More than a decade ago, when the farmers’ market concept took life, few expected that people would welcome a return to a simple trading transaction between food producer and consumer. Yet, a world of retail consolidation has seen new and thriving demand for distinctive food that is locally produced and regionally sold. Some 129 farmers’ markets are now in operation in Ireland and a growing number of farm shops and the increasing popularity of box schemes are further evidence of opportunities for direct selling as a route to market.

Farmers’ markets afford local producers the unique opportunity of selling directly to the consumer. A further bonus to such a transaction is the market research opportunity which meeting the public affords. In return, consumers are looking for direct access to farmers and producers. Consumer interest in reducing carbon footprints and food miles also explains why farmers’ markets and farm shops are growing in popularity.

Farmers’ markets and other forms of direct selling are here for the long haul but, as with any commercial enterprise, their individual success rests on how well they deliver to consumers in their area. This new Bord Bia guide has been designed to assist food producers and farmers who are inspired by these opportunities but who are, as yet, unsure as to how to get involved. The guide gives an overview of the sector, analyses individual segments and provides practical advice for producers on how to develop an idea, test it in the marketplace and go about building a customer base and a business.

We are fortunate to have, in Ireland - The Food Island, a rich and abundant source of raw materials and an industry with a record of achievement at home and abroad. Selling through farmers’ markets, farm shops and box
schemes offers opportunities to showcase and develop local food, organic food, artisan and speciality food enterprises. Successful markets promote the local economy as well as providing start-up opportunities for individual farm and food enterprises to meet consumers.

The development of farmers’ markets is an all-island phenomenon and I am particularly pleased that Bord Bia and Invest Northern Ireland have worked together on developing this guide and in promoting small food businesses.

I hope this publication will not only answer questions but also inspire food producers in growing new food enterprises to meet the interests of today’s consumers. This is an exciting and challenging time to be involved in food. I wish all readers success on their food journey.

Trevor Sargent, T.D.

*Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with special responsibility for Food and Horticulture*
The purpose of this guide is to assist growers, producers and other food entrepreneurs who wish to set up in business through farmers’ markets, farm shops and box schemes. Information and advice are presented in a concise, easy-to-use format, with step-by-step action plans, useful checklists and relevant guidelines all provided. Both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are covered. The intention is to give you a clear understanding of what is involved before you begin this exciting, demanding and, ultimately, very rewarding enterprise. Throughout, the importance of making contact with those already operating in the sector is stressed, as much of the most useful information you will receive comes from those who have already embarked on a similar journey. Useful contacts are also provided to point you in the right direction should you require more detailed advice or information (See Appendix 2 on page 56). If a love of food and a desire to share the fruits of the earth are the primary forces motivating you, then you will find there are many people operating on many different levels who share your vision and are willing to help you.
Section 2: Why alternative routes to market?

In recent years, we have seen an explosion in the number of farmers’ markets and other direct local-produce supply schemes in Ireland. These have been driven, to a large degree, by a yearning for provenance and authenticity in the food chain. The idea of being able to source food locally and directly from the producer is, for many, a refreshing and satisfying way to shop, as well as a way of directly supporting the local economy and supply base.

It is indisputable that consumers are concerned with issues such as pesticide usage, animal husbandry, animal welfare, biodiversity, traceability, carbon footprints and product origin. These heightened concerns have also lead to an enhanced awareness of, and an increased interest in, alternative methods of sourcing food.

As well as being the source of a wide variety of foodstuffs, farmers’ markets are also valued for their social dimension, giving people in a locality a chance to meet and interact with each other. Many find their informal atmosphere more community orientated than the more structured environment of high street retailing. Markets also have a role to play in food tourism, with food trails now becoming more commonplace around Ireland.

From the perspective of the small food producer, farmers’ markets (as well as box schemes and farm shops) offer a number of advantages as a route to market. The supply chain is shorter and there is a more informal approach to marketing. Transport requirements are generally far simpler than the more conventional routes to market and, in many cases, there are no intermediaries involved. This shorter supply chain also allows the producer to remain in direct control of the product. As the producer has, for the most part, direct links to the customer, instant feedback is available. This assists in developing market research and in allowing the food producer to make informed decisions on future product development and range enhancement.
Over the past decade the idea of a “local food sector” has gained both momentum and credibility in consumer consciousness. The evidence is available on the ground: more and more Irish people are supporting local markets, local products and direct selling schemes.

The experience, to date, of farmers’ markets, farm shops and box schemes, suggests that they can provide wide ranging and long term benefits, on both a local and regional level, which can be measured socially, environmentally and economically. These benefits include: access to in-season quality fresh food; fewer air miles travelled and, therefore, reduced carbon footprints; more money circulating in local economies; increased employment regionally; the preservation of regional specialities; and an enhanced level of choice for consumers.

There is no universally accepted definition of “local food” but, as a general rule of thumb, for a product to be local it must be sourced within a 40-50km (25-30 mile) radius of where it is sold. Local food can consist of fresh produce/product such as fruit, vegetables, fish and meat, or processed foods such as cheese, bread and jams. It may even be considered local if the final product is processed in the area where it is sold, even if the ingredients are from elsewhere. The source of the food product is, therefore, extremely important but other factors such as quality, flavour and freshness are also relevant.

Local food, undoubtedly, has moved up the policy agenda and links between local food and sustainable development are increasingly recognised by Government, both at local and national level.
Farmers’ markets are one of several methods of direct selling that have grown in popularity in recent years. A farmers’ market may be defined as a public market at which farmers and other vendors sell produce/product directly to consumers. Open-air markets are natural components of pre-industrial societies and were significant in Ireland in times past. The modern farmers’ market concept was pioneered in the United States in the 1980s. Farmers’ markets developed in the UK from the mid ’90s onwards and have emerged as a force here in recent years, with over 120 markets now in regular operation. For a complete list of all farmers’ markets on the island of Ireland please consult www.bordbia.ie. Other useful sources of information on this topic in general can be found in Appendix 2.

Diversity of markets

Though relatively new to the Irish scene, the market concept already embraces considerable diversity. The range of operations in the Republic of Ireland can be segmented as follows:

- **Municipal markets:** These are organised by a local authority and operate in a public area like a park, market square, town hall, etc. There may be a nominal charge for participation at these markets.

- **Private markets:** These markets are run by private companies, on privately owned property, and usually operate by charging commercial rent to stallholders.
- **Traders’ markets:** Some towns have historical trading rights which allow stallholders to sell on certain dates. In some cases there is no charge for trading in these markets.

- **Country markets:** The country markets operated by the Irish Countrywomen’s Association were established in Ireland over 60 years ago and sell a variety of home-grown and farm-based produce/products such as vegetables, jams, baking, etc.

- **Co-operatively run or community-based markets:** These markets are run by a group of producers or a community-based organisation on a non-profit making basis.

- **Shopping centre markets:** More recently, shopping centres and supermarkets are organising farmers’ markets in their car parks, in co-operation with stallholders, with a view to providing a more enhanced shopping experience.

- **Event markets:** Also, in more recent times, markets are being held at specific times of the year, in keeping with community festivals, agricultural shows or calendar events like Christmas and Easter.

More specific to Northern Ireland:

- The majority of markets in Northern Ireland are **municipal** based and are run by the local district council with a small number having their origins in co-operatives.
There has been considerable debate about what constitutes a farmers’ market. A number of farmers’ markets prefer their stallholders to consist exclusively of farmers and those involved directly in production, drawn from the local catchment area. Other markets take a broader view and allow the participation of traders who buy product from producers and sell it on to customers. In the more general markets, customers can buy anything from food to crafts, right through to clothing.

While the majority of markets take place at weekends, there are also those which take place on early weekdays. They can be either indoors or outdoors. Indoor markets offer a more formalised environment and protection from the weather. In contrast, outdoor markets have greater flexibility and, though exposed to the elements, can attract greater passing business because of higher visibility and presence. Such variations will have a direct bearing on the choice of farmers’ market that best suits you.

Diversity of products

There is a wide range of foodstuffs sold at these markets. While the farmers’ market concept is built around authenticity and on simplifying the ‘farm to fork’ journey, a certain amount of processing, albeit of the traditional kind, may also take place. Food choices can broadly be divided into the following categories:

- **Food for now:** In line with the trend for convenience, there are a number of stalls selling food for immediate consumption. Products like waffles, crêpes and hot pastries all fit the need of the ‘food for now’ consumer. From the stallholders’ perspective, the big advantage of this type of product range is that repeat purchases are generally higher than for longer-life products. For people who view visiting farmers’ markets
as part of their leisure time rather than shopping time, expenditure on ‘food for now’ treats can be higher.

