



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



# How to Start a Farmers Market

"TEXAS AGRICULTURE  
Matters!"



GO TEXAN.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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## *Letter from the Commissioner*

The Farmers Markets are a vital part of Lone Star agriculture. For generations, the bountiful Texas soils have provided a distinctive lifestyle for Texas farmers and ranchers. Agriculture is an industry fueled by hard work. It feeds a nation hungry for fresh meats, fruits, vegetables and many other locally produced products. The story of Texas agriculture continues to be one filled with innovation, Lone Star pride and perseverance.

Farmers markets are a true Texas treasure and popular with consumers and professional chefs alike. With a variety of products available, farmers markets provide an abundance of choices throughout the year for all Texans.

There are many steps and issues to consider when starting a farmers market. Use this guide as a tool to help you as you walk through this field full of opportunities.

Remember friends, *Texas Agriculture Matters!*

Commissioner Sid Miller



## Benefits of a Texas Farmers Market

Farmers markets provide a variety of benefits for Texas producers and consumers.

### BENEFITS FOR SMALL/MEDIUM-SIZED FARM OPERATORS

Direct access to consumers at farmers markets provides an important supplemental source of income for many growers.

### BENEFITS FOR CONSUMERS

Farmers markets give consumers access to locally grown, farm-fresh produce and other goods, as well as the opportunity to interact with the people who grow their food.

### BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Farmers markets offer many communities a unique way to access food, while also having a positive impact on the local economy. In 2014, Texas farmers markets accounted for more than \$16 million in sales for Texas agriculture producers. This translates to nearly \$30 million for the Texas economy as a whole.

## Steps to Starting a Farmers Market

1. Determine the characteristics of your farmers market
2. Create a sponsoring organization
3. Identify a location
4. Create market signage
5. Assign a market manager
6. Identify and recruit farmers and vendors
7. Establish bylaws
8. Adopt and enforce rules and regulations
9. Research and follow local health department food safety rules for prepared foods and meats
10. Contact the Texas Department of Agriculture to obtain all required certifications and licenses
11. Develop an organizational map for vendors locations and spaces
12. Create a budget
13. Determine a fee structure





## Determine Market Goals

“ When determining what would be the goal of the market, or the market’s mission, we decided we wanted to bring something new to the community. We knew that consumers were very interested in learning about cooking with vegetables, but there was no one in the city providing nutritional cooking classes. So we partnered with the local hospital, which has a program requiring their employees to perform community outreach. Hospital personnel helped us conduct the nutritional cooking classes, allowing us to fill a void and provide a beneficial service to the community. ”

*Elaine Montemayor-Gonzalez*

**JIM WELLS COUNTY FARMERS MARKET  
ALICE, TEXAS**



## Successful Characteristics of a Farmers Market

FARMERS MARKETS ARE DIVERSE OPERATIONS, BUT THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MARKETS HAVE CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS IN COMMON.

YOUR FARMERS MARKET SHOULD BE:

- \* Pedestrian-oriented
- \* Community-friendly
- \* Home to a variety of vendors
- \* Filled with local flavor
- \* Attended by an ample number of vendors with plentiful supplies
- \* Easily accessible
- \* In close proximity to available parking

### CREATE A SPONSORING ORGANIZATION/ASSOCIATION

Assemble a group of dedicated stakeholders to:

- \* Set objectives and goals for the planned farmers market
- \* Establish a governing body
- \* Develop bylaws, along with operating rules and regulations
- \* Create a mission statement



## Creating a Mission Statement

A mission statement is a concise declaration, which sets the direction of your market, establishes its goals and defines its purpose.

The mission should communicate your commitment to providing valuable products and services to your community. You may find it helpful to divide goals into time frames, such as, short term (1-5 years), intermediate (5-10 years) and, long term (10+ years). Goals should define:

- \* Expected achievements
- \* Items to be sold
- \* Who will be involved
- \* Expected earnings



## Sample Mission Statement

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

“ PARTNER WITH ALL TEXANS TO MAKE TEXAS THE NATION’S LEADER IN AGRICULTURE, FORTIFY OUR ECONOMY, EMPOWER RURAL COMMUNITIES, PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES, AND CULTIVATE WINNING STRATEGIES FOR RURAL, SUBURBAN AND URBAN TEXAS THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AND THE COMMON THREADS OF AGRICULTURE IN OUR DAILY LIVES. ”

## Stakeholders' Contributions

- \* Evaluating local market conditions
- \* Leveraging available community resources
- \* Researching grant opportunities
- \* Setting appropriate standards
- \* Developing a realistic budget and fee structure
- \* Arranging for steady, reliable and quality products
- \* Paying attention to market publicity and community relations
- \* Working closely with the Texas Department of Agriculture and GO TEXAN program





## *Identify a Location*

WHEN CHOOSING A LOCATION, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- \* Does it have access to major roadways?
- \* Is it accessible to vendors' vehicles?
- \* How visible is the location?
- \* Is the site convenient to get to and easy-to-find?
- \* Is it a clean and attractive location?
- \* Can you rely on using the site regularly in the long term?
- \* Is there shade, either natural or man-made, and protection from the weather?
- \* Is it equipped for solid waste disposal?
- \* Are there public restrooms?

