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## Savings to be had by switching to farmers' market

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## Groceries

### Emily Brookes

Farmers' markets may have a reputation for being bougie and expensive, but a study has found Kiwis could save up to 18% on their grocery bill by choosing one over a supermarket.

The survey, carried out by membership organisation Farmers' Market New Zealand in association with food collective Eat NZ, compared a basket of food from nine different markets - Grey Lynn, Hamilton, Cambridge, Gisborne, Nelson,

Amberley, Lyttelton, Otago and Southland - with the same or similar items from the two closest local supermarkets, to ensure "like for like".

Farmers markets and supermarkets were sampled on the same day in each region over the weekend of March 4 and 5.

Baskets differed across the motu depending on what was available at the market, but all focused primarily on seasonal fruits and vegetables. Other items surveyed included meat, dairy, eggs, fish, bread, honey and preserves.

Farmers' markets were cheaper in all regions, with the top 18% saving found in Southland, Gisborne and Grey

Lynn. That percentage was higher when fruit and vegetables were taken in isolation, FMNZ and Eat NZ said.

In Invercargill, a shopper who swapped to the local farmers' market for fruit and veg could save \$50 on their grocery bill.

"This doesn't even consider that the food from markets is much fresher, meaning it lasts longer once it's taken home," said Farmers Market NZ chair Jono Walker.

"There is less food waste in these short distribution chains. By being able to speak directly to the farmer, grower or producer people can ask questions about how their food was grown, and more money is returned to local communities."

The survey comes in the midst of a cost of living crisis which is seeing food prices rise at their fastest rate since 1989. In the year to February, fruit and vegetable prices rose 23% while some items experienced shortages due to factors both local and international.

Eat NZ chief executive Angela Clifford acknowledged not all New Zealanders had easy access to a farmers' market, but said she expected them to become more prevalent.

"I think its chicken and egg stuff. The more people shop at markets the more viable they become."