

## Starting a Farmers Market

There are many details that separate a great farmers' market from struggling or mediocre markets. Below are ten of the most important steps to consider as you start a farmers' market in your community.

### **Research and solicit available community resources**

This is the first step. Community support for a farmers' market is invaluable. Getting "buy-in" from residents as well as government and businesses will ensure that the market is seen as contributing to the life of the community. In addition to the intangible factors, a good relationship with the market's neighbors will help in tangible ways as well. City and county government agencies and local business may be willing and able to help with finding a location, sponsoring and/or doing advertising for the market or other resources

### **Select a location**

This is a tricky issue. Essential components are proximity to offices and other businesses, available parking, cover or shade in case of extreme weather, and seating for lingering and socializing, listening to music, or other recreational or educational activities associated with the market. The location you select may also determine your insurance needs.

### **Solicit vendors**

This is probably the toughest job. A successful market needs a good mix of products and services to attract a regular clientele. Many county extension offices keep a list of small farmers. Your chamber of commerce or craftpersons' guild may be another resource for potential vendors. Once you have identified potential vendors, you may have to sell the idea of a market to them. Farmers, craftspeople and other small business owners must be convinced that spending a few hours a week at the market is worth their while.

### **Develop by-laws and market rules**

There are some general points to be considered by market rules and by-laws. For templates of By-laws and Market Rules, check out model farmers' market in Big Gator county.

## **Apply for non-profit status**

Contact the [Florida Department of Revenue](#) for the forms and instructions for filing.

## **Hire a market manager**

The type of market manager you hire will depend on the kind of farmers market you and the Board of Directors want to create.

## **Get the right market insurance**

The market's insurance needs will depend on a variety of factors. See Farmer's Market Legal Issues and Farmers' Market Insurance for more on how to handle insurance.

## **Market the market**

It may seem obvious, but farmers' markets must be advertised to the public, especially when they first open. Public radio and local newspaper ads are less expensive than commercial radio or TV ads. Free publicity is great -- if it reaches your customers. Find out about putting an announcement in neighborhood or school newsletters. The food, gardening and weekend sections of newspapers may all be appropriate places to solicit articles about a new farmers' market.

## **What next? What do you need to think about once you have the market up and running?**

Keep marketing the market. This may seem obvious, but you will need to retain and expand your customer base -- and keep attracting new farmers. The marketing job is never finished. Think about ways to enhance the market experience for your customers. Live music adds atmosphere and entertainment to a market. Service groups and educational groups (like the Master Gardeners, Native Plant Society or FFA in your county) can add an educational component to the market. Giving them free market space can be very worthwhile if they add interest and life to the market. Some activities may not be useful. Clowns, pony rides and other children's entertainment can increase the need for parental guidance and create disputes, for example.

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