

<b>Ajax-Pickering News Advertiser (Ajax, ON)</b>			Order/Commande
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# Exploding demand for farmers' markets

*Another location in the works*

By Reka Szekely

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**DURHAM** — There's an increasing demand for locally-produced food from farmers' markets and Durham is at the centre of it all.

A recent survey, commissioned by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, shows two out of five people say they shop at local farmers' markets and nine out of 10 say given the choice, they would prefer to buy local food.

"There is this huge explosion in farmers' markets and interest in farmers' markets," said Laura Alderson, coordinator of the farmers' market program for the foundation.

Part of the reason for the interest is concern about the environment and part of it is prompted by things like recent salmonella scares.

"I think people are concerned about greenhouse gas emissions and about the environment and where their food is coming from and I know people are very concerned about food safety," Ms. Alderson said. "People want to know where their food is coming from and they want to have relationships with the people who grow it."

Friends of the Greenbelt, which is funded through the provincial government, is investing \$200,000 in local markets through a new program. Part of that money will go to a website farmers can use to promote

themselves and towards hiring a recruiter to entice farmers to the markets.

"Farmers are in short supply, what's happening with the demand for fresh local produce and new farmers' markets popping up all over the place, there's a demand for farmers to fill those markets," Ms. Alderson said.

As well, up to \$4,000 worth of support will go individual markets that apply for the funding. This will include tents or canopies and 1,000 free reusable bags which the markets can choose to sell to raise funds or give away.

"I know we're looking at Durham very carefully because there's a very large percentage of the Greenbelt in Durham, so we're looking to get as much money there as possible," Ms. Alderson said.

So far, every municipality in Durham has at least one farmers' market except for Ajax and Pickering.

But at least one group is working on bringing a farmers' market to the Pickering Town Centre. The Durham West Arts Centre was hoping to have a market running in the Pickering Town Centre's parking lot by last week, but the group ran into some red tape.

Ms. Michel also said the mall was enthusiastic about a market.

"We went to the mall and they loved the idea." She's hoping the market could be up and running by August. If not, a one-off festival will be planned for this year and the market will be launched next summer.

