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GROWING THE ORGANIC SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA



# How to set up a Farmers' Market



A guide for South African PGS groups to establish and host Farmers' Markets

The Principle  
Of Health.

The Principle  
Of Ecology.

The Principle  
Of Fairness.

The Principle  
Of Care.



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## About this guide

The South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) and Participatory Guarantee Systems South Africa (PGS SA) developed and implemented a 3-year training programme with 20 people from 7 South African provinces to support the establishment of PGS groups throughout the country. The project was funded by the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa (KHSA), which is part of the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa (KCOA), a collaborative country-led partnership funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and non-governmental organisations across Africa. The KCOA aims to scale up the adoption of agroecological and organic farming practices through five knowledge hubs in Africa. The other hubs are implemented by GIZ with in-country partners in North, West, East and Central Africa. The South African-based Sustainability Institute supports implementation of the Southern Africa hub. SAOSO and PGS SA are KHSA's in-country partners in South Africa.

As part of this innovative PGS Pollinator programme, a webinar series was designed to meet the knowledge gap related to establishing and hosting farmers' markets. The series took part in weekly two-hour sessions over a nine-week period. This guide draws on the content, discussions, case studies and feedback related to the webinar series. It aims to support PGS groups in holding successful farmers' markets at which they can sell their produce direct to consumers, generate an income and provide benefits to the wider community.

This manual was developed by Sheryl Ozinsky who also run a webinar series on how to develop a farmers' market, with input from Sasha-Mentz Lagrange, Siyabonga Mngoma, Nthatise Maphasa and Stefanie Swanepoel who edited this guide. Thank you to Angelo Marman, Anna Marie and Terence Atterbury, Audrey Wainwright, Babalwa Mpayipeli, Ben Feldman, Bridget Impey, Donna Barnard, Emilia Domagala, Erna Kruger, Gary Jackson, Grace Stead, Jessica Merton, Kim Bloch, Liz Eglinton, Michael Kamuteku, Nontobeko Khanyle, Nontokoza Mdletshe and Ryan Ausker for the input provided on their market experiences.

## Acronyms

<b>BMZ</b>	German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
<b>KCOA</b>	Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture
<b>KHSA</b>	Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa
<b>PGS</b>	Participatory Guarantee System
<b>SAOSO</b>	South African Organic Sector Organisation



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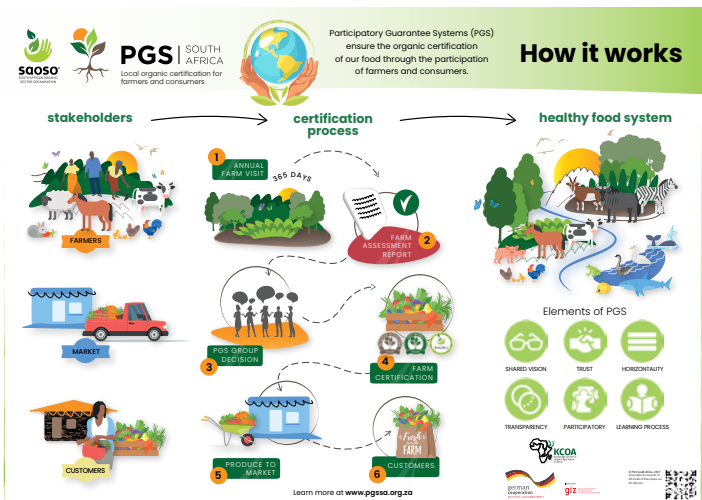
# Introduction

Many of you will have attended farmers’ markets. From the outside, it looks like an easily organised event in which farmers and producers come together to sell their produce to the local community. Organising and administering farmers’ markets is actually, however, a challenging task requiring a lot of work behind the scenes to create:

- A pleasurable environment for consumers.
- A space in which farmers and producers can make money from sale of their produce.
- Value for the community in which the market is being held. It takes dedicated and skilled people to invest time and expertise in conceptualising and launching successful farmers’ markets. The purpose of this ‘how to’ guide is to support participants of the Participatory Guarantee Systems South Africa’s (PGS SA’s) Pollinator Programme in implementing farmers’ markets in their communities.

## About PGS

PGS is a second-party certification system used in organic farming to verify that products are grown or produced following organic and sustainable practices. PGS is often used by farmers growing food for the domestic market, as an alternative to third-party organic certification systems, which can be costly and bureaucratic. Instead, PGS relies on local farmer groups and consumers to collectively certify the organic status of their products. For more information on PGS in South Africa, visit [www.pgssa.org](http://www.pgssa.org).



## How food can save the world

For the first time in 200 000 years of human history, we are out of synchronisation with the planet and nature. We face climate crises, ecological destruction, record obesity rates and rising hunger: food – the way in which it is produced, consumed and discarded – is threatening our future.

We take inspiration from Carolyn Steel who writes, “Our world is a ‘Sitopia’, a “food place” – from the Greek words *sitos* and *topos* – where everything from our environment to our societies to our bodies has been affected by our relationship with food, which “preceded us, anticipates us, sustains us. It shapes our lives, but since its influence is so pervasive, we often fail to notice it.”<sup>1</sup> Steel sees food as “by far the most powerful medium available to us for thinking and acting together to change the world for the better”.<sup>2</sup> By reconfiguring our relationship with food, she argues, we can find new and better ways of living that will arrest the damage we are doing to ourselves and the Earth. This includes revealing the true cost of the industrially produced food that we find in our supermarkets – in terms of pollution, poverty, obesity, malnutrition and ecological destruction – which would make industrial agriculture unaffordable and, instead, support the uptake and consumption of ecologically produced organic food. In turn, this would create a virtuous cycle in which the “market would favour goods that nurtured nature, animals and people”.

A new “Sitopian contract” would “establish the right of every human and non-human to eat well”. Such shifts would require enormous change and Steel sketches a “Sitopian economics” that would put food and its intrinsic value at the heart of economic life. In the slow food movement, characterised by the concepts of ‘slow money’, social investing and ‘guerrilla localism’, she sees the roots of new and democratic ways of reorganising commerce for a society whose new golden rule would be ‘Feed thy neighbour as thyself’.

This is a huge opportunity for farmers and organic farmer organisations to spearhead the call to rediscover the way in which food binds us to each other and to the natural world, and, in so doing, find new ways of living.

### Characteristics of a fair food system

- Everyone has the right to access healthy food grown in an environmentally friendly way.
- Provides for the economic wellbeing of everyone in the system from production, processing, distribution, selling and consumption to disposal/processing of food waste.
- Enables equal access to nutritious food enabling a healthy diet and reducing the prevalence of diet-related diseases and stunting in children.
- Does not contribute to pollution and climate change due to the use of agrochemicals; fossil fuels for transport, processing and refrigeration; and unsustainable packaging.
- Little food is wasted.

<sup>1&2</sup> Steel, C. 2020. *Sitopia: how food can save the world*. London: Chatto & Windus.

A broken food system disproportionately affects poor people and women. Black-headed households are seven times more likely than white-headed households to have inadequate access

to food globally. This inequitable distribution of the benefits and harms of the food system is called **food injustice**. It is also a violation of our Constitutional 'Right to food'.

### **The role of PGS in bringing about a fair food system**

PGS SA assists smallholder farmer groups to harness the economic, environmental and social potential of organic farming to support the development of local food systems that are climate resilient and that keep both soils and people healthy. This transparent, producer-focused system assures consumers of the integrity of organic products and links producers into a community of practice through knowledge exchanges, while developing consumer awareness around ethical choices that support local economic development.

