

Making A Marketing Plan A Guide in Plain English



**New Farms for New Americans
Burlington, Vermont**



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Thank you.
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Making A Marketing Plan

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Before you plant your first seed, ask yourself this question: **Where will I sell the vegetables I grow?**

There are many ways you can sell your vegetables. You can sell them at a farmers' market, to restaurants, grocery stores or food makers, or directly to your neighbors and friends.

In this workbook, we will talk about different places to market, how to make a market plan and some basic tools you will need to market vegetables. We will also give some tips for selling at the farmers' market and to wholesalers.

You will also find information on different crops you might want to consider growing for market and what kind of investments you will need to make to succeed at growing and marketing these crops.

Did you know that immigrant farmers are the fastest growing group of organic farmers in the United States? There are dozens of programs across the country designed to help immigrants overcome some of the barriers to farming, such as access to land, capital (money upfront), infrastructure and knowledge.



Did you know that women provide between 60 and 80% of the world's agricultural labor? In the United States, the number of women who own and operate their own farms more than doubled between 1978 and 2002. Opportunities for women in agriculture continue to grow, not just as laborers, but as owners and operators of their own small farm businesses.

Though production experience and ability is definitely important to running a successful farm business, knowing how to market your crops is also extremely important.

What is "Marketing"?

Marketing is another word for "selling." It describes all the things a farmer does to bring her or her products to a marketplace and sell them there.



What are “Markets”?



Markets or marketplaces are places where you sell your products. They can be **direct markets**, where you meet the customer and exchange money with him or her, or they can be **wholesale markets**, where another seller buys your products and then resells them to customers. Direct markets include farmers’ markets, Community Supported Agriculture programs, U-Pick operations and farm stands. Wholesale markets include restaurants, grocery stores, schools, hospitals and food makers or producers.

What is a “Market Plan”?

A market plan is an outline of how you will sell your produce. It can include how many markets you would like to have, what you will sell, how you will sell it and how much money you expect to make. It should also be unique to your goals for farming.

Where Do You Market?

Before you think about a plan for selling, it is important to understand the different places you can sell your products.

Farmers can sell their products to many different markets, which each has its own benefits and challenges. Once you get to know these different markets, you can then decided on a market plan that is best for you. Here’s a list of some of the different markets available to farmers:



- Farmers’ Markets
- Community Supported Agriculture Programs
- Multi-farm Drop Box Program
- Farm Stands
- Direct-to-Neighbors
- Wholesale Markets – Restaurants
- Wholesale Markets – Large Grocery Stores
- Wholesale Markets – Corner stores
- Wholesale Markets – Schools and Hospitals
- Wholesale Markets – Food Producers



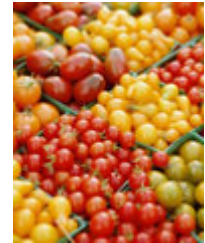
Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets are a great way for farmers to sell their products because they can get good prices from customers they meet face-to-face. Farmers can also sell different kinds of vegetables at the same time. It is good to bring a variety of high quality, fresh produce to market. For more tips on how to sell at the farmers' market, see pages 12-14.



In Burlington, farmers have a number of farmers' markets where they can sell. In 2008, you may be able to sell at these markets:

- Old North End Market at Wheeler Elementary School on Tuesdays
- Winooski Farmers' Market on TBA
- Fletcher Allen Health Care Market Cart on Thursday



Why are farmers' markets good?

Good prices, get to talk with your customers, can sell a range of vegetables, fun atmosphere

Why are farmers' markets hard?

Can only sell the best quality, competition with other growers, have to talk to people, may be difficult to keep track of the money you make, drive and set up takes time

Farm Stand and Direct to Neighbors

Another way to sell directly to your customers is to set up a farm stand near your home or farm. Sometimes these stands are "self serve," meaning customers can help themselves to as many vegetables as they want and pay by putting money in a box. You can also sell produce from your home to your neighbors and friends. Set up a small stand at your apartment complex or on your front porch. If you live in an apartment complex, be sure to check with the manager or land lord before setting up a table to make sure you do not need a permit.

Why are farm stands good?

Casual, get to talk to your customers, can sell a range of vegetables

Why are farm stands hard?

