

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

AT THE FARMERS MARKET AND BEYOND



LOCAL BURRITO'S SUCCESS STORY

In 2009, Kyle Sieck saw that no one was selling hot prepared food at the Iowa City Farmers Market and seized the opportunity to start Local Burrito. He sourced ingredients from area farmers, acquired a food license, and opened for business. Today, Local Burrito is his full-time job and a market mainstay—with a dozen other prepared food vendors joining him on Washington Street each Saturday. Kyle also does food truck events and sells his Heartland Burritos in stores across Iowa.

Whether you're a seasoned vendor looking for a new enterprise or fledgling vendor curious about opportunities, there are strategies to give you an edge. Do research both online and in-person at area markets. Look for the gaps in available product and pay attention to quality, pricing, and marketing. You want to be in the right place at the right time with the best product.



“ANYTHING THAT IS AN IMPORTED ITEM IN THE GROCERY AISLE IS A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY.” - KYLE SIECK



DO SOME RESEARCH:

Study Food Trends

You—as a small business owner—can make changes to your offerings very quickly and seamlessly. As a result, you're uniquely positioned to take advantage of ever-changing food trends. When planning for the next season, simply do a web search of “Food Trends.” There are many online resources guessing at what will be hot in the food world in the upcoming year. Tahini energy bars may be out of reach, but others are more feasible. Maybe purple vegetables. Or perhaps edible flowers. You just want to be the one who has the product when it hits Pinterest and everybody wants it. *Cha-ching!*

Market & Feasibility Studies

As a general rule, you'll want to figure out if you're going to make any money pursuing whatever venture you choose. Take a stroll around the farmers markets located near you to see if anyone else is selling the items that you've identified. Visit other farmers markets across Iowa or in neighboring states. Notice the quality of the product, its pricing, who is purchasing it, and what kind of marketing is in place. Take some photos. Take some notes. Try to calculate the costs of production, including time. Analyze this data to decide if this is still an opportunity worth pursuing. Consider reaching out to a credible business advisor—such as a Small Business Development Center near you—that can help with your business plan.



FRESH OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU AT THE FARMERS MARKET



GROW YOUR
BUSINESS:

1) Cut Flowers for Small Growers

At the farmers market, single cut stems can fetch a couple of dollars each. Add value by putting them in a bouquet—you'll be able to charge a premium while flexing your creativity. A cut flower business can be started with field production on a relatively small land base, but in Iowa, certain varieties will do much better in high tunnels or greenhouses.



2) Healthy Food Choices and Trends

Products like bone broth and wheatgrass have arrived on the scene. Keep an eye out for developing trends. If no one else is selling a product that you believe in, the farmers market is a low-risk space to test that product and establish a customer base.

3) Crafts and Basketry

Look around the landscape on your farm. If you see lots of evergreen, wild grape, willow, or honeysuckle, you may be looking at materials for your new crafting business. Woven baskets, wreaths, and otherwise ornamental accoutrements could be a big seller at certain markets. Pottery, handcrafted wood items, and furniture are also potential opportunities.

4) Value-Added Products

Jams, jellies, baked goods, and sauces are darlings of the value-added product world. Potential also exists for dehydrated foods like sun-dried tomatoes, apple chips, and dried mushrooms.

5) Grass-Fed/Pastured Meat, Dairy, and Eggs

These products are far from new, but there is a growing demand for animal products that are raised in a system founded on humane treatment and ecological benefit (open air, clean water, fresh grass, and plenty of space to move). Many consumers are also keen on the health benefits that come from animals eating mostly or exclusively grass, as opposed to a grain-based diet. Products raised in this model fetch a significant premium, though there can be a need for consumer education depending on the market.

6) Season Extension

With a high tunnel or greenhouse, you can bring produce items to market before and after those who are only doing field production—making you competitive and allowing you to set the price. As of Fall 2019, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) managed by your local NRCS office offers financial assistance to purchase a high tunnel.

7) Wild and Cultivated Mushrooms

Either as a complementary or primary enterprise, mushrooms could be a boon to your business. Outdoor and indoor production methods exist for a variety of edible mushrooms—some easier to produce than others. Because of health benefits and meat-substitution qualities, this is a corner of the market that's expanding.

8) Prepared Foods and Drinks

Do you fancy yourself a chef? Most markets have opportunities to sell prepared foods, but many small- to medium-sized markets don't have any prepared food vendors. Since a lot of markets take place in the morning, you'll likely want to cater to the breakfast crowd. Consider both traditional American food as well as international cuisine.

9) Natural Cosmetics and Medicines

Tinctures, soaps, salves, tea mixes—items like these can be produced with medicinal plants grown in a modestly-sized home garden. You can also purchase ingredients—for example, buying base ingredients like beeswax. Before you get too deep, reach out to local public health entities to make sure anything you're producing is properly licensed.



10) Certifications

Take a look around the market. Is anyone certified organic, animal welfare approved, certified naturally-grown, or otherwise certified? If not, it could be an opportunity for you to set your business apart. More and more consumers prefer this check-off to be confident in the foods they're eating.

Contact
Information

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This work is supported by the Farmers Market Promotion Program from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.



FIRST TIME VENDOR

HANDOUT 2

WHAT BEGINNING MARKET VENDORS NEED TO KNOW

TINY DONUTS BRING BIG SUCCESS

Travis and Erika Osurman moved from Hawaii to Cedar Falls to be closer to family. At the same time, they were looking for a way to channel their shared entrepreneurial spirit. Inspired by Portland's donut shops and coffee scene, they decided to open a farmers market stand serving li'ilii (Hawaiian for "tiny") donuts and craft coffee. At the Waterloo Farmers Market vendor meeting, Travis found the communal vendor atmosphere he was looking for. He paid the market dues, then dove into figuring out the expenses for all the needed equipment—from donut presses to a handwashing station. After six months of testing donut recipes and around nine calls to the health department to identify licensing needs, Li'ilii Donuts opened up for business selling made-to-order donuts and pour-over craft coffee from local roasteries. As a beginning market vendor, Travis says two of the most valuable resources were the Small Business Center at UNI and the farmers market manager. While doing his own research and homework got Li'ilii Donuts in a good position for the market, those resources accelerated progress and gave Travis and Erika confidence and support.



“ I DID A LOT OF READING AND RESEARCH THROUGH HEALTH DEPARTMENT WEBSITES —BOTH STATE AND COUNTY—SO I COULD LEARN THE REGULATIONS AND MAKE SURE I HAD ALL MY BASES COVERED. THAT'S WHEN I STARTED MAKING PHONE CALLS, ABOUT A WEEK AFTER SIGNING UP AND PAYING DUES. ”

- TRAVIS OSURMAN,
LI'ILI'I DONUTS

WHAT MARKET MANAGERS WANT YOU TO KNOW:



Research the Farmers Market

What's the best way to get a feel for a farmers market you're looking to become a vendor at? Go! While there, scope out the vendors and check out their booths. What do their stalls look like? What are they selling? Are they friendly? Keep your eyes open for any gaps in products sold at the farmers market. Could you fill those gaps?

Also, be sure to stop and talk with the market manager about what it takes to become a vendor at the market. Every market is different and one set of rules may not apply to all markets (for example: local vs craft vs produce-only).

