

Building better farmers' markets

Farmers' markets are one of the primary sources of fresh and local food for Albertans.

Customers enjoy connecting directly with the producers, processors and artisans, and welcome the opportunity to build an informed and trusting relationship.

The 2012 Alternative Agricultural Markets in Alberta study found that the combined market value of farmers' markets and farm retail was approximately \$878 million. On average, farmers' market patrons spend \$55 per visit and \$671 over the course of a year.

Customers agree that farmers' markets are one of the best sources of local food, but if the industry is to continue expanding, it is up to individual farmers' markets to encourage patrons to visit more often and spend more money on each visit.

The Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program Guidelines set the conditions for obtaining official Alberta approved farmers' market status. Once these basic expectations are met, markets can focus on how to enhance their market experience for vendors and clients alike. To help guide farmers' markets through this improvement process, Program staff have identified a list of ten "best practices" which, if implemented along with the Guidelines, may lead to

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Best Practices for Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets

The Vendor's Role
Start with a fresh, quality product that is showcased in the stall. Engage clients to educate, build a relationship and meet their needs and desires.

Evaluation and Statistics
Stay in touch with customer desires, track success, and make improvements through gathering statistics and evaluating the market.

Managing and Leading the Market
Create a positive environment that focuses on promoting the people and products through a passion for local food, building relationships, experimenting with change and personal development.

Market Governance
Use a combination of sponsor, community and vendor representatives to get a broad perspective and train governance members on their roles and responsibilities.

Planning and Strategy
Are you a destination, educator, family outing or community hub? Build a shared understanding of the market direction and foster partnerships to achieve it.

Location, Atmosphere, and Layout
Visibility, accessibility, ambiance draw clients to the market. A planned approach to vendor placement draws clients through the market.

Vendor Recruitment, Selection and Expectations
Be intentional and clear in your selection and expectations. Entice or reward desired vendors through stall pricing.

Community Engagement
Demographics, local organizations and businesses, history, or food trends can define your community. Find innovative, mutually beneficial ways to get the community involved.

Market Promotions
Tell a story through a combination of communications mediums and keep the message fresh. Leverage resources to get the most out of your promotions.

Market Activities and Special Events
Draw clients to the market with special events and activities that focus on demographics, promoting vendors, and educating clients.

Farmers' Market

While Albertans acknowledge that farmers' markets are one of the best sources for local food, the opportunity for growth of farmers' markets is grounded in our ability to encourage patrons to visit more often and spend more money on each visit. The following best practices help to make Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets vibrant and successful.

For more details on these best practices and Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets visit:
[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620).

Alberta Government

A graphic representation of the ten best practices.

Farmers' Markets from page 1

a more vibrant market. The ten key areas are:

Managing and leading the market

While there is not a firm consensus on the attributes of a great market manager, there is general agreement that managers need to have a passion for local food and the market itself.

Market governance

The make-up of the governance team should be influenced by the philosophy of the market. While community members help to ground the market in client needs, vendor members help to ensure that vendors have a voice in the decision making process.

Planning and strategy

A successful market needs to have a strategic plan and clear direction.

Location, environment and layout

A good location includes street presence/visibility, customer traffic, visibility and accessibility from main roads.

Vendor recruitment, selection and expectations

Vendor selection is an essential consideration that impacts the vibrancy of a market.



The City Market Downtown in Edmonton assesses market attendance through hourly traffic sample counts at each market entrance.

Community engagement

Market managers overwhelmingly agree on the importance of having a connection to the local community.

Market promotions

The most common communication methods are social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and word of mouth.

Market activities and special events

Special events and activities draw customers to the market and are focused on engaging specific demographics, promoting vendors, and educating patrons.

The vendor's role

Vendors are the core of a successful market. While the market controls vendor selection, the vendors play an important role as they directly engage market shoppers.

Evaluation and statistics

Feedback and statistics help the market to stay in touch with customer desires, track success, and make improvements.

To obtain a copy of the complete report, visit [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620?opendocument#best_practices](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620?opendocument#best_practices).

For more information on the Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Program, click the links on page one, or contact Eileen Kotowich, Farmers' Market Specialist, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry at eileen.kotowich@gov.ab.ca, or 780-853-8223. ●

Coming soon ...



From January 31 through February 5 over 200 farm direct marketers from across North America attended the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) convention held in Vancouver and Abbotsford B.C.

Six Agriculture and Forestry staff were privileged to learn from the BC2016 experience. They were joined by an additional 13 Alberta farm direct operators.

The fall issue of *Field Notes* will feature in-depth details of the trip, including location highlights, lessons learned, and tips and tricks to improve your own farm direct marketing operation, don't miss it!

