

19 April 2016

To all SAGE Farmers Market Stall Holders

SAGE Strategic Plan

Since SAGE was formed over six years ago, a huge amount of stuff has been achieved, including getting our market going. This market would not exist, if not for SAGE.

But SAGE is not just a farmers market. While the market provides the economic stimulus a local food system needs, SAGE is working on a number of fronts to rebuild local agriculture and connect people to their community through food.

The first SAGE Plan was written in 2010 and it needs a reboot. A review of the existing plan revealed that we have achieved almost everything in it and a bunch of stuff that wasn't in the plan as well. It shows that what SAGE is doing is needed and the community is responding. No doubt, the new plan will be an ambitious one as a result.

In order to be effective, SAGE needs to know what local growers need. We are inviting all of you, whether a SAGE member or not, to come along to the next stage of the process for writing the new plan **this Sunday 24th April at the SAGE Garden from 9am.**

How can SAGE help your efforts to grow food locally and sustainably? What can SAGE do to further stimulate the local food economy? What vision do you have for our local food system into the next decade?

A draft framework document has been produced and I am happy to email it to anyone interested in participating in the planning session.

So please come along. Bring your ideas, bring your criticisms, get involved... now is the time to have your say.

Licence to operate at Riverside Park

Recently, SAGE's licence to operate a farmers market at Riverside Park for the next five years was given the nod.

During the expression of interest process, we presented our argument (again) that the fees charged by Council are too high for a market such as ours to remain financially viable. As you know, last year we raised our charges to stall holders by \$5 for a basic site and that has improved our financial position, however, the market was still not returning any significant profit. It was always SAGE's intention that profits from the market would be fed back into SAGE programs that continue to foster local and sustainable food production, but that intention was not being realised.

Our arguments were well received by Council and we are very excited to announce that last Tuesday, Council voted in favour of returning 40% of the fees paid by the market to SAGE to fund activities identified in the SAGE strategic plan that continue fostering growth and employment in the local food industry.

This is game changing for SAGE and excellent timing where the strategic planning is concerned. We are now able to make plans and decisions knowing reliable funding is available, instead of speculating about the likelihood of unpredictable grant funding. This is yet another good reason for you to be part of the planning process this Sunday.

A media release about the funding from Council will be written and distributed shortly.

Stall holder representative on SFM Committee

Our current stall holder reps are Hughen (Meringo Creek Farm to Plate) and Martin (Soul Patch). Hughen has indicated that he no longer can afford the time to attend the monthly committee meetings. Fair enough too. Hughen has contributed a lot to the market, even before it began on 1st January 2013. Thank you, Hughen!

So we are looking for a replacement stall holder for the committee. Please consider giving some of your precious time to help keep our market operating in the best interests of stall holders and customers.

Meetings are held in the morning on the first Wednesday of the month and go for about an hour and a half at the most. You'll also hear from me a bit with some emails during the month. It's really not too onerous, but your contribution is very important. Martin has also remarked that he appreciated the insight being on the committee gave him into the complexities of managing the market.

Stall holder input is essential to the success of the market! Many other farmers market committees are comprised entirely of stall holders, so this market is fortunate to have a number of SAGE members willing to volunteer their time, allowing farmers to keep farming. In comparison to other markets, we are asking for a small commitment.

Please let me know if you're interested.

Stall holder meeting

I'd like to discuss a few issues with you all as a group, so if you could stay back after next week's market for about half an hour, I'd appreciate it.

I'd like to hear your response to the idea of developing a commercial/trade section to the e-market. Would this be something worth providing for growers and restaurants, cafés and shops?

I've also had some feedback from customers that I'd like to share with you and discuss.

That's it for now.

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on behalf of the
SAGE Farmers Market Committee

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