CHAPTER 6
General Topics

Food Safety Begins on the Farm ................................................................. 74
Food Safety for Farmers’ Markets Vendors ........................................... 75
Food Stamps .............................................................................................. 78
Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs ...................................................... 79
Quarantines: General Plant Product Entry Requirements ....................... 79
Scales, Weights and Measures ................................................................. 80
Signage ..................................................................................................... 81
Food Safety Begins on the Farm

From planting to consumption, there are many opportunities for bacteria, viruses, and parasites to contaminate produce. On the farm, soil, manure, water, animals, equipment, and workers may spread harmful organisms. Products may be harvested on a farm, processed in one plant, repackaged in another, then stored, displayed, or served by an institution or in the home. Each of these steps is an opportunity for harmful microorganisms to enter the food supply.

Clean Soil

The improper use of manure can be a risk factor contributing to foodborne illness. Pathogens such as E. coli O157:H7, Salmonella, and Campylobacter can be present in manure slurry and soil for up to three months or more, depending on temperature and soil conditions. Listeria may survive on vegetables growing in the soil, even though it may not survive in the soil itself. Yersinia may survive in soil for up to 330 days. Composting manure, incorporating it prior to planting, and avoiding top-dressing with fresh manure are important steps that can reduce the risk of contamination while making use of the important source of nutrients. Excluding domestic and wild animals as much as possible from production fields will help reduce the risk of manure (fecal) contamination.

Clean Water

When using surface water for irrigation, test quarterly for fecal coliforms, especially if water passes close to sewage treatment or livestock areas. Make sure that water used for produce cooling, washing, dipping, and processing operations is drinkable (potable). Whenever possible, use chlorinated water. Always make ice with potable water.

Clean Hands

Attention should be paid to worker hygiene in the field and the packing house. Workers who pick, sort, grade, or pack produce must wash their hands after using the restroom. Hepatitis A outbreaks have been linked to infected workers. Teach workers about microbial risks. Provide soap, clean water, and single-use towels in the field and insist that all workers wash hands before handling fruits and vegetables.

Clean Surfaces

Before harvesting or packing and at the end of each day, clean all bins and work surfaces. Sanitize surfaces using recommended chemicals and procedures (consult local extension service for specific recommendations).

There is no way to guarantee that everything we grow and consume is free of harmful microbial contamination. The risk can be reduced if preventative steps are taken before produce leaves the farm.

Sources: To request a copy of “Food Safety Begins on the Farm” contact the Cornell Good Agricultural Practices Program at www.GAPs.cornell.edu or (607) 254-5383
Food Safety for Farmers’ Market Vendors

The following information is an overview of ways you can meet the food safety laws that apply to you while trading at a farmers’ market. For the exact wording of regulations and advice on the more complicated food safety issues, refer to the individual agencies listed in the Appendix.

You should be aware that farmers’ markets are subject to routine inspection by food safety officers from the local health department, who may visit individual booths on the day a market is held. In addition, the farm or other premises from which you operate may also be subject to inspection.

Effective spring 2008, vendors at farmers’ markets may apply for an “intermittent food establishment” license from the local district health department. These licenses allow a vendor to operate for the duration of the farmers’ market season in conjunction with a specified market.

Transportation and Storage

Food transported to a market must be wrapped, covered or placed in suitable containers to prevent contamination. Vehicles and containers should be kept clean and in good repair and the food should be kept separate from other items. For example, if you are accustomed to transporting farm dogs, game birds or containers of agricultural diesel in the back of your truck, you should think about how you can avoid direct contamination or even tainting of fruit and vegetables.

Simple cardboard boxes and paper-lined crates are fine for most agricultural products but you will need higher grade materials, such as metal or plastic crates, for bakery products and meats.

Some foods must be kept cold (41 degrees F or below 5 degrees C) to prevent the growth of dangerous bacteria. These include soft or semi-hard cheeses, most other dairy products, cooked meat and vegetable products, most smoked or cured meat as well as raw meats and fish and shellfish. Insulated containers with icepacks and a thermometer are usually sufficient and the temperature must be checked from time to time (and preferably recorded in a log book). Larger volume traders should consider using refrigerated vehicles.