- **Main meal items:** Many stallholders sell products which are destined to be part of a traditional home-prepared meal and, as a result, are consumed in the short to medium term. Meat, vegetables, cheese, etc. are typical examples of this type of produce/product.

- **Added value:** Some markets now have a food offering where the producer cooks the food. Examples include family-sized meat pies, lasagnes and other types of ready prepared foods.

- **Treats:** Customers like to indulge in high quality treats and will often choose a farmers’ market to source such products as homemade cakes, ice cream, gourmet confectionery, etc.

- **Gifts:** Sometimes the purchase is not necessarily for the customer but rather a gift for someone else. Examples include handmade chocolates, cakes, biscuits and cut flowers.

- **Pantry fillers:** Chutneys and jams are examples of products which are central to the ‘traditional foods’ element of the farmers’ market but are generally subject to slower repeat business.

- **Seasonal product:** Very often, an existing stallholder will expand their range at certain times of the year to include seasonal products, e.g. homemade Christmas puddings, fresh organic turkeys and summer fruits.

- **Organic:** Consumer interest in organic products has risen dramatically in recent years. Farmers’ markets are an effective channel for selling organic produce/products as the customer base tends to be supportive of the organic ethos. The types of organic product that can be sourced include vegetables, meats, breads and cheeses.
- **Health/natural**: Freshly squeezed apple juice, natural yogurt, etc. offer the customer a range that is perceived to be healthy, authentic and good for you.

- **Artisan**: All of the products above command a strong customer following simply because of the way they are made and the ingredients used. ‘Handmade’, ‘handcrafted’, ‘natural ingredients’ and 'best tasting' are all attributes of the artisan offering.
Section 5: Getting started...

Do you have a good idea for a food product and feel the time is right to make your dream a reality? Perhaps you are already producing a food product for customers in your locality and would like to take the next step to developing and expanding sales.

Whatever your beginning point, one of the most important considerations in taking your business forward is in the creation of a comprehensive business plan. While direct selling through markets, etc. is more informal than traditional retailing, this is still a business in its own right, and should be treated as such. In a small or start-up business environment, it is easy to overlook the need to comprehensively cost your raw materials, labour and other expenses. Such planning can easily be neglected in favour of day-to-day activities which is why its importance cannot be overstressed. Formulating a plan is simply the beginning point. You must set aside a little time each week to review your business as well as deciding on what next steps you can take to drive the future growth and development of your enterprise.

The need for planning relates to the customer too. Although the farmers’ market environment is perceived as being less formal than other forms of selling, it is vital to remember that the customer will bring certain expectations and perceptions from other shopping experiences. Professionalism will be expected as a matter of course. You should be prepared to employ some of the skills and disciplines of modern retailing in order to understand your customer better and, as a result, develop and grow in the marketplace.
Understand the marketplace

**Conducting research:** Before deciding on whether your product is right for the marketplace, it is essential to understand what that marketplace is. Visit all of the local markets and shops around your area to see if similar products already exist. Talk to as many people as possible, including those who produce or sell a product similar to yours. Prepare some sample product to test among potential customers. Bear in mind that people are unlikely to give you negative feedback directly so, in order to achieve reliable results, some form of blind tasting may be useful. Bord Bia’s *Market Information Centre* and Invest Northern Ireland’s *Business Information Centre* also have large repositories of information, which will provide you with current consumer and market trend indicators. Such research can be vital in ensuring that you do not enter a product category which is already saturated. New innovative products are the key to success in both the farmers’ market arena and the wider marketplace.

Understand the product

**Uniqueness:** Food companies spend a great deal of time determining the unique selling proposition (USP) of their products. You will need to do the same. Establishing what differentiates your product from the competition is critical to its success in the marketplace. ‘Uniqueness’ is a multi-dimensional quality and a balancing act is required between highlighting the strongest points of difference of your product and communicating its overall attractiveness. A product can be unique for several reasons:

- **Taste:** Does your product taste better than other similar, competing products?
Authenticity of ingredients: Do you use vanilla pods rather than vanilla essence, for example?

Production method: Are your products dry aged, handcrafted, etc.?

Provenance: Is there a special story relating to who makes the product or the area it is made in?

Health benefits: Are there health benefits to your products which scientific research can support in keeping with current legislation?

Freshness: Are your vegetables harvested and sold within, say, 12 hours? This is an important consideration for many customers.

Rare variety: Do you sell an unusual variety of a fruit or vegetable?

Price: You need to ensure that the price you charge is fair and competitive within the marketplace (See Sample Pricing Models in Appendix 1).

Locality: Are you highlighting your proximity to the market, especially if you are based within a 40-50km (20-30 mile) radius?

Organic status: Fertiliser and pesticide-free foods, and good animal welfare credentials are a priority for many customers. Remember that you must have the necessary accreditation from the relevant certifying body.

To reiterate: one USP may be enough to make your product stand out from competitors initially; however, it is in the product’s overall quality, and not on any individual point, that sales growth will be based. A brown soda bread which has organic status as its USP may attract initial attention but may find it difficult to sustain long term sales, if it doesn’t deliver an excellent taste also.
**Quality and freshness:** Quality is paramount in the delivery of all goods and services and the farmers’ market environment is no different. You must ensure that you have created a production system that delivers consistently good product. Irrespective of what you are selling, freshness is key, as long-term success in the marketplace ultimately depends on this. One bad experience may mean a customer never returns again and poor word of mouth can have even more severe implications. You need to be rigorous with your standards. A policy whereby you and your staff try out a sample from each batch produced is a simple and reliable foundation for a quality control strategy. This could also act as a taste education tool for staff becoming familiar with the product.

**Shelf life:** If you have a product that has a short shelf life, you need to be acutely aware of the rotation process so that you can keep product moving and avoid the problem of stock going out of date. There are some simple ways which can help extend the shelf life of your product, e.g. if you are selling organic meat, it may make more sense to sell it frozen rather than fresh. Alternatively, you may be able to vacuum pack some products so that the shelf life is lengthened. It is essential that you verify the use-by date on your product by running the relevant shelf life trials. For further information please refer to FSAI Guidance Note 18 ‘Determination of Product Shelf-Life’ (http://www.fsai.ie/publications/guidance_notes/gn18.pdf). In Northern Ireland, please consult the Environmental Health Department of your local District Council. The relevant legislation is Food Labelling Regulations (NI) 1996 SR. No. 383.
Packaging: The role of good packaging is threefold: it should protect the integrity of the product; it should make access to it easy and safe; and it should do justice to the foodstuff aesthetically. Ensure that your packaging authenticates the quality of the product within and that it is appropriate for a farmers’ market or farm shop environment. Take time to look at all the packaging types that are available in the marketplace, ensuring that you choose the correct one.

Labelling: Closely tied to the issue of packaging is labelling. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) (http://www.fsai.ie/publications/leaflets/labelling2005_leaflet.pdf) and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland (http://www.food.gov.uk/foodlabelling) will provide the necessary labelling guidelines for your product. In both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, food labelling legislation is enforced by the local Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) (See Hygiene on page 18). The label on your product must contain your name and address and be illustrated in a clear and precise fashion, so as to enable a customer to contact you where necessary. All information provided must be easy to understand, clearly legible, as well as indelible and not obscured in any way by price labels or sealing tapes.

Other practical considerations to take into account include the fact that your product could be exposed to moisture and subject to low or high temperatures, depending on the weather. This is important, especially if you handwrite your label, which must be done with indelible ink.

Claims regarding organic status must be restricted to produce/products that are produced within the certification system and labelled fully in compliance with the requirements of the organic certification bodies.
As a general requirement, organic licences/certificates must be prominently displayed. Where all produce/products on the stand are not organic, it must be completely obvious to the customer which products are organic and which are not.

**Food safety**

**Hygiene:** With regard to the Republic of Ireland, a comprehensive list of food legislation is available on the Food Safety Authority of Ireland’s (FSAI) website [http://www.fsai.ie/legislation/food/index.asp](http://www.fsai.ie/legislation/food/index.asp) and the requirements for starting a food business are outlined in the business start-up section at [http://www.fsai.ie/industry/starting/industry_starting.asp](http://www.fsai.ie/industry/starting/industry_starting.asp).

