



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE &  
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

# **IOWA FARMERS MARKET DEVELOPMENT MANUAL**

Horticulture and  
Farmers Markets Program  
Iowa Department of Agriculture and  
Land Stewardship

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## Introduction

For the consumer, farmers markets provide a wide variety of competitively priced items that include locally-grown, fresh, nutritious produce; home-baked goods and other prepared foods; flowers and plants; eggs; honey; meat and poultry; and handmade crafts. Perhaps just as important, these markets provide the consumer with enjoyable, scheduled social events that gather people from the local urban/rural community. These events can provide a variety of consumer-oriented experiences including “buy local” shopping, opportunities to learn about new food items, food preparation demonstrations, networking with vendors and other shoppers, and experiencing live music and art displays.

For the producer, farmers markets provide an outlet for the sale of farm and garden-grown produce and other goods, and the opportunity to gain production and marketing expertise. Farmers markets offer ready-made occasions for producers to receive feedback from consumers on product quality, selection, and price. Over time, this feedback allows many producers to increase revenue and earn a substantial portion of their annual income from farmers’ market sales. And, like the consumer, the opportunities to experience the local urban/rural community, to network, and to partake in the various market experiences are vital components of “why” a producer participates in farmers markets.

An important third party to farmers markets is the market manager. This individual may be a producer-vendor, a former vendor, or originally an avid market consumer. The market manager typically has a passion for farmers markets and in particular the market they “manage”. A primary goal of the manager is to see the re-creation, week after week, of a market that provides both the attending producers and consumers a pleasing venue for the transfer of fresh, locally-grown produce and other home-produced goods from the farm and garden to the kitchen table.

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; or to expand, enhance, and improve features of an existing market. The 11 parts address specific topics that are vital to establishing and maintaining a vibrant market.

Please contact the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Bureau of Agricultural Diversification at 515-242-6239 if you have questions regarding this manual or farmers markets.

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## 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. Develop promotional activities throughout the season for maintaining customer traffic

- d. Develop strategies for social media outreach and designate subcommittee members to design, implement, and acquire content for new social media accounts; designate members that will serve as stewards of social media outlets/accounts

**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; review of "hits" and sharing of social media platforms
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; review of social media stewardship

## 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. Overview of social media outlets and content
  - g. Benefits the farmers market brings to be community
  - h. Benefits the farmers market brings to the prospective resource
  - i. Needs of the market
  - j. Any hard data acquired (surveys, head counts, social media shares, etc.)
  - k. 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 Farm Bureau	Senior citizen groups
Department of Parks and Recreation	State Dept. of Agriculture/Horticulture
Equipment dealers	University Ag & Extension Departments
Fair boards	Utility companies
Feed and seed stores	Youth organizations

### 7. Other Resources

- The Iowa Farmers Market Association (IFMA) is an all-Iowa group of individuals “dedicated to encouraging the producers and entrepreneurs who make Iowa's terrific farmers markets possible, and to helping people find and enjoy their local farmers market.” IFMA holds an annual workshop on farmers market issues and encourages all interested parties to attend. Members also provide mentoring for new markets and managers. Membership provides greater access to Farmers Market Coalition resources including metric analytics (see below). More information can be found at: <http://www.iafarmersmarkets.org/>.



- The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) is a national group whose mission is to “strengthen farmers markets for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities.” This organization has a wealth of information from in-house as well as links to sources throughout the country. The Coalition’s Market Metrics program facilitates a market’s ability to collect, analyze and share data on their markets to better engage with customers, funders, and the community as a whole. Reduced rates for using these metrics are available to markets that belong to the Iowa Farmers Market Association (see above). More information can be found by visiting <http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/> .
- The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) offers the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) – a grant program designed to facilitate and promote farmers markets and other direct-to-consumer market channels for agricultural products. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis following comprehensive review. Information on this program can be found at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FMPP> . The AMS also offers an online farmers market directory that can be found at: <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/> .
- The federal Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) is a new umbrella program created in the 2018 Farm Bill that partially combines and streamlines two existing, cornerstone local/regional food system programs: the [Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program](#) (FMLFPP) and [Value-Added Producers Grant Program](#) (VAPG). The FMLFPP is competitive grant program that “can help develop and build-out those connections by funding direct-to-consumer marketing strategies. FMLFPP also provides support for local and regional food business enterprises acting as intermediaries between producers and consumers.”
- The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship’s (IDALS) Horticulture and Farmers Market Nutrition Program Units offer information on their website at <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/horticultureandFarmersMarket.asp> . The site includes access to information and online application to the Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Iowa Farmers Market Economic Impact Surveys, Iowa Commercial Food Crops Survey, information of the [FSMA Produce Safety Rule](#), the Iowa Pesticide Sensitive Crops Registry, and links to additional information.
- Iowa State University Extension provides tools and resources dedicated to selling local food and direct to consumer access. Their website located at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/selling-local-food-direct-to-consumer/> includes links to a CSA directory, and Iowa food hub directory, and the Market Maker database: a searchable database of farms and businesses.
- The [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) or NSAC “advocates for federal policy reform for the sustainability of food systems, natural resources, and rural communities.” The NSAC website is good resource for grant programs and information on local food systems.
- IDALS also administers the [Iowa Farm to School Program](#) and an [Organic Certification Program](#).

