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Environmental studies professor Darren Bardati is a driving force behind local food research and practice

The Eastern Townships is replete with farms that produce incomparable flavours and products that both locals and tourists enjoy year after year. Since 2012, the Lennoxville Farmers' Market's mission is to bring these homegrown flavours to the palates of anyone who wishes to sample fresh, local ingredients.

Dr. Darren Bardati, an Environmental Studies and Geography professor at Bishop's, started the farmer's market after his wife, Jennifer, made the suggestion. "My family and I have been managing our homestead for several years now. My wife told me we should look into starting a farmer's market. The idea was to get like-minded people interested into local, high-quality food," he recalls.

After inquiring into a site that was off-limits, he found a place that was not very far from his office on campus: the former coop building at 2882 College Street, which, coincidentally, belongs to the university. "After I discovered that the site could be used for commercial purposes, I submitted a proposal to the Sustainable Development Committee (known at the time as the Environment and Land Use Committee) and the Executive Group, and both were excited about the project!" Dr. Bardati is now at the helm of a non-profit organization, the *Association du Marché Agricole de Lennoxville*, that manages the market.

In February, the borough of Lennoxville granted Dr. Bardati with the award for "Outstanding Achievement in Business Development". The recognition highlights not only the tremendous progress the market has made, but also that "today, farmers' markets are recognized for their value and contribution to the community," he points out.

In turn, the community has responded very positively to the market's offerings, which includes vegetables, honey, berries, certified meat, cheeses, artisan crafts and Jennifer Bardati's goat milk soaps, all locally grown and made. "Many students come to the market when they return to campus in late August," notes Dr. Bardati. "They make a noticeable impact and that's great to see."

"People are more concerned about their food than ever before," he explains. "The supermarket offers mostly geographically-anonymous food. We offer what's called "beyond organic": food that is grown by farmers that customers know personally. The main draw for our customers is that direct relationship with the farmer."

On the academic side, Dr. Bardati will be putting his expertise in resource management to good use: he has just received a grant to conduct a research project called "Adaptive Capacity in Local Food Systems: Analysis of the Farmers' Markets in the Eastern Townships".

"I don't know of any other study on local food systems in the Eastern Townships," he says. "What are the components of the local food system? Who is growing what? Where is it being sold? What is the role of farmers' markets in all of that? Is the local food system becoming more resilient or less? My research will attempt to answer

these questions so we can understand the true impact of farmers' markets in our region and what our society is doing about being prepared for climate change and other future stresses on our food system."

With his schedule as a professor and researcher, a community business leader, and a homesteader, Dr. Bardati might be one of the busiest professors at Bishop's this summer and fall, but one thing is for sure: he is never far away from the land.

The Lennoxville Farmers' Market opens on Saturday, June 6 at the former coop building at 2882 College Street in Sherbrooke. It will run every second week until Thanksgiving. For more information, please visit the [Facebook page](#), or [the website](#).

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