Guidance Note 16 ‘food stalls’ as issued by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland ([http://www.fsai.ie/publications/guidance_notes/gn16.pdf](http://www.fsai.ie/publications/guidance_notes/gn16.pdf)) will assist you with regard to the standards and arrangements necessary for all food stalls, in compliance with current legislation. The scope of this document includes current food hygiene legislation; HACCP principles; training of staff; relevant documentation; labelling requirements; preparation of food off-site; transportation of food; and personal hygiene; as well as the general requirements of food stalls including what constitutes low and high risk activities.

You must also register with your local Health Service Executive (HSE) Office. There, your Environmental Health Officer (EHO) will advise you about specific requirements pertaining to the manufacturing and selling of your type of food product. Contact details for the Health Service Executive Offices are available in Annex 2 of Guidance Note 16 or you can contact the FSAI advice line on 1890 336677 for the contact details of your local office. In addition to registering, if you make or handle products of animal origin you may
also require approval for this. Please consult the food law section at http://www.fsai.ie/legislation/eu_hygiene_regs/index.asp for further information.

In Northern Ireland, environmental health is controlled by the local District Councils and you should visit the website of your local Council, or talk to your local Environmental Health Officer with regard to the relevant regulatory requirements for farmers’ markets. All relevant legislation can be found on the Food Standards Agency website on www.food.gov.uk. The National Association of British Market Authorities is in the process of updating a guide for markets and fairs, taking into account all recent legislation on good hygiene practice. In the interim, the existing Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice–Markets and Fairs Guide can still be referred to, but anyone doing so should bear in mind that not all of the requirements of more recent regulations are covered. This guide can be purchased for £3.60 from The Stationery Office at http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp.

Financial matters/insurance

**Price:** Your pricing needs to be competitive and you must ensure that all costs are included in your selling price. Failure to work out your price accurately could result in an operating loss that will immediately undermine your business model. One mistake often made by producers at the beginning is to benchmark their price according to a competitor and ignore their own costs. When they realise they are losing money, they may have to dramatically increase the selling price, causing confusion and dissatisfaction amongst customers. The sample pricing model set out in Appendix 1 is designed to help you calculate a fair and reasonable selling price for your product.
Bear in mind that price is a selling point as much as any other aspect of your product. Please ensure that you display an individual price sign on each product.

**Cash flow:** If the production and sale of your foodstuff are kept within a short time frame then cash flow may not be a serious issue for you. However, you may find, particularly as the business progresses that you have to buy raw materials, packaging and labels in advance of production and, perhaps, in larger quantities than you require immediately, with payment having to be made straight away. If it takes a certain amount of time to sell your stock, you should plan in advance for any possible cash flow difficulties and ensure that you have finances in place to fill the gap.

**Tax/Value Added Tax (VAT):** You will need to discuss the implications of tax and VAT with your financial adviser who will set out the necessary guidelines for you.

**Insurance:** Insurance cover for product liability, public liability and employers’ liability is now a minimum requirement for all markets. However, the level of cover required can vary significantly, depending on the type of food you are selling.

**The market**

**Choose the best market for you:** If you are intending to sell at a farmers’ market it is important that you choose the most suitable one for your product. Some markets are more geared to luxury goods while others cater primarily for every day products. There is now a good geographical spread of farmers’ markets around the country and you should talk to participants, as well as travelling to a number of these markets to get a
feel for which would best suit your product type. This is also an excellent opportunity to check out the competition. It is also important to bear in mind that some markets may be saturated when it comes to certain product types. Because of the current popularity of farmers’ markets, many are already full to capacity and you may need to join a waiting list to participate.

**Seasonality:** You may be producing a product which is only available for a limited period during the year. This should not hinder you from approaching your local market to see if they will facilitate you for a short three or four month season. There are many markets which welcome seasonal producers as they bring variety and excitement to the market.

**How do I secure a space?** Most markets have a manager, organising group, or chairperson who is elected by the traders. The first step is to meet with the manager or relevant individual/s who will explain what the requirements are, the days of trading and the rental charge. Some markets are free because there are historical trading rights in the area. Others can vary between €5 and €70 per day depending on location and footfall. In Northern Ireland rates vary between £15 and £30 per day.

**Don’t be put off:** In the beginning, it is natural to meet obstacles and come across terms and procedures which may at first seem daunting. Don’t let this put you off! You will receive enormous support and advice from producers who already sell through farmers’ markets and there is also a strong network of government agencies and farmers’ market organisations who will help guide you on your journey. In certain instances, there may even be limited financial assistance available.
**Be patient:** It will take some months before your name becomes established and it is critical that you stick with your market for at least six months. You must turn up rain, hail or snow so that you do not disappoint your customers. Any break in the pattern could lose you business.

**Rewards:** Setting up a stall at a farmers’ market is similar in many ways to setting up a small shop, and generally requires a considerable amount of preparation. Very often you will be up early in the morning to reach the market and will have to stand for long hours in sometimes less-than-pleasant weather conditions. There are, however, many rewards for stallholders, including a huge sense of personal satisfaction.

**General logistics**

**Equipment:** Equipment needs can vary greatly depending on the type of market you trade in and the type of food you intend selling. In some situations, you may be required to have nothing more than a table to display your wares. More sophisticated markets will have minimum requirements such as a professional stall table, an umbrella or canopy etc. With regard to foods which are subject to temperature control, refrigeration/freezer units are needed. To learn more about this, please consult Guidance Note 16 ‘food stalls’ as published by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (http://www.fsai.ie/publications/guidance_notes/gn16.pdf) or the Environmental Health Department of your local Council in Northern Ireland (See Temperature Control on page 26). More specific to Northern Ireland, you could also consult the *Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice—Markets and Fairs Guide* by the National Association of British Market Authorities.
Whatever equipment you choose, ensure that it is suitable for the job in hand and most importantly, that it is convenient to be transported, carried and set up. Remember that you will be setting up and taking down your stall on a regular basis and possibly moving from market to market. In instances where you cannot take your vehicle directly into the market, carrying heavy equipment could be an issue (See Market Day Checklist on page 30).

**Transportation:** You will need transport to get your product to the market in a way that prevents any contamination of the food. You should check in advance how close you can bring your vehicle to where your stall is being set up, so as to avoid carrying objects long distances. In some markets, it is possible to have your vehicle parked directly beside the stall.

**Staff**

**Back up:** In the early days of your business, you may be either operating on your own or working with a family member. However, it is wise, from the outset, to have someone trained up on everything you do. You will need to take a holiday at some stage or may unexpectedly have to take time off due to family circumstances or illness, so having trained support is essential.

**Staff training:** In order to create efficiencies among staff members, there are some key areas which your training process should cover:

- Product information: Where and how it is made? What ingredients are used? Why it is different? Is it organic with the relevant accreditation?
- Recipe suggestions
- Customer service and activities that build loyalty
Hygiene and food safety requirements
Quality standards and rotation of stock
General housekeeping and upkeep of stall
Optimum display of product
Selling techniques
Dress code

Key tips
- Consult with your local Environmental Health Officer (EHO) with regard to the relevant food safety requirements
- Conduct on-going research so as to develop an in-depth understanding of the marketplace
- Determine the unique selling proposition of your product (USP)
- Remember quality and freshness are key with regard to your produce/product
- Ensure that your packaging authenticates the quality of the product within
- Include all costs in your selling price
- Choose a farmers’ market which is best suited to your type of produce/product
- Have a training process in place for staff
- Ensure that you have adequate insurance cover
You have decided on your product offering and have done the necessary preparatory work in market research, price planning, quality control, staff training, etc. Now you are ready for your first day’s selling.

The product

**Product display:** It is important to ensure that your stall looks good at all times, is properly merchandised and is visually appealing. If you know someone with a flair for layout why not invite them to give you some advice on presentation? A few simple choices can make all the difference in how a prospective customer views your stall. Keep the stall well stocked and use contrasting colours to achieve a vibrant presence. In addition, a blackboard and chalk is useful to tell customers about the product as well as ingredients and manufacturing processes used, e.g. “handmade using organic milk”. The more information, i.e., ingredients, cooking instructions, etc., that can be provided to the customer, the greater your chance of making a sale. Remember, a potential customer is not just the person you are dealing with directly. Everyone who passes will give your stall and range of product some consideration. It is important that they see the very best of your offering at all times.