Potential locations include: Shopping centers and malls; blocked-off street areas; outdoor space, or parking lots affiliated with religious institutions; state and federal building parking lots (weekends only); downtown "plaza" areas; and public parks.







## *Assign a Market Manager*

AN ORGANIZED, EFFICIENT MARKET MANAGER IS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR A WELL-RUN MARKET. YOU SHOULD CONDUCT A CAREFUL SEARCH FOR A QUALIFIED CANDIDATE. MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

- \* Acting as the main contact person for the market
- \* Overseeing day-to-day market operations
- \* Collecting user fees
- \* Obtaining proper permits and insurance
- \* Enforcing rules and regulations
- \* Recruiting vendors
- \* Controlling vendor and product mix
- \* Handling complaints and disputes
- \* Working with the market's board of directors
- \* Establishing strong community relationships

## *Identify and Recruit Farmers/Vendors*

QUALITY VENDORS ARE CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF YOUR FARMERS MARKET. SOURCES FOR FINDING FARMERS AND VENDORS INCLUDE:

- \* County extension agents
- \* Local colleges and universities
- \* Farmers market associations
- \* Texas Department of Agriculture's GO TEXAN program staff





**GROW. SHARE. PREPARE.**

Photo by Michael Yew



## Locating Vendors

“ Even though the Sustainable Food Center is a very well established market, we continue to look for new vendors to provide customers with the variety and quality they’ve come to expect. I recommend that you hold a series of "get to know you" meetings in your area. Create signs to post at feed stores, garden supply centers, gardener meetings, craft shows, newsletters and group meetings. Other venues for signage include the Small Business Development Office, Economic Development Office, Chamber of Commerce, Farm Bureau Office and grocery stores that buy local. I’ve found that visiting local farms listed on [localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org), [GOTEXAN.org](http://GOTEXAN.org), and the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association helps with recruitment. Visiting other farmers markets, attending farmer meetings and Texas AgriLife Extension meetings works very well, too. Additionally, you can create news releases or run ads in local papers and trade magazines. Finally, consider creating a Facebook page, or website for your market. ”

*Suzanne Santos*

**SUSTAINABLE FOOD CENTER**  
**AUSTIN, TEXAS**

## *Establish Bylaws*

### THE PURPOSE OF THE BYLAWS IS TO:

- \* Describe and define responsibilities of the board of directors and officers
- \* Define the purpose, location and hours of operation of the market
- \* Define membership, dues and fees
- \* Identify criteria for vendors to sell at the market
- \* Describe election procedures for board of directors and officers
- \* Define amendment process for changes to the bylaws
- \* Establish rules for vendors







