



THE BC
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MARKET
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Compost Education Centre

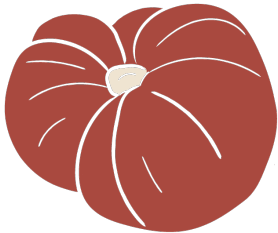
How to Minimize Waste at Market Events



This document offers guidance on managing waste sustainably at farmers' markets across British Columbia. It draws on the Compost Education Centre's experience in waste management and reduction education at events, as well as research conducted through interviews with reusable dish program providers, market managers across BC, and two market managers in Ontario.

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Rationale for Reducing Waste at Farmers' Markets

Values alignment - waste reduction aligns with common farmers' market values, such as sustainability, ecological, circular economy, and localism values

Save money - markets will pay less for waste disposal if they aren't creating the waste in the first place (e.g. reusable dishware program) or if you find alternative avenues for waste disposal (e.g. market volunteer takes home refundable containers, or fruits and veg scraps)

Engage community & provide education - a wonderful opportunity to engage with market patrons, particularly if your waste station is located at the info tent

Resilient climate action - fewer greenhouse gas emissions from landfill, less water & energy used to create disposable materials

Extend life of landfills

Build community resilience and power - it's a collapse skill to know how to avoid creating waste and deal with it responsibly

Create circularity & closed loops - especially with composting locally and using reusable dish programs

Key Considerations for Farmers' Market Managers

1. Monitored source separation is key

A well labelled, centralized waste sorting station that is staffed, consistently located, and is set up to handle as many waste streams as possible

- ◆ Most waste will come from food trucks/prepared food stalls
- ◆ If you operate in a place where there is public waste disposal, find a way to redirect patrons to your waste station if source separation is inadequate

2. A green team lead (volunteer or paid) is necessary

- ◆ They can manage communications before, during, and after market with vendors and volunteers, and can arrange prep of sorting station and proper disposal of items after market
- ◆ If you pay them, this will make things more reliable and consistent for the market manager

3. A reusable dish program for food trucks/prepared food stalls will dramatically reduce your dishware waste

- ◆ Relationships with and communications with vendors is key to the success of a reusable dish program
- ◆ Can be market started and run or make use of a service
- ◆ Ask regular vendors what size dishes they'd prefer and try and seek that size if you are doing a market-run reusable dish program/reusable dish service.
- ◆ Rather than asking "for here or to go," which is confusing in an open-air market environment, encourage vendors to either assume people are eating at the market, or ask everyone, "Are you eating your food here?" If the answer is yes, then serve the food in a reusable dish

4. Build a healthy, positive, conversational relationship with vendors so they receive feedback about packaging options, along with buy in for a reusable dish program

5. It is vital to ensure your waste ends up in the correct stream/place at the end of your market

- ◆ Know your regional context – every market deals with their waste differently

6. Beverage cups are confusing – get to know your specific local waste management context

- ◆ If recyclable, they need need to be empty/relatively clean
- ◆ Some are “compostable” in certain industrial composting facilities, but not all!

7. Track statistics

This is helpful when it comes time to report to members, funders, or the public about your waste reduction efforts. Having a hand scale that you weigh bags or dishes with, and a simple tracking sheet, can be very helpful.

Tip Box

Farmers' Market Managers

✓ Monitored source separation is key

✓ A reusable dish program for food trucks/prepared food stalls will dramatically reduce your dishware waste

✓ Track statistics

✓ Build a healthy relationship with vendors

✓ Beverage cups are confusing – get to know your specific local waste management context

✓ A green team lead (volunteer or paid) is necessary

✓ It is vital to ensure your waste ends up in the correct place at the end of your market



Above and Beyond - Be a Susty Market Manager / Volunteer Superstar!

On site / in-situ composting!

Story for inspiration: The Powell River Farmers' Market has a compost bin for food scraps gathered at the market. They keep the compost bin on site, make the compost in this bin, and they also have gardens on site where they are able to distribute the finished compost when it is complete! The market manager uses produce from this garden to make value added products (e.g. jam) for sale at the market – full circularity.

Invest in reusable sample cups for vendors to use or stress the importance of using pure paper sample cups

Story for inspiration: Get your volunteers on the job and searching thrift stores for small shot glasses by the dozens, or stress the importance of using pure paper sample cups that can go into the compost.

Market-branded reusable beverage cups

Story for inspiration: The Kingston Farmers Market invested in "Festicups" and added their logo and "Please return me" messaging.

Additional waste reduction activities

Story for inspiration: The Withrow Park Farmers market runs two swaps a year – a clothing swap, a costume/holiday decoration swap in late October, and a kitchen utensil/dish/small appliance swap. They also collect spent batteries that a volunteer takes back to the local Canadian Tire and spent pens that go back to Staples for recycling.

Story for inspiration: The City of Victoria partnered with various markets with their “beyond the curb” program. The city staffed a booth where they received depot-only materials, (e.g. soft plastics, Styrofoam) for recycling through Extended Producer Responsibility programs. This not only served the public, but it brought more people to the market, started more conversations about waste reduction, and educated the public as to what goes where.



Key Considerations for Farmers' Market Patrons

1. B.Y.O

- ◆ Bring your own bags, dish, plate, cup, napkin, and cutlery if your market does not yet have a reusable dish program. Set a reminder in your phone or stick a Post-It note on your door: “Don’t forget your to-go containers!”