**Tasting:** It is important to allow as many customers as possible taste your product. It provides an opportunity for customers to stop at your stall without feeling under pressure to buy. This gives you a chance to engage in conversation with them and explain the uniqueness of your product. However, in a busy market situation, an open tasting opportunity may become no more than a feeding station for passers by, yielding little sales in return. You will need to manage this if it becomes an issue. One possibility is to allow individual customers taste product once you have engaged them in conversation.
The stall

**Company or product name:** To help customers recognise your stall, it is important that you have a clearly marked brand or sign. Remember, you may be moving from market to market and, therefore, clarity is essential if people are to identify and remember you. Many stallholders have invested in some simple signage with the name of their business on it, as well as an illustration of the production process used. Your contact details should also be clearly visible. If you have organic accreditation, organic licences/certificates must be prominently displayed.

**Leaflet:** An explanatory leaflet describing your company, the product and its USPs is also highly recommended. Recipes are indispensable and you should include one or two on your leaflet.

**Table/umbrella:** There are many variations and you need to choose one that will suit your requirements. Again, a quick conversation with some people already selling in the market will help identify possible sources. Initially, a simple table may be sufficient; however, in the long term it is worth investing some money in a table that is both sturdy and easy to carry. Remember that you will be exposed to the elements, so investing money for the purposes of protecting both you and your food products could save you a lot of money and hardship in the long term. A good canopy is a wise choice from the beginning. You will also need some weights to secure the umbrella in poor weather conditions.

**Temperature control:** The stall must be provided with the necessary equipment to ensure that relevant food products are kept at the correct temperatures. Chilled foods must be maintained at between minus 1° and plus 5° Celsius. You need to find a suitable way of transporting the food to
the market so that it is protected and that the temperature is maintained at or below 5°C Celsius. Frozen food must be transported and stored at a temperature at or below minus 18°C Celsius. A temperature probe should be available to check the temperature. For further information, please consult Guidance Note 16 ‘food stalls’ as published by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (http://www.fsai.ie/publications/guidance_notes/gn16.pdf) or the Environmental Health Department of your local Council in Northern Ireland. More specific to Northern Ireland, you could also consult the Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice—Markets and Fairs Guide by the National Association of British Market Authorities.

**Stall hygiene:** It is important to note that food safety requirements vary depending on your product category and clarification should be sought from the Environmental Health Department of your local Council in Northern Ireland or the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (http://www.fsai.ie/publications/guidance_notes/gn16.pdf) with regard to this. In Northern Ireland, you could also consult the Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice—Markets and Fairs Guide by the National Association of British Market Authorities. For example, depending on the food safety requirement of your product, you may be required to have hot and cold running water. It is of the utmost importance that you keep your stall clean and fresh throughout the day. It will be necessary to have a supply of food-grade detergents, kitchen roll/paper, etc. constantly on hand. Portable sinks can now be bought and some markets may even have a central facility that you can use.

**Waste disposal plan:** Ensure that you have an adequate waste disposal plan in place. Depending on the market, you may need to take responsibility for your own waste or come to an arrangement with the
respective market manager. In some markets, the local authority provides a collection service. With regard to Northern Ireland, the majority of markets will require you to take responsibility for your own waste and, again, this should be checked with the market organisers. It is also important to segregate your rubbish for the purposes of recycling.

**Electricity:** If you are using a refrigerated unit, you will need to make arrangements in advance with the market manager with regard to electricity supply. You may need an extension lead so it is important that you check the electricity source. A 16 amp outdoor socket is the most commonly used.

**Float:** You will need to have a moneybox or money apron, and also to make sure that you have a substantial float that will cover all eventualities. The use of €50 notes (and £20 notes in Northern Ireland) by customers has become commonplace and you could be faced with people handing in large notes and expecting change, so be prepared for this. It is not an efficient use of time to have to leave your stall on a continuous basis to look for change from other stallholders. When handling money, care must be taken that food is not handled with the same hands. Gloves should be removed when handling cash. You may also need a calculator to add up purchases.

**Carrier bags:** Many customers who shop at farmers’ markets are environmentally aware and will bring their own shopping bags. However, you will need to be prepared for those who have none. Legally, you are required to charge the Government levy for each plastic bag you use in the Republic of Ireland. In Northern Ireland, this is not currently a requirement.
Staff

**Dress code:** The clothing worn by stallholders varies from person to person and the most important rule is that whatever you are wearing, it must be compatible with the product you are selling. It is recommended that you wear some sort of protective clothing, like an apron and gloves to instil customer confidence that the product is being handled hygienically. For further information, please consult Guidance Note 16 ‘food stalls’ as published by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (http://www.fsai.ie/publications/guidance_notes/gn16.pdf) or the local Council in Northern Ireland. More specific to Northern Ireland, you could also consult the *Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice–Markets and Fairs Guide* by the National Association of British Market Authorities.

The weather will vary enormously when selling through the markets so having the correct clothing to protect you is vital. Sleeveless jackets, hats, etc. should all be part of your winter fashion wardrobe at the farmers’ market. It is important to dress appropriately and comfortably.

The customer

**Customer service:** The importance of a pleasant manner and in providing as much information as possible about your product cannot be overstressed. You need to engage with as many customers as you possibly can. Some of the following tips may help with this:

- Give the customer a sample to taste and details of the ingredients
- Provide information about your company and the production process involved
- Suggest some recipe ideas/usage occasions
Recommend a product from another market stall that will complement yours

Provide some useful storage instructions

And finally…

**Market day checklist:** A comprehensive checklist is a sensible organisational technique to ensure nothing vital is left behind, particularly where long distances need to be covered. A checklist should include the following:

- **The product**
  - [ ] Product for sale
  - [ ] Product samples

- **The stall**
  - [ ] Banner or large sign
  - [ ] Product/price signage
  - [ ] Leaflets
  - [ ] Umbrella/weights
  - [ ] Table
  - [ ] Knives/chopping boards, etc.
  - [ ] Taste plates
  - [ ] Napkins
  - [ ] Cocktail sticks
  - [ ] Weighing scales
  - [ ] Cash float
  - [ ] Calculator
  - [ ] Carrier bags
Food safety

- Apron, gloves, hair nets, etc.
- Refrigeration/freezer units
- Extension lead
- Temperature probe/record sheet
- Cloths
- Food-grade detergents
- Soap/towel
- Dust pan and brush
- Suitable containers for waste
- Relevant health/safety/organic approval and certificates where necessary

Key tips

- Consult your local Environmental Health Officer with regard to relevant food safety requirements
- Have a clearly marked brand or sign, so that customers will recognise your stall
- Make sure that you have the necessary equipment so that food products are kept at the correct temperatures
- It is important that your stall is properly merchandised
- It is a good idea to allow customers taste your product
- Make excellent customer service your goal
- Consult your ‘Market Day Checklist’
Section 7: Ongoing considerations

No business can tick over all by itself. After setting up your new enterprise, your business planning should focus on a strategy of relationship building both in the market environment and with the broader community.

Work with the manager: As stated already, most markets have a manager, organising group, or chairperson who is elected by the traders. You should liaise with them regularly to learn about any upcoming events, themed days, etc. from which you could benefit. The more involved you are in the market, the greater your chances are of developing successful customer relationships. Of course, you should also discuss with the manager any concerns or indeed ideas you may have which will enhance the overall market or create a better trading environment.

Promoting both your business and your market: From your own business perspective, it is important to generate customer interest in the market in which you trade. Don’t forget that marketing never stops and needs to be considered within an ongoing calendar of events. Some tools you might consider using include:

- Adequate and informative signage
- Dedicated websites
- Feature pieces on local radio shows
- Articles in local newspapers
Sending product samples and information relevant to your market to food journalists in national papers

Inviting national TV programmes to film on the market site

Banners located on main roads to attract passing traffic

Dropping market information leaflets door-to-door in towns surrounding the market

If you are selling at the local agricultural show or festival, hand out plenty of leaflets telling them about your market, where it is located and when it is open

Creating themed market events, e.g. summer soft fruit festival, etc.

Periodic entertainment/music in the market to add character

At certain times of the year, you could consider moving the market to a location where there is a high footfall and greater traffic density, such as a local shopping centre car park

**Team up with others:** A commercial arrangement with other stallholders in the market may prove beneficial to both of you. For example, a butcher selling organic meat might sell some product directly to a hot food vendor who wants to put organic burgers on the menu. Look at the activities and product range of your fellow stallholders and consider whether there is any creative arrangement that would deliver advantages to both of you.
Multiple market presence: Many stallholders grow their business by selling at a number of different markets in their immediate area or broader region. To decide if this is worthwhile, you first need to calculate the expense of setting up at the new location. Take into consideration whether the distance from your current location will be sufficient to attract a new customer base. If you wish to sell at markets that take place at the same time, one practical solution is to team up with a producer who has a stall at that particular market or, if resources are available, to send staff to trade on your behalf. Either way, it is important that any extra expenses are accounted for in your overall business planning and pricing model.

