

ZERO WASTE FARMERS MARKET

A Case Study: Whitefish Farmers Market



3 KEY COMPONENTS

1. Commercial Composter

Most paper products can't be broken down in a backyard compost pile. To make this effort productive and cost effective, you need to identify a commercial composter in your area that will take your waste.

2. Compostable Products

Vendors had no difficulty getting the compostable products they needed. Be sure to tell them about the requirements a few months ahead of time so they have time to try out different options.

3. Consumer Education

Signage and education are key to success. Make your signs large, clear, and have lots of them! Having staff on hand to direct people and check bins improves outcomes. Once folks get used to the new disposal methods, there will be less need to monitor bins.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Produced by Climate Smart Glacier Country

The world we live in today is highly disposable. Many products we buy are meant to be used once and then thrown away. The average American generates 4 pounds of waste per day and, as our landfills near capacity, there are increasing levels of contamination in our cities, forests, and oceans. **Zero-waste is a concept that aims to reduce the amount of trash sent to the landfill through reducing, reusing, and recycling products that would otherwise be thrown away.**

In Northwest Montana, the Whitefish Farmers Market and other stakeholders, including Heart of Whitefish and Farm Hands - Nourish, decided to tackle the issue of unnecessary waste before the 2020 season with a goal of creating zero-waste at the market. By requiring all food vendors to use compostable products, single-use food containers (the primary source of event waste at the market) would be eliminated from the trash.

This short document can help inspire and guide you as you consider switching your market or event to a zero waste model.



Please see the full report for a more in-depth review of the process.



ZERO WASTE IS ATTAINABLE

The collaborative initiative between the City of Whitefish, Whitefish Farmers Market, Farm Hands - Nourish and Dirt Rich proved that the goal of a zero-waste market is attainable.

Almost all market vendors reported that ordering and receiving new compostable products to replace single-use disposables was easy. Vendors also reported that the compostable products performed well, and the local customer base not only welcomed but expected vendors to provide compostable containers. These findings suggest that there are no major barriers to implementing a zero-waste market from a vendor perspective.

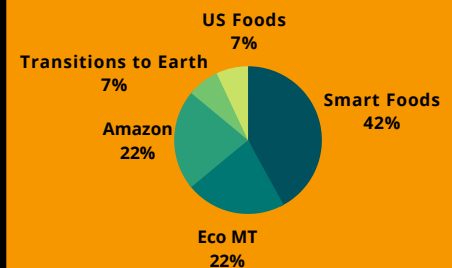
When asked what the market staff had done well during the transition to zero-waste, vendors stated they were pleased to have been given ample time to prepare. Notice was provided in February 2020 that the zero-waste initiative would be required for the 2020 summer market launching in June. This advance notice allowed vendors time to research and prepare for the switch, and enough time to receive new stock of compostable products. Because the zero-waste initiative was mandatory, vendors needed to commit to the initiative if they wanted to participate in the market.

With the success of this zero-waste initiative for the Whitefish Farmers Market, it is our hope that the information in this report can be used as support for other local events to transition to zero-waste.

QUICK TIPS

- Give your vendors plenty of time to switch products before the market starts.
- Check in with them and send reminders.
- Make normal trash cans inaccessible.
- Lots of signs!
- Check on compost bins during the market to make sure they aren't overflowing.

Suppliers Used By Vendors



"For events that do have to pay for trash removal, it's quite possible that going the compostable route would be less expensive."

*-Gretchen Boyer
E.D., Farm Hands -
Nourish*