

# FARMERS MARKET DEVELOPMENT MANUAL



State of Alabama  
**Farmers Market  
Authority**

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*December 2005*

## Introduction

For the consumer, farmers' markets provide a variety of fresh produce at a reasonable price, while creating a fun social event for the community. Many consumers prefer to purchase fresh locally grown produce if given the opportunity to do so. Consumers enjoy a wide selection of products while supporting local agriculture and meeting the farmers who grow their food.

For the new producer, farmers' markets represent one of the only outlets available for gaining production and marketing expertise while contemplating the possibility of expanding product volume. The market vendor may maintain a small-scale level of production for the simple pleasure of gardening and visiting with friends and neighbors during market hours. Others, however, may aspire to large-scale production over time, earning substantial income while maintaining a lifestyle that is more closely related to farming. In either case, the farmers' market provides the grower with the opportunity to discover what consumers' demand in product quality, quantity and variety.

The purpose of this "how to" development manual is to provide an easy-to-use reference guide for those who want to start a new market, expand an existing market, or participate in the selling of goods. The 11 parts address specific topics that are vital to establishing and maintaining a vibrant market. Please contact the State of Alabama Farmers Market Authority at (334) 242-2618 if you have questions regarding this manual or farmers' markets.

## **Part I: Establishing and Maintaining a Farmers' Market**

In order to develop and maintain a viable farmers' market, an organized and well thought out process needs to be implemented. The following is an example of such a process and is meant to serve as a guide for persons interested in farmers' market development. In addition, steering committee members are encouraged to visit a successful market to gain ideas and a better understanding of how a market functions.

### **A. Organize a Steering Committee**

1. Seek out those people in the local area who share enthusiasm in establishing a farmers' market and who are willing to make a commitment.
2. Obtain from very contact the names, addresses, and phone numbers of others who might be actively interested in starting and developing a farmers' market.
3. Responsibilities of a Steering Committee
  - a. To determine long-term goals
    - i. Important for year-to-year continuity
    - ii. Provide guidance and direction
  - b. To establish short-term goals or objectives
    - i. Should be measurable and obtainable within one season
    - ii. Provides a sense of accomplishment upon achievement of each objective.  
Example: To obtain 15-20 vendors present during each day of the market season
  - c. To initiate all functions and activities necessary for developing, operating, and promoting the farmers' market
  - d. To maintain good communications with everyone involved in or impacted by the market
    - i. To encourage support and participation in the market
    - ii. To smooth troubled waters regarding the market
      - a) Worries of local grocers and other businesses
      - b) Mediating disputes regarding who should control the market
    - iii. To adjust strategies and make changes during the development and operation of the market based on continual evaluation

### **B. Conduct Meetings**

Meeting should be publicized according to the range and scope of participation desired

1. Organizational meetings are generally better suited to small gatherings
2. Interest meetings, where overall community input is sought, are generally suited to large groups and should be located in easily accessible and well-known locations. Such meetings should be well publicized.

### **C. First Meeting**

1. Outline how grower interest will be determined (see Part III)
  - a. Develop questions for producers' response
  - b. Determine method of surveying
2. Outline how consumer interest will be determined (see Part III)
  - a. Develop questions for consumers' response
  - b. Develop method for surveying
3. A member of the Steering Committee should serve as survey coordinator and recruiter of volunteers for conducting surveys

#### **D. Second Meeting**

1. Evaluate the findings of the grower and consumer surveys
  - a. Determine whether or not to continue the effort of developing a farmers' market based on level of interest indicated
  - b. Determine the size of the proposed market
    - i. The number of stalls needed to accommodate the expected vendors
    - ii. The number of extra stalls deemed necessary to accommodate unexpected vendors and anticipated growth
2. Establish the following subcommittees, set tasks, and outline time frames
  - a. Site Selection Subcommittees (see Part IV)
    - i. Develop criteria for site selection
    - ii. Investigate and evaluate possible locations
    - iii. Prepare site recommendations for the Market Steering Committee
  - b. Grower Relations Subcommittee
    - i. To maintain open communications between local growers and the Market Steering Committee
      - a) Determine the anticipated selection of products to be offered by vendors
      - b) Determine when growers anticipate having product available
      - c) Work with growers to insure that a variety of products will be offered at the market throughout the season
      - d) Keep growers informed of the Market Steering Committees' activities
    - ii. To obtain commitments to participate from growers

#### **E. Third Meeting**

1. Evaluate the findings of the Site Selection Subcommittee and make a preliminary selection
2. Develop a written proposal for the owner of the site
  - a. Outline the advantages to them and the community
  - b. How the property will be used
3. Determine the desired physical improvements necessary prior to the market opening
4. Establish the State and Local Regulations Subcommittee, set tasks, and outline time frames (see Part VII)
  - a. Determine the regulations with which the market will have to comply, regardless of location
    - i. Food guidelines
    - ii. Food establishment license
    - iii. Building codes
  - b. Determine the regulations with which the market will have to comply, given the location of the selected site
    - i. Zoning ordinance requirements
    - ii. Sign ordinance requirements

#### **F. Fourth Meeting**

1. Evaluate the findings of the State and Local Regulations Subcommittee
2. Make final determination of site to be used and initiate actions for securing the site
3. Develop and prepare a Market Biography to be used to provide information on the proposed intentions and expectations of the market (see Part II)
  - a. Length and dates of market season
  - b. Number of vendors expected
  - c. Proposed activities and promotions
  - d. Benefits the farmers' market brings to individuals and the community
  - e. The farmers' market contact person's name and phone number
4. Establish the following subcommittees, set tasks, and outline time frames

- a. Site Development Subcommittee (see Part IV)
  - i. To determine site layout of the market... considering desired amenities and required regulations
  - ii. To determine the specific physical improvements to be undertaken
- b. Market Rules Subcommittee (see Part VI)
  - i. To develop rules and recommendations for market operation
  - ii. To evaluate the anticipated impact of each proposed rule

**G. Fifth Meeting**

1. Evaluate the recommendations of the Site Development Subcommittee and outline activities to be undertaken
2. Discuss the recommended market rules, make necessary amendments and adopt rules
3. Outline a listing of potential sponsors for the market
  - a. Those who are willing to finance or donate in-kind services (use of phones, office space, supplies, license fees, etc.)
  - b. Sponsors are important to help cover initial costs until a sufficient level of self-generated income is achieved from stall fees
4. Develop a listing of reasons why each potential sponsor should want to help develop the farmers' market. Examples are:
  - a. Chamber of Commerce - to attract people into the business district
  - b. Local government – the economic and social benefits for the local community
  - c. Growers association - to obtain impact on market development decisions, and for establishing an additional market outlet for them to use
5. Establish the following subcommittees, set tasks and outline time frames
  - a. Funding and Budget Subcommittee (See Part V)
    - i. Determine the costs of the required physical improvements
    - ii. Secure sponsors for the market
    - iii. Obtain donations (utilize the Market Biography when making contacts)
      - a. Cash
      - b. Supplies
      - c. Materials
      - d. Volunteer labor
    - iv. To determine an overall budget and outline proposed stall fees for the upcoming season
  - b. Market Manager Subcommittee (see Part VIII)
    - i. Outline the manager's qualifications
    - ii. Outline the manager's responsibilities
    - iii. Develop a list of possible candidates/advertise opening
6. Determine the specific market season (based on anticipated supply and selection of product)
  - a. Opening day
  - b. Days of the week that the market will operate (Take into consideration the days other neighboring markets operate. Growers may be participating and would not want to change)
  - c. Last market day

**H. Sixth Meeting**

1. Make a market manager selection and outline requirements for the individual
2. Outline a schedule for undertaking physical development activities, and have the Site Development Subcommittee and/or Market Manager oversee development
3. Establish a Promotions and Advertising Subcommittee, set tasks and outline time frames (see Part IX)
  - a. Develop a strategy for obtaining media coverage throughout the market season
  - b. Develop opening day activities and pre-opening day publicity, etc.

