

EVOLUTION OF FARMER'S MARKET IN THE US

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Abstract

A farmers market is a public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling the food that they produced directly to consumers. Farmers markets facilitate personal connections and bonds of mutual benefits between farmers, shoppers, and communities. By cutting out middlemen, farmers receive more of their food dollars and shoppers receive the freshest and most flavorful food in their area and local economies prosper.

Most farmers' markets are operated on a seasonal basis, opening in the spring and closing in the fall. There are year-round markets and they are generally found on the West Coast, southeast and southwest United States.

Farmers' markets also provide low-risk entry points for new or beginning farmers; educational opportunities for the general public; and increased access to fresh food for food-insecure community members. For example, in 2017 over \$22 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars (formerly known as food stamps) were redeemed at farmers' markets across the country.

Direct marketing of farm products through farmers markets continues to be an important sales outlet for agricultural producers nationwide. As of National Farmers Market Week, (the first full week in August), there were 8,771 farmers markets listed in USDA's National Farmers Market Directory. This is a 6 percent increase since 2014.

After more than a decade of explosive growth, sales of local food at U.S. farmers' markets are slowing. A January report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that while more farmers are selling directly to consumers, local food sales at farmers markets, farm stands and through community supported agriculture have lost some momentum.

Even the rate of growth in the number of farmers markets nationwide has slowed in recent years after several years of rapid growth, rising just 1.5 percent from 2013 to 2014.

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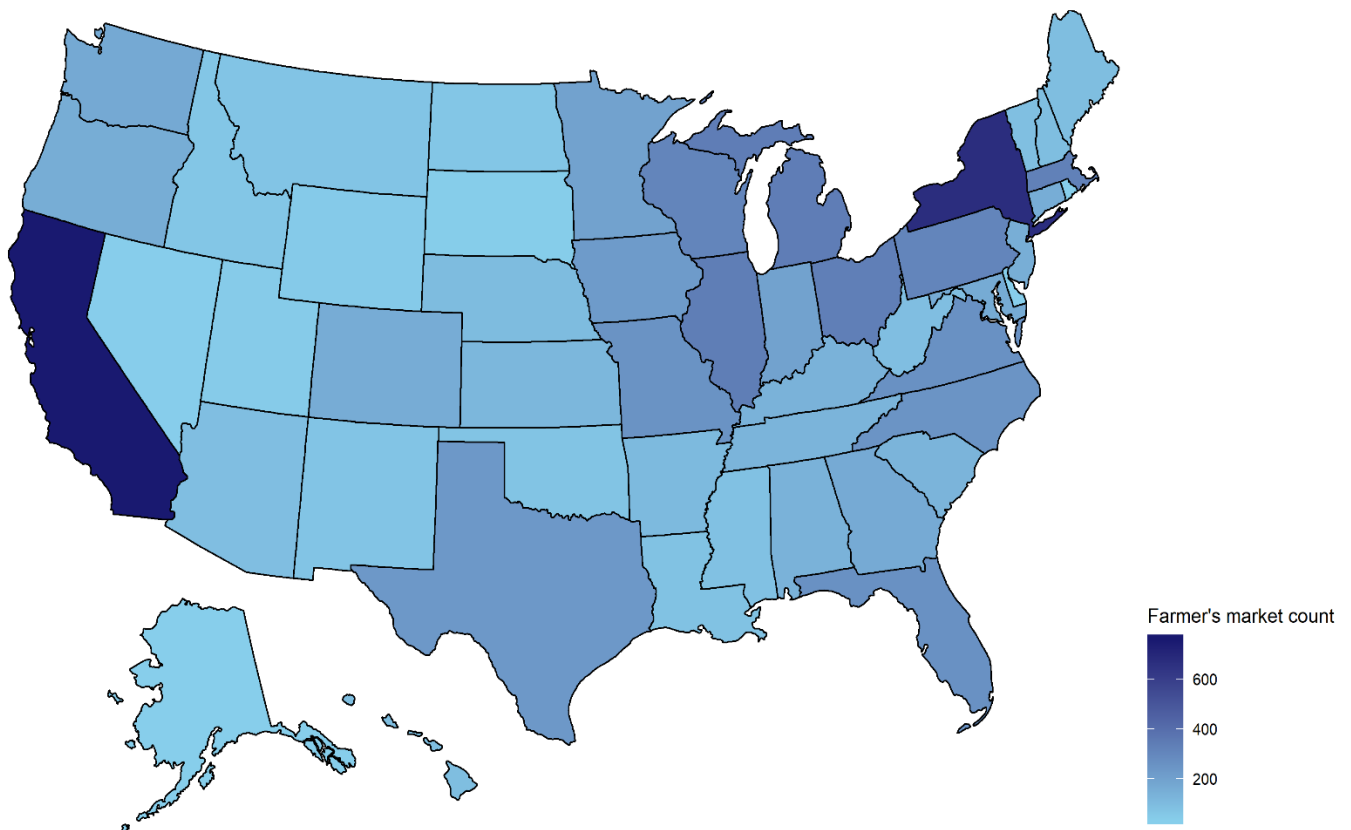
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Introduction

Farmers markets are an integral part of the urban/farm linkage and have continued to rise in popularity, mostly due to the growing consumer interest in obtaining fresh products directly from the farm. Farmers markets allow consumers to have access to locally grown, farm fresh produce, enables farmers the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with their customers, and cultivate consumer loyalty with the farmers who grows the produce. When a sale is made at a farmers' market, nearly 100% of the income stays in the hands of a producer. Meanwhile, according to the USDA, farmers and ranchers receive less than 16 cents for every dollar generated in revenue through sales at traditional retail outlets. This is due to processing, distribution and marketing costs, among other factors.