2. Refuse packaging

- ◆ Kindly refuse bags, containers, or packaging from vendors. It takes some courage but is usually very well received.

3. Volunteer at your market

- ◆ Offer your support on your market's green team, or propose some waste reduction initiatives to the market and help put them in place.

4. Ensure the waste you do produce at the market goes into the correct bin or bag at the waste station

- ◆ Beverage cups are confusing (recyclable? compostable?). All the more reason to BYO!

5. Be a susty leader!

- ◆ Feeling inspired by waste reduction initiatives? Suggest some fun ideas to your market leadership, like more waste streams at the waste station, a gear swap, a plan to take home food scraps, or host a zero-waste educational booth at the market!



Tip Box

Farmers' Market Patrons

✓ B.Y.O. – bring your own bags, dish, plate, cup, napkin, cutlery

✓ Ensure the waste you do produce at the market goes into the correct bin or bag at the waste station

✓ Refuse packaging – kindly refuse bags, containers, or packaging from vendors

✓ Be a sustainability leader – suggest and help run waste reduction initiatives (i.e. more waste streams, host a gear swap, take home food scraps to your compost bin, etc.)

✓ Volunteer at your market – offer your support on your market's green team



Key Considerations for Farmers' Market Vendors

- 1. Assess your current practices – do a mini waste audit!**
 - A. Track what waste do you currently create, and how much of it
 - B. Separate at the source – have bins for sorting out compostables & recyclables (rinsed out) of various types, and establish a reliable place to properly dispose of these
 - C. Research what kind of packaging you use for your product, and find out if there is an option that would be more sustainable, compostable, or recyclable
 - D. If you prepare food, avoid food waste at the source (i.e. trim vegetables more closely, use more of meat cuts, etc.)
- 2. Encourage your fellow vendors, patrons and market managers to bring their own bags, cups, dishes and cutlery, or advocate for a market-run reusable dish program for prepared foods**
- 3. If your market already has a reusable dish program and you provide prepared food to patrons, ensure you are defaulting to using those dishes, rather than single-use containers**
- 4. Most compostable dishware you buy from suppliers is not actually accepted in industrial composting facilities in BC. There are few truly compostable take out containers available, so try these brands (nothing.eco, Soyle, and Cambium) or encourage your market to have a reusable dish program!**
- 5. Pack out what you pack in. The waste you make at your stall should be taken away by you the vendor, rather than left at the market for market managers to process**
- 6. The best way to manage waste is to avoid producing it in the first place!**

Tip Box

Farmers' Market Vendors

- ✓ **Assess your current practices – do a mini waste audit!**
 - Track what waste do you currently create
 - Separate at the source
 - Research what kind of packaging you use for your product, and find out if there is a more sustainable option
 - If you prepare food, avoid food waste at the source

- ✓ **If your market already has a reusable dish program and you provide prepared food to patrons, ensure you are defaulting to using those dishes, rather than single-use containers**

- ✓ **Encourage your fellow vendors, patrons and market managers to bring their own bags, cups, dishes and cutlery, or advocate for a market-run reusable dish program for prepared foods**

- ✓ **Most compostable dishware you buy from suppliers is not actually accepted in industrial composting facilities in the province of BC**

- ✓ **Pack out what you pack in. The waste you make at your stall should be taken away by you, the vendor, instead of left at the market for managers to process**

- ✓ **The best way to manage waste is to avoid producing it in the first place!**



Appendix: Zero Waste Market Checklists for Green Team Lead Volunteers/Market Managers

Checklist: Before the Market

- Gather all the bins & signage you'll need for each waste stream at your waste sorting station. Consider the following streams:
 - Organics (i.e. food waste, food soiled paper)
 - Blue bin recyclable containers
 - Blue bin recyclable paper
 - Refundable drink containers
 - Landfill
 - Depot recyclable soft plastics
 - Dish return (if using a reusable dish program)
- Reach out to all prepared food vendors and encourage them to:
 - To participate in the reusable dish program if you have one, and instruct them on how it works and what's in it for them (value alignment, cost savings, etc.)
 - To choose truly compostable (i.e. paper) or recyclable plastic dishware
 - Ask patrons if they are eating at the market or taking their food home (if the market is using a reusable dish program)
- Reach out to all other vendors and encourage them to use less packaging at their stalls, and if not, suggest truly recyclable or compostable packaging for them to use
- Coordinate (and train) staff and volunteers to person the waste station.
- Determine where all items will go after the market, and who will take them
- If you have a reusable dish program create signage for the food vendors "Re-useable dishes available here!", that they can hang on the outside of their food stall.
- If you have capacity, plan to have an educational table with further resources on how patrons can reduce waste (choose some factsheets like "[Zero Waste Living](#)" factsheet from the CEC).



Checklist: During the Market

- Ensure a volunteer or staff member is always at the waste sorting station to help people sort
- Change out bags or bins as they get full, and weigh bins/bags to collect some data
- If you are using an in-house reusable dish program and have dish washing facilities, wash/sanitize dirty dishes as they come in and cycle them back to vendors

Checklist: After the Market

- At the end of the market, if it's the weekend or late in the day, store the waste in a secure location until it can be properly dealt with
- Coordinate with waste haulers (whether a commercial company, municipality, reusable dishware company, community members or market managers) re: proper waste disposal
- Follow up with vendors and volunteers to thank them for their support!

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