



community
food and health

(scotland)

Flying off the shelves

a guide for community food retailers
to help them sell more fruit
and vegetables



About Community Food and Health (Scotland)

Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS aims to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to access a healthy and acceptable diet for themselves, their families and their communities. It does this by supporting work with and within low-income communities that addresses health inequalities and barriers to healthy and affordable food.

About the Scottish Grocers Federation's Healthy Living programme

The Scottish Grocers Federation's (SGF) Healthy Living programme works with convenience stores to help them sell more fruit and vegetables. The programme's resources include display stands and point-of-sale material, and training designed to help staff working in convenience stores to promote and care for the fruit and vegetables that they sell. The programme is funded by the Scottish Government.

Thanks

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Introduction

CFHS is working with the SGF Healthy Living programme to roll out the programme's resources to community food retailers, such as fruit and vegetable co-ops, stalls and outlets. The programme has been successful in assisting community food retailers to increase their sales of fruit and vegetables and reduce waste.

This guide has been produced to meet a need identified by some of the community food retailers that have taken part in the programme. They wanted CFHS to produce an additional resource that recognised how they differ from convenience stores and the different challenges they face when selling fruit and vegetables.

The guide has been designed for community retailing organisations to use alongside the SGF Healthy Living programme's training materials. It contains ideas and suggestions for stalls and outlets to help them sell more. Many of these have come from community retailers.

The guide contains four sections:

- **The right location**
- **Making the most of your produce**
- **Encouraging sales**
- **Promoting your stall**

Using this guide alongside the SGF Healthy Living programme's materials will help you make sure that your stall does not look like this....



The right location

Finding a good location for your stall is essential.

You should locate your stall where it is going to be seen by as many people as possible. If you have a choice of sites in the building you use, find out which areas of the building are busiest at the times your stall will be running. Use this information to work out the best site for your stall: it may not be where you thought of first.

If you cannot negotiate where your stall is placed, make it as easy as possible for people to find it:

- Use A-boards, banners or posters to advertise your stall, outside and inside the building.
- Put up signs or arrows throughout the building that direct people to your stall.
- Set up your stall so that people passing the room you are using will see it, eg. beside or opposite the door.
- If lots of people will be passing it, put your stall beside a window. Put a sign in the window that tells people which room you are in and how to get there.
- Think about setting the stall up outside in good weather.
- If you can, have someone at the building's entrance, or in other busy areas, to tell people where your stall is and how to get there.



TOP TIP:

Make sure that the building's staff know where your stall is, which days it is there and its starting and finishing times. If you have them, ask the staff to display or hand out leaflets to people using the building.

TOP TIP:

If there is a café in the building, ask the café staff if they are willing to advertise your stall. Maybe they would be willing to sell some of your fruit and vegetables too? If they are, could you use your SGF 'healthyliving' display stand?



Making the most of your produce

Your customers are looking for good quality fruit and vegetables. Make sure that the fruit and vegetables that you are selling meet their standards.

Do not have any on display that are damaged or past their best. Remove any fruit and vegetables that become damaged from your stall right away.

Store your fruit and vegetables correctly to maintain their quality. Do not store them beside a radiator, in direct sunlight, or anywhere where they are likely to be damaged or spoiled.

Making your produce look as attractive as possible will encourage more people to buy from your stall, and buy more.

- Display all the types of fruit and vegetables that you sell, and as many of each as you can, even if you only have a very small display space.
- Keep topping up your display: the more you have on show, the more you will sell.
- Think creatively about how you can use the space you have to display your produce. Look out for shelving and containers (boxes, baskets, crates, buckets, bins) that you can use, reuse or adapt for your display.

- Cover the tables you are using with cloths or fake grass.



- Remove or hide any empty boxes.
- Clear up any debris or rubbish on or near the stall.
- Use the 'tricks of the trade', including polishing each piece of fruit with a cloth before putting it in your display, or spraying your display with water to make it look as if your produce has just been picked.
- 'Colour block' your fruit and vegetables. Display produce with similar or contrasting colours side by side, to attract the eye.



TOP TIP:
Look in charity shops for inexpensive containers to use.

TOP TIP:
How does your local store or supermarket display its fruit and vegetables? Can you pick up any ideas to try on your stall?



TOP TIP:
As well as making your stall look great, make it smell great too. If your stall is in a public place, cut up an orange to attract people who are passing.

Encouraging sales

To encourage more sales, get to know your customers. Ask them what they would like you to sell (without making a commitment to stock everything), and what else you could do that would encourage them to buy more.

You could also ask people who are not your customers why they do not buy from the stall. This information may also help you find out how you can promote your stall to attract new customers.

You can gather information from your customers in many different ways. Ask other community retailers how they have done this. The directory on CFHS's website contains contact details of some community retailers. For details of others, contact CFHS.

Your customers are more likely to buy fruit and vegetables if they know how to store, prepare and cook them.

Make sure all your staff and volunteers working on the stall know about the fruit and vegetables that you are selling, particularly those that may be less familiar to everyone.

Offer 'tasters' of fruit and vegetables to encourage people to buy them. If it is possible to do so, prepare some dishes using the produce for customers to try too. But, make sure that you follow food hygiene and food safety guidelines. If you require more information about these, contact your Environmental Health department.