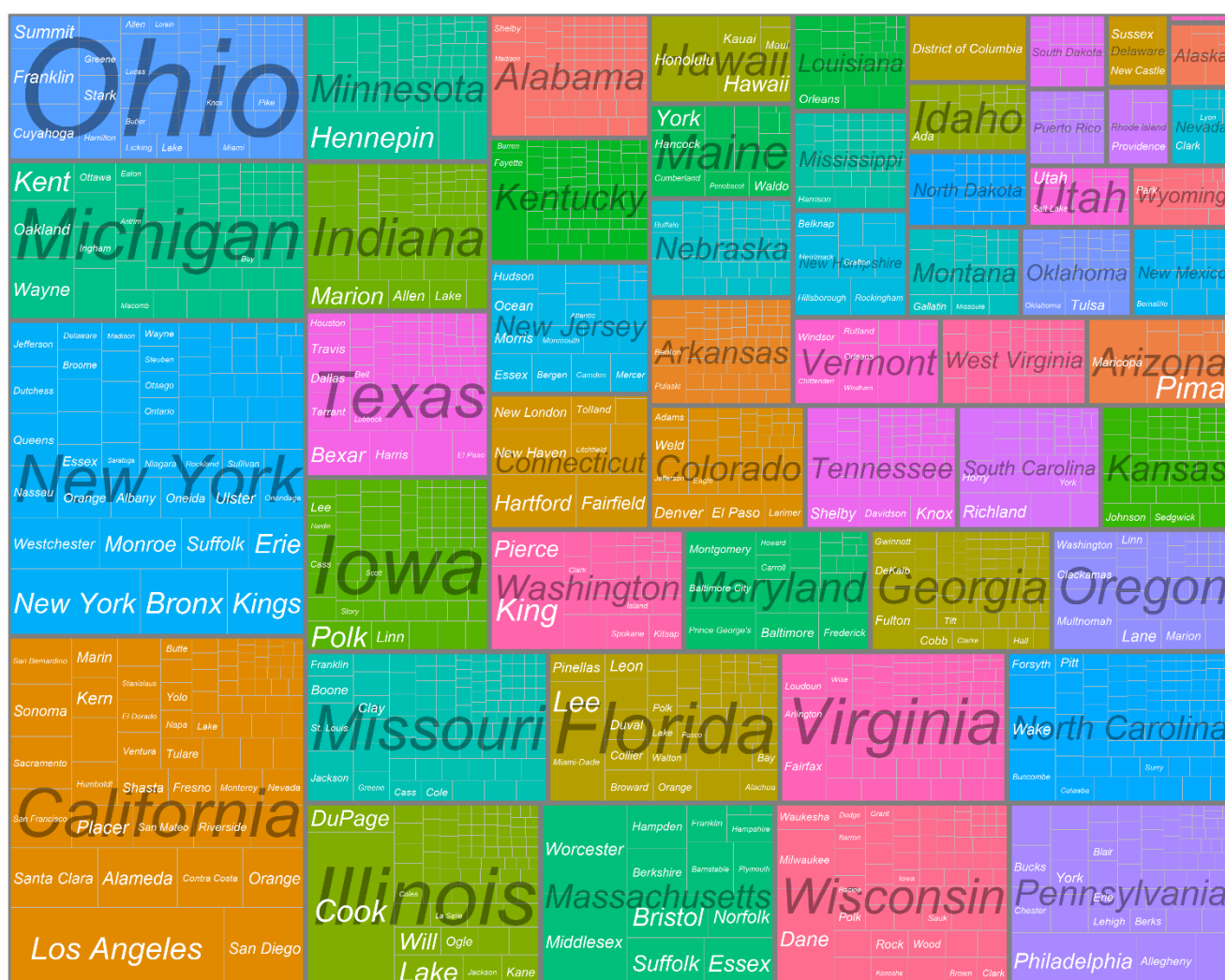
Now in its 24th year, USDA's farmers market is a living demonstration of USDA's dedication to supporting local and regional food systems and increasing consumer access to fresh, healthy foods in our community.

State wise Farmer's Markets Distribution



The Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), is one of the USDA grant programs supporting this movement. The program awards competitive grants, with the goal of expanding access to locally produced agriculture products and developing new market opportunities for farms and ranches participating in direct farmer-to-consumer marketing. Since 2006, FMPP has helped communities establish farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) enterprises, road-side stands, and agritourism in all 50 States and U.S. territories. All project proposals must demonstrate community support and directly benefit farmers and ranchers.

