

# Farmers coming to Main Street

## *Farmers Market* Certified farmers market opening in Watsonville

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Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Pajaro Valley will get its own "direct marketing" approach to agriculture on June 5 Watsonville Certified Farmers Market debuts on Peck Street, right in the center of downtown.

Every Friday from 2:30-6:30 p.m. local farmers will be selling their fresh picked fruits and vegetables and cut flowers, and area commercial vendors will sell a variety of other commodities like bread, cheese, eggs and seafood.

Market manager Tim Siemsen believes the farmers market "will showcase the rich cultural diversity and cuisine of the community and the many flavors of the Pajaro Valley."

He's looking to capture that same kind of enthusiasm and success in Watsonville as other weekly markets in Felton, Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz and Cabrillo College have experienced.

With the certified market label comes integrity to the "direct marketing" approach to agriculture, said Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner Dave Moeller. "The concept of direct marketing is putting the community in touch with growers."

Each year, farmers must register with the Agricultural Commissioner's office to be certified as to the variety of fruits and vegetables they plan to grow and sell to the public. Siemsen is encouraged by the amount of interest shown from local farmers, with 80 percent of the fruits and vegetables coming from farmers between Aptos and Aromas.

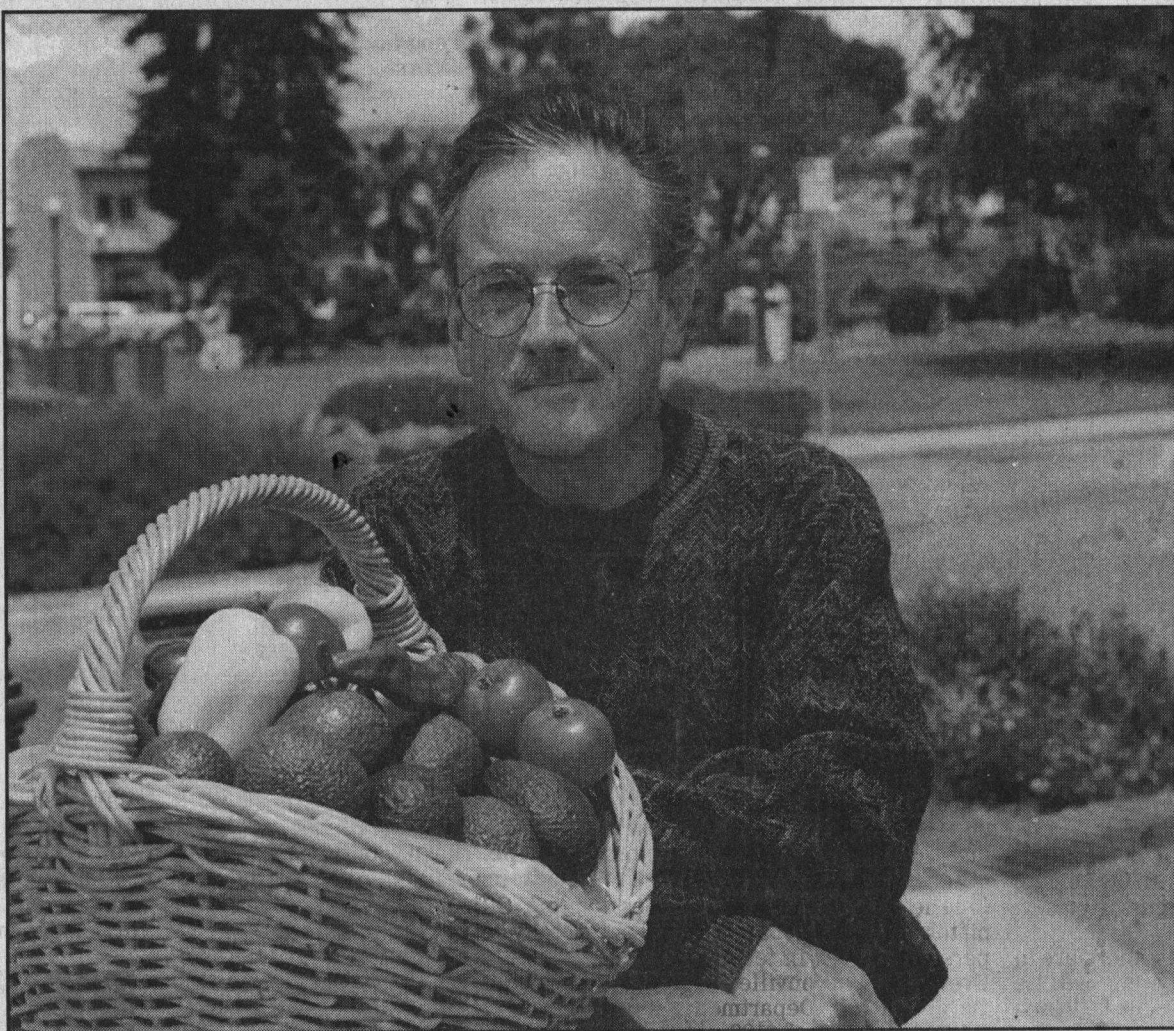
Farmers will bring a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables while Glaum Eggs plans to sell fresh eggs and Alfaro's Bakery an assortment of breads baked nearby on Riverside Drive.

Corralitos farmer Jerry Thomas began selling flowers and vegetables at farmers markets in 1976 and he welcomes the chance to sell locally. "We're excited that there's been a lot of positive effort. They are doing everything right."

Nancy Wright, special projects manager for the Redevelopment Agency for the city, views the farmers market as a "logical connection to tie the pedestrian corridor that was missing" in the downtown.

She said the word is out that Watsonville is about to open its own farmers market. "We went to Cabrillo College to observe and we were given a warm response by farmers who knew about our market. Some are taking a 'wait and see' approach, but most say there is a market here."

A recent survey points to that fact.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Manager Tim Siemsen says the market 'will showcase the flavors of the Pajaro Valley.'

The consulting firm of Urban Decision System counted more than 5,400 people who work within a half-mile of the downtown plaza. "I was shocked by that number," Wright said. "What that means is every Friday afternoon there will be an opportunity to capture 5,400 workers before they go home."

The farmers market is a project of Main Street Watsonville, the business association involved in the revitalization of the downtown.

Paula Santos, Main Street Watsonville Manager, said the farmers market won't be the only thing going on downtown.

Plans are being finalized to get merchants stay open until 8 p.m., a shopping tradition that was very popular in Watsonville for years on Thursdays. A gala grand opening celebration will highlight the farmers market debut, beginning at 10 a.m. with a hay wagon caravan throughout Watsonville featuring the blues group "Harmony Grit" playing their music and spreading the word about the new marketplace.

The Watsonville Firefighters Association is doing a barbecue, and other music entertainment for the entire family will fill the afternoon, Siemsen said.

For more information, call 724-3954.