

Guide to Establishing a Farmers' Market

Farmers' markets play a vital role in providing small to medium-sized growers access to consumers wishing to buy their farm products. These markets provide a unique marketing experience for both farmers and consumers, enabling them to stay in business and increase profit margins. Consumers can purchase farm fresh products and get the chance to meet and interact with the people who actually grow the food. This form of farmer-to-consumer direct marketing has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years, as producers respond to consumers' demands with new and alternative marketing strategies for their farm enterprises.

Identifying the site

Preliminary identification and assessment of a market site are essential in determining the feasibility of the project. Give initial consideration to:

- Location- Identify a site with optimum visibility from streets and walkways.
- Space- Assess the number of vendors the site will accommodate.
- Availability- Determine days and hours the site is available.
- Restrictions- Determine if there are any restrictions such as number and type of vendors; ordinances such as any town Zoning issues and/or state and local/district Health Department requirements; parking issues such as need to cover meters; or need to have market site cordoned off.

Market cooperative/sponsors

Groups to contact to identify farmers, determine product availability, and help coordinate market activities include the following:

- Connecticut Department of Agriculture
- Cooperative Extension Offices
- Local Community Organizations
- Town Government
- Agricultural Organizations

Identifying farmers/vendors

Local farmers and vendors should be identified in collaboration with market cooperators/sponsors.

Considerations include:

- Establishing direct communication with farmers/vendors
- Developing a good product variety/mix
- Ensuring top-quality products
- Ensuring farmer/vendor diversity.

Schedule

Develop an appropriate operating schedule to maximize the potential of the local harvesting season as well as consumer participation. Issues to consider:

- Fees- Determine the costs of insurance, site fees, advertising and/or marketing
- Season- Determine the number of months to operate the market.

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- Calendar- Determine the day(s) of week the market will operate, including market dates and times.

Rules and regulations for farmers/vendors

To ensure an efficient and orderly market, it is important to adopt and enforce concise rules and regulations:

- Requirements for participation (farmer, determine if other vendors are needed such as bakery, crafts, specialty foods, etc.)
- Commitment to schedule/season
- Timelines (arrival, setup, disassembly, etc.)
- Cancellation (Specify a period of notification)
- Display area (size of vendors area)
- Signage (name, type of farm/product, price, farm location)
- Vehicle size (Limit truck size for easy site access)

Market management

Determine management and operating procedures. An important element of this is to plan for enforcing relevant rules and regulations.

Market activity

Entertaining and informative activities that complement the market environment should be planned for consumers. Consider:

- Special events (on-site chef/nutritionist, flower day, seasonal product promotion, etc.)
- Promotional plans (press releases, newsletters, posters, flyers, public service announcements)

Gleaning

Farmers' market groups may want to donate food and/or food products to local food banks and other charitable food groups. They should be sure to check with the local health authority to ensure compliance with requirements for donating to charitable food service establishments such as soup kitchens.

For further information contact the Connecticut Department of Agriculture:

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Last edited 12/30/2013