

## CHAPTER 7

# Promoting Your Farm Business

Individual farmers can increase their sales by setting up a market stall that is visually attractive. Furthermore, farmers interested in capturing more dollars from benefits programs should consider specific labeling and display techniques, detailed below, to make their produce more attractive to shoppers with limited resources.

*“I think whenever I buy strawberries from a farmers’ market versus the store, I think they’re much sweeter, just taste better.”*

*“It’s fresh. It’s out of the ground.”*

— Focus group participants

### Acceptance of Benefits and Incentive Programs

*“Yeah. We accept, they accept the food stamps. It’s up on the sign right here. The signs are good.”*

— Focus group participant

Our research made it clear that limited-resource Kentuckians are much more apt to shop at the farmers’ market if they know the market will accept their EBT, WIC or SFMNP benefits. Coupons and incentive programs, such as Double Dollars, are also great motivators for shopping at the farmers’ market. Many shoppers who are eligible for benefits are uncomfortable asking for directions. Post large, clear



signage near the market entrance to:

- Confirm whether you accept benefits,
- Advise whether you are implementing an incentive program,
- Direct EBT cardholders to POS machines and/or the information desk,
- Provide directions for how to obtain tokens and how to use tokens and coupons to purchase food at the farmers’ market, and/or
- Explain how to take advantage of the available incentive programs.

# KENTUCKY FARMERS' MARKET TOOLKIT

Additionally, eligible vendors should have a sign that shows they accept SNAP/EBT, WIC or SFMNP benefits. Authorized SNAP markets or direct marketing farmers may order the SNAP poster by calling the USDA toll-free retailer hotline at 877-823-4369. The administering state agencies provide signage for the Kentucky SFMNP and WIC FMNP.

## Product Display Matters

*“Offer more stuff.” “Have everything.”*

— Focus group participants

The focus group found that the greatest motivators for shopping at the farmers’ market were, in descending order:

- To buy fresh food,
- To enjoy the variety,
- To support farmers and to know the origin of their food,
- To have better tasting food, and
- To get friendlier service.

When arranging a booth and displaying the product, these key motivators should provide a guide. Customers will never know how great the produce tastes if you don’t first draw them to your booth. Interesting, colorful, and creative displays should draw attention to the variety and abundance of fresh, delicious products.

The display should give the appearance of abundance even if supplies are running low. A container with an elevated bottom can make it appear as if there is still plenty to sell. The produce display may be tilted so passersby easily see it. Display similar products together, such as varieties of tomatoes. This will also give you an opportunity to engage with the customers and talk about how varieties differ. Perhaps show off any unsaleable, unusually shaped root vegetables as curiosities and conversation pieces.

*“It’s crowded, so if we were in a rush maybe or just needed to grab one thing, it seems like it would be kind of chaotic. It’s not organized.”*

Traffic flow through the market is important. Some study participants simply found a crowded, disorganized appearance unappealing.

*“Well, when I go off down the road to the farmers’ market, people that sell the vegetables, they’re always nice. They always say, ‘Can I help you sir?’”*

*“I personally enjoy the thought of talking to the person who actually grows the food, the vegetables...”*

— Focus group participants

Supporting local farmers, knowing the origin of their food and friendly service are strong motivators for the limited-resource audience. Engaging them in friendly conversation is key. Find additional information about merchandizing at the farmers’ market in the resource, “Standing Out at a Farmers’ Market,” (<https://extension.psu.edu/standing-out-at-a-farmers-market>).

*“The dirty table...”*

*“Well, they’re all cleaned up. I mean, none of these carrots, which are grown in the dirt, have dirt on them.”*

— Focus group participants

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Study participants conveyed definite preferences for orderly and clean booth displays. Vendors should use colorful, clean table coverings. Avoid using a cover with a busy pattern, which detracts from the product. Vinyl works well and is easy to clean but doesn't always lay flat and is not as neat. Using a cloth table cover with a variety of baskets, plates, and containers to showcase products keeps the cover relatively clean. Participants reacted positively to produce displayed in baskets.

Everyone realizes that plants are grown in the ground, but most customers don't want to see that ground still clinging to the produce. Clean produce can often bring a higher price because it is perceived as higher quality. Similarly, do not display produce on the ground or floor. Elevate edible items at least 6 inches off the ground. As much as possible, remove clutter and trash so the market has an overall clean and tidy appearance. Keeping a small trash can in the selling space is essential for containing trash, especially if you offer samples.

Don't forget that the individuals selling the produce should also look neat and approachable. It is important for vendors to greet customers and to avoid keeping a table between themselves and their customers, if possible. Carpenter or pocketed aprons are great for keeping money organized while interacting with customers.

## Pricing and Packaging

*"I like that it says how much everything is right there, so you don't have to like ask them."*

*"And we noticed that they didn't — I don't know how she was pricing anything, but there's no scale or anything we see to weigh."*

— Focus group participants



Many customers, particularly those new to shopping at farmers' markets, do not like to ask about prices and may walk on by if they do not see price information. It is important to post prices where you can easily read them at a distance of 3 to 5 feet and high enough so you can see them even if there is a crowd in front of the booth. Label products clearly with:

- Name of product,
- Price, by pound, volume, or piece, and
- Examples of quantity of product per weight.