PGS groups drive food sovereignty through localised, farmer-driven food systems based on community participation, transparency and trust. They are key to galvanising local fair food systems and generating collaboration between stakeholders in regional value chains. They do this in the following ways:

- **By making certification available to farmers and organic food available to communities** In the South African context, PGS has been promoted as a tool to

promote the uptake of organic farming practices, especially by small-scale farmers who are given the opportunity to certify their production. Without PGS, many small-scale farmers would be excluded from the organic system, and so would their communities. PGS helps farmers enter into organic production, ensuring that knowledge is shared to improve practices and, when needed, to convert from conventional practices to organic agriculture. As farmers both in urban and rural contexts reconnect with the 'traditional' ways of farming, they are helping to make healthy, nutritionally dense food available to their communities.

- **By making farmers and consumer the 'shapers' of their food system** Because consumers are strongly encouraged to become involved in the running of the farm visits and in managing the PGS groups, PGS plays a pivotal role in building alternative food markets, thus enabling farmers and consumers to shape and defend their own food systems. It is only when consumers are closely involved with their food that they can understand the



challenges of farming, what goes into the fruit and vegetables they buy, thus making them agents of change for a fairer, healthier food system.

- **By fostering greater agro-diversity and therefore food and nutrition security**, PGS groups are inherently about building communities of organic practice in which farmer knowledge is shared. The depth of the knowledge exchanges that occur during farm visits is rarely equalled and the cross-pollination that happens during these visits fosters more diverse production systems that allow farmers to meet household nutritional needs more effectively. PGS thus helps to bring about greater food and nutrition

security and it helps to combat the increasing 'conventionalisation' of organic farming.

- **By making farmer price makers** PGS helps dismantle the retail dominated food sector in South Africa, building short supply chains where the farmer is no longer a price taker but a price maker. An essential element of fairness of a PGS is that the farmer receives not less than 50% (and often much more) of the selling price of production. In parallel, reduced costs for organic certification allow farmers to supply PGS-certified products at lower prices than third party-certified products. In this way the pool of consumers can be widened.

## What is a farmers' market?

A farmers' market is more than just a place to sell good food. It's a place where people come to connect, to celebrate and share food and awaken their senses; a place to enjoy food, how it tastes and the way it makes us feel; a place that connects people to the farmers and producers who grow and make the food they eat; a place of experience and discovery where food and products are talked about by well-informed and passionate producers and makers eager to tell their stories.

These markets are typically held in outdoor spaces like parks, parking lots or public squares, although some also operate indoors. They are popular for their emphasis on fresh, high-quality and locally sourced food products, for promoting sustainable agriculture, supporting local food systems and fostering a sense of community. They can be found in cities, towns and rural areas around the world, offering a diverse range of products and experiences to consumers. In South Africa, though, where supermarkets dominate the food system, there are very few 'true' farmers' markets. This publication hopes to help change that reality.

### Key features of a farmers' market

Offering	Mechanisms	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Local and freshly harvested produce</b>, including vegetables, fruits, herbs and meat, dairy products and seafood.</li> <li>■ <b>Artisanal and handcrafted goods</b>, like baked goods, jams, honey, cheeses, crafts plants and flowers.</li> <li>■ <b>Lifestyle products</b> such as clothing, ceramics, vintage and recycled goods, cosmetics, pet accessories, clothing, jewelry and cosmetics.</li> <li>■ <b>Seasonal offerings</b>: Produce shifts with the seasons and what is available locally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Direct connection</b> between farmers, producers and consumers supporting transparency about food production and building a sense of community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Support for local agriculture</b>: Consumers buying at local farmers' market help keep money in the local economy and reduce the environmental footprint of food distribution chains.</li> <li>■ <b>Community space</b>: Farmers' markets serve as community hubs where people can socialise, enjoy music, and take part in various events and activities.</li> </ul>

## Key characteristics of a farmers' market

Farmers' markets are decidedly different from malls or other sources of fresh produce. They have certain characteristics that enable them to contribute more to society and the local economy than regular shops. They offer a unique shopping experience that encourages community engagement, among other benefits.

- **Pedestrian-friendly:** They are designed to be pedestrian-friendly and are often held in areas where people can easily walk to the market and around it, allowing customers to explore the market at a leisurely pace.
- **Community-friendly:** Farmers' markets often foster a sense of community by bringing together local residents, farmers, artisans, and visitors.
- **Variety of traders:** They are known for their diversity of traders. You can find a wide range of products, from fresh produce to baked goods, fish and meat, cheese, handmade crafts, plants, flowers and more.
- **Local flavour:** Farmers' markets showcase locally grown or produced goods, which gives them a distinct local flavour. This emphasis on local products highlights regional specialties and supports local agriculture and artisans.
- **Enough traders with enough produce/products:** Successful farmers' markets typically have a sufficient number of traders with ample supplies of their

products. This ensures that shoppers have a variety of options and can find what they need.

- **Easily accessible:** They are often located in accessible areas within communities, making it convenient for people to visit. They may be situated in city centres, parks, or other central locations.
- **Consistent opening days and times:** Farmers' markets typically have regular schedules, with set opening days and hours. This consistency helps shoppers plan their visits and ensures that the market is open come rain or shine.



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## **CASE STUDY:**

### **BEN FELDMAN, FARMERS' MARKET COALITION, UNITED STATES**

Farmers' markets have become increasingly popular in the United States. There are more than 400 farmers markets in New York alone and close to 9 000 in the country. They support farmer livelihoods, contribute significantly to local economies and the produce bought at them contributes to federal nutritional benefits. Markets have become powerful cultural icons in reshaping how people think food should be produced and eaten. Farmers have introduced new crops and varieties, which have been popularised by chefs. They have supported the rise of alternative sales and distribution models like community-supported agriculture, mobile markets, online stores and app-based delivery systems. There are innovative state mechanisms such as the Federal Nutrition Benefits Programme that link low-income shopper's purchases of food at farmers' markets through a voucher scheme (Food Stamps) to ensure nutrition security. Another is the Women, Infant, Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program that ensures that pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and young children living below the poverty line can access healthy fruits and vegetables. Farmers' markets can act as agents of change in many dimensions.



## Benefits of farmers' markets

Farmers' markets benefit farmers, consumers and communities, as well as the environment. They support local food economies, provide spaces for

community connection, are sites of education about nutrition and provide a base for new or expanded small businesses.

Benefits for farmers	Benefits for consumers	Benefits for communities	Benefits for nature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Direct sales to local consumers in a low-cost venue.</li> <li>■ Better understanding of consumer needs enabling diversification of production.</li> <li>■ Potential for gaining higher prices or a higher percentage of profit.</li> <li>■ New farmers can learn marketing skills.</li> <li>■ Space for consumer education about organics, nutrition and sustainable farming.</li> <li>■ Control over marketing and branding.</li> <li>■ Able to grow customer base through enhanced visibility.</li> <li>■ Diversification of income streams by also selling value-added products.</li> <li>■ Accessible entry to market for small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Access to fresh, nutritious, tasty and local foods.</li> <li>■ Access to seasonal foods and unique artisanal and handmade products.</li> <li>■ Health benefits by accessing PGS-certified food grown without chemicals.</li> <li>■ Transparency about where food comes from and how it is produced.</li> <li>■ Relationship of trust with farmers and producers and more confidence in food safety.</li> <li>■ A cultural experience with the chance to explore local traditions, flavours and cuisines.</li> <li>■ Opportunity to boost the local economy and encourage sustainable farming practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Spaces for nutrition education and promotion of healthier diets, which promotes public health outcomes.</li> <li>■ Supports local food and nutrition security.</li> <li>■ Boosts community resilience in times of crisis such as food supply chain disruptions or emergencies, such as COVID-19 in 2020/21.</li> <li>■ Boosts the local economy and enables spin-off businesses, growing local revenue, and the tax base.</li> <li>■ A stronger sense of community identity and pride.</li> <li>■ Supports tourism and local identity by highlighting the community's unique identity, culture and products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduces the need for long-distance transportation of goods, reducing the carbon footprint of the products, individuals and the community.</li> <li>■ Supporting local sustainable agriculture practices helps to preserve biodiversity, quality of water and health of soils in the larger landscape.</li> </ul>

## Planning a farmers' market

See below for key insights into planning steps to make your market a success.

