

## FACT SHEET: TIPS FOR TRANSITION TO AN AUTHENTIC FARMERS' MARKET

A Farmers' Market is a predominantly fresh food market that operates regularly within a community, at a focal public location that provides a suitable environment for farmers and specialty food producers to sell farm-origin and associated value-added specialty foods for human consumption, and plant products, directly to customers.

AUSTRALIAN FARMERS' MARKETS ASSOCIATION (AFMA)



*Carriageworks Farmers' Market, Redfern NSW*

Aspiring and enthusiastic farmers' market operators may commence with poorly considered operational guidelines or over time relax their market rules, diverting from the original intent. For example, away from the recommended best practice **Model Rules** advocated by AFMA. This can result in poor trading and even market failures, and a farmers' market that does not represent the thriving, authentic and successful market originally anticipated.

Without clear boundaries and criteria that determine eligibility for farmers' market stallholder entry there can be numerous challenges associated with stallholder requests, varying committee discretions and community expectations. All of these can result in considerable stress for farmers' market advocates and operators and their governance members.

Notwithstanding, AFMA is available to support farmers' market enterprises in the start-up phase or aiming to transition to an authentic model. AFMA respects the autonomy of market organisations and is available to offer counsel for markets seeking to transition, and/ or retain or change their structure and brand, according to the style of the market.

AFMA and its state representatives advocate the application of 'farmers' market' to authentic farmers' markets that adhere to the definition above. Community groups operating an existing farmers' market are encouraged to transition (according to AFMA Model Rules) to an authentic farmers' market model.

Governance entities that trade under the farmers' market brand when they are clearly a 'Community Market' or 'Makers Market' are encouraged to transition to a name change, ceasing to trade as a farmers' market.

An authentic farmers' market has the following **core characteristics**:

- Local food and produce focus
- Local/ regional produce
- No resellers
- No craft
- All stallholders from the farm or an artisan value-adding food business
- Proficient management and governance
- Regular trading cycle
- Community engagement programs
- Incorporated Association status (there are some exceptions)

Authentic farmers' markets benefit from rigour and commitment in meeting these core characteristics, which can bring the following **benefits**:

- Connection to the national farmers' market brand, its values and networks
- Distinction from other expressions of a community market
- Access to consumers seeking authentic paddock-plate produce shopping
- Access to funding and in-kind community support
- Incorporated Associations typically attract savings on public liability insurance
- Opportunity for awards/ promotional collaborations



Transitioning can be challenging so here are some **tips to help you with the process.**

### **STAGE 1: FIRST STEPS TO TRANSITION**

- Have a clear understanding/rationale as to why you wish to adjust operations of your market guidelines and transition to a farmers' market.
- Reach a collective agreement within your governing body that your market needs to take the direction of authenticity.
- Ensure this is recorded in meeting minutes.
- If your authenticity has diminished over time, identify as a group why your farmers' market's authenticity levels have lapsed and factor this into revised guidelines.
- Review your operational guidelines to ensure your stallholder eligibility criteria are clearly identified and aligned as closely to the Charter as possible.
- Seek full committee endorsement of the revised guidelines and record in meeting minutes.
- Write up the transition plan and make available to all stakeholders.
- Inform your Local Government Authority of your transition plan so they may be prepared for any public or media comment directed to them as a transition can be controversial and draw media interest.

### **STAGE 2: TRANSITIONING PROCEDURES**

- Identify a transition time frame for the process and implementation of actions to reach authenticity. One full season is reasonable i.e. winter, summer, autumn or spring. Alternatively, you could choose a six-month period.
- Communicate the transition goal to all stallholders outlining revised operational guidelines, stallholder criteria and time line/s.
- Offer alternative 'market' options for ineligible stallholders.
- Offer support to stallholders wishing to transition to authenticity in order to remain a stallholder. AFMA is available to provide objective advice around this.
- Couch the decision to transition, as a committee decision in order to protect the market manager and/or committee members from personal advances from stallholders or members of the public.
- Consider whether you need to re-brand (slogan, logo, and name) to support your farmers' market's new identity.
- Use all media platforms to showcase your transition and how this will occur.
- Create a draft media release stating the rationale and facts in readiness for media interest.
- Set a review date for example three to six months into the transitioning.
- If you have the resources, seek feedback from your remaining stallholders to assess the impact on their sales as a result of the transition phase. AFMA can assist.
- Celebrate a successful transition with your governance body and stallholders.

### STAGE 3: WHAT INDICATES A 'SUCCESSFUL' TRANSITION?

The following measures can indicate a **successful transition process** and outcome.

- Take home sales remain steady or increase for producer stallholders.
- Customer numbers increase.
- Customer attendance frequency increases.
- Customer average spend remains stable or rises.
- Increased personal exchange between stallholder and customer.
- Stallholder applications increase.
- Stallholder turnover increases.
- Stallholder trading frequency increases.
- Community liaisons evolve.
- Competitive local non-authentic markets experience reduced attendance or the competitive market closes.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION:

[www.farmersmarkets.org.au](http://www.farmersmarkets.org.au)

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