



Center for Crop Diversification

*Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment*

Farmers Market Crash Course

Brett Wolff – brett.wolff@uky.edu

@ccduky on facebook, Instagram, and
youtube





Center for Crop Diversification

*Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment*

Our Team



Brett Wolff
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Sr. Extension Associate



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Tim Woods
Extension Professor

 **Center for Crop
Diversification**
*Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment*



Resource Development

A LOT of publications & maps



Price Reporting

Farmers Market and Produce Auction Price Reports for Region



Marketing Training

Group and individual marketing training for small farms & food businesses

What We Do

ccd.uky.edu

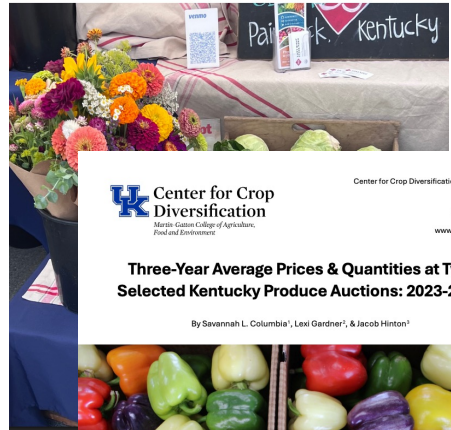
 **Center for Crop Diversification**

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Food and Environment*

Price Reports

Auctions & Farmers Markets

- Help growers decide on new crops.
 - Use auction/FM price reports to determine potential income.
- Gives growers a starting point to pricing their crops.



Center for Crop Diversification
 Fact Sheet
 CCD-FS-38
 January 2026

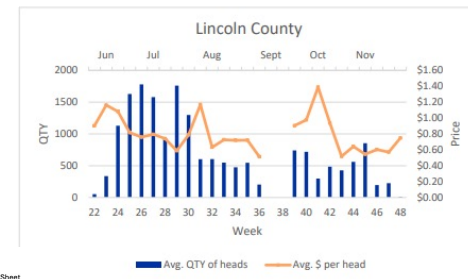
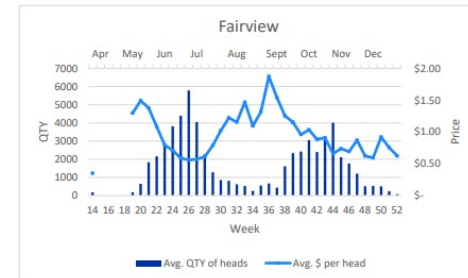
3-year Average Weekly Prices at Kentucky Farmers Markets: 2023-2025

Center for Crop Diversification Fact Sheet
 CCD-FS-37
 January 2026
 www.ccd.uky.edu

Three-Year Average Prices & Quantities at Two Selected Kentucky Produce Auctions: 2023-2025

By Savannah L. Columbia¹, Lexi Gardner², & Jacob Hinton³

¹ Savannah L. Columbia is an Extension Associate in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Kentucky
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Cabbage

Notes & Observations

2020 – 2022 Weekly Average Prices & Quantities

Season Length: May – December.

Lincoln County's season is slightly shorter and trends from June – mid December.

Cabbage has a distinct spring and fall season at the auction which can be seen clearly in the Fairview graph; however, it is accessible May – December. There are a few spikes in price as supply falls or is limited – this could pose an opportunity for growers to capture higher prices if they can fill this gap.

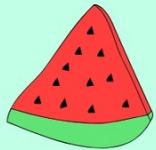
Table 3. Seasonal Average Prices for All Kentucky Farmers Markets, by year 2021-2023

Crop	2021	2022	2023
Apple (lb)	\$2.25	\$2.71	\$2.71
Asparagus (lb)	\$6.61	\$7.57	\$7.25
Beans (lb)	\$3.36	\$4.12	\$3.37
Beets (lb or bunch)	\$3.19	\$3.37	\$3.38
Blueberries (pint)	\$4.40	\$5.68	\$5.20
Broccoli (lb)	\$3.11	\$3.39	\$4.01
Cabbage (each)	\$2.78	\$3.03	\$3.34
Carrots (lb or bunch)	\$3.32	\$3.59	\$2.91
Corn Sweet (dozen)	\$5.99	\$7.53	\$7.63
Cucumber (each)	\$0.81	\$0.78	\$1.20
Garlic (each)	\$1.91	\$2.73	\$2.21
Greens (lb)	\$4.85	\$6.78	\$4.58
Lettuce (lb or head)	\$4.99	\$5.08	\$5.39
Peppers (each green or 2 banana)	\$0.78	\$0.86	\$0.89
Radishes (bunch)	\$2.24	\$2.41	\$2.75
Strawberries (qt)	\$6.04	\$6.07	\$6.95
Tomatoes (lb)	\$3.06	\$3.22	\$2.91

Hort Biz Quiz

- “So, I bought a farm...”
- Helps you think about land, labor and capital

Take the HortBiz Quiz!



Results:

Your responses indicate that you have:

Limited to no Access to Capital

Access to Land

Access to Labor

Limited access to capital means that you may struggle to afford things like equipment, branding and marketing, or other startup costs. You may want to talk to lenders to see what borrowing options are available. Land access—whether through rent or through ownership—is a huge advantage. Generally, horticulture operations don't require massive amounts of land, but having some is a really good start. There's no getting around it: horticultural crops are labor-intensive. Since you have access to at least some labor, you have an advantage as you start your operation. Don't forget to account for the costs to pay that labor—especially if you have limited starting capital.

Your next steps:

1. Print or Screenshot the "Results" section above (you can also take the quiz again at your county office)
2. [Contact your county agent](#) to share your results and talk further.
3. [Go here for additional resources](#)

With limitations in capital, you'll want to select crops based on your land and labor access. A few crops you might consider--based on your responses are listed below.

Consider*:

Sweet Potatoes
Baby Vegetables
Mushrooms
Cucumbers

Avoid or limit:

Grapes
Greenhouses
Nursery Production

*Your agent has a larger list and the experience to help you identify and rule out other options.

Since you are planning to sell your crops, it is imperative that you identify markets before you plant. This includes checking that you understand the quality, volume, and food safety requirements of different markets. We've listed some resources below to help you identify markets, and explore your options further.

The tool provided at this site is intended for educational purposes and is not a guarantee of operational success or profit. It is your responsibility to build your production skills, refine your business idea, and develop a profitable market. We are here to help you identify useful resources that will help you along the way to success.

Publications & Budgets

- Small Scale & Large Scale Budgets
- Pubs for
 - over 140 specialty crops
 - Production systems
 - Market Types

High Tunnel Resources

Home / Resources / Production Systems / High Tunnel Resources

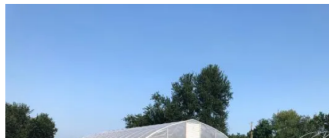
High Tunnel Guide for Kentucky Producers Available

A curated collection of resources

Check out this brand new guide from a multidisciplinary team from Grow Appalachia, University of Kentucky, Kentucky HNRCS, and KADF.

[DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE](#)

High tunnels, also known as hoop houses, have been a staple in KY agriculture for many years. They differ from greenhouses in that crops are still planted in the ground rather than in pots on a bench and there is no supplemental heating or cooling. Side wall and roof vents are used to help moderate temps that are increased via solar gain. With the growth of the NRCS EQUIP program since 2010, the number of high tunnel structures skyrocketed from fewer than 400 tunnels to over 1200 in 2020 with more being installed every year. These structures can be incredibly valuable to



Monitoring pH and EC in Greenhouse Production

Greenhouse and other controlled environment growers that want to improve their harvest yields through providing their plants with optimal balances of nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium should consider regularly monitoring of their crop's pH and electrical conductivity (EC). EC is used as an indicator for the salinity and availability of nutrients in the growing system. Regularly monitoring and proper mitigation of undesirable readings can improve cost efficiency of your production, ensure crop consistency, and ensure a sustainable grower's operation.



Center for Crop Diversification Fact Sheet
CCD-FS-15
www.ccd.uky.edu

School Gardens Funding Strategies

By Cindy Finneseth

School gardens are one of the three pillars of Farm to School (F2S) programs – a living laboratory that complements locally-produced food procurement and agriculture and nutrition educational programs. Less than 10% of Kentucky school food authorities (SFAs), however, are benefiting from school garden programs. In a 2020 survey of the USDA Southeast Region, which includes Kentucky, 77% of respondents identified school gardens as their weakest F2S component. Funding is consistently identified as a barrier for F2S programs, not just establishment of gardens, but also expenses associated with ongoing maintenance, upgrades, and staffing. In the 2023 national Farm to School Census, 43% of SFAs stated more funding would encourage them to participate in F2S activities. Consistent, substantial, and recurrent sources of funding for the school gardens is the ideal financial support model for a sustainable school garden program. In reality, most school garden managers leverage multiple funding streams to sustain garden upkeep and programming. Developing a reasonable budget, securing funding, and good financial stewardship is crucial for a thriving school garden program.