- c. Development promotional activities throughout the season for maintaining customer traffic

**I. Seventh Meeting**

1. Review the recommendations of the Promotions and Advertising Subcommittee. Designate person(s) responsible for each element of the proposed plan
2. Develop reporting system for Market Manager to keep Steering Committee informed
3. Have the Grower Relations Subcommittee report on the status of the grower group

**J. Finalize Site Development Activities**

**K. Finalize Opening Day Activities**

**L. Opening Day**

**M. Grand Opening Day**

1. This should be one of the biggest promotional event days during the market season
2. The celebrated grand opening should occur when there is sufficient product volume and variety for enticing consumers to shop at the market throughout the season. This date is not always the same as the first day of the market season
3. Everyone who has been instrumental in the development of the market, plus local officials, celebrities, and media should be invited and encouraged to actively participate in the day's activities

**N. Tracking the Season**

1. Number of vendors and their frequency of participation
2. Estimated number of consumers
3. Diary of activities, what items sell best, weather conditions
4. Impact of promotional activities on customer traffic
5. Problems

**O. Year End Meeting**

1. A social gathering for all participants
2. To evaluate the season and look forward to next year

**P. Interim Season Activities**

1. Steering Committee Meetings
  - a. To realign goals and strategies as needed
  - b. To set agenda for next season
2. Grower seminars
3. Newsletters
4. Publicity and public relations

## Part II: Market Biography and Resources

Resources are businesses, groups, or individuals that offer expertise, services, or supplies, and who are not obligated or required to assist. The following will cover the market biography and provide resource guides to use in the development of market resources.

**A. Many businesses, groups, or individuals can be used as resources in one way or another.**

Many people are more than willing to donate their time and services to a worthy cause. A listing at the bottom of this page gives many examples of potential local resources.

**B. Market Biography.** A market biography is an information sheet that can be given to potential resources to acquaint them with the farmers’ market and its activities.

3. Prepare market biography prior to contacting potential resource person
4. The market biography should contain a summary of market intentions and expectations, including the following:
  - c. Length and dates of market season
  - d. Number of vendors expected
  - e. Proposed activities and promotions
  - f. Benefits the farmers’ market brings to be community
  - g. Benefits the farmers’ market brings to the prospective resource
  - h. Needs of the market
  - i. Farmers’ market contact person’s name and phone number
5. Leave the market biography with the prospective resource to use for future reference
6. Resources

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Banks                              | Foundations                            |
| Businesses, merchants, industries  | Garden centers, greenhouses, nurseries |
| Individuals, associations          | Historical groups                      |
| Chamber of Commerce                | Hospitals and medical clinics          |
| Charity organizations              | Legislators                            |
| City council                       | Local producer groups                  |
| Civic/service organizations        | News media                             |
| Community Development              | Private citizens                       |
| Community Colleges                 | Professional organizations             |
| County Board of Supervisors        | Religious groups                       |
| County Development Commission      | Rural Electric Co-ops                  |
| County Farmers Federations         | Senior citizen groups                  |
| Department of Parks and Recreation | AL Farmers Market Authority            |
| Equipment dealers                  | University Agricultural departments    |
| Fair boards                        | Utility companies                      |
| Feed and seed stores               | Youth organizations                    |

### **Part III: Interest Surveys**

The survey is an instrument or tool that can help in determining the level of interest of a designated group. It is advisable to test the degree of interest shown by producers and targeted consumers prior to the development of a farmers' market. The survey can determine whether the interest stimulated is enough to indicate the development and success of a farmers' market.

#### **A. Methods of Survey**

1. Mail
4. Phone
5. In person
  - a. Door to door
  - b. Person on the street
6. Public meetings
  - a. Attendance at meetings on a specific topic
  - b. Input from those attending the meeting

#### **B. Survey Content**

7. Questions pertaining to specific information desired
8. A contact person, address, and phone number
9. Mailed surveys should have a deadline for responding

#### **C. The Consumer Survey (see samples on p. 7-8)**

4. Directed to potential consumers
5. Investigate items consumers look for at a farmers' market. Any area of interest can be surveyed, from types of products the consumer wants at the farmers' market to reasons why the consumer shops at the farmers' market
6. Surveys help attract attention and build consumer awareness concerning the market
7. Surveys help obtain data to be utilized in planning the market
8. Include a description of the farmers' market with the survey
  - a. Location of proposed market
  - b. Benefits the market will provide for the consumer
  - c. Benefits the market will provide for the community

#### **D. The Grower Survey (See example on p. 9)**

3. Determines degree of participation interest
4. The grower survey should include questions concerning the following:
  - a. Types of product the grower produces
  - b. Days of interest that a grower would participate at the farmers' market
  - c. Number of weeks the grower would participate
    - i. Length of season
    - ii. Specific calendar days the grower would participate
  - d. Request for any additional names of growers who may be interested in becoming involved in the farmers' market

#### **E. Scope of the Survey**

5. Sampling population
6. Total population

## Part IV: Site Selection

There are various factors to consider when determining the location for a farmers' market. Cost involved with the use (rent) and the development or upgrading the site will greatly influence site selection. While all of the following elements should be considered, the final determining factor will depend on the specific criteria established by each individual market.

### A. Permanent vs. Temporary Use of a Site

1. Permanent Site – A farmers' market site can be permanent through a long-term leasing agreement with the owner, or a farmers' market may purchase a site
  - a. Advantages of a permanent site:
    - i. Consumers become familiar with the location and learn to look in the same place for the market
    - ii. The farmers' market will directly receive the benefits from all investments made in the site development
    - iii. Permanent structures or shelters can be utilized. Fences may be built around the market permitting vendors to leave their stalls set up. Displays, containers, or products such as firewood can be left in place from week to week
    - iv. Set up and break down time for vendors will be decreased
  - b. Disadvantages of a permanent site:
    - i. A large initial investment may be required
    - ii. Vandalism may occur
    - iii. Liability insurance will be even more important
  - c. Farmers' markets may be able to secure a long-term lease at very low cost if the market steering committee agrees to make specific developments and improvements, or allows others to use the site when the market is not in operation
2. Temporary Site – Short-term lease
  - a. Empty lots in prime locations within the business district of a city or town are often available to farmers' markets. Through negotiations with the land owner, these sites can often be used at little or no cost. The farmers' market may be permitted to use the property in return for maintaining upkeep of the site.
  - b. A temporary location may be free to use and the market may even be permitted to make improvements. However, unless a long-term commitment is established, these benefits will not be worth major investments by the market.
  - c. Temporary sites require little initial investment by the farmers' market
3. Temporary site – Free access/No time commitment/No lease agreement
  - a. There is no limit to the site possibilities that farmers' market may utilize at no cost

Potential sites include, but not limited to:

- |                                     |                                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Athletic fields                  | 9. Courthouse grounds            |
| 2. Bank parking lots                | 10. Outdoor malls                |
| 3. City streets and sidewalks       | 11. Schoolyards                  |
| 4. Church or synagogue parking lots | 12. School parking lots          |
| 5. Churchyards                      | 13. Shopping center parking lots |
| 6. City parking lots                | 14. Town squares                 |
| 7. City parks                       | 15. Vacant lots                  |
| 8. County fairgrounds               |                                  |

- b. Improvements and site development is limited. A farmers' market may have free access to a site, but it may not be permitted to make any improvements. Improvements may be made by negotiating and working jointly with the site owner.