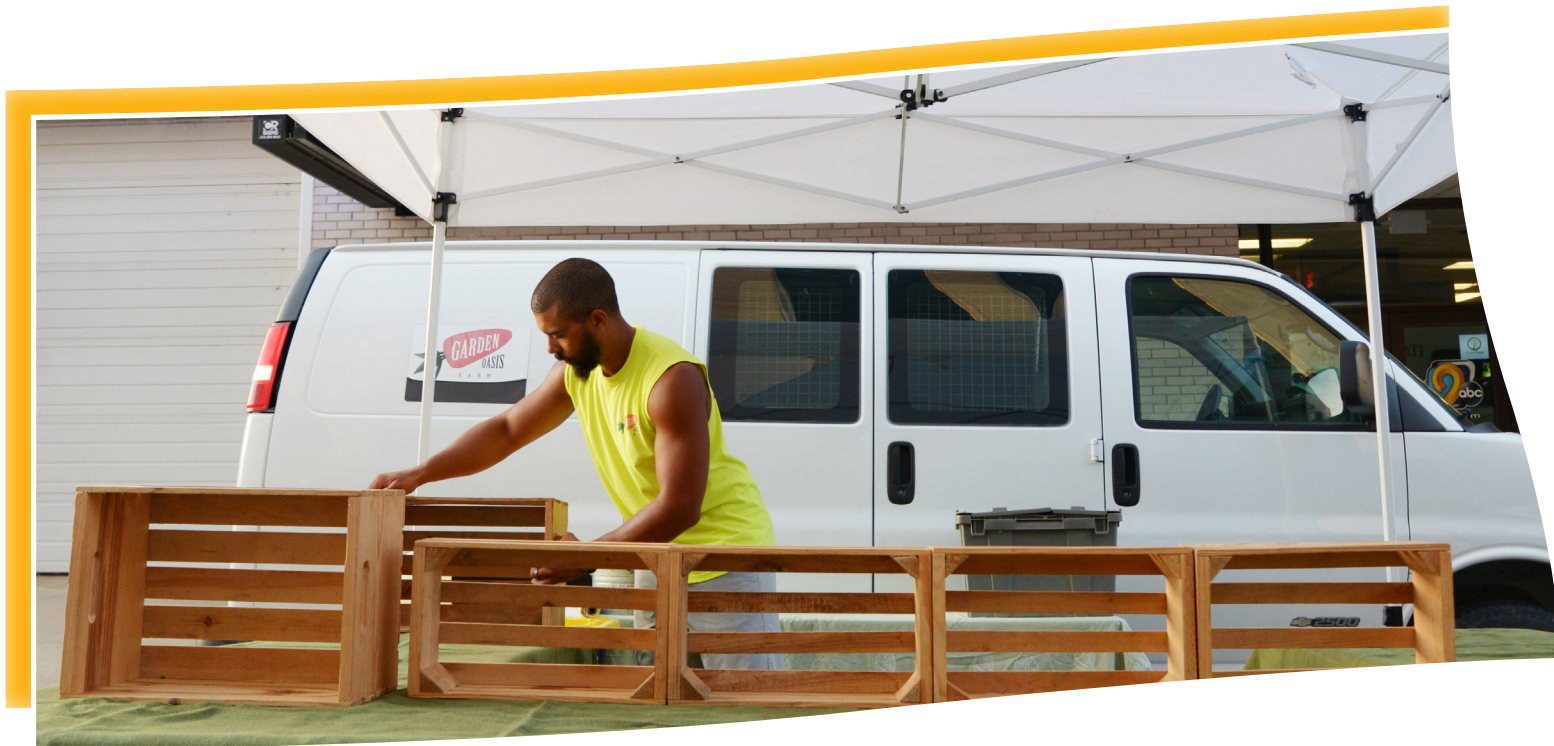
Know Your Strengths

Being a farmers market vendor is no cakewalk. It takes a time commitment (as markets usually happen every week) and an outgoing personality. Selling at the farmers market can be a fun, exciting, and profitable venture if you enjoy meeting new people and talking about your business.

TIPS FOR MARKET SUCCESS

FROM EXPERIENCED VENDORS

ADVICE
FROM VENDORS:



1) Bring Extra Product

"Just because someone else has the same thing doesn't mean you can't bring it. There are always niches in the market! Also, your stand has to look full, so bring twice as much product as you think you'd sell. Set your prices based on what you need—not on what you're seeing set by vendors around you."

- Emma Johnson, Buffalo Ridge Orchard

2) Nice Looking Stand = More \$\$\$

"I wish I'd went to a larger market earlier on because I learned so much. You can increase your sales for a small amount of money by making the stand look nicer. For around \$150, I bought a few wood crates—and a nicer table cloth helped me look more professional. It is true that if you bring more you'll sell more."

- T.D. Holub, Garden Oasis Farm

✓ FARMERS MARKET PREP CHECKLIST

Table	Calculator
Shelter (tent, umbrella, etc.)	Bags (plastic/reusable)
Shelter Weights	Display Items
Tablecloths	Garbage Bag or Bin
Cash Box (with change)	Proof of Insurance
Product or Merchandise	Chair
Product Signage	Comfortable Shoes
Farm Signage	Helpers
Scale (if required)	Tape and Scissors
Water and Snacks (for yourself)	Good Attitude and Smile
Water and Spray Bottle	Extra Pens/Markers

3) Engage Your Customers

"I would tell my pre-vendor self that doing a farmers market is just as much a place to sell veggies as it is a place to connect with people. Some people aren't going to know what the romanesco or beauty heart radishes are. Be sure to engage with people so they leave the stand excited to try a new veggie!"

- Whitney Brewer, Grade A Gardens

4) Honesty and Authenticity

"Never cheat by trying to re-sell produce purchased at an auction or elsewhere. Many vendors have done this. Other vendors always find out and share the news—hurting both the market and the vendors in the end. Customers buy from a farmers market because they want to know their farmer and how the food was grown. Be honest and don't undercut prices of vendors. Charge a fair price for you and everyone."

- Shelley Squier, Squier Squash & Donnelly Farm

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DO I NEED A LICENSE?

FIND OUT THE ANSWER BEFORE YOU START SELLING

IT'S A VENDOR RESPONSIBILITY

It is ultimately the responsibility of each vendor to research and secure any necessary license. Start by contacting your County Health Department. The Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) oversees Iowa's food code. Locally, county health departments inspect and award licenses to businesses. "A vendor who offers a product for sale at a farmers market shall have the sole responsibility to obtain and maintain any license or sell or distribute such products." - Code of Iowa, Sec. 137F8



NO LICENSE REQUIRED TO SELL (1-3):



FARMERS MARKET LICENSING CAN BE COMPLICATED.
DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS
AND APPEALS (DIA) WITH ANY QUESTIONS.



1) Fruits & Vegetables

Whole and uncut fresh fruit and vegetables may be sold at a farmers market to consumers without the vendor being licensed as a food establishment at the market. Once cut, fruits and vegetables may be considered "potentially hazardous foods." For example: Melons, once cut, have to be held below 41°F. If these fruits or vegetables are offered as samples, the vendor would have to keep them under temperature control and receive a license from DIA.

2) Baked Goods

Properly labeled baked goods which are non-potentially hazardous or shelf-stable bakery products (non-perishable items that do not require refrigeration for food safety reasons) can be sold without a license. The term "baked goods" is limited to: breads, cakes, donuts, pastries, buns, rolls, cookies, biscuits, and pies (excluding meat pies). Pies that require temperature control once they have been prepared are a "potentially hazardous food."

3) Shelf-stable Foods

Prepackaged, shelf-stable food products such as honey, jams, jellies, or dried noodles may be sold at a farmers market without a license. These products still require a label, which must include: 1) name of product, 2) a list of ingredients, 3) name and address of where the food is prepared, and 4) net weight, volume, or numerical count. Questions about "homestyle" canned goods should be directed to the Department of Inspections and Appeals.

