



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Mac Farmstand Director

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Jonathon Patterson  
SUBJECT: MSU Mac Farmstand Report #1  
DATE: Tuesday July 7, 2015

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### **UPDATE**

This is the fifth year of Farmstand and we are on track for a very successful year of supporting McMaster students and community members in eating more locally and sustainably. The Farmstand launched with a grand opening on June 3rd to an amazing reception; over 100 students and community members came out to ask questions, take part in the event, and purchase local food.

Our focus this year is advocacy; finding ways to raise awareness of the importance of local food and sustainable eating at McMaster by promoting the environmental, economic, and health benefits. Customers regularly approach the stand with questions about the source of their produce, why local food should be important to them, and the farming practices that go into getting food to their plates. We have created an amazing team of local food advocates that have truly embraced the mission of the service, their passion in leading these conversations is key to everything we do. In addition to weekly market days, multiple promotion campaigns, and community outreach, this year will also feature a first year specific campaign, a local food festival and a nutrition roundtable event.

Students can now purchase local food using debit, credit, and in September we will also take meal card. Making the service more accessible has been a remarkable success with about 30 percent of all purchases now being made electronically. This is part of a larger reorganization that now puts us fully under the direction of the MSU and gives us more control over the future of the service going forward.

### **SERVICE USAGE**

Using register sales as a metric, weekly sales are up over a quarter from last year; the total amount purchased in each transaction is also higher. This shift in purchasing patterns is important because it indicates that customers are beginning to utilize Farmstand for planning ahead to cook at home instead of just purchasing a snack for the moment. An

average week of sales at this time last year was around \$450.00; this year we are averaging \$600.00 per week. I attribute this growth to accepting electronic payments, our increased focus on advocacy, and successful online and offline promotions.

### **PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

We opened on June 3rd to overwhelming support. The event included local food, live music, face painting, and a “why love local” photobooth.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

Farmstand continues to be open every Wednesday and Thursday from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. Beginning on June 24th we also began a weekly “local music lunch” event that brings local musicians to Farmstand to showcase their talent. We are planning a staff appreciation day for July 15th to raise awareness among University staff and appreciate their support. We continue to actively promote the service through social media, campus screens, posters, and word of mouth.

### **BUDGET**

Due to challenges noted below, our operations costs may be higher than anticipated but not likely to exceed our total budget. We will be requesting additional funding through Special Projects and USIF for the Local Food Festival and Nutrition Roundtable Events.

### **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

We are meeting some resistance from hospitality services in use of tablecloths and securing a cart to replace a broken one. The cost of both of these items has the potential to be high so we are currently sourcing alternatives. As for stand operations, our past practice of pricing items based on unit pricing (we purchase by weight) has resulted in slightly underestimating cost. This has been identified and remedied by adjusting prices and trialing selling by weight for some items. As a result our sales (which aim to break even) are currently a couple hundred dollars below cost. I anticipate this to be corrected by the end of July.

### **SUCSESSES**

In addition to now accepting debit and credit, becoming fully under control of the MSU, and increasing service utilization over past years we have successfully curated a culture where stakeholders are passionate about why we exist as opposed to just what we are. This has resulted in many more customers engaging in conversations to understand the many benefits of buying local. Farmstand has an amazing and dedicated team of executives and CSRs that are truly committed to the success of this service.