Lonely, inconsistent customers, people might steal if you leave your stand unattended



Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a program where people from the community buy a “share” of vegetables from a farm or group of farms that is then delivered to them throughout the summer. Though there is not a plan for the New Farms for New Americans program to have a CSA this season, other immigrant farming groups have successful CSAs that sell shares to members in their community. World PEAS co-op is a network of immigrant and other farmers affiliated with the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project in Massachusetts. They market collectively through farmers’ markets and wholesale outlets and also have a CSA.

In Burlington, you can sell vegetables to a community supported agriculture program that is supplied by several area farms and sells shares of vegetables to about 100 people. In particular, this program is looking to buy green beans, potatoes, radishes, sweet potatoes and snap peas.



Why is Community Supported Agriculture good?

Consistent market, loyal customers, money up front, good prices

Why is Community Supported Agriculture hard?

Have to grow a variety of crops, customers can sometimes be picky

Wholesale Markets

In Burlington, you can sell into these wholesale markets:

- Cooperative Grocery Stores (City Market/Onion River Coop)
- Corner and Neighborhood Grocery Stores
- Restaurants
- Food Makers and Producers
- Schools and hospitals

Why is wholesale good?

You can sell large amounts of the same product in one transaction, can be faster, fewer customer interactions

Why is wholesale hard?

Price isn't as good, buyer often determines the price, stricter rules about sorting and packing, large amounts need to be delivered, farmer responsible for getting paid

Wholesale Tips

- Bring samples of your crops to potential buyers during the summer. Let them see them and taste them. If they are of high quality, and fulfill a need at that market, then you will have no trouble selling them.
- Bring a crop calendar. Create a chart showing what you are growing, when it's available and how much you'll be charging.
- Meet your clients first hand. Grow a relationship with them.
- Be flexible. Sometimes buyers don't need as much of something as they did in the previous week. Don't get upset, get creative. Can you move any extra vegetables somewhere else? Can you eat them?
- Ask what you can grow for someone. Talk with chefs or produce buyers. See if there's anything they'd like you to try and grow for them that you may not have thought of.
- Learn your customer's individual packing and billing requirements and stick to them.

How do you make a market plan?

A market plan starts with a list of questions. How you answer these questions will help you determine what the best plan is for you. To help you answer these questions, you will find a chart at the end of this workbook (pages 15-17) that list some potential crops and what growing and marketing these crops involves. On page 18, you will also find a line drawing of a garden plot, which you can use to help you organize your farm.

For your market plan, you should first identify your **PURPOSE**. The purpose is central to all the other decision making you have to do. Your purpose is a broad goal that you will be ever-striving toward in your day-to-day work on the farm. You can have several purposes. For instance, your purpose may be to grow vegetables for your family and friends, to improve soil conditions and to provide high quality crops to your community at the Old North End Farmers' market.



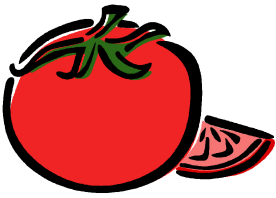
Now is the time to ask yourself:

What are you trying to do with your farm? What is the purpose? Why?

Please use this space to write or draw your farm's purpose.

Now that you have a purpose, consider who you are. What is your interest in running a farm? What is your background? Why is this farming project important to you? These are all questions that should be address when thinking about your market plan.





How much land do you have? Depending on how much space you have, you will have to adjust your crop plan to make the most of your space. For instance, if your space is limited, it may not make sense for you to devote a lot of room to a space-gobbling crop like watermelons. Instead, you should focus on a crop that makes use of vertical space, like tomatoes. Determining how much space you've got is the first step in deciding what and how much to grow.

How much money would you like to make? Look at how much space you have to work with and decide what a feasible number might be. Be conservative.

What skills do you have? What are you good at? What do you like to grow? Be sure that your plan compliments your strengths. This will cut down on the mistakes you will make and allow you a more smooth transition into farming.

How much time do you have? You need to plan for how much time you can dedicate in a week to your farm. If you have small children and other responsibilities that consume most of your time during the week when harvesting, marketing and selling occurs, then it may be best to find other means of distributing your vegetables.



What markets would you like to serve? Who do you want to sell to and why?



What crops do you want to grow and sell? It's very difficult to sell crops you don't like, know or eat. The best crops are the ones you can speak about intelligently and convincingly. What are these crops?