LICENSE REFERENCE GUIDE

FOR PRODUCTS SOLD AT THE FARMERS MARKET

LICENSE REQUIRED TO SELL (1-10):

FOOD/ITEM BEING SOLD	SALES TAX?	LICENSES OR CERTIFICATION REQUIRED									
	✓=YES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cut Fruit & Vegetables		1									
Whole & Uncut Fruit and Vegetables		No License or Certification Required									
Bakery Products (breads, cakes, donuts, pastries, buns, rolls, cookies, biscuits)						5					
Refrigerated Bakery Items		1	2								
Jams and Jellies		No License Needed if Standard is Met; Contact DIA									
Pickled Foods		1	2								
Fermented Foods		1	2								
• Meat and Poultry (A,D)		1									10
• Dairy Products (B,D)		1			4			7			
Cultivated Mushrooms		No License or Certification Required									
Wild-Harvested Morel Mushrooms		1		3							
Alcoholic Beverages	✓									9	
Soaps	✓										
Art and Crafts	✓										
Inedible Decorative Gourds	✓										
Flowers, Seedlings and Potted Plants	✓										
Hot Prepared Food	✓		2		4						
• Fresh Shell Eggs (C)		No License or Certification Required									
• Seafood (A,D)		Iowa DNR Aquaculture Unit & Other Licenses May be Required									
Honey (Pure & Unflavored)		No License or Certification Required									
Pet Products	✓										
Dried Noodles		No License Needed if Noodles are Fully Dried									
Maple Syrup		No License or Certification Required									

Meat & Poultry (A): Meats must be processed in a USDA or state licensed and inspected plant. Each package must have either the USDA or state inspection stamp. A Warehouse License from Department of Inspection & Appeals is required to store meat at your farm.

Dairy Products (B): Bottled milk must be made in a Grade A Dairy. License and manufactured dairy products (cheese, sour cream, butter) must have a Grade B license.

Fresh Shell Eggs (C): Fresh shell eggs should be kept at 45 F° or below if you have an Egg Handling License from the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship.

Temperature Controlled Foods (D): Potentially hazardous food products include dairy products, meat, fish, and poultry and require a license.

LICENSE & CERTIFICATION DIRECTORY

- (DIA) Department of Inspections & Appeals: PH (515) 281-6538
- (IDALS) Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship: PH (515) 281-5321
- (ABD) Iowa Alcoholic Beverage Division: PH (515) 281-7400
- (ISU) Iowa State University (ISU) Extension: PH (515) 281-3114
- (IDR) Iowa Department of Revenue: PH (800) 262-3804

1) Farmers Market Food Establishment

Issued on a yearly basis to a vendor who wants to sell "temperature controlled foods" at a farmers market. Costs around \$100. ● Contact DIA

2) Commercial Food Processing License

A completed application will have a water test, HACCP plan, facility floor plan, a fee, and completed processing license. ● Contact DIA

3) Morel Mushroom Certification

Vendors must complete a three-hour spring certification workshop and re-certify every three years to continue to sell morels. ● Contact ISU

4) Mobile Food License

A license is required for all Class II, III, and IV units and must go through a plan review and pre-operational inspection. ● Contact DIA

5) Home Food "Bakery" License

A licensed bakery located in a residence must meet 13 inspection standards and labeling requirements. Costs around \$35. ● Contact DIA

6) Potentially Hazardous Food License

Refers to food that requires temperature control after preparation. ● Contact DIA

7) Inspected & Permitted Dairy Facility

Dairy products are considered potentially hazardous food products and require a license to sell at the farmers market. ● Contact IDALS

8) Temporary Food License

Valid for up to 14 days in conjunction with a single event. Applications must be submitted at least 3 weekdays prior to the event. ● Contact DIA

9) Iowa Alcoholic Beverages

Wineries must be formally invited to sell at a farmers market and request an off-site license that will last one year. ● Contact ABD

10) Warehouse License

Meats from the farmers' own animals must be licensed if the meats are sold as packaged cuts to individuals or retailers and stored between slaughter and sale. ● Contact IDALS

Sales Tax Applicable

Sales tax is applicable to all taxable items sold at the farmers market. Tax rates are available online.

● Contact IDR

VENDOR INSURANCE

WHAT DOES MY MARKET REQUIRE ME TO HAVE?



WHY CARE ABOUT INSURANCE?

Insurance is protection against some of the risk involved in doing business. There are multiple types of policies that can be purchased to insure yourself and the products you sell at the market. It's important to research insurance coverage and what will not be covered in your policy. Liability insurance is in place to cover legal claims against the insured and is commonly required for vendors at farmers markets in Iowa.

“NO MATTER WHAT BUSINESS YOU’RE IN, THERE IS ALWAYS RISK INVOLVED. INSURANCE IS ONE WAY TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THESE RISKS.”



- WASHINGTON STATE FARMERS MARKET

WHO TO TALK TO ABOUT INSURANCE:

1) Market Manager

As commander of the market, the market manager will easily be able to answer general questions and refer you to who to talk to for more detailed information. Talk to them about insurance requirements for vending at the market. Don't forget to ask if the market is a member of the Iowa Farmers Market Association, which may have access to membership perks related to insurance.

2) Insurance Provider

Have a conversation with your current home, auto, life, etc. insurance provider. When talking to an agent, be clear about what products you want covered by the policy and make sure their policy covers those products. Not all policies and providers are the same, so it's important to do your research before deciding on a policy for your business.

3) Similar Vendors

Chat with farmers market vendors who sell products similar to yours and ask them questions. Experienced vendors are a wealth of knowledge and can speak to situations where insurance has helped them in the past. Who is their agent and provider? What kind of policy do they have? What information should you gather before meeting with an agent?



LIABILITY INSURANCE

MAKING SURE YOU'RE COVERED

PROTECT YOURSELF & YOUR BUSINESS



Producer liability insurance is an umbrella term for two specific types of insurance, 1) Product Liability and 2) General Liability.

Product Liability

Covers claims related to product that the farmer sells, which typically includes fruits, vegetables, eggs, baked goods, etc.

Example: A consumer buys a dozen eggs, and later claims that those eggs made them sick. They sue you for food poisoning.

General Liability

Covers claims brought against the farmer that are not related to product that the farmer sells.

Example: A shopper tripped over one of the bungee cords that ties down your tent and needed to get stitches. They sue you for personal injury.

What do you want covered?

Not all producer insurance policies offer the same coverage. When buying producer insurance, be very clear and specific with the agent about what products you want covered by the policy and make sure that the policy provides that coverage.

Example: Product Liability insurance may cover your fruit and vegetable sales, but not your meat and dairy sales.

Example: General Liability insurance might not cover temporary structures, such as tents or tables.

Questions to Ask about Insurance

Ask Market Managers:

- 1) Do you require vendors to carry insurance?
- 2) If so, what type of insurance requirements do vendors need to attend your market?
- 3) When and where does the market operate?
- 4) Does the market have insurance?

Ask Insurance Providers:

- 1) What products are covered by my product liability insurance? What types of products are not covered?
- 2) What incidents are covered by my general liability insurance? What types of incidents are not covered?
- 3) Does my liability coverage extend to only one market, or to all of the markets that I attend?
- 4) Does my coverage extend to my employees and representatives and their actions?