Farm and ranch workplace legislation

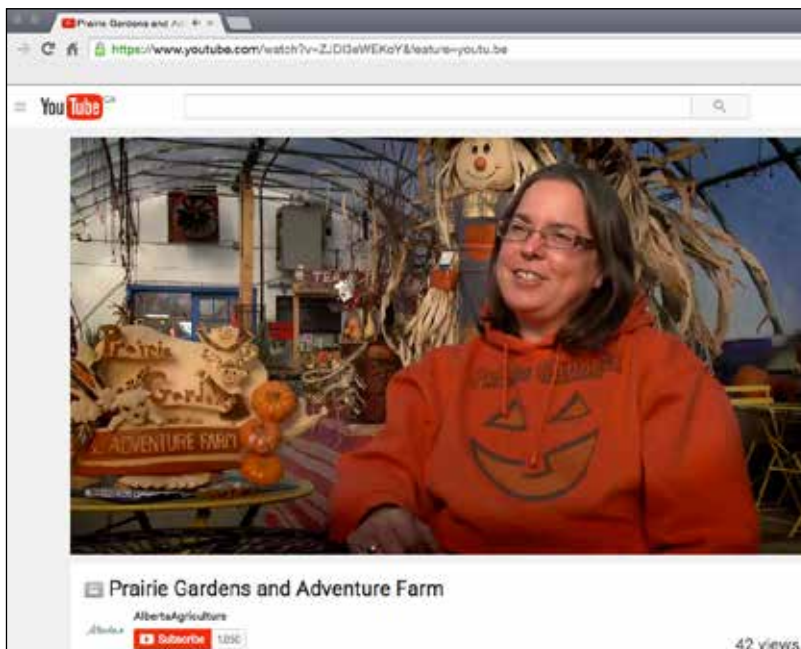
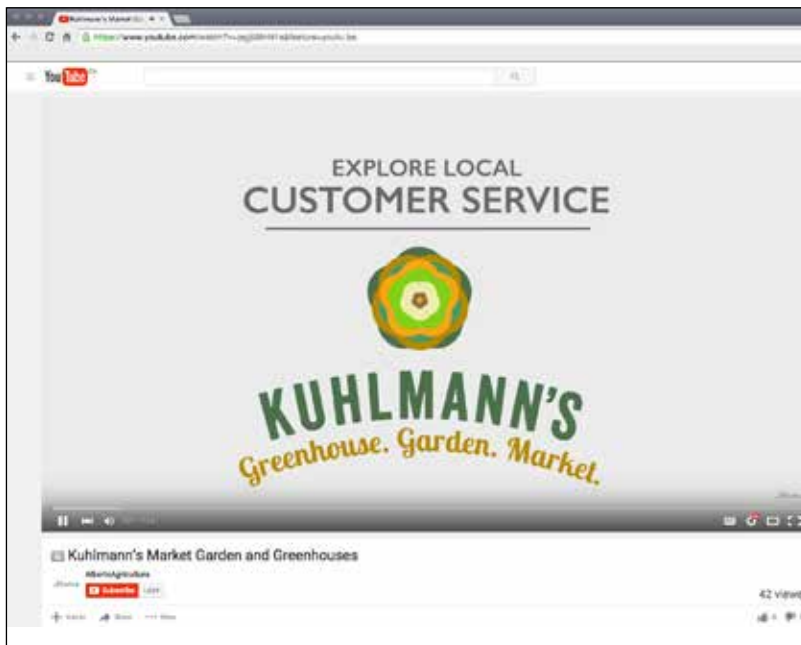
For up-to-date information on the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act* and consultation process, visit www.alberta.ca/farm-and-ranch.cfm.

Farm direct marketer videos now online!

Explore Local is pleased to announce that the first two videos in our marketer profile series are now available for viewing. We hope to produce additional videos in the coming months, in the meantime, please enjoy these!

Part 1: Kuhlmann's Market Garden and Greenhouse

Staff are the backbone of your operation. How they interact with your customers can form an immediate and lasting



impression for your farm direct business. Anita McDonald, family member and greenhouse manager with Kuhlmann's Market Garden & Greenhouses, shares tried and true tips on building an exceptional team and creating experiences that keep your customers coming back. Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jegj5I8nN1s&feature=youtu.be>

Part 2: Prairie Gardens and Adventure Farm

For Tam Andersen, owner and Director of Fun at Prairie Gardens and Adventure Farm, success is delivering an experience worth paying for time and time again. In this video Tam shares her "customer driven" philosophy and strategies to help you engage both customers and staff, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJDI3eWEKoY&feature=youtu.be>

Regional Producer Profiles project

Last year's pilot project saw the creation of 5 profiles featuring Calgary area farm direct marketing producers. This collection of profiles celebrates the success of regional producers and the uniqueness of their products.

