**Visit A Local Farmers’ Market or Grocery Store**

**Class activity for Chapter 3**

***Food, Farms and Community***

**Material Requirements: None**

**Time Requirement: Varies**

Whether you shop for food at a local grocery store or at a farmers’ market, both retail environments demonstrate that the production, processing and distribution of food is a business, and those involved in these businesses work to earn money. To inform discussions of the business of food and farming, it can be worthwhile to take a field trip to a local farmers’ market or grocery store.

If you have access to a local farmers’ market, arrange to take your class there and invite students to pay attention to the market’s character. How many vendors are there? Do they sell a variety of products? Are most of them certified organic, or is the market more mixed in terms of the values its vendors espouse regarding organic methods? Look at the prices the vendors are asking for their products; are they reasonable enough that most people in the region would be able to pay for the food being sold or are the vendors marketing to an upper-middle or upper-class demographic primarily? How do the prices compare to those for similar items in a local supermarket? Ask farmers how they set their prices. How much do prices vary from farmer to farmer for comparable products? Look around at the customers frequenting the market. Is there diversity here? Do you see people from a range of ethnic, racial and socio-economic classes represented, or are the customers more homogenous? Does the demographic makeup of attendees reflect that in the surrounding community? Look at the license plates in the parking area; is it apparent that many attendees are visitors to the area, or not?

If you lack access to a local farmers’ market, reach out to a local grocery store and see if they are willing to offer your class an educational tour of their facility. You might ask to see the back room where workers prepare produce for display on the sales floor, or the back room of the store’s meat department where meats are cut and/or packaged for retail sale. You might also engage the managers in various departments in conversations about the business of selling food, although be forewarned that they may be hesitant to divulge certain financial details.

Back in the classroom, ask students about their experience. What did they learn about the business of food and farming by engaging vendors at a farmers’ market or managers at a local grocery store? How did this change their views of farming and food?