

Setting up a Farmers' Market



Introduction

Farmers' markets give local growers and producers the opportunity to sell their own produce directly to consumers, i.e. "local fresh high quality produce for local people". All products should have been grown, reared, caught, brewed, pickled, baked, smoked or processed by the stallholder. The markets are an ideal opportunity for farmers to source new customers and customers to source new suppliers. Local producers rent an area or stall. Selling directly to the consumer gives greater control over pricing; there are no intermediaries, so there is potential for a larger return per unit. The markets host a range of locally grown produce and crafts and can facilitate the creation of a culture of enterprise within an area, county or region. They can also have positive spin-off effects for local businesses. Some of the types of produce sold include organic vegetables, gourmet breads, herbs, sausages, Italian products (e.g. pastas, sundried tomatoes and olives), ethnic foods, cheeses, gourmet quiches, cakes, arts and crafts.

There are several key factors that determine the success of a farmers market.

Location and easy access is important. In addition the availability of ample parking is essential.

The Market

Farmers' markets are the most common consumer-direct marketing outlet for farm producers. Presently, there are over 80 farmers' markets throughout Ireland and they provide easy access to both producers and consumers. The growth of these markets reflects changing consumer preferences for fresh, locally produced foods. Some farmers' markets are now also providing coffee shop facilities, playgrounds for children and are introducing a 'gaelic' culture by providing traditional Irish music.

Bord Bia has a web-based guide for local producers interested in setting up a farmers' market, providing current information on locations and outlining the benefits and expansion opportunities. (See www.bordbia.ie)

Farmers' markets in Ireland are often seasonal although some operate all year-round. They usually take place each weekend or on the last weekend of each month.

The location and day of the week when local market rights exist can be seen at www.ardnashee.com/markets

Farmers' markets provide an opportunity for producers to sell crops and provide high-quality produce and other farm specialty items. They provide an outlet outside of the traditional large volume distribution systems. In addition, they allow farmers to sell field run produce not restricted to pack and grade standards.

Local businesses can also gain increases in benefit from increased profits on the day. This enhanced business is manifesting itself in that some supermarkets are offering facilities for the setting up of farmers' markets.

The most economically successful farmers' markets to date have been located at pleasant, easily accessible sites near large centres of population.



Fact Sheet No. 39 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.

Setting Up

Setting up a farmers' market involves researching the space, availability and restrictions at a potential location. At the outset, it is important to ensure that ample car parking is close at hand and that the market day does not coincide with markets in a local town/village.

The relevant Environmental Health Officer is usually notified who will then carry out an inspection process to ensure that Health and Safety Regulation standards of stalls are adhered to. (See www.ehao.ie to find your local Environmental Health Officer)

Opening and closing times should be set and it is important to stick rigidly to them.

There is a list of currently operating markets at www.irelandmarkets.com

For a market to be successful an effort must be made to inform customers and potential sellers that a market is or will be in operation. Local councillors, editors, radio stations, community development groups, and other local leaders can be informed and involved in promoting the benefits of a farmers' market.

A committee can be set up to assess suitability of potential stallholders. New stallholders should submit an application, as should existing stallholders looking to sell new products. Ideally any new or additional products should compliment existing products sold.

In addition, there are several requirements for each stall: table, canopy/umbrella, scales if necessary, bags for produce, dust pan and brush, cloths, markers and card for price display, basin, flask of hot water, soap and towel. Cleanliness is vital and all participants should take full responsibility for waste disposal and hygiene around their stalls, both during and after market hours.

There are guidance notes available from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) which gives specific requirements for food handlers. Of particular relevance is The Guidance Note 16 'Food Stalls' which can be downloaded from www.fsai.ie. Among others it outlines how food cannot be labelled 'organic' unless it is officially certified as organic with a recognised symbol.

Insurance can be costly. Public liability insurance can be got from the Irish Organisation of Market and Street Traders (I.O.M.S.T). It costs approximately €350 per stallholder, per year.

More information on setting up a farmers market can be obtained from Bord Bia.

Price Levels of Produce

Customer choice of prices, by providing foods at different price bands as prevails in supermarkets, is critical at country markets. Farmers' markets cannot be perceived as being expensive; they must give value as well as choice. All processors/producers of food should have a produce liability policy.

Costs

The costs of setting up a farmers' market vary and there is no set cost. Each market will be unique and the costs depend on a number of factors encompassing many little nuances. An approximate cost range is from €7,000 to €10,000. This would include Site cost – if any, publicity and advertising – signs, posters, media, etc., insurance, permits, etc.

The costs can be shared among stallholders.

Links

Bord Bia www.bordbia.ie Clanwilliam Court, Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. Tel (01) 6685155 E-mail: info@bordbia.ie

Food Safety Authority of Ireland www.fsai.ie Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

Tel: (01) 817 1300 E-mail: info@fsai.ie

Environmental Health Officers Association www.ehao.ie 39 Main Street Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland Tel: (01) 276 1211

Irish Organisation of Market and Street Traders, 101 Phibsborough Road, Dublin 7. Tel (01) 8603886

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