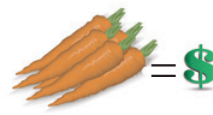


Tips for Selling to: Grocery Stores

Grocery stores typically buy large volumes of fresh and processed foods as well as other household items, reselling their products to individual consumers. Grocery stores are appealing because they sell everything customers need at one convenient place. Depending on the size of the town, these stores may have more than one location. Very large grocery chains operate stores across broad regions of the country. Many grocery stores are now interested in selling products grown by local farmers.

For this market you can expect:

- **Medium-to-high volume**
- **Lower prices**



Advantages

- You may be able to sell larger volumes.
- The store may buy a range of products once you have introduced your first product.
- There is potential for a long-term relationship with the store, especially if you build a brand identity for your farm.

Considerations

- The first sale may be difficult because grocery stores have a limited amount of shelf space, already have regular suppliers, and may prefer to buy from fewer suppliers.
- Payment is not immediate, but generally occurs on a predictable monthly cycle.
- Standard packing and post-harvest practices are required. Produce should be delivered clean and cold.
- Grocery stores may require a PLU (Price Look-Up number) or UPC code (Universal Product Code, represented by a barcode).
- Do I have a Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) plan?
Does this buyer require it?



Photo: Rex Dufour, NCAT

Tips for Selling to Grocery Stores

- ★ **Be professional, reliable, and on time when communicating and delivering products.**
 - Visit or call the store and ask for an appointment with the produce buyer before the season begins. Provide the buyer with product samples, a product list for the full season, and a price list.
- ★ **Always provide a bill or invoice when you deliver your products.** Ask the receiving clerk to sign a copy that you keep for your records.
 - Build relationships with everyone who handles your product.
- ★ **Ask about and follow the store's expectations for pack, size, grade, or post-harvest practices.**
 - Communicate with buyers weekly during the growing season about your product availability.
- ★ **Plan your plantings for continuous harvest and adequate volume to supply expected demand from store.**
 - Offer the store lots of opportunities to promote and profile your farm along with your products.
 - Offer to provide farm tours, pictures of your farm for display, and in-store demos of your products.

Key Questions to Ask Yourself

- What products do local grocery stores want that I could supply, including specialty ethnic foods?
- Does a particular chain have an interest in purchasing locally?
- What is my plan to ensure a consistent supply of a few key products over a period of several weeks?
- Do I have a Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) plan? Does this buyer require it?

Resources

- **ATTRA Publications.** Prices vary for individual publications. Many are free. An inexpensive subscription to ATTRA will give you access to all 350+ publications and databases. www.attra.ncat.org
 - **Scheduling Vegetable Plantings for Continuous Harvest** (2008)
 - **Sustainable Season Extension: Considerations for Design** (2011)
 - **Season Extension Techniques for Market Gardeners** (2005)
 - **Postharvest Handling of Fruits and Vegetables** (2000)
 - **Illustrated Guide to Growing Safe Produce on Your Farm: GAPs** (2011) (available in Spanish or English)
- **Selling Directly to Restaurants and Grocery Stores**, Washington State Department of Agriculture, 2010. <http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/DOCS/3-sellingDirectlyToRestaurantsAndGroceryStores.pdf>
- **"A Guide for Farms Considering Selling in Grocery Stores"** and **"Is Selling to Grocery Stores Profitable for Farms or Processors?"** from the Local Fare website of the University of Wisconsin, Platteville. www.uwplatt.edu/cont_ed/LocalFare/links-resources.html
- See advertised prices of last week's produce nationwide and by region at www.marketnews.usda.gov/portal/fv
- **Price Look-up numbers (PLUs):** a complete list is available on the Web, www.plucodes.com
- **Wall Street Journal** article explains why and how to obtain UPC codes, including costs and alternatives. <http://guides.wsj.com/small-business/starting-a-business/how-to-get-upc-codes-for-your-products-2>

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