### Set your goals

Think about why you want to start a farmers' market and then set clear goals. Examples of goals for a farmers' market are:

- You want to provide low-income people with access to fresh produce.
- You want to provide your PGS group with access to market.
- You want to increase farm income by selling produce at retail prices.
- You want to promote local agriculture or you want to build community interaction, etc.

You may have several goals, and some may compete with each other. If they differ greatly, it helps to list them in order of importance. Once you have defined your own goals, find out who else is interested in having a farmers' market in your community. Can you find an organisation to sponsor the market? If so, they may provide you with valuable resources like administrative support and volunteers.

### Establish market demand and look for partnerships

Is there a demand for a farmers' market? Who would be interested in shopping at it? Are there people or organisations in your community who would like to support you in starting a farmers' market? What sources of funding are available to you?

### Meet with local farmers or your PGS group to discuss setting up a market

Identify with farmers what they have to take to market. This includes vegetables, fruits, dairy, meat, baked goods and artisanal products produced on and by PGS member farms. Discuss what resources (land, labour and equipment) they can access for production and what they can realistically produce. And find what they would need at a market location – parking for trucks or delivery vehicles, washing stations, etc. And, very importantly, find out what they want to get from the market – increase revenue or more exposure, etc.

### Choose a location

- Is there demand for fresh, local produce and other products in the area? Conduct some market research to understand what consumers want (see pg 20).

#### HELPFUL TIP



Leave yourself several months for research and organisational development, and several more to secure a site, recruit farmers and producers, and promote the market.

- Is the location easily visible from main roads or well-travelled areas? Is it accessible?
  - Can people walk or easily catch public transport to the market?
  - Is there enough parking for traders and farmers' trucks or delivery vehicles? Are there loading and unloading areas?
  - Are there ramps, accessible restrooms and clear pathways for physically challenged people?
- Check if the location has the necessary infrastructure and amenities, such as restrooms, electricity and water to support the market's operations.
- Find all the local regulations and zoning laws related to markets. You may need to get permits and follow health and safety regulations (related to use of gas and fire, hygiene matters, access to water, etc.).
- Will the market be affected by seasonal changes and bad weather (rain and wind, for example). Is there access to covered areas or use of tents or gazebos?
- Regarding waste, will you be able to dispose of it in a responsible way? See Case study: Reusable cups at the Oranjezicht City Farm Market (pg 27).
- Do you need security or surveillance systems to keep customers and traders safe?
- Think about the long-term potential of the market location. Will it accommodate an expanding market? Is it close to amenities and services to support this? Will the land be sold or developed in future?
- Evaluate the costs associated with the location, including rent, utilities,

and maintenance. Ensure that your budget can accommodate these.



## Decide when the market will be open

- Which days of the week will you operate? Will the market be more profitable if it opens more often? Saturdays are popular for shopping and Sundays for eating and community activities. If farmers are already busy on Saturdays, choosing a day in the middle of the week may be better.
- What time of day should you operate? Keep in mind the needs of the farmers supplying the market. How far do they have to drive to get there? Will they be picking produce in the morning or the night before? When is traffic heavy?
- Before you decide how many months you want to operate, think about what products will be offered for sale, when they will be available and for how long. Think about the length of the season. Operate when there is plenty of produce available.

- You can open earlier in the season when your market is well established and, over time, you can educate your customers about the seasonal limits of local production wherever you are. Just be careful not to disappoint them during the first few markets.

## Organise collective production planning

Farmers will need to understand what they can produce and then commit to producing it, and they will need to work together to plan so that there is enough quantity and variety to support a regular market. This is why production planning is so important. Farmers need to make a profit and the prices of market produce need to be fair – to both consumers and to farmers.

## Publicise and host the market

You will need to attract consumers to the market and so will need to advertise it far in advance. There are many ways to do this, including gathering community support by hosting community meetings or seeking endorsements from local organisations.

Once all the planning has been done, you will need to organise suppliers and coordination for the day to host the market. You will also need to understand more about your target market to understand what will appeal to them and what will not (see pg 19).



## Production planning & considerations to bring produce to market

Production planning is deciding what to plant, how much to plant and when to plant it. It helps farmers to make informed decisions, make the most out of their production (in resource use, yields and in cash), ensure that they can meet market demand and the sustainability of farming operations by looking after the resource base (particularly soils). You will need to have farmers coordinate their production planning to make sure that they produce enough of a diversity of produce to meet market demand on a regular basis.

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## CASE STUDY:

**SANVITALIA PTY LTD** *By Nontokoza Mdletshe*

In the midst of Covid-19, Nontokoza started a pilot project on a 1.3-hectare farm (rent-to-buy) in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The aim was to grow organic vegetables for the community. It is now a business and core activities include vegetable production, seedling sales, rabbit farming and skills development and training. Nontokoza offers the following advice to those wanting to set up a market:

- Consider the need to educate consumers about farming and make sure that you understand consumer needs. Make sure you always add value.
- A good location is key, it should be busy with foot traffic and easily visible to those living and working in the surrounding areas. Make sure you have good signage.
- Build good relationships in the community, including with the local municipality.
- Always have a price list ready for customers and know current market prices so that you are not forced to lower prices on demand.

Nontokoza's vision for her farm is that through PGS groups, she can help organic farmers to build sustainable futures in which they are financially independent, and to improve the livelihoods of the community through job creation.



## How PGS plays a pivotal role in collective production planning for market

PGS can be a platform for groups of farmers, in discussion with market organisers, to plan aggregation of their produce to meet the quantity and quality demands of the market. The market provides farmer groups and market organisers the opportunity to link directly with consumers, thus getting a better sense of market needs and production gaps. Connecting farmers to markets entails optimising on-farm production so that the right produce is grown on the farm to serve the market and ensure that the farmer sells her/his production (i.e., avoiding gluts of uniform products

on saturated markets). PGS also constitutes a vehicle through which farmers are capacitated with better organisational skills in terms of production and farm management – bookkeeping and other records are a requirement for PGS groups. This up-skilling of farmers to enable them to take part in the organic value chain are essential considerations in the context of land redistribution and the capacitating of emerging farmers in South Africa. Linking farmers into an ethical value chain that is farmer-centred embeds trust into these localised value chains and creates livelihood opportunities.

### 1. Determine your product offering

Identify the types of products you will offer at your market. This could include vegetables, fruits, dairy, meat, baked goods, artisanal products, etc.

### 2. Assess production capacity

Evaluate the farmer group's available resources, such as land, labour and equipment, to determine how much they can realistically produce.

### 3. Establish a production schedule

Create a detailed production calendar that outlines when and where farmers will plant, cultivate and harvest crops or produce goods, or what and how much can be aggregated from other groups or local farmers.

### 4. Recognise seasonal adjustments and be adaptive

Recognise that production needs and product availability will vary with the seasons. Adjust your production plan accordingly. Be prepared to adapt your production plan based on unforeseen challenges, such as extreme weather events or changes in market conditions.

### 5. Keep sustainability in mind

PGS encourages sustainable farming and production practices. This includes crop rotation and diversification practices to improve soil health, prevent pests and diseases, and ensure a variety of products throughout the season.

There is also a focus on integrated pest management and on eco-friendly packaging.

## 6. Monitor market demand and manage inventory

Continuously assess the demand for products by conducting market research and gathering customer feedback. This information should go back to the farmer groups to help them plan or adapt their production accordingly. It is also important to keep track of inventory levels to avoid overproduction or shortages. Use inventory management systems if needed.

### Keep accurate records

Farmers need to keep accurate records related to farming operational costs and sales to be able to accurately forecast what they need to plant in order to meet market demand. Production planning would include using spreadsheets of previous year's sales, seasonal productivity and demand as well as speaking to experienced farmers to understand what has worked well for them. Encourage farmer groups to maintain detailed records of their production processes, including planting dates, yields, expenses, and sales.