Preparation

The surface that you lay out or prepare food on must be smooth and impervious so that it can be thoroughly cleaned. If you are using wooden tables, you must provide plastic sheeting or other suitable covering material.

You will need to wash and dry your hands from time to time and if facilities are not provided on site, you must bring your own. For stallholders selling open foods, such as meats, or high-risk unwrapped foods such as cooked meats, dairy products and seafoods, there must be hand washing facilities at the stall. The facilities should include a supply of hot water, towels, bowl, soap and preferably a nailbrush.

If you are using knives or other serving implements you will need washing facilities for these, which must not be the same as those used for hand washing –
separate bowls or sinks must be used. Wear a clean protective apron while handling unwrapped food.

**Display and Service**
To avoid possible contamination, food must not be placed directly on the ground or floor. It is best to keep all unwrapped food off the ground by at least 45 cm (approximately 17 inches).

Check the temperature of chilled foods from time to time and preferably keep a record of this in a logbook. Make sure you know the correct temperature for the food that you are selling.

Regularly wipe down surfaces with a clean (preferably disposable) cloth using a food grade cleaner/disinfectant.

If the market does not have refuse services, make sure you have sacks or containers for waste food and water.

**Training and Basic Hygiene Measures**
It is not required by law that all market traders have attended training in food hygiene, but you must at least be aware of the basic principles that apply to the safe handling and preparation of food. You will need some specific training if you have no experience of running a retail food stall or business, or if you are manufacturing food at home or from other location. In any case, food hygiene training courses are always strongly recommend for anyone involved in the running of a food business. Indeed, you may find that your local market will require evidence of such training before allowing you to join. If you are in any doubt as to what is required, your local health department will be happy to advise you.

For basic retailing operations, such as those selling fruit and vegetables, or bakery products that do not contain meat or cream, the following advice applies:

- Keep yourself clean and wear protective clothing such as an apron.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly before handling food, after using the toilet, after handling raw food or waste and after every break.
- If you have a skin, nose or throat problem or an infected wound, do not handle unwrapped food.
- If you have a stomach upset, do not handle food for at least 48 hours after you are free of symptoms.
- Ensure that cuts, spots or sores are covered with a brightly colored waterproof covering.
- Do not smoke, eat or drink where open food is handled.
- Clean as you go - keep all equipment and surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Avoid unnecessary handling of food.

**Labeling, Weights and Ingredients**
As a general rule, most loose foods such as fruit and vegetables must be sold by net weight, using approved weighing equipment. Refer to the section on Labeling, Scales, Weights and Measures for details.
Manufacturing Food at Home for Sale From Your Market Stall

This is an area that covers everything from jams and cakes to frozen and chilled meals and meat products. Special rules and regulations can apply to some of these foods, particularly when making meat, fish, and dairy products, and will include pre-packed meals and dishes. If you do not comply with these rules, the consequences can be very serious.

*It cannot be stressed strongly enough that when thinking about starting such a business you must get advice from your local health department.*

Making Low-risk Items Such as Cakes and Jams

Generally these present few problems and many people safely produce a range of jams and non-dairy cakes from home. You must make sure you know about the basics of food hygiene and law and also the labeling and shelf-life requirements that apply. Before starting out, contact your local health department for advice. See Appendix for location of your nearest local health department.

Health District Licensing Requirements for Farmers’ Markets

Vendors exempt from licensing requirements are vendors preparing/selling non-potentially hazardous foods:

- Baked goods
- Whole, fresh, uncut produce
- Jams & jellies

*Sale of prepared food items must be limited. Any wholesale to retail establishments or larger volume requires a food processing license.*

Making High-Risk Items such as Meat, Dairy and Fish Products

These foods are much higher risk because they can support the growth of harmful bacteria and are often sold ready to eat without further cooking. A mistake in their preparation and handling can have serious consequences for public health. As a result, many of these products, which include hams, pates, ice cream, cheeses, yoghurts and prepared foods such as meat pies and lasagna, etc. require approval of the production premises and process, under specific legislation. It can be very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to obtain approval for a domestic premises to manufacture these kinds of products, even on a small scale. As a result, you will need to plan your operation carefully.