Developing a Budget

Budget needs vary widely based on the school garden type and scale. Container gardens, raised beds, in-ground rows, greenhouses, and hydroponic systems all require a different setup investment and vary in on-going expenses. The types of crops grown – vegetables, small fruits, herbs, fruit trees, or flowers will influence setup and maintenance decisions. Each garden site will have unique needs; however, basic supplies, materials, and equipment can be identified to develop initial and on-going budget estimates.



Kingston Elementary School Garden in Madison County



School Garden Construction at West Jessamine Middle School in Jessamine County

Dr. Cindy Finneseth is an Assistant Extension Professor in the Department of Horticulture at the University of Kentucky

Potatoes	Pumpkin	Squash, Winter
Squash, Summer	Sweet Corn	Sweet Potato
Tomato	Watermelon, seedless	Watermelon, seeded

Note: Some budgets assign a per-box cost for packing. This cost changes depending on the hired labor rate. Harvest and packing rates may be changed using the appropriate cell on the right of the budget worksheet.

The author gratefully acknowledges contributions and reviews from UK Horticulture Extension Specialist Shawn Wright and Extension Entomologist Ric Bessin.



For more info visit:
www.uky.edu/ccd

*Matt Ernst is an independent contractor with the Center for Crop Diversification.

Cooperative Extension Service | Agriculture and Natural Resources | Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development | Community and Economic Development

...there is room in the market for locally



stems are well-suited to small-scale a good way to diversify or expand an ion. They can be grown in open fields or in ents such as high tunnels or trolled greenhouses. Non-flowering cut l heads, stalks and woody cuts, may also be ecorative purposes. Specialty cut flowers dried, by the stem, in bunches, or in mixed dded products.

entucky Cut Flower Grower Map here.

er Resources

- es [+](#)
- l [+](#)
- Post-Harvest [+](#)
- Marketing [+](#)

HIGH TUNNEL PLANTING CALENDAR for ANNUAL CROPS



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

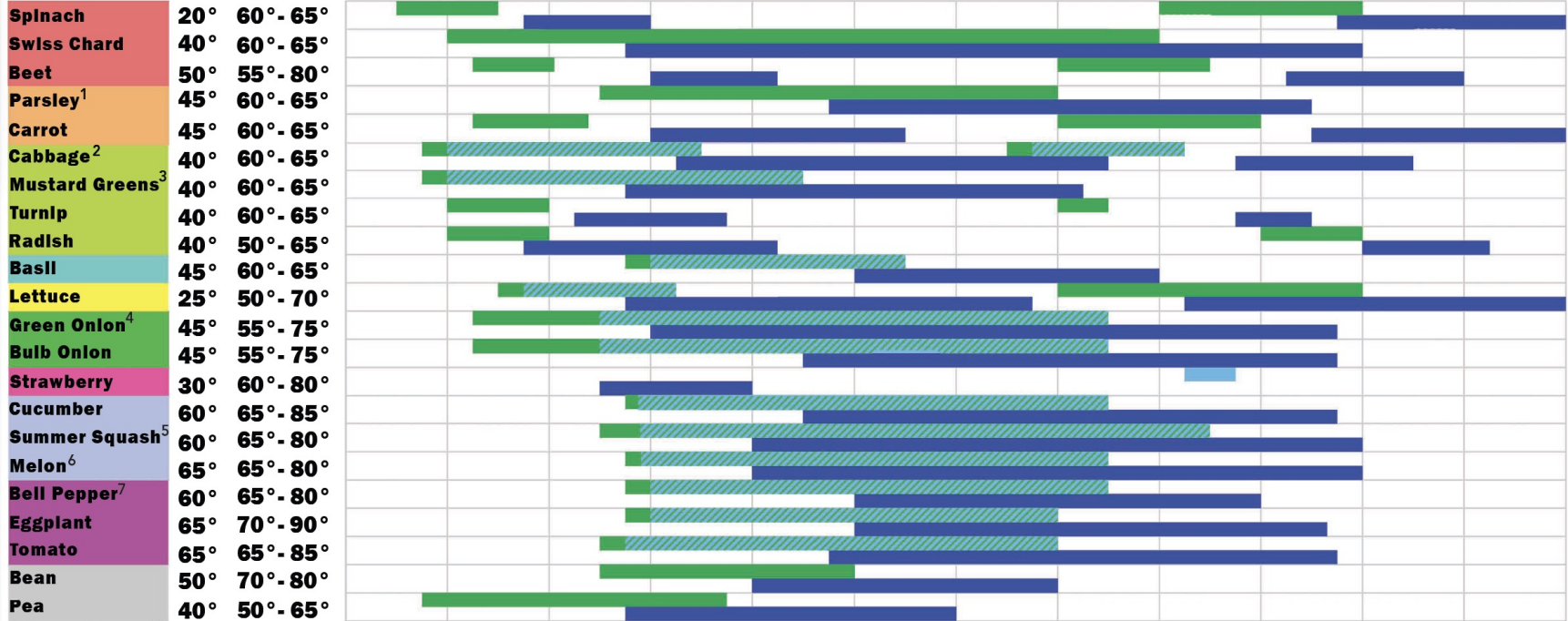
CENTER FOR CROP DIVERSIFICATION

KADF
KENTUCKY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND



AIR TEMPERATURE
MIN OPTIMAL

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JULY AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

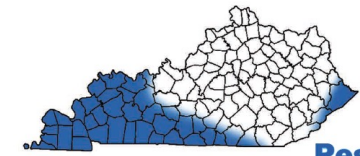
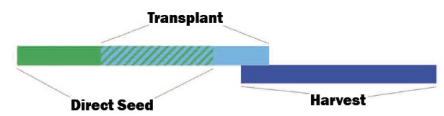


Plant Family

Beet Carrot Cole Crop Mint Sunflower
Garlic Rose Gourd Nightshade Pea

Alternative Crops

- 1) Cilantro, Dill
- 2) Chinese Cabbage, Pac Choy
- 3) Arugula, Collards, Kale
- 4) Leeks
- 5) Zucchini
- 6) Cantaloupe, Muskmelon, Honeydew, Watermelon
- 7) Sweet Pepper, Chile Pepper



Region 1

3-year Average Weekly Prices at Kentucky Farmers Markets: 2023-2025



Three-Year Average Prices & Quantities at Two Selected Kentucky Produce Auctions: 2023-2025

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CCD NEWSLETTER

Stay up to date on events, new resources and partner organizations info.



 Cooperative
Extension Service

**Center for Crop
Diversification**

Social Media



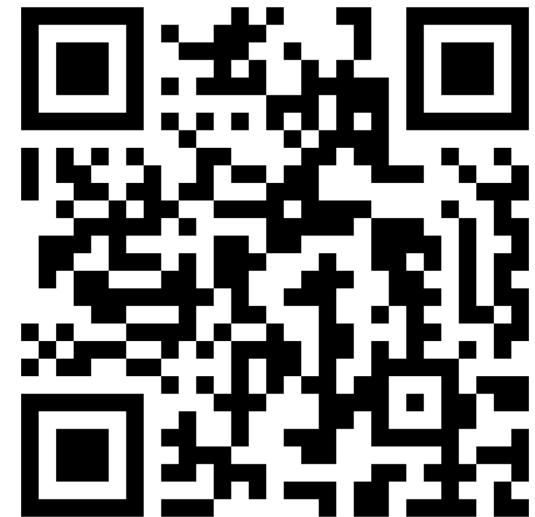
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Follow us!



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Roadmap

Marketing Basics

What's an FM?

Pricing & Costs

Quick Tips

The 4 P's

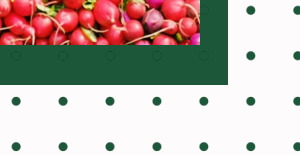
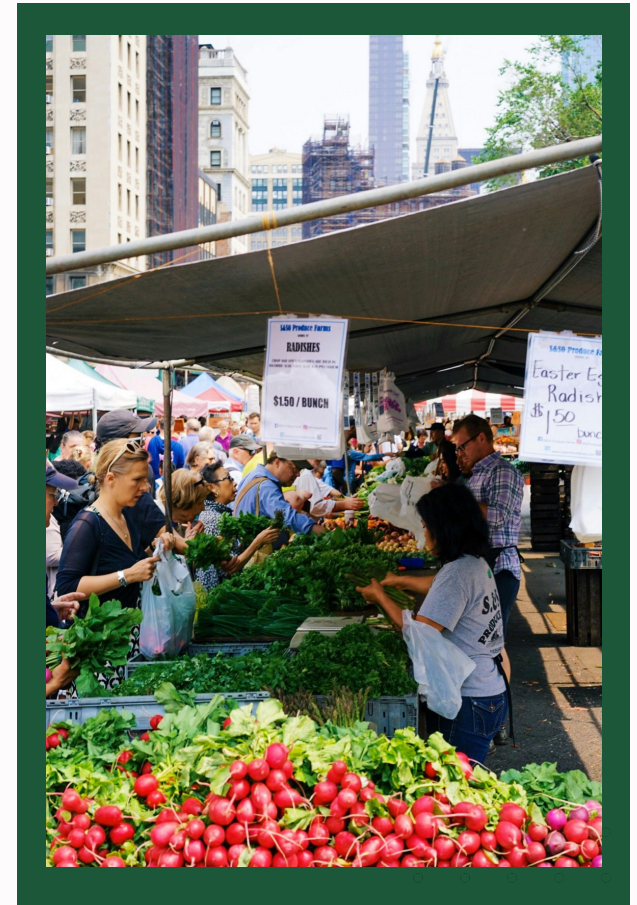
Product