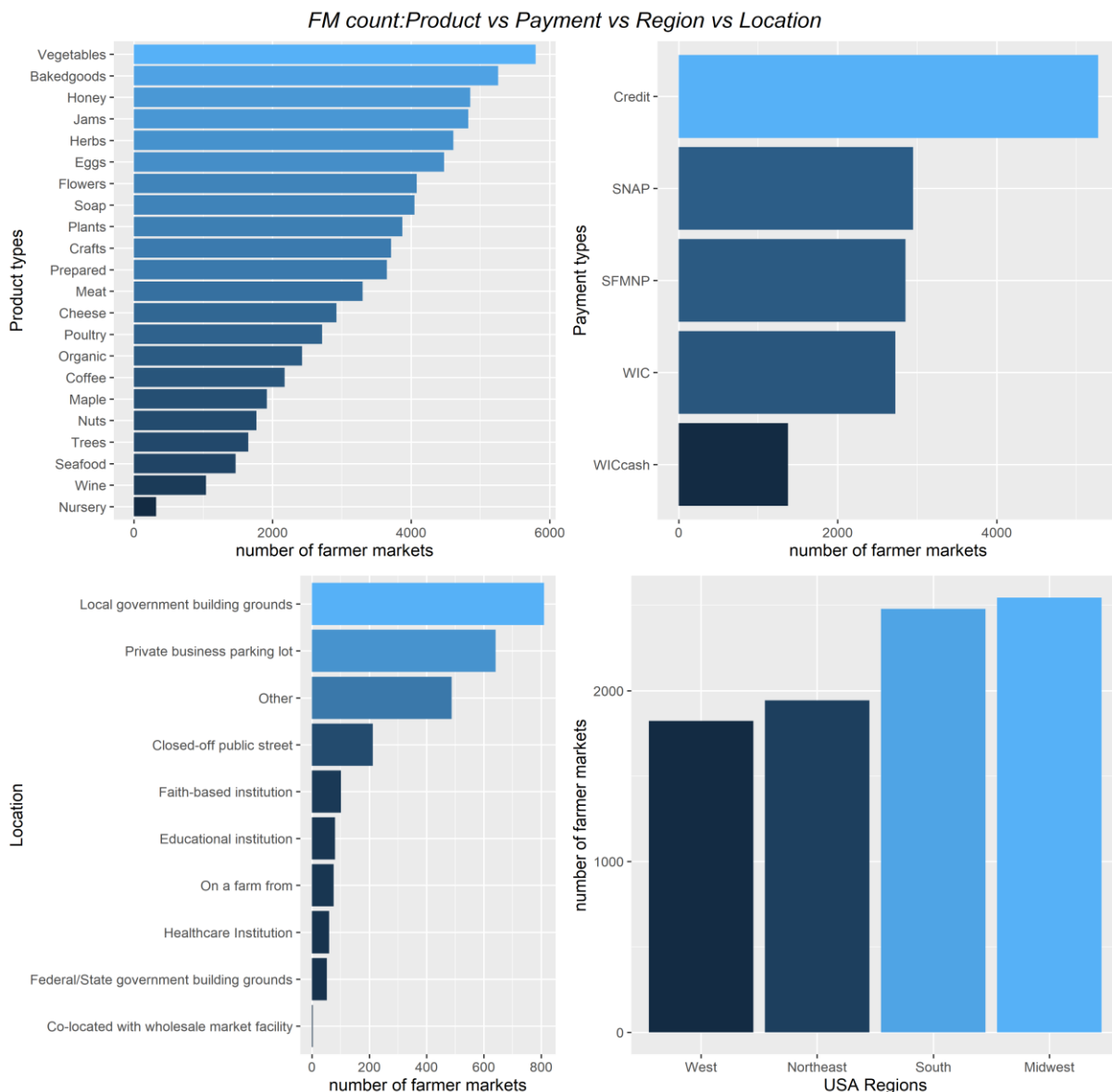
The county wise distribution of farmer's markets spread across states can be seen in the State-Tree map below:



Related Statistics

If it seems as if farmers markets have sprouted like weeds from every vacant parking lot in the last few years, you're not imagining things. According to the latest data from the USDA, the number of farmers markets in the United States has grown by 76 percent since 2008. There are now 8,791 markets listed in the USDA's National Farmers Market Directory — that's one market for every 38,000 people.

The geographic, product, payment and location distribution of the farmer's markets can be seen below:

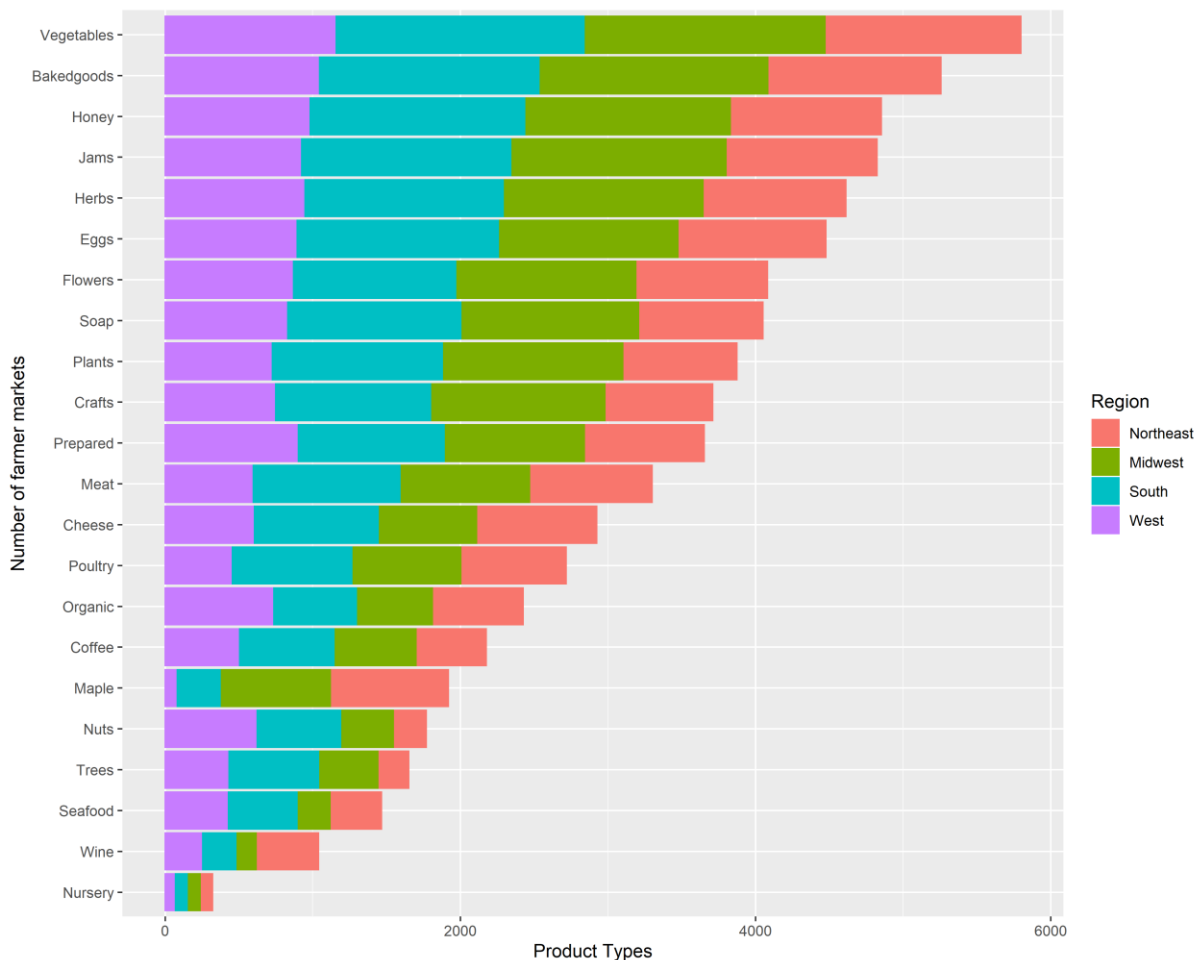


Products and Payments

It is a source of pride to farmers and market shoppers alike that the products available at farmers market represent the agricultural of a region or state. Depending on the time of the year, you might find avocados, olives, steak or artichokes in Texas or California, and be more likely to find paw paws, peanuts, pork, and peonies in Virginia.