The goal of the Regional Profiles project is to present producers in an honest, straightforward and accessible way that promotes open communication and interaction.

We are continuing the project this year and plan to feature farm direct operators from across Alberta. If you would like your operation profiled, please contact Mimi Lee, New Venture Economist, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry at mimi.lee@gov.ab.ca or 780-968-3552



At left are screen shots taken from the Explore Local website of the two online videos now available for viewing. Above is a photo of one of the Regional Producer Profiles also available on the [Explore Local](http://Explore Local website) website.

Upcoming Events

WEBINAR SERIES

MARKETING ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

MAR 8, 9 AM MST/MDT, FREE

In this webinar, Cidnee Stephens of Strategies for Success and a seasoned small business marketer will introduce a less complicated way to look at your marketing and help you navigate through all of today's shiny marketing objects to help you define the RIGHT tools for you, and an AFFORDABLE approach to take for YOUR BUSINESS.

Registration link: <https://albertaagriculture.webex.com/albertaagriculture/onstage/g.php?MTID=ec7b46dc4d015b01a1131fe47a97a41fb>

WORKSHOP SERIES

AGRITOURISM AND FARM DIRECT MARKETING

FEB 23 (Leduc)

FEB 24 (Airdrie)

Registration deadline: FEB 16

9 AM - 3:30 PM \$25 (incl. lunch)

Mark and Angela Saunders lead the award-winning Saunders Farm near Ottawa, Ontario. They have had over one million guests and now welcome nearly 60,000 people each year to their Haunting Season. The Saunders will explore effective customer service strategies, staff management best practices, training protocols, pricing for profit and sustainable marketing products such as farm dinners and events.

For more information: Colin Gosselin, colin.gosselin@gov.ab.ca or 780-968-3518 (toll-free in AB, dial 310-0000 then the number).

ALBERTA FARM FRESH SCHOOL

FEB 25-26 Olds, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

This two-day conference is for producers to learn, network and build capacity in direct market fruit, vegetable and livestock production and marketing.

For more information: Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association, 403-558-0189, info@albertafarmfresh.com, or Organic Alberta, 1-855-521-2400, info@organicalberta.org.

GETTING INTO FARMERS' MARKETS

MAR 9 (Medicine Hat)

9 AM - 4 PM, \$25 (incl. lunch)

Registration deadline: MAR 2

This one-day event examines selling food products at Alberta approved farmers' markets. With more than 130 Alberta approved farmers' markets and over \$700 million in sales in 2012, farmers' markets are big business in Alberta. Entering with the right skills can shorten your learning curve and enhance your success.

For more information: Delores Serafin, delores.serafin@gov.ab.ca or 780-427-4611 (toll-free in AB, dial 310-0000 then the number).

HORTSNACKS IN THE WEEDS-INVASIVE SPECIES IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

MAR 22, Edmonton

9 AM - 4 PM \$25 (incl. lunch)

Registration deadline MAR 14

Can you tell knotweed from purple loosestrife? Himalayan balsam from Ox-eye daisy? If not this workshop is for you! These invasive species and their cronies will be featured in this

interactive workshop. Time will be spent on the basics of plant identification, with lots of hands on time. Barry Gibbs of Alberta Invasive Species Council Executive Director will be on hand to discuss the council and their newly formed "spotter" network.

For more information contact: Dustin Morton, dustin.morton@gov.ab.ca or 780-679-1314 (toll-free in AB, dial 310-0000 then the number)

WHAT'S EATING YOU? TAKING BIOCONTROLS AND INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

MAR 23, Thiel's Greenhouse, 4916-45 Street, Bruderheim, AB, FREE

Thrips got you seeing red? Aphids sucking the life out of you? Suzanne Wainwright-Evans of Buglady Consulting will be leading this hands-on workshop looking at the latest advances in biocontrols, their application, and maximizing their return. With over a decade in the business, Suzanne has been at the forefront of this growing industry and is sure to have something for everybody in this interactive one-day workshop.

Call 1-800-387-6030 to register, or for more information, Dustin Morton at 780-679-1314.

EVENTS



For more information on any of these events, visit explorelocal.ca and click on the "Events" tab.

Field Notes is published up to four times per year and is available online at explorelocal.ca. For further information about anything you've read here, or to be included on our email list, please contact Donna Skorworodko at donna.skoworodko@gov.ab.ca.