What makes you special? What makes your farm unique from other farms in the area?



Who is your competition?

Finally, what is your market plan? What will you grow, and how will you sell it?

Tools for Selling at the Farmers' Market

When preparing to sell at the farmers' market—or any market for that matter—make sure to:

- Pick vegetables when they reach the right size
- Pick vegetables at the right time of day
- Handle vegetables as little as possible
- Bunch or package vegetables in recommended sizes
- For instances, most greens get bunched in .75 lb bunches
- Store vegetables properly – in the shade or in the cooler

At the farmers' market, each farmer or group of farmers selling together has his or her own table. The farmer in charge of selling at the market must make sure to:

- Get to the market on time
- bring enough vegetables
- Set up your vegetables in a pretty display – don't just dump them onto the table
- Bring a table cloth
- Have change handy for customers
- Keep track of how much you sell and for how much
- Clearly note prices on your display or have them committed to memory
- If you will need to weigh vegetables, have a scale with you
- Bring bags for customers
- Be ready to answer questions about your produce
- Smile or look inviting

Farmers' Markets also require some unique supplies. Make sure to have these items with you:

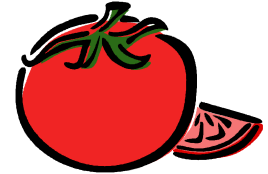
- Stand / Table
- Scale OR pre-weighed produce
- Bags
- Table Cloth
- Pen and Paper
- Containers for Produce
- Ice to keep produce cold (if necessary)
- Change
- Spray bottle



15 Tips for Farmers' Marketing

modified from the Rodale Institute's 'Some Thoughts on Selling at Farmers' Markets' by Nina Planck

1. The more information the better. Prices are the bare minimum. Customers love handouts, pictures and information about your farm and products.
2. Charge what it's worth. If you're selling high quality, rare, organic produce, charge for it. When you offer a bargain price, promote it on large signs. Offer discounts to people who buy a lot of one crop.



3. Give samples. People love to try things. Teach them about your favorites and highlight abundant or unusual crops. Suggest recipes.

4. Eat your own food. Know what everything tastes like and how to use it.

5. Give customers personal opinions. If you don't like something, don't be afraid to say, "I'm not much of a tomato eater." Customers will respect you for that. Be sure to continue by saying, "But my son loves these and says they're very sweet."

6. Tell customers how to store food.

7. Quality is everything. Farmers' Markets succeed because the produce sold there is superior. Make sure your produce is fresh and beautiful.

8. Have something to sell all season. To make good money at the market, have spring, summer, autumn and winter crops. Extend the season with covers or cold weather crops, or plant several batches of carrots so you can have them throughout the year.



9. Bags. Place bags where customers can reach them.

10. Get to know the market manager. If you have problems or a question, tell the manager.

11. Cultivate regular, loyal customers. Regular customers provide steady income. Tell your regulars about the other markets you attend.

12. Pile it high and fill it up. Use small containers and keep them full. Smaller containers look like abundance.

13. Don't be afraid of competition. Farmers' markets are cooperative. Find your niche.

13. Every farmer attending benefits from the high quality and diversity offered by each other.

14. Bring equipment. Don't forget your signs, table cloth, wet towels for lettuce, a tarp if it rains, baskets, boards and a table and enough change to get you through the first few big bills.

15. Be cheerful and active. A bored, sullen person won't sell a thing.

Trouble selling at the farmers' market?

It may be difficult at times to sell at your farmers' market for a variety of reasons.

The main reason, however, is a lack of customers. A good thing to do is simply always remind people that there is a market. When you're in a store, tell the merchant about it. Tell your neighbors, tell your friends. The more people who know about it, the more will come. And the more who come, the more fun it will be, thus insuring they return.

**You must always be marketing your farmers' market,
even when you're not actively farming.**

Here are some tips to help ensure a good market for you and your fellow farmers.