Some markets concentrate on produce, while others carry everything from fruits and vegetables to baked goods, meat, eggs, flowers, and dairy products. Some may carry locally made crafts or prepared foods as a complement to the agricultural products they sell. As the number of markets grows, so does the variety of foods available.

The distribution of commonly sold produce in the farmer's markets region wise can be visualized as below:

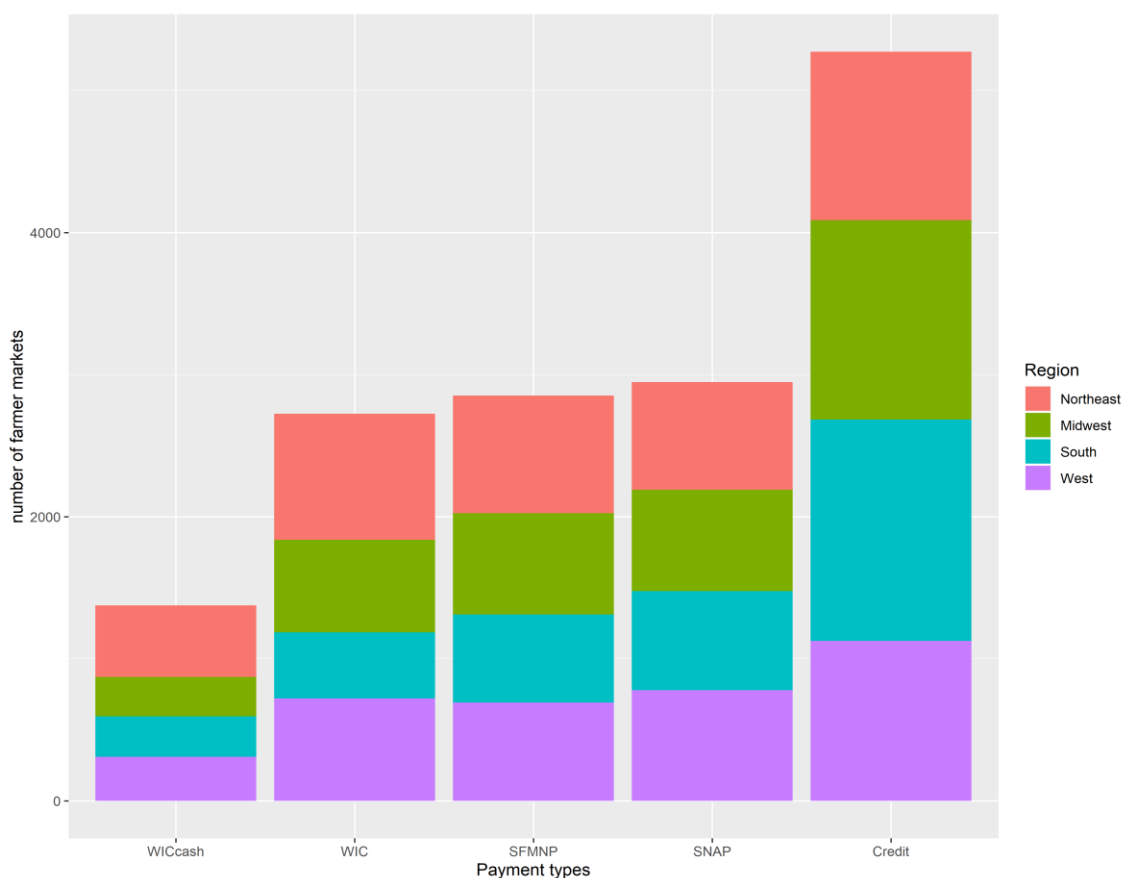


The farmer's markets accept a variety of payment option like Credit, SNAP(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC, WICcash and SFMNP.