## *Adopt and Enforce Rules and Regulations*

### QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS THAT MAY ARISE REGARDING SPECIFIC GUIDELINES INCLUDE:

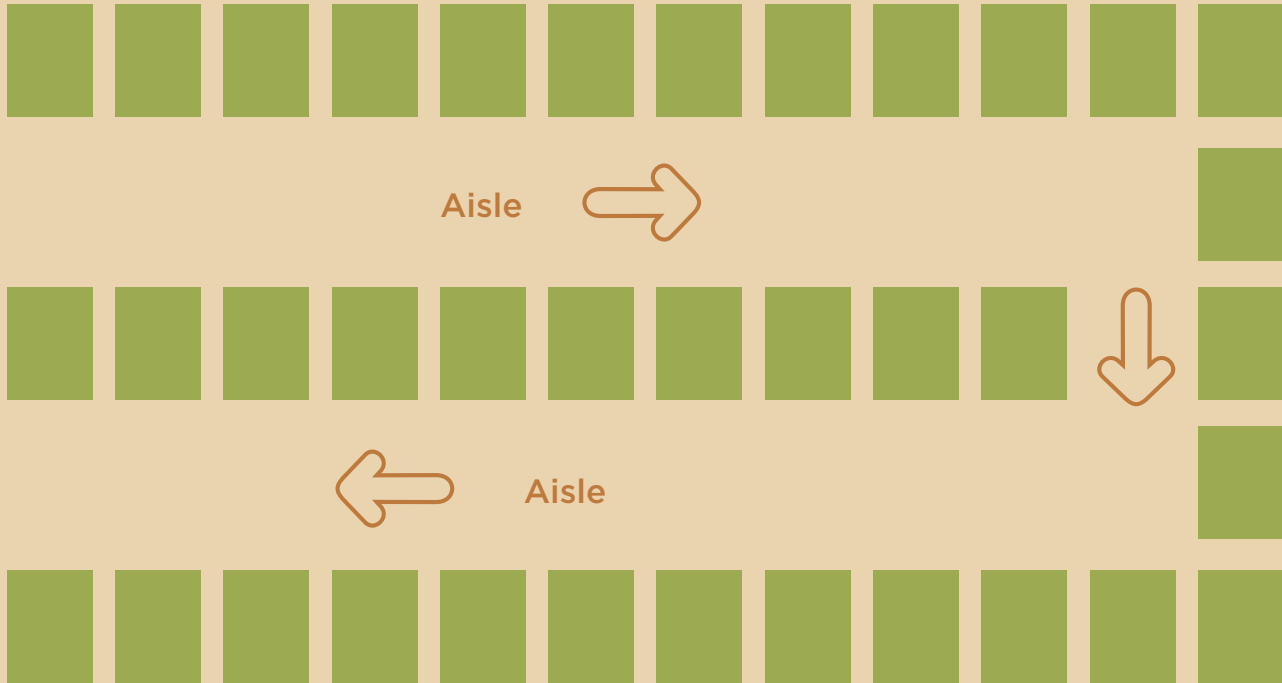
- \* Types of products allowed
- \* Number of vendors that can participate
- \* Licenses and permits required
- \* Geographic distance from market to allowable producers
- \* City regulations

## *Research and Follow Local Health Department Food Safety Rules for Prepared Foods and Meats*

- \* Check with your local health department for required permits and rules
- \* Determine if permits are required to sell ready-to-eat foods
- \* Determine if any pre-packaged foods must be labeled with ingredients
- \* Pay any required fees
- \* Make sure vendors store and display foods at proper temperatures
- \* Determine if proper sanitation equipment and hand-washing sinks will be required

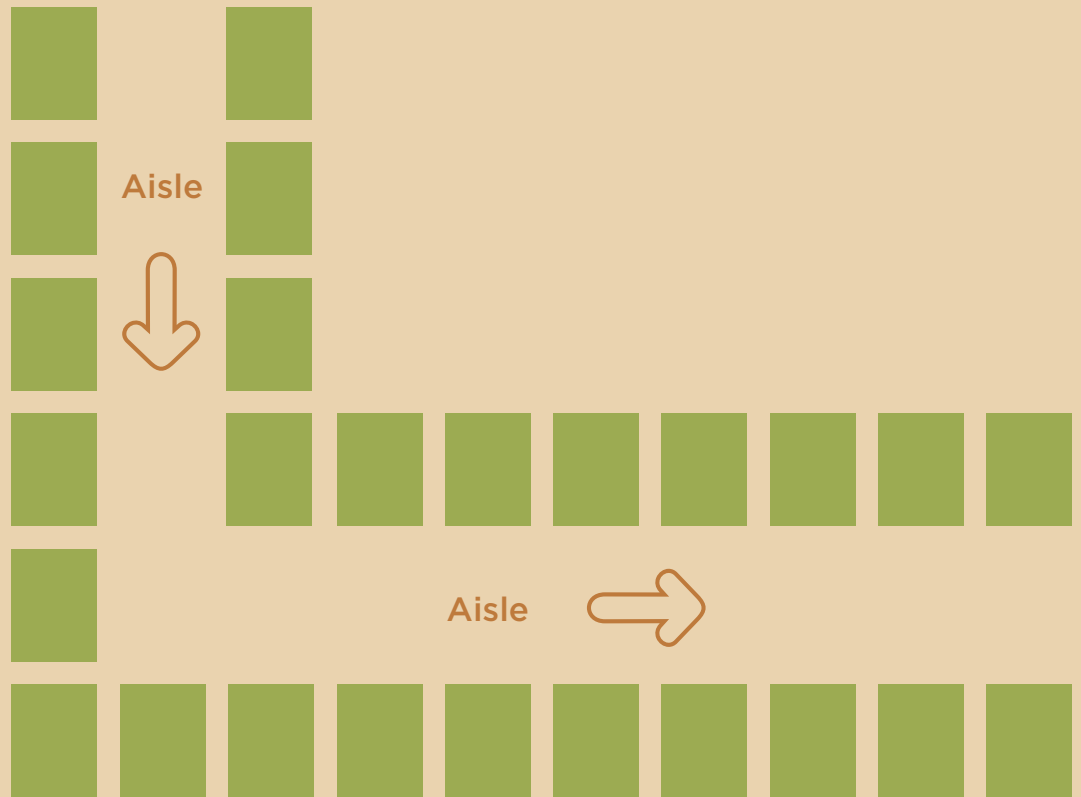
# Develop Organizational Map for Vendor Spaces

