



Market Matters

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Top 10 Strategies for Farmers Market Vendors

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1. **Tell your farm's story.** Post pictures of the farm with the owner and the employees who are working the market(s) in action shots. Have photos of them working on the farm in various settings to help customers make a visual connection with the farm and its products.
2. **Brand your stand.** Besides having a great logo and having it everywhere in your stand (aprons, farm sign, boxes, etc.), the stand should be tied together with colors, matching tables/table covers and pricing signage consistent with the image. Be known for something. Nothing is worse than another vendor offering the same product as you - and sometimes at a lower price! You can avoid getting caught up in price wars by having other great products and being known as having the best of certain products.
3. **Differentiate yourself as a grower** if the market allows resellers. If you are selling a neighboring farms' items - it should be posted as such. Consider going to farmer only markets. From our experiences, you'll probably notice the higher prices you can get for your products.

Please see *Top 10 Strategies* on page 2

Tips for Creating Effective Market Rules

From "The Farmers Market Manager Training Manual"
By The Farmers Market Federation of NY

There are several things to consider when establishing rules for farmers markets. First, the rules define the market. They should complement the mission, or goal, of the market. The market mission can include such aims as meeting social and economic goals, revitalizing a local economy, creating vibrant public spaces, providing food access to otherwise food-insecure neighborhoods, reclaiming and revitalizing public space, and creating opportunities for local agriculture. Any number of other goals could define the market and how it should establish its rules.

For example, if the driving force of the market is to provide a venue for local farmers, then the rules should reflect that by limiting the vendors to farmers only. Likewise, limiting the geographic region where participating farmers reside supports a local theme.

Please see *Effective Market Rules* on page 3

Market rules should be fair, equitable, and enforceable.

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“Find a way to connect and partner to better the entire community.”



Tell them how to use it

4. **Educate your customers.** Why should they be coming to your stand? Will they keep coming? Explain why your products are healthier, more sustainable, local and more beneficial to the local economy. Additionally, it is your job as a producer to be sure they understand current agricultural practices used to produce the food you are selling.
5. **Do some simple research.** Making a sale can be as easy as making conversation with customers. Ask questions which cannot be answered ‘yes or no’ or give them a suggestion regarding a product. Once they feel comfortable with you, try to find out what other products they may want to purchase. Then, find a way to grow those products for the market.
6. **Tell them how to use it.** Many items will not sell unless the consumer can see themselves serving it up for a meal. Offer recipes and tell them how to prepare - broil, braise, steam, blanche or just eat it raw! Encourage the market to have cooking demonstrations using the market manager, inviting local chefs or simply showcasing customers as masters of locally grown products in the kitchen.
7. **Provide convenience.** Make paying for items as easy as possible. Think about this when setting prices and when deciding what forms of payment to collect. Line decorative baskets in displays with the bags customers will take home so they can just pull it out and go about their shopping (and this may help with your food safety requirements). Consider recycleable, reuseable or biodegradeable bags. Let customers know what other markets you participate in and on what days those markets are open.
8. **Mix it up and make it colorful.** Even if you don’t have a large mix of products available, consider growing a variety of colors/shapes of the same products to make the display and offerings look as new and fresh as possible. There are endless varieties available to ‘mix it up a bit.’ Try mixing different colors of tomatoes for a ‘salad mix’ basket, different Romas for a ‘sauce mix’ or just a variety of similar vegetables/fruit to market towards smaller households.
9. **Pay more to be a vendor.** The more serious the business plan for the market, the more likely you are to be profitable as a vendor. Markets which pay a manager and pay attention to a succinct marketing plan seem to have more customers and happier, more profitable vendors. A great plan will allow customers to find market hours, location(s), website, social media and special events whenever and wherever they decide they need it. And, as a market grows, do not be afraid to help start a second market with a different focus.
10. **Work with the community.** Whether it’s the chamber, tourism bureau, business improvement district or a non-profit - find a way to connect and partner to better the entire community. Accept coupons for nutrition programs and other government programs which will help many segments of the local population.

Effective Market Rules from page 1

If your mission is to provide local residents with access to fresh foods, then your rules may be broader in regard to who may sell in the market, including a broader product mix. The point is that every rule should help to support the mission of the market. Market rules should be fair, equitable, and enforceable. Each vendor must be treated equally, with no one receiving special benefits. In addition, each rule should be enforceable. Any rule that cannot be enforced should be eliminated or rewritten. For example, rules that require that up to 75% of the product for sale must be grown by the participant are very difficult to enforce. Is it 75% by weight, by dollar value, by count? Is the percentage based on what is in the truck that day, on the table at any given time of the day, or as an average over the market season? Rules that cannot be enforced leave doubt and will ultimately create a conflict that will require the market governing body to resolve. All market rules should be implemented and enforced. That means that each rule must be complied with at all times, by all vendors. When any rule violation is ignored by the market management, a precedent is set against the enforcement of that rule. That means no other vendor in the market can be made to comply, since that would entail an unfair advantage to the vendor who was allowed to violate it without management response. It will also make it hard to enforce any other rule, since a precedence has been set that the market rules sometimes will be ignored by market management.

Rules must attempt to cover the full range of issues that arise in a market. Some issues are universal across markets and can be planned for. But it is important to consider the market's mission, environment, and past experiences when developing market rules. With a carefully designed set of rules, the market manager can efficiently implement the rules and maintain an effective and conducive environment for both sellers and consumers. Rules should be reviewed and revised by the market management on a regular basis. Situations change and new issues arise. A review of the rules by the market's governing body will assure that the rules reflect the current state of the market. Clearly spelled out rules that are fair, equitable, and uniformly implemented will give the market a legal defense if a lawsuit is brought by an aggrieved vendor. If the rules are specific to a behavior, with defined consequences, the rules will allow a judge or arbitrator to back up the market's actions, when necessary.



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