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SETTING PRICES

THE MATH BEHIND THE MARKET

EMMA & MARCUS BUFFALO RIDGE ORCHARD

Emma and Marcus Johnson returned to Emma's family farm, Buffalo Ridge Orchard, in Central City in 2012—the same year that an untimely frost knocked out the entire season's apple crop. The next year's crop had to make up for the 2012 loss. That change in price forced the family to take a holistic look at how they priced their products. Buffalo Ridge Orchard restructured their pricing structure based on labor expenditure, profit margin comparison, and the fixed costs of attending any market—stressing the importance of on-farm production being informed by the pricing and vice versa. This holistic view of pricing and production as a whole leads to improved on-farm labor prioritization and targeted marketing.



PRICING IS UNIQUE AT FARMERS MARKETS:



“IF THE PRICE WE NEED TO MAKE ON A CABBAGE MEANS WE WILL ONLY SELL A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CABBAGE AT THE FARMERS MARKET, THEN WE WILL ONLY PRODUCE ENOUGH ON THE FARM TO SUPPLY THAT NEED.”

- EMMA JOHNSON,
BUFFALO RIDGE ORCHARD



The Unspoken Rule

Many vendors may be selling similar items at the farmers market. Be mindful of what the “market price” is so that you don't inadvertently undercut all the other vegetable growers. The general unspoken rule is that you stick close to what everyone is selling any given item for. Charge what the market is charging.

The Market is Yours

If you're the only one with a certain product (like the first tomatoes of the year), the market is yours. Sell that tomato for as much as you think you can get for it. If you have an enterprise unique to the market, you'll use a more traditional cost analysis to find your price by adding labor, expenditures, shrink, and profit into the costs for the products you are selling at the market.

Diversity is Key

If you're selling a diverse-range of products (such as ten vegetable crops or fifteen cuts of meat), consider the profitability of each product. For example: You're making more money on an heirloom tomato than you are on a turnip. But by growing both heirloom tomatoes and turnips, you can reach a larger customer base than by just growing one or the other.

PRICE SETTING TERMS

COSTS AND ANALYSIS TO KNOW

IT TAKES \$\$\$
TO MAKE MONEY

Fixed Costs

Fixed costs, sometimes referred to as administrative overhead, are expenses that do not change with sales—at least in the short term. Fixed costs must be paid even if you have no sales at all, and include expenses that you incur separate from production (accounting, phone and internet service, website fees, advertising, insurance, and interest). Your prices must generate enough revenue to cover not only your fixed costs of doing business, but also the variable costs of producing your product.

Variable Costs

Product costs are also termed variable costs because they rise or fall with the volume you're producing. Variable costs are all the costs directly tied to the making of one product—cost for labor and cost for things (seed, fertilizer, compost, breeding animals, feed, processing fees, packaging, labels, etc.).

Breakeven Analysis

Understanding fixed and variable costs is the first step in determining a breakeven point for your business. The breakeven point is the number of units or sales dollars you need to sell to cover both your fixed and variable costs. When the business is neither earning a profit nor losing money, it's "breaking even." Every unit you sell beyond the breakeven point will generate a profit; every unit below it generates a loss.

Calculating your breakeven can help you decide if your business plan is practical or if it needs to be adjusted. Breakeven also gives you an idea of how much product you need to sell before the business will be profitable.



PROFITABILITY GOALS

$$\text{NET INCOME} = R - \text{COGS} - F - I - T$$

WHERE:

R = REVENUE COGS = COST OF GOODS SOLD
F = FIXED COSTS I = INTEREST T = TAXES

$$\text{NET PROFIT MARGIN} = \frac{\text{NET INCOME}}{R} * 100$$

EXAMPLES OF NET PROFIT MARGINS BY INDUSTRY

PRIVATELY OWNED RESTAURANTS — 5.1%

AVERAGE SUPERMARKET — 1.3%

MANUFACTURING — 10% OR GREATER

(Based on data from the Food Marketing Institute and Sageworks)

BREAKEVEN POINT IN UNITS

$$\text{BREAKEVEN POINT} = \frac{\text{TOTAL FIXED COSTS}}{(\text{SELLING PRICE PER UNIT} - \text{VARIABLE COST PER UNIT})}$$

BREAKEVEN SALES IN DOLLARS

$$\text{BREAKEVEN IN SALES} = \text{FIXED COSTS} + \text{VARIABLE COST}$$

QUESTIONS?

CONTACT INFORMATION

	Phone	Website
Farmers Market Coalition	(888) 362-8177	farmersmarketcoalition.org
Small Business Development Center	(515) 294-2030	iowasbdc.org
Practical Farmers of Iowa	(515) 232-5661	practicalfarmers.org

HOW DO I RECORD SALES?

BEST METHODS TO TRACK FARMERS MARKET ACTIVITY

TRACKING SALES: WHY & HOW TO DO IT

Having a record of sales by item at each market empowers you to make critical business decisions. By tracking sales and fees as well as calculating the profit of your business, you'll be better informed when planning for next year's markets.

BOOKKEEPING TIPS & TRICKS



“BY KEEPING RECORDS, WE CAN TRACK FARM PROFITABILITY, DETERMINE NECESSARY CHANGES TO PRODUCTION, AND EVALUATE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE.”

- BECKY HUANG, NORTH IOWA BERRIES



Compare Market to Market

Take time to compare your sales from each market so that you can decide which markets are the best for your operation. This will also help you adjust what you sell, where and when. For example: If at the previous week's market you sold twice as much apple butter as apple sauce, then you know to bring that much more apple butter.

Review Year to Year

You can use past years' records to not only get an overall perspective of success, but also to compare specific market dates from year to year—this June vs last June, a rainy market vs a rainy market. For example: If a holiday market stood out as one where three products were especially desirable, you can plan accordingly.



SALES TRACKING METHODS & BEST PRACTICES FOR BOOKKEEPING

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

VENDOR EXPERIENCE	METHODS	COST	ABILITY TO TRACK			
			Time Item Purchased	Products Sold	Payment Method	Year to Year Changes
BEGINNER	(1) Before/After	Low	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
	(2) Tally Method	Low	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
INTERMEDIATE	(3) Apps	Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	(4) Point of Sale Apps or Hardware	High	Moderate	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed
EXPERT	(5) Accounting Software	High	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed

There are many ways to record sales at the farmers market, some more complicated than others. The method you choose will depend on how busy the market is, how much you enjoy chit-chatting with customers, and the number of products you are selling. Pick a system that you feel comfortable with and WILL use! You don't need to keep track of every detail and it doesn't hurt to start small.

1) Before/After:

Before loading up your products to go to the market, get an accurate count of each item. When you return from the market, count how many you have left and subtract that from your beginning total to find how much you sold.

Pros: Quick and easy; nothing needs to be done at the market.

Cons: You're not tracking *how* purchases were made (cash, check, food assistance, credit card, or token). This may be an issue for tracking food assistance spent at your stand that must be recorded for the government or token record keeping that may be required by the market. Plus, you're missing out on tracking busy vs slow times.

2) Tally Method:

Bring a pen and pad of lined paper to the market with each item you're selling written out on its own line. After every sale, draw a tally mark on the lines of each item you sold.

Pros: Low cost and easy to teach to employees.

Cons: It takes time, especially if you have many different items. You'll sometimes forget to tally a sale if you get busy or distracted. Plus, you'll still need to enter this information onto your computer software later to track sales over time.

4) Point of Sale Apps or Hardware:

POS (Point of Sale) products like Square, Intuit GoPayments, PayAnywhere, Paypal Here, and Shopify can help make the record-keeping process more efficient for you. When you sign up for the software, the company will send you a card-reader that plugs into your phone and allows you to accept credit/debit cards.