Provide recipes for your customers to take home. You do not have to produce the recipes yourself. Suggestions of where to find recipes are included below.

Offer prepared soup bags containing all the vegetables needed to make a pot of soup. If you have space to store them, include the other ingredients needed for the soup (stock cube, lentils, etc) in the bags, not forgetting the recipe.

Where to find recipes

CFHS's website contains some recipes, including some produced by community food initiatives. The CFHS Recipe Book and our factsheet 'Resource, toolkits and recipes for community cookery' are available in the 'Publications' section on our website and include details of other organisations that may have recipes you could use.

www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

The Scottish Government's 'Take Life On' campaign website also contains recipes.

www.takelifeon.co.uk

NHS Choices has some recipes in the Livewell section. www.nhs.uk/Livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating/asp.

Your local NHS Nutrition and Dietetics department, Health Improvement or Health Promotion departments or community dietitian may be able to help. There may also be a team of community food workers in your area. You may be able to find their contact details on your local NHS Board website or in the telephone directory. If not, ask at your local NHS clinic or your GP surgery.

Recipes provided by those listed overleaf will meet current healthy eating guidelines in term of the amount of fat, sugar and salt they contain.

Try selling one or two products as 'special offers':

- Think about what you put on special offer: do not include produce that you know is not likely to sell well.
- Speak to your fruit and vegetable supplier: they may be able to provide some products at reduced prices.
- Make sure everyone knows what is on special offer, and that these are displayed where everyone can see them.

TOP TIP:

Your 'special offers' should not be costing you money. Do not sell any items as a 'loss leader'. Sell your special offer items for at least the price that you have bought them for. Make up for any loss of income by slightly increasing the sale price of other produce that sells well.

- Stock products that tie in with seasonal events (eg. pumpkins for Halloween, turnips for Burns Night, brussels sprouts for Christmas) or particular times of the year (eg. soup packs during the winter, berries and salad vegetables during the summer).

Make it easier for your customers to buy your produce:

- Offer soup bags (see over), fruit bags (eg. 5-a-day bags) and 'Grab and Go' bags for customer to pick up.
- Some stalls sell ready-prepared vegetables and fruit (peeled and chopped carrots and turnip, fruit pots). These can be good sellers, if you have the staff, space and equipment you need to prepare them.
- If you have the space, stock both loose and pre-packed fruit and vegetables (onions, carrots, potatoes, apples, pears, etc). Some customers will prefer to buy pre-packed produce.
- Set up a pre-ordering system so that customers only need to collect their purchases from the stall. This may also help work out what types of produce (and how much) to order for the stall.

TOP TIP:

You could set up a customer 'loyalty' scheme, with rewards for your regular customers.

TOP TIP:

Some of your customers may prefer to buy locally-grown produce. Buying local produce in season, especially if bought directly from the grower, may also cost you less. Everyone wins!



Promoting your stall

Your stall could look fantastic and be selling a great range of high quality, affordable fruit and vegetables: however, if people do not know about it, they are not going to become your customers. To attract as many customers as possible you need to promote your stall as widely as you can.

How you promote your stall will depend on the resources you have. Some ways of promoting your stall will cost money; others can be done without any financial cost, but may take up more of your volunteers', staff or committee's time. Here are some ideas.

Ways of promoting your stall with little or no financial cost:

- Use your local media (eg. newspapers, radio stations). Ask if they can include articles about your stall, especially if you are going to be doing something new or different, eg. running a promotion, a taster session or a cookery class.
- Invite a local politician – MP, MSP, Councillor – to visit your stall, and ask your local newspaper to write about it. If the newspaper cannot send a photographer, make sure that someone takes pictures that can be used in the article.
- Include something about your stall in your community newspapers and newsletters. There may be several organisations in your area producing regular newsletters that are distributed locally, eg. community council, housing association, tenants association, community planning partnership. They may be willing to include an article or an advert about your stall.
- If you are doing or selling something that local shops in the area are not, e.g. selling locally-grown fruit and vegetables, offering your customers a pre-ordering system, or offering home deliveries, make sure that this is included in all your articles and adverts.
- Ask to run at stall at local events – gala days, school sports days and other community events.
- Set up a web page, Facebook page or Twitter account.

Other ways of promoting your stall:

- Produce publicity material which can be widely distributed in your area, such as posters and leaflets .
- Produce your own newsletter.
- Produce 'money-off' vouchers or coupons, which can be included in your own newsletter (if you have one) or other local papers.
- Buy 'giveaways' that are branded with your organisation's logo or name. Bags (hessian, cotton, paper or plastic) are particularly good.
- Buy t-shirts, sweatshirts, tabards, or aprons with your logo or name on them, and ask everyone working on your stall to wear them. This is especially useful if you are running your stall at an event or in a different building from usual.

TOP TIP:

Word of mouth can be the most effective way of publicising something, Encourage your staff and volunteers to 'spread the word' about your stall when they are talking to other people. But, make sure that everyone involved in running the stall – staff and volunteers – are clear about what they should be telling others. You might want to produce something that includes the key points about the stall for everyone to use.



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