- c. There is no guarantee to the length of time a farmers' market may utilize a site if there is no leasing agreement
- d. Many free locations are often used for other purposes in addition to the farmers' market. Utilization of the site may need to be coordinated with other groups or activities

**B. Accessibility**

- 1. The farmers' market should be easily accessible to the public transit system
- 2. The farmers' market should be accessible to adequate parking
- 3. The farmers' market should be easily accessible from the major roadways or thoroughfares
- 4. The farmers' market site should have entrance and exit points, and good internal traffic flow
- 5. The farmers' market should be located on a through street to avoid congestion and permit a flow through of traffic
- 6. The farmers' market should have handicapped accessibility

**C. Location**

- 1. The farmers' market should be developed in a central location in the city or town
  - 1. Near potential consumer groups
    - i. Where they live
    - ii. Where they work
    - iii. Where they shop
  - 2. Near popular areas with regular consumer traffic
  - 3. In a location that appeals to a cross-section of consumers
- 2. The market site should be easily visible from the main thoroughfare
- 3. Consumers should be able to easily locate the market with a few simple directions
- 4. Neighboring land uses should not distract from the aesthetic appeal of the site (i.e., a garbage dump would not create a favorable neighboring environment)

**D. Surface of the Site**

- 1. An even and level surface with proper drainage
  - a. Consider the pros and cons of surface covering
    - i. Concrete
    - ii. Gravel
    - iii. Grass
    - iv. Blacktop
- 2. A site with a moderate slope may be utilized if the development of the farmers' market is not hindered

**E. Shelter from the Sun and Rain**

- 1. Protects the products, aiding in maintaining freshness and quality
- 2. Creates a more comfortable and enjoyable shopping experience
- 3. Shelter can be provided by:
  - a. Trees
  - b. Overpass or bridges
  - c. Permanent buildings, structures, or shelters
  - d. Temporary canopies or awnings

**F. Size of the site (very important)**

- 1. The actual market selling area/vendors

2. Walkways for the consumer traffic flow
3. Parking areas either on-site or within a convenient location to the market
4. Roadways

**G. Special planning consideration may be necessary if the site is used in conjunction with other activities.**

**H. Other factors**

1. Location of water supply (or other utilities) on-site or accessible to the site
2. Location of restroom facilities on-site or accessible to the site
3. Zoning or building regulations may restrict or dictate proposed development plans

## Part V: Funding and Budgeting

**Project a budget early in the planning stages of a farmers market.**

### A. Costs

Following are some of the costs that might be incurred by a farmers' market. However, not all of these will necessarily be incurred.

4. Rental or lease of site
5. Licenses and permits
6. Site improvements
  - a. Resurfacing
  - b. Storage facility
  - c. Overhead structure
  - d. Signage
7. Organizing expenses
  - a. Meeting facilities
  - b. Telephone
  - c. Printing
  - d. Postage
  - e. Travel
8. Advertising
  - a. Art work
  - b. Printing
  - c. Distribution (travel time and expense)
  - d. Materials
9. Market Manager's salary  
**It is recommended that a person be hired with the sole responsibility of farmers' market operations**
10. Liability insurance  
Personal accidents or injury may be the liability of the market. It is a necessity with the number of people who will be visiting the farmers' market over the course of the season. If covered otherwise (mall, city, etc.), then the insurance may not be necessary. Always check to be sure.
8. Miscellaneous equipment and supplies
  - a. Fire extinguisher
  - b. First Aid kit

### B. Income

**The market should be planned to support itself. The following are possible sources of income:**

1. Stall fees
  - a. Stall fees should be assessed for each vendor selling in the market
  - b. Generally both daily and seasonal rates are offered
    - i. Seasonal rates should reflect a discount from daily rates if they were paid for every market day of the season
    - ii. Total payment of seasonal rates should be required at the beginning of the market season
      - a) Prepayment of stall fees will provide the market added operating capital to help cover the higher costs necessary at the beginning of the season
      - b) A savings incentive in overall costs should exist for vendors
  - c. Stall fee rate categories

- i. Daily rates for “Local Grown” and “Alabama Grown” products (see Part VI for definitions)
      - ii. Daily rates for brokers of products imported
      - iii. Seasonal rates for “Local Grown” and “Alabama Grown” products
    - d. The number of stalls available under each rate category should be determined during the preparation of the budget and numbers should be based on the findings of the grower interest survey
- 2. Donations
  - a. Labor
    - i. Developing and making site improvements
    - ii. Distributing advertising flyers
    - iii. Making phone calls
    - iv. Soliciting additional donations and support
    - v. Preparing advertising
    - vi. Participating in promotional activities
  - b. Materials, supplies, misc.
    - i. Building materials and equipment
    - ii. Office supplies
    - iii. Printing and Postage
    - iv. Office space
    - v. Telephone and utilities
    - vi. Prizes for promotional activities
  - c. Farmers’ market site
  - d. Cash donations

## Part VI: Market Operation

### A. Hours and Days of Operation

1. The following days should be outlined in the rules:
  - a. The date of the first day the market will be open for the season
  - b. The days of the week the market will be operating
  - c. The date of the last day the market will operate for the season
2. The following references to time should be outlined in the rules:
  - a. A specific time of day when vendors may begin setting up
  - b. A specific time of day for the deadline of stall fee payment
  - c. A specific time of day when vendors with seasonal stall permits must have occupied their space in order to avoid losing its use for the specific day to another vendor
  - d. A specific time of day when vendors may no longer gain admission to the market for setting up and selling
  - e. A specific time of day when vendors may begin selling
  - f. A specific time of day when vendors shall have totally vacated the farmers' market premises

### B. Who Can and Cannot Sell at the Market

Farmers' markets are attractive places at which to buy and sell produce. This encourages the presence of non-producers who may buy produce and offer it for resale at the farmers' market. Consequently, potential problems may arise with non-producers, peddlers, "pinhookers", and resellers. Many of these marketers buy produce from other areas and offer it earlier in the spring and later in the fall than locally grown products of the same variety.

These factors lead to strong demands by resident producers for regulating who may sell on the market. This leads to a considerable managerial problem. The Board has three policy options:

- Only local farmers may sell products they grow
- Only farmers may sell products they grow
- Farmers and non-farmers may sell

Some community leaders may feel that it is not wise to limit selling to bona fide producers. Reasons cited include the notions that peddlers may assure more uniform supply and more attractive volume, and that a local producer with quality homegrown produce can effectively compete with the peddler. Most customers come to the market with the idea that all produce is locally grown by the person offering it for sale. The bottom line is that it is very difficult to police a farmer-only rule. However, it can be done; but, it requires local participation with farm visits and enforcement from the market manager.

The size of the market and the availability of an adequate range of quality produce from local farmers may affect the decision. Whatever the decision, the Board must impartially enforce the ruling until, after careful review and evaluation, the Board chooses to change it. Allowing resellers and non-producers to operate in the market immediately brings the market under all laws applying to retail sales and tax collections. Sales tax must be collected on all items sold by persons who do not produce them. This is a good reason to sell only farmer-owned, raw agricultural products grown by the seller.

Farmers' markets that are located near the state boundaries should allow all vendors with "Local Grown" products and allow them to be labeled as such. The intent is to provide outlets for selling and buying

locally-produced fresh products (i.e., A product grown 10 miles across the state line should be just as fresh as a product grown in Alabama.

Quantity and variety is an asset for attracting customers to any farmers' market. Therefore, discrimination against vendors from neighboring states or governmental subdivisions is discouraged. Discrimination can result in reciprocal actions against the market's vendors by other nearby farmers' markets where they may want to sell.

**C. Market Fees**

1. Outline to whom fees are to be paid and time schedules for payment
2. Outline the fee schedule
  - a. Daily rates
  - b. Seasonal rates, which should result in a greatly reduced cost when compared with paying fees on a per day basis

**D. Stall Assignments**

1. Outline how assignments will be made based on the following:
2. Location by vendor category
  - a. Location by seasonal vs. daily rates
  - b. Location on a first-come basis
  - c. Whether or not stalls may be sublet

**E. Product - Items to Sell**

- Do sell fresh fruits, vegetables, flowers, shrubs, plants and honey
- Consider selling craft items
- Do not sell home canned goods without proper approval, fresh meat, antiques or purchased items.

Health regulations pertain to three categories of items:

- 1) Acceptable items—fresh produce and other raw agricultural products sold by the producer. No sales tax need be charged if sold by the original producer.
- 2) Questionable items—items whose sale may be technically restricted by State and/or Federal law, but which are not the subject of extensive law enforcement activity because they are unlikely to present an extreme health hazard. A check with local Health departments should be made before offering any questionable items for sale.  
*Examples: baked breads, jams, jellies, cookies and pickles.*
- 3) Forbidden items—fresh meat and home canned foods. Local health departments will not allow the sale of these items.