Pros: Allows you to take credit/debit payments and saves time spent in front of a computer moving over sales records.

Cons: While the hardware that plugs into your device is usually free, the provider charges a fee for each transaction. (Fee varies.)

3) Apps:

A number of smartphone and tablet applications have been developed to make your farmers market record keeping easier. These apps work like a cash register—a customer selects items they want to purchase, you tap each item in the app, and the app adds up the total and records each sale. You can then upload sales directly to your computer record-keeping software (see #5).

Pros: Apps are time-efficient; there's no need to manually enter data into a computer later.

Cons: Using an app requires some tech-savviness. Keep in mind that you may also have to pay a fee for each app.



5) Accounting Software:

Now, what to do with all your sales data? Just like with the mobile card-reading apps, technology has brought us plenty of affordable (if not free) software options that outdo Microsoft Excel when it comes to tracking sales records. Quickbooks, Xero, FreshBooks, and Wave are all options.

Pros: Unlike Excel, these programs can create invoices, track cash-flow, provide payroll assistance, and much more.

Cons: Some tech-savviness is required, but there are free online tutorials that will teach you how to use the software.



SELLING BAKED GOODS

THE SALE OF HOME-PREPARED FOODS AT THE MARKET

A NEW TWIST ON AN OLD KNOT

For Teri Thompson, baking started out as a hobby. When she decided to sell baked goods at a farmers market to raise funds for a mission trip to Haiti, her hobby not only helped her travel, but also grew to become her small business, Knotted Dough & Co. Now a vendor at the Ames Farmers Market, Teri puts a unique twist on traditional kringla by adding flavors like caramel pecan, cheesecake, eggnog, and pumpkin spice. Her product offerings have expanded beyond kringla to include pie, breads, and cookies as well as a variety of gluten-free baked goods. Plus, she takes special orders for fresh hamburger buns, dinner rolls, egg noodles, and muffins. "I started with a 4x4 card table and a few flavors. No canopy. No signage," says Teri. "But I watched. I looked at other stalls. I would encourage new vendors to go to bigger markets and get ideas. I practiced setting up my stand at home so I could see what it looked like and make sure there was enough space for my products and customers."



"DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY. THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS YOU CAN PUT YOUR OWN TWIST ON AND DRAW PEOPLE IN."

- TERI THOMPSON, KNOTTED DOUGH & CO.



SWEET OR SAVORY?

Deciding What to Bring to the Market

Think about what you're especially good at baking. Do you make incredible cinnamon rolls, but not-so-spectacular cookies? Check out what's currently being sold at the market. Are there any gaps you can fill? Also, consider the customer base. Artisanal goods might go over well at one market. At another, customers might be reaching for more traditional goodies.

Sweet

Cinnamon rolls, sticky buns, donuts, cupcakes, pies, cookies, muffins

Mindful Ingredients

Items made for customers with allergies or dietary restrictions, such as gluten-free, peanut-free, or vegan

Personal- or Snack-sized

Items easy to eat right there at the market, such as mini-pies or single items like scones, donuts, cookies, and more

Savory

Plain or herb breads, butter croissants, rolls, jalapeño cheddar scones

Kid-friendly

Items made with child portions and preferences in mind, like mini cupcakes or themed and colorfully decorated cookies

Sharable- or Family-sized

Items customers can take home and share, such as a pan of sticky buns, bag of croissants, or 4-pack box of muffins



FARMERS MARKETS

A GREAT PLACE TO START OR EXPAND

A RECIPE
FOR SUCCESS

You can use the market as a way to get started selling your baked goods for the first time or as a way to market your existing business. Do you make cakes for birthdays, weddings, or other special events? Promote that with a small sign ("Ask me about baking for your special day!") and put it on business cards.

Do you have an existing customer base who would want to pre-order and pick-up items (such as bagels, loaves of bread, pans of sticky buns) at the market? Promote a pre-order list that customers can sign up for and place orders for the next market.

Equal Parts Variety and Efficiency

Consider that it's easier to make batches rather than lots of individual things. Be thoughtful about the product mix that you have until you're sure they're going to sell. For example: Having five staples at every market, then introducing a new or seasonal item at each market. As a new vendor or when introducing a new item, start on the small side so that you can try it out. If it sells out, you can increase the amount for next time.

Customer Feedback

Finding out what customers think of your products is key in determining your product mix. Don't be afraid to try new things and get feedback from customers when they return. You will not only gain valuable insights into what customers want, but also build connections by remembering them and expressing a desire to hear their opinions about your products.

Food-Safe Storage and Display

In following with Iowa food code, all baked goods need to be in some way covered. This could mean displaying individual items like cookies, donuts, and pies in a case, or individually packaging loaves of bread. Think about how you want to display your product. Many vendors make custom displays or have a crafty friend make them for them.

Proper Labels for Your Product

When selling your baked goods at the market it is important to follow all the rules and regulations. Make sure to check in with the Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) when starting your business.



- A** **Chocolate Chip Cookies**
Big Town Cookies **B**
1234 Littlebigtown Lane
Decorah, IA 52101 **C**

Ingredients: Enriched flour (Wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine, mononitrate, riboflavin, and folic acid), butter (milk, salt), chocolate chips (sugar, chocolate liquor, cocoa butter, butterfat (milk), soy lecithin, walnuts), sugar, eggs, salt, artificial vanilla extract, baking soda. **E**

Contains: Wheat, eggs, milk, soy, walnuts **D**

Net Wt. 3oz. **F**

- A Product Name:** All food must be labeled with the common name of the food
- B Business Name:** What business (or who) made the product
- C Business Address:** Where the product was made
- D Allergens:** Must be declared on the label (Major allergens include: peanuts, soybeans, milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, tree nuts, and wheat)
- E List of Ingredients:** Must be listed from highest weight to lowest and every ingredient used needs to be listed
- F Net Weight:** Net amount of the product must be listed preceded by "Net WT"

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DIY STAND IMPROVEMENTS

DO-IT-YOURSELF WAYS TO DISPLAY YOUR PRODUCT

A+ BOOTH TIPS FROM GRADE A GARDENS

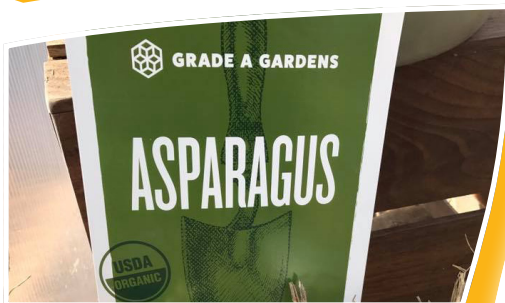
Grade A Gardens has been vending at the Des Moines Farmers Market since 2009. They say that first and foremost, you should make sure you have a high-quality product that looks good. Next, make labels as straightforward as possible—don't let the logo get in the way of the product name and price. And finally, make your booth stand out. BIG displays attract customer's attention—and wooden crates fit quart and pint containers perfectly.



“WE SET UP OUR STAND SO MULTIPLE PEOPLE CAN BE SHOPPING AT ANY ONE TIME. A CROWD BRINGS A CROWD.”

—WHITNEY BREWER,
GRADE A GARDENS

3 ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER



1) Re-useable Signs

Whether you prefer one big price board or several price sheets, there are ways to make your signs low-cost and reusable. For example: Make a simple sheet for every item that you sell and laminate it. Then, when you set prices each week, you can use a dry erase marker to update the price per pound or bundle. Don't just lay the sign down flat. Get creative with clothespins or velcro to display it.