## Example 1





## Example 2



### IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:

- \* The standard tent size is 10' x 10'
- \* Eliminating gaps between vendors prevents customers from taking shortcuts
- \* Direct customer flow by having vendors set up tables end-to-end
- \* Use signage and displays that give the market a festive appeal
- \* Aisles should be a minimum of 25 feet wide



COMMUNITY GARDEN





## Establish a Budget

“ It’s important to know the type of expenses to include in your budget. When we started our farmers market, we considered many things when setting up our initial budget, among them:

- \* Application costs for Texas Certified Farmers Market Association & Texas Department of Agriculture/GO TEXAN
- \* Staff-to-Volunteer: Will salaries be paid only for days the market is open?
- \* Transportation and mileage costs
- \* Site location cost
- \* Water, electricity and other utilities: Are they already available, or will they need to be installed? What are the monthly costs?
- \* Cleaning and sanitation supplies for three-compartment sink, which must be provided to each vendor dealing with food, or food prep, in any way
- \* Porta-potty rental, if restrooms are not available
- \* Canopies, tables and chairs, if they are not designated as the responsibility of the vendors
- \* Advertisement budget
- \* Cost for parking area and road lane closure fees
- \* Printing training materials for vendors
- \* Nutrition educational materials
- \* Food permit costs
- \* Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) machine for Sustainable Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), credit cards
- \* Miscellaneous expenses ”

Matthew Molpus

SAN ANTONIO FOOD BANK FARMERS MARKETS  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

## Determining Your Fee Structure

### CONSIDER THESE THINGS WHEN DETERMINING THE FEE STRUCTURE FOR YOUR VENDORS:

- \* Fees collected from participating vendors are a primary source of income
- \* Fees determine the market manager's salary, advertising budget and funds for improvements
- \* Fees should be based on profitability
- \* Fees may be based on a percentage of daily gross sales or on a seasonal/annual basis

## Summary

- \* Take care of your customers
- \* Be flexible about changes in consumer demands
- \* Maintain a positive image of your farmers market
- \* Keep your operation consistent
- \* Strive for improvement in your market's operation
- \* Be creative and implement new ideas
- \* Take advantage of key partnerships







## *Government Programs*

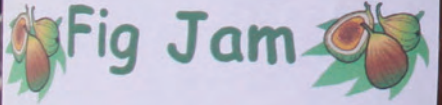
**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS,  
WHICH CAN HELP LOCAL ECONOMIES BY  
INCREASING SALES:**

- \* Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—  
administered by USDA Nutrition Program
- \* Farmers Market Women Infant Children (WIC)  
Program—administered by TDA
- \* Senior Farmers Market Program—administered  
by TDA in select cities



JAM

Homemade  
Fig Jam



Homemade  
Fig Jam



Homemade  
Jam

Homemade  
Raspberry Jam





“ Working with the GO TEXAN program has enabled the River Valley Farmers’ Market in Elgin to create and participate in events that have attracted many customers to the market over the years. In addition, the GO TEXAN program has helped to expand our farm and, most importantly, it has helped us increase our direct to consumer sales. Use of the GO TEXAN mark provides instant recognition and customer confidence in our product. ”

*Eileen Niswander*

YEGUA CREEK FARMS PECAN  
ORCHARD & COMMERCIAL KITCHEN AND  
RIVER VALLEY FARMERS MARKET



**GO TEXAN.®**

GO TEXAN promotes the products, culture and communities that call Texas home.

## *Acknowledgements*

Thank you to the United States Department of Agriculture, Sustainable Food Center, Jim Wells County Farmers Market, River Valley Farmers Market, and the San Antonio Food Bank for providing information included in this guide.

“ Burn down your cities  
and leave our farms,  
and your cities  
will spring up again  
as if by magic;  
but destroy our farms  
and the grass will grow  
in the streets  
of every city  
in the country. ”

*William Jennings Bryan*



**GO TEXAN.<sup>®</sup>**

P.O. BOX 12847 | Austin, TX 78711 | (877) 99-GOTEX  
GOTEXAN@TexasAgriculture.gov