

CHAPTER 6

Market Safety

Safe customers are happy customers. This section provides an overview of both general safety recommendations and food safety requirements to ensure farmers' market customers have a good experience. Find evaluation tools to measure the impact(s) of farmers' market safety at the end of this section.

Food Safety

"I was concerned about these eggs just sitting out in the weather and maybe getting hot or something, you know?"

— Focus group participant

Temperature Control

Some farmers' market shoppers express concern about food safety. In addition to eggs, shoppers mentioned herbs and vegetables wilting in the sun and unprotected fruit specifically. Vendors should keep any product that needs to be temperature-controlled at safe temperatures. These include meat, poultry, dairy, and egg products. Sliced melons, cut tomatoes, tofu, and raw sprouts are also considered potentially hazardous and vendors must keep them at proper temperatures.

Hand-washing

Markets should have a hand-washing station available for vendors to use. Details about food handling safety and permits required are covered in the "Kentucky Farmers' Market Manual and Resource Guide." (https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/documents/FM_Manual_and_Resource_Guide.pdf) There is also a concise



resource on safe sampling procedures included in the Marketing Resources section of this toolkit.

Permits and Certifications

A market should display any permits, certifications, or licenses from the local health department. If any processed foods such as canned or baked products are sold, the vendor should follow state labeling requirements.

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General Market Safety

“Tents. Yeah. There’s no shade.”

“The fact that it’s set up nice. I mean, plenty of walking space in between, and covered part is nice, to be a little bit in the shade.”

— Focus group participants

According to the “Kentucky Farmers’ Market Manual and Resource Guide,” wind-blown canopies and umbrellas are the No. 1 cause of injuries at farmers’ markets. Shoppers appreciate shopping in the shade and having products sheltered from the sun, but vendors should follow safety procedures to secure tents and umbrellas appropriately. Additionally:

- If you use power cords, you should tape them down so no one trips.

- If you use hotplates or other cooking devices, you should use them in a secure location to avoid potential injuries or burns.
- Display tables should be sturdy enough to hold the weight of not only the produce, but of any customer who might lean on them.
- Keep a first-aid kit on the market premises in case an injury occurs.

It is a good idea for vendors to “shop” their booths before opening, making sure to move potential tripping hazards and making any last-minute changes needed.

“It’s too many people. My child would get lost somewhere ... she would. She would just take off running, and there’s too many people to try to push through to get ahold of her.”



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“Well, the individual people, sometimes they’re right by the side of the road and it’s not always the safest to get in there because they don’t have a lot of room to.”

— Focus group participants

Parking areas must be safe for families and at a safe distance away from the market area. Are pedestrian spaces clearly defined? Is there accessible parking for individuals with disabilities? Is the parking area clearly defined? Can drivers safely pull in and out of spaces? Are parking areas safely away from where customers might be walking or children playing? Do customers need to cross busy roads to reach the market area?

Study participants repeatedly relayed the message that crowding is a safety issue, as well as an accessibility issue. Many were concerned about losing their children or about vehicle traffic near the pedestrian traffic. Page 46 of the “Kentucky Farmers’

Market Manual and Resource Guide” covers market safety.

https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/documents/FM_Manual_and_Resource_Guide.pdf

Market Safety Evaluation

If you would like to assess the results of your activities, the following table may be useful in evaluating a program or project from the Farmers’ Market Toolkit, either as the result of a work plan created after implementing the Assessment Tool worksheet or for a predetermined activity.

For Extension agents, this table provides examples of ways to evaluate a program or project from the Farmers’ Market Toolkit and construct measures to determine outcomes for success stories, KERS, and PSE activities reported via the Food Systems Impact survey.

Examples of related success stories copied from KERS follow the table below. The highlighted sections in the stories show how agents reported specific results.

Action	Type of PSE Change	Indicators	Outputs
Make changes to the farmers’ market appearance and/or safety	Environ-mental change	Number of changes to appearance, layout, or display	Report number and type of changes and resulting increase in number of attendees or increase in overall sales.
		Number of improvements made to facilities to make them more safe or healthy for vendors and/or attendees	Report number and types of improvements made and resulting increase in number of vendors, attendees, or increase in overall sales.