2) Space Limitations

If your two-dimensional space is limited, go up or under! Get creative with vertical space. Stack wooden crates on top of each other, create multiple levels on your table, and make a stand that rises up at an angle. If you're going to use space beneath the table, be deliberate. If you're using it as a display, keep it neat and organized. If you're using it for storage, consider a table cloth to hide it from the customer's view.

3) Eye-catching Color

The more attractive the stand, the more likely customers are to stop. Think about all the items you sell and how you can organize them in a way that makes customers want to reach out and grab them. Have many different colors? Arrange like a rainbow. Want to display items in baskets? Put a burlap bag (or similar padding) in the bottom to make baskets look full when only half-full.

ANATOMY OF A VENDOR STALL

ELEMENTS
TO BUY AND DIY



1) Shelter

Your shelter is the first impression of your business, but it also protects you, your products, and your customers from rain and sun. Consider investing in a high-quality one.

2) Shelter Weights

Shelters aren't cheap and Iowa has some WINDY days. It's important to weight your shelter down to keep it from flying off. Weights come in many designs and shapes.

3) Table

The table is a crucial component of your booth at the farmers market. A lightweight table that's easy to fold up and transport makes the best use of your budget and space.

4) Table Cloth

To bring more color and a clean look to your booth, using a table cloth does the trick. Find a style that fits your brand and makes your market stand unique!

5) Bins and Baskets

To make use of all your booth space, take advantage of the ground level. Use metal bins, wood crates, a bike—you name it! The more unique your display, the better.

6) Vertical Displays

Think about what people see at their "eye-level" and use vertical displays to make the most of your space by displaying as many of your products as possible.

7) More is More

Use angles and colors to attract customers. Make sure to keep your booth looking full to provide a sense of abundance. You can use the space under the table as storage.

8) Double-Duty Displays

Find displays that are both easy to clean after the market, convenient to transport, and that can serve double duty as storage and decoration—like crates, baskets, and boxes.

9) Product Signage

When shopping, customers are looking for items and their prices. Don't assume the customer will ask. If they can't find a product or its price, they may pass you by.

10) Cash Box

A well-stocked and organized cash box will allow you to assist with customers sales quickly—without having to worry about money blowing away in the breeze.

11) Stand-out Sign

Make it as easy as possible for customers to find you in the crowd. Prominently display a large, easy-to-read, recognizable sign featuring your farm or business name.

12) Farmer

Strike a balance between clothing that's practical for the weather and easy to move around in. Consider ways to wear your brand—a hat, t-shirt, or even an apron.



VENDOR STALL LAYOUT

CREATING A MARKET LAYOUT THAT WORKS

TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR VENDOR STALL

Anne Bohl took as much pride in the farmers market booth for Low Oaks Farm as she did in the acre vegetable garden, bee hives, sheep, and laying hens on the small, certified organic farm itself. Anne wanted to create a stall setup that allowed space for multiple customers to look over her abundant selection of produce, ask questions, and learn about the seasonal varieties on display. Through testing out different arrangements, Anne found that the best option was to use smaller tables with baskets and bins on the wings of her main table—similar to the U shape (see back), but instead of using tables of the same size, she used shorter, smaller tables.



“CREATING A NEAT, CLEAN, AND INVITING BOOTH IS INVALUABLE. I WAS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO FILL, ADJUST AND MAKE MY VENDOR STALL LOOK AND FEEL INVITING.”

-ANNE BOHL, LOW OAKS FARM



VENDOR STALL BASICS



Tidy: The most visually appealing displays attract the most customers. Successful vendor stalls remain clean, organized, and filled with an abundance of product on display from market start to finish. While your booth should look full, avoid overcrowding. When setting up, create an area to keep required boxes or bins out of customers' sight. A vendor stall also shows how your business feels about food safety.

Shelter: The shelter is typically one of the first things a customer will notice when walking through the market. Make sure yours is clean and welcoming—no holes, no broken pieces hanging, nothing that could look dangerous. A white or black shelter is suggested as other colors will cast a tinted glow over your products, making some appear discolored. When laying out your vendor stall, remember to include space for shelter weights.

Easy to Navigate: If done strategically, the direction and shape in which you organize your tables will direct the movement of customers when they enter your vendor stall. When laying out your space, be careful when placing items on or near the ground as not to make them a tripping hazard. It's just as important to pay attention and move or adjust items if customers are knocking over or having trouble reaching products.

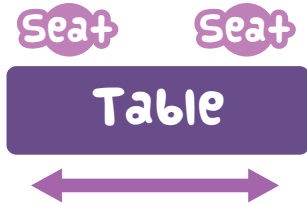
COMMON SETUPS

FOR BOOTH LAYOUTS AND SHELTERS

THINK ABOUT YOUR
PRODUCTS & CUSTOMERS

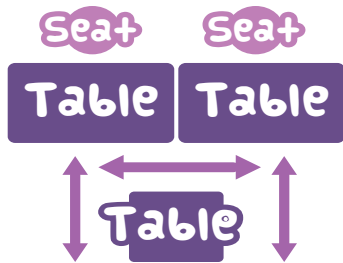
Booth Layouts

Your booth layout will depend on what you sell, but all stalls need to be inviting to attract customers in from the common market space. When laying out your booth, take a moment to look at your booth from a customer's point of view.



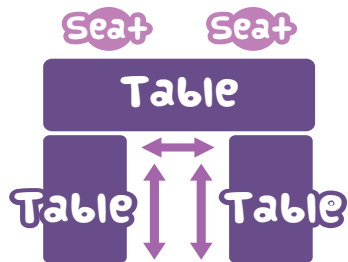
Straight Line

A simple and common booth design, this is easy to set up with little to no hazards for customers, but you will need to be creative with using vertical space to show off product and attract customers.



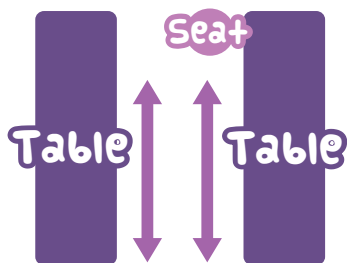
Open T

This setup adds more space to the straight line design. Be sure to leave enough room for customers to walk between the front and back tables, otherwise products can get knocked off and damaged.



U Shape

While this design creates the most square footage of tabletop retail space in your vendor stall, it limits room for customers to enter and move around, so it can easily end up feeling crowded.



Galley Style

The galley setup allows for easier customer traffic flow in comparison to the U shape design, but eliminates valuable retail surface square footage.

Booth Shelters

Farmers markets typically happen in an open space, which leaves vendors, customers, and products exposed to spring rain, summer sun, and fall breeze. Choosing the right protection for the right shelter is crucial for any market vendor.

Pop-Up Canopy

The most common shelter at a farmers market, these are convenient to transport and large enough for customers to find shelter under from rain and sun, but not easily set up by one person.



Patio Umbrellas

Patio, shade, or beach umbrellas are easy to set up and work well for small booths, but they can be troublesome on windy days, and don't provide much sun or rain protection for customers.



Vehicle Awning

These are uncommon in larger markets due to space constraints, but if market space and your vehicle allow for it, this type of shelter is easy for one person to transport and set up.



Cart

Typically larger, heavier, and more expensive, a cart can provide ideal retail space for your products, but it doesn't offer customers protection from sun and rain.



FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

HOW DO I ACCEPT FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS?

FARM FRESH FOOD FOR EVERYONE!

By accepting food assistance program benefits, your farmers market will be more inclusive to all members of the community regardless of their economic means. Beyond the community aspect, there are also economic benefits to participating in these programs. In 2016, the SNAP program alone represented \$66.5 billion spent on groceries across the country.

