

## **Characteristics of urban farmers markets in Malaysia: a case study of the Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

Name: Abdul Rahman Saili and Maria Fay Rola-Rubzen

Affiliation: Department of Agribusiness and Wine Science, Curtin University of Technology

Mailing Address: Department of Agribusiness, Curtin University of Technology

Email Address: arsaili76@gmail.com

Phone/Fax No.: (+618) 92661307/ Fax: (+618) 92664422

### Abstract

Farmers markets vary greatly in terms of their physical shape, form, operation and product mix, but generally assume characteristics determined by the social, political and economic factors particular to their locales. This paper explores the characteristics of Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market as urban farmers markets in Malaysia. Results of the study showed that there are two distinct types of urban farmers markets – the structured and non-structured market. The type of market influences the degree of participation by farmers. The study also showed that farmers markets have the potential of providing livelihoods for vendors with evidence of sufficient customers visiting their stalls.

*Key words (5): urban farmers market; development; linking farmers to markets, livelihoods, vendors*

## **1. Problem statement**

Farmers markets are an exciting and important form of free enterprise. They are important in developing countries where the main sources of fresh produce are still farmers markets and other small public markets. But what is the potential for farmers markets for supporting sustainable development? Currently, there is a dearth of information about farmers markets in developing countries - their role, the rules of engagement and the impact on the community and the economy. Most research is centered towards farmers markets in developed countries. In Malaysia, a number of farmers markets are operating in urban areas which allow farmers to reach urban consumers and offer fresh produce. Due to the role of urban farmers markets in Malaysia, an investigation of the characteristics and development of these markets is needed.

## **2. Objectives**

The objectives of this paper are to:

- Assess the current state of the art of Satok Weekend market and Payang Central market
- Explore the livelihoods potential of both markets from the vendors point of views

## **3. Procedures**

Structured interviews were conducted to 335 vendors in Satok weekend market with permission and support from the Kuching North City Hall authorities. Another 202 respondents were interviewed in Payang Central market with permission and support from the Kuala Terengganu City Council. To speed up the data collection, a few enumerators were appointed as interviewers. Interviewers read the questions exactly as they appeared on the survey questionnaire. The choice of answers to the questions is often fixed (close-ended) in advance, though a few open-ended questions were included within the structured interview. A structured interview standardizes the order in which questions are asked of survey respondents, so the questions are always answered within the same context. The data collected were analysed using the statistical software, SPSS. Analyses included descriptive analysis, correlations and other statistical analyses.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Demographic background**

The profile of respondent characteristics is presented in Table 1. Both market shows that the respondents are dominated by female. Fifty-four per cent of the respondents are female in Satok Weekend Market whereas 72% of respondents are female in the Payang Central Market.

**Table 1: Demographic background of Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Satok Weekend Market</b>		<b>Payang Central Market</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	155	46.3	55	27.8
Female	180	53.7	143	72.2
Total	335	100.0	198	100.0
<b>Age</b>				
20-30	50	14.9	33	16.6
31-40	82	24.5	65	32.6
41-50	108	32.2	64	32.2
51-60	75	22.4	22	11.1
60 and above	20	6.0	15	7.5
Total	335	100.0	199	100.0
<b>Education</b>				
Postgraduate	1	0.3	0	0.0
University degree	8	2.4	1	0.5
Diploma	13	3.9	3	1.5
High school	175	52.2	101	51.0
Primary	75	22.4	69	34.8
Others- Did not go to school	60	17.9	23	11.6
Others – certificate	3	0.9	1	0.5
Total	335	100.0	198	100.0

The largest proportion of the respondents was in the age category of 31-40 and 41-50. In Satok Weekend Market, 32% of the respondents fall under the age of 41-50 and 25% fall under the age of 31-40; whereas in Payang Central Market about the same percentage (32%) goes to both categories.

About half of the respondents in both markets indicated that their highest level of education is high school. The percentage of respondents whose highest level of education is primary school in Satok Weekend Market is 22% and 35% in Payang Central Market. There are only few people who completed higher education and diploma level up to postgraduate level. The number of respondents who did not go to school is about 18% in Satok Weekend Market and 12% in Payang Central Market.