1. Outline what products can and cannot be sold, considering state and federal regulations and guidelines (see Part VII)
2. Product quality that is acceptable and/or unacceptable
3. Under what conditions it can be required that the product be removed from sale or confiscated

**F. Required Vendor Performance**

1. Appearance
2. Behavior
3. Maintaining a tidy area throughout the market day
4. Leaving clean stall at the end of the market day
5. Stall setup and tear down

### **G. Penalties for Noncompliance with Market Rules**

These should be clearly outlined prior to the market season and distributed to every market vendor

1. Under what conditions a vendor would permanently lose the privilege to sell
2. Under what conditions a vendor would temporarily lose the privilege to sell
3. When, if ever, a vendor would be assessed a fine

### **H. Management - Market Manager as Final Judge**

The farmers' market should have a Board of Directors to provide overall direction and policy. The Board should be composed of producers, consumers, government officials, community leaders, agribusiness managers, and other individuals who can lend support and skill to managing the market. The broader the community involvement on the Board the greater the chances for success.

The Board of Directors should:

- Establish policy concerning hours, days, and months of market operation
- Determine who may sell at the market
- Set fees for selling in the market
- Select employees
- Designate individuals who may act for the Board in an emergency
- Specify the responsibilities of the manager plus the extent of the manager's authority

Only a part-time manager may be needed because the market may not operate every day. Due to funding limitations, the manager may have to be chosen from among the regular market sellers, be a retired person offering services free or at a low cost or be a government official to whom market management responsibilities are added above other assigned duties.

An **on-site manager** is needed to:

- Exercise supervisory control
- Collect seller fees
- Open and close the market grounds
- Maintain order and cleanliness
- Record names and addresses of sellers

Provide pricing and merchandising help to sellers

1. In order to maintain a smooth running farmers' market, the market manager needs to be given the authority to interpret, when necessary, and enforce the market rules
2. If the market manager does not consistently reflect the intent of the rules or the steering committee, two options exist:
  - a. Further clarification and official adoption of revised rules
  - b. Discipline or replace the market manager

### **I. Pricing**

Buyers patronize farmers' markets not only for high quality but also for economy. Quality is more often cited as the reason for shopping at the farmers' market than favorable prices. Since there are no middlemen to pay, selling below retail can generate profits to the grower. Sometimes quality and demand justify pricing at or even above retail.

Sellers should be especially careful not to engage in price wars with each other or consumers will expect it and wait. Establish a fair price and stick with it. *Fairly priced quality produce always sells.*

#### **J. Packaging**

Attractive displays with readable information are great helps in selling.

- Use contrasting colored items to call attention to each offering (examples: red peppers beside zucchini, unhusked corn beside tomatoes, bell peppers beside yellow squash)
- Be sure produce is clean
- Don't display items with defects, such as insect damage or spoilage
- Use large bulk displays if possible
- Offer more than one package size

Be sure containers are attractive and clean. When selling by weight, be sure the package actually contains enough produce to meet the weight specified. Weight does not include the container.

#### **K. Building A Clientele of Shoppers and Sellers**

The best way to succeed in a farmers' market is to develop repeat customers who return time after time. When the seller sells regularly, and comes each day or on the same day each week, customers learn to associate the seller with quality and concern and so patronize that seller repeatedly.

Success is not selling out quickly, but rather having enough produce to permit steady selling all day (hours of operation). Much is lost by sellers who lose patience and leave the market quickly. Recipes, free samples, proper handling guidelines, storage suggestions, and utilization procedures all show that the seller cares about the customer.

#### **L. Customers**

A careful study of potential customers will help in planning a market for their greatest convenience. Some markets are not patronized by many potential customers because: the hours of operation are too early or hours of market operation coincide with working hours.

*If the market is to be used profitably and efficiently, community leaders, policy-makers, and producer-marketers must work together in establishing and operating the community farmers' market.*

#### **M. Miscellaneous**

1. No firearms
2. No alcoholic beverages or drugs
3. Specify unloading areas when market is not set up to accommodate vehicles

## **Part VII: State and Local Regulations**

## **Part VIII: Market Manager**

The market manager is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farmers' market. The role of the market manager may vary from handling the basic operation of a market to developing the market and coordinating special activities and to handling any conflicts that may develop.

### **A. Qualifications of the market manager**

1. Good communication skills and relates well with others
2. Good organizational skills, responsible, and capable of carrying out a variety of duties at the same time
3. Good leadership skills and the ability to guide and maintain the stability of the market
4. Is willing to accept the market manager position as their sole responsibility
5. Is advisable that the market manager not be a vendor, so all time can be entirely devoted to the direction and supervision of the market
6. Has a thorough understanding of the regulations and ordinances governing the farmers' market and the effect those rules have on the operation of the market
7. Good decision maker, with the ability to make quick, accurate decisions and stand by them
8. Reliable, punctual

### **B. Responsibilities of the market manager**

1. Acts as the administrator of the market, exercising general supervision over the market and its activities. Keeps the operation of the farmers' market running smoothly and effectively
2. Interprets market rules and regulations. Makes necessary judgments and decisions if questions or concerns arise
3. Enforces all farmers' market rules, regulations, ordinances and codes
  - a. Monitors activities within the market
  - b. Ensures all market happenings comply with stated guidelines
  - c. Takes disciplinary action when necessary
4. Mediator
  - a. Settles disputes in the market
  - b. Deals with complaints
  - c. Accepts suggestions
  - d. Works to achieve equitable and fair decisions
5. Communication and information link between all facets of the market development and operation. Keeps vendors aware of market policies, activities and promotions, liaison between market and other businesses and organizations. Responds to all consumer inquiries and complaints
6. Responsible for handling market fees
  - a. Collects stall fees from vendors
    - i. Seasonal fees. A vendor pays a set rate to reserve a specific stall for the duration of the farmers' market season
    - ii. Daily fees. A vendor pays a set fee each time the farmers' market is utilized. Stalls are generally assigned on a first-come/first-served basis
  - b. Collects fees from fines, i.e., Vendor is fined for not cleaning up his stall at the close of the market day
7. Assigns stalls to vendors
  - a. Vendors who purchase seasonal stalls receive top consideration when making assignments
  - b. Vendors purchasing stalls on a day-to-day basis receive consideration on a first-come/first-served basis
  - c. If a vendor with a seasonally reserved stall has not arrived within a set time of the market opening, without prior notification to the market manager, that stall may be reassigned by the market manager for that market day

8. Serves as quality control person for the market. All products must comply with the food guidelines developed for the market. Only top quality products should be sold through the farmers' market
9. Works with grower group or representative(s) to encourage an adequate quantity and a broad variety of products each market day. The market manager provides information as to which products are in high demand and/or in low supply
10. Ensures that all required forms dealing with the operation of the farmers' market are properly filled out and filed. These include vendor registration forms, fee receipts, daily market reports and "market assurance" forms in participating in the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.
11. Arranges for someone to be responsible for the market during any absences, and gives vendors prior notice
12. Maintains a clean and attractive market at all times. Ensures that the market area is properly cleaned up at the end of the day. Enforces penalties on vendors who do not leave their stall area clean
13. Develops and prepares emergency plans. As leader of the farmers' market, the market manager should always be prepared for emergencies. It is advisable that she/he have quick access to a first-aid kit and a fire extinguisher. Knowledge of first aid and CPR is beneficial
14. Develops and maintains a consumer information booth at the farmers' market
  - a. Tracks local food store prices and displays information on price board. Displaying prices enables consumers to compare costs and heightens awareness regarding product quality and freshness in relation to price
  - b. Displays point of purchase information
    - i. Supplies nutritional information of specific products
    - ii. Offers recipes, preparation, and storage ideas
    - iii. Provides food samples, allowing the consumer to see and taste a product
  - c. Uses a sign-in guest book, asking for consumer name and address
    - i. Consumer numbers can be determined to evaluate success of promotions
    - ii. Provides information for estimating the range consumers travel to attend the market
    - iii. Offers an opportunity for consumers to give positive or negative comments concerning the market
    - iv. Used to inform customers of any market news

## Part IX: Promotions, Advertising and Publicity

### A. Promotions

1. Promotions are a way to attract attention to your market and involve community members, the media, and consumers in the market. Promotional activities are important for maintaining consumer traffic throughout the market season... used early in the season to draw consumers to the market and during the season to maintain customer traffic levels during slow periods.
2. Promotions activities should be well advertised and aimed at drawing general public interest and stimulating involvement.

