



Santa Cruz County Fair Deputy Manager John Scurfield (from left) goes over some details with the farmers market's Patricia and Rosario Rodriguez.

Jon Chown/Register-Pajaronian

Fairgrounds to host new farmers market

Market to take place Sundays; planner to choose 'best' vendors

By JON CHOWN

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Watsonville will soon have a second certified farmers market.

Local growers Patricia and Rosario Rodriguez have signed a contract with the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds to start holding a market each Sunday beginning Aug. 9 — and they have big plans.

Patricia Rodriguez said she plans to have something for everybody, with several music bands, all types of food, balloon artists and face painting for children, and even a magician.

"We really want to focus it on community — so there is something for everyone. We are choosing the best vendors we know; a lot of them are Watsonville businesses," Rodriguez

said.

Patricia Rodriguez, born and raised in Watsonville, said she has been working at farmers markets since she was 14. The couple, who own Rodriguez Farms in Castroville, have been selling strawberries and raspberries at farmers' markets throughout their 18 years of marriage, and currently sell their berries at markets all over the Central Coast, including the Watsonville Certified Farmers' Market at the plaza. However, Rodriguez said she and her husband cannot sell at some of the closest markets, while berries are trucked in from Oxnard and other areas hundreds of miles away.

"We are 20 minutes away and we could give these markets fresh produce, but we have been waiting 20

years to get in to the market in Monterey or at Cabrillo College," she said. "There's a need in our community with so many local farmers. There's a need to give them an opportunity to sell."

Rodriguez said there is also a need for a market on Sunday because many of Watsonville's working families cannot attend the Friday market.

"The people that work in the fields don't have time to get there before it closes," she said. "They don't have Fridays off. Sunday is their only day off."

Because these folks work during the week, they are also not able to receive help and advice from many

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nonprofit organizations and receive available services. Rodriguez said she is going to make space available for groups that provide things like health services. She is also working closely with Second Harvest Food Bank, so that it will receive leftover produce and food not sold at the market.

Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds Deputy Manager John Scurfield said he is excited about the project.

"It will be like a minifestival out here," Scurfield said.

Rodriguez said that so many vendors have already contacted her about selling at the market that she will be able to pick and choose the very best ones. She said she will emphasize having local products at her market.

"When we are going through so many hardships in the community, it's important to come together on a project like this, where we are helping our own people," she said.