Harvest²Cuisine

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From Farmers’ Markets to the Wider Marketplace

Understand the channels

“Wider marketplace” means additional ways products reach buyers. It does not mean every producer should expand or that one channel is better. A small direct-sales model may be the right long-term fit. Each channel changes the work, relationships, and obligations involved.

A plain-language map

Direct-to-consumer: the producer sells to the person who will use the product, such as at a market or through an appropriate direct ordering arrangement. Retail: a shop sells products to end users; the shop may buy from a producer or another supplier.

Wholesale: products are sold to business buyers, commonly for resale or use in their operations. A distributor handles movement and sales of products under its own arrangements. A food hub may coordinate aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified products from multiple producers.

Terms do not describe every arrangement

Some organizations perform several roles. Ask who buys the product, who owns it at each point, who transports it, and who handles unsold goods. A consignment arrangement, for example, can differ from an outright purchase; read the actual terms.

Reference: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Local Food Directories: https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-directories-listings

Educational concepts and recordkeeping only; not an offer, business opportunity, income promise, or substitute for professional advice. Requirements depend on product, process, location, facility, and sales channel. Confirm current requirements with the responsible agencies before acting.

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What changes beyond the stall?

Product and order expectations

A business buyer may ask for a product specification, consistent pack size, minimum quantities, lead time, availability information, or a delivery window. These are questions to clarify, not universal requirements. Do not agree to quantities or dates before assessing your capacity.

Records and communication

Clarify product identification, lot or batch records where applicable, invoices, ordering contacts, complaints, and procedures for a product problem. Identify which food-safety, labeling, traceability, or other requirements apply with the responsible authority and buyer.

Work and cost categories

Compare packaging, preparation, storage, transport, delivery time, administration, fees, rejected goods, and payment timing. A selling price alone does not describe the whole arrangement. Use actual quotes and your own records rather than assumed margins or promised income.

Questions before an agreement

☐ Who places orders, and when is an order confirmed?

☐ What product specifications and documents are needed?

☐ Who handles delivery, damage, returns, and unsold goods?

☐ When is payment due, and which charges can be deducted?

☐ What happens if supply changes or either party stops?

Terms I need explained before deciding

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A hypothetical comparison

A small grower sells herbs at a weekly market. A nearby shop asks about a standing order. The grower does not assume this is the next required step; first they compare the work and their own goals.

Option A: continue market sales

The grower values direct customer conversations and flexible weekly quantities. They still account for stall preparation, market attendance, transport, unsold stock, and the market's rules.

Option B: explore the shop request

The grower asks about the shop's pack sizes, delivery timing, acceptance standards, payment terms, and documentation. They check whether they can meet these requests consistently and confirm applicable requirements. They may accept, negotiate, defer, or decline.

A useful decision

The decision could be to stay with the market, seek more information, test a limited arrangement if appropriate, or pursue another channel. No option guarantees sales or profit. A commercial kitchen is relevant only if a product and process call for a suitable production setting; it is not an automatic bridge to wider sales.

Find guidance for the actual product

Consult local Cooperative Extension, the appropriate food regulator, and qualified advisers for specific questions. FDA's starting overview: https://www.fda.gov/food/food-industry/how-start-food-business

Our goal / capacity limit / question still unanswered

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Sales channel comparison worksheet

Product concept / location / date

Question	Current channel	Channel being considered

Prompts: buyer and order size; pack and label; production fit; storage and delivery; records and approvals; full work and cost categories.

Information source / contact / date confirmed

Decision to explore, defer, decline, or revisit / reason

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