



# Battlefords and District Farmers' Market Co-operative

*As part of Saskatchewan Co-operative Association's ongoing series of co-operative profiles, we interviewed Joeleen Milman, a member of Battleford and District Farmers' Market Co-op.*

## ***What is the Battlefords Farmers' Market?***

The Battlefords and District Farmers' Market Co-op is a not for profit co-operative made up of members who proudly sell their products at the farmers market under the slogan *Make it, Bake it, or Grow it in Saskatchewan.*

We operate year round: Our outdoor markets are held May to October on Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the corner of 12th Avenue and 100th Street in North Battleford, and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Battleford Furniture in Battleford. Our winter market this year was held October through April in the Co-op Mall in North Battleford, on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## ***When was it established?***

Our market was established in the 1970s.

## ***How many members does your co-op have? How do they participate in the co-op?***

At present we have about 24 active members. Each member purchases a membership that gives him or her the opportunity to sell their products at the market. Members are entitled to one vote at the Annual Meeting. They can then be elected to the board of directors. Members can hire a market manager who oversees the day-to-day operation of the farmers' market.

## ***What unique products does your market offer to the community? Is there a wide range of products?***

Our consumers will find a wide range of quality, locally made or grown products such as baked goods, vegetables, local fruit, bedding plants, organic eggs, crafts, honey, homemade skin care products, cut flowers, jams and relishes.



***What have the greatest successes of the co-operative been? How do you feel they were achieved? What about challenges?***

Our Farmers' Market has been around for a long time providing the area's consumers with a quality local alternative to those products that are shipped into the province from other countries. According to the economic impact study of farmers markets in Canada in 2008, farmers' markets are the second source for groceries for 62% of shoppers. We believe in the EAT LOCAL, EAT FRESH philosophy. The demand for these types of products is high and we are here to supply the consumer.



At farmers' markets, a real personal connection starts to form between the consumer and the vendor because the consumer can talk directly with the person that produced the products. This personal touch keeps the consumer coming back even if the prices are a little higher than the big chain stores. As producers, we are very proud of our product and are always going to sell the best quality product we can.



One of our biggest challenges is to encourage new vendors to the market. Many people don't realize the work involved and are sometimes turned away by this. As the old saying goes, you get out of it what you put into it. Of course if you don't have the variety of vendors at the market that the consumer wants, you lose the consumer. This is something we creatively work on all the time.

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***How do farmers' markets benefit Saskatchewan communities?***

By having the markets we provide an opportunity for people to sell their quality local products. Markets are an important source for farm income. Jobs are created with farmers' markets. Businesses near the market benefit from the traffic flow. Farmers' markets are a destination place for families, seniors, and others who want to be part of something that fills their need for fellowship.

***What do you envision for the co-operative in the next five years?***

As a new market manager I come into the Battlefords and District Farmers' Market with enthusiasm and new ideas. I believe that there is an opportunity for growth within the market and we are always looking for new vendors. I see a market that continues to be self-sustaining and supplies the customer with quality local products.

***How can people find out more about your co-operative?***

They can contact Joeleen Milman at 306-389-2414 or email [glenjo@sasktel.net](mailto:glenjo@sasktel.net), or they can come see me at the market on any given Saturday.