### EVENTS AT FARMERS' MARKETS

Events at your farmers' market attract and involve community members, the media, vendors, consumers and new market shoppers.

Events are an opportunity to take your market to a new level of operation. Events held at farmers' markets:

- Enhance the ambience of the market-place;
- Attract new shoppers;
- Increase sales for vendors;
- Create an enjoyable shopping and selling experience, and;
- Strengthen the market's position as a cultural, community and economic entity within the community.

Two questions to ask before you host an event are:

What do we want to accomplish with the event?

Who is it aimed at?

(Who is also called "Target Group", e.g. children, older citizens, general shoppers, new shoppers, ethnic groups, etc.)

Events can be hosted by the market itself, by an outside group, or co-sponsored by the market and the outside group.

Market-hosted events are organized, executed and paid for by the market.

With an outside group hosting, the manager is the coordinator of the event. The manager oversees and facilitates the arrangements rather than organizing, executing and paying for the event.

Co-sponsored events create a partnership between the market and the outside group. Organization, execution and expenses are shared by or between the two entities.

Two types of events held at a Farmers' Market are:

- Produce Focused
- Non-Produce Focused

Produce Focused events showcase produce. Events centered on produce could be:

- sampling of a product (i.e., sweet corn—sweet corn feed);
- a taste comparison (i.e. several melon varieties to sample);
- a variety of produce/products (i.e. a salad bowl sampling or a market basket giveaway);
- educational (i.e. cooking demonstration or recipe distribution);
- introduction of a new product/variety (i.e. apple variety)

Examples:

An event done by the market could be the market basket giveaway drawing. Or if you have an abundance of a certain product at your market, have a taste sampling.

An event done by an outside group could be a local chef, an Extension Office food specialist, a hospital dietician or nutritionist demonstrating a recipe that is prepared with produce from various vendor stands, and giving out recipes and nutritional information.

Non-produce events are all other types of events.

Examples:

An outside group hosting an event is having your local library come to promote reading, sign people up for library cards, hold a story telling time for children. Or maybe your local fire or police department coming and displaying their equipment, passing out fire prevention materials, etc.

The market hosting a non-produce event would be an Ice Cream Social or Customer Appreciation Day.

#### Suggested Steps for Undertaking Events

Recruit volunteers to be on you “Events Committee”.

Put together a list of all the ideas for events.

Start out small and relatively simple.

Select the events that are the most “do-able” for the year.

Map out a calendar of the events. If you’ve never held events, one a month would be manageable or maybe just two or three for the season. (Some markets that are experienced in staging events have one almost every week of market.)

Develop a “To Do” list or a “time line” for each event. This “check list” is invaluable for keeping track of what, when, where and who is responsible for all the items that will need to be undertaken to hold the event.

Consult and inform your vendors about the events – you need their cooperation and participation to make the event a success.

Announce the event at least two weeks in advance. Plan to increase media coverage for the event. Send press releases to your newspaper, or buy an ad. Put up signs at your market about the upcoming event or pass out flyers to shoppers.

Take photos during the event.

After the event, send a press release or article and a photo of your event to your local media. Be sure to give recognition to any vendors or organizations or businesses that may have been a contributor.

After the event – measure the effectiveness of your event.

Some examples of questions you will want to answer are:

Did we achieve our goals?

Did we reach our target audience?

What were the strong points – what were the weak points?

Get feedback. Ask your vendors their view of the event. To ask shoppers, you could easily put together a short questionnaire they could answer at the market.

Keep an event notebook. This is as easy as using a three-ring binder with dividers. For each event, put all the pertinent information (the name of the event, purpose of the event, who was involved, equipment, copies of paid ads, posters, flyers, photos, expenses, etc.) in one divided section.

Each divided section of the notebook creates a chronological reference when, at the end of the season, you go back and evaluate the market season and the events you hosted. This information will help you decide if you repeat the event and build on it, or scrap it and try a different event next year. It also provides a history for future “events committee” volunteers.

Where do I find outside groups to hold events or co-sponsor an event at the market?

Look to your community. You want your market to serve as many different populations in your community as it can. Look for businesses or community groups you can network/partner with.

Example: The High School Band needed to raise money for new uniforms and a competition band trip. One of the market vendors had a son in the band. He suggested to the market manager that the Band and Band Boosters come to the market and let them hold a bake sale to raise money.

The result was a success all the way around:

- The band boosters raised money with their bake sale;
- The band provided music several times during the market;
- The vendors and the shoppers enjoyed the music;
- The band members, some of whom had never been to the market, made purchases;
- Band members’ parents came to see the band perform and shopped;
- The local newspaper covered the event and it made the front page of the weekly edition.

Basically – this event was very easy to do for the manager. Two or three phone calls between the market manager and the Band Boosters contact; the market manager did a press release to the local paper; put an upcoming announcement at the market two and one week(s) ahead of the bake sale/performance; provided a space for the Boosters to set up and sell their baked goods; coordinated the allocation of space and playing time for the band, and that was that.

This event enhanced the ambiance of the market, attracted new shoppers, increased sales for vendors, created an enjoyable experience for both shoppers and vendors, and strengthened the market’s position as a cultural and economic entity within the community.

Organizations to contact for events at your market.

Along with the following list of suggested groups (which is just a “short” list), keep your eyes and ears open for suggestions!

Grade School, Middle School and High School Bands  
Band Booster Clubs  
Drama/Mime Groups  
Jr. College/College bands  
Local musicians, musical groups  
Disc jockeys  
Art groups/local art councils  
Cub Scouts  
Girl Scouts  
Boy Scouts  
Eagle Scouts  
Camp Fire Girl & Boys  
Horizon Club  
Big Brother/Big Sister  
YMCA/YWCA  
Tae Kwondo Groups/Martial Arts Academy  
Local Sports groups (Little League, Soccer, Football, T-ball, etc.)

Dance & Gymnastics groups  
Master Gardeners  
Men’s Garden Club  
Women’s Garden Club  
Quilting Group – display/demonstration  
Weavers Guild  
Pork Producers  
Egg Producers  
Turkey Federation  
Beef Producers  
Corn Producers  
Soy Bean Producers  
Fruit & Vegetable Growers Assn.  
Dairy Council  
Department of Natural Resources  
County Conversation Board  
Farm Service Agency  
Animal Rescue League, or City Pound, County Animal Shelter

Zoo  
 Ducks Unlimited  
 County Extension Office  
 FFA, 4H  
 American Heart Association  
 American Cancer Society  
 American Lung Association  
 American Dental Association  
 Hospital – (Nutrition or Dietary Dept.)  
 American Ophthalmology Assoc.  
 American Podiatry Assoc.  
 Medical School or Local Clinic  
 Fire Department  
 Police Department  
 Schools  
 Church groups, choirs  
 Chefs/Restaurants  
 Radio/TV stations  
 Armed Forces (Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, ROTC, Jr. ROTC)  
 Veterans Groups  
 Community Economic Development groups  
 Chamber of Commerce  
 Resource, Conversation and Development (RC&D)  
 County Extension Office  
 Kiwanis  
 Rotary  
 Lions Club  
 Alabama Farmers Federation  
 Community Church and/or Church Coalition  
 City or a Department within the City

Celebrate Opening Day, Middle of the Season Day, Last Market Day, etc.  
 Celebrate a Vegetable or Fruit Day (e.g. Broccoli Day, Strawberry Day, etc.)  
 Market Birthday/Anniversary – host a birthday/anniversary party for your market  
 Cooking Demonstrations  
 Arts & Crafts Day – Christmas in July  
 Essays/Photo/Drawn Pictures – tie in with any type of promotion  
 Recycling Collection Point  
 Eyeglass Collection Site for the Lions Clubs  
 Food Drive  
 Clothing Drive  
 Kid’s parade  
 Unusual/ugly vegetable contest  
 Coupon “cents off” for a particular featured vegetable at that day’s market  
 Market Bucks  
 Market Basket giveaway  
 Produce tasting  
 Scrambled Egg Breakfast – afternoon market  
 cookies/coffee  
 Chili Breakfast  
 Spaghetti Breakfast  
 Popcorn giveaway  
 Agi-sculpture, Play With Your Food – art forms made from vegetables/fruits  
 Children’s Produce Tractor Pull  
 Hands On Art Affair/play & craft time for children  
 Collection for a Mission or homeless shelter  
 Cucumber/Zucchini races  
 Family Picnic Day – July  
 Free plant giveaway  
 Cooking demonstration  
 Ice Cream Social  
 Contests: pie eating, seed spitting  
 Bicycle Safety Day, Bicycle Rodeo  
 Pep rally for football game  
 End or beginning site of an organized 5K, 10K race or fun-walk

What kind of events can I host at the market?

