

Chapter 12

FISHERMEN'S AND FARMERS MARKETS

Fishermen's and farmers markets are types of community-based alternative markets where fishermen and growers come together to sell their seafood directly to consumers and, when permitted, local chefs and caterers. Fishermen's markets are often located at a local harbor or port (and thus are sometimes referred to as "dockside" markets), whereas farmers markets are located elsewhere in town.

These kinds of markets are temporary or fixed retail market events where space is obtained (sometimes for a small fee) for a specified day and time. Depending on the community and availability of product, the markets may take place weekly or monthly for a certain number of months or even throughout the year. Despite the market names, fishermen and growers can sell their products at both types of markets: fishermen's and farmers markets. However, some markets may have limitations about vendor type and the number of vendors selling the same product.

These styles of alternative markets offer a few benefits:

- 1) Markets tend to be well established in their communities and may provide general advertising to attract customers.
- 2) The diversity of vendors and products also typically attracts a larger and more diverse group of potential customers compared to more individualized markets like off-the-boat sales.
- 3) The regular face-to-face interactions with consumers can help build a loyal customer base, with the likelihood of expanding via word-of-mouth.

Note, however, that fees, insurance, time commitment and other requirements for vendors vary among individual markets.

CONSIDERATIONS

As with all alternative/direct markets, there are many things to consider before jumping in. Here are some questions to ask yourself and others when considering selling at this type of marketplace:

Product considerations

- What product style will you sell (fresh, frozen, value-added, other)?
- Will you be able to offer a portion size that will match what consumers will be willing to pay for (e.g., a whole fish versus small portions that will be a fraction of the cost)?
- Does the market operate at times when you have product available?
- If you have little or no catch one week, are you permitted to sell seafood caught by another fisherman?
- Does the market include enough seafood consumers to make it profitable for you?
- If other vendors are marketing the same product, will the demand be high enough to support you and the others?
- What will you do with product that does not sell?
- How will you keep your product cold, if necessary?
- Do you need to process your catch? If so, what additional facilities, supplies, equipment, personnel and permits are needed?

Market operations

- What are the market's rules and requirements?
- What is the application process, deadline and fees?
- Do you need to reapply each year or will your space be renewed automatically?
- Are you required to carry particular liability or other insurance?
- Who may and may not sell: fishermen, family members, local buyers, others?
- What times must you (or someone working with you) be at the market?

- Will you have easy access to your truck from your stall?
- Do you have the proper equipment and supplies to maintain safe, high quality product while handling, holding and selling it?
- How will you address additional seafood safety issues? What kind of control measures, monitoring procedures and records are needed to document the use of safe handling practices?

Fishermen's and farmers markets are started and overseen by various groups with different application requirements. Fishermen's markets are few and far between, but more locations are being developed each year. In California, the Pacific to Plate law was enacted to streamline the process enabling those that fish and farm seafood to sell their products directly to consumers in a way similar to farmers markets. Guidance documents were then developed to clarify how to organize and participate in fishermen's markets in ways that meet public health requirements. Visit California Sea Grant's website for the guide, "How to Participate in a Fishermen's Market."

Typically, a successful fishermen's market includes multiple fishermen and growers participating as vendors selling their different products (fished and farmed), because it increases the likelihood that there will always be some product available. Product availability is a key consideration for deciding whether this market type is right for a community and/or yourself, and for setting the frequency of the market.

Farmers markets may also be a place to sell your seafood directly to consumers. However, selling seafood at this type of market may require additional approvals. For example, in California, the farmers market organizer and county environmental health department must approve having a seafood vendor at the market. This special approval is necessary because this type of market is specific to sales by 'certified farmer producers,' which does not include fishermen. It is best to reach out directly to the farmers markets you want to sell at to learn more about the opportunities for selling seafood there.

FINDING OR STARTING A MARKET

If you are looking for an established fishermen's or farmers market (i.e., a market where seafood vendors are already active) to sell your product, visit Sea Grant's "Discover West Coast Seafood" website. If you are interested in finding a location to start a new fishermen's market, consult with your state's Sea Grant extension

specialists/advisors as they may have information about which harbors are interested in having a market. The California guidance document will also help with understanding requirements for site identification and planning. For locating a farmers market where you might be able to sell your product, check the listings for certified farmers markets in your state.

Washington Find a Farmers Market

<https://wafarmersmarkets.org/washingtonfarmersmarketdirectory/>

Oregon Regular Season Markets

<https://www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/in-person-markets>

California Certified Farmers Markets by County

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/docs/CurrentMrktsCounty.pdf>

If you are interested in working with farmers to establish a new Farmers' Market refer to the state guidance documents.

Washington Starting a Farmers Market

<https://wafarmersmarkets.org/starting-a-farmers-market>

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

For the two guidance documents below, contact:

commercialsales@dfw.wa.gov

- WDFW Commercial Fisheries Contacts
- WDFW How to Sell Seafood Dockside in Washington

Oregon Starting and Managing Your Market

<https://www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/starting-a-farmers-market>

California Who We Are – California Farmers Markets Association

<https://www.cafarmersmkts.com/about#about-cfma>

Participating in a fishermen's or farmers market is somewhat similar to selling your product off-the-boat. In particular, much of the same equipment is needed and tips for connecting and talking with potential customers are similar. Visit Chapter 11 on off-the-boat sales and onboard processing to gain additional tips and recommendations useful for participating in fishermen's and farmers markets.

Consult with resource management, public health and business authorities before selling your seafood. In some states, requirements for selling to the public are different from those for selling to retailers, chefs and other food providers (see Appendices E–H) and the "Market Your Catch" website at <https://marketyourcatch.msi.ucsb.edu/> for updates.