## Other business considerations related to production

- **Coordinate with suppliers:** If you source any products or ingredients from other producers or suppliers, establish reliable relationships and agreements with them.
- **Quality control:** Implement quality control measures to ensure that your products meet or exceed customer expectations in terms of freshness, appearance, bunch size, and taste.
- **Pricing strategy:** Develop a pricing strategy that considers production costs, market prices, and the perceived value of your products. Be competitive but also profitable.
- **Marketing and promotion:** Create a marketing plan to promote your products and the farmers' market itself. Utilise social media, email marketing, signage, and other promotional tools.
- **Compliance and regulations:** Ensure that you follow all relevant agricultural and food safety regulations, including labelling and packaging requirements.
- **Customer engagement:** Build and maintain relationships with your customers. Encourage their feedback and loyalty through excellent customer service.
- **Supply chain resilience:** Establish contingency plans for supply chain disruptions, such as transportation issues or supplier shortages.

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## CASE STUDY:

### THE 1000 HILLS PGS AND OGWINI SOUTH PGS EXPERIENCE

By Donna Barnard & Nontobeko Khanyile

The 1000 Hills PGS and Ogwini South PGS group collaborated on their first market in 2023 to showcase and sell a variety of local PGS organic certified produce at the Shongweni Farmers & Craft market in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. This family market attracts more than 3 000 people each month. The PGS groups have managed to sell out every time they have attended by ensuring that items are fairly, uniformly and competitively priced. The competitive pricing has enticed customers to buy larger quantities of produce at a time. There have been challenges around consistent supply from PGS group members despite production planning being in place and in getting farmers and their produce to market. The lack of own transportation makes transporting large quantities of produce difficult, particularly on public transport! Issues such as keeping produce fresh have been overcome by using cooler boxes and bags under the table and restocking produce as necessary. These PGS groups have done great work in educating consumers about the benefits of buying organic food and of buying it through PGS certified organic groups. The 1000 Hills PGS and Ogwini South PGS groups noted that they had received compliments from both customers and the market organisers on the attractiveness of their stall and the variety and freshness of their certified organic produce.



## Farmer budgeting

Farmers need to understand how to price their produce for market. This means that they need to keep accurate records of what they spend money on and how much they made from sales to allow them to work out profit margins and determine market prices.



Remember to include everything spent on the farm and in the business of running the farm. This includes money spent on rent (if applicable), seeds, compost, plant protection products, work clothes, equipment, wages, salaries, transport, marketing, cellphone and data costs, tea/coffee, stationery, etc.

Keeping track of expenses and income allows farmers to make decisions about what to plant and how much of it. For example, if a farmer keeps good records they can look back over previous seasons to see what crops sold well at what price (this shows market demand) and what crops performed poorly in terms of yield or being vulnerable to pests and diseases (this shows the need to take preventative measures or to improve soil health or to plan ahead for remedies).

### Example of working out profit:

Kaya farms a 1 000 square metre plot with 50 beds. She fills in her expense sheet in the budget sheet with all her expenses for the year. Her costs to farm for a year are R30 000.  $R30\ 000 \text{ divided by } 50 \text{ beds} = R600 \text{ cost per bed}$ . Kaya fills in her income for each crop for the

year in the budget. Using the example of carrots, Kaya sold 1 000 bunches of carrots at R10 a bunch from carrot seed planted in 12 beds. She made R10 000 from carrots.

$1\ 000 \text{ bunches divided by } 12 \text{ beds} =$   
 $\text{Approx } 83 \text{ bunches a bed}$   
 $1\ 000 \text{ bunches} \times R10 = R10\ 000 \text{ revenue}$   
 $\text{per bed}$

$R10\ 000 \text{ revenue per bed minus } R600 \text{ cost}$   
 $\text{per bed} = R400 \text{ profit per carrot bed}$

### Pricing for a farmers' market:

The following pricing structure is often used to arrive at the pricing of produce for a farmers' market. It is the four-time multiple rule:

- 1/4 of the price covers the cost of production (see formulas above).
- 1/4 of the price is for packaging and transportation.
- 1/4 of the price is for selling (wages for manning the stall) and advertising, including giving away free samples, and for disposing of waste.
- 1/4 of the cost is the profit.

Kaya harvested 83 bunches a bed at a cost of R600 per bed: **R600 per bed divided by 83 bunches = R7.22 a bunch.** **Using the four-time rule – each bunch of carrots would be R28.**



Note that the price that farmers can ask for is relative to what the target market can afford, so sometimes one cannot get the exact price determined by four-time multiple rule, but you should strive to get as close as possible.



## Publicise your market

It is very important to publicise your market among the consumers you want to attract. You need to do this before the actual market day to allow people to make plans to attend, and you need to market to your preferred consumer base in ways and through channels that will reach them and make them want to attend. This means you should draw up a marketing plan that sets out the actions you will take to ensure that people attend. Below are some steps to consider.

### 1. Conduct simple market research

It is important to understand what the market wants in terms of produce and products and how much they are willing to pay for it. This is called market research. There are relatively easy and affordable ways to do this.

If your market will be in the local community, you can set up a survey and ask potential customers directly – either in places where community gathers or house-to-house. You could ask things like “what are the five vegetables you eat most often, how often do you buy these five vegetables, what do you pay for them, would you pay more if they were organic?”. If you are entering a new market, maybe in a community different to your own, you could use social media platforms to ask the same questions. You can also use the market research as a way of publicising the market.

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## CASE STUDY:

**ABITZ FARM** *By Angelo Marman*

Angelo Marman from Abitz Farming has a 1.6-hectare farm in Riversdale, near Malmesbury. In addition to growing vegetables to supply the Oranjezicht Market and other businesses such as a pet food company, Angelo and his colleague, Herman Bailey started the Abitz Farming Training Programme, offering skills training in vegetable production and facilitation to the community. Angelo sees giving children the opportunity to learn about farming as an important aspect of his work as a farmer. His story provides insights into the need to understand the farm's target market to ensure that all produce can be sold. Angelo gives the following tips:

- You must know your customer's needs and then plant for your customers, rather than planting and then finding customers afterwards.
- Find alternative markets for produce that does not suit your primary market. For example, he grows tomatoes in tunnels, which are not considered organic, and so he has found another market that is not strict about organic certification.
- Look at ways to diversify income. Angelo also farms turkeys and ducks.

### **2. Design messaging for the target market**

This messaging should appeal to the target market you want to reach. Highlight the benefits of buying fresh, local products (see table on pg 11) and use the data that you have on farmers and farms to tell an engaging story; this can include number of farms (or hectareage of farms) that the market provides an outlet for; how many farmers are doing better because of their access to the market; how many farms are in organic production or converting to organic production; how many new farmers have entered the

market; as well as the personal stories of the farmers – why they farm, why they farm using organic principles, how the market has made a difference in their lives, etc. These are stories that can encourage consumers to attend and support the market; they are also stories that the media is interested in. Put together a media pack and invite media to the market to come and meet the farmers. You also have an opportunity to act as a liaison between the farming community and local government as you are best placed to hear about farmers' frustrations and can pass these on to municipal representatives.

### 3. Decide on messaging channels

Depending on the target market, you will use different channels. You might want to put up posters in the neighbourhood in which the market will be held. If you have budget, you could consider an advert in the local newspaper or ask them to give you some free coverage. And you should use social media to broadly publicise the market. Make sure that you also give traders the marketing material to share through their networks.

### 4. Engage with the community

Engaging with community organisations is an excellent way to share what you are doing with the market and how it will benefit the community. You could consider offering added value at the market like games for children, cooking demonstrations, gardening classes or live music to make it a social event. You should approach churches, schools, local councils and business forums, as well as non-governmental organisations.

### 5. Use the market as an 'advert' for future ones

Make sure that all traders have the dates and details for future markets to encourage people to return and ensure that on the day there is a welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere. This means you must think about shoppers' comfort in terms of places to sit, shade, and access to amenities like restrooms. You could also create a social media tag so that shoppers' can share their experience with friends and family.



