

The Western Australian Farmers' Markets Association (WAFMA) announces 2018 research collaboration with the University of Western Australia (UWA).

In 2018, the University of Western Australia (UWA) will be working with the Western Australian Farmers' Markets Association (WAFMA) to develop new research on the importance of farmers' markets for regional development.

The research project will focus on the reasons why food producers choose to sell at farmers' markets. This will include identifying the economic and social drivers and constraints for participation in farmers' markets, the potential multiplier effects for regional agribusinesses, and may include a short survey of farmers' market consumers.

Ms Helena Shojaei, a Master of Urban and Regional Planning student, has been awarded a prestigious UWA Agribusiness Connect Honours/Masters Regional Research Scholarship to help finance this research. The scholarship is funded by the Government of Western Australia's Royalties for Region program. Ms Shojaei has recently finished a double major in agricultural science, and human geography and planning.

According to Ms Shojaei, "Farmers' markets have the potential to be a significant contributor to small scale farm businesses. Farmers' markets are an excellent outlet for fresh produce sales, networking opportunities and market testing"

WAFMA Chairperson Ms Jenny Payet said "WAFMA is keen to support this research as there has been very little academic research on farmers' markets in WA, despite rapid growth in the number of farmers' markets operating in the state over the last five years".

She said "the research will seek answers as to whether the potential economic and social opportunities of farmers' markets are actually afforded to participants and will serve as useful evidence for decision making around farmers markets, for example with Local Government."

Working in collaboration with WAFMA, Ms Shojaei will conduct interviews with producers and short surveys with consumers at one urban and one regional market. This will include consultation with key stakeholders from the relevant Local Government and other groups. The data collection for the research will take place from mid-January to around the end of March 2018.

"I'm very passionate about the relationship between the sustainability of the agricultural sector and urban and regional planning. I am really looking forward to speaking with producers and consumers at farmers' markets in WA in the New Year, and getting some much-needed data around the question of the economic and social importance of these markets in our state", said Ms Shojaei.

As part of the scholarship, Ms Shojaei will invite producers and participants to attend a seminar on the results at the conclusion of the research in mid-2018.

The research project will be supervised by Dr Natasha Pauli and Professor Fiona Haslam McKenzie of the School of Agriculture and Environment and Centre for Regional Development, UWA.