Local food group: Many regions around the country have their own local food groups with their own regional identification and branding. Such groups can provide invaluable support and advice, and are well worth tapping into as you develop your business.

Ongoing support: Bodies such as Invest Northern Ireland, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Northern Ireland), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Bord Bia, Leader Groups, Teagasc and County Enterprise Boards provide a wide array of programmes to support small food producers. Contact each organisation directly to find out what assistance is available in this regard.

Food awards: Food awards like the Great Taste Awards, Northern Ireland Food and Drink and Taste of Ulster Awards, the British Cheese Awards, the Bridgestone Guide Awards, Bord Bia’s Food and Drink Industry Awards, etc. are great instruments to get your product noticed and promoted. Award-winning products create immediate excitement and new-found interest among customers and can help attract the attention of the local media. Your publicity material should highlight awards won.
Prominently-displayed copies of relevant press cuttings will also inspire confidence in the customer. Raising the credibility of your product and building your reputation as a quality food producer are crucial to the long-term sustainability of your enterprise.

**Business contacts:** It is not unusual for stallholders to secure a business contract from a local shop, or even a multiple supermarket, as a result of an owner or buyer visiting the stall. It is important, therefore, that you have a leaflet or business card to hand so that you do not lose the business opportunity.

**Consumer research:** Developing an open dialogue with your customers is an invaluable tool in directing future business development. If you are working on the stall yourself, you will have a first-hand opportunity to conduct some basic but fruitful market research. Find out what attracts customers to this farmers’ market, what kind of product they like to buy and, as conversation moves to your own product, ask if there are any variants they would like to try or improvements they would suggest. Of course, people are unlikely to voice direct criticisms to you, and if they are buying from you then it already indicates appreciation of your product. All customers, however, have views on what constitutes quality and you may be surprised at how their feedback inspires ideas for new product development and the overall enhancement of your range. To capture feedback, you could have a ‘comment box’ in the market, where (with easy access to pen and paper) visitors can give their views.

**Balance your time:** In the earlier stages of your business you may be operating alone and struggling to balance the time between food production, product sales and home life. It is critical to get this balance correct: too much time spent in production does not leave enough time for
marketing and selling, and vice versa. Of course, the big danger is that both activities will eat into home and family time. If you find that the pressure is telling on you, then it is time to consider taking on extra staff to support the business. You can move in small steps, perhaps initially employing help part-time to cover peak periods. You may also find that taking on extra staff is a catalyst to growing the business, as it allows you to focus on key areas of opportunity including new product development, sales and marketing.

The future: Hopefully your efforts in establishing yourself in the farmers’ market circuit will lead to a successful and satisfying business. Remember, all your time at the market should be considered as a learning experience to understanding the needs of the customer. This is important, not just in the context of the farmers’ market, but also should you decide to further develop other routes to market. Farmers’ markets have been the springboard for many successful food businesses in Ireland and they can be your starting point too.

Key tips
- Liaise with those in charge of the farmers’ market on a regular basis
- It is important to promote both your own business and the market in which you trade
- Many stallholders grow their business by selling at a number of different markets
- There are a number of groups and bodies at both local and national level which provide support and advice
- You could use a ‘comment box’ to capture feedback from customers
- It is important to balance the time between business and home life
**What is a farm shop?** Like the farmers’ market, the farm shop has grown in popularity in recent years. A farm shop may be defined as a building or mobile vehicle which sells local produce/product to customers, and is located on or beside the farm where the food is grown or produced. In setting up and running a farm shop, many of the issues relevant to farmers’ markets apply. The following, additional factors should also be considered:

**Setting up shop**

**Find a buddy:** You will need as much advice as you can get in the earlier stages of developing your business. It is always advisable to find someone who has already set up a farm shop, who will be happy to share their experience with you and who will keep in touch as your business grows. As with the farmers’ markets, you’ll find a tremendous amount of goodwill in this sector, so ask around in your community or among colleagues in the markets and you are likely to find some very useful contacts.

**Planning:** It is necessary to consult with the local planning authority/department in your area in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland before setting up a farm shop. It is important that planning permission is sought where necessary and that required planning regulations are adhered to.

**Buildings:** You may find that you have some outbuildings or sheds on your farm which are no longer in regular use. These may have the potential of being developed into a farm shop premises. Obviously, the approach into the area including the driveway, the yard, etc. will need to be well maintained, clean and pleasing to the eye. The fit-out of the premises itself will depend largely
on the type of product you are selling. As with the farmers’ market, it is advisable to talk with your local Environmental Health Officer in advance of setting up your business so that you are conversant with all the necessary health and safety requirements. Again, the advice of an established farm shop owner will prove invaluable in guiding you through this often exacting process.

**Signage:** The main difference between a farmers’ market and a farm shop is mobility. With the former, you are, for the most part, travelling to a central location, while, with the latter, you must tempt the customer to come to a possibly remote location and certainly one outside the main shopping areas. The importance of clear signage, in as many locations as possible, to direct people to your farm shop cannot be overstressed. The signage should also be used as a marketing tool to alert customers to the unique offering of your farm shop. It is worth investing, therefore, in professionally-made and attractive signage. Remember, the installation of these signs may require planning permission from the local planning authority/department.

**Opening hours:** Opening hours should be regular and consistent. To achieve a viable level of sales, you probably will have to trade in the evenings and at weekends, something which will have implications for your staff. As with farmers’ markets, you should, at the very least, have some staff or family members available to provide cover for holidays or in the event of an emergency. It is critical that they are well versed in the business and product range.

**On-site facilities:** You will need to ensure that your shop and site can accommodate the needs of customers, particularly if you expect a large number to visit the shop. Easy access, adequate parking, toilet facilities and access for customers with special needs must all be considered.
Amenities: Some farm shops have small playgrounds and picnic tables, while others run specific events such as “pick your own strawberries” at certain times of the year. These give customers an additional reason to visit and can make it more attractive for a family to shop together. A small coffee shop supported with home baking could be an additional revenue stream for you.

School trips/education: Many local schools welcome the opportunity to visit farms and farm shops, and this could be an ideal way for you to get word into the local community that your shop exists. You will need to ensure that either your own insurance or the school’s insurance covers the visit. There are also other groups who may be interested in some educational talks on horticultural topics, e.g. active retirement groups, ladies clubs, etc.

The product

Product range: You will need to put some thought into whether you will only stock product from your own farm or sell products grown or produced on neighbouring farms as well. Many farm shops gain their niche by selling foodstuffs which are not necessarily available in other forms of retail. However, certain customer expectations do not change. A very small range of products and any unreliability with regard to opening hours or stock availability could prove off-putting to new customers. If you can deliver a wide enough range of products from your own farm then you have a strong marketing proposition. If not, you could certainly look around and see who in your locality can help maximise your offering. Again, planning regulations may be a consideration in this regard.
**Quality and freshness:** A farm shop can get the product to the customer within hours of harvesting or production and this should always be emphasised. Let your signage get across the message that, for example, your strawberries are “guaranteed picked and sold within 6 hours” or your pies are “made in our farmhouse kitchen this morning”. Quality is key to the success of your business, so it is vital that you operate to the highest standards and remove any damaged or substandard food immediately from your shop.

**Organic:** Claims regarding organic status must be restricted to produce/products that are produced within the certification system and labelled fully in compliance with the requirements of the organic certification bodies.

As a general requirement, organic licences/certificates must be prominently displayed. Where all produce/products in the shop are not organic, it must be completely obvious to the customer which products are organic and which are not.

**Food safety**

**Hygiene:** A farm shop is considered a food business and you will need to register it with your local Health Service Executive (HSE) office in the Republic of Ireland. With regard to Northern Ireland, you are advised to contact the Environmental Health Department, in your local District Council. The Environmental Health Officer will provide you with the relevant information and guidance. Apart from the official requirements you have to meet, you will, of course, have to maintain your farm shop and displays to a very high standard. Clean surroundings, properly merchandised displays which maximise the use of colour and seasonality and courteous staff are all factors that will contribute to your business’ success.
Financial matters/insurance

**Price:** Similar to the farmers’ market, you will need to work out an accurate price for each product you sell. Appendix 1 provides a sample pricing model.

**Payment:** As with the farmers’ market you need to ensure that you have a sufficient float to satisfy customer needs for change. If your business grows to a significant level you may also wish to consider credit card payments. You should, however, weigh up the benefit of this service to your customers against the fees charged.