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Action	Type of PSE Change	Indicators	Outputs
Promote changes to the farmers' market appearance and/or safety	Promotional change	Number of point-of-purchase or distribution prompts at stands and check-out areas	Report the number of posters or signs displayed at farmers' market to show PSE reach.
		Number of flyers or posters posted advertising FM changes	Report the number of flyers or posters posted to show potential PSE reach.
		Number of locations where flyers or posters advertising FM changes were posted	Report the number of locations flyers or posters posted to show geographic scope of promotion (neighborhoods, sq. miles, etc.).
		Number and type of media advertising farmers' market	Report media reach (newspaper subscribers, mailers, radio listeners) to show PSE reach.
		Number and type of websites that are promoting farmers' market changes	Report type of websites and number of website hits promoting changes.

Market Appearance and Safety Success Stories

All stories reported below were accessed from the Cooperative Extension Reporting System (KERS).

Farmers' Markets are Essential

Farmers' markets benefit producers, consumers, and communities. The Farmers' Market Coalition explains that farmers' markets preserve America's rural livelihoods and farmland, stimulate local economies, increase access to fresh and nutritious foods, support healthy communities, and promote sustainability. During the COVID pandemic, with the disappearance of essential products from store shelves, local food sources were and are more important than ever.

To follow COVID-specific guidelines for farmers' markets, the Bounty of the Barrens market moved from the Glasgow public square to the Barren County Extension Service parking lot for the 2020 summer season. The BotB market implemented required protocols, including a single entrance/exit, a hand-washing station, and distance between vendors. The Family and Consumer Sciences agent helped ensure the market's smooth transition to the Extension location by setting up the hand-washing station and social media management and marketing, among other tasks.

To educate Barren County folks and others about seasonal produce availability, smart farmers' market shopping tips, promote benefit redemption, and encourage increased foot traffic and sales, the FCS agent created and shared social media content. The agent shared Facebook Live videos and images

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through social media channels. Live videos at the market appeared to be very popular, especially videos on shopping smart at your local farmers' market and national dairy month. In total, these quick presentations received thousands of views.

The pandemic did not hinder the success of the Bounty of the Barrens Farmers' Market. COVID-specific accommodations and marketing efforts helped encourage safe shopping and promoted market traffic. Customers expressed satisfaction with the more-level and accessible parking situation at the Extension office and many market vendors reported increased sales. Market vendors agreed to continue holding the market at the Extension Service parking lot during the 2021 summer season. In the wake of the coronavirus, we discovered that farmers' markets are indeed essential.

Metcalfe County Farmers' Market

The Metcalfe County Farmers' Market (MCFM) continues to grow and increase in capacity. MCFM 2021 season ran every Friday beginning April 2 and continuing through Nov. 19, 2021. *Four first-time vendors participated with MCFM during the 2021 season. 2021 was the first full season for MCFM under the newly constructed, larger farmers' market pavilion. The new pavilion was full of market day vendors on Fridays from June through October 2021. The larger space can accommodate approximately 50% more producer tables than the old pavilion.*

The 2021 MCFM season was the first in the 12-year history of the MCFM, in which the market charged a \$5 per day vendor table set-up fee. The 2021 reported producer income for the season came in at \$54, 575, an increase of \$8,174 over the 2020 reported vendor income and an increase of \$24,104 over the 2019 MCFM vendor-reported income. 2021 season also saw



the greatest number of producer vendors who pre-paid the \$75 annual membership fee (16), to support the Metcalfe County Farmers' Market as a member.

MCFM and the Metcalfe County FCS agent increased outreach to customers with SNAP benefits, through flyer advertisement with the Metcalfe County Family Services office, the Metcalfe County Health Department, Public Schools Family Resource Youth Service Centers, and Bowling Community Park USDA Food Commodities distribution program. These efforts saw a significant increase in SNAP benefit usage at the MCFM during the 2021 season, with \$2,420 income from SNAP/EBT an increase of \$2,265 over the reported 2020 SNAP/EBT income and \$1,680 over the 2019 SNAP/EBT income.

In an effort to continue the growth of the market, the Metcalfe County ANR agent is currently working with the KOAP and a local builder to expend the remaining 2019 Farmers Market Grant funds to enclose the former farmer's market building and convert it into a winter market. Construction is under way and is expected to be completed September 2022 in time for the fall/winter season.

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