

BARBOUR COUNTY COMMUNITY GARDEN MARKET POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This document is a resource for both current and potential farmers, processors, and vendors working with the Barbour County Community Garden Market through its consignment-style farmers' market and through its aggregation center. It is a living document, summarizing basic operations, as well as detailing policies and procedures to help guide vendors in meeting the demands of the Community Garden Market. While much of the following content is common practice within the realm of food aggregation and distribution, the Community Garden Market has developed its own set of unique operations requiring specific standards that help us build efficiency and preserve quality from farm to consumer.

PART 1 – INTRODUCTIONS

THE COMMUNITY GARDEN MARKET

The Community Garden Market, operated by Heart and Hand House, Inc., is a local foods market with a mission to increase year-round sales and access to quality food and farm products sourced locally. The market facilitates the sale of local product to the community through a consignment-style farmers' market and to institutions and business consumers through an aggregation center. We collaborate with farmers and food processors in our region to provide the community with an array of the highest quality foods. The market is committed to cultivating a local economy that sustains healthy food, farms, land and people.

The Community Garden Market's goal is to strengthen the relationship between agricultural producers and the community. We believe in "community supported agriculture" where farmers and the community know, support and nourish one another. We provide 100% transparency and traceability, sharing the stories of our farms and processors and offering the community assurance that they are receiving the freshest, healthiest and safest food available.

The Community Garden Market is committed to our farmers and processors. We offer a stable market, with fair pricing, and provide information and networking opportunities to help them access the technical assistance and support they need to grow and process more food, diversify production, develop specialty products, and push the limits of West Virginia's growing season.

HEART AND HAND HOUSE, INC.

Heart and Hand House, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) corporation, founded in 1965, and affiliated with the WV Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. It exists because of the clear Christian mandate to minister to the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs of in-crisis, low-income people of Barbour County and its immediate surroundings. In keeping with Heart and Hand's overall mission, the Barbour County Community Garden Market was established in 1992 to provide a way for low-income families to earn additional money by growing extra vegetables in their garden and selling the surplus. While the market is open to all local producers and customers, regardless of income, food access for low-income families is particularly supported through the acceptance of SNAP EBT and WV Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons.

PART 2 – POLICIES & PROCEDURES

General Requirements

The Community Garden Market works with a diverse range of vendors, both farmers and food processors, comprising all levels of experience and scale. We prioritize working with vendors that are local, those using good agricultural practices, and those who can provide the highest level of quality, sustainability and service. In addition, communication and engagement from our vendors is critical in order for the Community Garden Market to uphold our commitment to farmers, food processors and the community.

Below you will find a list of general requirements for all vendors supplying product to the Community Garden Market, followed by a more detailed description of market vendor policies and procedures. These requirements are necessary for us to maintain product quality, service and a business that is transparent and accountable. All market vendors must verify they will meet these requirements by reviewing the Food Safety Best Practices and signing an annual Producer Agreement. General vendor requirements include:

- Deliver product that, to the best of your knowledge, is safe for human consumption.
- Follow all required state and federal regulations, including food safety and product labeling requirements.
- Review the Community Garden Market Food Safety Best Practices.
- Deliver product in routinely cleaned transport vehicles and maintain proper product temperatures.
- Deliver product that meets market product labeling, grading and packaging standards.
- Agree to the Community Garden Market Product Refusal Policy.
- Attend annual vendor meetings (1-2 meetings per year).
- Provide logo, contact information, business description, photos, website and links to social media.
- Engage in market outreach and marketing efforts, as needed, to help us tell your story.
- Attend market-related events.

Pricing

Our goal is to create a pricing structure that allows the Community Garden Market to maintain a viable business while providing fair and competitive prices to vendors. The market manager will set prices in consultation with the vendor. If after a reasonable amount of time fresh produce has not sold, the market manager will at his/her discretion lower the price if necessary. If not sold at the discounted price the market manager will dispose of produce via composting or donation to Heart and Hand's Nutrition Program. Vendors who do not want their prices lowered or the produce to be disposed of, will pick up their produce within three days of delivery to the market.

Deliveries

Producers should deliver product to the Community Garden Market facility, located at 107 South Main Street, Philippi, WV. The facility is equipped with refrigerated, frozen and dry storage space. Market staff will provide a copy of a written receipt to vendors at the time product is delivered.

Receiving Hours

Receiving hours for the Community Garden Market are weekdays before 3:00 p.m. (Deliveries for aggregated sales must be made to the Community Garden Market facility by the designated receiving cut-off time established by the coordinator each week.) All vendors must deliver to the Community Garden Market facility and must check in product with market staff to confirm quantities delivered and that product meets quality and labeling standards. Please locate market staff when you deliver. After-hours deliveries may be accommodated by making prior arrangements with market staff.

Product Refusal

Vendors are required to deliver according to the Community Garden Market product quality standard (food safety, grading, packaging and labeling). All products that do not meet these standards will be subject to refusal. Product can be refused by the Community Garden Market staff upon delivery or within a 24-hour period after delivery. If product is refused, the vendor may choose to replace the product with one that meets market product quality standards by the daily receiving cut off time.

