

CULTIVATING LOCAL CHECKLIST

Selling at farmers' markets

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Starting or diversifying a farm business requires careful planning, especially when exploring direct sales channels. Through the Cultivating Local project, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has developed a series of nine checklists to support you in your direct-to-consumer sales journey.

Necessary background research

Select your farmers' market. When searching for a farmers' market consider the location, customer base, market fees, and the market's values. Browse potential markets on the Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO) website, and visit the markets before deciding where you want to sell.



Ensure compliance with food safety requirements. Local Public Health Inspectors regularly inspect farmers' markets and can help you navigate food safety requirements.



Insurance. You will need specific insurance to sell at a farmers' market, even if the market is insured. You can find a group insurance program through FMO.



Getting farmers' market ready



For tips on marketing, merchandising, displays, and best practices for sales, visit the FMO's website to complete the Market Vendor Certification Program. It is free for members and \$40 for non-members.



Consider applying for the free Foodland Ontario program to access recognizable branding materials.



Develop communication materials for your staff at the farmers' market. Think of the story behind your product, how it is grown, and the story of your farm. Refer to checklist five for marketing tips. Ensure to use your branding to boost your reach.



Pricing strategy. Consider the additional overhead costs associated with selling at a farmers' market and incorporate them into your pricing strategy. Avoid overextending yourself by attending too many markets. You can use the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness' "Performance analysis by marketing channel" calculator to help determine pricing.

Finding success at the market



Use social media to let customers know which markets you will be attending. Refer to checklist six for social media tips.



Use tools to track sales and manage the inventory sent to each market effectively.



Farmers' Markets Ontario has resources for members including a market supplies checklist, tips on how to shine at a market, and how to create great market displays.

In response to consumer demand and growing interest in opportunities to sell local, OFA's Cultivating Local project has developed a series of nine checklists, nine recorded workshops, a resource hub, and a final report. To learn more, visit: ofa.on.ca/cultivating-local/



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