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## 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. Online fillable survey linked to social media sites and affiliated association websites
6. In person
  - a. Door to door in neighborhood
  - b. Person entering the market
7. Public meetings
  - a. Attendance at meetings on a specific topic
  - b. Input from those attending the meeting

### B. Survey Content

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

### C. [Consumer Surveys](#) (see samples on p. 28-29)

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. Investigate consumers access to use of websites and social media platforms; investigate exposure to other media outlets and their impact
7. Surveys help attract attention and build consumer awareness concerning the market
8. Surveys help obtain data to be utilized in planning the market
9. 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. 30)

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. Types of outreach grower/vendor uses for their business including social media; links to farmers market websites; other media
  - e. 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

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## 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
    - v. The site may have amenities like restrooms and wireless internet access; insurance or portion thereof may be added as a rider to owner's insurance policy
  - 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. However, there may not be time commitment for utilization of such sites.
  - 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
  - d. Consider insurance needs and other amenities (present or not) considered necessary
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               |                                  |

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.

- b. There is no guarantee to the length of time a farmers market may utilize a site if there is no leasing agreement
- c. 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
- d. Again, consider insurance needs in relationship to the site; consider amenities desired that may or may not be present

## **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 provide ease-of-access to growers loading and unloading
4. The farmers market should be easily accessible from the major roadways or thoroughfares
5. The farmers market site should have entrance and exit points, and good internal traffic flow
6. The farmers market should be located on a through street to avoid congestion and permit a flow through of traffic
7. 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 – shade alone from trees can be a bonus to growers and customers
  - 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. Website hosting and development costs
  - b. Art work
  - c. Printing
  - d. Media advertising costs
  - e. Distribution (travel time and expense)
  - f. Other materials
9. Market Manager's salary  
**If possible, 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. The Iowa Farmers Market Association and the Farmers Market Coalition offer ideas and options on insurance.
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 “Iowa Grown” products (see Part VI for definitions)
    - ii. Daily rates for brokers of products imported
    - iii. Seasonal rates for “Local Grown” and “Iowa 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: below are some items that fall under “costs” but could be acquired through donation of time, supplies, and/or dollar contributions
- a. Labor
    - i. Developing and making site improvements
    - ii. Distributing advertising flyers
    - iii. Maintaining any web and social media sites
    - iv. Making phone calls
    - v. Soliciting additional donations and support
    - vi. Preparing advertising
    - vii. 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

## Part VI: Market Rules

### 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

1. All markets should allow all vendors to sell "Iowa Grown" products and to be labeled as such
2. 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 in Lineville, Iowa should be just as fresh as a product grown in Lineville, Missouri)

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.

3. Vendor categories
  - a. "Iowa Grown" products
    - i. Vendor has grown the product in Iowa with the intent of generating income
    - ii. Vendor has obtained product from Iowa growers
    - iii. Vendor has obtained product from a local food hub or "auction house" with a detailed receipt that provides where and by whom (in Iowa) the produce was grown or produced
    - iv. Vendor has grown product in Iowa as a hobby
  - b. "Local Grown" products
    - i. Vendor has grown the product outside of the state of Iowa but within the vicinity of the market (i.e., Lineville, IA and Lineville, MO)
    - ii. Vendor has obtained the product from local growers outside of the state of Iowa but within the vicinity of the market
    - iii. Vendor has grown product as a hobby outside of the state of Iowa but in the vicinity of the market
  - c. "Broker"

