



# Building Successful Farmers' Markets

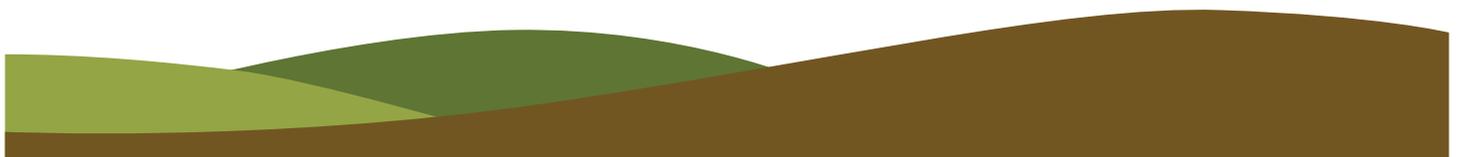




# Building Successful Farmers Markets

# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Customers</b>	
How to attract them to your market	<b>3</b>
How to get them to spend money	<b>8</b>
How to keep them	<b>13</b>
Other ways of getting them involved	<b>14</b>
<b>4. Community Involvement</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5. Producers</b>	<b>16</b>



## Introduction

### The project – Making Local Food Work

This workbook accompanies a workshop for farmers' market organisers run by Making Local Food Work, a programme funded by The Big Lottery. The aim of the collaborative farmers' market project within this programme is to provide support to existing farmers' markets to help them survive and thrive. The project is run jointly by The Plunkett Foundation and FARMA (The National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association).

### Where this booklet fits

During the first part of our work with farmers' markets information was gathered at markets providing a snap shot of the performance of the market. The data confirms things that are going well and highlights areas for improvement. The reports provided on this research are often useful for talking to local authorities, funding bodies and other groups associated with, but not directly involved in, the running of markets. But the reports are most useful for market organisers, giving them ideas on ways for making their markets even better.

At the workshop for organisers where HealthCheck findings were reviewed some ideas for improvement will have been touched on. This workbook pulls together a broad range of ideas, hints and tips on how to make farmers' markets great – how to take performance to the next level. The material has been drawn from observing what works well at the best farmers' markets not only in Britain, but also around the world.

### What it is

This workbook is designed as a resource for market organisers who are running existing markets. It aims to give simple, practical, hands-on advice about how to run successful farmers' markets and focuses on marketing techniques and the impact that these techniques will have.

### What it is not

This workbook does not cover the detail of what is needed to set up a farmers' market – for instance the insurance and legal requirements for markets.

### What's important

Farmers' markets provide a great opportunity for producers to sell directly to the public. People love shopping at farmers' markets – it's the only place that they can talk directly to producers about exactly how the food they are about to eat has been produced.

**26% of people thought they would be buying more at farmers' markets, twice as many as those thinking they'd be shopping more at supermarkets**

Source: Institute of Grocery Distribution



A welcome sign at the market entrance

**Make sure that everyone who visits the market knows that all the goods available are produced locally. It may seem obvious, but people visiting for the first time may not be aware.**

## Introduction Continued

To be successful a farmers' market must have enough stalls and enough customers. It is that simple! The trick is to make sure that your market has a good range covering all the basics – vegetables, fruit, meat, bread, cheese, plus jam, preserves, cakes, non alcoholic and alcoholic drinks, plants, flowers – that displays on stalls are attractive and generous, and that the layout encourages customers to spend time seeing everything that's on offer. To make sure that all your stallholders want to continue coming back to market time after time there needs to be plenty of customers spending money in the market.

Another vital component for a great farmers' market is the local community. Community involvement can be enormously helpful for farmers' markets at many levels, from direct support from local councils and authorities, to volunteers helping with the day to day running of the market. Markets

that spend time fostering good relationships with their community often benefit greatly, for instance from support of local shops or free publicity in council newsletters. Some markets involve their communities directly in the running of the market, and have stated aims to return any surplus created from running the market to fund community projects.

Location, location, location so the saying goes, and it's true the location of a market is vital to its success. Finding the right location, with good footfall, good visibility and good parking is really important. Holding a market in a less than ideal location will have a serious impact on performance. We have seen examples of even quite small moves, of only 200 metres or so, improving the performance of a market dramatically.

It sounds simple, but of course it isn't always easy or straightforward to get all these things right. This workbook will give you fresh ideas and tips on how to make sure that your market thrives!



A tempting display

## Customers - How to attract them to your market

Getting enough customers to your market is crucial to its success. It's all about the external marketing that you do – how you tell people about your market, where it is and when it runs.

There are lots of things you can do. The challenge is choosing the things that have the biggest impact and are most cost effective.

### Signs, banners

Extensive research throughout the UK (FARMA Retail HealthChecks) shows that the best way to publicise markets is by using road signs and banners. These need to be positioned on key access routes into town, at key junctions and roundabouts and anywhere else that catches the eye of your customers. Signs should be simple and just give the key message, for example:



A sign put up a couple of days before the market to remind customers

Ideally signs should be put up a couple of days before the market, particularly if your market does not run weekly.