Whatever your imagination can come up with. The following is a very limited list of event suggestions. How you make them into your own event is up to your creativity!

Ideas for events to hold at a market:

Signs, Signs, Signs Signs!

Whatever you choose to do – don’t forget your signage!

Signage is very important and cannot be stressed enough. Always inform the shoppers/public about the promotion you are holding!

Signs are silent salesmen. They have a job to do. If you fail to let the shoppers know what you are doing – you’ve lost the chance to inform, educate and promote.

Notify shoppers/public of an upcoming event a couple of weeks and the week before the event so you have good attendance.

Identify what you are doing – No matter what you are doing – if it’s sampling, a sign-up giveaway, demonstration, etc. the signage lets them know what is going on.

Example: You are having an Ice Cream Social and free ice cream – Identify it! Put up a big sign that says ICE CREAM SOCIAL – FREE ICE CREAM. Be sure and acknowledge the entity that donated or paid for the ice cream.

Let the Shopper know if it’s free or if there’s a cost:  
(Some shoppers may be too shy to ask for a sample or may not want to pay for a sample)

Be sure if it’s free, to say FREE.  
If you are charging – put a sign up with the price. Caution – if you designate a specific price, you may have to charge sales tax. Therefore, you may need a sales tax permit.

However, if you’ve incurred some expenses for your FREE promotion (such as paper plates, napkins, etc.) and need to recoup some of that expense, you could put out a jar with a sign that says “donations appreciated”. No sales tax permit is required.

### **Conclusion**

While all farmers’ markets share the purpose of providing producers/growers a direct to the consumer sales venue, remember, every farmers’ market is unique. An event held at one market may not be feasible in its entirety at another. However, there may be one single idea that is gleaned from another market’s event that you could incorporate into your market

If you have the opportunity, visit other farmers’ markets and see their event(s) up close. Talk to that market manager regarding specifics. Attend market managers’ workshops and conferences and get good information from managers who are experienced in hosting events.

Try different events at your market until you find the mix that feels right for you, your vendors and your customers. Events held at farmers’ markets enhance the ambience of the market-place, attract new shoppers and vendors, and strengthens the market’s position as a cultural and economic entity within the community.

### **National Days/Weeks/Months Observances during a Market Season**

The following pages are lists of nationally declared days, weeks or months celebrated during the months of a typical market season (May-October). Any of these could be an event/celebration at your market. Make your market THE place in your community for informative activities and events during the market season.

Information taken from *Chase’s Calendar of Events 2005* (an annual publication, you can check your local library reference desk) *updated for 2006 (2006 edition not available at printing time of this article)*; also see [www.butlerwebs.com/holidays](http://www.butlerwebs.com/holidays)

Examples – You’ve selected National Healthy Vision Month (May) as an event. Contact your local Lions Club and ask them to come to the market and provide a collection box for used eyeglasses – and allow them to promote their organization. Be sure to put out press releases – also do signage at your market prior to the event to remind people to bring their unused eyeglasses. May 25 is National Tap Dance Day – get a local dance studio to come and perform!

#### MAY NATIONAL DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE

National Beef Month  
National Barbecue Month

National Egg Month  
National Hamburger Month

National Clean Air Month  
 National Bike Month  
 National Strawberry Month  
 National Salad Month  
 National Asparagus Month  
 National Bike Month  
 National Book Month  
 Eat Dessert First Month  
 National Salsa Month  
 National Tennis Month  
 National Military Appreciation Month  
 National Historic Preservation Month

National Older Americans Month  
 National Physical Fitness & Sports Month  
 Mother's Day (8<sup>th</sup>)  
 Armed Forces Day (21<sup>st</sup>)  
 National Tap Dance Day (25<sup>th</sup>)  
 Memorial Day (30<sup>th</sup>)  
 National Police Week (15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>)  
 National Tourism Week (7<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>)  
 National Safe Boating Week (21<sup>st</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>)  
 National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) week (18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>)

*(May is filled with health awareness campaigns. These are just a few. You might think about having a health fair or health information table at your market).*

National Osteoporosis Prevention Month  
 Better Sleep Month  
 National Mental Health Month  
 National Allergy/Asthma Awareness Month  
 National Women's Health Care Month

National Arthritis Month  
 National Correct Posture Month  
 Healthy Vision Month  
 Better Hearing & Speech Month

**PRODUCE TYPICALLY AVAILABLE AT MARKETS – Create a promotion around these:**

**EARLY-MID MAY**

Bell Pepper  
 Blueberries  
 Cabbage  
 Cucumbers  
 Eggplant  
 Greens  
 Peaches  
 Peas  
 Potatoes  
 Snap beans  
 Squash  
 Tomatoes

**MID-LATE MAY**

Bell Pepper  
 Blueberries  
 Cabbage  
 Cucumbers  
 Eggplant  
 Greens  
 Peaches  
 Peas  
 Potatoes  
 Snap beans  
 Squash  
 Tomatoes

**JUNE NATIONAL DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE**

National Dairy Month  
 National Safety Month  
 National Turkey Lover's Month  
 National Perennial Gardening Month  
 National Zoo & Aquarium Month  
 National Fresh Fruits & Vegetables Month  
 National Accordion Awareness Month  
 National Rose Month

National Adopt a Shelter Cat  
 National Rivers Month  
 Summer Solstice (21<sup>st</sup>)  
 Flag Day (14<sup>th</sup>)  
 Father's Day (15<sup>th</sup>)  
 National Yoyo Day (10<sup>th</sup>)  
 National Little League Baseball Week (13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>)

**PRODUCE TYPICALLY AVAILABLE AT MARKETS – Create a promotion around these:**

**EARLY – MID JUNE**

Bell Peppers

**MID – LATE JUNE**

Bell Peppers

Blueberries  
Cabbage  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Greens  
Onions (Green)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Snap Beans  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

Blueberries  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (Green)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Snap Beans  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

JULY NATIONAL DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE

Anti-Boredom Month  
National Ice Cream Month  
National Baked Bean Month  
National Hot Dog Month  
National Picnic Month  
National Recreation & Parks Month

National Culinary Arts Month  
Independence Day (4<sup>th</sup>)  
National Farrier's Week (13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>)  
Air Conditioning Appreciation days (July 2<sup>nd</sup> - August 31<sup>st</sup>)

PRODUCE TYPICALLY AVAILABLE AT MARKETS – Create a promotion around these:

EARLY – MID JULY

Bell Peppers  
Blueberries  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (Green)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

MID-LATE JULY

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Blueberries  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (Green)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

AUGUST

NATIONAL DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTICE

National Farmers' Market Week (7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>)  
National Inventor's Month  
National Back to School Month  
National Peach Month  
National Immunization Awareness Month  
National Smile Day (1<sup>st</sup> Monday in Aug.)