## 4.2 Current state of the art

In the Satok Weekend Market, 26% of the vendors are purely farmers while 21% are farmers and vendors at the same time (Table 2). Apart from selling their own-grown products, they also sell products that they get from other suppliers. Purely vendors can be divided into two groups; the first group sells fresh agricultural products (26%) and other group sells mixed products such as food (dried food, baked food, prepared food and drinks) and non agri-food products (e.g. souvenirs, books and clothing). Those who grow their own products can be divided into full time or part time farmers. Sixty four per cent of them claimed that they are full time farmers and 36% considered themselves as part time farmers.

**Table 2: Type Vendors and farmers**

	Satok Weekend Market		Payang Central Market	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Types of vendor</b>				
Farmer	87	26.0	2	1.0
Farmer and vendor	68	20.3	34	16.8
Vendor (Fruits, vegetables, flower/shrub/herb and meat/fish/poultry)	86	25.7	75	37.1
Vendor (others)	94	28.0	91	45.1
Total	335	100.0	202	100.0
<b>Type of farmer</b>				
Full-time farmer	99	63.9	34	94.4
Part-time farmer	56	36.1	2	5.6
Total	155	100.0	36	100.0

In Payang Central Market, only 1% are purely farmers and 17% are classified as farmers and vendors. A total of 37% of the respondents are vendors selling fresh agricultural products while 45% are selling other kinds of products. About 94% of respondents identified themselves as full time farmers and 6% are part time farmers.

### 4.3 Trading background

The reported product mix in both markets comprises of agriculture products, food and also non agri- food products as stated in Table 3. In Satok Weekend Market, the market is dominated by fresh agricultural products (72%) and food products (18%) whereas 10% of the product mix comes from non agri-food products such as souvenirs, books, clothing and others. The scenario in Payang Central Market is different where most vendors reported that they sell agricultural products (48%) followed by food (29%) and non agri-food products (23%) (Table 3).

**Table 3: Product mix in Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

Group	Type of products	Satok Weekend Market		Payang Central Market	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Agriculture	Fruits	105	24.6	31	14.1
	Vegetables	124	29.0	46	20.9
	Flowers/shrubs/herbs	33	7.7	14	6.4
	Meat, fish and poultry	45	10.5	13	5.9
	Sub-total	307	71.9	104	47.3
Food	Dried food	29	6.8	41	18.6
	Baked good	27	6.3	13	5.9
	Prepared food	13	3.0	4	1.8
	Drinks	7	1.6	9	4.1
	Sub-total	76	17.8	66	30.4
Non agri-food	Souvenir products	24	5.6	35	15.9
	Books/magazines/newspaper	6	1.4	3	1.4
	Antique products	8	1.9	9	4.1
	Others	6	1.4	2	0.9
	Sub-total	44	10.3	50	22.3
Total		427	100.0	220	100.0

In Satok Weekend Market, most of the vendors (35%) reported that they had been in trading for less than 5.1 years whereas about 33% of the vendors had been selling in the market for 5.1 to 10 years. In Payang Central Market, 37% of the vendors had been participating in the market for 5.1 to 10 years, while (33%) reported that they had been trading for less than 5.1 years (Table 4).

**Table 4: Vendors length of trading in Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

<b>Length of trading</b>	<b>Satok Weekend Market</b>		<b>Payang Central Market</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 5.1	116	34.9	65	32.5
5.1 to 10.0	109	32.8	73	36.5
10.1 to 15.0	49	14.8	19	9.5
More than 15	58	17.5	43	21.5
	332	100.0	200	100.0

In the case of Satok Weekend Market, the vendors reported most of them (42%) travel less than 30 minutes from the market whereas 33% of them live more than 30 minutes up to 1 hour from the market. In Payang Central Market, majority of the vendors (86%) claimed the distance between their houses to the market is less than 30 minute (Table 5).

**Table 5: Distance of the market from vendors house in Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

<b>Distance</b>	<b>Satok Weekend Market</b>		<b>Payang Central Market</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 30 minutes	139	41.5	174	86.1
30 minutes to 1 hour	110	32.8	21	10.4
1-2 hours drive	54	16.1	7	3.5
More than 2 hours	32	9.6	0	0
Total	335	100.0	202	100.0

Table 6 presents the mode of transportation of the vendors in both markets. In Satok Weekend Market, most of the respondents have their own transport; 40% own a van or lorry and 38% own a car. In another market, the figures demonstrate a similar pattern where the vendor own a van or lorry and own a car show significant figures at 16% and 41%, respectively. Boat also another mode of transportation available due to the market's location by the river bank. Seven per cent of the respondents travel to the market by water transport.

