

Markets short on farmers

MyMarket brand certifies real deal

They're sprouting faster than weeds in a field, but some of the farmers' markets popping up around Toronto are short one thing: Farmers.

"There aren't enough farmers to go around," confirms Bob Chorney, executive director of Farmers Markets Ontario, a provincial association that represents 135 members.

After a \$1 million injection from the Greenbelt Foundation, Chorney hired a recruiter in March to help find the growers necessary to make sure Ontarians buy local when they visit one of the association's four new MyMarkets in Toronto.

"He's managed to find about 15 farmers for us," Chorney says. "It's really

tough. We set the bar really high."

For years, Chorney has led the charge against what he calls "hucksters" — people who buy imported fruit and veg at the Ontario Food Terminal and pass it off at farmers' markets as local produce.

"These were guys who didn't have a dime invested in a farm," he says.

So he developed the MyMarket brand, which made its debut last year at Liberty Village and the Woodbine Centre, where every vendor was inspected and certified by Farmers Markets Ontario to ensure they grew everything they sold.

Recruiter Bernie Solymar says part of the problem of finding farmers is the strict rules attached to the MyMarket designation.

Other Toronto markets also have had trouble re-

cruiting growers to fill their stalls. At the new Sorauren Park Farmers' Market near Roncesvalles, organizers contacted 60 people to ask if they wanted to set up a table in the park on Mondays, and now have about 20 confirmed for the May 26 opening. Market manager Filip Haderer says more than half will be farmers in order to meet Farmers Markets Ontario requirements for membership, although it doesn't meet MyMarket criteria because it is allowing local businesses such as Baluchon, a fair-trade coffee shop on Sorauren Ave., to set up a table and sell joe.

"We have a broader perspective," he says. "We support farmers and we support processors ... Most of them get their food from farmers."

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new kids on the block

» While farmers' markets are struggling to recruit from an ever-dwindling pool of growers, that has not dampened the enthusiasm of residents' groups and institutions that have stepped up to the plate to help organize markets in the city. The new additions are:

» Bloor-Borden Farmers' Market (MyMarket): Wednesdays, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., east side of Lippincott Street, "Green P" parking lot, opens June 4.

» East Lynn Farm Farmers' Market (MyMarket): Thursdays 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Danforth Avenue, just west of Woodbine, opens June 5.

» Hospital for Sick Children Farmers' Market (MyMarket): Tuesdays 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 555 University Ave., opens June 3.

» Sorauren Park Farmers' Market: Mondays, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Sorauren Avenue at Wabash, opens May 26.

» Coming soon: Look for a new market at Eglinton-St. George's United Church, 35 Lytton Blvd.

» For more information on location and hours of GTA markets, go to farmersmarketsontario.com and [and food-share.net/farmersmarkets02.htm](http://food-share.net/farmersmarkets02.htm).