Price

Place

Promotion

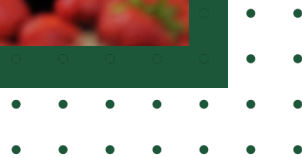
- Often referred to as your marketing mix
- The key elements that are involved in planning and marketing your product
- They interact significantly



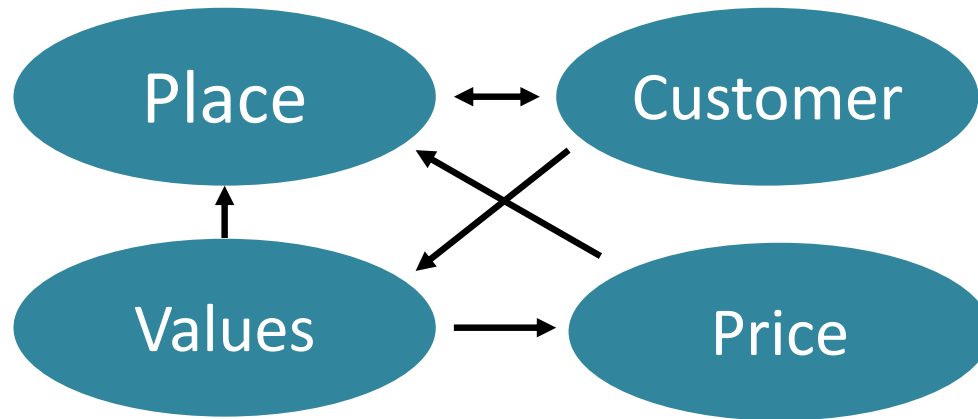
Product



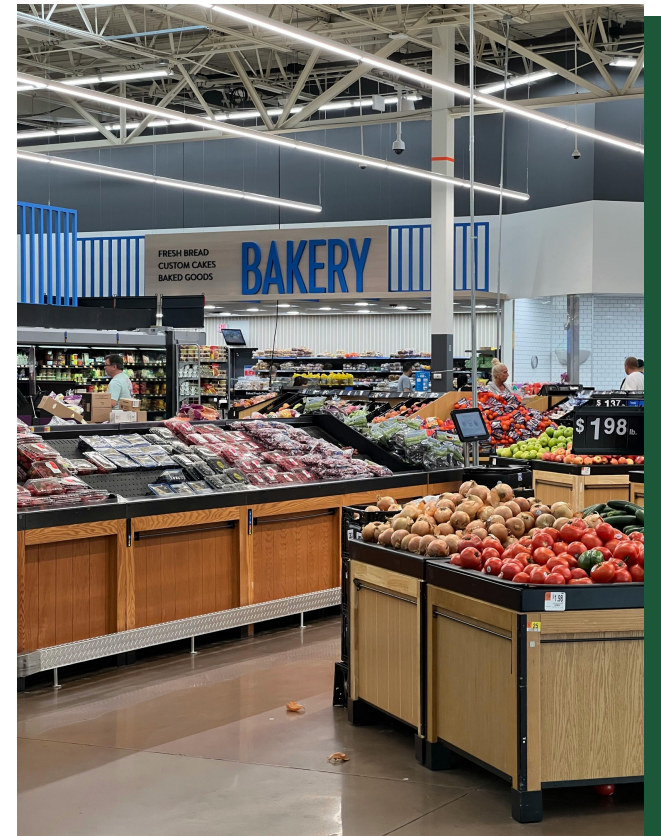
- Commodity quality is about sameness—adhering to standards
- Direct to Consumer (DTC) is usually about difference—differentiation
- Whose values?



Place & Price



- We'll be talking about both of these more later.
- Keep a focus on where you are and what your customers value most.



Promotion



Roadmap

Marketing Basics

What's an FM?

Pricing & Costs

Quick Tips

What is a Farmers Market?



- Low barrier to entry
- LOTS of facetime with customers
 - Extroversion vs. Marketing
- Weekly (or more) commitment

- Booth fees (bigger market, higher fee)
- Relatively low volume
- Most customers will tolerate some variation.
- Quality is still critical.



- Weather
- Transportation & Storage
- Market size is variable and so is market/customer type.

Kinds of Farmers Markets

Price vs. Sales Markets



- Lower price sensitivity for sales markets
- Higher price sensitivity for price markets
- Access for vendor is harder in sales
- Access for vendor is easier in price

Urban vs. Rural



- Farther vendor travel for urban markets
- Urban tends to have more customers
- Rural markets are closer to vendors
- Fewer customers in rural markets

Customer is King



- Knowing which market you are selling in will help you understand customer preference
- Each customer has different values and cares about different things
- Don't Assume

Kinds of Farmers Markets

How do you tell?



Market
Visit

Visit the market while they are open. What products do you see? How many vendors are there? Note the prices. Are there special labels like Organic, Certified Naturally Grown, artisan? What is the *feel* of the market? Folksy and rural? Chic and hip? What kinds of customers are there? Families, senior citizens?

Ask Around

What do people in the community say about the market? How do they perceive it? Expensive? Quality? Fun? Well-stocked? If you visit the market ask some of the customers and vendors what they like about the market. Talk to the manager.

Price Reports

Up next...

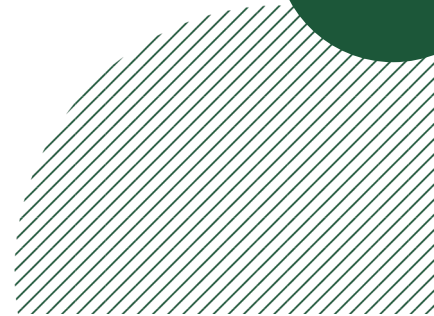
Roadmap

Marketing Basics

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Quick Tips



CCD Price Reports

ccd.uky.edu

- Farmers Markets (KY & TN)
- Produce Auctions (KY)
- 3-Year Average Prices



Center for
Crop Diversification

Price Reports

Our Impact

Resources

Training

Local Food & Ag Research

2025 KY Mechanical Weed Control Field Day

H
C
P

Price Reports

Regional Farmers Market & Produce Auction Price Data

[Home](#) / [Price Reports](#)

We collect and post prices from a variety of specialty crop markets in several states. We also analyze these prices and publish average price reports available below. If you are interested in reporting prices with the CCD, [contact us here](#).

"Producers can utilize price reports for pricing their products to figure out what they can truly expect. In some cases they recognize that they can get more for their product even though they live in a rural area."

-Brent Lackey, Executive Director, KCARD

Price Reports and Publications

- > **Kentucky Produce Auction Prices**
New auction prices posted multiple times per week during the season
- > **Kentucky Farmers Market Prices**
Weekly prices from Kentucky markets during the season
- > **Tennessee Farmers Market Prices**
Bi-weekly prices from Tennessee markets during the season
- > **Average & Summary Price Publications**
Publications with price averages and other analysis
- > **Price Report Archives**
Historical data from our reports dating back over a decade



3-year Average Weekly Prices at
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Are You Charging Enough?

Going Price


- Price Reports
- Grocery Store Visit (careful!)
- Local Market Research
- Talk with colleague farmers

Your Costs

- Recordkeeping
- Budgets

Good local data are usually the best

TOMATOES, STAKED: FRESH MARKET, TRICKLE IRRIGATED
 Kentucky Estimated Costs and Returns for 2017
 Approximately 0.10 acres (8 100-ft rows)
 NOT TO BE CONSIDERED CROPPING RECOMMENDATIONS OR PROFITABILITY PROJECTIONS. FOR COMPARISON AND PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY.


