



“Real Farmers, Real Local” VERIFIED Farmers’ Market Vendor



CRITERIA

Mission Statement

Our verified farmers’ market vendor concept offers the local Ontario producer easy access to an urban, diverse marketplace and a level playing field, where resellers are neither welcomed nor permitted. Our vendors will be bona-fide producer-based and will champion the cause of **real** farmers and producers across the province. **We are firm believers in building community through the connection of the real farmer to the urban marketplace!**

1. Background

Research shows that customers come to farmers’ markets believing that they are purchasing “farm fresh” fruit and vegetables from the farmer that grew them.

During the summer of 2006, it became very clear to Farmers’ Markets Ontario (FMO), that something needed to be done to combat the growing number of resellers that had infiltrated and in some cases, were dominating, some of the markets in the Greater Toronto area. Farmers were being literally squeezed out of existing markets by resellers who continued to glut the market with food terminal sell-offs and in some cases, told there was no room for them to sell at market. FMO studied the Greenmarket program in New York City and the State of California Certification program where all farmers are verified and where all vendors at market are “the real thing”.

Discussions were held with the provincial government, the decision was taken to invest significant time and money in authenticating our market farmers. FMO is hopeful that we will start a trend where only real farmers with their own products will be found at markets across Ontario. Once discriminating shoppers recognize the goodness and value of the “real thing” and once word spreads, it is hoped that all markets will do what’s

right and that they will rid themselves of vendors who don't have a dime invested in a farm.

2. Objectives

Our concept supports and nurtures the real farmer by facilitating access and a direct link to the health-conscious, environmentally-aware consumer resulting in economic prosperity for bona-fide farmers and producers.

3. Who Can Apply as a “Verified Local” Vendor?

All Ontario bona-fide, conventional and organic growers and producers may apply. As part of the initial application, all prospective vendors will be required to submit a full list of the produce/products to be sold and indicate when these items will be available for market.

All farms will be inspected by an independent farm inspector, hired by FMO. There is **zero tolerance** for the reselling of products that have not been grown by the vendor.

4. Farm Inspections & Verification

All vendors who wish to be “Verified Local” will be subject to farm inspections and verification. There will be **no** exceptions. These farm inspections will be conducted yearly and will form an integral part of your application process and documentation.

The Verified Farmers’ Market Vendor Application Form includes farm identity through the Farm Business Registration (FBR) system, the number of acres proposed for each crop, the land base verified by municipal tax assessments and/or rental agreements, and expenses related to farm supply purchases (fertilizer, seed, nursery stock, etc.). This documentation will establish that the farm is a bona-fide operation and will enable a reasonability test – that is to say that the items sold are consistent in quantity with the number of acres proposed. Where a farm has certification with an organization such as LFP, OCPP or OCIA, that certification will be recognized by FMO.

5. Product Categories

Primary Products

Fresh/unprocessed fruit, vegetables, cut flowers, plants and nuts; honey and maple syrup; shell eggs; meat (fresh and frozen); fish (fresh and frozen); herbs; mushrooms.

Secondary Products

The secondary products must meet the following three conditions:

- The “defining ingredient” must be from (produced on) the farmer’s own farm
- The value must be added from the farm (the case of meat products was discussed, where the value might be added at a site off-the-farm)
- The product must be in compliance with all regulations and there must be evidence of appropriate inspection (by health and/or other authorities)

By signing a compliance agreement with FMO where guarantees are provided as to the vendor’s authenticity as a farmer, the vendor acknowledges that false or misleading statements shall constitute fraud and subject to the appropriate legal ramifications and/or remedies.

Farmers are urged to apply only if they feel confident about meeting our Criteria. If in doubt, please call FMO at 1-800-387-3276. Anyone who does not qualify but knowingly applies, causing an unnecessary farm inspection visit, will be expected to pay for the cost of the failed inspection, estimated at \$250.