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## **CASE STUDY:**

### **CREATING CAPTIVATING MARKET DISPLAYS TO DRIVE SALES**

*By Michael Kamuteku, Oranjezicht City Farm Market*

Michael, a Zimbabwean, was living on the streets in Cape Town before he found work as a foreman with a non-governmental organisation. Through the organisation he connected with the Oranjezicht City Farm Market and started working there. Michael is now passionate about creating engaging and captivating market displays. He notes that it is important to have clean and tidy surfaces to work from, the display should be easily accessible to consumers and items should be clearly labelled. Michael notes that people buy with their eyes and so making an attractive display can drive sales. Michael's top tips are:

- Mix colours by grouping different vegetables together or alongside each other.
- Label produce clearly and have a story to share with customers about where it comes from, how to store it and how long it keeps, etc.
- Use unique varieties and cultivars to draw attention to your stall.
- Keep track of how much you are selling and see whether you need to adjust the display during the day or replenish stocks from the fridge to ensure everything is sold.

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### **STORYTELLING TO BUILD MARKET LOYALTY AND BRAND AWARENESS**

*By Audrey Wainwright, Oranjezicht City Farm Market*

Audrey is on the committee for PGS SA and serves on the South African Bureau of Standards Technical Committee for Organic Production and Processing. She notes the importance of storytelling to attract consumers to organic produce and that markets are good venues to share stories related to all aspects of organic production – from people's health to the health of the environment. When customers have to make a choice about which eggs to buy, Audrey relates the farmers' stories, shows the photos and customers decide to buy based on the story that best resonates with them and their values. A good market advertises the farmer's produce through storytelling and this helps the farmers' businesses grow. A lot of knowledge exchange and networking happens at the market, which helps businesses to grow. Participating in a PGS also helps in the gathering of stories. These visits are also great opportunities for farmers to share their stories with each other and a good marketer can take these stories to promote their produce at the market.

## How do I ensure the market is viable?

It is important to think about how you will ensure that the market is viable and that it stays viable. This chapter provides some guidelines of what you need to consider in this regard.

### 1. Develop a realistic budget

Page 19 sets out some guidelines related to the pricing of farmers' produce, but there are many other things to consider. The governing body or market committee (see pg 28) play a key role in developing a budget for the market – and then for overseeing financial management of funds. Make a list of expenses, including:

- Site rental as well as rental for stalls, tables, chairs and sun and rain protection if needed.
- Sanitation and restroom fees, if not included in site rental.
- Water and electricity costs if not included in site rental.
- Permits and any regulatory fees.
- Membership fees, if necessary, to join organisations.
- Marketing and promotion costs for the market, including signage.
- Insurance and any health and safety requirements (medics, fire extinguishers, etc.).
- Security and parking assistants, if needed.
- Salaries, including for the market manager if this is a paid position. For other wage and salary costs (like support in setting up and taking down the market, cleaning, etc.), determine if these will only be paid on days when

the market is open or as a monthly retainer for other work done in the month.

#### HELPFUL TIP



When deciding on whether to pay salaries or not, note that having a

paid market manager can generate much higher returns than a volunteer manager. It is important to think about how much work it entails and whether the position would be full-time or part-time.

Knowing what needs to be spent will enable you to make decisions about income opportunities such as trader fees, farmer pricing, venue size and to know how much you need to make to recover costs. It is good to do a monthly cashflow projection up to three years in the future so that you can account for growth. Income from the market generally derives from trader fees. It is important that these are priced correctly to ensure that all of the costs mentioned above are covered.

### 2. Determine trader fees

Trader fees should reflect the actual cost of operating at the market. First decide how many traders you can accommodate on the site, while still allowing for enough space for shoppers to feel comfortable and ensuring that traders can all do well. Consider starting at a lower fee and increasing it as the attendance at the market grows. You can also think about having differential

fees depending on stall size and where it is located in the market. Another option is a minimum fee for trading at the market and a percentage of turnover. This way, those who do not sell a lot will not be overly penalised. If you get sponsorship for the market, you can also reduce the traders' fee. Remember that your traders are your partners, work closely with them and monitor their turnover and adjust fees accordingly. Don't forget to adjust fees annually as per the cost-of-living increases.



**HELPFUL TIP**

Do not feel shy about setting reasonable fees. There are hard

costs to cover and the market will not be profitable if the fees are not appropriate. Farmers and producers will benefit more from a well-managed and promoted market – and thus will pay more – than if they paid less but were in a poorly run market where they made less money.

### 3. Choose your traders carefully

It is important to attract a diversity of producers and farmers to ensure that shoppers have access to a wide variety of produce. The quality of produce and products must be high and consistent. This will help to maintain a good reputation for the market and ensure repeat visits. The traders you choose to invite should be producing or making products that will appeal to the chosen target market. You can draw up trader contracts.

### 4. Diversify income streams

You can also consider other ways in which the market itself can generate an income, for example, through specialised events like farm-to-table dinners, wine tastings and festivals, night markets, cherry and pistachio festivals, etc. Other options are having branded merchandise such as T-shirts, caps or aprons with the market's branding and operating some stalls yourself, such as coffee stations and bars. In addition, some of the aggregated produce can go into a veggie box scheme or wholesale to restaurants, hotels and online businesses.



**HELPFUL TIP**

You can consider only selling organic produce if the intent is to

promote organic farming practices and support local organic farmers and if the potential target market has a strong demand for organic produce. If you are making organic claims, note that the South African organic sector guidelines state that any farmer who contributes to the aggregation of certified organic produce for market must be either third-party or PGS certified. But there are some challenges to only offering organic produce. Sometimes supply is limited, there might be issues with consistency in offerings and if the customer is not able to buy everything that they need, they will go to the supermarket. Mixing the two (**as long as they are clearly labelled**) means that you can always guarantee a wide range of fresh, high-quality options.

## 5. Gather feedback and adapt

Collect feedback from traders and customers who attend the market and use it to make improvements to their experience. Ways to collect feedback include surveys conducted at the market or simply chatting to customers. You need to have some idea of how many customers visit the market. This can be done by placing a volunteer with a counter at entry gates. If you want to gather demographic information about customers, you can develop a chart to capture information like male/female shopper numbers. You can also evaluate the effectiveness of market layout by conducting a customer traffic flow study to gain insights into what products and stands are popular, where there are bottlenecks, and where patrons are not going. This requires a map of your

market stalls and volunteers who track the path of a customer on the map as they shop at market. The customer traffic flow study provides an opportunity for trader feedback and information for trader placement to improve traffic flow and the ease of shopping. A guest book, raffle and mailing lists are other ways to gather customer information. Customers can leave basic information and comments in a guest book, answer a few questions to enter the raffle or subscribe to a mailing list. Be sure to collect email addresses because this will make it cheaper and easier to engage.

## 6. Focus on sustainability

There are many places to incorporate sustainable practices at a market. Two of these are packaging and waste. Consider putting mechanisms in place to



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## CASE STUDY:

### A JOURNEY TOWARDS ZERO-WASTE

Oranjezicht City Farm Market recognised the urgent address the single-use waste problem and so partnered with Reusefy ([www.reusefy.co.za](http://www.reusefy.co.za)) to implement a reusable cup system, particularly at the Market Bar. This transformative move has significantly reduced waste, replacing single-use cups with a truly environmentally sustainable alternative. Patrons receive a reusable cup for their drinks and when finished they dispose of the cups in one of the many yellow bins placed around the market. The cups are collected by Reusefy who wash, sanitise and repackage the cups at their wash hub, ready to be reused. For every 1 000 cups returned, a tree is planted. It's the market's way of saying 'thanks' for helping us keep our reusable cup cycle going. By



returning the cup, customers not only contribute to a cleaner market, but also help us make the planet greener. It's a great feel-good factor and a win-win all around! Says Sheryl Ozinsky, "Every sip from a reusable cup at the Oranjezicht Market is a toast to sustainability, a pledge to protect our beautiful city and a celebration of the mindful choices that consumers can make." In 2023, 57 000 single-use plastic items and 550 kilograms of plastic waste were diverted from landfill and 3 500 litres of water and 1 ton of carbon dioxide emissions saved.

encourage waste reduction and recycling by having designated bins available and encouraging uptake of reusable bags to avoid plastic packaging waste. This should go into your marketing materials.