[Click here for print version](#)

	Quantity	Unit	\$/Unit	Total	
GROSS RETURNS					
Tomatoes	2400	lbs	\$ 2.00	\$ 4,800.00 a,b	
Total Returns				\$ 4,800.00	
VARIABLE COSTS					
Production					
Plants	400	plants	\$ 0.40	\$ 160.00	
Transplant & Staking Labor	12	hours	\$ 12.50	\$ 150.00	
N Fertilizer: Preplant Urea	10	lbs	\$ 0.40	\$ 4.00	
Starter Liquid Fertilizer	0.9	lbs	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.70	
N Fertilizer: Calcium Nitrate fertigation	60	lbs	\$ 0.45	\$ 27.00	
Black Plastic/Drip Lines	800	feet	\$ 0.08	\$ 64.00 d	
Stakes & Twine	1	plot	\$ 220.00	\$ 220.00 c	
Weed Control	1	plot	\$ 54.28	\$ 54.28 e	
Insect Control	1	plot	\$ 26.45	\$ 26.45 e	
Disease Control	1	plot	\$ 71.97	\$ 71.97 e	
Irrigation	9	hrs.	\$ 0.40	\$ 3.60 c	
Machinery Variable Costs	1	plot	\$ 9.25	\$ 9.25 f	
Total Preharvest Variable Costs				\$ 793.25	
SUMMER GRAZING BUDGET					
Projected Costs and Returns per Calf and Herd Total					
Buy Date: 4/15/24 Sell Date: 10/15/24					
Avg. Daily Gain	1.4	lbs			
Days in program	183	days			
Sale Weight	706.2	lbs			
Weight Gain	256.2	lbs			
Death Loss	2.0%				
Number of Cattle	60	head			
Pasture-acres used	60	acres			
Stocking Rate	1	ac/hd			
Expected Returns	AMOUNT	UNIT	PRICE	PER CALF	HERD TOTAL
Feeder Calf	706.2	lbs	\$2.30	\$1,624.26	\$97,456
TOTAL RETURNS				\$1,624.26	\$97,456
VARIABLE COSTS					
Purchase of Feeder Calf	450	lbs	\$2.70	\$1,215.00	\$72,900
Pasture Maintenance	1	acre	\$45.00	\$45.00	\$2,700
Hay	0	ton	\$90.00	\$0.00	\$0
Grain	0	lbs	\$0.10	\$0.00	\$0
Salt and Mineral	50	lbs	\$0.40	\$20.00	\$1,200
Vet and Medical	1	head	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$1,800
Marketing	1	head	\$45.61	\$45.61	\$2,736
Mech & Equip (Fuel/Rep/Main)	1	head	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$1,200
Death Loss Expense				\$24.90	\$1,494
Other	1	head	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$600
Interest on Operating Capital	\$1,310.00	dollars	8.0%	\$52.54	\$3,153
TOTAL VARIABLE COSTS:				\$1,463.05	\$87,783
RETURN ABOVE VARIABLE COSTS				\$161.21	\$9,673
FIXED COSTS					

CCD & AgEcon Budgets

Prefilled with ballpark example expenses, but fully editable so you can use your own projected costs.

Roadmap

Marketing Basics

What's an FM?

Pricing & Costs

Quick Tips

Tip 1:
Sampling Sells

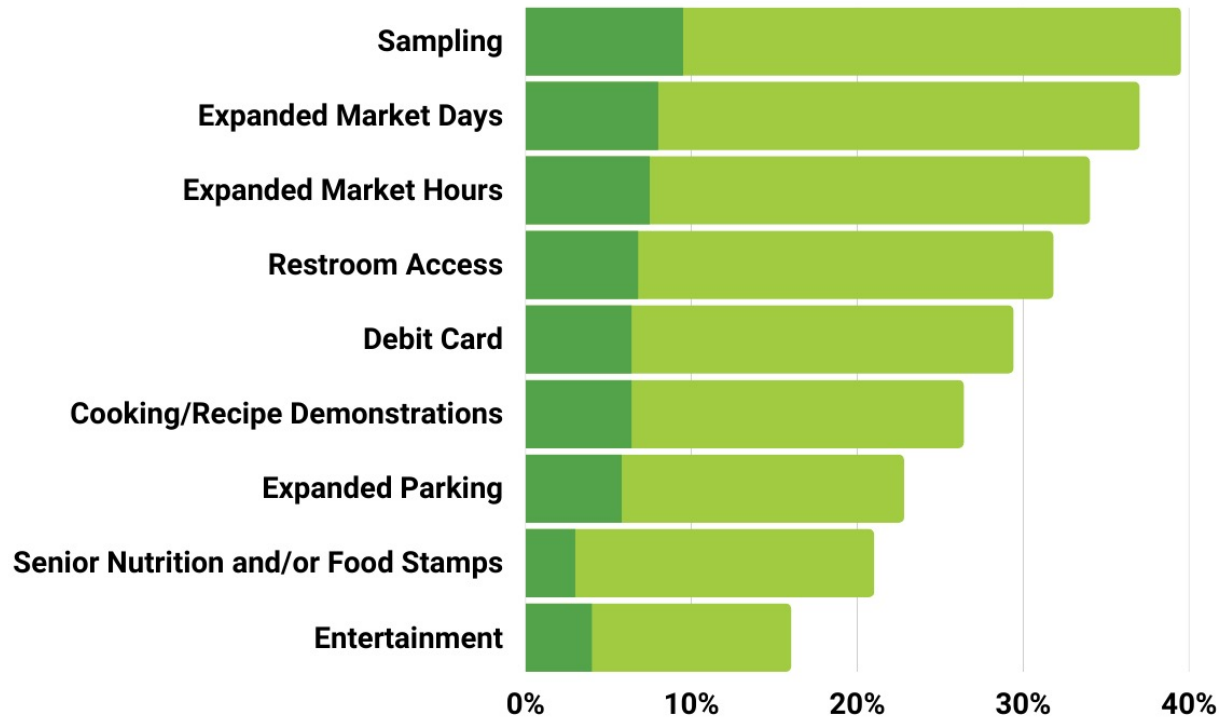


Sampling & Demonstration Services in Perspective

Services in most demand in KY Farmers' Markets



Sampling was the most important & in-demand service at Farmers Markets



Based on 302 patron intercepts in 11 different KY Farmers Markets, Summer 2009. Services rated on 1 = 'not important' to 10 = 'very important'

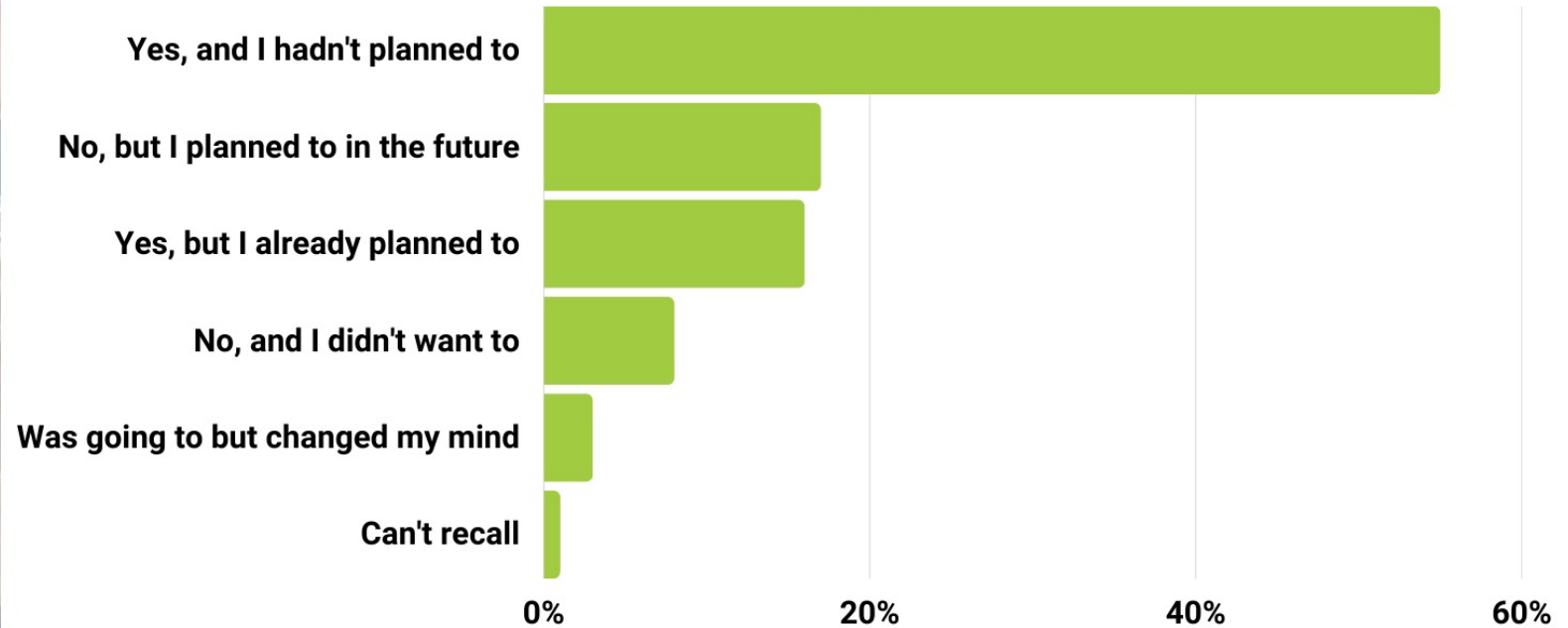


give away product for free??? It's what the customers want

After sampling, did you buy the product?



