

Selling at a Farmers' Market



Introduction

Farmers' markets are markets, usually held out-of-doors, where farmers can sell their produce to the public. Products at such markets are renowned for being locally-grown, very fresh, and sold directly to the public, without going through a middle man. Farmers' markets often feature additive-free and organic produce and there is a growing demand for 'value-added' products.

Farmers' markets are an ideal way to test out your ideas at low cost and low risk. A farmers' market can be an ideal opportunity for the large or small producer to sell directly to the public. It provides a way to market products that benefits consumers in a direct way.

Some of the types of produce sold includes organic vegetables, home baked goods, herbs and spices. The farmers' market is a niche market and there is a growing demand for suppliers especially for 'value-added' products.

These markets tend to thrive close to large centres of population, with ample car parking available. Much of the development has taken place in the east of Ireland. However, with a growing population combined with an increasing demand for fresh produce, expansion has occurred throughout Ireland.

The Market

Farmers' markets are a serious retail force in Ireland and have developed further over the past six years at a remarkable rate. At present there are over 80 such markets in the country and that number is increasing. The markets help to forge links between local food producers and the public. For small producers in particular these markets help to increase turnover and can give a greater control over pricing.

As sometimes direct sales are the only option for the small scale producer they can also help provide greater security by building up customer loyalty.

Farmers' markets are a developing market and this has resulted in a demand for both suppliers and consumers. In particular if you can offer a 'value-added' product then selling at a farmers market may be an ideal opportunity. In addition, the more sellers that participate, the more appeal the market has and the more customers will begin to come to the market.



Fact Sheet No. 40
May 2006

This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.

All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website
www.teagasc.ie

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Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources.

Joining a Farmers Market

If you are interested in participating as a vendor in a farmers market, the time and locations of markets can be found at www.irelandmarkets.com and www.bordbia.ie

It is important to research the location, space, availability and restrictions. For example, there are several requirements for a stall: Table, canopy/umbrella, scales if necessary, bags for produce, dust pan and brush, cloths, markets and card for price display, basin, flask of hot water, soap and towel. Cleanliness is vital and you need to take full responsibility for waste disposal and hygiene around your stall, both during and after market hours. If selling food products it is essential that they are produced to the highest standard of hygiene and are of consistent quality. A Guidance note 16 on 'Food Stalls' is available at the Food Safety Authority.

It is recommended that all stallholders producing low-risk foods in their own kitchens comply with the regulations in I.S 344.2002 produced by the NSAI and available from ILI, Northumberland House, 42/44 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4. Telephone 01 - 8576730

It may also help if you have a greenhouse to extend seasons or to develop specific niches.

Establishment Costs and Profit Margins

Each seller must determine his or her approach to pricing and merchandising. It is necessary to know all production and associated costs. Costs are also involved in marketing including transportation, advertising, containers, signs, stall fees, insurance, and the time spent on the market. Growers can get better-than-wholesale prices by selling direct at farmers' markets.

It is essential to have an estimate of what the demand for certain products may be. Some types of produce such as carrots, tomatoes or apples will be sold in large quantities while other minor vegetables will not be in as great a demand. Take a positive attitude when pricing, emphasising the quality and value of the product. Pricing the product fairly is also advised. Surplus produce may be marketed to restaurants and local supermarkets.

The price to rent a stall varies depending on the market, but the larger ones generally charge between €40 and €50 per week. A €5 levy is normally charged for stalls that need electricity.

Each seller must also cover insurance costs. Many farmers' markets purchase group insurance on behalf of the market vendors. Individual sellers should check their farm or personal insurance policies concerning coverage of sales in a farmers' market situation. Insurance costs will vary depending on coverage, community, and market size.

Links

Irish Food Markets Traders Association

www.marketsofireland.com

Environmental Health Officers Association

www.ehoa.ie

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

www.fsai.ie

Link between Irish Food and Drink suppliers and existing potential customers

www.bordbia.ie

National Standards Authority of Ireland

www.nsai.ie

www.standards.ie

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