Vendor has imported the product from outside of the state of Iowa, and outside the areas of neighboring states which are within a short traveling distance to the market

### 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. A best practice is to have assignment guidelines in writing and made available to vendors. Assignment location can include:
  - a. Location by seasonal vs. daily rates
  - b. Location on a first-come basis
  - c. Whether or not stalls may be sublet

**E. Product**

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. Market Manager as Final Judge**

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 that of the steering committee, two options exist:
  - a. Further clarification and official adoption of revised rules
  - b. Discipline or replace the market manager

**I. Miscellaneous items to consider**

1. Firearms permissible or not
2. Alcoholic beverages permissible or not / no drugs
3. Pets permissible or not (with the exception of seeing eye dogs)
4. Specify vendor unloading/loading areas when market is not set up to accommodate vehicles
5. Any additional accessibility needs for handicapped customers

**J. Additional**

1. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and the Iowa Farmers Market Association both offer copies and examples of market rules from markets that have shared these resources. You can visit <http://www.iafarmersmarkets.org/> or call IDALS at 515-242-6239 for more information.

## Part VII: State and Local Regulations

“Farmers market” means a marketplace which seasonally operates principally as a common market for fresh fruits and vegetables on a retail basis for off-the-premise consumption.” Code of Iowa, Section 137F.1

### A. Food Establishment/Food Processing Plant Licenses

“A vendor who offers a product for sale at a farmers market shall have the sole responsibility to obtain and maintain any license required to sell or distribute the product.” Code of Iowa, Section 137F.8

The following text (the remainder of item “A”) is from a document titled: “**FARMERS MARKETS REQUIREMENTS FROM INSPECTIONS & APPEALS FOOD & CONSUMER SAFETY BUREAU**” and dated February 2018. A link to the document can be found at <https://ia.foodprotectiontaskforce.com/resources1/farmers-market/#tab3> . Please note that requirements can change and it would be prudent to check the Department of Inspections and Appeals Food and Consumer Safety Bureau website at <https://dia.iowa.gov/food-consumer-safety> .

#### **The following products may be sold at a farmers market to consumer customers without being licensed as a food establishment at the market location:**

1. Fresh fruits and vegetables which are whole and uncut
2. Bakery products which are not time or temperature controlled for safety. Examples include: breads, cakes, doughnuts, pastries, buns, rolls, cookies, biscuits, and pies (except meat pies). The following products are examples of bakery products that *are* time and temperature controlled for safety and *may not be sold at farmers market without a license*: soft pies, custard filled products and cream filled products.
3. Fresh Wholesome Shell Eggs
4. Honey (products containing honey would have to be individually evaluated)
5. Non-Time/Temperature controlled for safety food products (non-potentially hazardous foods); that is products that do not require refrigeration, since they are shelf-stable. These products can be prepared in the home, to be sold for consumption off-the-premise. Some examples of products that can be prepared in the home for direct sale to consumer customers include: jams, jellies, candies and dried noodles. (Only jams and jellies that meet the Standard of Identity for jams and jellies specified in 21 CFR Part 150 are exempt from licensing)

#### **The following products may not be sold at a farmers market without appropriate licensing from local, state or federal authorities:**

1. Time/Temperature Controlled for Safety Foods (potentially hazardous food products), which include meat, poultry, dairy products, and cooked foods. This includes all ingredients (including eggs) used in the preparation of these foods, with the exception of honey and whole uncut fruits and vegetables.
2. With the sole exception of jams and jellies meeting the Standard of Identity for jams and jellies specified in 21 CFR Part 150, no “home style” canned goods can be sold at farmers markets, since food in a hermetically sealed container shall be obtained from a licensed food processing plant. (Section 3-201.12 of the Food Code which has been adopted by Section 137F.2 of the Code of Iowa)
3. Wild Morel mushrooms

#### **What type of licenses are available to obtain to sell time or temperature controlled (potentially hazardous) foods at Farmers Market?**

1. Farmer’s Market Food Establishment License.

- a. A separate license is required for each county in which a vendor sells food
  - b. The license is only valid at farmers markets
  - c. If the vendor has operates two or more stands simultaneously, a separate
  - d. license is required for each unit
2. Mobile Food Unit License
  3. Temporary Food Establishment License
  4. Time and Temperature controlled foods not prepared at the Farmers Market must be produced in a licensed facility. A Farmers Market Food Establishment License is also required to sell these foods at the Market.
  5. Canned goods, except jams and jellies, must be from a licensed Food Processing Plant. (Only jams and jellies that meet the Standard of Identity for jams and jellies specified in 21 CFR Part 150 are exempt from licensing)

**What type of mushrooms and fungi can be sold at a Farmers Market and what are the requirements for selling wild mushrooms?**

Growing mushrooms in a controlled environment or space is acceptable. There are no requirements besides the fact that they must be grown and not harvested in the wild (except morel and oyster mushrooms and the requirements that go with them, see below).