Frequency of Product Purchasing



N = 1,132

Cooked or Processed Sampling Certificate

- read through the sampling chapters in Farmers' Market Manual (*available online at KDA*)
- complete KDA Farmers' Market Sampling Application
- submit completed application to KDA office

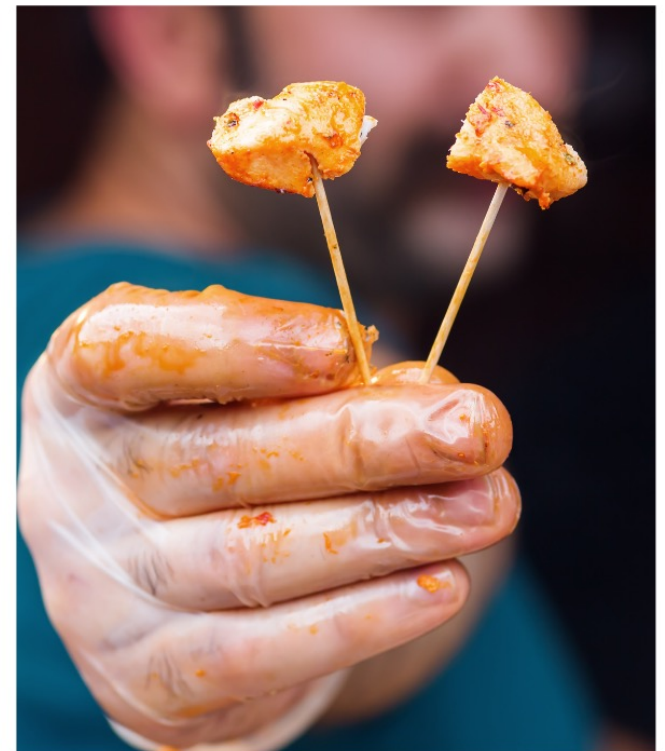
All Samples Certificate *for raw or uncooked products*

- complete GAP Training class (talk to your Extension Agent) & KDA Farmers' Market Sampling Application
- submit completed application to KDA office



SAMPLING CERTIFICATE DETAILS

- Certificates are valid for a **two year period**
- Certificates are only issued for an individual (person on certificate is person who gives samples)
- Only have to have **ONE GAP Diploma on record**
- If producer moves or expands to another market they **MUST** contact KDA to have their sampling certificate updated

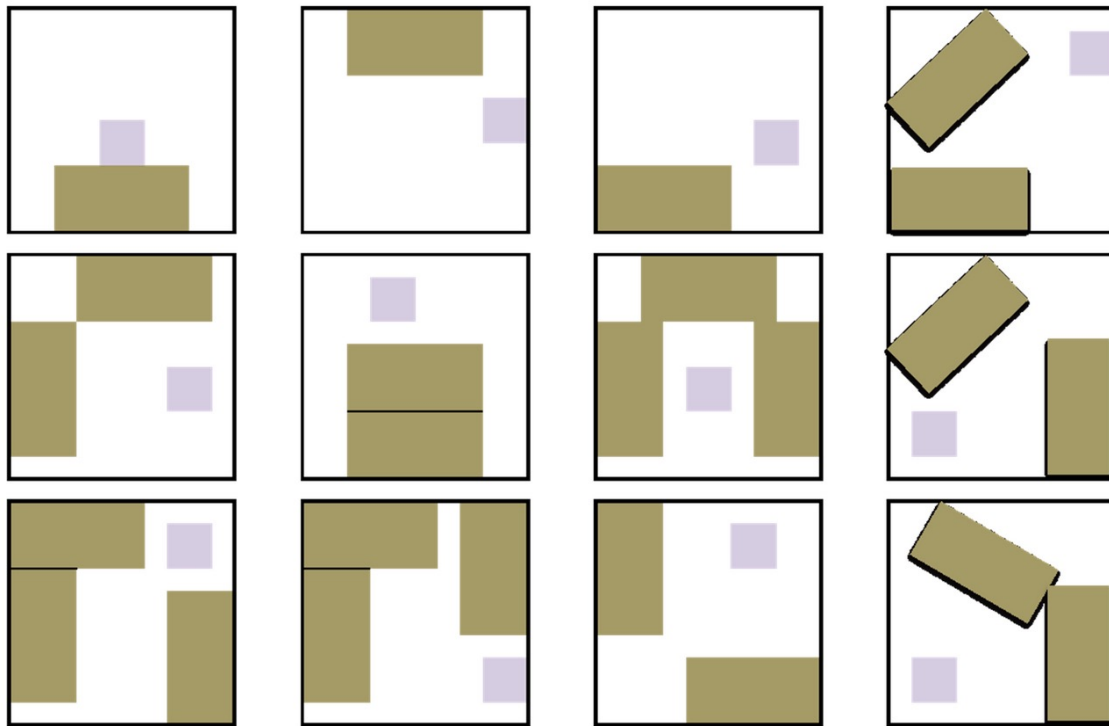


Tip 2: Eat with the Eyes

(pay attention to visual merchandizing)



FLOOR PLAN & FLOW



Most important factors:

- 1.visibility
- 2.vendor convenience
- 3.customer experience

Want to avoid:

- lines that block product from other customers
- customers reaching around cashier for product

Also consider:

- natural flow of market
- other vendors



KNEE-TO-EYE

Keep your items reachable and accessible for all individuals -- physically and visually.

- Vertical Displays
- 15-degree tilt of displays (make your product easy to see!)

ABUNDANCE

A trick from the grocery store trade! Use small containers to give an overflowing effect.

- Use small containers
- Refill often
- Don't use more table/shelf space than you need





COLOR

Most important colors = your product's colors!

Use your tent, tablecloth, containers to enhance them.

Consistency in branding colors so that customers recognize you/your brand.

Tip 3:
**Accept more
than just cash**

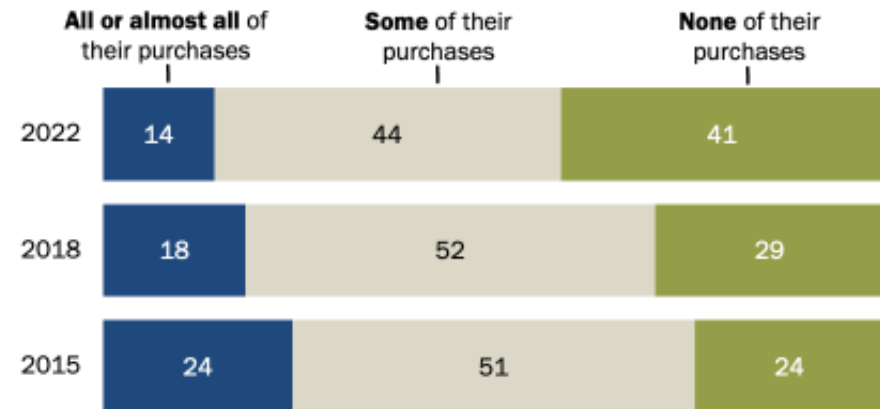


The Cold, Hard Cash Truth

- Cash is easy to track & exchange. It doesn't require additional technology or equipment
- Cash use is on the decline
- Only 14% of consumers *always* carry cash
- Younger adults are least likely to have cash

Americans have become more likely to say they don't use cash for purchases in a typical week

% of U.S. adults who say they make ___ (including things like groceries, gas, services or meals) in a typical week using cash



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 5-17, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

How To Accept Credit & Debit Cards

Purchase a mobile card reader

Plug the card reader into your smartphone

Swipe, insert, tap, or key-in card numbers (depending on the card reader model)



3 scenarios—**CASH ONLY**



- 30 cash customers
- Average \$20 purchase
- **\$600 in sales**

- "I only have \$10 cash—you take cards?"
- 30 customers
- \$10 average sale
- **\$300 in sales**



- I have \$40 in SNAP on my EBT and I heard about Double Dollars—do you do that?
- 10 customers
- **\$0 in sales**

3 scenarios—Cash & **Cashless Payments**



- 30 cash customers
- Average \$20 purchase
- **\$600 in sales**

- "I only have \$10 cash—you take cards?"
- 30 customers
- \$40 average sale

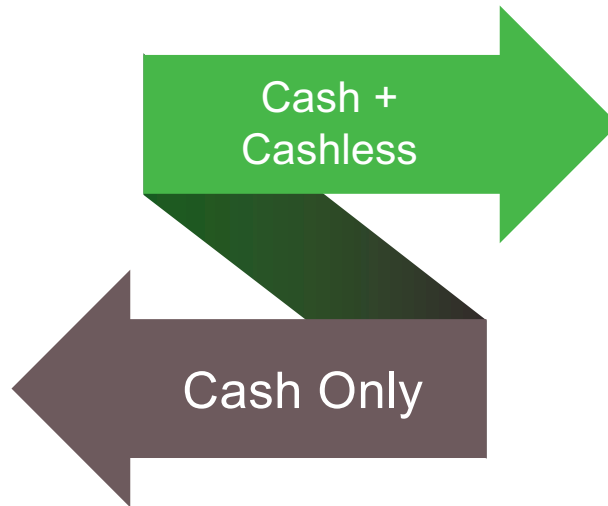
- **\$1200 in sales**



- I have \$40 in SNAP on my EBT and I heard about Double Dollars—do you do that?
- 10 customers \$80/ea once doubled
- **\$800 in sales**

Let's compare...

