

The boutiques go to the farmers's markets...

More and more people shop cheaply from the stalls

"Now that I go to the farmers's markets, I have more stable customers and better incomes than when I had a store. Most people buy their everyday clothes from the farmers's markets. I go every week also to the northern suburbs. Even there, the people who come are stable and numerous." Mr Demetrius has been selling clothes for the last eight years at farmers's markets. Amidst the eggplants, tomatoes, potatoes and fishes, in every neighborhood that has a farmers's market, more and more stalls are being set up with trousers, shirts, dresses, and shoes. The "boutiques of the farmers's markets" gather more customers, because their prices are especially low.

"There is a lack of money and time. Since I am coming to the farmers's market in any case, I look at the clothes and the shoes and accordingly I might choose either potatoes or slippers," says typically Mrs Eva, who shopped yesterday at the farmers's market of Papagou. As she says, she decides from her home how much money she will spend every time at the farmers's market, and she takes care not to go beyond that amount. "Last week, instead of grapes, I got a shirt."

"The people who buy clothes at the farmers's market are different from people who go to the boutique," says Mr Yiannis, who sells mainly athletic shoes. "In the past there were Greek small businesses that were making clothes only for us. Now the warehouses where they gathered them on Athenas street have closed, because Chinese products are cheaper and people prefer them. Many people come to me who are shopping for their children, since I have things from five up to twenty euros. Most of my clothes now are imported, from China and from Turkey, but also a fair amount of things from stores that are closing."

Shopkeepers look at the stalls with with clothes at the farmers's markets in desperation. "For us it is harsh competition," maintains Mrs Chrysa, who has a boutique with women's clothes in a shopping mall. "On the street outside the shopping center there is a farmers's market every week. Some people say that it is good, because people gather and it is possible that some of them come to us. I don't agree. When a woman can dress for her job for 20 euros, why should she spend 100? She prefers to buy five or six different pieces, even if they don't last so long because of bad quality."

However, there are stalls with more expensive wares. "I have a boutique at the farmers's market," says Mrs Zoe. "I started four years ago bringing exclusively clothes from India. Most of them are cotton and silk and some pieces are more than 100 euros. I have many women customers and a fair number of them buy clothes only from me."