**Requirements can change, however: Please contact the Iowa Food and Consumer Safety Bureau prior to sales, call 515-281-7102 for information.**

Mushrooms harvested in the wild may not be sold at a Farmers Market. Exception: only wild morel and oyster mushrooms can be sold at a Farmers Market if all of the following criteria are met;

To legally sell morel mushrooms in Iowa, sellers must complete a certification workshop that covers identifying morels and false morels. People can be poisoned by eating mushrooms that are misidentified. By the end of the certification workshop, participants must be able to recognize true morels from false morels as well as identify wild oyster mushrooms. Certification lasts for three years. Iowans who have not certified for three or more years must recertify prior to selling these wild mushrooms. Workshop registration is open to out-of-state individuals, but keep in mind local certification may be available in your home state.

Iowa State University offers the Morel and Oyster Mushrooms Certification course each spring. Information can be found at <https://www.ipm.iastate.edu/morel-mushroom-certification>

**Labeling Requirements**

[https://dia.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/03/farmers\\_market\\_food\\_requirements\\_1.pdf](https://dia.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018/03/farmers_market_food_requirements_1.pdf)

Per the Iowa Food & Consumer Safety Bureau, all food must be labeled with the common name of the food and the name and address of the person who prepared the food. Allergen information needs to be declared on the label or by the use of a placard. The following food products are considered major allergens: Peanuts, Soybeans (not refined soybean oil), Milk, Eggs, Fish, Crustacean (crab, lobster or shrimp), Tree Nuts (almonds, pecans or walnuts) & Wheat.

Food that is prepared in licensed food establishments or food processing plants must be labeled at a minimum with the following information:

1. Product name
2. A list of ingredients in order of predominance (by weight). If the product has a standard of identity in the Code of Federal Regulations, it must conform to that standard.
3. Name and address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor. Unless the name given is the actual manufacturer, it must be accompanied by a phrase which states the product is: "manufactured for" or "distributed by."

4. Net weight or volume.
5. Allergen information.
6. Nutrition labeling information is required unless exempt. Exemptions may be found on the website. [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

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4. Net weight or volume.
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6. Nutrition labeling information is required unless exempt. Exemptions may be found on the website: [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

Notes:

- Code of Iowa, Section 137F.1(15) defines "Time/temperature control for safety food" means a food that requires time and temperature controls for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.
- See the Code of Iowa, Section 137F.6(1)h.: "For a farmers market where time/temperature control for safety food is sold or distributed, one annual license fee of one hundred fifty dollars for each vendor on a countywide basis."

Individuals needing to submit a Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) Farmers Market Food Establishment License Application should submit their license application and corresponding fee(s) to the appropriate office. Much of Iowa has local regulatory authorities while other parts of the state would be regulated directly by the DIA. Please check the Regulatory Authorities map found on the DIA's website. A link is provided here: <https://dia.iowa.gov/food-and-consumer-safety-bureau> .

The DIA's Farmers Market Food Establishment License Application can be found on their website and a link is provided here: <https://web-dfs.s3-fips-us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/iowa/assets/File/Farmers%20Market%20License%20Application.pdf>

For more information, contact: Department of Inspections and Appeals  
Food and Consumer Safety Bureau  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
515-281-7102 / <http://dia.iowa.gov/>  
[Kurt.Rueber@dia.iowa.gov](mailto:Kurt.Rueber@dia.iowa.gov)

## **B. Retail Sales Tax**

Currently there is a six percent retail sales tax imposed on gross receipts of the sale of tangible personal property. Local jurisdictions can impose an additional local sales and services tax of up to one percent on sales subject to the state sales tax. Currently there is no retail sales tax collected on the sale of fresh fruits and vegetables.