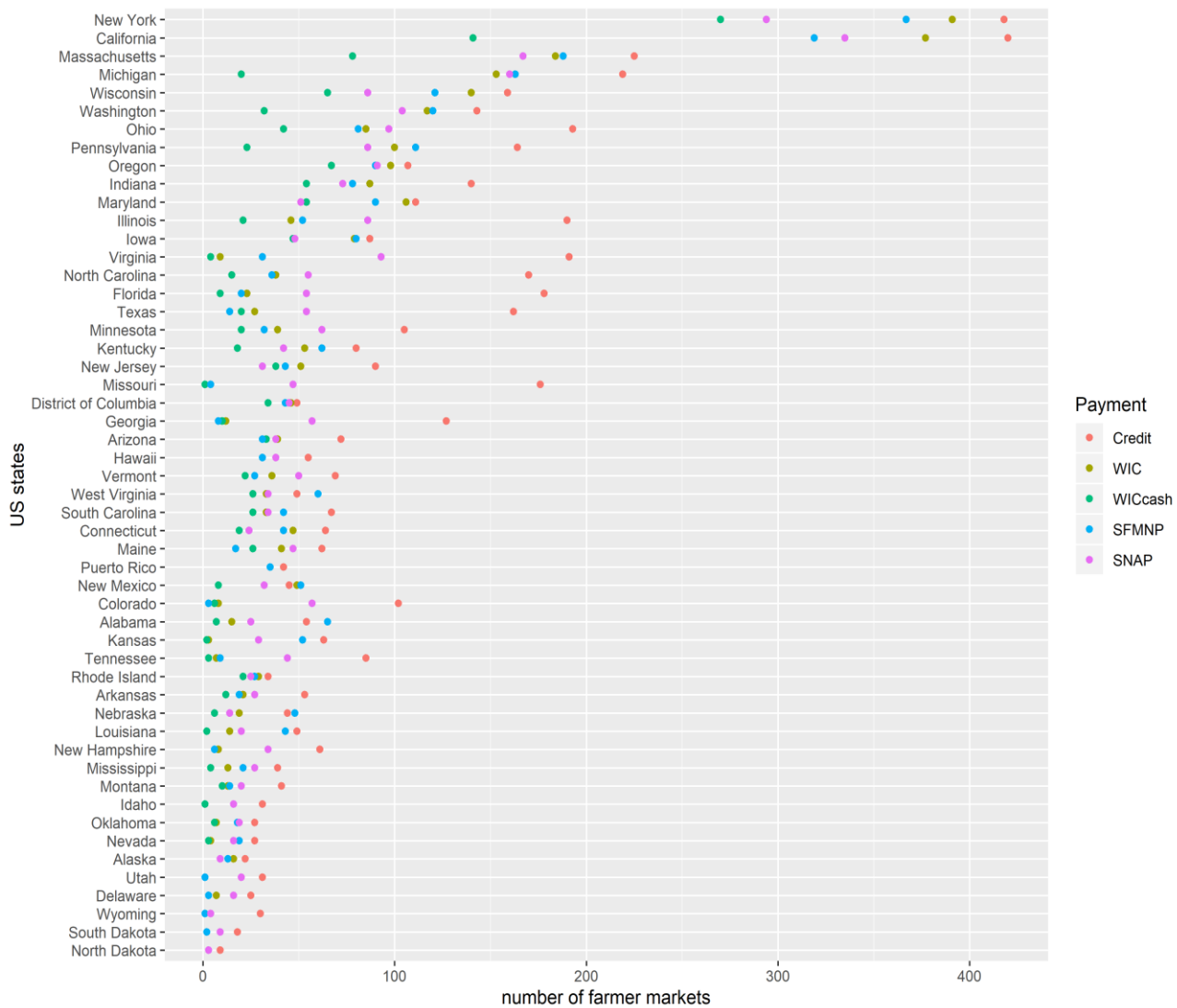
SFMNP (Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Coupons)- The Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program is designed to provide low-income seniors with access to locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey and herbs. FNS awards grants to states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territories, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments. The program is administered by state agencies such as a state Department of Agriculture or Aging.

SNAP(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)- SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency.

WIC- The WIC Program aims to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, popularly known as WIC. Eligible WIC participants are issued FMNP coupons in addition to their regular WIC benefits. These coupons can be used to buy eligible foods from farmers, farmers' markets or roadside stands that have been approved by the state agency to accept FMNP coupons. *The distribution of accepted payment methods across the farmer's markets region and state wise can be seen in the below charts:*