Council views on temporary signs of this nature vary widely. Some are supportive and will allow this sort of sign to be fixed to street lights and other street furniture. Others are less tolerant and will remove and destroy signs. If possible it's useful to get agreement from the council for temporary

signs. Economic development officers are generally very helpful but you will need to get support from the planning department and the highways department as well. It's useful to remind them that you will remove all temporary signs after the market. It is worth bearing in mind that councils may be more tolerant of directional signs than of ones that might be considered purely promotional.

If your council is not as supportive as it could be, consider other sites that you could use. Often shops will put up signs. Local farmers may own land alongside approach routes into town and supporters of the market may be prepared to put up a sign on their fences. Check that the distance from the road is legal. Schools might even put up banners on their railings.



A sign directing footfall to the market

Digital technology has dramatically reduced the cost and ease of producing signs and banners. If you are able to buy in quantities of ten or more then costs can be reduced further.

Make sure your signs and banners are as clear as possible. Use fonts that are easy to read. Maximize legibility by using color combinations that contrast in brightness such as black and white. For road signs make sure your text is large enough to be read easily from a distance. Don't forget to remove signs between markets.

# Building Successful Farmers Markets

## Leaflets, postcards, calendars and posters

Leaflets, flyers, postcards and posters can be cheap to produce and they can be a very effective way of communicating to existing and new customers.

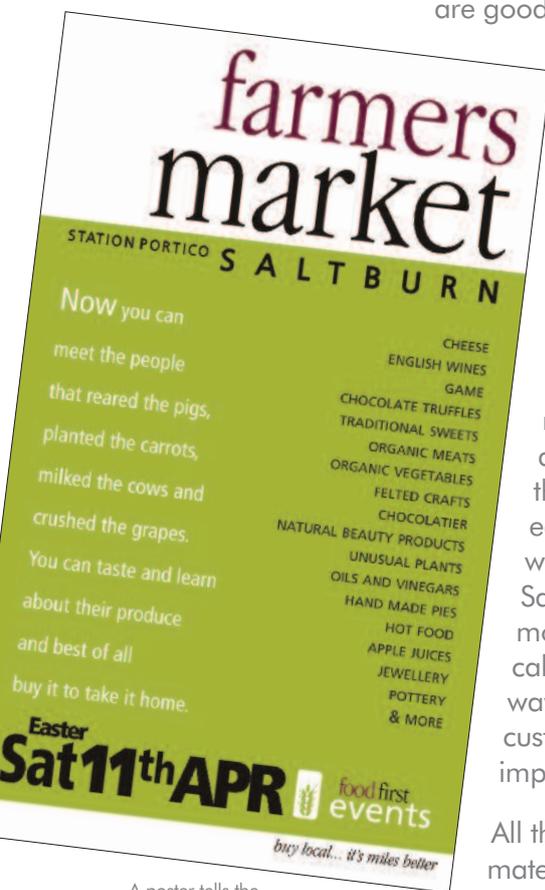
Leaflet drops can be targeted on streets and areas that contain a high proportion of farmers' market customers. Postcards can carry seasonal recipes along with photographs or drawings of local produce. Postcards are also great for dropping into shoppers' bags and, if they list dates of markets,

are good for reminding people about the future dates for markets.

Many markets run once a month and so it's vital to do everything possible to remind people about the date for the market. It's not easy to work out when the third Saturday of the month falls so calendars or other ways of prompting customers are important.

All these printed materials need to be spread as far and wide as you can manage.

Think about places to leave your leaflets that are likely to share farmers' market values. Some places to consider include doctors' surgeries, schools, tourist information centres, libraries, parish notice boards, community centres and shops/restaurants/cafes that promote local food.



A poster tells the farmers' market message simply and clearly

## Website, emails, Texts, Facebook, Twitter

We are in an age of electronic communications – use them! Using electronic communications can be a very cheap and effective way of reaching lots of people.

The first place to look for information for many people is now the internet. Make sure that you have coverage for your market – ideally your own website, but if this is not possible then make sure you are listed on the sites that provide information on farmers' markets. Specific sites include:

- [www.farma.org.uk](http://www.farma.org.uk)
- [www.localfoodadvisor.com](http://www.localfoodadvisor.com)
- [www.local-farmers-markets.co.uk](http://www.local-farmers-markets.co.uk)
- [www.farmersmarkets.net](http://www.farmersmarkets.net)

Other places to register information on-line include on council websites and tourist information websites such as:

- [www.information-britain.co.uk](http://www.information-britain.co.uk)

Google your own market to see where and how information about it appears. Sometimes other websites will list old or inaccurate information. Make sure you keep sites up to date.

Setting up an email or text reminder service for your customers is a great way of reminding them a couple of days before the market, giving the details for the market as well as telling them about what special produce will be available. You can collect email addresses at your information stand on your market, or by running competitions that require entrants to give their email details. Provided you have asked if it is OK to make contact in the future then you will meet the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

Facebook and Twitter are other ways of keeping in touch with your customers. Different methods will suit different people, so think about using a range of ways to keep in contact with your customers.

# Building Successful Farmers Markets



## Newsletters, E Newsletters

Another great way of keeping in touch with customers! Use newsletters to remind customers about market dates, announcing special events and providing information about what's in season, how to cook it, new producers or seasonal producers – tempt your customers to come back to your market and to try new things. Newsletters are a great way of passing on terrific stories about producers and the fabulous produce that they bring to market.