**Table 6: Vendors transportation in the case of Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

<b>Transport</b>	<b>Satok Weekend Market</b>		<b>Payang Central Market</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Own transport - van/ lorry	135	40.3	32	15.9
Own transport – car	128	38.2	82	40.8
Chartered bus	5	1.5	23	11.4
Chartered van/ lorry	51	15.2	16	8.0
Motorcycle	14	4.2	28	13.9
Boat	0	0.0	14	7.0
Others	2	0.6	6	3.0
Total	335	100.0	201	100.0

#### **4.4 Practice and operational aspects**

As shown in Table 7, most of the vendor (87%) in Satok Weekend Market trade every weekend. About 3 % of them trade everyday where over the weekdays they trade in other places since Satok Weekend Market only operates on weekends. Following this, the respondents were asked about their satisfaction of the trading days. About 82% of respondents were satisfied with the days of trading, while 17% are looking for more days to sell. In terms of trading time allowed, 83% agreed with the allocated time and 17% required more time.

**Table 7: Trading frequency and opinion on the operation period for Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

Trading frequency	Satok Weekend Market		Payang Central Market	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Everyday	11	3.3	202	100.0
Every weekend	290	86.6	0	0.0
Every Saturday	11	3.3	0	0.0
Every Sunday	20	6.0	0	0.0
Others – irregular	3	0.9	0	0.0
Total	335	100.0	202	100.0
<b>Current days of operation</b>				
Just right	274	81.8	202	100.0
More days needed	57	17.0	0	0.0
Less days needed	3	0.9	0	0.0
Others	1	0.3	0	0.0
Total	335	100.0	202	100.0
<b>Current time of operation</b>				
Just right	278	83.2	202	100.0
More time needed	56	16.8	0	0
Less days needed	0	0	0	0
Total	334	100.0	202	100.0

In the case of Payang Central Market, all respondents claimed that they sell everyday. All of them are satisfied with the trading days and even the times of operation.

The projected customers who visited the market are stated in Table 8. Most of the vendors (29%) in Satok Weekend Market claimed that around 21 to 50 customer visited their stall per day and another 29% claimed that less than 20 customers come to their stall per day. The respondents had been asked to identify how many tourists dropped at their stall and 57% stated that less than 20 tourists per day and 16% had between 21 to 50 tourists per day.



**Table 8: Number of customers and tourists visiting the stalls per day in Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Satok Weekend Market</b>		<b>Payang Central Market</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Customers</b>	55	16.4	158	78.2
Less than 20				
21-50	98	29.3	37	18.3
51-100	97	29.0	1	.5
More than 100	57	17.0	1	.5
None	1	.3	3	1.5
Do not know	27	8.1	2	1.0
Total	335	100.0	202	100.0
<b>Tourists</b>				
Less than 20	191	57.0	163	80.7
21-50	55	16.4	32	15.8
51-100	29	8.7	1	.5
More than 100	6	1.8	1	.5
None	29	8.7	3	1.5
Do not know	25	7.5	2	1.0
Total	335	100.0	202	100.0

In Payang Central Market, 78% of the respondents claimed that less than 20 customers had visited them per day while 18% of the respondents received between 21-50 customers per day. About 81% of respondents also stated that less than 20 of the customers are tourists and 16% of the respondents identified around 21 to 50 of the customers are tourists.

## **5. Discussion**

The demographic information revealed that there are still a high number of female vendors in the urban farmers markets studies. Both markets show a high number of female participation in the market. Payang Central Market indicated more than 70% are female vendors while a slightly lower figure of 54% are females in the Satok Weekend Market. The difference is probably because of the nature of the market. Payang Central Market is operating on a daily basis therefore the participation of male are less. Wives generally spend time in the market while the husbands generally work in the farm or other jobs. In Satok Weekend Market, male participation is a bit higher as compared to the other market since the market only operates on weekends. The males can hence participate in the market for extra income. However, overall females still

dominated the market. One of the possibilities is due to the market policy of giving priority to single mothers.