701-13.5 section 422 (Iowa Administrative Code) Permits - Retailers Operating a Temporary Business –

“A person not regularly engaged in selling at retail and not having a permanent place of business but is temporarily selling from trucks, portable roadside stands, concessionaires at state, county, district or local fairs, carnivals and the like shall not be required to hold a permit. These retailers shall request an identification card from the department. The card shall be in a form prescribed by the director and shall be completed and displayed by the retailer to show authorization to collect tax. The issuance of the card by the department shall be dependent upon the frequency of sales and other conditions as each individual case may warrant.”

For more information, contact:

Iowa Department of Revenue and Finance  
Taxpayer Services  
Hoover State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
515-281-3114 or 800-367-3388  
<http://www.iowa.gov/tax/>

## **C. Farmers Market Nutrition Program**

Many Iowa farmers markets are participating in the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP). These programs have the dual purpose to provide Iowa WIC (Women, Infants & Children) Program participants and low-income seniors with fresh fruits and vegetables to improve their diets and to expand the awareness, use of, and sales at farmers markets.

A market with several fruit and vegetable vendors and an interest in participating in the Program may contact:

Farmers Market Nutrition Program  
Iowa Dept. of Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
Wallace Building, 502 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
515-242-6239  
[http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture\\_and\\_FarmersMarkets/farmersMarketNutritionProgram.asp](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture_and_FarmersMarkets/farmersMarketNutritionProgram.asp)

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## 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. Though not always possible, having the market manager not be a vendor allows more time to devote 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
3. Examples of promotional activities:
  - a. Cooking demonstration: Invite a local restaurant chef to demonstrate food preparation techniques. The business receives publicity and consumers discover new preparation ideas, and may have the opportunity to sample untried product
  - b. Produce pedal tractor pull: Children 10 and under are divided into age groups. A small pedal tractor is used with a box trailer attached for carrying pre-weighed cloth vegetables filled with pea gravel. A few of the vegetables are on-board at the start of the pull with additional weights added at designated locations along the track. The child in each class who pulls the furthest is the winner. Older age classes should start the pull with a heavier initial load
  - c. Harvest festivals: Activities highlighting a popular fruit or vegetable during the peak of its season
    - i. Pie baking or eating contest
    - ii. Pumpkin carving contest
    - iii. Sweet corn roast
    - iv. Tomato pitch at local celebrity
    - v. Watermelon feed
  - d. Community celebrations and festivals: Integrate market promotional activities into the celebration theme or convince the festival's planning committee to locate some of the planned activities in or near the farmers market
  - e. Drawing for prizes: Encourage all consumers to register by signing their name, address, and phone number on a slip of paper. The drawing should take place at the end of the market day. This works not only as an added incentive for attracting customers into the market, but it also provides the market manager with an estimate of the number of consumers at the market on a given day and gives an indication of the market's geographic service area. This activity helps develop a mailing list
  - f. Basket(s) of Bounty Auction: Product can be donated by each vendor and placed in a large basket, or vendors can individually prepare baskets displaying their own product. Baskets are placed on display for a short period of time and then auctioned off to the highest bidder. Proceeds from the basket(s) can be used to finance future market activities, or the receipts from the individual baskets could be retained by the respective vendor
  - g. Other activities
    - i. Musicians and craft people performing their arts
    - ii. Educational exhibits and demonstrations
    - iii. Freezing and canning demonstrations

### 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, social-networking sites, 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 & Social Network sites
      - 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. Social Network Sites
  - d. Radio

- e. Television
  - f. Local cable company's news channel
  - g. Community Calendar websites: check with your area Chamber of Commerce, downtown alliance or other promotion group that hosts detailed week by week web-based calendars
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 perspective 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

## CONSUMER SURVEY (A)

(In-person or phone survey)

1. Have you ever attended a farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Where is/was it located? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Did you enjoy your experience at the farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. What did you like most about the farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - d. What did you not like about the farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Do you access information about the market via website or social media? Please specify any details and/or suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How often do you/would you shop at a farmers market?
   
 \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly    \_\_\_\_\_ Twice a month    \_\_\_\_\_ Once a Month    \_\_\_\_\_ Once a season
  
4. How much money do you/would you spend per visit to the market?
   
 \_\_\_\_\_ Under \$5    \_\_\_\_\_ \$5-10    \_\_\_\_\_ \$10-20    \_\_\_\_\_ Over \$20
  
5. What specific products do you/would you like to see at the farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. How far do you live from the market? How far would you drive?
 

