

Chapter 4:

Meet Our Marketers

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will have:

- Background information on the three fictional marketers used throughout the manual to describe the food safety opportunities and challenges that farm direct marketing presents

Chapter 4: Meet Our Marketers

The following case examples do not provide comprehensive information. They are meant to illustrate certain concepts. To fully understand the concepts in each chapter, read the manual information in conjunction with the case examples.

As a direct marketer, you will likely face some of the same food safety issues that our fictional marketers face. Although your products may be different, the food safety requirements will be the same. Each case example shows the major food safety issues in one of three different food types:

- Meat (potentially hazardous)
- Produce (perishable)
- Baked goods (generally considered non-hazardous)

Chapters 6 and 7 highlight only the legislative requirements for food safety. You must know all the federal and provincial regulations that impact your business.

Follow our marketers as they develop best practices to address the food safety issues they face. Read the following chapters and apply a similar process to your business to build your own food safety plan.



Hogs and Hens at Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets



Background

Mike and Elizabeth operate a 700-acre farm in the Peace region of Alberta. They have three children aged 10, 14 and 17. The farm has been in Mike's family for over 50 years. Ten years ago, to supplement their farm income, they started direct marketing chickens from the farm to local customers.

Eight years ago they began selling at the local farmers' market which operates year round on Thursdays. While researching this marketing opportunity, they discovered that all meat sold must be slaughtered at a government inspected facility. Since then, all their birds have been slaughtered at provincially inspected facilities. Because of the rave reviews they received from their customers, five years ago they started selling at a large urban, approved farmers' market in central Alberta.

Products and Marketing Channels

Two years ago, increasing input costs and decreasing commodity prices forced Mike and Elizabeth to make a decision about the operation of the farm. They either needed to expand their production capability or focus on the farm direct marketing aspect of their business. They decided to grow their farm direct marketing operation and convert more of their grain land into pasture. They increased their production of meat products to include free range turkeys and chickens for sale through the farmers' markets.

At the urban farmers' market, they invested in a permanent booth and an on-site freezer. The chickens and turkeys are sold whole and frozen.

Future Opportunities

Mike and Elizabeth have always raised a few hogs for personal consumption. Over the last two years they have increased their production and are testing their pork products at the local farmers' market.

They sell their pork as ready-to-eat ham kubassa, and frozen cuts and breakfast sausages. They plan to sell their pork products at the urban farmers' market next year. All their animals are slaughtered and the meat is processed at provincially inspected facilities.

The manager of an outdoor farmers' market on the British Columbia side of the Peace region approached Mike and Elizabeth about selling their pork and poultry at her market. Aware that selling outside Alberta has implications, they are still considering this opportunity.



Green Thumbs at Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets

Background

Liane and her sister Pam operate a large market garden in central Alberta. They sell from the farm gate and at five weekly approved farmers' markets between Edmonton and Calgary. The size of their operation requires them to have additional staff: some who work strictly at the farm and some who work at both the farm and the farmers' markets. They attend a year round market in Edmonton, plus two seasonal indoor and two outdoor markets.

Products and Marketing Channels

Liane and Pam offer a full range of fresh vegetables including cucumbers, zucchini, pumpkin, squash, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, carrots, peas and beans. The cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers are grown in the greenhouse, giving them an early crop to take to the farmers' markets. They sell their vegetables both bagged and bulk by the kilogram.

They also have five acres of strawberries, sold primarily fresh as U-pick and at the farmers' markets. Strawberries are sold by the basket. They process some strawberries into jam. Carrots and cucumbers are processed into pickles that are sold at the year round market. A neighbouring bed and breakfast uses their strawberry jam and displays it for sale.

Future Opportunities

Liane and Pam's regular customers are asking for a greater selection of pre-picked products at their farm. To meet this demand, the sisters are considering building a small farm store where they could also sell refreshments.

Demand for their fresh products is growing, particularly at the year round market. Their current cold storage needs to be replaced and expanded.





The Happy Baker at an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market



Background

Heidi sells her home baked goods at a medium sized, approved farmers' market in southern Alberta. She has been selling at the farmers' market for five years and enjoys the experience. She has a loyal customer base. Many of the other vendors are her neighbours and friends. The farmers' market is open from April to the end of October with a Christmas market in November.

Products

Heidi bakes bread, buns and cookies. She recently introduced fruit pies: saskatoon, strawberry, saskatoon rhubarb and strawberry rhubarb. Her pies are her best selling product with sales growing every week. All her products are currently sold fresh.

Future Opportunities

Heidi is evaluating a number of opportunities for business expansion to provide her with a year round income from her pies. These include selling to a teahouse, expanding her pie line to include other types and adding frozen pies.

Olga, the owner of a local teahouse, recently approached Heidi. Olga's business is located on a quaint piece of property just outside town and attracts several busloads of tourists each week. Olga feels Heidi's pies would sell very well at her teahouse.

At a recent conference, Heidi met market gardeners, Liane and Pam, and is considering making pies using their pumpkins and strawberries.

Heidi cannot supply all the pies for fresh sales at the market and teahouse from her kitchen. She is considering expanding her pie line at the market to include baked and unbaked frozen pies.

Summary

You have now met our fictional marketers. These case examples will highlight the primary food safety considerations related to meat, produce and baked goods. The experiences of Mike, Elizabeth, Pam, Liane and Heidi do not illustrate all the food safety issues that may impact your business. It's up to you to learn about the food safety issues for your own business and develop strategies to reduce the risk of a food safety incident.

What's Next

Additional information to the case examples is provided in subsequent chapters. Some chapters have examples from all of the cases while other chapters describe only one situation.

Do you know what FATTOM is? Danger Zone? Hint: it's not an overweight man with high blood pressure. In the next chapter you will learn about the common conditions that lead to foodborne illness, so please read on and find out more about the Danger Zone and other potentially hazardous conditions.