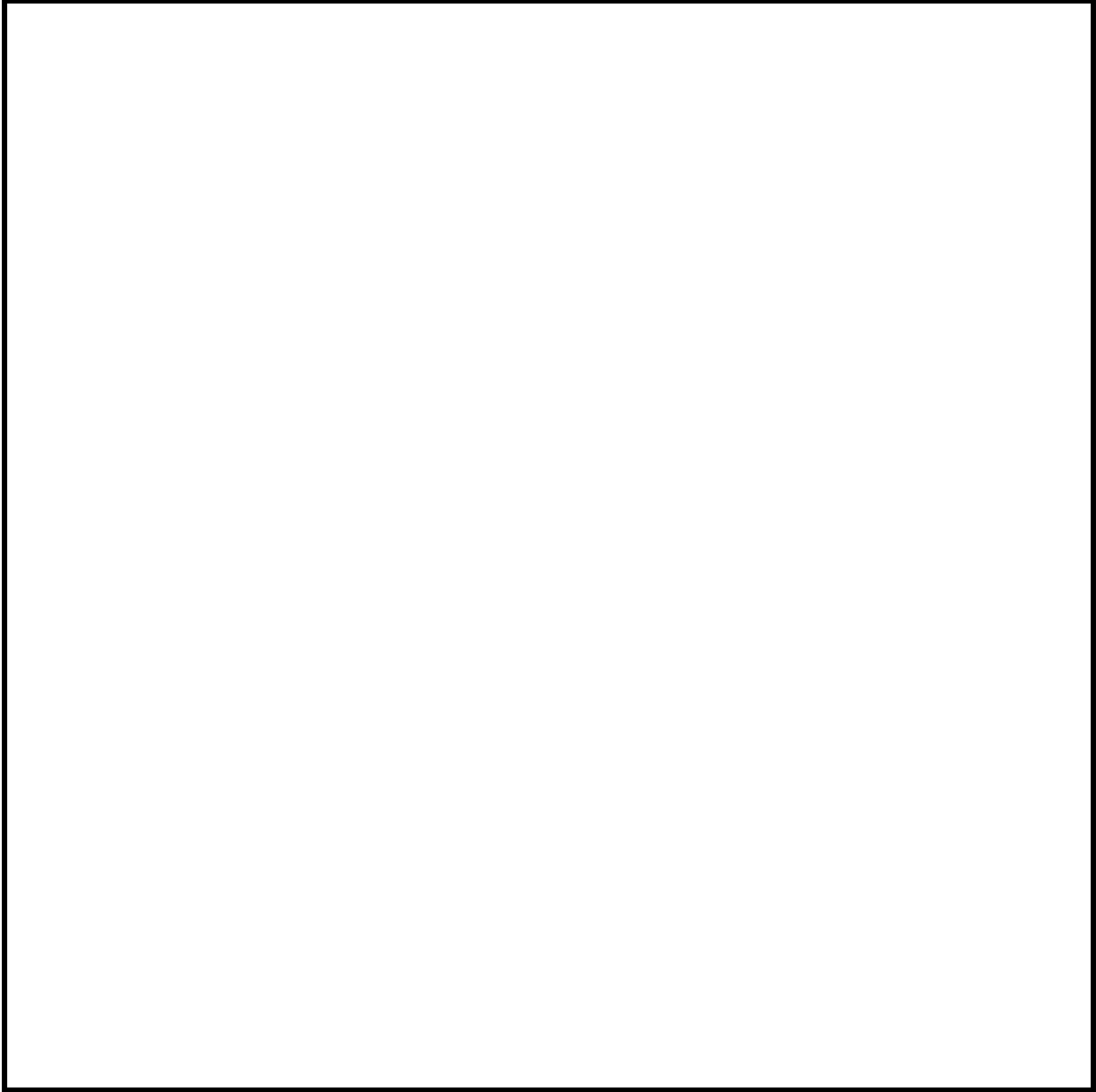
- Come up with some neat ideas on how to cook your vegetables. People may be afraid of vegetables they're unfamiliar with. The more you can educate them, the better. Telling them how to cook with these vegetables is a great way to educate.
- Make your stand inviting and bountiful looking. People like to see pretty stands with lots of food. It makes them feel like they have many wonderful options to choose from. The more you can play into that, the better.
- Make sure your prices are in line with the other sellers at the market. No one likes to buy vegetables that are more expensive, but people are also wary of prices that are too low. It makes them wonder about why your vegetables are so much cheaper than everybody else's, and if anything is wrong with them.
- People like discounts. If someone buys a lot of one vegetable, give them a slight discount on the price. It makes them feel special