\$900



\$2600

But...Cashless isn't FREE!!!

Cash Only	# of sales @ average \$	Per transaction fee	Total \$ Sale	%-based fee (Total Sales x 2.6%)	Net Fees (Transaction + % Fees)	Net Sales (Total \$ Sales – Net Fees)
	50 @ \$40.00	-\$5.00 (\$.10 x 50)	\$2000	-\$52.00	-\$57.00	\$1943.00

Accepting EBT at the Market

- SNAP customers redeem their benefits by swiping their EBT card on a point-of-sale (POS) terminal at the market in exchange for tokens or a paper receipt
- Farmers and vendors can become authorized to administer their own SNAP program, but it's most common for markets to use a centralized POS

Accepting EBT at the Market

- Markets that are part of the KY Double Dollars program use this system
- The KYDD program helps remove obstacles for consumers and farmers with hopes to increase the purchase and consumption of locally-grown food



USE SNAP TO GET FREE FRUITS & VEGETABLES AT YOUR LOCAL FARMERS MARKET!



The market manager will swipe your EBT card and give you EBT tokens to spend, plus some bonus Kentucky Double Dollars (KDD) matching tokens.



You will get up to \$12 in green KDD Fruit & Vegetable tokens. If you spend more than \$12, you can receive up to \$8 in additional purple tokens for Meat, Eggs, & Dairy. You may get up to \$20 total in KDD tokens per day.



Spend your tokens on eligible items, then take your fresh produce home and enjoy!

Roadmap

Marketing Basics

What's an FM?

Pricing & Costs

Quick Tips



Center for Crop Diversification

*Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment*

Farmers Market Crash Course

Brett Wolff – brett.wolff@uky.edu

@ccduky on facebook, Instagram, and
youtube



All materials below
were prepared by the
Farm Launch Team for
a previous co-hort.
There is some overlap,
but I wanted you to
have them. -brett



Direct Market Development

25 August 2025



Today

- Deep dive on direct market challenges – answering your questions
- Farmers Markets
 - Lexington Farmers Market Manager Josh England
 - Farmers markets – structure, fit, pros and cons
 - Setting up for success at farmers markets
- Value added products for direct markets
- Shared use equipment and facilities
- CSAs and other options
 - Deciding when and how to get started with CSA
 - Customer relationship management
- Break out discussions, checking in on your next steps

Getting Started at Farmers Markets in Kentucky

Key Considerations

Marketing Time Required	High
Required Product Volume	Low
Potential Sales Volume	Low-Medium
Price Per Item	High
Difficulty of getting into this market	Low
Importance of Product Quality & Shelf-Life	Medium-High

- Resources from the UK Center for Crop Diversification
- <https://ccd.uky.edu/resources/markets/direct-markets/farmers-markets>



The screenshot shows the website for the UK Center for Crop Diversification. At the top left is the UK logo and the text 'Center for Crop Diversification'. Below this is a navigation menu with links for 'Price Reports', 'Our Impact', 'Resources', 'Training', 'Local Food & Ag Research', and '2025 KY Mechanical Weed Control Field Day'. A large blue banner at the bottom of the screenshot features the text 'Farmers Markets' in white, with a sub-link that says '> Check out Farmers Market Price Reports'. The background of the website includes a photograph of fresh carrots in a basket.

Getting Started at Farmers Markets in Kentucky

Challenges

- Selling face-to-face: Requires good customer service skills.
- Many small transactions: If you are accepting credit/debit payments, the fees on small transactions can add up quickly.
- Market schedules: You must consider travel time, set-up time, early mornings, etc. This time commitment should be considered in your pricing of your products.
- Limited vendor space: Many markets have very limited vendor space, so it may be difficult to get into the market initially or be competitive year-to-year.

Opportunities

- No requirements for sales volume: Flexible marketing opportunities for inexperienced producers or for trying out new items.
- No standard pack/grade: Allows flexibility in the quality and methods of selling.
- Access to market information: Can see prices, demand, consumer preferences, and willingness to pay in real-time. View Kentucky Farmers Market price report data [here](#).
- Opportunity creator: can establish a customer base with some built-in customers that are coming to the market for other vendors.

Getting Started at Farmers Markets in Kentucky

- Identify a market (or two) early (summer or fall before you want to market)
 - Think through transportation logistics, timing, fees, customer count and price points
- Visit the market and talk to the vendors
 - Check out availability and price points
 - What is the vibe? Between vendors? Customers? Customer count?
- Apply early
 - Be prepared to answer questions about your products, availability, volume, etc.
 - You may not be approved for all of your products. What are your 'deal breakers'?



Getting Started at Farmers Markets in Kentucky

- The Kentucky Department of Ag Farmers Market Manual and Resource Guide
 - https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/documents/FM_Manual_And_Resource_Guide.pdf
 - Covers regulations, permitting, etc. at the state level
 - Every market has its own rules, structure, fees, record keeping requirements, etc.

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Some start up considerations: Booth set up

- Tents and tables
 - You get what you pay for
 - Bring tent weights...
- Market scales
 - Necessary if you are selling anything by weight at the market
 - Must be for 'legal trade' and have National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) certification
 - Must be certified annually by the KDA
- What forms of payment do you want to accept?
- Other display items
 - Banners, baskets/boxes, booth set up
- Give yourself some grace in getting your perfect set up, and don't be afraid to modify over time



Market Display Tips

Growing for Market's 'Top 10 Rules'

10. Have a shelter
9. Create a flow
8. Display clear signs
7. Brand your farm
6. Keep it simple and consistent
5. Use three dimensions
4. Keep it clean
3. Talk to customers
2. Plan ahead
1. Have fun!

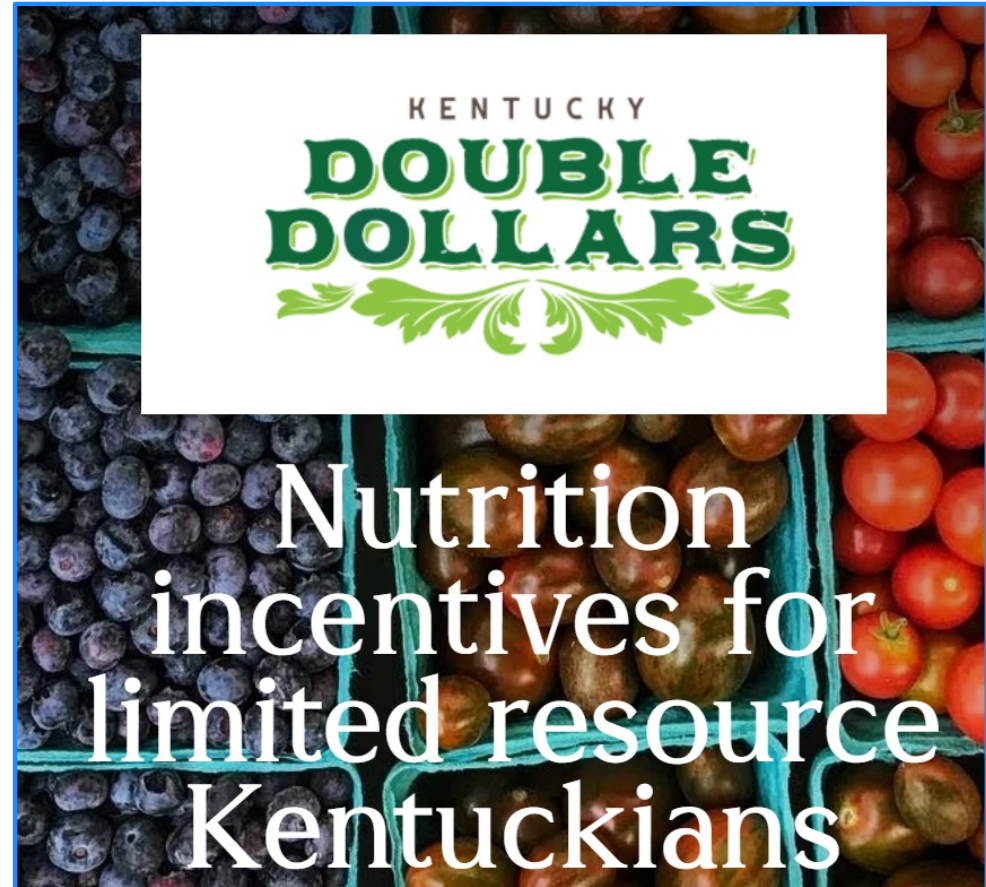


Free download issue:

<https://growingformarket.com/categories/SellingAtFarmersMarkets>

Additional farmers market programs

- Market-level programs administered by KDA
 - WIC FMNP
 - Senior FMNP
- Market-level programs administered by USDA/State
 - SNAP (requires USDA Food and Nutrition Service approval, then state SNAP office)
- Kentucky Double Dollars
 - Provides a matching funds for customers utilizing SNAP funds, WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program funds
 - Administered to markets by Community Farm Alliance
 - Grant-funded
 - <https://kentuckydoubledollars.org>



Farmers Market Sampling Certificates

- Kentucky Department of Agriculture Farmers Market Resources
 - Check under the ‘Forms & Documents’ section
 - ‘Farmers Market Sampling Packet’ has application information
 - ‘Handwashing Station’ example is a good one
 - All of this can be found in the KDA Farmers Market Manual and Resource Guide:
- https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/documents/FM_Manual_And_Resource_Guide.pdf



The screenshot shows the website for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, specifically the Farmers Market page. The header includes the KDA logo, the name of the Commissioner Jonathan Shell, and navigation links for Contact Us and AgNet. A search bar is also present. The main navigation menu lists categories such as ABOUT THE KDA, AG POLICY, ANIMAL, ONLINE SERVICES, PESTICIDES, PLANT, PROMOTIONAL, and REGULATORY. The page content features a large image of a smiling man at a farmers market, with a 'CONTACT THIS PROGRAM' button. Below the image, the text reads 'FARMERS' MARKET' and provides information about the growing demand for local and healthy foods. A sidebar on the right lists various programs and services, including Direct Farm Marketing, Education & Outreach, Grants & Funding, Kentucky Proud, Livestock, Plant, Promotion & Development, and Shows and Fairs. The 'Forms & Documents' link is highlighted at the bottom of the sidebar.

