

# Missouri Economy Indicators

## Farmers Markets and Direct Sales

VOL. 7, ISSUE 8, 18 JUNE 2026

Direct sales of agricultural products and value-added foods can help farmers and ranchers diversify their operations while generating additional income. These sales outlets—such as farmers markets, farm stands, and u-pick operations—also give consumers better access to local food and strengthen the resilience of the broader food system. According to the 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 116,617 farms nationwide sold products through direct sales channels, including 3,215 farms in Missouri. While direct marketing sales account for a very small share of total agricultural product sales, understanding the factors impacting these markets can help local leaders and organizations develop strategies that support agricultural producers, expand market opportunities, and strengthen local food systems.

### Regional Differences in Missouri Direct Marketing Sales

In 2022, Missouri farms and ranches reported generating about \$35 million in sales from direct marketing. Of Missouri's 114 counties, 106 reported sales.

Three of the four counties with the highest sales are metro counties—St. Charles, Boone, and Platte—while the top performing county, Gasconade, is nonmetro. Other nonmetro counties with notable sales included Johnson, Lawrence, and Laclede, whose proximity to metro areas likely contributed to their success. Conversely, Mercer, Monroe, and Madison counties reported the lowest sales.

### Direct Sales of Agricultural Products, 2022 Number of Farms and Sales Values

State	Number of Farms Selling Direct	Value of Sales (Thousands)	Average Sales Per Farm (Dollars)
Missouri	3,215	\$ 35,001	\$ 10,887
Arkansas	1,436	\$ 8,537	\$ 5,945
Illinois	2,674	\$ 52,977	\$ 19,812
Iowa	2,427	\$ 30,095	\$ 12,400
Kansas	1,764	\$ 20,099	\$ 11,394
Kentucky	2,944	\$ 24,124	\$ 8,194
Nebraska	1,107	\$ 16,566	\$ 14,965
Oklahoma	2,535	\$ 14,572	\$ 5,748
Tennessee	3,090	\$ 28,022	\$ 9,069

Source: MU Extension graphic using 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture data.

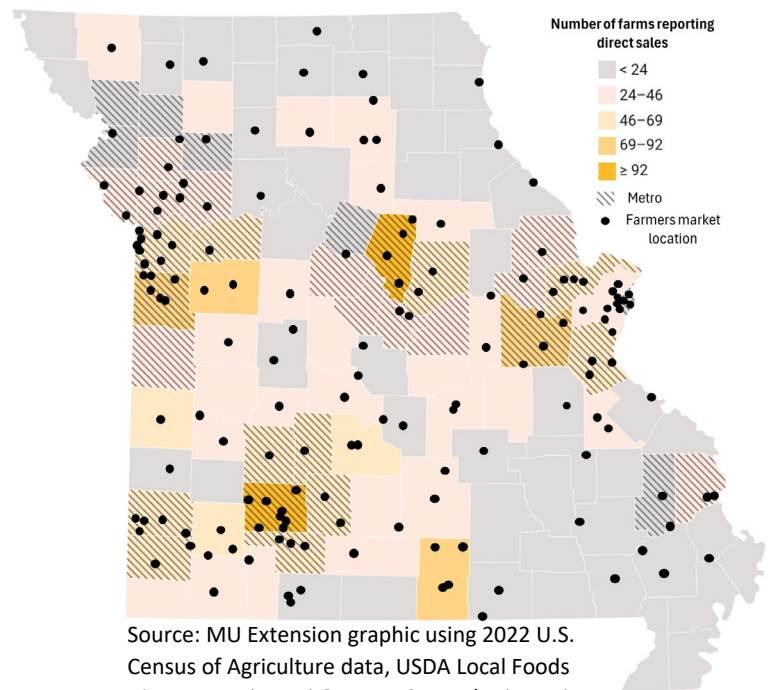
Nationally, direct sales are heavily concentrated in the West and Northeast, with California alone bringing in a nearly 40% share of direct sales. A state's production diversity, food processing infrastructure, and urban-rural connectivity can influence the success of direct marketing efforts. Among its neighboring states, Missouri reported the largest number of farms and ranches leveraging direct marketing channels and second largest sales value; however, Illinois leads the way in sales value with an approximate \$53 million. In 2022, the average direct sales for Missouri farms totaled \$10,887, behind Illinois, Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas. The table above compares the number of farms reporting direct sales, along with the value of sales and average sales per farm across Missouri's border states.

## Missouri Farmers Markets and Direct Sales

Farmers markets are a key channel for Missouri farms to sell agricultural products directly to consumers, yet access to these markets varies widely across the state. Missouri is home to more than 150 farmers markets, though the number shifts annually with changes in management and local participation.

Data from the USDA Local Foods Directory, Missouri Grown USA, and Missouri Farmers Market Association show that roughly two-thirds of Missouri counties have at least one farmers market. The highest concentrations appear in St. Louis, Jackson, and Greene counties (12, 9, and 8, respectively), a pattern consistent with national trends in which larger population centers support more robust sales. Counties adjacent to metro areas also benefit from greater access, while many rural community residents must travel to neighboring counties or farther to reach a market.

### Farm Density and Farmers Market Locations



Source: MU Extension graphic using 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture data, USDA Local Foods Directory, Missouri Grown USA, and Missouri Farmers Market Association directory listings.

## Addressing Gaps in Local Food Access: The Missouri Rural Food Access Partnership

In collaboration with other organizations, MU Extension is working to build a more resilient local food system for all Missourians through the [Missouri Rural Food Access Partnership](#). Survey findings from this initiative show that 55% of Missourians obtain at least some of their food from farmers markets, and another 8% rely on them for most or all of their food. For 17% of respondents, farmers markets serve as a primary food source, compared to grocery stores (66%) and warehouse stores (51%), such as Walmart. Beyond farmers markets, 32% of Missourians have made local food purchases through other direct outlets, such as on-farm sales or community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. These insights offer a more complete understanding of direct sales in Missouri and factors shaping how producers and consumers engage in local food systems.

## Additional Notes and Resources

- Find nearby farmers markets and local ag products using [Missouri Grown's interactive directory](#).
- Access MU Extension [Agricultural Business and Policy program](#) resources to strengthen business planning, marketing, and pricing skills for producers and market managers, including a guide that answers common questions about [starting and operating farmers markets](#).

*All Missouri Economy Indicators briefs in this series are available online. [Sign up for the Exceed newsletter.](#)*

Authors: TaylorAnn Washburn, Extension Specialist, [taylorann.washburn@missouri.edu](mailto:taylorann.washburn@missouri.edu)

Luke Dietterle, Extension Specialist, [luke.dietterle@missouri.edu](mailto:luke.dietterle@missouri.edu)