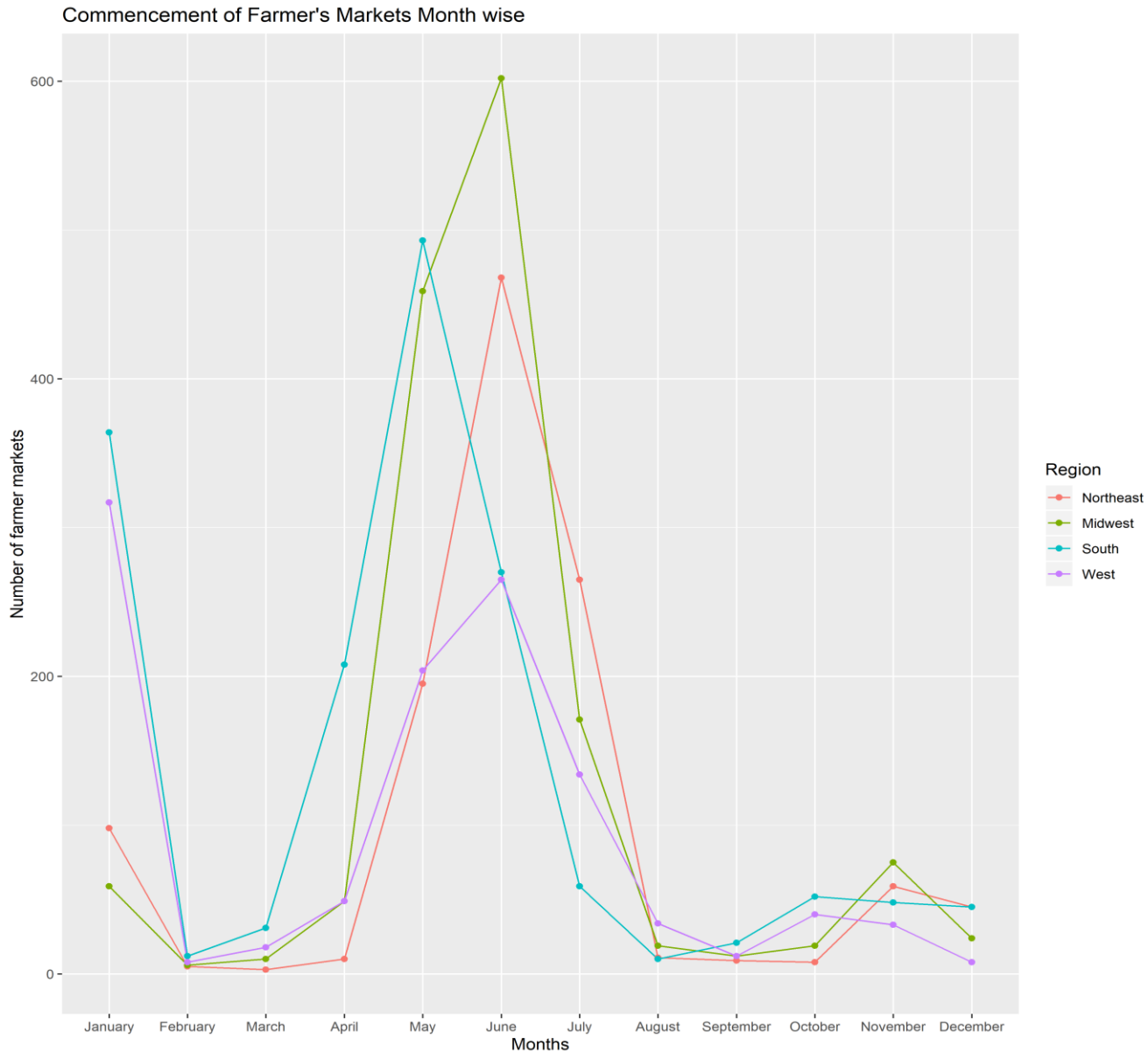
State-wise



Seasonality

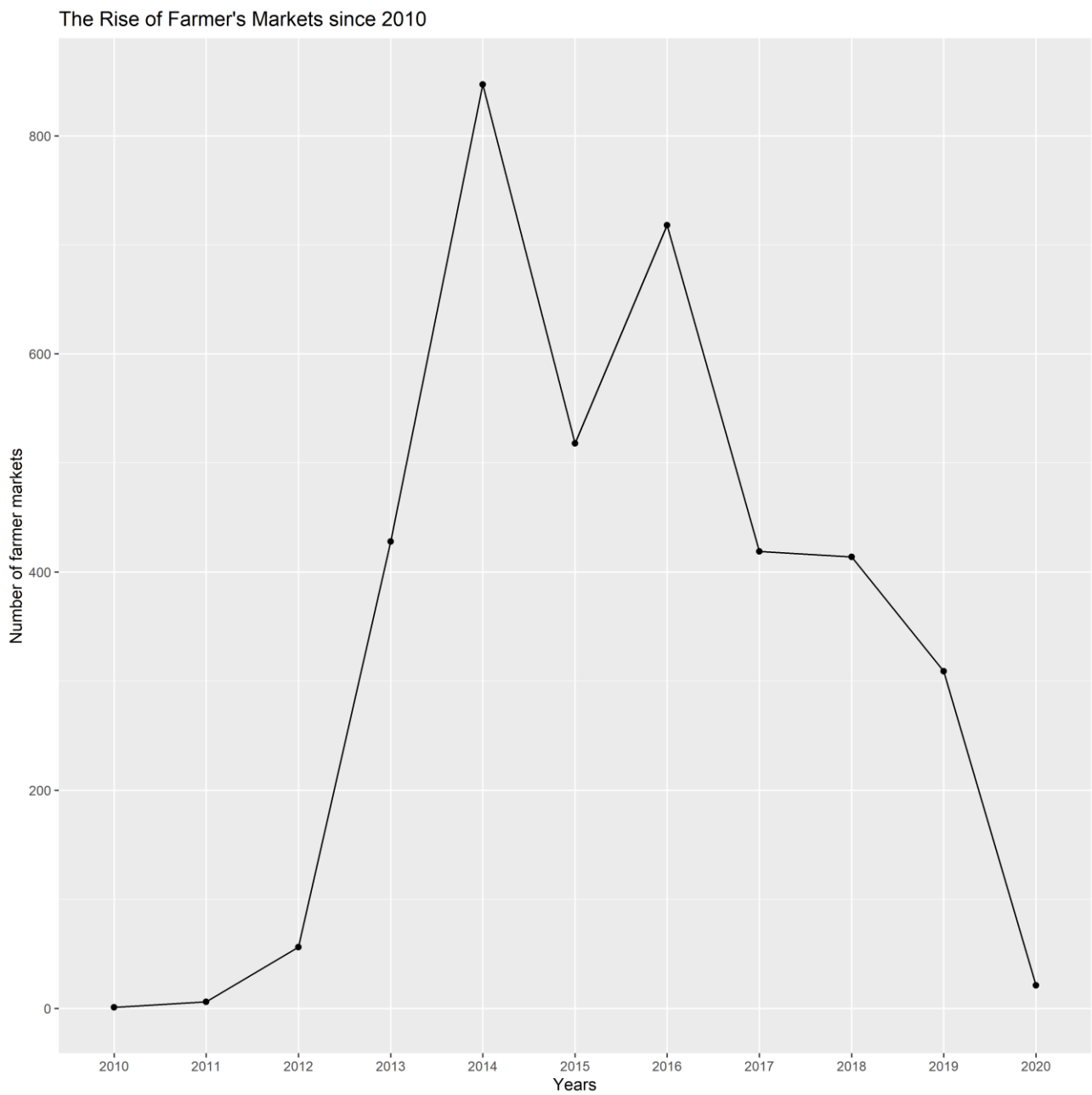
Peak harvest season is usually peak market season, and some markets are only open in the spring, summer, and early autumn. In 2010, roughly 15% of all farmers markets were open in the winter months. Nevertheless, year-round farmers market thrive in many states. Many markets are expanding their seasons or transitioning to year-round operation by offering their shoppers items including meat, eggs, dairy, bread and other products that are available fresh throughout the year. Even in colder climates, farmers are implementing a variety of season-extending techniques that can protect crops from frosts and allow them to be picked and sold fresh for more weeks of the year.