Electronic media can be a cheap and quick way to communicate.

## The media

The media can be great supporters of farmers' markets. Good food and protecting the environment are still popular topics and farmers' markets combine these two themes.

Make sure you keep in contact with your parish newsletters, local newspapers, 'what's on' diaries as well as radio and TV. Keep sending stories to your local papers and always send a good photograph if you can. If you get to know your local journalists they may start to approach you for stories. To the outside world something that you take for granted may be a great story! But make sure you have a good 'hook' to attract the journalist's attention. Journalists often like stories of triumph over adversity – for example has a farmers' market provided a vital new outlet for a local farmer? Use events as hooks. Invite a local celebrity or notable person to your market and ask the media to your event too.

Radio and TV may be willing to cover special events such as formal opening ceremonies. Local radio stations have run outside broadcasts from markets, and invited producers to speak regularly about their farms and what they produce.

The bottom line is that this can be a very cost effective way of creating awareness for your market. If you can establish a list of media contacts it can be quite quick and easy to keep sending stories through to your local press.

## Writing press releases

The purpose of a press release is to grab a journalist's attention quickly. It must be factual, concise and informative.

**Headline:** Don't spend time thinking of a clever headline; sub editors will do this themselves. Use a title rather than a headline, for example '[Local celebrity] to launch farmers' market.'

**Opening paragraph:** Your opening paragraph is the most important part of the press release; if it doesn't command attention in the first line the remainder will not be read.

You are not telling a story, so come to the point straight away. If you are inviting the press to an event, include the date, time and location in the first paragraph.

**Second paragraph:** Give some more information. Why have you organised this event?

**Comment:** Include a quote – it gives the press release a human element.

**Fourth paragraph:** Background information. This would be where you give more information about the farmers' market.

**Photography:** Is important. Ideally a press photographer will attend the event, but they can often be called away at short notice, so always have someone on hand who can take photographs on the day that can be sent to the publication afterwards. Wherever possible, stage photographs to ensure they are suitable for the publication. If you have more than one person in the shot, make sure they are standing very close together so the photo can be cropped if necessary. Think about what you want in the background of the shot – a market banner, for example.

Continue on next page >

# Building Successful Farmers Markets

## Writing press releases

Continued

**Contact details:** Give a mobile number whenever possible. This persuades the journalist that you are easy to get in touch with and means they can call you on the day if they need directions, for example.

**Notes to Editors:** Include any other relevant information that an editor might wish to know

**Avoid jargon:** Always assume your reader has no knowledge of your subject matter. Avoid technical language and state explicitly why local food is important.

**Proof read:** Spelling and grammar mistakes will undermine your credibility. Read quotes aloud to make sure they sound like someone has actually said them.

**Sending your press release:** Use a press release in the body of the email – not as an attachment. Make sure the title of the email is the title of your press release. If you have a generic email address, address it for the attention of the news editor or, where possible, a named journalist.

**Other Tips:** Be aware of publication deadlines and contact via email or phone in the morning to avoid stressful afternoons when journalists are rushing to get their copy in for the following day's publication. Aim to send your press release two weeks before an event, and follow up with a phone call a couple of days beforehand if you have not received confirmation of attendance.



People love to stop and chat at markets, make sure you give them something good to talk about

## Go for awards

Enter your market for an award. Blow your own trumpet! There are national awards for farmers' markets such the FARMA awards ([www.farma.org.uk](http://www.farma.org.uk)) and ones run by The Times and The Daily Telegraph as well as Radio 4's The Food Programme Food & Farming awards. There are also regional awards run by local food groups. Winning an award gives you a great opportunity for publicity!

## Indirect advertising

Local businesses may be willing to sponsor your market, or help distribute flyers and promotional material. For example estate agents claim that the presence of a farmers' market will increase house values in a town. They may be prepared to include calendars or flyers for farmers' markets in packs for prospective house buyers. Local pubs, and restaurants who share suppliers may be prepared to help publicise your market, or get involved giving cooking demonstrations at markets. Don't forget this will be good publicity for them too.