In Satok Weekend Market, the age profile reflects a good range of young and old generation with 25% of the vendors aged between 31 and 40, 30% aged between 41 and 50 and 24% aged between 51 and 60. This is important in ensuring continuous participation of vendors in the market. In reference to the projected life birth expectancy in Malaysia, in 2007 the life expectancy of males is 71.9 and females is 76.4 (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2009). The age profile shows about the right balance of age distribution. This scenario is also reflected in the case of Payang Central Market.

Both markets also show a good record of vendors who had been engaging in the market for substantial periods of time. This shows that the market is providing them livelihoods for quite some time. In Satok Weekend Market, about 17% of the vendors had been loyally attached to the market for more than 15 years and another 15% had been trading for 10.1 to 15 years. The number of new vendors (less than 5.1 years) that participated in the market is also healthy where the number reaches up to 35%. Likewise in Payang Central Market, 22% of the vendors had been operating in the market for more than 15 years, 37% had been trading for 5.1 to 10.0 years and 33% for 5.1 to 10 years.

In terms of education, both markets show that typically the vendors (more than 50%) completed high school while more than 20% completed primary school. There is still evidence that some vendors did not receive any formal education, with 18% in Satok Weekend Market and 12% in Payang Central Market not receiving formal education. These data is consistent with the literacy rate in Sarawak and Terengganu where the markets are located. In Sarawak, literacy rate of 15 to 24 years old male and female in 1990 and 1997 are a bit low as compared to Terengganu (Table 9). In contrast, a study conducted in West Virginia's farmer's market in the US indicated that majority of the vendors hold a high school diploma (32%) and college graduate or doctoral degree (31%) (Brown, Miller et al. 2007). The low levels of education in the Malaysian farmers market may have implications in terms of communicating with the international tourists.

**Table 9: Literacy rate of 15 to 24 of male and female in Sarawak and Terengganu for the Year 1990 and 2007**

Gender	Male		Female	
	1990	2007	1990	2007
Sarawak	97.1	98.0	92.2	98.6
Terengganu	98.8	99.1	97.1	99.2

Source: Manpower and Social Statistics Division, Department of Statistics, Malaysia

In terms of the current state of farmers markets, the type of market vendors is the most debatable issue in terms of defining what a farmers market is. Billing (2006) in his article *From gate to plate: Exploring the farmers' market phenomenon* defined farmers markets as one in which farmers, growers and producers from a local area are present in person to sell their own products directly to the public. However, in developing countries like Malaysia, established urban farmer's market are mostly mixed farmers market. The vendors can be divided into four main categories; farmer, farmer and vendor (farmer selling their own products and at the same time selling agri-products from suppliers or friends), agri-vendor (selling agriculture products from supplier or friends) and other vendors (selling non agri-products).

In the Satok weekend market, participation from farmers (farmer only, farmer and vendor) reached 46% whereas in the other market, farmers are only 18%. However agri-vendors in Payang Central Market reached up to 37% while on the other market its is only 26%. The types of products range from agricultural products, food and non agri-products. The agriculture commodity that is mostly sold by the vendors is vegetables followed by fruits. In Satok, 29% of the stalls sell vegetables and 25% sell fruits. In the other market, 21% offered vegetables and 14% offered fruits. Dried food is another major product offered in Payang Market with quite a significant percentage (19%) whereas in Satok Weekend Market, the proportion is only 7%.

In Satok Weekend Market, the distance of the market from the vendors' house is varied. However it seems that more farmers are far from the market. This is normal as most agriculture land is pushed to the inner zones as the city sprawls. Out of the 155 vendors who claimed to be farmers (farmer and farmer & vendor), 44% said they had to travel more than one hour to the market and 36% claimed they need to travel between 30 minutes to one hour. This is in contrast with Payang Central Market where most vendors who are farmers live only less than 30 minutes from the market (Table 10). This is due to the slow urban sprawl as compared to Kuching. Kuching City indeed developed very aggressively and since the city is very big it is divided into North and South city council. Whereas in Kuala Terengganu, there are still a lot of agricultural lands in the peripheral area, close to city.