The seasonality of farmer’s markets with respect to their commencement monthly, region wise can be shown in a line chart as follows:

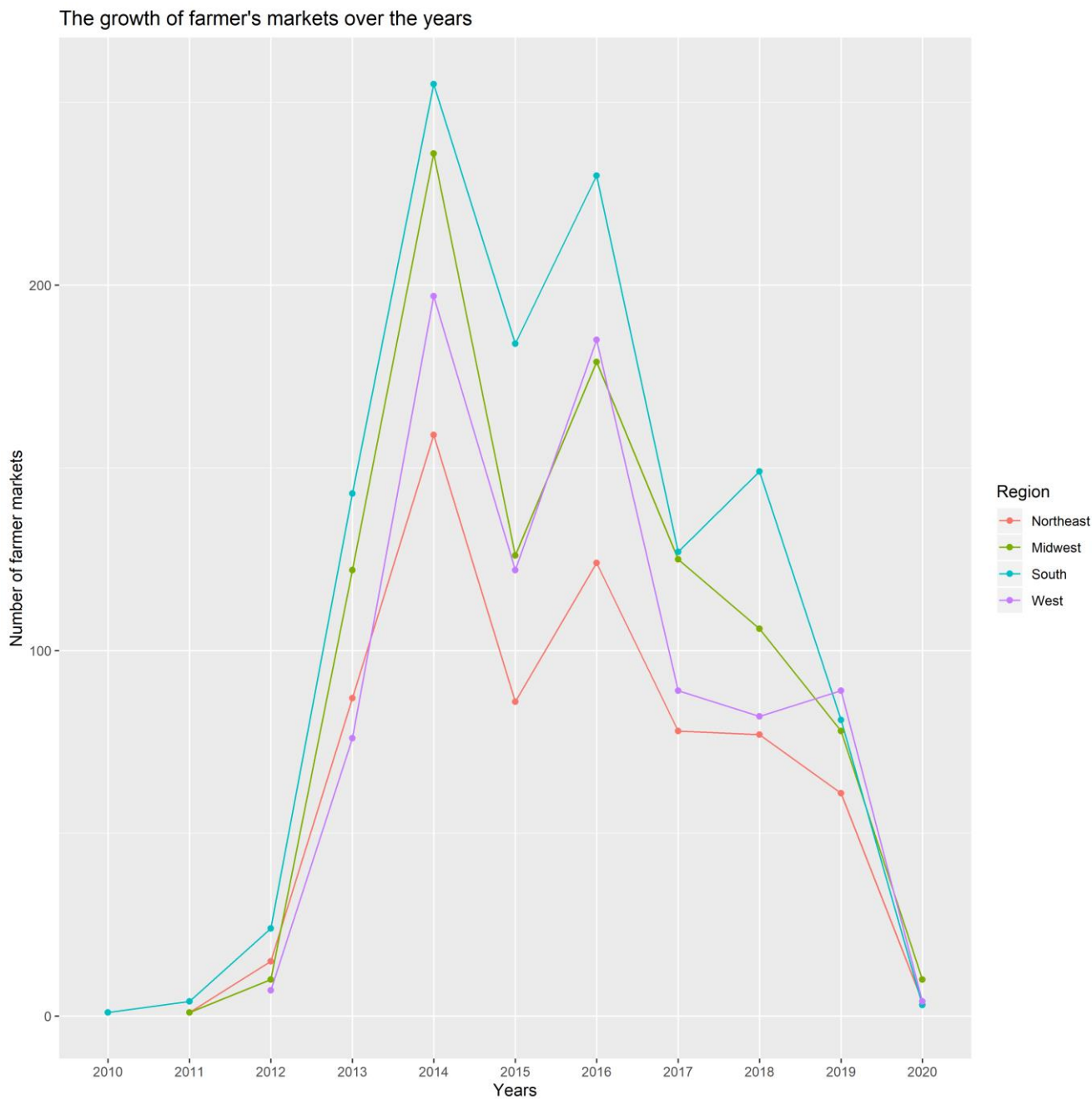


Growth statistics

The growth and presence of farmer’s markets in the US over the course of years can be visualized as follows:



Region-wise

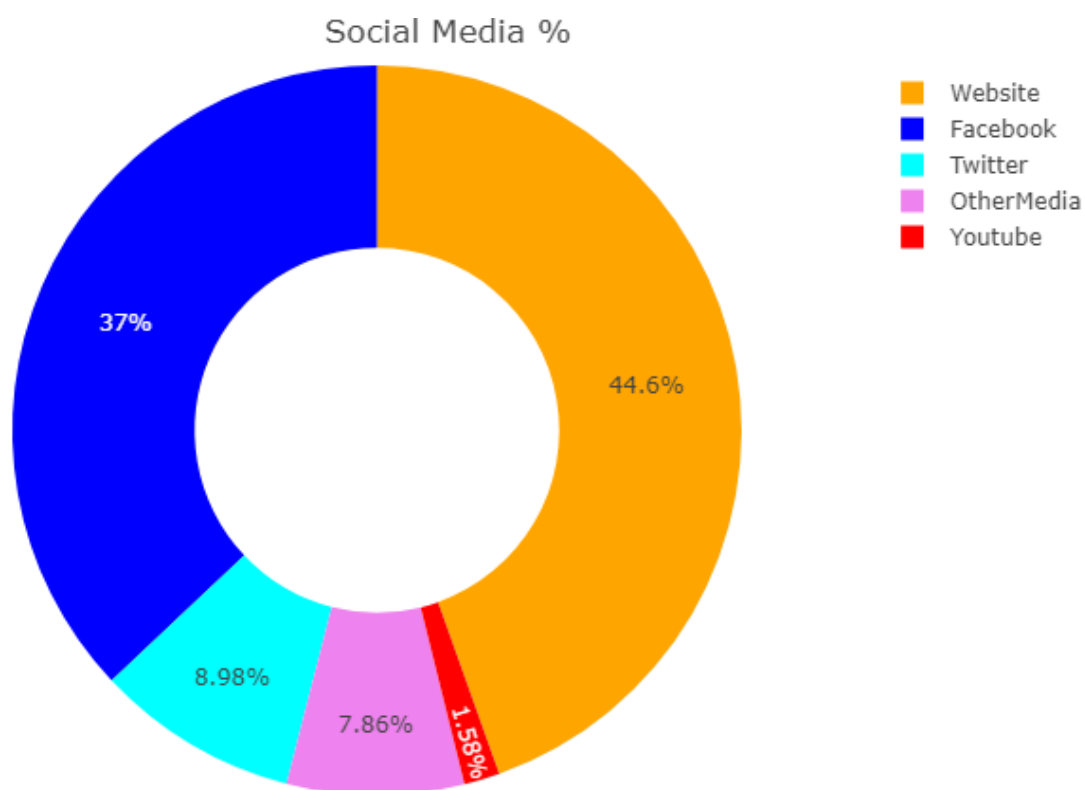


Social Media

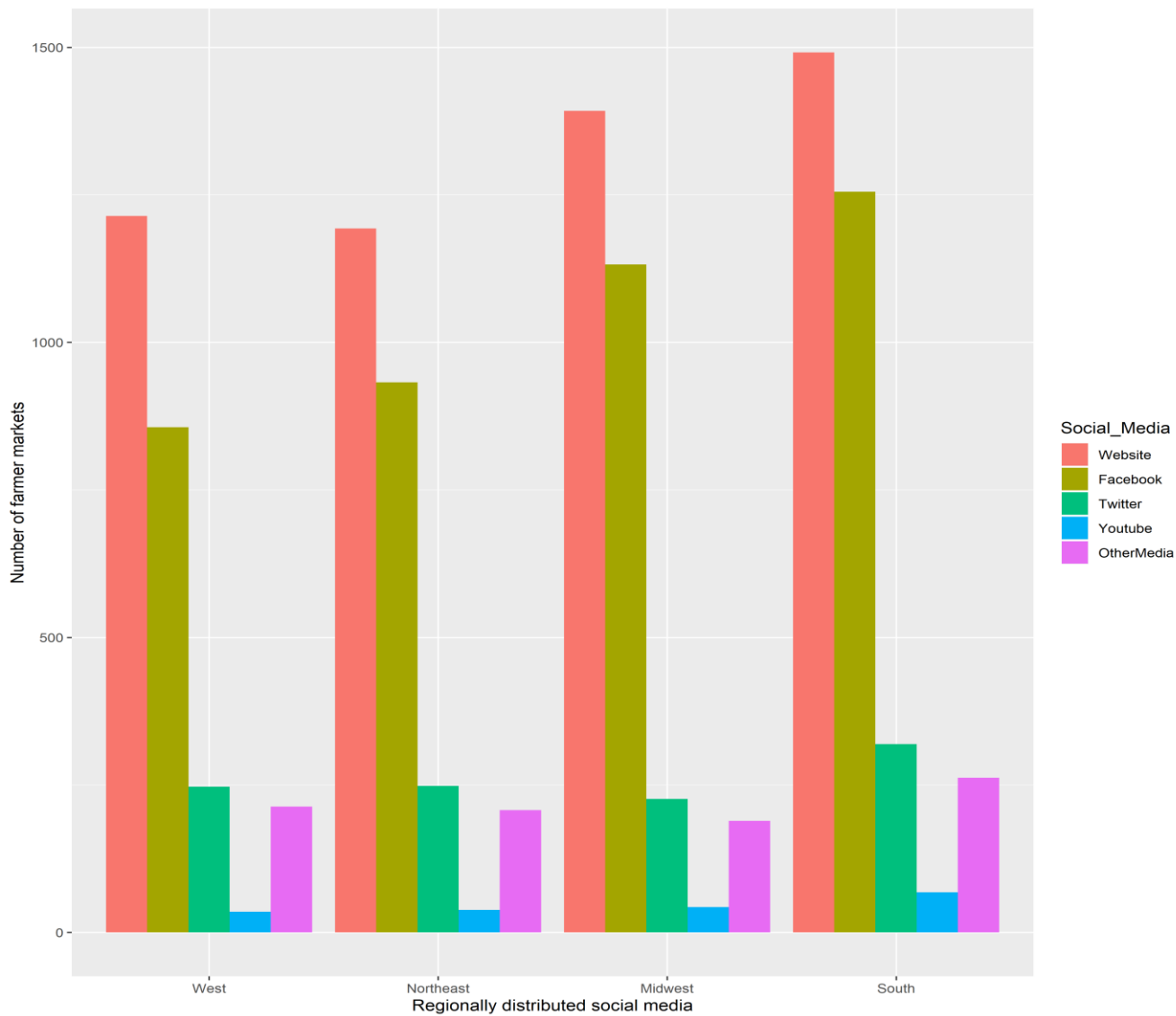
In 1994, there were only 1,755 known farmers markets in the United States. As of 2018, there were 8,760. That growth, which has been increasing steadily, is proof that farmers markets are not only thriving but that people want more of them.

In fact, you can pair your offline efforts, like hosting a booth, with your online efforts, like Twitter and Facebook. Social media has been a significant factor in most small businesses that have gotten any kind of viral promotion. The food business requires a lot of word-of-mouth marketing, and there's no better vehicle for generating traffic and sales than a combination of social media and in-person tasting. Once you can convince a few socially-savvy customers to tweet about your delicious treats, the community will start coming in just for you.

The social media donut chart below represents the channels farmer's markets use to reach out to their customers for promotional and informatory purposes.



The social media distribution of the farmer’s markets region wise can be visualized as the grouped bar chart below:



Conclusion

After more than a decade of explosive growth, sales of local food at U.S. farmers' markets are slowing. A January report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that while more farmers are selling directly to consumers, local food sales at farmers markets, farm stands and through community supported agriculture have lost some momentum.

Rising demand in the last several years has led to the opening of many new markets. There were 8,268 farmers' markets operating in 2014, up 180 percent since 2006.

From 2007 to 2012 the value of food sales of farmers face-to-face with consumers dropped by 1 percent in real dollars. For some context, from 2002 to 2007 that value increased 32 percent. The increase was 36 percent in the five-year period before that.

Even the rate of growth in the number of farmers markets nationwide has slowed in recent years after several years of rapid growth, rising just 1.5 percent from 2013 to 2014.

Spurred by the collapse of the housing market in 2008, the recession likely played some role in slowing sales at direct-to-consumer sites.

References

[1] USDA website : <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/usda-farmers-market>

[2]Farmer's market dataset provided, for all the visualizations in the repost

[3]FMPP highlights :

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[4]SFMNP info: [https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-p](https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program)
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[5]SNAP info: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>

[6]WIC info: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/wic-farmers-market-nutrition-program>