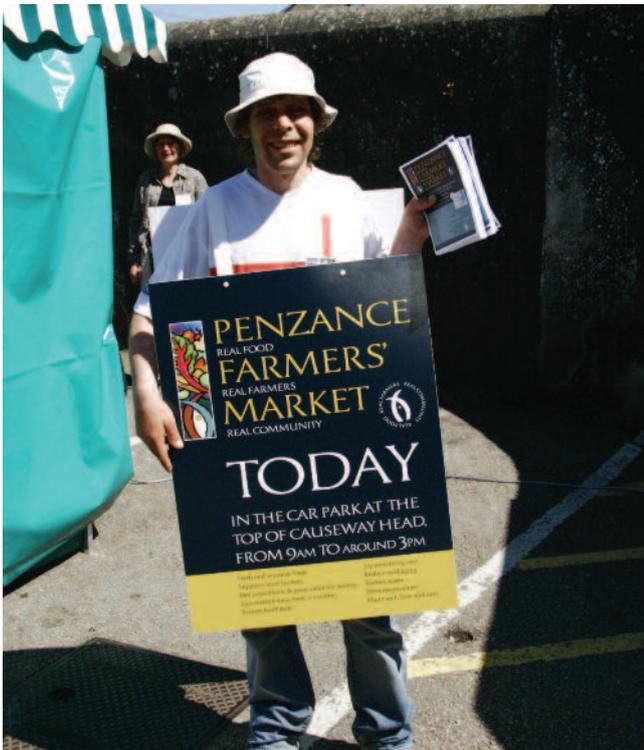
## Find a famous patron

Celebrity chefs and famous foodies have been generous with their support for farmers' markets, because they appreciate the quality of produce available. If you know a food celebrity in your area, approach them and ask if they will act as your patron. Don't forget it's a two way thing – if you can persuade them to get involved opening new markets or making special appearances it's great publicity for you and will help to draw people to the market, but it's also great publicity for them. Don't be afraid to ask - they can only say 'No'!

## Word of mouth

When asked how they heard about the market people will often say that a friend told them about it. What people say about your market to their friends, family and work colleagues is very important to your market so make sure people have something positive to say.

# Building Successful Farmers Markets



A sandwich board helps to draw people in

## Drawing people in on market day

Signs are crucial, but there are some other tricks you might try. One market organiser has a butcher's bicycle with boards on it giving details of the market. He rides around town at regular intervals whilst the market is on to encourage people to walk to the market from other parts of town. Another organiser walks round town with a sandwich board. We have heard of people dressing in chicken outfits, or other fancy dress costumes and handing out flyers. There are lots of variants on these themes, so think of something that works for your market as an extra promotional boost to push customers towards your site.

## Importance of promotion for monthly markets

It's difficult to work out when the third Saturday of the month is, so if you run a monthly market you will need to work extra hard to remind people. Putting signs up a couple of days before the market is the best thing to do, but email reminders, newsletters or providing customers with printed

calendars are also useful ways of nudging customers.

Once a market runs weekly then this sort of reminder isn't so vital. Saturday just becomes 'Farmers' Market Day'.



A weekly market becomes part of a regular shopping pattern

## Run a weekly market

Consider increasing the frequency of your market. Once a market runs weekly it becomes part of a regular shopping pattern, and it's much easier to remember that Saturday is always market day. Instead of treating a farmers' market as a place to buy special treats and one-off indulgences it becomes a place to pick up all the week's fruit and veg, a true alternative to supermarkets as a place to buy great quality seasonal food.

As one customer said to us:

**"I don't just eat monthly"!**

Inevitably you will lose customers – some will move away or move on. As a guideline you need to aim to attract 10% new customers to each market to make sure that you maintain customer numbers over time. It's a good target to set so that you focus on ways of attracting new customers. So make sure that you continue to think about ways to extend your customer base and remember it's important to regularly monitor your footfall and customer numbers.

Now you have got potential customers to your market the next step is to persuade them to part with their cash!

## Customers – How to get them to spend money

The look and feel of the market, the layout and the quality of produce available are the key things that will influence whether or not a passer-by will stop to buy, and how much money they will spend.

### Tell them what it's all about

We might know what farmers' markets are all about but it's amazing how many people don't. Make sure you have a sign at the entrance that can be seen as people approach, have an information point / table at your market providing answers to questions such as: how far your producers travel and what your criteria are if you allow guest stalls. You need to reassure customers about your standards and to build trust with them. This is also your chance to tell them some of your stories – about new producers, new products, seasonal items and other specials available, as well as a chance to confirm the value for money that farmers' markets can provide. Supermarkets have done a great job at putting out a story that farmers' markets are expensive. You can dispel the myth by making price comparisons of like for like goods. Maybe assemble a basket of goods priced at the market versus the same basket of goods from a supermarket.



Let people know what farmers' markets are all about

Consumers are interested to know more about how the food they are about to eat has been produced. We all know that supermarkets can sell fantastically cheap chicken, but Jamie Oliver, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and many others have helped to get the message across about the downsides of cheap food. Make sure that producers are talking about the great value of their produce.

**Being able to talk directly to the producer is what's unique about farmers' markets. Make sure producers are telling their stories!**

### Offer a good range

Providing a good range of basic food items should be the minimum – vegetables, fruit, meat, bread, cheese plus jam, preserves, cakes, non alcoholic and alcoholic drinks, plants, flowers. Markets need to have more than a dozen or so stalls to create a lively atmosphere. For key items such as meat, customers will expect to have choice. One of the key tasks for a market organiser is to balance the stalls on the market – to create a good selection, enough choice for customers whilst making sure that there aren't too many stalls of one type and that the market is viable for producers.

### Quality and standards

The reputation of the market relies on the quality of the goods available. Standards are very important. Farmers' markets have lots of competition and supermarkets continue to try to exploit interest in local food. Make sure that what's available at your market meets and exceeds quality expectations of customers. There are national schemes available to accredit markets and producers operated by FARMA. You can find more information on their website [www.farma.org.uk](http://www.farma.org.uk) or Tel: 0845 45 88 420. Being able to publicise the fact that it is accredited builds the reputation of your market and trust with your customers.



Let customers know that you have standards



Certification for markets

And if you don't know how you are matching up to expectations ask! Don't forget word of mouth plays a vital role in publicising farmers' markets so you need to work really hard to maintain your reputation.