Farmers have an opportunity to partner with the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide farm fresh products to low-income Iowans. As part of the partnership, farmers receive wireless point-of-sale machines for use not only at farmers markets and roadside stands, but also on the farm. These machines allow farmers to accept Food Assistance Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards.



"SNAP" SHOT:



“THE WIRELESS EBT PROJECT STARTED IN 2005. IT IS AN 'ALL WIN' OPPORTUNITY FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES, FARMERS, FARMERS MARKETS, AND COMMUNITIES.”

- IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Your market may not accept SNAP benefits, but that doesn't mean you can't as a vendor!

HERE'S HOW DONNA WARHOVER OF MORNING GLORY FARM DID IT:



"We attended four markets, two of which weren't SNAP retailers. It's part of Morning Glory's mission to make sure that good, healthy food is affordable for everyone in our community. We wanted to be able to take SNAP, so we contacted the Iowa DHS SNAP coordinator directly to make it happen. She was great. We talked numerous times on the phone and she even drove to our farm to do a training. I recommend that other vendors get set up during the off-season before markets begin. The process is simple and so worth it."

SNAP, WIC, & SENIOR

CAN YOU ACCEPT THESE BENEFITS?

IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND LOCAL PRODUCTS

SNAP Program

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal program administered by the USDA Office of Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and managed by the **Iowa Department of**



Human Services (DHS). SNAP benefits can be used to purchase farm-fresh foods for the low-income household to eat, such as: breads and cereals; fruits and vegetables; meats, fish, and poultry; and dairy products. Seeds and plants that produce food can also be purchased.

1) Does your farmers market have a centralized SNAP station? (Often, these devices are at the table that has general market information.)

Yes: You're all set. Just ask the market manager to explain how the benefit system works at the market and learn what products can be purchased with SNAP dollars.

No: Even if your market doesn't have a centralized SNAP system, you can become a SNAP retailer yourself. As a general rule, farmers markets and vendors who qualify as "direct marketing farmers" are eligible to be authorized SNAP retailers. See Step 2.

2) How do I become a SNAP retailer myself?

Individual market vendors can apply to be a SNAP retailer. As such, they maintain their own POS (point of sale) and receive the consumer's benefits directly. To become a SNAP retailer, contact the SNAP Coordinator with the Iowa Wireless EBT Project at the Iowa Department of Human Services.

3) What about "Double Up Food Bucks?"

In Iowa, the Healthiest State Initiative manages the "Double Up Food Bucks" program, which offers SNAP recipients an opportunity to receive a dollar for dollar match up to \$10 when they purchase fruit and vegetables at the farmers market. Reach out to them (below right) to learn more.



WIC & Senior Programs

The **Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS)** manages the Iowa WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). WIC (Women, Infants & Children) provides supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding post-partum women, and infants and children up to 5 years of age, who are found to be at nutritional risk. The Senior FMNP provides low-income seniors with vouchers that can be exchanged for



eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs) at farmers markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.

1) Is your farmers market certified to accept WIC and Senior FMNP vouchers?

Yes: If the market has been authorized by IDALS, farmers market vendors that grow and sell local produce can accept Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers once they complete required training and an annual application. See Step 2.

No: The market manager must complete an IDALS FMNP Farmers Market Assurance Statement and the market must meet the following requirements: 1) Operate a minimum of two consecutive hours each week for a majority of weeks of the season, June 1 through October 31. 2) Have a minimum of three eligible certified vendors indicating intent to participate in the farmers market for the majority of weeks of the season. 3) Post the market hours and days of operation.

2) My market is certified. I want to be, too.

You must meet the following requirements: 1) You are 18 years or older and reside and grow eligible foods fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs within Iowa or a county adjacent to Iowa's border. 2) Sell produce only grown locally (Iowa or a county adjacent to Iowa). 3) Submit a completed and signed agreement to IDALS. 3) Participate in an IDALS FMNP training on rules and procedures and be in compliance with the rules while selling as an FMNP vendor. Any interested farmers market vendors should contact IDALS for the most up-to-date information.

Important Contacts	Phone
IDALS (WIC/Senior FMNP)	(515) 281-5321
DHS (SNAP/Wireless EBT Project)	(515) 281-4935
Healthiest State (Double Up Food Bucks)	(515) 309-3227

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OPTIMIZING PRODUCT MIX

EVALUATING THE ITEMS YOU BRING TO MARKET



MIX IT UP! WHAT CAN YOU OFFER?

For Allie and Thomas of Burrowing Owl Bakery, product mix meant variations of a single product. They started their stand by offering four or five varieties of tarts at each Iowa City market. Their repertoire grew to include twenty. "Simplicity is the best way to help a customer make a decision. It's also a smart strategy for the vendor," says Allie. "We wanted to focus on one thing and do it well. For us, that was tarts. We were known for tarts and within that category, we were able to diversify. At each market, we made sure to have both savory and sweet. Over time, we experimented with a lot of different combinations, but we were careful to keep the favorites."

“WE DIVERSIFIED THE FLAVORS WE OFFERED AND AFTER EIGHT YEARS HAVE CULTIVATED A DYNAMIC MIX. WE HAVE BOTH CONSISTENCY AND EXCITING SEASONALITY.”

- ALLIE GNADE & THOMAS AGRAN

The small Things that have a BIG Impact

Product diversity is a good thing, but be thoughtful about the items that you put time into producing. Optimizing your product list is an ongoing, repetitive process and takes time to hone. At the end of each season, go back to your list—consider adding new items or modifying those that didn't make money.

Here's where to start:

- Seek products that fold in well with your current operation.
- Add products that can be arranged or packaged together (e.g. salsa ingredients).
- Match your mix and amount of product you bring to the market to the need—especially for peak sale times like holidays. For example, customers may buy extra vegetables around July 4th to prepare a dish for their barbecue.
- Having the first or last of a product for the season brings customers to your stand and increases the likelihood of them buying their other items from you.
- Display your niche items prominently and use them to build rapport with your customers.



Find the Right Mix for YOU

Product mix for you might mean diversity within a niche. Instead of regular carrots, you grow purple, yellow, or red carrots. Maybe you offer pressed carrot juice or a baked good that incorporates carrots. The goal is to expand your product mix in a way that makes your stand more competitive without overextending your resources. Consider efficiency, creativity, profit margin, and the realities of your customers' shopping habits.

A FARMER'S PERSPECTIVE ON FINDING THE RIGHT PRODUCT MIX

WHY A BIG VARIETY
OF PRODUCT YIELDS LARGER SALES

Dairy

JOSIE ROZUM
DAN & DEBBIE'S CREAMERY

Cheese Curds, Milk, Ice Cream: "Our farmers market products are geared towards items that customers can easily carry and consume on-site. We offer convenient grab-and-go sizes at the market because dairy is temperature-sensitive and a gallon of milk or half-gallon of ice cream doesn't sell well at big markets where people tend to walk around for a couple of hours. The pint-sized milk and single servings of ice cream are also an inexpensive way for customers to try different flavors. The chocolate milk is a great option for kids eating their breakfast at the market. We offer five varieties of our signature cheese curds, two flavors of milk, and five flavors (up from three last year) of ice cream."