crop	Beans	Sweet Corn	Watermelon	Tomatoes	Hot Peppers	Potatoes
yield per 100 ft row	15 lbs	200 ears/ 15 lbs	70 fruits or up to 700 lbs	500 lbs or more	50 lbs	160 lbs
weeks til harvest	9 weeks	10 weeks	10 weeks		10 weeks	
starts needed?	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no
planting schedule	varied	6/8 - 6/22	6/1 - 6/8	5/23 - 6/1	5/23 - 6/8	AEAP
succession potential	yes, 5/23 - 7/26, 3 bds/wk	varietal potential	some varietal potential	some varietal potential	some varietal potential	some varietal potential
potential markets	City Market	farmers' market	farmers' market	wholesale	wholesale	wholesale
price per lb	\$2/lb or more	\$.50 each	\$.30 - \$.50	\$2.50/lb	\$3/lb	1.50/lb
gross per row	\$30	\$100	\$210	\$1,250	\$150	\$240
additional markets	farmers' market, school district, restaurants		coop	farmers' market	farmers' market	farmers' market, multi-farm CSA
seed per row	1/2 lb	3 oz.	2/3 oz	1/4 oz.	?	10 lbs
estimated cost of seed per row	\$9.15	\$1.50	highly varied	varies - \$40; heirloom = \$17.90	1 Oz = \$69.50	\$40
additional investment	Trellising?		scary tape	cages	cages or other, black plastic	early and fingerlings get great price
notes		grow a good northern variety	deer and disease	must be able to break stem easily	watch for beetle	

Potential Crop Lists

crop	Bunched Greens	Peas	Winter Squash	Summer Squash	Scallions	Napa cabbage
yield per 100 ft row	200 bunches or more	20 lbs	150 lb	500 lbs	800 bunches	100-140 lbs
weeks til harvest	16	8	12	7	9	7
starts needed?	maybe	no	no	yes	yes	yes
planting schedule	AEAP	AEAP	AEAP	?	AEAP, July	
succession potential	yes	no	some varietal potential	some varietal potential	yes	no
potential markets	wholesale	farmers' market	wholesale	wholesale	multifarm CSA	wholesale
price per lb	\$2/ bunch	\$3.25/lb	\$.85/lb	\$1.30/lb	\$1.00/bunch	\$1.00/lb
gross per row	\$400	1 1/2 lb	\$128	\$650	\$800.00	\$100-140
additional markets	farmers' market	wholesale	farmers' market, CSA	farmers' market, CSA	farmers' market, wholesale, restaurants	
seed per row	1/2 oz	1 1/2 oz	2 oz	2 oz	1/2 oz	1/8 oz
estimated cost of seed per row	\$5	\$10.00	\$15	\$20	\$5	\$5
additional investment		trellis or other	black plastic			
notes	three plantings in 100 ft bed = 50 bunches a week	wholesale \$2.50/lb			tons of weeding	Flea beetle but you use ree-may and re-move outer leaves

	Head lettuce	Pumpkins	Sweet Potatoes	Okra	Radishes
crop					
yield per 100 ft row	100 head	300 lbs		200 lbs	33 lbs or 100 bunches
weeks til harvest	7	15	13	7	4
starts needed?	maybe	yes	yes	yes	no
planting schedule				early June	AEAP
succession potential	some varietal potential	some varietal potential	no	harvested for several weeks	yes
potential markets	wholesale	wholesale	wholesale	farmers' market	Wholesale, farmers' market
price per lb	\$1.50/head	\$.85/lb	\$1.33/lb	\$3/lb	\$2.00/bunch
gross per row	\$150	\$255		\$600	\$200
additional markets				maybe	yes
seed per row	1/8 oz	1 oz		?	1 1/2 oz.
estimated cost of seed per row	\$10 or less	\$5			\$4.50
additional investment		scary tape and black plastic			
notes	24 heads in a case and \$30-32 a case wholesale		Not very many farmers grow sweet potatoes	bugs like them	Can sell to multi-farm CSA



100 foot x 100 foot for a 1/4 acre plot—20 100 foot rows

50 foot x 50 foot for a 1/8 acre plot—10 50 foot rows

Average row is 5 feet wide