Do I Need a License?

Find out the answer before you start selling

It's a Vendor Responsibility

It is ultimately the responsibility of each vendor to research and secure any necessary license. Start by contacting your County Health Department. The Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) oversees Iowa's food code. Locally, county health departments inspect and award licenses to businesses. "A vendor who offers a product for sale at a farmers market shall have the sole responsibility to obtain and maintain any license or sell or distribute such products." - Code of Iowa, Sec. 137F8

No License Required to Sell (1-3):

Farmers Market licensing can be complicated. Don't hesitate to contact the Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) with any questions.

1) Fruits & Vegetables

Whole and uncut fresh fruit and vegetables may be sold at a farmers market to consumers without the vendor being licensed as a food establishment at the market. Once cut, fruits and vegetables may be considered "potentially hazardous foods." For example: Melons, once cut, have to be held below 41°F. If these fruits or vegetables are offered as samples, the vendor would have to keep them under temperature control and receive a license from DIA.

2) Baked Goods

Properly labeled baked goods which are non-potentially hazardous or shelf-stable bakery products (non-perishable items that do not require refrigeration for food safety reasons) can be sold without a license. The term "baked goods" is limited to: breads, cakes, donuts, pastries, buns, rolls, cookies, biscuits, and pies (excluding meat pies). Pies that require temperature control once they have been prepared are a "potentially hazardous food."

3) Shelf-stable Foods

Prepackaged, shelf-stable food products such as honey, jams, jellies, or dried noodles may be sold at a farmers market without a license. These products still require a label, which must include: 1) name of product, 2) a list of ingredients, 3) name and address of where the food is prepared, and 4) net weight, volume, or numerical count. Questions about "homestyle" canned goods should be directed to the Department of Inspections and Appeals.

License Reference Guide
For Products Sold at the Farmers Market

Food/Item Being Sold	Sales Tax? ✓=Yes	Licenses or Certification Required									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cut Fruit & Vegetables		1									
Whole & Uncut Fruit and Vegetables		*No License or Certification Required*									
Bakery Products (breads, cakes, donuts, pastries, buns, rolls, cookies, biscuits)						5					
Refrigerated Bakery Items		1	2								
Jams and Jellies		*No License Needed if Standard is Met; Contact DIA*									
Pickled Foods		1	2								
Fermented Foods		1	2								
Meat and Poultry (A,D)		1									10
Dairy Products (B,D)		1			4			7			
Cultivated Mushrooms		*No License or Certification Required*									
Wild-Harvested Morel Mushrooms		1		3							
Alcoholic Beverages	✓									9	
Soaps	✓										
Art and Crafts	✓										
Inedible Decorative Gourds	✓										
Flowers, Seedlings and Potted Plants	✓										
Hot Prepared Food	✓		2		4						
Fresh Shell Eggs (C)		*No License or Certification Required*									
Seafood (A,D)		*Iowa DNR Aquaculture Unit & Other Licenses May be Required*									
Honey (Pure & Unflavored)		*No License or Certification Required*									
Pet Products	✓										
Dried Noodles		*No License Needed if Noodles are Fully Dried*									
Maple Syrup		*No License or Certification Required*									

Meat & Poultry (A): Meats must be processed in a USDA or state licensed and inspected plant. Each package must have either the USDA or state inspection stamp. A Warehouse License from Department of Inspection & Appeals is required to store meat at your farm.
Dairy Products (B): Bottled milk must be made in a Grade A Dairy. License and manufactured dairy products (cheese, sour cream, butter) must have a Grade B license.
Fresh Shell Eggs (C): Fresh shell eggs should be kept at 45 F° or below if you have an Egg Handling License from the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship.
Temperature Controlled Foods (D): Potentially hazardous food products include dairy products, meat, fish, and poultry and require a license.

License & Certification Directory

- (DIA) Department of Inspections & Appeals: PH (515) 281-6538
- (IDALS) Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship: PH (515) 281-5321
- (ABD) Iowa Alcoholic Beverage Division: PH (515) 281-7400
- (ISU) Iowa State University (ISU) Extension: PH (515) 281-3114
- (IDR) Iowa Department of Revenue: PH (800) 262-3804

License Required to Sell (1-10):

1) Farmers Market Food Establishment
Issued on a yearly basis to a vendor who wants to sell "temperature controlled foods" at a farmers market. Costs around $100. ● Contact DIA

2) Commercial Food Processing License
A completed application will have a water test, HACCP plan, facility floor plan, a fee, and completed processing license. ● Contact DIA

3) Morel Mushroom Certification
Vendors must complete a three-hour spring certification workshop and re-certify every three years to continue to sell morels. ● Contact ISU

4) Mobile Food License
A license is required for all Class II, III, and IV units and must go through a plan review and pre-operational inspection. ● Contact DIA

5) Home Food "Bakery" License
A licensed bakery located in a residence must meet 13 inspection standards and labeling requirements. Costs around $35. ● Contact DIA

6) Potentially Hazardous Food License
Refers to food that requires temperature control after preparation. ● Contact DIA

7) Inspected & Permitted Dairy Facility
Dairy products are considered potentially hazardous food products and require a license to sell at the farmers market. ● Contact IDALS

8) Temporary Food License
Valid for up to 14 days in conjunction with a single event. Applications must be submitted at least 3 weekdays prior to the event. ● Contact DIA

9) Iowa Alcoholic Beverages
Wineries must be formally invited to sell at a farmers market and request an off-site license that will last one year. ● Contact ABD

10) Warehouse License
Meats from the farmers' own animals must be licensed if the meats are sold as packaged cuts to individuals or retailers and stored between slaughter and sale.
● Contact IDALS

Sales Tax Applicable
Sales tax is applicable to all taxable items sold at the farmers market. Tax rates are available online.
● Contact IDR

Contact Information

Northeast Iowa RC&D
101 East Greene Street
Postville, IA 52162
Tel. (563) 864-7112

Iowa Valley RC&D
920 48th Ave
Amana, IA 52203
Tel. (319) 622-3264

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