Almost a quarter, 22%, of survey participants reported thinking that prices at the farmers' market are confusing. Many are not experienced in cooking with fresh products and do not know how much product is in a pound. Examples of such signage might read as follows:

Including pictures of the produce on the signage helps those with limited reading abilities.

It is a good investment to make signs that are attractive, rugged, and waterproof so you can use them all season. Make sure that the farm's name and logo is up front and noticeable. It should be on labels, placards, even vendors' shirts or aprons if possible. Make the name easy to remember so customers can find the booth again next week.



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*“Large variety, the prices marked, and you can buy it by the pound or buy it per piece and so you can buy the amount you want.”*

*“...but it’s just me and my daughter, so I have no need to buy a large quantity of vegetables that I know we’re not going to eat within the time where I have to throw it away.”*

— Focus group participants

Some vendors sell produce by the pound, and shoppers choose individual pieces in the amount they need. When selling by weight, it is helpful to weigh the product in front of the consumer so they can decide if they want more or less. This is important if funds are limited, and it provides the customer with options.

Some vendors, however, prepackage fruits or vegetables in containers or bags for sale. If prepackaging, consider making some small packages because customer family sizes vary. Not everyone wants or needs 2 pounds of tomatoes this week. Additionally, limited-resource patrons may not be able to spend a large sum on one type of food because it will limit their ability to buy the variety of foods they need.

## Bundling

Another popular idea is bundling different types of produce that customers often buy together for added convenience. Examples include a stir-fry mix, a mixed salad kit, and a salsa pack. Start with a few bundles and if they are popular, bundle more. Prepriced bundles of small quantities of popular produce also appeal to smaller or senior households. Good customer service includes taking time to package produce so it will arrive at its destination in good shape. When



packaging items together, make sure the consumer understands whether the package is part of the product price. Many limited-resource shoppers walk, bike, or take public transportation to the farmers’ market. It is a good idea to have some bags or boxes available for customers. Experienced farmers’ market shoppers will often bring their own, but it’s important to ensure that new customers feel welcome.

When market policies allow, you can offer seconds, blemished, or limited shelf-life foods at a discounted price. This offers options for those with limited food dollars.

## Labeling

If vendors are selling home-based microprocessed food products, such as jams or pickles, the state of Kentucky requires the following information on the labels:

- Common name of food product,
- Name and address of home-based processing operation including street address, city, state, and ZIP code,
- Ingredients of the food listed in descending order by weight,
- Net weight or volume of food,
- The following statement in 10-point type:
  - “This product is home-produced and processed,” and
  - Date the product was processed.

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The “Kentucky Farmers’ Market Manual and Resource Guide” published by KDA covers the details of microprocessing regulations in Kentucky.

[https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/documents/FM\\_Manual\\_and\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/documents/FM_Manual_and_Resource_Guide.pdf)

## Summary

	Promotional Tips for Market Leadership	Promotional Tips for Vendors
Benefits and Incentive Programs	<p>Post large, clear signage near the market entrance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm whether you accept benefits,</li> <li>• Advise whether you are implementing an incentive program,</li> <li>• Direct EBT-holders to POS machines and/or the information desk,</li> <li>• Provide directions for how to obtain tokens and how to use tokens and coupons to buy food at the farmers’ market, and/or</li> <li>• Explain how to take advantage of incentive programs available.</li> </ul>	<p>Post a sign that shows you accept SNAP/EBT, WIC or SFMNP benefits.</p>
Displays		<p>Reflect abundance. Use colorful, creative displays. Provide conversation starters. Be friendly. Post the name and location of your farm.</p>
Traffic Flow	<p>Assure adequate space between booths. Project an atmosphere of order. Provide maps of the market.</p>	<p>When possible, remove physical barriers between vendors and shoppers.</p>

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Cleanliness	Provide trash receptacles. Remove litter and trash.	Project cleanliness and order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display on a clean table or bright, solid table cover.</li> <li>• Use baskets or other containers to organize products.</li> <li>• Wear clean clothes.</li> <li>• Clean dirt from produce.</li> <li>• Elevate edible produce at least 6 inches from the ground.</li> <li>• Keep a small trash can in the selling space for containing trash, especially if samples are being offered.</li> </ul>
Pricing and Packaging		Post prices where people can easily read them at a distance of 3 to 5 feet and high enough so customers can see them even if there is a crowd in front of the booth. Label products clearly with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name of product,</li> <li>• Price, by pound, volume, or piece, and</li> <li>• Examples of quantity of product per weight.</li> </ul> Allow purchase of produce by the piece or small packages. Weigh produce for customers so they get the amount they want.
Bundling		Try bundling a variety of foods together as a food kit. Package to travel. Provide bags or boxes for those who don't have them.
Discounted Foods		Offer blemished or past-peak foods at a discounted price.
Labeling		Follow Kentucky regulations for micro-processed goods.

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