#### 7. Be adaptable

Be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances, including seasonal variations in product availability and

unexpected challenges like weather and other disruptions.

#### 8. Develop a long-term vision

Building a strong, supportive community around the market is key to its long-term success. Regularly assess progress and adjust to meet evolving community needs and preferences.

## Building systems for sustainable markets

As a market ages, it goes through the growing pains of maturity. In the first couple of years, it benefits from the enthusiasm of the market founders and the customers who enjoy shopping there. This enthusiasm has to be carefully nourished to ensure the sustainability of the market. Part of this rests on having clear goals and a mission, an enforceable set of rules and dedicated resources, including a good market manager. As the market matures, it becomes especially important to develop systems that will safeguard the future of the market, protecting the farmers dependent on the market for income, for the consumer who relies on the market for the fresh, local food they feed their families, and for the community who sees the market as a vital partner for the enrichment of community life for all its residents. In addition, market managers must be innovative and encourage traders to continually innovate their offerings. This helps to keep the market fresh to appeal to loyal and new customers.

## Governance structure of the market

A successful market has a well-thought-out governance structure to ensure that it operates in a responsible manner, can provide good quality produce over time and benefits for farmers, consumers and communities. It is good to have a diversified group of people to represent the various interests involved in the market, such as farmers, local

businesspeople, community officials, consumers and sponsors (if possible). Having people with legal knowledge and business, marketing and fundraising skills and experience is very useful.

### Governance structure

A recommended approach is to establish a governing body and management committee and appoint a market manager.

- **Governing body:** Assemble a group of dedicated stakeholders to establish a governing body. This body sets the market's goals and objectives, creates a constitution and mission statement, develops operating rules and regulations, and decides what kind of legal structure would best suit the market. This could be a sponsoring organisation, voluntary organisations, non-profit organisation or a for profit company. The governing body must also provide assurance of sound financial management and compliance to legislative and regulatory requirements.

Examples of legal structures: A voluntary association is the most common legal form in South Africa requiring three or more people to agree on achieving a common objective, which is normally not-for-profit. Some examples are churches and neighbourhood watch groups. Non-profit organisations are voluntary associations registered through the Department of Social Development. Non-profit companies are registered via the Companies & Intellectual Properties Act and governed by the Companies Act. There are very strict reporting

requirements and there must be at least three directors who have a fiduciary duty to ensure sound financial management. A non-profit trust is governed by the Trust Properties Control Act and can be established for charitable purposes. Trustees have limited liability. A for profit company is formed to generate financial returns for shareholders. It can distribute income to shareholders.

- **Management committee:** The management committee provides support to the market manager; this can include sourcing the relevant laws and regulations needed for the market, undertaking community outreach and marketing, conducting market research to understand the target market and what they are looking for in a market, evaluating local market conditions, researching funding opportunities, helping to resolve conflicts, overseeing the financial management and ensuring transparent decision making.
- **Market manager:** The market manager oversees day-to-day market operations. This includes collecting traders' fees, obtaining permits and insurance, enforcing rules and regulations, recruiting traders, controlling the trader and product mix, handling complaints and disputes, establishing strong community relationships and working with the governing body. They act as the main point of contact for the market. This person should have outreach and organisational skills and should be committed to growing the numbers of farmers and consumers.

## Legalities of a market

A clear set of rules helps to ensure that each market participant is doing their part to fulfil the market goals and they understand their rights and what is expected from them. The rules also provide a basis to resolve disputes that may arise. Key elements of good rules are that:

- The rules are understandable, fair and provide a means to cover the issues that arise in a farmers' market. They will then help to keep the market intact, support its mission and make it possible to be administered in an efficient, effective manner.
- The rules are enforceable and are uniformly enforced. Each trader must be treated equally, with no one receiving special benefits. Any rule that cannot be enforced should be eliminated or rewritten. For example, rules that require that up to 75% of the product must be grown by the participant are difficult to enforce. Is it 75% by weight, by rand value, by count? Is the percentage based on what is in the truck that day, on the table at any given time of the day, or as an average over the market season? Rules that cannot be enforced will create conflict that the market governing body must resolve.
- The rules should reflect the goals of the market. For example, if the goal was to provide a venue for local farmers, then the rules should limit traders to farmers only. If the emphasis is on local production, then only traders within a set geographical area would be considered. All rules should help to support the mission of the market.

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## CASE STUDY: OVERCOMING GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

*By Babalwa Mpapipeli and Grace Stead, Abalimi Bezekhaya (Harvest of Hope)*

Established in 2008 by Abalimi Bezekhaya and other organisations, Harvest of Hope was a box scheme aggregating produce from 54 community gardens in local townships in Cape Town. The produce was sold to households, restaurants and corporate clients across the city through 450 boxes a week. This was a way of generating livelihoods for local growers and of reducing food waste, as the community food garden often had to put their surplus produce into compost heaps. Initially Abalimi would provide growers with seeds and fertilisers and, in return, they would supply Abalimi with the produce for the box scheme. But farmers started selling their produce to other buyers and sometimes were not able to meet their obligation to Harvest of Hope. Other challenges faced in the project were the overseeing of quality of produce as it was aggregated from many different gardens, the coordination of deliveries to ensure that they were efficient, and administration and financial management related to payments for 52 growers against produce received. From 2008 to 2019, Harvest of Hope sold R16 million worth of vegetables, of this R6 million was spent on operations with the balance benefiting 245 growers and 1 225 of their family members. The business model has been revised and Harvest for Hope will re-open to continue its work.

- Rules should be reviewed and revised by the market management on a regular basis. Situations change and new issues arise.

### Key elements in effective market rules

**Definitions:** Throughout the rules, certain terms will be used. To make the rules easier to understand by all, clarify the terms that are being used.

**Market governance:** Identify who operates the market, who sets the policies and procedures of the market and who applies those policies and

procedures and who has the authority to implement and enforce the rules. The market's mission should also be spelled out. Since the rules are meant to support the mission of the market, it is important that everyone understands the mission. This will allow traders to understand the rationale for the rules and promote greater co-operation. General operations: This section outlines when the market operates and where, set-up times and when traders are allowed to leave. Most markets require traders to stay until the market officially closes, even if they have sold out. If this is

the case, it needs to be clearly stated in the rules. All details of operations should be clearly defined in the rules so there is no ambiguity and all market participants know what is expected of them.

**Who may sell in the market:** The rules will define exactly who is eligible to sell at the market. The definition needs to be written in a way that can be verified and enforced. For example, many markets require that products being sold must be 100% grown by the farmer selling at market. To verify that the products are 100% self-grown, a farm inspection may be necessary. There are markets that do allow for some reselling; then it becomes important to define where the products for resale may come from, procedures for allowing for resale products, and what amount of reselling is allowed. This section must also contain

a definition of the products that can be sold at the market. While some markets may choose to define each individual product, other markets simply identify by category. Some products require additional explanation, such as meat and dairy.

**Guidelines for selling:** Outline the rules of conduct for participating in the market. When everyone participating in the market adheres to the same guidelines, then all traders are given an equal opportunity to present their products for sale. Customers will be treated fairly and courteously. Adherence to the guidelines for selling helps to ensure a harmonious business environment for farmers and traders. Examples of rules in this category relate to signage, quality control and bringing sufficient stock. Stall fees: This section will deal with the fees involved in participating in a market. The rules will also spell out how stalls can be rented – seasonally, daily, for six months or annually.

