

Where to retail your products

Selling your products will help raise funds for your organisation especially if you can convey your aims and values as a charity or organisation to your potential audience. Planning where to retail can take longer than you may hope and there are a lot of considerations to take into account.

Markets and events

Attending a market or event is a good way to launch a product and chat to people directly about your organisation, especially if you are a community business and anticipate a local customer base. If attending a market, you may need equipment and need to have public liability insurance and you will need to be registered with the local EHO where you store your stall materials. Consider also how you will present your products and what the food safety considerations there are if you are at an event all day. Also take into account the time it takes to attend an event in terms of travel and stand cost at an event and how you will accept payments.

Online with your own web shop - home delivery or collection

Creating your own webshop, or paying for an off the shelf selling platform will enable you to add products little and often or adjust your production to meet demand. Web shop platforms like Shopify have fees to pay which are around £19 per month but will give you a professional looking platform to sell your products. Being able to link your online shop direct from your social media, websites or newsletter will also help with marketing your products. There are obviously expenses associated with online ordering such as percentage fee for the website, card payment providers as well as packaging and delivery costs.

Open Food Network or local food hub

Contacting your local food hub or local online farmer's market managed by Open Food Network is also a good option. Open Food Network has minimum fees to pay, has the ability for you to set up your own online shop and link in with other local Open Food Network markets to sell your produce. Open Food Network is generally used by smaller, values led organisations so may be a good fit with charitable organisations or businesses. It is also a good place to cross trade to source fresh ingredients too and has a supportive UK team to help with IT issues or marketing and selling local produce.

Pay it forward and donations

Another way of raising income and selling more produce is by taking donations and offering a pay-it-forward scheme where your customers can buy a meal for someone else. Having this offer will potentially be able to boost your production level and increase your community engagement.

Local independent retailers

Visiting your independent shops and retailers is worthwhile and could be mutually beneficial. You will be able to speak to the business owner or decision maker more easily and you may have an easier way in if you are from the same community. Have a look at the retail offering and see if you feel your meals would be a good fit and if the shop has the infrastructure and space to accommodate stocking them e.g. fridge / freezer.

Veg box and micro dairy delivery schemes

Many veg box schemes and micro dairies are extending their offers to include other things than just veg boxes and milk. Contact your local distributors especially if they are smaller businesses to see what their offer is and if they could accommodate your products within their rounds.

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Grocery chains and supermarkets

Grocery chains and supermarkets often have a local offering but are very difficult to access for small local producers, can take a long time to pay and often expect a higher level of food safety accreditation such as Safe & Local Supplier Approval (SALSA) or Brand Reputation through Compliance (BRC) certification. Time and efforts may be better spent early on smaller markets and slower growth when starting your retailing.

Public sector

Public sector organisations such as councils or hospitals may also be worth investigating - your local food partnership may be able to support you with information on how you may be able to supply public sector organisations near you once you are more established.

Things to consider when starting to sell

Build up slowly if you can so you can meet production requirements and build trust and confidence with your retailers and customers.

Is your insurance in date and are you covered for everything you need?

Can you manage distribution in terms of transport and time?

Know your logistics - can customers place an order every day, can you deliver every day or is delivery on a set day?

Is your production paperwork e.g. HACCP up to date and ready for inspection at any time in case a retailer would like to view it?

If selling online, is your packaging robust enough to cope with transportation and to keep the product within food safety parameters?

How long will a retailer take to pay you and does that fit with your own cashflow forecasting?

Will you still be paid by retailer if your products don't sell? Be wary of sale or return offers, the retailer does not have such a vested interest in selling your goods if they don't have to pay for them

If selling to a retailer of any kind, how will they handle your food to keep it in prime condition?

Know your unit pricing and don't undersell your products.

Do you have a financial system in place to invoice out, receive in payments, send reminders and maintain accurate records?