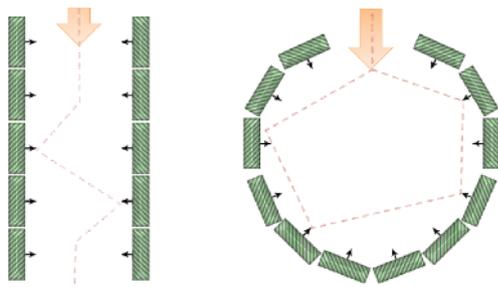
## Displays

It's important to have great produce on the market and the way it's displayed can make a huge difference to the visual appeal and atmosphere of the market. People 'buy with their eyes' so it's important to make sure that stalls look great. Goods should be arranged tidily, making use of height in displays to make produce clearly visible. Colour should be used to draw the eye – red in particular attracts attention. Goods should be clearly priced and labelled. People will not stop to ask the price. All stalls should display the name of the business and its logo clearly, ideally as a backdrop to the stall and at the front forming a neat frontage. Of course stalls should be neat with no rubbish or excess packaging on display. And producers should aim to keep stalls looking generous throughout the day by moving stock into the centre of the stall as goods are sold. Customers spend only a few seconds deciding whether or not to stop at a stall so it's vital to make a quick positive impact to tempt them.

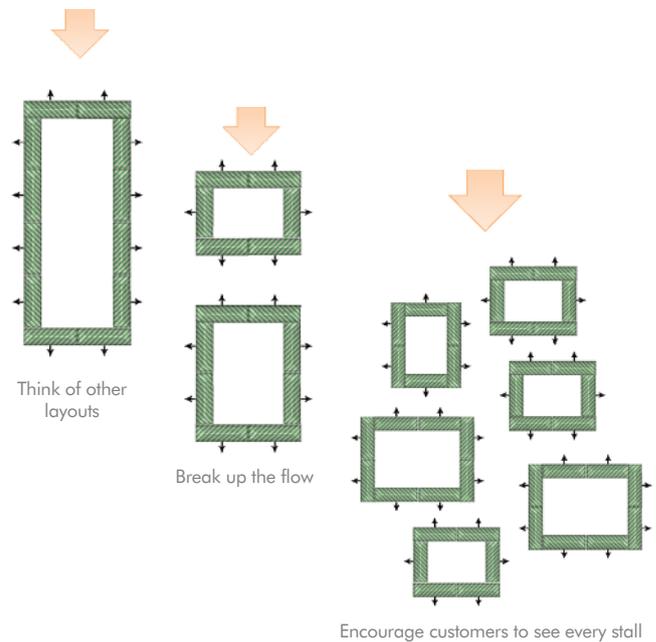
Making Local Food Work runs workshops for producers that provide more detail on selling at farmers' markets. There is also a workbook that accompanies the session. Visit the website for more information [www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk](http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk).

## Layout

The way your market is laid out can make a significant difference to its performance. Your aim should be to make sure that every customer sees every stall in the market. Think about Ikea – it's almost impossible to get through without seeing every part of the store. Avoid straight lines. Break up lines by creating blocks or by creating bends. The diagrams above show some suggestions.



Customers may not visit every stall if the layout is a straight line or a horse shoe



## Persuade customers to 'linger longer'

Creating opportunities for customers to linger longer is another way of making sure that they see everything in the market. Have a seating area and serve tea and coffee and farmers' market cakes and treats. Have hot food available – nothing is quite as irresistible as the smell of bacon cooking for butties! And make sure if you have a seating area that you leave calendars and information there, or use it as a point to hand out customer surveys or collect email addresses. Markets are sociable – places to meet and chat to friends and neighbours – encourage this.

## Calendar of events

Farmers' markets are the best place to buy fresh seasonal food – celebrate this by creating special displays and events to reflect the seasons.

Below is a calendar with monthly ideas that you could use. This is not an exhaustive list. You may have other local or regional events.

Many of the national events attract a good deal of press attention, and often national organisers provide useful information packs. Some of the more local contacts, such as Regional Food Groups, will also have information on regional or county based food events and festivals.

# Building Successful Farmers Markets

## January

### Healthy eating or diet lines

Include 'change your diet' promotions, encourage customers to 'think local' as well as 'think healthy'.

### Farmhouse Breakfast Week – end of January

An annual campaign that emphasises the importance of eating a healthy breakfast every day.

[www.farmhousebreakfast.com](http://www.farmhousebreakfast.com)

Invite a local producer to cook up bacon butties and bangers on wholegrain bread for your customers, or feature eggs, bacon, sausages, mushrooms and other breakfast items at your market in an eye catching display.

### Chinese New Year – end of January

Promote local vegetables and local beef or chicken for stir fries, and any locally made sauces, relishes or prepared foods with a Chinese influence.

Organise a stir fry demo in the market.

## February

### St Valentine's Day - 14th February

Offer pre-orders for local treats like wine, beer, chocolates, cakes and patisserie. Ask stallholders to create a Valentine's display, provide recipes to promote items for dinners for two.

### Shrove Tuesday

Promote local eggs, milk, flour – and use recipes to encourage some more diverse pancake shopping!