**Compliance:** This section sets out how market management handle complaints, rules violations, and grievances.

- Dogs at the market: Dogs are a controversial issue for farmers markets. Some markets will ban dogs based on health and sanitation issues. Others will allow dogs that are leashed, believing that denying dogs will also deny a significant consumer base to the market.
- Liability insurance: Liability insurance extends coverage to a person, business, or other entity to cover



**HELPFUL TIP**

The rules should make clear that each market participant must

comply with all local, provincial laws and regulations dealing with the products they are selling. It is important that all food safety regulations are adhered to for the safety of the consumers and to protect the market from liability. It is also important that every trader selling a product that requires some form of licence or permit, keep these current and on file with market management. Again, this will help to absolve the market management of liability.

bodily injury or property damage. For example, a customer at the market slips and falls in front of the cheese trader's stall. The customer breaks a leg as well as their cell phone. The customer then sues for the cost of the hospital bills, lost wages incurred from being unable to walk, let alone do their job, and for cost of replacing their cellphone. The liability insurance would cover these damages.

your business model first, then put systems in place and make sure that they are resilient. She also notes the importance of establishing a fair and transparent pricing model that is also profitable.

## Building a farmers' market community

A farmers' market is a unique form of enterprise that is based on more than just transactions between buyers and sellers, but also on the relationships that these transactions build: consumer to producer, producer to community, consumer to community, and so on. These relationships are a vital component of a farmers' market and, in large part, a predictor of its success. It is the market's responsibility to foster these relationships, nurture their growth, and, in essence, build a market community.

### Building a market community

What is a 'market community'? It starts with the concept of a 'triple bottom line'. To be successful, markets must strive to simultaneously and equally serve consumers, farmers and their host community in a manner that brings value to each and benefits all.

Why is this important? A market community helps to establish the market as an institution. Its programmes serve the needs of its consumers, with access to fresh local foods, connections to local growers and with programmes and products that positively impact the health and wellness of a community's residents.

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## CASE STUDY: UMTHUNZI FARMING COMMUNITY

By Kim Bloch

In March 2018, Kim and her partner quit their jobs and started Umthunzi. Their mission was to economically empower small-scale urban farmers, through a fair and transparent marketplace. The backbone of the model was a suite of integrated tech tools and systems that were used to operate the supply chain, offering logistics support, finances and accounting services, capacity building and support with access to resources. Over three years, Umthunzi worked with 101 farmers, mostly women around 60 years of age that mostly had home gardens or community plots. The programme generated about R4 million in revenue, 70% of which went straight to the farmers. Kim offered the following advice: establish

Local businesses see the market as a partner in building the economic base of the community, bringing crowds of shoppers each market day that spill over into surrounding businesses. As well as market customers, market farmers and producers will likewise spend some of their hard-earned rands with local businesses, adding to the local economy. Finally, local municipalities will see the farmers' market as a community partner, helping to provide service to their residents, building community connections through the market.

**A farmers' market that is successful in building the market's community is rewarded with long-term partnerships with residents, organisations, businesses, and the municipality.**

Note that a farmers' market cannot exist without farmers. They are the very essence of a market. It is the fruits (and vegetables) of their labours that attract customers. Successful market managers understand this and work diligently to recruit farmers to their markets and to offer the broadest possible range of farm products: fresh fruits and vegetables, cheeses, free-range meats, fresh herbs, honey, local wines, and more. The work to build a community of farmers and producers does not stop with successful recruitment. It is an ongoing task, one that continues to build opportunities by growing the potential to make sales and to promote their farms and products.

There are certain key elements to building a strong sense of community around a farmers' market.

- **Building community:** Create a welcoming atmosphere, engage with local farmers and producers, involve the local community by organising events, workshops and other educational opportunities, support local causes, be active on social media, work together with local stakeholders and businesses, promote local artisans and craftspeople, encourage sustainable practices, and actively gather feedback and use it to improve.
- **Creating a great space and community place:** A great place is a location that offers a combination of physical, social, and cultural attributes that make it enjoyable, appealing, and valuable to people. A great place should align with the values and aspirations of the people who use it, making it a destination that fosters a sense of belonging and enjoyment.



This means considering aspects such as accessibility and connectivity to surrounding areas, safety, aesthetics and design, space for social interaction, a sense of inclusivity that allows for a diversity of people in terms of age, background and interests. Great places often have a sense of history or cultural significance that provide a sense of identity and meaning. The presence of greenery, trees and natural elements can help to create a sense of tranquillity. A great place often reflects the unique identity and character of the community it serves. This identity can be expressed through local traditions, art, and cultural events.

- **Learning by doing:** By actively participating in a farmers' market, farmers can learn from each other and adapt their practices to better meet the needs and preferences of their customers and the community. This can lead to a more vibrant, sustainable, and resilient local food system. They can learn how better to market and price their produce, how better to display it and various marketing ploys, like giving samples or running promotions. They learn what customers want and this helps them improve their production planning and they could learn from others about new techniques or technologies for sustainable food production, including eco-friendly packaging.

### Creating a mission statement

You already know what the goal of the market is, now identify who the market serves (this can be farmers, consumers, the broader community, etc.) and how

it serves them. This will help you to draft a mission statement that speaks to all stakeholders. The Oranjezicht City Farm Market's mission statement is below.

- **Product Mission**, to source and sell the finest quality fresh produce, food and lifestyle offerings, promoting business practices that respect the environment and community.
- **Economic Mission**, to manage the market on a sustainable financial basis of profitable growth and to help farmers/producers/artisans grow their businesses.
- **Social Mission**, challenges us to use the market to make our city better, by helping small farms to thrive and to make healthy food available to more people.

Central to their mission statement is the belief that all three parts must thrive equally in a manner that commands deep respect for individuals in and outside the market.

## A farmer's perspective on selling at a farmer's market

Farmers' markets are both rewarding and challenging for farmers. The market enables them to connect with their community and generate an income, but it is also challenging because of the seasonality of production, competition from other traders, and the added burden of time and resource

management. Farmers need to work hard, be adaptable and have a deep commitment to sustainable farming practices to make participating in markets a success.

Farmers' markets offer certain advantages to farmers. They enable direct interaction with customers (great to build relationships and to get feedback) and for farmers to play an active role in their communities. They also offer the chance to gain higher profit margins than selling on to an intermediary. And they provide space to diversify product offerings to include value-add products like jams, preserves, artisanal cheeses, etc.

Farmers' markets also pose challenges to farmers as markets are seasonal, meaning that there could be limited selling opportunities, depending on location and climate, and there is no guaranteed turnout. This means that income streams can be unpredictable. Significant attention must be paid to production planning to ensure sustainable revenue. In addition, preparing for and attending farmers' markets can be time-consuming. You must pack, transport, set up and take down your stall. This can be physically demanding, with long hours, especially during peak growing seasons.

There might be a need to comply with various regulations and to obtain permits in order to comply with food safety standards and health regulations, which can be administratively burdensome or even too expensive for some. Time must also be spent on developing

marketing and branding. Farmers' markets often feature multiple farmers selling similar products. You must find ways to differentiate yourself, such as through unique offerings or exceptional customer service, and/or signage.

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## **CASE STUDY:** **BLUE SKY ORGANICS**

Liz Eglington is the Farmer and owner of Buffelshoek Farm in the Klein Karoo which she bought nearly 20 years ago as a dusty and destroyed piece of land, through over grazing and chemical fertilising. Using organic, permaculture and biodynamic farming practices, Liz planted olive trees and breathed new life into the land. She then witnessed the miracle of nature healing the ecosystems and bringing vibrant life where there was none. In 2001 the farm became the first certified organic olive and chilli farm in South Africa and now has a range of 24 products. Liz supplies produce to specialty food retailers and farmers markets. Although Liz thought she was eating healthy food buying food from supermarkets, getting sick proved to her "you are what you eat" and she discovered how toxic store-bought food can be. In pursuit of her health. Liz planted 3 000 olive trees and 3 hectares of chillies. She found an agent and distributor to gain access to the supermarket and bigger retail chains.