Produce

ERIK SESSIONS
PATCHWORK GREEN FARM

200 Vegetable Varieties: "I think it's very important to have a wide array of products available just like a good produce section at a grocery store. Customers come back week after week for favorites but often delight in and purchase the well-presented surprises. Our market tables are full of a wide assortment of vegetables, herbs, and flowers from June through November. We keep popular items like lettuces on the table at every market through variety selection and succession planting, and customers know they can almost always find their favorites at our stand. We also plant for the seasons. Shoppers find peas in June, beans in July, tomatoes in August, winter squash in September, and Brussels sprouts in October. Many vegetable crops also make for a healthier crop rotation in the field and we can spread the annual risks—like weather and pests—out among crops. And, simply, it's more interesting to grow a wide variety of crops."

Livestock

MELISSA DOTY
DOTY ANGUS CATTLE CO.

Beef Sticks, Jerky, Steaks, Roasts, and Ground Beef: "We use the farmers market as an opportunity to talk to customers about doing more quarters, halves, and wholes. I feel like it's the least expensive way for us to advertise. People want to see who you are. It gives us a way to get in front of that customer. They can ask us questions, try a small amount to decide if they like it, and then get a large quantity. At farmers markets, we do samples of beef sticks, beef jerky, and all-beef hot dogs—and that gets people to our stand where they realize we have steaks, roasts, and ground beef as well."



Cut Flowers

ERIC AND ANNE FRANZENBURG
PHEASANT RUN FARM

70 Varieties of Flowers: "We got into cut flowers because we saw an opening in the market and an opportunity to fill that niche. We also grow tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers, but those mostly go to the grocery stores. We don't bring those to the market because we aren't interested in competing against all the other vendors with that produce. Our cut flowers are marketed to florists, weddings and special events, and farmers markets—farmers markets making up about half of our cut flower sales. We sell primarily cut stems, but bouquets as well. Depending on the market, one gets sold more than the other—it depends on the clientele. We learned over time that the customers at one market prefer cut stems, and customers at another prefer bouquets. We try new things, and if they don't work we'll try something else. Farmers markets are a part of our diversified marketing approach."

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THE POWER OF BRANDING

YOUR FARM AND PRODUCTS



WHY BRANDING IS KEY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Linley Cavin believes branding sets a business apart from others in its category. As the owner and designer behind Matted Ink, she's created a lifestyle brand centered around inspirational, intentional, and meaningful pieces—from apparel and accessories to prints and mugs. "Markets can be very oversaturated with choices and you oftentimes only have a split second to grab someone's attention," she says. "Great branding does this."

Linley designed Matted Ink's branding around three principles: a love for rural living, spreading positive messages into the world, and her faith. Sticking to these core values helps her stay true to what she stands for. "My brand aesthetics are rooted in minimalistic typography, timeless colors, and moody tones pulled from the countryside. You'll find these carried throughout everything I do—from my logo to my product line to my market displays. To me, a strong brand is created in the details and doesn't waiver from its core values."



“TAKE TIME TO CRAFT YOUR BRAND PRINCIPLES AND STORY.
AT THE END OF THE DAY, PEOPLE WANT TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE.
A GREAT BRAND UTILIZES ITS STORY TO PROVIDE CONNECTION.”
- LINLEY CAVIN, OWNER & DESIGNER BEHIND MATTED INK

BRANDING 101 FOR VENDORS

Your brand is the public-facing part of your overall marketing plan. How customers perceive your brand can drive new business and increase awareness of who you are and what you do. Branding can increase the value of business, attract new customers, and build the trust and loyalty that leads to recurring shoppers. From an eye-catching logo to consistent colors, there are several elements you need to consider when developing a brand that showcases you and your business.

Personality: Think of your brand as the personality of your small business. What sets it apart? What are its values? Its mission? How did it get started? How do your products and/or services fit into the customer's life? If you're already doing business, talk to your customers. Ask if there was any initial confusion about who you are or what you sell. A brand can feel vague at first, but it will become more specific as you identify what you want customers to feel and perceive when they interact with your business.

Color: Colors are powerful. They can inspire feelings and set moods. The colors you choose to use in your branding will affect the overall look and feel of your business. Take some time to research the psychology of color as it relates to the rest of your brand's image and the products or services you are going to sell. Choose two to four colors—you can create additional variation by adjusting their hues.

Typeface: Choose one or two fonts to use consistently on all of your materials—signage, business cards, social media, website, and more. The details matter! Is it easy to read? Does it reflect your business personality? What emotions does it evoke?

Logo: A logo is both the first impression and longterm identity of your business. It's worth investing a professional designer's help here to ensure you have a beautiful, high-quality logo that can be used in many ways and on a variety of materials.

Consistency: Strive to be consistent in how you present your business. You reinforce your brand through every word and visual you use in your marketing materials, vendor booth, product labels and packaging, and customer service. A consistently delivered brand message will lead to an increased value of your company's products and/or services.

BRANDING SPOTLIGHT:

TIPS FROM A MARKET VENDOR DOING IT RIGHT

BRANDING YOUR
BUSINESS IS IMPORTANT!



JOSIE ROZUM "SPILLS" THE STORY BEHIND BRANDING DAN AND DEBBIE'S CREAMERY

Family-Owned, Operated, and Branded:

"We wanted a logo and brand that was family-oriented. So we sat down as a family and made a list of a bunch of words and phrases that matched what we wanted people to see the creamery as. Local. All-natural. Family-owned. Non-GMO. We also found pictures online that had the feel that we wanted for our brand."

It All Started with the Name:

"If we would have named the creamery something else, our branding strategy would have been completely different. We decided to go with Dan and Debbie's Creamery because Dan and Debbie are my parents. They started the farm from scratch. By naming the creamery after them, we're able to share and continue their story, pay tribute to them and their hard work, and show appreciation to farmers."

Options on a Zero-Dollar Marketing Budget:

"For many farmers and small businesses going to the market, their marketing budget is probably zero. The same is true for us. But it's not impossible to have a good brand on a zero-dollar budget these days. Social media is fantastic for telling your story. As we've grown over the last three years, our approach to marketing and branding has really been about storytelling—sharing how we got started and what we're doing in a very genuine way. We use social media, our website, a blog on our website, newsletters, and even press releases to tell our story. The media and consumers love local businesses. It takes extra work to put together a press release about a new product you're doing or something unique that's happened, but it's so worth it because you're probably going to get some publicity and free marketing out of it."

Investing in Professional Design:

"We felt that branding was so important that we wanted to have our logo professionally done. We met with a few designers and found one we connected with and who understood what we were trying to accomplish. We gave her that list of words and the visual examples of branding we liked. She was the one to create the look of our logo with the boy and girl. She also created a one-page branding guide with our color palette and fonts. When we roll out a new product, we reinvest in the logo and branding. We're able to share those branding guidelines with a designer to utilize in new labels and packaging. Even though I have some design experience and can do some things internally, two heads are better than one. It's important to know what you think of the product, but an outside perspective from a professional (who is also a consumer) is so valuable. And when you work with a professional designer, you know it's done right—the files are in the right format and everything is sized correctly for sending off to the printer."

Branding is More than Your Logo—It's Your Vibe:

"Whether people see us in our store, at the market, or on social media, we want them to feel that same farmhouse, small town, rustic, old-fashioned vibe. The barn red, smoky blue, and vintage green on our product labels also show up in our store and market stall. In our store, we have plaid linens and chalkboard signs, which we bring to the market."

The Evolution of a Brand:

"The cool part about being a small business is that if you have a really solid logo, you can still evolve, do rebranding, and make some changes to how you promote yourself, but keep that logo the same. I love that our logo is so versatile that we can make tweaks for a new, different product, but people will still see the Dan and Debbie's logo and branded elements."

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This work is supported by the Farmers Market
Promotion Program from the USDA Agricultural
Marketing Service.