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Article published Jun 8, 2007

## **Soledad market opens**

### ***Direct marketing event city's first***

By **SUNITA VIJAYAN**  
The Salinas Californian

The fresh, sweet scent of fruit and vegetables filled the air Thursday evening at the inaugural gathering of the Soledad Farmer's Market.

Held on Encinal Street between Front and Monterey streets, the certified farmer's market featured 15 commercial and produce vendors from Monterey and Santa Cruz counties.

Its "certified" label means all produce sold at the market is grown by the vendors themselves.

"Soledad doesn't have that access to high-quality grocery stores - we don't have a Trader Joe's or a Whole Foods," said Colby Bell, the market manager. "This gives the community an opportunity to get that access to high-quality organic foods."

At least 300 people showed up in the first hour, Bell said, and another 100 were expected by the end of the three-hour event.

The market is operated by the Oldtown Soledad Beautification Association and sponsored in large part by the Salinas-based Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association. ALBA coaches farm workers and others on becoming small-farm proprietors.

On Thursday, growers displaying cases of fruits and vegetables such as red beets, cauliflower and carrots, allowed customers to taste test before purchasing their wares.

"Other than bringing in more money, my main motivation in coming here was to sell my produce and promote my business," said Delfina Corcoles of C&N Organics, a grower who rents acreage from ALBA in Chualar. "Today's been so-so for me, but that's probably because a lot of the vendors here are selling the same produce."

Soledad's farmer's market is the second of its kind in south Monterey County. Greenfield introduced its own in April.

The Greenfield Village Green Farmer's Market, which debuted as a monthly event, expanded this month to a weekly affair to help vendors establish regular customers.

Maria Juarez, a 13-year resident, said she saw a sign for Soledad's market while driving home from work with her family and decided to check it out.

"I love it," Juarez said. "I hope it does well and continues, because this is where I'm going to be doing my shopping from now on."

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