Billing & Payment

Items are sold through the Community Garden Market on a consignment basis. The market will collect the sales price placed on each product (along with applicable sales tax), retain 20% for overhead costs, and pay the remaining 80% to the producer on a monthly basis. Producer payments will be made by check within 10 business days of the end of each month and delivered via U.S. mail, except when a producer's earnings are less than \$5; in that case, the producer will be asked to stop by the market for direct payment. Any questions about payment for consigned sales should be directed to the Community Garden Market manager.

Vendors supplying product for aggregated sales should invoice the Community Garden Market, preferably on the day of delivery. Invoices may be submitted upon delivery, by mail or by email {gardenmarket@heartandhandhouse.org}. If an invoice is not submitted upon delivery, a packing list must be provided with each delivery for record of what has been received. Invoices must contain the following information:

- Date of billing
- Vendor Name
- Vendor contact information
- Address for payment
- Product and quantity delivered
- Price per unit
- Total cost

Invoices for product sold through the aggregation center will be paid on the 15th or 30th of each month, depending on when the invoices are received. Any questions regarding billing and payment should be directed to the aggregation center buyer.

Ordering (for Aggregated Sales)

The aggregation center buyer confirms orders weekly with vendors to verify availability. If a vendor is unable to meet their commitment, the aggregation center buyer will seek out a replacement and make

purchases in real time. It is best practice for vendors to offer a weekly or bi-weekly availability list to the aggregation center buyer to communicate current availability for real time purchasing.

Part 3 – PRODUCT QUALITY STANDARDS

The Community Garden Market is committed to offering our customers with the highest quality food – fresh, healthy and safe. All product supplied to the Community Garden Market must meet market product quality standards including food safety, grading, packaging and container labeling as outlined below.

Food Safety

Vendors selling product to the Community Garden Market are expected to use best practices to ensure food safety when handling and distributing products to the Community Garden Market. By reviewing the Community Garden Market Food Safety Best Practices, vendors agree to deliver product that, to the best of their knowledge, is safe for human consumption and maintained at proper temperatures up to delivery. Vendors must follow all required state and federal food safety regulations and provide proof of certification to the Community Garden Market (where appropriate), as well as properly labeled product as required by specified regulations. Vendors are categorized and regulated based on the products being produced. Market vendors generally fall into two categories: produce farmer and food processor.

The Community Garden Market does not require produce farmers to hold any food safety licenses; however, we do require them to review the Community Garden Market Food Safety Best Practices for their operation on an annual basis. We encourage all produce farmers to have a comprehensive food safety plan. Farmers can refer to USDA Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices Audit Verification Program to develop, implement and maintain a proper food safety plan.

Food processors fall into several categories and are regulated by a number of state and federal agencies. Food processing categories include meat and poultry products, dairy products and all other food products. The Community Garden Market requires that all food processors adhere to the appropriate regulations based on their product. Please see the Farmers Market Vendor Guide, prepared by the WV Department of Health and Human Resources, for additional information regarding West Virginia food processors. (Available online at <http://smallfarmcenter.ext.wvu.edu/r/download/36641>; paper copy available on request.)

Grading

Crops sold through the Community Garden Market will be sorted and marketed based on appearance, size, firmness, cleanliness, etc. The Community Garden Market has adapted U.S. Grade Standards provided by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to develop a set of product standards market vendors. In general, the Community Garden Market strives for product to meet U.S. No. 1 grade standards, meaning a specific crop must be of similar varietal characteristics, fresh and/or firm, fairly well shaped and colored, fairly clean, and free from rot, decay and damage. For more details on USDA grade standards visit: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/Standards> (paper copy available on request.)

Packaging

The Community Garden Market has guidelines regarding packaging, including acceptable containers and appropriate case sizes. **All product delivered to the Community Garden Market must be in a clean, washed container.** Acceptable containers include reusable plastic containers (RPC), wax and fiberboard boxes, plastic totes, plastic mesh and plastic vented bags, and bulk bins. Case sizes are specific to each product.

Container Labeling (for Aggregated Sales)

The Community Garden Market strives to follow WVDA product labeling guidelines. At minimum, labels need to include the vendor name, product (arugula, beets, carrots, jam, etc.), packing date and the count and/or weight (24 count, 50 pounds, etc.).

Part 4 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

The Community Garden Market is committed to assist in providing all vendors with the resources they need to have successful, viable, strong businesses.

In general, we offer vendors a range of support and services, including aggregation, distribution, sales and marketing. We also offer vendors access to new markets and pass along market information, including market demand, trends and needs. This information serves as a resource for our vendors, enabling them to increase production, develop new products and meet evolving requirements for pricing, packaging, labeling, and food safety.

As part of the WV Farmer's Market Association, we are connected to a diverse and knowledgeable network of professionals and serve as a link to statewide resources for farmers and food processors.