



**Leicestershire
Food Links**
Leading the Field in Local Food

Press Release 9th March 2010

BE FAIR TO OUR FARMERS MARKETS

Leicester City council is discriminating against local farmers and producers by charging excessively for the Farmers Market held in Humberstone Gate. This is the conclusion of Leicestershire Food Links who starting operating the monthly market in November 09

Sandra Herbert, chair of LFL, welcomed the first market in the City Centre as it provided a larger more vibrant market selling a larger range of quality, locally produced fresh produce. It replaced the much smaller market trading within the market itself.

“We were very excited that after a number of years of negotiation, the City Council supported a Farmers Market that would do justice to the growing local foods movement. Customers loved it and producers were enjoying the new location. But since our move from the retail market our costs have increased dramatically as we now have to pay a licence fee of £300 for each market, on top of electricity charges of £175. The Rival Markets policy has to be revised, it is outdated and unfair”

The City's Rival Market policy – based on an ancient market charter- levies a charge of £300 for any market held within 6 and two thirds miles of their retail market. It also restricts Farmers' markets to 12 a year and to 25 stalls. The same policy treats a “ General Market” such as the new Sunday market at the Walkers Stadium, differently. This market, recently approved by the Council, has no limit on stalls, many have 150 – 200, they can run weekly, and they pay just £500 per market.

Sallie Hooper from LFL said “The Farmers Market has so much to offer Leicester but the Rival Markets Policy not only limits its potential but cripples it financially in comparison to general markets making it unsustainable. We had hoped following discussions that the Council would heed the Government recommendation and reduce the fees. However in April costs rise even more as we have to move the market to Gallowtree Gate due to a clash with the Drama Christ in the Centre, which the council overlooked. We will then be charged over £200 for a Traffic order, which will mean we will be paying costs nearer to £800 for a maximum of 25 stalls. We are a not for profit community enterprise organisation working in the community to promote local food and have worked with the Council to bring benefits to part of the city which has been struggling. With the recent market developments the policy is now under the spotlight again for its inconsistency suggesting that it is not fit for purpose. We are only asking to be treated fairly”

Ian Jalland who farms near Melton sells his award winning pies and rare breed lamb at the market.

" As a producer this market is very challenging as we have had to cope with a move in December (due to the Fun fair) and now face another move in April. That does not help us or the customer It's also very expensive to stand on because of these high charges. But our customers are very supportive of the market, many travelling in by bus to enjoy the atmosphere of the market and to buy local food they can trust We owe it to them too to get this sorted."

NOTE copy of the Rival Market policy can be seen on line on the City Council's web site. Gareth Jones from **FARMA** the national organisation that supports and accredits Farmers Markets can be contacted on 0845 45 88 420 He believes that Leicester's charges might be the highest in the country.

For more information call Sandra Herbert 07971 403 823 Sallie Hooper 01509 881386

This is one of the recommendations following the 2009 Communities and local Government Select committee report Can the Traditional Market survive?

We acknowledge that the use of market charters to regulate market numbers is a complex issue, but believe that it is one that locally-elected councils are best placed to adjudicate on. We would though recommend that councils treat farmers' markets applications sympathetically given the potential benefits they can offer whether in proximity to existing markets or in isolation. We also recommend that account be taken of the status of the organisation wishing to run a Farmers Market and that consideration be given to reducing fees in the event that the organisation is a not for profit organisation with clearly articulated social goals

Government response

We agree with this recommendation. A number of Farmers Markets are run by social enterprises and this may well increase over the next three years. One strand of the Making Local Food Work Programme, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, will focus on supporting 20 farmers market social enterprise groups covering 200 markets which in turn aim to provide a vehicle for over 2500 producers to provide local food to their communities.

(We are one of the social enterprises involved and recently have gone through a series of retail health checks, workshops for producers and action planning to help us to run the markets more effectively and efficiently)

LFL was set up 10 years ago as a small not for profit organisation promoting the use of local food, we set up and develop Farmers Markets to support local producers and communities.