Live	Travel		Live	Travel
_____	_____	In the same community	_____	_____
_____	_____	Within 5 miles	_____	_____
_____	_____	Between 5-10 miles	_____	_____
				Between 10-20 miles
				More than 20 miles
  
7. How do you hear of farmers market specials, events, and updates?
   
 \_\_\_ Newspaper    \_\_\_ Radio    \_\_\_ TV    \_\_\_ Social Networking sites
   
 \_\_\_ Downtown Alliance / Chamber of Commerce or similar web-based calendars
   
 \_\_\_ E-mail Notifications    \_\_\_ Local Shopper    \_\_\_ Posted Signs and Fliers
   
 \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Any additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_



## CONSUMER SURVEY (B)

(In-person or phone survey or mail-in survey)

9. Have you ever attended a farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
- a. If "yes", what did you like about the farmers market?
- \_\_\_ Fresh quality produce
  - \_\_\_ Prices of product
  - \_\_\_ Variety and selection of product
  - \_\_\_ Locally grown produce
  - \_\_\_ Atmosphere and activities of the market
  - \_\_\_ Supporting the local economy
  - \_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. If "yes", what did you not like about the farmers market?
- \_\_\_ Location
  - \_\_\_ Day market is open
  - \_\_\_ Time market is open
  - \_\_\_ Price
  - \_\_\_ Variety and selection of product
  - \_\_\_ Quality of product
  - \_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
10. How often do you/would you shop at a farmers market?  
\_\_\_ Weekly \_\_\_ Twice a month \_\_\_ Once a Month \_\_\_ 1-2 times a season
11. How much money do you/would you spend per visit to the market?  
\_\_\_ Under \$5 \_\_\_ \$5-10 \_\_\_ \$10-20 \_\_\_ Over \$20
12. What products would you like to see sold at a farmers market?
- \_\_\_ Fruits (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_ Vegetables (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_ Dry Flowers \_\_\_\_\_ Baked goods
  - \_\_\_ Fresh Flowers \_\_\_\_\_ Honey
  - \_\_\_ Firewood \_\_\_\_\_ Eggs
  - \_\_\_ Crafts \_\_\_\_\_ Apple Cider
  - \_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
13. How far do you live from the market? How far would you drive?
- | Live  | Travel |                       | Live  | Travel |                     |
|-------|--------|-----------------------|-------|--------|---------------------|
| _____ | _____  | In the same community | _____ | _____  | Between 10-20 miles |
| _____ | _____  | Within 5 miles        | _____ | _____  | More than 20 miles  |
| _____ | _____  | Between 5-10 miles    |       |        |                     |
14. Do you access information about the market via website or social media? Please specify any details and/or suggestions:
15. Would you like to see the proposed farmers market (proposed site \_\_\_\_\_) established and developed? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Would you like to be involved in the planning and development of the market? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Any additional comments?

Send completed survey form to: (Name), (Address)

For additional farmers market information, contact: (Name), (Address), (Phone number)

## GROWER SURVEY

(In-person or phone survey or mail-in survey)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

18. Would you be interested in selling your products at a local farmers market in \_\_\_\_\_?
19. How many days per week would you sell at a farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Specify which days of the week you would participate at the farmers market:
- |               |                 |                |              |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| _____ Monday  | _____ Wednesday | _____ Friday   | _____ Sunday |
| _____ Tuesday | _____ Thursday  | _____ Saturday |              |
21. Number of acres currently in fruit and vegetable production? \_\_\_\_\_
22. Types of products produced:
- | Product | Number of Acres |
|---------|-----------------|
| _____   | _____           |
| _____   | _____           |
| _____   | _____           |
| _____   | _____           |
23. Product availability dates:
- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| _____ | Earliest date product will be available |
| _____ | Latest date product will be available   |
24. Would you be interested in becoming involved in a local growers' group to produce products for a farmers market? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Would you like to be involved in the organization of the growers' group \_\_\_\_\_?
26. Would you be interested in helping establish and develop a local farmers market?  
\_\_\_\_\_
27. Do you know of any other grower who may be interested in participating in a local farmers market? Please fill in the name below:
- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone: \_\_\_\_\_
28. Are you an Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition Program certified vendor?  
If yes, would you be interested in being a core FMNP vendor – one willing to pledge to attend the market 11 consecutive weeks during the market season?
28. If no, would you like information regarding this program?

Send completed survey form to: (Name), (Address)  
For additional information, contact: (Name), (Address), (Phone number)

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