Some of the lessons she learnt:

- Supermarkets take a large percentage and this added to what the agent and distributor get, leaves the farmer with the least amount of money, but the largest amount of risk.
- Supermarkets are not the preferred destination for those looking to purchase organic food; they tend to shop at farmers' markets, organic shops and speciality delis.

Liz has since diversified her income; in addition to selling olives, she also sells olive tree cuttings from a nursery, makes olive leaf teas and provides training.

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## CASE STUDY:

### WELL I AM, THE ATTERBURYS' FARM

"Well I Am" is nestled in the Garden Route in a picturesque farming community named Elandskraal, which is near Sedgefield. Anne-Marie and Terence Atterbury practice organic, ecological, regenerative, no till farming – all natural practices. The business was started in response to the limited availability of mineral-rich food and it aims to produce safe, healthy and mineral-dense food starting with the choice of heirloom seeds and a focus on

building soil health. Anna Marie and Terence believe that if a tomato has the capacity to absorb 54 minerals, it should do so and hence their focus is on this aspect of production. The Atterburys sell their produce at the Wild Oats Market in Sedgefield. They sell out on most market days, but sometimes return with surplus produce. Instead of throwing this away or composting it, they dehydrate the vegetables and sell them as dried vegetables for soup or as supplementary food powders. They have also started selling dried food in capsules. They share some key tips for marketeers and for farmers:

- The most important thing about selling at a market is consistency. If you said that you would be there, then make sure that you are. Shoppers get into routines, and if they are disappointed once, they will revert to their previous vendor.
- Use packaging and signage that is as natural as possible. It should also help you to tell your story and engage with customers. Signage should be bold and easy to read. It should explain PGS as well.
- Make contact and visit as many farms and farmers as possible – look, listen and learn. Join forums, workshops, go to farm visits and join PGS groups as you learn a lot and see how other farmers do things.

## Alternative retail models

There are many alternative retail models emerging as more and more people want to source healthy produce, support small-scale farmers and boost the local economy. Farmers are also looking for ways to get fairer prices than they would through the formal retail market, in which they are also forced to comply with very stringent health and safety regulations, which are not always appropriate for their scale of operation. This chapter describes some of these models, using real-world examples where possible.

### Community-support agriculture

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is an interesting model in which consumers buy a share of the seasonal or annual harvest in advance. This gives farmers the cashflow needed to sustain operations for a year and consumers take on some of the risk of farming. Food production becomes a mutual collaboration between farmers and consumers. Consumers receive regular boxes of fresh produce.

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## CASE STUDY: STRAIGHT FROM THE GROUND

Straight from the Ground, based in Craighall Park, Johannesburg, is a nonprofit company that connects consumers to small-scale farmers and micro-producers through a box scheme and shop. The box scheme sources its produce from a PGS network of farmers, as well as from its

own farm. Straight from the Ground offers two sizes of box – a two-person box for R250 and a four-person box for R380. The produce changes every week based on what is in season and available; it comprises root and other vegetables, fruit, greens, eggs, onion and herbs. Other items on sale from the Straight from the Ground shop are local honey, kombucha, dried beans, cassava flour, dried herbs, farm butter, jams and preserves. The box scheme does not run on subscriptions, but people can buy upfront month to month. Our main challenges have been logistical – getting the produce from the farmer to our shop. Many farmers do not have the means to deliver. As our business grows, we would be able to hire a driver to collect – ideally in a PGS cold storage vehicle that takes produce to a central pack house. It is also challenging to collect data on available produce each week. It takes a lot of time to contact each farmer and then consolidate the data so that we know what we can offer. We have learned that it is important to build relationships and to work with each other in a business like this. It is good to set clear expectations. Our customers and our traders genuinely support the initiative and understand what we are trying to do.

### Dedicated retail outlets

There are more and more small – and even large – retail outlets dedicated to providing consumers with organic, naturally produced foods and products.

These are also spaces for knowledge sharing and exchange on sustainable food and farming systems. They play an important role in consumer education.

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## **CASE STUDY:** **JACKSON'S**

Jackson's in Johannesburg has two physical retail stores in Kyalami and Bryanston. Their mission is to provide healthy, nutrient-dense and chemical-free food supply to local consumers. Gary emphasises the need to start small with what you have, grow your brand (and your confidence) and know that for at least 18-24 months there are no profits. Understanding cash flow and the complexity of the supply chain has also been a huge challenge but through engagements with farmers, these can be overcome. For example, Jackson's used meter taxi drivers to collect produce from farms when farmers did not have vehicles to deliver the produce to the store. To lower costs, the restaurant and the retail store have recycled furniture – simple and aesthetically pleasing. Less packaging has also been a cost-saver, and customers appreciate this as they pay for the food and not packaging. One of Jackson's goals is educating customers, staff and suppliers about the food system, health, nutrition, etc. and they also host educational events at the store. PGS farmers are integral to the

business as they supply most of the produce at Jackson's.

## **Food buying clubs**

The clubs comprise a group of people who put their funds together to buy directly from a food producer, collective of producers or a wholesale food distributor. The intention generally is either to get produce and products at a lower price or to support particular types of producers or manufacturers (such as organic producers).

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## **CASE STUDY:** **THE ONLINE FOOD CLUB HUB**

Food Club Hub is a not-for-profit social enterprise, aiming to decentralise the food system in South Africa. "In this model", says Jessica Merton of the Vredehoek Food Club, "communities put their collective food spend together, buying directly from producers who care about their impact on people and planet. In this model, farmers set the terms of the sale, are paid on time (within 7 days) and there is transparency on what percentages farmers get and on the 10-15% administration and marketing costs. The amount that goes to the farmer is highlighted on invoices for all members to see." There are currently 38 food clubs in South Africa. The model is based on a web App, with hosts able to personalize their hub.

To set up a Food Club, one needs a computer, a printer, cooler bags and scales. There is no waste, as members place orders and sourcing is according to orders. Members meet once or twice a month to discuss, learn about food systems, recycling, community projects, etc. This is a great model for PGS groups to start with as the overheads are low and the support from the Food Club Hub is extensive.

### **Local, informal markets**

There are many markets in South Africa, including flourishing informal markets. In the rural areas, these could be farm gate or village markets, in urban areas, these are often found along transport routes – either on the side of pedestrian walkways to work and back or at transport hubs, such as taxi ranks.

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## **CASE STUDY:**

### **MAHLATHINI DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION**

Mahlathini Development Foundation works with local food production and local marketing initiatives through the Mametja-Sekororo PGS in Limpopo and the KwaZulu-Natal marketing committees for rural smallholder farmers. Erna Kruger says that they work in the ambit of sustainable agriculture and integrated resource management, practising agroecology in homestead production. Through

their local marketing collaboration, they jointly set up monthly Tala Tables at taxi ranks, pension points, small centres, etc. selling vegetables, fruits, small livestock, eggs, craft and other value-add products. Tala Tables consist of ‘naturally’ produced products, where farmers have not yet been certified as organic or are in transition. Mahlathini provides most of the capital investment and writes funding proposals on behalf of the farmers. Farmers usually start by growing for their own and community consumption and are encouraged to increase production to gain an income. Mahlathini has included youth initiatives to deal with the generational gap and encourages youth to use their skills, for example, driving and computer skills, to enjoy livelihoods in the food and farming system. Because youth can typically read and write, they are also able to understand different ways of marketing and bring diverse perspectives to the system.

### **Vegetable box schemes**

These schemes provide consumers with an option to order a box of fresh vegetables and sometimes other products, like fruit, jams, honey and cheeses. Content for the boxes is sourced from one or a few local farms. Boxes are normally collected at the farm, specified drop-off points or delivered to the customer’s door. There are different models. Sometimes consumers can order as and when they wish or they sign up for weekly or monthly boxes.



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