

Information Sheet: How to Start a Farmers' Market

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) is committed to the long term success of approved farmers' markets in Alberta. One of the ways this can be achieved is by ensuring that individuals/community groups have all the information they need in order to make the best decisions for their proposed farmers' market prior to the market opening.

Checklist

- Bring together a team of advisors/partners to assess the feasibility of starting a market in your community.
 - ➔ Assess the need and potential support for the market in the community
 - ➔ Potential site analysis
 - ➔ Potential customer base and target clientele
 - ➔ Assess potential revenue and costs for the market; sources of funding;
 - ➔ Assess potential vendor profitability
 - ➔ Potential Vendor recruitment: types wanted, where to find them, optimal vendor mix, etc.

- Determine optimum organizational structure considering all options – non-profit society, sponsored by a non-profit community organization, new generation cooperative, for-profit, etc.

- Consider the benefits of becoming an Alberta approved farmers' market vs a non-approved farmers' market.

- Review the Guidelines that govern approved farmers' markets at www.sunnygirl.ca or receive a copy by calling Eileen Kotowich at 780-853-8223 (dial 310-0000 first for toll free access) or email eileen.kotowich@gov.ab.ca.

- Form an interim Board of Directors or Advisory Committee (if sponsored) to develop many of the following items and to oversee the operations of the market and ensure it is operating in such a way as to achieve the vision of the market
 - ➔ Define market goals that will act as guideposts, keeping the market on the right path and which help to assess your progress
 - ➔ Market mission statement formed reflecting the market's goals
 - ➔ Develop a business plan that includes budgets and human resource needs which is reviewed and updated annually
 - ➔ By-laws written to govern how the organization will operate (sample available)
 - ➔ Develop a manager's job description (sample available) and determine remuneration
 - ➔ Develop record keeping systems so activities can be tracked and evaluated
 - ➔ Develop annual financial budgeting process and financial record keeping system
 - ➔ Develop vendor record keeping system for current, past and potential vendors



- ➔ Develop a vendor application form (sample available)
- ➔ Develop a record keeping system for important correspondence, forms and conversations
- ➔ Ensure Board members are available to assist the manager when needed, especially in the early stages of the market

- Hire a market manager who is willing to undertake all the responsibilities and undergo the required training.
- Develop a preliminary budget for the market including proposed revenue (proposed table rentals, etc) and proposed expenses (liability insurance, advertising, facility rental, signage, manager salary, etc).
- Obtain the application form to become an Alberta approved farmers' market from ARD: available online at www.sunnygirl.ca or by calling Eileen Kotowich at 780-853-8223 (dial 310-0000 first for toll free access) or email eileen.kotowich@gov.ab.ca. This form must be completed in full before it will be considered.

Applications take two - four weeks to process by ARD and then an additional two weeks for Alberta Health Services to process the farmers' market food permit application.

Allow for a minimum of four weeks prior to opening date to ensure all processes can be completed fully.

- Contact the local public officer of health and express interest in starting a farmers' market. He/she will provide you with input and requirements regarding your location, access to running water and washrooms, concession vendors, etc. Be advised that approved farmers' markets receive special status under the Alberta *Public Health Act* Food Regulation, allowing food vendors to produce some low-risk foods in home kitchens. Food vendors at non-approved farmers' markets do not receive the same status. For a copy of the Alberta *Public Health Act* and Food Regulation, go to www.gp.alberta.ca.
- Set proposed market opening date, dates of markets, hours of operation, etc.
- Secure a suitable location. This may involve a letter of understanding or lease arrangements.
- Arrange for liability insurance for the market. Proof of insurance is required for approved farmers' markets. It is a best practice for all farmers' markets to have adequate insurance coverage. \$5 million is recommended.
- Gather a list of a minimum of 10 vendors who "make, bake, or grow" the items which they are planning to sell.

- Upon receiving approval, contact:
- public officer of health to obtain “Farmers’ Market Food Permit”
 - vendors
 - media to advise of proposed new market details

Other Resources

- **Farmers’ Market Program, ARD:** ARD manages the Alberta approved farmers’ market program on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture. Information about the program and resources are available at www.sunnygirl.ca or by calling Eileen Kotowich at 780-853-8223 (dial 310-0000 first for toll free access) or email eileen.kotowich@gov.ab.ca.
- **Alberta Farmers’ Market Association:** AFMA is a voluntary membership, non-profit organization that provides direction and support to member markets, vendors, managers, boards and sponsors through advocacy, education, promotion and innovation. To become a member, download a membership form at: www.albertamarkets.com or call 1-800-628-0624.
- **Marketing Food Safely manual:** Developed in partnership with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and the Alberta Farmers' Market Association, the Marketing Food Safely home study manual is a distance delivery education tool for farm direct marketers. The manual is a reference guide, a workbook and a planning tool. It focuses on marketing activities, not production or processing. It is available for download as a pdf at www.explorelocal.ca. If you would prefer a hard copy, it is available for purchase through the Alberta Farmers’ Market Association.