**Insurance:** The minimum insurance requirements which a farm shop operator must consider include public liability, product liability and employers’ liability.

Marketing

**Promoting your business:** The focus of your marketing strategy is to attract the customer to your premises. You could advertise in a local newspaper or on a local radio station. Local media always welcome new stories about business developments in the region. If you can supply an exciting angle for the piece you will attract more time and attention from the media. Printing and distributing your own leaflets is also a useful way of promoting your business. Desktop publishing and modern printers make a great many options easily available to you in this regard. In a business like this, word of mouth will always be your strongest marketing tool and, therefore, you should encourage customers to tell their friends about your shop. Some farm shops have a mailing list of customers’ addresses and send newsletters plus other information throughout the year to promote new season crops and other developments on the farm.
Website: You may consider setting up a website to increase the awareness of your farm shop. This will allow you to reach a much wider audience and provide up-to-date information for both new and existing customers. You will even have the option of allowing customers to place orders on-line or e-mail you with queries. The website can also act as a reference point for media and other interested parties. Sites should be kept simple and updated frequently. E-mail accounts should be checked regularly.

Direct selling to local restaurants: Forging a relationship with a local restaurant for your product is a win-win situation. For the restaurant there is the prestige of being able to state a certain foodstuff is grown locally and even identified with a local farm. For your business, this is advertising of the most potent kind as people associate a pleasurable dining experience with your products and farm.

Seasonal excitement: The best time to take advantage of your status as a farm shop is when fruits or vegetables come into season and are harvested for the first time. Your marketing and promotional materials should be prepared in advance to maximise awareness and alert your customers. You may also find that your local radio station will give you some airtime if the new season of crops is widely anticipated and of particular quality. It is also a good time to allow customers to come and pick their own produce e.g. strawberries, raspberries and potatoes.
Key tips

- Consult your local Environmental Health Officer with regard to the relevant food safety requirements
- Get as much advice as you can in the earlier stages of developing your business
- Signage is crucial and should also be used as a marketing tool
- Opening hours should be regular and consistent
- Quality and freshness are key to the success of your business
- You should consider setting up a website to increase awareness of your farm shop
- Your marketing and promotional material could centre around the seasonality of fruits or vegetables
Section 9: Box schemes

What is a box scheme? In recent years, particularly in the organic sector, box schemes have become increasingly popular. A box scheme is typically a mixed box of fresh fruit and vegetables, sourced directly from the farm and sold to the customer for a fixed price. Some, more established box scheme operators now offer a wide range of other products including bread, cereals, tea and coffee which are locally sourced, organic, or fair trade, etc.

A number of different models exist but all are based around the central principal of delivering a box of fresh, locally grown, in-season and, in many cases, organic produce either directly to the customer’s home or to a central drop-off point. Box schemes may be run by an individual grower; a wholesaler; a company which buys in produce from the farmer; or consumer groups. Many schemes offer a range of box sizes to pick from and a number also offer customers the opportunity of choosing the contents of their box. If you are claiming organic status, it is imperative that you follow all relevant guidelines and have the necessary accreditation from the relevant certifying body.

Unlike the farmers’ market and the farm shop, customer interaction with regard to box schemes is typically low as, once the initial agreement is set up, contact is limited to the delivery of goods. The value of consumer feedback is not lessened as a result, however, and, if you are participating in a box scheme, you should establish some method of gauging the response of customers on a periodic basis.
There are many similarities in running a box scheme to participating in a farmers’ market or operating a farm shop. The following points, however, are more relevant to box scheme operations:

**Setting up a box scheme**

**Planning:** To set up a box scheme business you will need, aside from the obvious horticultural requirements, an appropriate place for packing, a holding area adjacent to the packing operation, suitable storage facilities and a cool area suitable for harvested crops. You should consult with the local planning authority/department in your area if any building construction or conversion is required.

**Production:** If your business is small and operated directly from the farm, you will probably be allocating about one day a week to packing the boxes. Good organisation and planning is needed to ensure a professional job. The first step is to decide, depending on demand and availability, the amount of each vegetable or fruit to harvest. The second step is to fill each of the boxes equally. Try to minimise the amount of packaging you use. Boxes, carrier bags and sacks are commonly employed. Re-use of packaging is generally welcomed by all participants for environmental reasons and vital for a small operation to keep costs down. You should try to use good quality packaging from the outset. Use labelling to encourage customers to return their boxes or bags each week. Remember, however, that a product must not be compromised or contaminated in any way through the re-use of packaging.
**Box options:** For your own organisational needs, do not over-complicate the amount of box options you offer. Simplicity is the key in every respect. Most operators of box schemes offer two or three different sizes – some to cater for one or two people, others to take into account the needs of a family.

**Delivery:** With increasing fuel costs, transport can be a significant expense, particularly in rural areas. Plan your routes carefully to reduce these costs. Some box schemes operate by arranging certain drop-off points where customers can then collect their goods. You may be able to make an arrangement with a local forecourt garage owner or other outlet to act as a central pick-up or collection point. In some instances, loyal customers of yours may even offer to take in product on behalf of neighbours.

**Working with your neighbours:** If you cannot provide a full range of vegetables you may consider working with neighbouring growers so that, as a combined pool, you can deliver as large a variety as possible. Some neighbours may be willing to share in the packing and distribution of the boxes while other growers will prefer to concentrate on the farming itself. You may also find that there are a number of artisan producers within the area who are producing added-value products like breads, jams, etc. who would also like to be part of the scheme. Very quickly, you may find that you are able to offer a surprisingly broad selection of goods from the locality.

**The product**

**Product origins:** If you are supplying product directly from your own farm then it will be very easy to supply traceability information. However, if you are sourcing product from other farms or if you are a wholesaler buying product from a number of producers and growers, it is important
that the customer be given information on product origin as well as details of the personalities behind the product.

**Availability:** Ideally, you should run a box scheme for twelve months of the year. However, as the growing season does not permit fruit and vegetables to be available all year round, box schemes often shut down for a few months, usually April to June, between the winter and summer crops. Customers who participate in the scheme will normally be aware of such seasonality and will sign up for the box scheme again, once new product becomes available. Obviously, if you have developed a wider product range, it will be much easier to supply the customer for the full twelve months of the year, even if the entire range is not available all of the time. This may be a more attractive proposition in terms of developing a sustainable business and in building a loyal customer base.

**Quality and freshness:** The operator of the box scheme has the ability to get the product to the customer within a very short time frame. This is usually less than 24 hours after harvesting, if the scheme is run directly by the farm. It is important that you maintain and promote this concept of quality and freshness at all times.

**Recipe information:** In the traditional shopping model, where the customer goes to the supermarket, they buy only what they require. However, with a box scheme, the operator of the scheme usually chooses the box mix, meaning that there is a possibility that the customer is supplied products which he or she may not be familiar with. Therefore, it is of critical importance that you have an ongoing programme of customer education and provide recipe tips and information. There are websites which you can use or refer people to, which are specifically designed to provide recipes for vegetable boxes, e.g. www.vegbox-recipes.co.uk.
**Likes and dislikes:** You will have to consider whether you will operate a ‘menu card’ which allows the customer to reject certain products from their box. For example, if a particular household does not like broccoli, will they have the option of having it excluded from their box?

**Substitutions:** If particular products are not available for a specified box (as opposed to a mixed box) you should agree the option of having predetermined substitutions with the customer. This is worth factoring into the initial contract with the customer as it eliminates the need to contact individuals in the event of a product not being available.

**Food safety**

**Hygiene:** Similar to the farmers’ market and farm shops, box schemes are considered a food business and your local Environmental Health Officer will advise you with regard to the necessary regulatory guidelines and standards.

**Financial matters/insurance**

**Price:** The pricing model will be similar to that of the farmers’ market and farm shop, although there are certain costs specific to box schemes which will need to be considered. A sample pricing model is outlined in Appendix 1.

**Payment:** Most customers will pay by cash and, in the earlier stages of business development, this will probably suit you. However, as your business grows, and particularly if you are delivering the boxes door-to-door, payment may not be possible at the time of delivery (e.g. box left with neighbour), so you may want to consider credit card payments so as to allow customers to pay in advance. You will also need to consider the costs that come with such a payment method.
Insurance: The minimum insurance requirements which a box scheme operator must consider include public liability, product liability and employers’ liability.