## March

### Fairtrade Fortnight – end February - early March

Let customers know that your market offers a fair trading opportunity for local producers!

### Mothers Day – end of March

The time for wine, chocolates and treats!

## March/April

Easter weekend The traditional time for new Spring Lamb, so promote this or other meats for roasts, plus the many local accompaniments, of course. Also highlight chocolates, Hot Cross Buns and cakes. If it looks like being good weather, perhaps even promote the 'first BBQ of the year'

## April

### St George's Day - 23rd April

An excellent time to promote local, English produce, especially if your village has St George's Day celebrations. Supply recipes highlighting traditional English dishes.

## May

### British Asparagus Season – May and June

The long-awaited 8 week season of British asparagus. Let the local press know when the first asparagus is due to arrive! For recipes and information see [www.british-asparagus.co.uk](http://www.british-asparagus.co.uk)

### English Wine Week - end of May

Use the opportunity to promote any local wines. Provide tastings on the market of local wine & cheese. [www.englishwineweek.co.uk](http://www.englishwineweek.co.uk)

### National BBQ Week - end of May

Focus on your BBQ friendly lines as a good way of marking the start of the outdoor eating season. Don't forget the relishes, sauces, mustards and dips to go with the burgers, sausages, chicken and steaks. A great combination with English Wine Week if you have local wines as well.

[www.nationalbbqweek.co.uk](http://www.nationalbbqweek.co.uk)

## June

### Father's Day - mid June 2009

BBQ items, beer and cider and favourites like steak will all go down well.

### Strawberries Start to be in season.

Offer tastings and use recipe cards to encourage greater sales. Encourage customers to purchase around Wimbledon fortnight. Other fruit such as cherries, gooseberries and outdoor rhubarb also come into their own now.

## July

### BBQ foods – Promote burgers, sausages, fish, vegetables, bread, relishes and salads.

Offer BBQ packs. National Cherry Day – mid July

## August

### Picnics and outdoor eating

If it looks like being good weather

# Building Successful Farmers Markets



## Bank Holiday Weekends

BBQ's, Parties and Celebrations.

## September

### Harvest Celebrations

There is generally a bountiful supply of local products at this time of year, especially fruit and vegetables. Perhaps some recipes for chutneys, pickles and preserves to encourage customers to make the most of the competitively priced seasonal harvest of local produce (e.g. that jumbo-sized marrow!). Help organise a Harvest Supper in the village, promoting the local products you have on sale.

### Organic month September

The Soil Association's annual celebration of organic food and farming. Highlight and promote local organic food & drink products, perhaps with special offers.

[www.soilassociation.org/organicseptemberfortrade.aspx](http://www.soilassociation.org/organicseptemberfortrade.aspx)

### British Food Fortnight: late September – early October

A fortnight of celebrating the excellence and diversity of British produce. An opportunity for events, tastings or cookery demonstrations. Lots of resources are available.

[www.britishfoodfortnight.co.uk](http://www.britishfoodfortnight.co.uk)

## October

### British Cheese Week – late September – early October

Nationwide campaign to promote British Cheese, culminating in the Great British Cheese Festival and British Cheese Awards. Highlight local cheeses hold tastings. Promote any award winners on your market and feature complementary goods such as savouries and pickles, local bread and wine.

[www.thecheeseweb.com](http://www.thecheeseweb.com)

### October Apple Day - October 21st

Get stallholders to stack their local apples high for impact and promote apple juice. Hold an Apple Day event such as an Apple sauce competition. Ask stallholders and customers to bring a sample of their favourite recipe and ask a local dignitary or

celebrity to judge!

[www.commonground.org.uk/appleday/index.html](http://www.commonground.org.uk/appleday/index.html)

### Halloween - 31st October

Pumpkins, soups, baking potatoes, apples for bobbing or toffee can all be promoted – and rolled on for Bonfire Night too. Carve some pumpkins at the market. Judge your pumpkin growing competition and give our recipes.

### Cider and Perry Month

If you have local cider and perry offer tastings, warm mulled ciders. [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk)

## November

### World Vegan Day - 1st November

An opportunity to promote your local vegetables, fruit and other vegan products that you stock.

### British Sausage Week: early November

Organise a 'Battle of the Bangers' tasting [www.britishsausageweek.com](http://www.britishsausageweek.com)

### Bonfire Night - 5th November

Warming food and drinks are always the order of the day – baked potatoes, bangers, soups, meat and veg for stews could all be promoted now. Think ahead to Christmas. Make sure stallholders organise pre-ordering service for Christmas.

## December

**Christmas.** The biggest foodie opportunity of the year!

Let the local press know what special items will be available at your market - such as locally-reared turkey, goose or duck, Christmas Puddings, pies and cakes, locally grown potatoes, sprouts, parsnips, and sauces. And of course wines, beers, spirits, juices and other drinks. Run festive events at the market, invite carol singers from local schools. Make sure stallholders have gift items available, specially wrapped.

**New Year** Stock up with and promote local sparkling wines, local juices, foods for celebration meals such as roasts, speciality foods, party friendly food and drink.

