

An Introduction to Connecticut Farmers' Markets

In Connecticut, the demand for farmers' markets is increasing and each year there are a number of requests to establish new ones. Many consumers would prefer to purchase fresh Connecticut Grown products if given the opportunity to do so. The purpose of this Reference Guide is to provide guidance for those who want to start a new market, expand an existing market, or participate in selling of goods.

The markets provide a benefit for farmers and consumers alike. For the consumer, farmers' markets provide a variety of fresh products at a reasonable price, while creating a weekly community event. Consumers enjoy a wide selection of products while supporting local agriculture and meeting the farmers who grow their food. Farmers' markets provide an opportunity for farmers to sell their crops and to market their farm to a wide audience.

Certified Farmers' Market

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is proud to work closely with both the producers and the markets that are committed to offering CT Grown farm products. Farm products are defined by Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Ch.1 Sec.1-1. Farmers' markets that are committed to CT Grown products and those that wish to work with CT DoAG receive a variety of benefits. These benefits include:

- Yearly participation in the CT Farmers' Market Brochure
- Yearly participation on our website, www.CTGrown.gov
- Additional promotional opportunities with a variety of media outlets
- Market usage of the CT Grown Logo
- An option to participate in supplemental food programs including the WIC & Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)
- Certified markets provide participating farmers the use of the farmer's kiosk designation. This designation allows exempt items (jams, jellies, acidified foods, etc.) to be sold at certified farmers' markets. Without this designation, off farm sales of these products are prohibited.
- Farmer/Vendor recruitment
- Support in dealings with other government agencies (federal, state, and local)

Farmers' markets committed to CT Grown farm products that wish to work with CT DoAG and be identified as "certified farmers' markets", as defined by CGS Ch. 422, Sec.22-6r, should contact CT DoAG. All certified markets need to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) before being recognized and benefit from the departments programs. Other governing agencies utilize this list to applicably regulate farmers within their jurisdictions. For up to date listings of Connecticut's Certified Markets, please visit our website, www.CTGrown.gov.

Farmers' markets are also affiliated with several supplemental food programs including: WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), Senior FMNP, WIC Fruit and Vegetable Check Program, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-SNAP (also

referred to as Electronic Benefits Transfer or EBT). These supplemental nutrition programs provide eligible individuals with access to fruits and vegetables, thereby increasing the demand for CT Grown products. Participants receive benefits that can be used at certified farmers' markets. Each of these programs has a chapter in this guide dedicated to them.

Food safety is a concern in all aspects from farm to table. Farmers' markets have become one stop shopping locations to purchase fresh, high-quality produce and other specialty items. It is important that farmers, vendors, and market masters be familiar and comply with the applicable food safety regulations at the farmers' market. This manual provides a general overview of the most common requirements. Working cooperatively with your local health department and the appropriate state agencies early on in the process will assist vendors in providing safe and wholesome foods at the farmers' market.

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Last edit 01/25/2010