Marketing

Promoting your business: To be successful in your business venture, you will need to constantly communicate with and inform your customers. A regular newsletter with information about crops coming into season, recipe ideas, etc. is highly recommended. Some box schemes produce a welcome pack for new customers with a whole range of information to ensure that they are aware of: (1) the benefits of buying local organic produce; (2) seasonal information; (3) how to store fruit and vegetables; and (4) payment choices. You may also want to consider inviting people to come to the farm once a year for a farm walk, seasonal celebration or, indeed, a cookery class if you have adequate space to do so. It is vital that you stay in constant contact with your customers. Use the occasion of dropping off the box as an opportunity to get feedback with regard to your products.

How the customer can find you: As well as your own proactive marketing, you need to think through how a new customer will find you. Always brand your boxes with your contact details to assist in natural word of mouth. A website would be very useful, as would some door-to-door leafleting. You could also take a listing in the telephone directory or place an advert in the local newspaper.
Key tips

- Consult your local Environmental Health Officer with regard to the relevant food safety requirements
- Do not over-complicate the amount of box options you offer
- Plan your routes carefully so as to reduce costs
- Quality and freshness are key to the success of your business
- You could operate a 'menu card' system
- It is important to regularly communicate with, and inform, your customers
- It is important to brand your boxes with your contact details, which can assist in promoting your business
Farmers’ markets, farm shops and box schemes hark back to a more traditional world where the producer, seller and customer not only lived side by side but were usually personally known to each other. Today, such forms of selling represent an exciting new development in modern retailing and have created new business opportunities for people with a passion for food and, particularly, for those who wish to share their talents and energies with the broader community. For those who are about to embark on this exciting route to market, this guide has been designed not only to provide a clear-headed assessment of the various challenges you will confront, but also to deliver the positive message that your participation is encouraged and welcomed. This is a sector where the collective vision is created by many individual visions, and where those who love and have a keen interest in food can have a role to play in shaping and developing its future.
The following models provide guidelines which are designed to assist you in calculating a selling price for your product (N.B. Supplement € with £ for Northern Ireland). Please ensure that all costs are included in your price calculation. Your financial adviser will be able to assist you in this regard.

Some general guidelines
You will need to calculate all of the relevant costs for making one single unit of product so as to determine the selling price. To do this you will need to divide all costs by the total number of products you produce in a given period (e.g. over a month or week), so as to calculate the individual cost. The time taken to do this will be critical to the overall profitability of your business.
Model 1 – Farmers’ Markets

N.B. You will need to include all fixed and variable costs such as:

**Production costs:** These cover all costs which you incur while making the product e.g. you may have to get a bank loan to set up your kitchen/production unit. Don’t forget to allow for your own labour costs. You need to consider if a profit is to be factored in at production level or simply included in the overall selling price.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw material</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light/heat/power</td>
<td>€</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loan repayment</td>
<td>€</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hygiene/quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Packaging</td>
<td>€</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Gate Price</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Market costs:** These costs cover transporting the product to the farmers’ market and ultimately selling it. Don’t forget to include wages and other costs like insurance and a market fee. If you plan to run price promotions from time to time, you will need to build this into your overall pricing structure.

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Market fee</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/leaflets</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer bags</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product cost</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Selling price:** You will need to ensure that you are competitive in the marketplace. Make sure that you advise customers as to what makes your product different.

N.B. VAT is applicable to the selling price of certain goods. Your financial adviser will assist you in this regard.
### Model 2 – Farm Shops

N.B. You will need to include all fixed and variable costs such as:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw material/seed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light/heat/power</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinery costs</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan repayment</td>
<td>€</td>
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<td>Hygiene/quality</td>
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**Farm Gate Price**  €0.00

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shop costs:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shop fit out</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loan repayment</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light/heat/power</td>
<td>€</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/leaflets</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer bags</td>
<td>€</td>
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**Product cost**  €0.00

**Profit**  €

**Selling price**  €0.00

N.B. VAT is applicable to the selling price of certain goods. Your financial adviser will assist you in this regard.

**Production costs:** These cover all costs which you incur while growing or producing the product. You may have a cost of growing and harvesting the crop e.g. machinery, fuel and wages. Also remember to factor in any relevant loan repayments. You need to consider if a profit is to be factored in at production level or simply included in the overall selling price.

**Shop costs:** These costs cover the setting up and running of your farm shop e.g. you may have taken out a loan to assist with setting up your shop. You will have to pay for display units and relevant fit-out materials, as well as other costs such as insurance, leaflets, etc.

**Selling price:** Ensure that you deliver value for money and that all costs are included in the overall selling price.
Model 3 – Box Schemes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Production costs:</th>
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<td>Raw material/seed</td>
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<td>Wages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Light/heat/power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Machinery costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loan repayment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene/quality</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging e.g. boxes</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Delivery costs:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Van expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing/leaflets</td>
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<td>Wages</td>
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<td>Profit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling price</td>
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N.B. You will need to include all fixed and variable costs such as:

**Production costs:** These costs will be principally concerned with packing the boxes and the sourcing of ingredients for each. Also remember to factor in the purchasing costs of the boxes, as well as any loan repayments on machinery etc. You need to consider if a profit is to be factored in at production level or simply included in the overall selling price.

**Delivery costs:** You will probably have to provide a door-to-door delivery system; you will need to include all of the costs associated with this, from vehicle upkeep to wages. Marketing and advertising will also be critical to creating awareness of your scheme.

**Selling price:** In most box schemes the customer is charged a fixed price for each box. You need to ensure that you have built sufficient profit into your overall selling price.