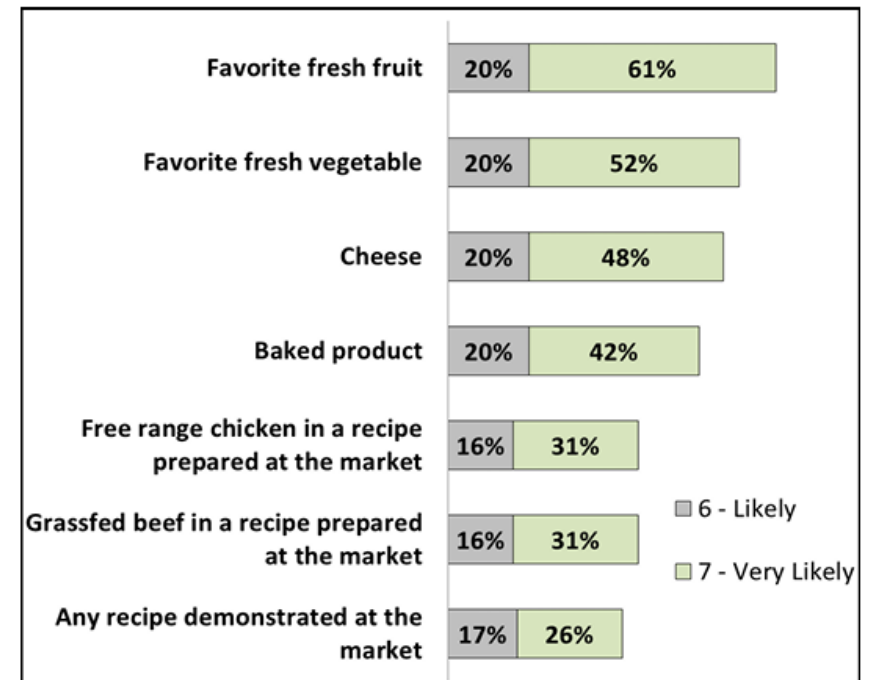
Sampling Strategies

- Things to consider
- What are your sampling goals?
 - Showing how good your product is? Drawing people into your booth? Moving a specific product that you have in high volume?
- Logistics!
 - Cash vs. food handling
 - Hand washing station
 - Sample preparation
- Quantity of samples
- Timing of sampling
- Is it worth it?
- https://ccd.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2024-11/aec-2012-19_samplingatfm.pdf

At the Farmers Market

The top 4 items that people are willing to sample are fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, cheeses, and baked products. It is interesting that traditional items are the top choices respondents chose as products they are "likely to sample." This implies that "common" products are continually in demand.

Figure 5. General Food Products Patrons are Likely to Sample



N = 3,406. Likelihood to sample these products rated on 1 = "Not at all likely," to 7 = "Very likely." Our question asked, "Which kinds of general products are you likely to sample if they were offered during your farm market visit?"

KENTUCKY FOOD PERMITS FLOW CHART

5/25

Home-based Permit

Food Safety Branch

Processing (HBP)

No workshop or training required

Annual sales less than \$60,000/year

- Dried or freeze-dried fruits and vegetables
- Fruit jams, jellies, and preserves (this does not include low- and/or no-sugar varieties and pepper jellies)
- Fruit butters
- Sweet sorghum syrup
- Maple syrup
- Bread
- Cookies
- Cakes
- Candy (no alcohol)
- Fruit pies
- Pecan pies
- Dried herbs and spices
- Dried grains
- Nuts
- Granola
- Trail or snack mix
- Popcorn with or without added seasonings

Microprocessing (HBM)

Must complete workshop through University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

Annual sales less than \$60,000/year

Acidified foods

- Canned tomatoes
- Tomato juice
- Pickled fruits and vegetables
- Salsa
- Barbecue sauce
- Pepper or herb jellies
- Flavored vinegars
- Low- or no-sugar jams and jellies

Low-acid canned foods

- Canned vegetables

Commercial Manufacturing Permit

Must be conducted in a commercial or certified kitchen (list available)

Food Safety Branch

- CBD, Hemp, and Delta-8 products
- HBP and HBM annual sales over \$60,000/year and wholesale
- Tinctures
- Wholesale sales

Local Health Department

- Catering
- Direct-to-consumer sales
- Food trucks
- Grocery stores (retail food establishment)
- HBP and HBM annual sales over \$60,000/year and direct-to-consumer sales
- Restaurants
- Temporary permits (fairs, festivals, farmers markets)

Home-based vs. commercial manufacturing permits

https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/files/ky_food_processing_flowchart_2025.pdf

Cosmetics (lotion, lip balm, etc.)

- Cosmetic Manufacturing Permit – Food Safety Branch

Eggs

- No permit – Less than 60 dozen/week
- KDA Permit – More than 60 dozen/week

Extracts

- Commercial Manufacturing Permit
 - ➔ Local Health Department if direct-to-consumer sales
 - ➔ Food Safety Branch if wholesale
- Kentucky ABC (Alcoholic Beverage Control) - special non-beverage alcohol license

Honey (includes creamed honey)

- No permit – Less than 500 gallons/year
- Commercial Manufacturing Permit
 - ➔ Local Health Department if direct-to-consumer sales, infused, or more than 500 gallons/year
 - ➔ Food Safety Branch if wholesale, infused, or more than 500 gallons/year

Hot Sauce

- Commercial Manufacturing Permit
 - ➔ Local Health Department if direct-to-consumer sales
 - ➔ Food Safety Branch if wholesale

Jerky and Tallow/Lard (from USDA-inspected meat)

- Commercial Manufacturing Permit
 - ➔ Local Health Department if direct-to-consumer sales
 - ➔ USDA if wholesale

Meat and Poultry Processing

- Commercial Manufacturing Permit
 - ➔ Food Safety Branch or USDA depending on species

Milk

- Commercial Manufacturing Permit – Milk Safety Branch

Nutrition Facts Panel

- University of Kentucky – Food Systems Innovation Center

Packaged Meat

- Mobile Retail Sales Permit – Local Health Department

Pet Treats and Animal Feed

- University of Kentucky – Division of Regulatory Services

Soaps and Detergents

- No permit

Want to sell certified organic?

- Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA)

Washed and Ready-to-Eat Produce

- Register with Kentucky's Produce Safety Program – KDA
- Commercial Manufacturing Permit
 - ➔ Local Health Department if direct-to-consumer sales
 - ➔ Food Safety Branch if wholesale

Whole Fresh Produce

- Register with Kentucky's Produce Safety Program – KDA
- No permit – from farm, direct-to-consumers, or restaurants
- Sampling certificate for cooked and/or raw samples – KDA

Other products

Contact info for farm product permitting in Kentucky

Contact Information

Food Safety Branch, 502-564-7181

Milk Safety Branch, 502-564-3340

chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dphps/msb/Pages/default.aspx

KDA (Kentucky Department of Agriculture), 502-573-0282

kyagr.com/

Egg Marketing & Licensing, 502-782-9211

kyagr.com/consumer/eggs-marketing-and-licensing.html

Organic, 502-782-4112 and 502-782-4121

kyagr.com/marketing/organic-marketing.html

Produce Safety Program 502-782-7809

kyagr.com/marketing/produce-safety.html

USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), 601-899-4869

fsis.usda.gov/

University of Kentucky

Cooperative Extension Service, 859-257-1812

fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/homebased_processing_microprocessing

Division of Regulatory Services, 859-257-2785

<http://www.rs.uky.edu/regulatory/feed/>

Food Systems Innovation Center (FSIC), 859-218-4387

Shelf-life studies and Nutrition Facts labels.

fsic.ca.uky.edu/

Kentucky Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) 502-782-0525



Kentucky-specific farmers market resources

- CCD Farmers Market Resources
 - <https://ccd.uky.edu/resources/markets/direct-markets/farmers-markets>
- CCD Farmers Market Profile Fact Sheet
 - https://ccd.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2024-10/ccd-mp-6_farmmarket.pdf