Vendors Required to be Licensed and Inspected

Vendors selling /serving potentially hazardous foods:

- Any raw animal food
- Any heat-treated plant or animal food
- Raw seed sprouts
- Cut melons
- Garlic in oil mixtures
- Salsa

In addition, attractive traditional recipes that may be perfectly safe for immediate consumption do not always lend themselves to a production process, packaging or do not have an easily assessable shelf life for prolonged storage. Before starting out, contact your local health department for advice.
Giving Away Free Samples

You will likely want to introduce your customers to as wide a range of your foods as possible, and having tasting samples available is a good way to get their attention. Bear in mind that even though you may give samples away free of charge, Idaho statute does not distinguish between selling the food and providing free samples. The production of foods for sampling is still subject to legal control. Samples need to be protected from contamination such as undue handling, usually either from inquisitive pets or equally inquisitive children, so ensure that samples are stored and displayed out of their reach.

If your customers absolutely must handle your food samples, make sure they don’t touch other samples on the plate – cocktail sticks or tongs can help with this. Most importantly, don’t leave food that must be chilled for safety reasons out of chill control for long periods. Keep sample quantities to a minimum and throw out uneaten food if it has been out of refrigeration longer than four (4) hours. It is best and safest if high-risk food is disposed of after one hour out of chill control. Bear in mind that for some foods, such as hard cheeses, temperature control is not critical to safety and longer periods are acceptable, so seek advice in advance.

You should find your local market has its own conditions and requirements for food samples or that they may not be permitted at all. This may be at the discretion of the market organizer or the city rather than any national or state legal requirements.

If you need any further information, please contact your local health department (see Appendix for health department listings).

Sources: The preceding information was adapted from Food Safety Guidance for Farmers’ Market Traders publication from The National Association of Farmers’ Markets, www.farmersmarkets.net

Food Stamps

Retail outlets, including farm stands, farmers’ market, U-pick operations, and CSA’s that sell food for human consumption in the home are all eligible to apply for authorization to receive food stamps for payment. The USDA, in an attempt to reduce costs and fraud associated with issuing and handling paper script, has moved largely to an electronic system to manage food stamp transactions. Recipients of Food Stamp Program assistance, also known as the Basic Food Program, are now issued a Quest card. This card is much like a debit card used at the point of purchase. Transactions require the vendor to use an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Point of Sales (POS) device and requires access to a standard 110-volt power source and a telephone line. Although qualified for receiving food stamp program credits as payment for farm products, many direct sales vendors are not able to accept food stamps because they lack access to EBT technology, the required power source, or phone lines at the point of sale.

Accepting Food Stamps at Farmers’ Markets

As of 2007; two farmers’ markets are authorized in the State of Idaho to accept food stamps; Kuna and Caldwell. Currently, farmers’ market food stamp operations are being approved in Idaho as
a "pilot project". The farmers’ market sponsor is required to provide a letter to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service office explaining the market operating procedures and describing how they propose to handle food stamp transactions. This letter from the sponsor is submitted to the USDA Food and Nutrition office along with an application (FNS-252 USDA-Food Stamp Application for stores) for authorization. The Idaho Health & Welfare’s EBT Operations Supervisor will review the farmers’ market food stamp plan, and upon approval, will work with the sponsor to provide the EBT device once the authorization process has been completed.

Many farmers’ markets in other states utilize a type of script as the customer’s form of payment. The customer will purchase a certain value of script using their Idaho Quest Card at a central point (usually where the sponsor or market manager has a booth). The customer can then use their script at any of the vendors at the farmers’ market. Each vendor then presents their collected script to the farmers’ market manager to receive payment at the end of the day.

Accepting Food Stamps on Individual Farms
As of 2007, no applications have been submitted requesting food stamp authorization for payment for products in the State of Idaho for farms, farm stands, CSA’s, or U-pick operations. To accept food stamps, vendors must be authorized by the USDA Food & Nutrition Service. Applicants must supply copies of their Idaho State Master License, Social Security Card, and Health Permit, fill out an application and submit for review by the USDA Food & Nutrition Service.