# Building Successful Farmers Markets

Get stallholders involved in events. Make sure their displays reflect your theme. For example if you plan to focus on Valentine's Day, ask all the stall holders to wear something pink or red or heart shaped. Encourage them to theme their own stalls. Focusing on seasonal events will help to keep the appearance of the market fresh and vibrant and add interest for customers. Running events is a great way of attracting new customers as well as making sure that your existing customers come to the market regularly. Remember to make the most of this you will need to publicise your special events as widely as you can through flyers and by sending out press releases.

## Be theatrical

All markets have an element of theatre – that's part of what makes them different to the supermarket shopping experience. If you have space, invite musicians to play and school choirs to sing. During school holidays run special events for children to get in involved with, for example have a clown or a face painter at your market or run a pumpkin / sunflower growing contest and invite children to plant and then come back to see which has grown the largest.

## Tastings

Use tasters to tempt. Encourage your stallholders to do this and organise some things yourself too. Walk through the town with samples, or around the market – put two products from the market together, such as sausages and mustard or cheese and chutney. Or think about having a chef demo now and then. Get the chef to walk the market to select ingredients and make sure there's a blackboard listing what's cooking and which stalls the ingredients came from. Maybe even write up recipe cards to take away. Tie in with seasonal events – run a competition on apple day for the best apple sauce.



Offering tasters is a great way to convince customers – after all the proof of the pudding is in the eating!

## Keeping it fresh

Supermarkets adjust their layouts and displays all the time. Markets need to do this too. Customers may grumble that they can't find their favourite stall and producers may be resistant, but experience has shown that changing things helps to keep markets fresh. If you move things make sure there is someone around to ask where stalls have moved to or provide market maps. Inviting seasonal producers will also help to add interest throughout the year.

## Cash at markets

One answer that customers give when they are asked, 'What stopped you from buying more at the market today?' is, 'I ran out of cash'. Encourage producers of high value items such as meat to take cards. Mobile card readers are easily



Running out of cash stops customers buying more – encourage use of cards for high value items or think of other cash alternatives

and cheaply available. We feel relaxed about putting in extra items in our basket at the supermarket because often we are paying with a card. If high value items can be paid for on cards at the market people will use the cash in their purses to buy other items. Even if there are ATMs close to your market, customers may be loath to go to them and then return to the market. One market that runs miles from the nearest cash machine has even printed its own currency!

## How to keep customers

It's hard to attract new customers to market so once you have got them there you need to make sure that they will come back time after time. Making customers regulars will depend on their experience at the market, the quality and value of goods they buy and making it easy for them to remember when the market is on.

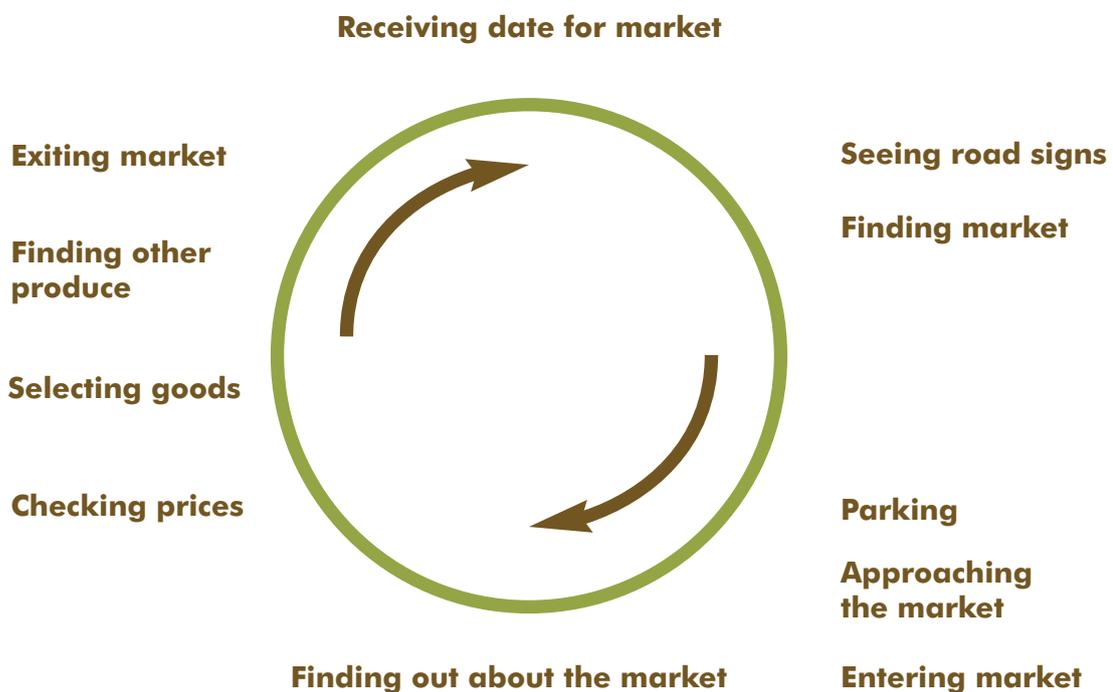
### Give them what they want – Do you know what that is?