N.B. VAT is applicable to the selling price of certain goods. Your financial adviser will assist you in this regard.
## Republic of Ireland based contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Web Page</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland</td>
<td>01 2961400</td>
<td><a href="http://www.craftbutchers.ie">www.craftbutchers.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@craftbutchers.ie">info@craftbutchers.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bord Bia</td>
<td>01 6685155</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bordbia.ie">www.bordbia.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@bordbia.ie">info@bordbia.ie</a> <a href="mailto:vantage@bordbia.ie">vantage@bordbia.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bord Iascaigh Mhara</td>
<td>01 2144100</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bim.ie">www.bim.ie</a></td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgestone Guide</td>
<td>027 61186</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bridgestoneguides.com">www.bridgestoneguides.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:estragon@eircom.net">estragon@eircom.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Statistics Office</td>
<td>021 4535000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cso.ie">www.cso.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:webmaster@cso.ie">webmaster@cso.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>City and County Enterprise Boards</td>
<td>01 6312121</td>
<td><a href="http://www.entemp.ie/enterprise/local">www.entemp.ie/enterprise/local</a></td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comhar LEADER na hEireann</td>
<td>071 9646186</td>
<td><a href="http://www.irishleadernetwork.org">www.irishleadernetwork.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:cle@eircom.net">cle@eircom.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Companies Registration Office</td>
<td>01 8045200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cro.ie">www.cro.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@cro.ie">info@cro.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cork Free Choice Group</td>
<td>021 7330178</td>
<td><a href="http://www.corkfreechoice.com">www.corkfreechoice.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:carolinerobinson@eircom.net">carolinerobinson@eircom.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>County Councils</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.psi.gov.ie/local-authorities/county-councils">www.psi.gov.ie/local-authorities/county-councils</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demeter Standards Ltd</td>
<td>056 7754214</td>
<td><a href="http://www.demeter.ie">www.demeter.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:bdaai@indigo.ie">bdaai@indigo.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food</td>
<td>01 6072000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.ie">www.agriculture.gov.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@agriculture.gov.ie">info@agriculture.gov.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dept of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs</td>
<td>01 6473000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pobail.ie">www.pobail.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:eolas@pobail.ie">eolas@pobail.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dept of Enterprise, Trade and Employment</td>
<td>01 6312121</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dept of Finance</td>
<td>01 6767571</td>
<td><a href="http://www.finance.gov.ie">www.finance.gov.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:webmaster@finance.gov.ie">webmaster@finance.gov.ie</a></td>
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<td>Dept of Health and Children</td>
<td>01 6354000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dohc.ie">www.dohc.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@health.gov.ie">info@health.gov.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>DIT Food Product Development Centre</td>
<td>01 8146080</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fpdc.dit.ie">www.fpdc.dit.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:fpdc@dit.ie">fpdc@dit.ie</a></td>
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<td>Enterprise Ireland</td>
<td>01 8082000</td>
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<td>Eurotoque</td>
<td>01 6779995</td>
<td><a href="http://www.eurotoquesirl.org">www.eurotoquesirl.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@eurotoquesirl.org">info@eurotoquesirl.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Failte Ireland</td>
<td>1890 525525</td>
<td><a href="http://www.failteireland.ie">www.failteireland.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@failteireland.ie">info@failteireland.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>FAS Training &amp; Employment Authority</td>
<td>01 6070500</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fas.ie">www.fas.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@fas.ie">info@fas.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Safety Authority of Ireland</td>
<td>1890 336677</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fsaie">www.fsaie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@fsai.ie">info@fsai.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Food Ireland</td>
<td>053 9158693</td>
<td><a href="http://www.goodfoodireland.ie">www.goodfoodireland.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@goodfoodireland.ie">info@goodfoodireland.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Safety Authority</td>
<td>1890 289389</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hsa.ie">www.hsa.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:wcu@hsa.ie">wcu@hsa.ie</a></td>
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<td>Health Service Executives (HSEs)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.irlgov.ie">www.irlgov.ie</a></td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
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<td>IBEC</td>
<td>01 6051500</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ibec.ie">www.ibec.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@ibec.ie">info@ibec.ie</a></td>
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>International Fund for Ireland</td>
<td>01 4780655</td>
<td><a href="http://www.internationalfundforireland.com">www.internationalfundforireland.com</a></td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Operators, Market and Street Traders</td>
<td>01 8302271</td>
<td><a href="http://www.eventsmarketsireland.com">www.eventsmarketsireland.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@eventsmarketsireland.com">info@eventsmarketsireland.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish Commercial Horticultural Association</td>
<td>01 4500266</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ifa.ie">www.ifa.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:postmaster@ifa.ie">postmaster@ifa.ie</a></td>
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<td>Irish Country Womens Association</td>
<td>01 6680453</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ica.ie">www.ica.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>01 6622755</td>
<td><a href="http://www.isme.ie">www.isme.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@isme.ie">info@isme.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Standards Authority of Ireland</td>
<td>01 8073800</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:nsai@nsai.ie">nsai@nsai.ie</a></td>
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<td>Organic Trust Limited</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:info@slowfoodireland.com">info@slowfoodireland.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Firms Association</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.sfa.ie">www.sfa.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@sfa.ie">info@sfa.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Food Technology Centre (St Angela's College)</td>
<td>071 9150734</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thefoodcentre.ie">www.thefoodcentre.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@thefoodcentre.ie">info@thefoodcentre.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teagasc</td>
<td>059 9170200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.teagasc.ie">www.teagasc.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:web@teagasc.org">web@teagasc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Irish Apple Farmers Association</td>
<td>052 41459</td>
<td><a href="http://www.theapplefarm.com">www.theapplefarm.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:con@theapplefarm.com">con@theapplefarm.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Competition Authority</td>
<td>01 8045400</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tca.ie">www.tca.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@tca.ie">info@tca.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Udaras na Gaeltachta</td>
<td>091 503100</td>
<td><a href="http://www.udaras.ie">www.udaras.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:eolas@udaras.ie">eolas@udaras.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>University College Cork</td>
<td>021 4903178</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ucc.ie">www.ucc.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:fitu@ucc.ie">fitu@ucc.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Development Commission</td>
<td>094 9861441</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wdc.ie">www.wdc.ie</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@wdc.ie">info@wdc.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ascisco Ltd</td>
<td>0044 1173145000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.soilassociation.org">www.soilassociation.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:DP@soilassociation.org">DP@soilassociation.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association</td>
<td>0044 1314781201</td>
<td><a href="http://www.biodynamic.org.uk">www.biodynamic.org.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:office@biodynamic.org.uk">office@biodynamic.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>British Cheese Awards</td>
<td>0044 1993823215</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thecheeseweb.com">www.thecheeseweb.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:trade@thecheeseweb.com">trade@thecheeseweb.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>British Nutrition Foundation</td>
<td>0044 2074046504</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nutrition.org.uk">www.nutrition.org.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:postbox@nutrition.org.uk">postbox@nutrition.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Agriculture, Food &amp; Rural Enterprise</td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cafre.ac.uk">www.cafre.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
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<td>Companies Registry</td>
<td>0044 8456048888</td>
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<td>Country Markets Ltd</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.country-markets.co.uk">www.country-markets.co.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@country-markets.co.uk">info@country-markets.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
<td>0044 2890524999</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dardni.gov.uk">www.dardni.gov.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:dardhelpline@dardni.gov.uk">dardhelpline@dardni.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</td>
<td>0044 2072386951</td>
<td><a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk">www.defra.gov.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk">helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Enterprise Northern Ireland</td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.enterpriseni.com">www.enterpriseni.com</a></td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
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<td>FARMA</td>
<td>0044 8454588420</td>
<td><a href="http://www.farma.org.uk">www.farma.org.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:justask@farma.org.uk">justask@farma.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink Federation</td>
<td>0044 2078362460</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fdf.org.uk">www.fdf.org.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:webmaster@fdf.org.uk">webmaster@fdf.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>Food &amp; Drink Training Council</td>
<td>0044 2890329269</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fdtc.co.uk">www.fdtc.co.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:karenmartin@fdtc.co.uk">karenmartin@fdtc.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food From Britain</td>
<td>0044 2072335111</td>
<td><a href="http://www.foodfrombritain.com">www.foodfrombritain.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@foodfrombritain.com">info@foodfrombritain.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.food.gov.uk">www.food.gov.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:infofsani@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk">infofsani@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Guild of Fine Food Retailers</td>
<td>0044 1963824464</td>
<td><a href="http://www.finefoodworld.co.uk">www.finefoodworld.co.uk</a></td>
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<td>Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland</td>
<td>0044 2890243249</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hseni.gov.uk">www.hseni.gov.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:hseni@detini.gov.uk">hseni@detini.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Institute of Grocery Distribution</td>
<td>0044 1923857141</td>
<td><a href="http://www.igd.com">www.igd.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:igd@igd.com">igd@igd.com</a></td>
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<td>Intertrade Ireland</td>
<td>0044 2830834100</td>
<td><a href="http://www.intertradeireland.com">www.intertradeireland.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@intertradeireland.com">info@intertradeireland.com</a></td>
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<td>Invest Northern Ireland</td>
<td>0044 2890239090</td>
<td><a href="http://www.investni.com">www.investni.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Association of British Market Authorities</td>
<td>0044 1691680713</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nabma.com">www.nabma.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:nabma@nabma.com">nabma@nabma.com</a></td>
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<td>National Market Traders Federation</td>
<td>0044 1226749021</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmtf.co.uk">www.nmtf.co.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:enquiries@nmtf.co.uk">enquiries@nmtf.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Business Information</td>
<td>0044 8000270639</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk">www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk</a></td>
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<td>Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:info@nifda.co.uk">info@nifda.co.uk</a></td>
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## Northern Ireland/UK based contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<td>Northern Ireland Local Government Council</td>
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<td>Northern Ireland Tourist Board</td>
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<td>Organic Farmers and Growers Ltd</td>
<td>0044 1743440512</td>
<td><a href="http://www.organicfarmers.org.uk">www.organicfarmers.org.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@organicfarmers.org.uk">info@organicfarmers.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organic Food Federation</td>
<td>0044 1760720444</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Welsh Food Certification Ltd</td>
<td>0044 1970636688</td>
<td><a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic">www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:alan.starkey@wales.gsi.gov.uk">alan.starkey@wales.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Payments Agency</td>
<td>0044 1189583626</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rpa.gov.uk">www.rpa.gov.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:enquiries@rpa.gsi.gov.uk">enquiries@rpa.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scottish Organic Producers Association</td>
<td>00 44 1313356600</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sopa.org.uk">www.sopa.org.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:sopa@sfqc.co.uk">sopa@sfqc.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Soil Association Certification Ltd</td>
<td>0044 1179142412</td>
<td><a href="http://www.soilassociation.org/certification">www.soilassociation.org/certification</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:prod.cert@soilassociation.org">prod.cert@soilassociation.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taste of Ulster</td>
<td>0044 2890241010</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tasteofulster.org">www.tasteofulster.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@tasteofulster.org">info@tasteofulster.org</a></td>
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<td>UK LEADER &amp; Network</td>
<td>0044 20737830830</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ukleader.org.uk">www.ukleader.org.uk</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@ukleader.org.uk">info@ukleader.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulster Farmers Union</td>
<td>0044 2890370222</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ufuni.org">www.ufuni.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@ufuhg.com">info@ufuhg.com</a></td>
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<td>Vegbox-Recipes</td>
<td>0044 1285869152</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vegbox-recipes.co.uk">www.vegbox-recipes.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Refer to Website</td>
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