To request an application for authorization to accept food stamps contact: USDA Food & Nutrition Services, (877) 823-4369 (toll free) for an application packet.

To apply for Food Stamp authorization, or to inquire about Farmers’ Market Food Stamp pilot programs contact:
USDA-Food and Nutrition Service office,
Peggy Beier, Program Specialist, 9174 West Blackeagle Drive, Boise, ID 83709 (208) 378-5731

Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs (WIC & Senior Programs)
As of December 2007, the State of Idaho does not have any active Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs, WIC or Senior programs available.

Quarantines General Plant Product Entry Requirements
Nursery stock shipping requirements:
All incoming nursery stock must be accompanied by an inspection certificate signed by the regulatory agency of the state of origin. The list of the contents and origin of the items must be attached to the package or container. Further certification may be required for some nursery stock originating in areas covered by a state or federal quarantine.

Nursery stock:
Includes all botanically classified plants or any part thereof, such as herbaceous plants, bulbs, sod, buds,
corms, culms, roots, scions, grafts, cuttings, fruit pits, seeds of fruits, forest and ornamental trees and shrubs, berry plants, and all trees, shrubs, vines, and plants collected in the wild that are grown or kept for propagation or sale. The term does not include field and forage crops, seeds of grasses, cereal grains, vegetable crops and flowers, bulbs and tubers of vegetable crops, vegetables or fruit used for food or feed, cut trees or cut flowers unless stems or other portions thereof are intended for propagation. However, state law still requires nurseries, florists and landscapers with a physical presence in Idaho to be licensed. Idaho will honor nursery and florist license issued by states that accept our nursery and florist license.

**Feed, seed, fertilizer, and soil and plant amendments:**
All commercial feed, seed, fertilizer, and soil and plant amendments in bulk or packaged, offered for sale or distribution in Idaho must be properly labeled and registered or licensed with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. For all unregistered products, file a report listing the Product, Brand Name (if any), Manufacturer, Consignor, Consignee, Destination, and any pertinent label information.

**Honey bees:**
Non-resident beekeepers must obtain a permit before bringing bees into the state to an Idaho destination. A certificate of health must be obtained from the state of origin showing the absence of American foulbrood. Colonies without a health certificate should not be allowed to enter, unless prior arrangements for an inspection have been made. This does not apply to shipments of packaged bees. Shipments transiting the state are exempted from any pre-clearance requirements, however the colonies must be netted or in refrigerated containers. See Federal Domestic Quarantines for imported fire ants.

For additional information on Idaho quarantine regulations, or to request copies of the regulations, contact: Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Division of Plant Industries, Summaries of External Quarantines, 2270 Old Penitentiary Road, PO Box 790, Boise, ID 83701-8620 (208) 332-8620 www.idahoag.us

Pest Survey and Quarantine summary information may be found under the Publications section of the website.

**Scales, Weights and Measures**
Most foods are sold by weight, liquid measure, dry measure in standard containers, or by count. The USDA Quality Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables list (http://www.ams.usda.gov/standards/stanfrfv.htm) is a good resource of quality and packing standards to use when selling directly to retail or wholesale.

The ISDA Bureau of Weights and Measures (ISDA W&M) examines all commercially-used weighing and measuring devices used in the state of Idaho on an annual basis. The inspection includes testing the device for accuracy and ensuring the device complies with design, construction and installation requirements. Inspectors also test packaged products for net contents, sample octane, and investigate complaints pertaining to measurements.

There are many types of scales, but only those models legal for trade may be used. Scales placed in service after July 1996 must have a National Type
Evaluation Program Certificate of Conformance. To maintain accuracy, scales should be moved as little as possible and be serviced regularly by agents registered with the state. Electronic scales are not as susceptible to problems from being moved as the older drum or fan mechanical scales. All scales need to be used on a stable base and be re-leveled by adjusting the legs each time they are moved to a new location. The National Conference on Weights and Measures (www.ncwm.net) has a database of commercially acceptable weighing and measuring devices.

