


# Southern SAWG Conference

## Starting a Producer Only Farmers Market

*Louisville, Kentucky*  
*January 21, 2006*

*Presentation by Don Wambles*





# Planning stages are critical to the success of the operation

- Determine interested parties
- Determine specific goals and tasks
- Look for and settle on a location
- Gain community support
- Begin publicity for farmers
- Promote the farmers' market concept
- Decide market management and organization (by-laws)
- Begin publicity to consumers
- Open the farmers' market
- Promote the farmers' market (peak season)
- Sponsor a special activities
- Extend the market season with fall crops



# Market Feasibility

- Adequate # of Producers is more important than evaluating consumer numbers in planning the market.
- There has to be a strong interest and commitment on the part of the farmers to sell at the market.
- Must be diverse, high quality produce that appeals to the buyer's sense of sight and smell.
- Poor quality product and zero diversity will ensure that customers do not return.



# Vendor Recruitment

- Public Meetings
  - Great venue to let farmers know that you are interested in what their marketing needs are, and how and when the market would need to operate. Interaction guaranteed.
- Radio or TV
  - Early morning farm show
- Grower or Commodity Meetings
  - Great place to meet and talk with growers
- Grower Visits
  - Assures producer you are interested in assisting them
- Grower Referrals
  - Increase variety
- Nothing sells like Success



# Other factors to consider

- Percentage of population in and around the market with gardens
- Existence of other nearby farmers' markets
- Existence of nearby roadside stands or u-pick farms
- Socio-economic mix of consumers
- Production and marketing experience of potential growers
- Attitude, interest and support for the market by local officials, community leaders, business people and the agricultural community
- Willingness of producers to cooperate with each other.



# Favorable Environment

- Do not share the location with vigorous non-produce sales activities
  - Flea markets or antique shows which operate regularly will likely swallow up a farmers' market in the immediate vicinity.
  - Sharing buildings and parking will diminish the impact of the farmers' market.
  - Most customers will either refuse to visit the market because of parking and walking distances, or
  - will divert their major attention (and dollars) to the non-produce activities.



# Location, Location, Location

- Locate the market where it is convenient and close to buyers
- Locate it where sellers can reach it easily
- Make sure the entrance and exit are not traffic hazards
- Provide enough space for parking and traffic flow
- Choose a well-drained and relatively level site



# Operating the Market

- On-site guidance should be provided by a market manager
- A Board of Directors should develop policies consistent with the by-laws and organizational goals



# Board Responsibility

- Establish policy concerning hours, days, and months of market operation
- Determine who may sell at the market
- Set fees for selling in the market
- Select employees
- Designate individuals who may act for the Board in an emergency
- Specify the responsibilities of the manager plus the extent of the manager's authority



# Who Can Sell at the Market?

The Board has three options:

- Only local farmers may sell products they grow
- Only farmers may sell products they grow
- Farmers and non-farmers may sell



# Periods of Operation

- Operate one or two days each week
- Try to keep some sellers at the market all day (hours of operation)
- Publicize days and hours of operation



# Items to Sell

- Do sell fresh fruits, vegetables, baked goods, flowers, shrubs, plants and honey
- Consider selling craft items (home canned goods such as jams & jellies).
- Do not sell fresh meat, antiques or purchased items.



# Packaging

- Be sure containers are attractive and clean
- Use contrasting colored items to call attention to each offering (examples: red peppers beside zucchini, unhusked corn beside tomatoes, bell peppers beside yellow squash)
- Be sure produce is clean
- Don't display items with defects, such as insect damage or spoilage
- Use large bulk displays if possible
- Offer more than one package size



# Measure of Success

- Success is not selling out quickly, but rather having enough produce to permit steady selling all day (hours of operation).
- A careful study of potential customers will help in planning a market for their greatest convenience.
  - Some markets are not patronized by many potential customers because: the hours of operation are too early or hours of market operation coincide with working hours.
- **If the market is to be successful, community leaders, policy-makers, and producer-marketers must work together in establishing and operating the community farmers' market.**



# State & Local Support - Alabama

- In 1965, the Farmers Market Authority was established to assist in the marketing of agricultural products.
  - We promote marketing avenues (particularly direct markets) for Alabama agricultural products.
  - Advocate for the interest and respond to the needs of farmers' markets and direct market farmers.
  - Educate farmers and consumers about the benefits of direct marketing and the importance of supporting local agriculture and community
  - Provide information, technical assistance, and facilities necessary to move agricultural products from the farm to the consumer



# Services/Programs

- Market Development
- Marketing
- Farmers Market Nutrition Programs
  - WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Programs
  - Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs
- Training for Market Managers & Farmers
- Promotion



# Market Development

- Assist communities with starting new farmers markets
  
- Support the growth of existing markets
  - through assistance with organizational development
  - grower recruitment
  
- Products sold at farmers markets
  - Fruits, vegetables and herbs
    - Conventional
    - Organic
  - Flowers
  - Baked goods
  - Homemade crafts

# Promotion Campaign

- Logo
  - Posters
  - Brochures
  - T-shirts
  - Caps
  - License Plates
- Web site
  - [www.BuyLocalAlabama.com](http://www.BuyLocalAlabama.com)
- Print Ads
- Billboards
- Radio
- Conferences, Workshops, State Fairs, etc.





# How to Increase Traffic



# Consumer's Reason for Attending the Market

- Freshness
- Quality
- Variety (they want to shop)
- Draw Crops
- Buying direct from the farmer
- Pricing
- Social atmosphere
- Availability of produce not often found in supermarket
- Bulk buying for preservation



# Strategies Farmers Use to Increase Sales



# Product Selection

- Crop selection - identify draw crops
- Seasonal extensions/late and early varieties
- Value added
- Specials, recognize regulars with farmers' market dozen
- Don't bring unless you can put your name on it



# Stall Merchandising

- The display is what the customer sees first!!
  - Showcase your product
  - Convey a sense of pride in your product
  - Appear ready for business
  - Keep busy – restock, rearrange– no idle time



# Strategies Markets Use to Increase Sales



# At the Market

- Site dressing and presentation of the market
  - Directional signs, on-site signs, flags and banners
  - Music, entertainment
  - Comfortable experience
  
- Layout and design
  - Tighten the stall placements, no gaps
  - Keep like products apart
  - Single items vs. anchor stalls



# Effective marketing that “knows” customers

- Advertising– Clear message/theme
  - Who, what, where, when, how.....,
  - Always include “direct from.....”
  - Method to get further information
- Opening Day Marketing Plans that reflect customers needs



# Effective marketing that “educates” customers

- Ads, postcards, press releases all the same theme
- Comparative tastings
- Cooking demonstrations
- Guest Chef Program
- Recipes
- Healthy Programs
- Awareness Programs
- Special Events



# Results

- More farmers direct marketing
- More people are shopping at farmers markets
- Increased farmers incomes
- New farmers markets (65)
  - 1999 – 17
  - 2005 -- 82



# Resources

- ***Alabama Farmers Market Authority***  
([www.fma.alabama.gov](http://www.fma.alabama.gov))  
([www.BuyLocalAlabama.com](http://www.BuyLocalAlabama.com))
- ***Farmers Market Website***  
([www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets](http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets))
- ***Direct Marketing Website***  
([www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing](http://www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing))
- ***State Marketing Profiles***  
([www.ams.usda.gov/statesummaries](http://www.ams.usda.gov/statesummaries))
- ***List of Farmers Markets by State***  
([www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm))
- ***List of Publications***  
([www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/msb/publications.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/msb/publications.htm))
- ***National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs***  
([www.nafmnp.org](http://www.nafmnp.org))



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