It's very easy to assume that we know what customers want. It's good to occasionally check that you are on the right track by asking directly. Customer surveys should be short and concise. The Retail HealthCheck carried out as part of

Making Local Food Work support used simple techniques to gather information from customers. Rather than approaching with clipboards we set up a series of questions on boards in the market with multiple choice answers and asked people to select their own answers. This has proved to be a great way of getting people involved and is easy for you to reproduce using your own questions.

### Touchpoints

Imagine that each visit that customers make to your market is a journey. It covers a whole host of 'touchpoints', interactions with your market. A happy customer needs to have had a good experience at each 'touchpoint' and each experience needs to give a consistent message about the market. The diagram below shows some of the 'touchpoints' that customers might experience:



A customer's experience of the market is a series of 'touchpoints' – make sure all these points give a positive impression

## Other ways of getting your customers involved

You might also want to consider ways of getting customers more involved with your market, for instance by inviting them to join your committee, or setting up 'Friends' schemes. Customers can be passionate about the farmers' market ethos and might want to help with the market. It's always a good idea to have customer representatives on your management committee. Making sure you meet the needs and expectations of your customers is crucial to your success so it's good to keep in touch with them. Or you might set up a scheme for 'Farmers' market Friends' - for a small membership fee a range of benefits can be offered.

Here are 2 examples of 'Friends' schemes:

### Wirral Farmers' Market Friends scheme

#### How does it work?

By paying your membership fee and completing a membership form, you will automatically become a Friend for one year. You will be sent regular email newsletters and information, and will find out how to get more involved in the work of the Market.

#### What do Friends receive?

A Pin Badge to show that you are a Friend of Wirral Farmers' Market.

Automatic entry into a monthly prize draw for £15 in vouchers. (You must be present at the market to collect your prize!)

Regular email newsletters about forthcoming markets – keep up to date on what is in season, new producers and special offers.

#### How much does it cost to join?

Membership of the Friends is only £1 for a year's membership and this includes your badge.

### North East England Friends of Farmers Markets

Express your support for your local farmers' market and for farmers' markets across the region by becoming a Friend. Benefits include:

- Receiving a newsletter and advance news on food events and shows
- Receiving invitations to visit producers and to special events
- Volunteer opportunities to support local producers and your local Farmers' Market

The annual subscription is £10, half of which will go directly to support your local farmers market.

Visits: The visits are to Farmers' Market producers and other interesting people and places connected to local food and drink. Whilst mainly for enjoyment, the visits are also an opportunity to learn more about how food is grown, raised, caught, brewed, baked and processed and how it relates to the land and seascapes of the North East.

The aim is to run two or three visits a year, and any suggestions would be welcome. Visit groups are limited to about a dozen, and all you have to do is get yourself there (we'll provide directions) and make a contribution to the cost of the picnic.

Volunteering: Friends who volunteer their time at their local Farmers Market could find themselves:

Helping with activities like Apple Days, Christmas Markets etc

Setting up and running a food sampling table

Carrying out price comparisons with similar supermarket produce to challenge the perception that produce at Farmers' Markets is expensive

It's a great way to meet like minded people and a big help to producers.

## Community Involvement

Forging close links with your local community can be really helpful. We have observed that markets that have close links with their communities are often more successful.



Farmers' markets are at the core of the community

### Involve other 'Green' groups

Community / green groups can provide useful networks for communication about market dates and events and may even provide volunteers to help run markets. Inviting appropriate community and charity groups to take a stall on your market can be a great way of communicating with the local community and using their networks to reach new customers.

### Events with schools

Educating the next generation about where food comes from and how to cook it is important. Farmers' markets can offer great educational opportunities - from running cooking events for children to growing contests for pumpkins or sunflowers. Getting children along to markets will help encourage parents to visit too.

Markets have also arranged to have live animals at markets for instance new born lambs at Easter.

However care needs to be taken to address all health and safety issues, including provision of hand-washing facilities.



Get the younger generation involved – Show them where food comes from

## Producers

It's not always easy to find producers but to run a successful market it's vital to have a good range attending on a regular basis. It's an important part of an organiser's job to find and retain producers of appropriate standard.

Some places to look for new producers include the internet, local food directories, and Yellow pages.

Some useful websites that can be searched by product and region include -

- [www.localfoodfinder.org](http://www.localfoodfinder.org)
- [www.localfoodadvisor.com](http://www.localfoodadvisor.com)
- [www.foodloversbritain.com](http://www.foodloversbritain.com)

Or try contacting local farms, farm shops and village shops, local agricultural colleges, councils, local NUF offices. You might use your website, newsletters or Facebook page to call for new producers.

You should have agreements in place with all your producers clearly laying out standards. Induction

training will help to reinforce what's expected. All producers need to recognise the vital role they play in the success of the market. The quality of their produce, the way they arrange their stall and their customer skills determine whether or not a customer stops at their stall. Stallholders who fail to show up with no notice create gaps that let the market down, and stallholders who leave early do the same thing. So make sure that everyone understands what's expected and how important it is to maintain standards.

It's good to get producers directly involved. Invite ideas from producers and encourage them to help with the running and development of the market. After all they will directly benefit from the success of the market.

It's not easy to run a farmers' market, but we hope that we have given you some useful hints and tips on how to make sure your market thrives. The rewards are great for you, your producers and your community!



Great producers make great farmers' markets

# Building Successful Farmers Markets



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