The current annual license for instruments and devices shall be displayed in a prominent place at the same physical location where those devices are installed or used. A commercial device is any device that is used to buy or sell or used to determine a charge.

The term commercial weighing and measuring device is defined as any weight or measure or weighing or measuring device commercially used or employed in establishing the size, quantity, extent, area or measurement of quantities, things, product, or articles for distribution or consumption, purchased, offered or submitted for sale, hire, or award, or in computing any basic charge or payment for services rendered on the basis of weight or measure and includes any accessory attached to or used in connection with a device that may affect the accuracy of the device.

The capacity of an instrument or device will be determined by the manufacturer’s rated capacity. The licensing period is from February 1 to January 31 each year.

**Annual registration fees in Idaho:**

- Scales < 50 pounds capacity Fee $4.50
- Scales > 50 < 1,159 pounds capacity Fee $9.00
- Scales >1,160 < 7,499 pounds capacity Fee $18.00
- Scales >7,500 <59,999 pounds capacity Fee $46.00
- Scales 60,000 pounds or more Fee $57.00

**For questions about devices or registration contact:** ISDA Bureau of Weights and Measures, PO Box 790, Boise, ID 83701-0790 (208) 332-8690 weights@agri.idaho.gov kmerritt@agri.idaho.gov, http://www.agri.idaho.gov/Categories/WeightsMeasures/indexWeightsMeasures.php

**Signage**

Your road sign identifies your business and directs customers to your farm. Signs can be very important for drawing customers to direct sales location, including farm stands and U-pick operations. Signs must be easy to read, so keep the message short. Six words are about all that people can comprehend while zooming by in a car. Focus on what appeals most to your customers, such as a seasonal product you are featuring. Use selling words like “homegrown,” “organic,” “fresh,” etc. as they apply to your products.

The use of signs is restricted by federal laws, state statutes, and local ordinances. Contact your local county planning and zoning commission for information on zoning restrictions and other regulations. Permits are required for any Temporary Agricultural Directional signage on highways. These include signs on private property adjacent to state highway right-of-way, which provide directional information to places of business selling seasonal agricultural products harvested or produced on the property where the sale is taking place.

**How do I apply for a permit to erect a new sign?**

First, clearly mark the proposed location of your sign with stakes so the site can be inspected by Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). Then complete the application and submit it to the ITD office in the district where the proposed sign will be located (see office locations below). Make sure to include the following:
A $10 non-refundable application fee.

Proof of local approval (if applicable), such as an approved building permit for the sign.

Zoning type and signature of local zoning authority.

The property owner’s signature and contact information. If you don’t have the property owner’s signature, you may provide a copy of a lease for the sign site. NOTE: Licensed sign companies are required to provide a copy of a lease from the property owner that includes signatures and a termination date.

A site plan, which is a sketch of the proposed sign on the subject parcel showing the sign’s proximity to structures, property lines (applicants are responsible for establishing property lines), highways, overpasses, interchanges, driveways, power lines, waterways, sidewalks, etc.

A plan-view showing the sign configuration from all angles, including from above. Make sure to include any illumination and catwalks.

A copy of the last deed of record to confirm ownership of the property where the proposed sign will be located.

ITD may ask you to provide additional information needed to process your application. Processing time is approximately 30 days. The annual renewal fee for sign permits is $3. You will have 180 days from the permit issuance date to complete the installation of your sign structure and sign face. ITD will inspect the sign 180 days from the permit issuance date to make sure the sign complies with the information provided in your application.

This information is only a guideline for outdoor advertising and is not intended to be inclusive of all applicable laws. Sign applicants and owners are responsible for knowing the laws and ordinances that control signage. If there is a conflict between this information and any federal, state, or local laws or ordinances, the laws or ordinances will prevail.

To get an Outdoor Advertising Sign application form (ITD-1850) or for more information, contact any ITD office: Idaho Transportation Department, Right of Way Headquarters Office, 3311 W. State Street, Boise, ID 83707; (800) 745-2752 or (208) 334-8503 Sign Agent: Jan Strough Jan.Strough@itd.idaho.gov