Other Resources for Farmers Markets

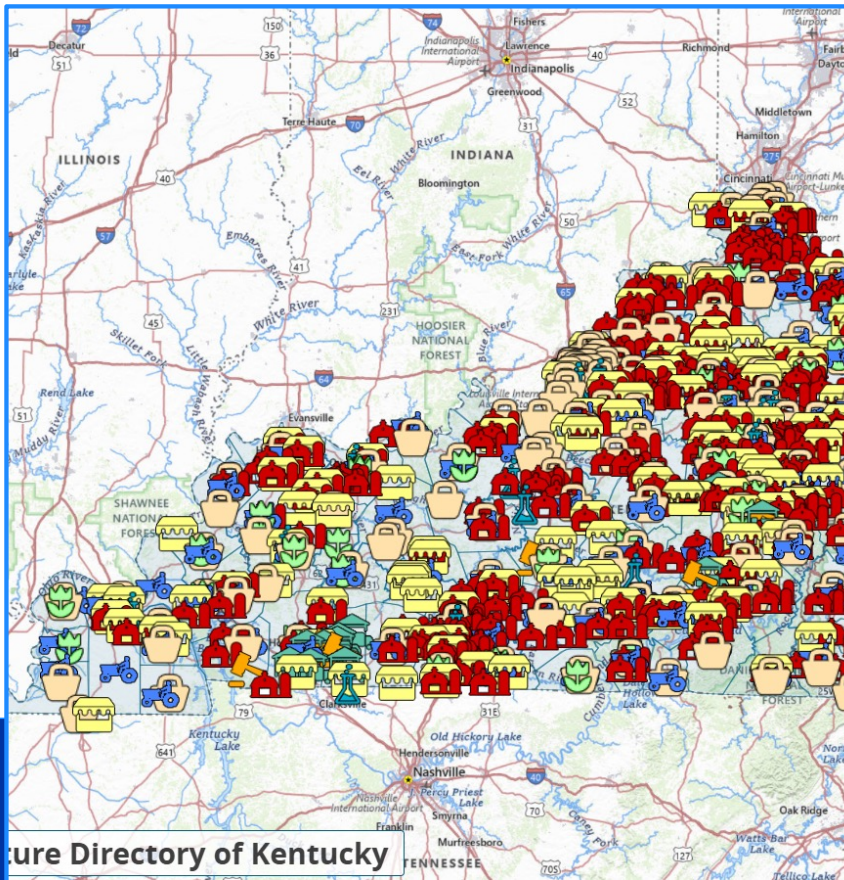
[Sampling at Farmers Markets Best Practice Guide](#)

- › [CCD Farmers Market Price Reports](#)
- › [Understanding Produce Marketing for Kentucky's Direct Markets](#)
- › [Promotion and Advertising for Kentucky's Direct Markets](#)
- › [Sampling at Farmers Markets Best Practice Guide](#)
- › [Kentucky Farmers Market Toolkit](#)
- › [Kentucky Double Dollars Program](#)
- › [Kentucky Proud Farmers Market Directory](#)
- › [Farmers Market Coalition Resource Library](#)

Switching gears...Shared Use stuff!

- Bio Break?
- Timing/vibe check?

Shared Use Equipment and Facilities



- <https://uk-horticulture.github.io/hort-directory/>
- On UK Center for Crop Diversification website under ‘Maps and Mapping Resources’
- Always contact your County Agent or Soil and Water Conservation District rep and ask about model number, rental protocol and use frequency, rates, and other questions/quirks
- Read the manual

Getting Started with a CSA

Key Requirements

Marketing Time Required	High
Required Product Volume	Low-Medium
Potential Sales Volume	Low-Medium
Price Per Item	High
Difficulty of getting into this market	Low
Importance of Product Quality & Shelf-Life	Medium-High

How do I get started in CSA?

Getting started in a CSA requires extensive production knowledge and marketing skills. Having a CSA operation means committing product to your customers on a regular basis. This is different from a farmers market model, where you show up each week with whatever you harvested to sell that day. In a CSA model, you commit to your members up-front, and they often pay up-front. Because of this relationship, you are guaranteed income and your customers are guaranteed product. It is up to you to determine whether you want to offer a customizable share or a pre-determined share, or something in between. Starting with a small CSA with a few members would be a good way to experiment with your capacity of the crop planning, production, and marketing that is required of a CSA farmer.

CCD CSA Market Profile:

<https://ccd.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2024-11/csa.pdf>

Getting Started with a CSA

Challenges

- Extensive out-of-season marketing: required each year due to annual member turnover
- Heavy reliance on word-of-mouth marketing: smaller customer demographic that is willing to commit to a season's worth of produce
- Heavy customer service: CSA members are often in constant communication with their farmer about recipes ideas, logistics of missed pick-ups, upcoming available produce, etc. Many of these questions can be mitigated with a well-written CSA membership agreement
- Requires careful crop planning & season extension: attracting members requires early and late season offerings and highly diverse product selection
- Season-long commitment: CSA membership agreements are time intensive and reduce price flexibility

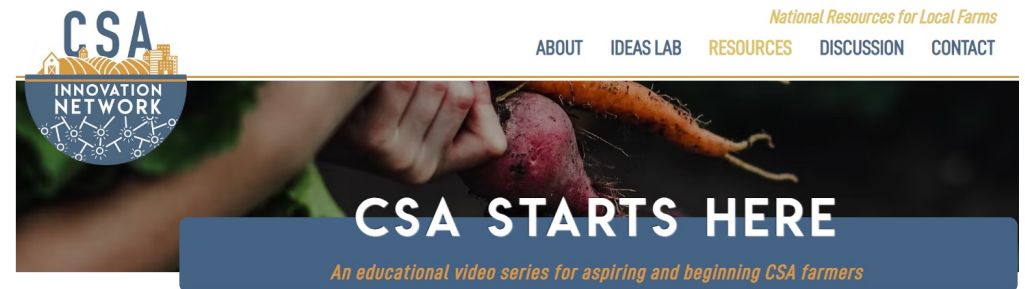
Opportunities

- Can reduce risk and capital needs: Many customers pay at least partially up-front and this provides cash flow before the season and helps estimate product need
- May reduce customer sensitivity to cosmetic defects: due to the close farm-customer relationship, customers may care less about aesthetics of product
- Can help build community around your brand: Typical CSA customers are very interested in knowing about their farmer/farming operations
- Potential reduced marketing time during season: Your produce is already sold, so your marketing efforts will be focused on maintaining your relationship with your CSA members primarily

Getting Started with a CSA: Resources

Other Resources for CSA

- > University of Kentucky CSA Production Manual
- > UK-CSA Share & Field Planner (Excel Workbook)
- > UK-CSA Fertility Planner (Excel Workbook)
- > CSA For Beginners Course (Free)
A beginner course from non-profit Texas Center for Local Food
- > **CSA Starts Here**
Video Series from the national CSA Innovation Network
- > Cultivate Customers & Retain Value: A Guide to CSA Retention
- > CSA Customer Engagement
A CCD video with Maggie Bowling from Old Homeplace Farm
- > CSA Marketing Handbook
- > CSA in Kentucky Facebook Group
- > What Should be Included in a CSA Membership Agreement?
A short publication from University of Maryland Extension



CSA Innovation Network – lots of resources, videos, etc.

- Video series has helpful, bite-sized considerations
<https://www.csainnovationnetwork.org/csa-starts-here>

CSA's: Buffering your risk

Multifarm sourcing...

Alternative market models

Customer relationship management – for all direct markets

- Maggie Bowling, Old Homeplace Farm on [relationship marketing](#)
 - (~16 minute video)
- CCD Producer Voices video series



Putting the pieces together...

- Let's break out into small groups and talk through the following topics:
- Are you planning in direct marketing your farm products to customers?
- What does your market plan look like so far? What kinds of market channels and where?
- What pieces are you missing?
 - Examples might be an identified farmers market, an additional market, developing a CSA or other subscription program in addition, etc.
- What do you think will be the hardest thing to get right?

Next steps...

- **Homework – 2 questions for you to reflect on over Labor Day Break.**
We have been spending a lot of time on production aspects these past weeks. Let's think backward from market to farm about what you need moving forward:
 - ***Question 1)*** What aspects of your plan for market channel development are missing or are you stuck on?
 - ***Question 2)*** Thinking backwards from marketing to production, what is the next biggest hurdle?
 - ***Question 3)*** What is the thing you are most worried about and/or want to get out of the program? How can we help?

Session Evaluation: Veg + Small Fruit Track

- How did today go for you?
- Please complete our short survey before you leave today, if possible.
- As always, survey feedback is anonymous.
- You are always welcome to reach out to your KY Farm Launch team if you have any questions or concerns! We are here to help!



New to QR codes? It's okay, they are easy!

Using your camera app, hold your device so that the QR code appears in the viewfinder. Tap the link to go to the survey.