National Mustard Day (6<sup>th</sup>)  
National Sisters Day (7<sup>th</sup>)  
Herbert Hoover Day (Sunday nearest Aug 10<sup>th</sup>)  
National Clown Week (1<sup>st</sup> week in Aug)  
National Simplify Your Life Week (5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>)

PRODUCE TYPICALLY AVAILABLE AT MARKETS – Create a promotion around these:

EARLY – MID AUGUST

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Blueberries  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (dry)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

MID – LATE AUGUST

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (dry)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon  
Winter Squash

SEPTEMBER

NATIONAL DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE

National Piano Month  
National Library Card Sign-Up Month  
National Chicken Month  
National Honey Month  
National 5-A-Day Month  
National Cholesterol Month  
National Potato Month  
National Rice Month  
National Organic Harvest Month  
National Sewing Month  
Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month  
National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>-  
Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>)  
Deaf Awareness Week (18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>)  
National Farm & Ranch Safety & Health Week  
(18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>)  
Labor Day (5<sup>th</sup>)  
National Grandparent Day (11<sup>th</sup>)  
First Day of Autumn (22<sup>nd</sup>)  
Talk Like a Pirate Day (19<sup>th</sup>)

PRODUCE TYPICALLY AVAILABLE AT MARKETS – Create a promotion around these:

EARLY – MID SEPTEMBER

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe

MID – LATE SEPTEMBER

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe

Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (Dry)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Turnips  
Watermelon  
Winter Squash

Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (Dry)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Pumpkins  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Turnips  
Watermelon  
Winter Squash

OCTOBER

NATIONAL DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE

|   |  |
|---|--|
| National Pork Month   | National Stamp Collecting Month                    |
| National Apple Month  | National Crime Prevention Month                    |
| National Fire Prevention Month  | National Chili Month                               |
| National Breast Cancer Awareness Month  | National White Cane Safety Day (15 <sup>th</sup> ) |
| National Adopt a Shelter Dog Month  | National Children's Day (9 <sup>th</sup> )         |
| National Dental Hygiene Month   | World Smile Day (7 <sup>th</sup> )                 |
| National Popcorn Month  | Columbus Day (14 <sup>th</sup> )                   |
| National Cookie Month   | National Grouch Day (15 <sup>th</sup> )            |
| National Roller Skating Month   | World Food Day (United Nations 16 <sup>th</sup> )  |
| National Eat Better – Eat Together Month  | United Nations Day (24 <sup>th</sup> )             |
| National Lupus Awareness Month  | Make a Difference Day (22 <sup>nd</sup> )          |
| National Animal Safety & Protection Month   | Halloween (31 <sup>st</sup> )                      |
| October 16 <sup>th</sup> -22 <sup>nd</sup> : National Chemistry Week, National Forest Products Week, National Massage Therapy Week, National School Bus Safety Week |  |

PRODUCE TYPICALLY AVAILABLE AT MARKETS – Create a promotion around these:

EARLY – MID OCTOBER

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Cabbage  
Cucumbers  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (Dry)  
Peas  
Pecans  
Pumpkins  
Rutabaga  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Turnips  
Winter Squash

MID – LATE OCTOBER

Bell Peppers  
Cabbage  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Peas  
Pecans  
Pumpkins  
Rutabaga  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Turnips  
Winter Squash

## **B. Advertising**

1. Maintain a consistency in advertising presentation (i.e., lettering style, market name, and graphic illustrations). Consumers will become familiar with and develop an association between the advertisement and the market. The “look” of your advertising can also help develop an “image” for your market. A similar style of presentation can be used on the following to act as a means of advertising:
  - a. Signs/posters/flyers
  - b. Banners
  - c. T-shirts
  - d. Aprons
  - e. Hats
  - f. Buttons
  - g. Bags
  - h. Headings for news releases, public service announcements, and newspaper ads
2. Consumer benefits should be used in advertising campaigns
  - a. Produce freshness and quality
  - b. Product variety... highlighting the unusual
  - c. Farmers’ market social atmosphere, community activity
  - d. Shopping at the farmers’ market keeps dollars in the local economy
  - e. Comments on pricing should not be included
3. Target initiation of advertising so as to gain sufficient attention and coverage prior to when impact is desired
4. Permanent or semi-permanent signs/posters/flyers
  - a. Effectiveness is dependent on the following:
    - i. Appearance
    - ii. Content
    - iii. Visibility
    - iv. Location
  - b. Placement should be in strategic locations where it is visible from the greatest distance and where it will attract the consumers’ eyes
  - c. Location of the farmers’ market should be clearly indicated, regardless if it is located on-site or off-site
  - d. Being able to read a sign at a distance depends on the colors and the size of the letter utilized. Selected colors should attract the eye and be easy to read
  - e. Art work should be professional and clearly lettered so it is easy to read
  - f. The costs and time involved with the distribution of circulars and flyers needs to be considered. Major advantages of these advertising tools are:
    - i. They can be posted where a large number of people gather
    - ii. Individually distributed so they can be kept by the consumer as a reference
  - g. Newspaper advertising
    - i. Classified ads
      - a) Located in the midst of a whole page of other like ads; little distinguishing characteristics for quickly drawing the reader’s eye
      - b) Advertising fees are generally calculated on a per word basis
    - ii. Display ads
      - a) Attracts the reader’s eye by using larger, stylized letters and/or graphics
      - b) The advertising fee schedule is based on measured dimensions, either calculated in column inches or page portions
      - c) Costs are typically higher than with classified ads
  - h. Radio & TV
    - i. Promotional tie-ins (live remotes, contest)
    - ii. Sponsorships
    - iii. Give-aways

## **C. Publicity/Media Coverage**

1. Special market promotional activities can be covered, or human interest stories can be developed about market participants
2. The media sources beneficial to a market varies from community to community. Possibilities include:
  - a. Newspaper
  - b. Area shopper
  - c. Radio
  - d. Television
  - e. Local cable company's news channel
3. Make contacts with those who produce or host local talk show programs and suggest a farmers' market program
4. News releases
  - a. Contact newspapers and get a background on the kind and degree of coverage they would offer, and what angle they would use (food section or farm section)
  - b. Information should be presented in a concise and to-the-point manner
  - c. At the top of the page, first type the date, followed by the centered heading "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE", then the heading "SUBJECT" with a statement explaining the subject of this release; and then type the heading "FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT"; type the name, address, and phone number of your organization's contact person
  - d. The lead sentence should contain the main point of the story. It answers the questions: Who? What? When? Where? And Why?
  - e. The subsequent body of the news release builds on the central facts, supporting and expanding them
  - f. The release should be typed, double-spaced, and have at least a one-inch margin on both sides of the page
  - g. News releases should be sent to newspapers, radio, and television stations at least one week before it is to appear
5. Public Service Announcements (PSA)
  - a. The Federal Communications Commission requires all radio and television stations to provide a designated amount of air time for public service announcements
  - b. A PSA is basically prepared in the same manner as a news release, except:
    - i. The subject matter or special activity should be presented before giving information on the contact person
    - ii. The amount of time it takes to read the announcement aloud needs to be noted
  - c. Radio stations generally prefer PSAs to be 10, 15, or 30 seconds in length. Television stations generally do not use anything but 10- or 30-second spots
  - d. Contact the station's community affairs/public service director to find out exactly what format the station requires
6. Public relations
  - a. Membership in other groups
  - b. Community involvement

## Part X: Market Management Records

Good record keeping gives the market manager, the sponsor, the steering committee, and growers an idea of where the market has been, where it is, and an indicator of where it is going with respect to the goals.

