegetables on her table at the Tuesday afternoon farmers market held in the parking lot of the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Forestry in Oklahoma City.

