
ARE YOU A FOOD PRODUCER OR PROCESSOR IN THE EAST KOOTENAYS?

THERE IS SUPPORT TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS THRIVE.

Starting a new business can be overwhelming at times, but there is support to help you bring your great food product to the public. Starting as a vendor at a Farmers' Market is a great way to begin your business journey as they are a low-risk entry point into the marketplace.



AGRI-PARK FARMERS' MARKET, WINDERMERE
Photo Credit: BC Farmers Market Trail & Bruno Long

FARMERS' MARKETS ARE A SAFE SPACE TO:

- **Explore and test ideas with real customers.** You can gauge product marketability and get valuable feedback on your products directly from consumers. This real-time feedback allows you to experiment with what works ... and what doesn't!
- **Network and share knowledge.** Connect with your peers and ask for or offer support. Have questions about packaging? Pricing? A new pest you're seeing in your field? Other vendors at the market are a great resource for sharing knowledge and processes.

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- **Build business relationships.** Aside from connecting with other vendors and individual customers, farmers' markets are an opportunity to connect with wholesale buyers and restaurants. Other businesses often come to markets to test products and seek opportunities to source directly for their own retail or distribution.
 - **Scale up.** After you have built some relationships and dialed in your product and offerings, farmers' markets can then be a springboard for scaling up. This could mean increasing production, hiring employees, or launching other revenue streams, such as an online or brick and mortar shop.

THERE ARE LOTS OF SUPPORTS FOR BUSINESSES WITHIN THE EAST KOOTENAYS TO MAKE SURE YOU GROW AND THRIVE.



Photo Credit: BC Farmers' Market Trail & Anice Wong

- **Have you worked out how to price your products?** Use one of the advice services listed below to help find a price for your products that allows you to stay profitable.
- **Do you have a business plan?** Use this free and intuitive [business plan writer](#) to get a plan for your business.
- **How are you going to take payments from customers?** A lot of people use [Square](#) to take payments from customers. Other options include [Stripe](#), [Poynt](#) and more.
- **Do you have a secure supply chain?** Can you purchase your ingredients locally? Do you have a reliable wholesale source for ingredients and packaging? This is especially important if your markets require compostable packaging or serving ware.
- **Do you WANT to grow?** Perhaps you are happy with this being your side business and that is great! Know that there are supports and help whether you want to grow or just be a regular vendor at farmers' markets in the region.

Nyree Marsh (nmarsh@futures.bc.ca) is the **Agriculture Business Advisor** with Community Futures Central Kootenay and provides free, confidential, one-to-one business advice to food and agriculture businesses in the Columbia Basin region. She is a wealth of information and can offer you tailored advice and support for your food business.

Make sure you have the right permits and certifications to sell your products. The Environmental Health Officer with Interior Health in Cranbrook (email: HP.Admin.Cranbrook@interiorhealth.ca) is here to help. More information about what permits are needed is [here](#).

Do you need money to start your business or help you to grow? Microloans of up to \$25,000 are available through [Community Futures East Kootenay](#). The [Ktunaxa Nation Microlending Program](#) is also available for Ktunaxa Nation Members.

The [FCC](#) has a range of financing options for larger enterprises, and is the only lender 100% invested in Canadian agriculture and food.

The BC Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) also has a great [list of resources](#), including a database of [funding opportunities](#) for BC food producers.

Small Business BC has a wealth of [resources](#) and runs regular [online workshops](#) tailored for start-up, new and growing businesses.



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SPECIFIC BUSINESS SUPPORTS

- If you're aged between 18-39, [Futurpreneur](#) provides financing, mentoring and support tools to aspiring business owners.
- [WE-BC](#) provides financing, free advice, mentoring, training and resources for BC women to start, lead and grow their own business.
- If you are an Indigenous business owner, [KABDA](#) offers free support the development and growth of your business.
- If you are based in the Columbia Valley, [Columbia Valley Food & Farm](#) is there to support the region's growers and makers. Be a part of their annual local food guide to promote your business.
- If you are currently unemployed or underemployed, there are supports from [Kootenay Employment Services](#) to help you set up your business.

ARE YOU A FARMER OR PRIMARY PRODUCER?

- The [Kootenay & Boundary Farm Advisors](#) help with practical information for producers with regards to science and agriculture. If you need support on the "science of farming" then get in touch.
- [Young Agrarians](#) are a farmer-to-farmer educational resource network for new and young ecological, organic and regenerative farmers in Canada. They provide a wealth of information and support for new farmers.
- Columbia Basin Trust have the [Basin Food Producer Wage Subsidy Program](#) that provides support to primary food producers in the Columbia Basin to hire employees as needed throughout the 2022 growing and harvesting season.

ARE YOU READY TO STEP BEYOND THE FARMERS' MARKETS?

The [Basin Food & Buyers Guide](#) is a great resource to get you ready to start selling to buyer's beyond individual customers.

The [Feed BC Directory](#) is also a great place to promote your food business. It makes it easier for institutions, retailers and distributors to find YOUR products.

OTHER CONNECTIONS IN YOUR AREA

Become a member of your local Chamber of Commerce and help increase your exposure and gain more community awareness of your business. There are also chamber programs which can help you save money. Contact your local Chamber of Commerce to find out more:

- [Golden](#)
- [Radium](#)
- [Columbia Valley](#)
- [Kimberley](#)
- [Cranbrook](#)
- [Fernie](#)
- [Sparwood](#)
- [Elkford](#)



KIMBERLEY FARMERS' MARKET

Photo Credit: BC Farmers Market Trail & Anice Wong

This resource is produced by Community Futures East Kootenay - www.cfek.ca

Community Futures East Kootenay helps to foster strong, resilient local economies. We champion economic growth and sustainability throughout our vibrant service area.