### A. Records should include, but not be limited to:

1. Copy of the market rules and regulations
2. Copy of city/county/private permission to use site for market
3. Copy of lease or purchase of land site
4. Copy of certificate of insurance
5. Copy of market layout, design, stalls, etc.
6. Minutes of Farmers' Market Committee meetings
7. All correspondence
8. Copies of newspaper ads, flyers, publicity, etc.
9. Resources/contact lists. Use for a quick reference to obtain information on all subjects of interest to the farmers' market, such as advertising, health and sanitary regulations, insurance, etc.
10. Vendor registration forms
  - a. Individual grower/artisan information
    - i. Name
    - ii. Address
    - iii. Phone number
    - iv. Stall information
      - a) Stall assignment
      - b) Payment structure (season or daily)
      - c) Payment record – serves as a receipt
      - d) Attendance record – tracks participation
    - v. Product information: type(s) of product/produce sold, point-of-origin statement, herbicide/organics statement, etc.
    - vi. Insurance verification
    - vii. Agreement of compliance (market agreement). This statement says the grower or seller is aware of the market's rules and regulations and agrees to abide by them.
    - viii. Sales tax permit (if applicable)
  - b. Mailing lists of participating growers/vendors
11. Sales data and market day stats
  - a. Gross sales in dollar volume
  - b. Types of product sold
  - c. Prices
  - d. Quantities
  - e. Best-selling items
  - f. Inadequate supplies of certain products

### B. Tracking Information

Recording information on a daily basis will provide data to evaluate the effectiveness and success of the farmers' market. Through continual evaluation, market strategies can be adjusted to meet needs.

1. Track consumers. Determine the consumer profile. Knowing the consumer group will help the market determine effective marketing strategies
  - a. Observe the shopper population or an on-site survey
    - i. Older adult/middle age adult/young adult/children – Percentage of age groups represented at a market
    - ii. When do particular groups come to market -- This allows planning of events and what type of events to be held
    - iii. What groups are lacking so efforts can be made to get that group to market
  - b. Buying averages -- How much does the average consumer purchase per visit

- c. Product popularity -- What products do the consumers look for and track purchases
  - d. Buying preferences -- Do consumers buy for immediate consumption or bulk for canning/freezing
2. Track vendors
- a. Names of vendors
  - b. Frequency of each vendor's participation in the market
  - c. Types of products each vendor sells
  - d. Individual gross sales per market day
  - e. Donations for special promotional and/or tasting events
  - f. WIC and/or Senior certified
  - g. Food Stamp certified
3. Track promotions
- a. Determine degree of participation and who participated
  - b. Record what made the promotion effective or ineffective, i.e., thorough advertising, weather conditions, lack of participation, or lack of interest
  - c. Positive results of the promotion or activity
  - d. Proposed changes to make the promotion more effective (i.e., problems that arose, other groups to include, etc.)
  - e. Weather and its effect on the market's success. Weather conditions should always be included when recording information. The success or failure of a special event or promotion may be directly related to the day's weather rather than the event

## **Part XI: The Vendor Group**

### **A. Recruitment of vendors to participate in the farmers' market**

1. Who is responsible? EVERYONE!
  - a. The market steering committee has the primary responsibility to recruit vendors for the market
  - b. Individual vendors should try to encourage other to participate. Though this might be seen as increasing competition, generally any increase in vendors participating in a market will increase the numbers of customers patronizing the market
  - c. Supporting groups should also be a source for recruiting vendors
2. How to recruit
  - a. Contact those who are currently growing and selling through other outlets
  - b. Contact market participants in nearby towns. Many vendors are often interested in participating at markets in various locations
  - c. Through posters and by using all media sources, announce vendors are needed and give phone number/address of individual to contact
3. When to recruit
  - a. For a new market, it is imperative to begin early. Many winter farm meetings are planned during the previous summer and early fall. Contact sponsors of such meetings and request time at their meetings to recruit. Be sure to set a date for the vendors to meet
  - b. For an existing market, use not only the method explained above but also devise a method to solicit vendors during the market season. It is not unusual for a prospective vendor to check out the market prior to actually participating. Provide a way for interested vendors to obtain information at the market site. Temporary vendors can be converted into permanent ones.

### **B. Expectations of the market and vendors**

1. What vendors expect of the market
  - a. Vendors expect the market's managing organization to provide a buying crowd
  - b. Vendors generally expect the market entity to advertise, promote and operate the market on funds derived from stall fees
  - c. Vendors generally regard a market failure as a problem cause by the organizing committee, even when they have not offered input
2. What the market expects of vendors
  - a. Markets expect vendors to abide by the market rules and vending agreements that the vendor signs to participate in the market
  - b. Markets expect vendors to participate in promotions and events that enhance and improve the market for the benefit of all
3. Impact vendors should have
  - a. The vendors should be represented on the market steering committee. It is not a rule that the vendors operate the market. In fact, most markets are not run by the vendors
  - b. The vendor's representation on the steering committee should be selected by the vendors and act on behalf of the majority
  - c. Any complaints or suggestions should be carried by the vendors' representative to the market steering committee meetings. Only complaints which are of importance to the total group should be brought before the steering committee. The vendors' representative should not enter personal concerns without making sure such concerns are in the majority interest
  - d. Vendors could have major impact on market promotions, either through product donations or through monetary contributions. Expecting stall fees to cover all market costs is generally unrealistic
  - e. Off-season fund-raising activities could be one of the primary roles of the vendor group. Remember, during the selling season the vendor is usually too busy to work on

fundraising and promotion activities. Therefore, market season activities usually fall on other members of the market steering committee

### C. Seminars and vendors meetings

The object is to provide valuable information for improving the market or improving the sales skills of the individual vendor

1. Merchandising strategies... there are always new ways to merchandise products. Therefore, a merchandising seminar should be held each year
  - a. Product displays are very important to the success of sales
    - i. At a farmers' market, displaying products out of the sun, incorporating the use of ice to retain freshness, providing exceptional quality or displaying the products in appropriate containers can greatly enhance the sales potential
    - ii. When possible, provide added services to the customers. A free sample can break down the buyer's resistance to purchase
  - b. When possible, provide added services to the customers. Providing new preparations hints, care instructions, or appropriate containers for carrying the product home can greatly improve customer relations
  - c. Vendor image is a contributing factor to repeat sales
    - i. Smoking, an unkempt appearance, dirty clothes, foul language, etc. are all negative images in the customer's mind
    - ii. Thoughtful expression of appreciation is a valuable advertising technique. A simple thank you or a genuine smile can make the difference in a customer sharing their satisfaction with a friend
  - d. It will be of great advantage to label the product by variety. Many customers will gain confidence in a particular variety and come back to you. Labeling will also cut down on variety questions by customers
  - e. Displaying prices
    - i. Pricing the product will cut down on questions and enable the vendor to service more customer
    - ii. Pricing strategies are very important and should be given great consideration. Caution should be exercised in negotiating prices or changing prices to reduce volume, for both can have adverse effects on continual sales.
    - iii. As vendors become more informed on pricing strategies, pricing problems between vendors should be reduced
    - iv. Vendors should always display their name and address. This acts as a silent signature that boosts a customer's confidence in the product
2. Pricing
  - a. Pricing is based on total costs of production, transportation and marketing
    - i. Even though the market may be local, always calculate the cost of transportation and cost to market the crops. Include the wear and tear on equipment and time spent selling.
    - ii. Do not offer product below the cost of production and marketing
  - b. Consider the pricing strategy. This is, selling by the unit or by the weight
    - i. Selling by the unit is the simplest way to insure accuracy. Unit measures include selling by the piece, the dozen, the peck, etc.
    - ii. If scales are used, they must be inspected and certified. The primary units of measure by weight include the ounce and pound. (Please refer to Part VII "State and Local Regulations")
  - c. When it is appropriate to adjust prices
    - i. When the quality of the product is inferior
    - ii. When the volume is large enough to give a discount
    - iii. When a commercial establishment buys on a regular basis and would normally be considered a wholesale customer

- iv. When a repeat customer complains. A complaining customer generally wants to do business with the vendor. If not, they would simply go to another vendor and not both
- d. Price wars should not exist in the farmers' market
  - i. It is imperative to not sell product at a price below the cost of production. This is of no benefit to anyone
  - ii. Often hobby gardeners can offer product at a much reduced rate. Do not get involved in a price battle with a hobby gardener. The commercial grower cannot win such a struggle
  - iii. The more knowledgeable the vendors are of pricing strategies, the less time will be spent on slashing prices
  - iv. Workshops on pricing strategies will help prevent price wars
- e. **Price fixing is illegal, and vendors cannot overtly conspire to set prices.** Once such practices begin, they are hard to stop