Business is Booming at WA Farmers Markets

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : August 4, 2009 at 7:25 am

OLYMPIA, Wash. - August 2-8 is "Washington Farmers Market Week," an official nod to the farmers who set up booths

There are now 140 farmers markets around the state, and sales have risen from $38 million in 2006, to $55 million last

"The return and the value of meeting customers and getting feedback on their products, and being able to get a retail dollar amount for their product and not a wholesale dollar amount, is valuable enough that farmers are willing to put in 60 to 80 hours a week to make it happen."

Barrantine says farmers markets are doing well because people enjoy the social aspects of them, as well as the idea of buying fresh, locally produced foods. One drawback for vendors, however, has been that they typically are only equipped to handle cash sales. Changing that has been a priority this year, according to Barrantine, enabling them to take credt card payments.

"They operate often, you know, in a street or in a park without electricity or phone lines, so it hasn't been an option. But this year, 20 markets in the state are part of a pilot program to actually have wireless point-of-sale machines, so they can take debit cards, credit cards and food stamp cards."

Barrantine says the pilot program has already paid for itself in increased sales. For more information about farmers markets in the state and "Washington Farmers Market Week" events, see http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com/.