**Table 10: Distance of the market from the vendor's house to Satok Weekend Market and Payang Central Market**

Number	Satok Weekend Market		Payang Central Market	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Less than 30 minutes	31	20.6	23	63.9
30 minutes to 1 hour	55	35.5	8	22.2
1-2 hours drive	41	26.5	5	13.9
more than 2 hours	27	17.4	0	0.0
Total	155	100.0	36	100.0

Both markets show that most of the vendors have their own transport. In Satok Weekend Market, 40% owned van or lorry and 38% owned a car whereas in Payang Central Market, 16% owned a van or lorry and 41% owned a car. This showed that parking is needed for both vendors' and consumers vehicles.

In regards to operational aspects, the Satok Weekend Market and the Payang Central Market are different in nature. Satok Weekend Markets only operated on weekends. Majority of the vendors participated every weekend and only less than 10% of the vendors either participated on Saturday or Sunday only. About 17% of vendors expressed their opinion that the market should be operated for more days and about 17% also wanted to have more time within the day of operation. The market operates on Saturday afternoons and close on Sunday afternoons. In Payang Central Market, the market is open daily and all respondents claimed that they participated everyday. They are satisfied with the day of operation and current time operation.

The sustainability of the market partly depends on the customer - on the simple supply and demand concept. These two markets have different orientation, therefore the distribution of customers visiting the stall is also different. In Satok Weekend Market, 29% of the vendors claimed that between 21 and 50 customers visited their stall per day and another 29% claimed that they have between 51 and 100 customers per day. In Payang Central Market on the other hand, most of the vendors (78%) claimed that less than 20 customers visited their stall per day and 18% claimed that 21 to 50 customers visited them per day. The possible reason is because most of the customer will wait for the weekend to go to the market in Kuching and in Kuala Terengganu customers can go anytime throughout the week. Therefore the type of customers in each market is different.

## **Conclusions**

The study found out that here are two distinct types of urban farmers market in Malaysia - the structured and non-structured market. The nature of these market influences the time of operation of the market and also the type of vendors. Satok Weekend Market is a non-structured market and occupies parking space in between buildings. Due to that, it can only operate after office hours on Saturday till Sunday afternoon. After they finish by Sunday afternoon, the place will be cleaned by the Local Authority. From the survey, this type of market shows a high number of farmer participants where during weekdays they work in their farm. Therefore, on the weekend they bring their products to the city to be sold. As in Payang Central Market, the local authority has to accommodate the farmers to participate in the market by offering special zones for them in the market. They only have to pay the stall whenever they come to trade and they do not have to come everyday. Those farmers who rent the stall at the market for everyday, need to fully participate in the market by making their own arrangements.

Another particularly interesting finding is the vendor mix. While in a developed countries such as the USA, UK or Australia farmers markets only have farmers as vendors, the urban markets

such as Satok Weekend Market and the Payang Central Market had a mix of vendors for many decades. The mix of vendors help the market survives longer and creates a bigger crowd. This type of mixed product farmers market is probably more suited to developing countries than pure farmers markets, because one scale economies and also the attraction of the farmers markets as a source of a diverse range of product. The farmers market concept has become like a one stop centre for the consumers to buy goods. Tourists also have the opportunity to visit the market and buy souvenirs or indigenous products to bring home.

Finally the results of the study showed that farmers markets have the potential of providing livelihood for vendors in the case studies area in Malaysia. Their loyalty to the market proves that the vendors earn at least a decent income to make them continue selling in the market. There is also enough customers supporting farmers in these urban farmers markets.

## References

Billing, D. 2006, *From gate to plate; Exploring the farmers' market phenomenon*. Massey: 16-18.

Brown, C., S. M. Miller, et al. 2007, *The importance of farmers' markets for West Virginia direct marketers*. Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems 22(01): 20-29.

Department of Statistic Malaysia 2009, *Life Expectancy At Birth (Updated 2 January 2009)*.

Retrieved 22 March 2009, from

[http://www.statistics.gov.my/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=54:life-expectancy-at-birth&catid=38:kaystats&Itemid=11](http://www.statistics.gov.my/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54:life-expectancy-at-birth&catid=38:kaystats&Itemid=11)

Department of Statistic Malaysia 2009, *Indicator 7b: Literacy rate of 15 - 24 by sex and state, 1990 - 2007, Malaysia*. Retrieved 22 March 2009, from

<http://www.statistics.gov.my/eng/images/stories/files/MalaysiaInfoIndicators/goal2.pdf>