

Streamline your sales area

A sales area which is poorly laid out wastes time, effort, and can leave a negative impression on your customers. You can maintain product quality and save time and money with a well-designed sales area.

Why analyze my sales area layout?

Streamlining your sales area can eliminate wasted steps and increase the shelf life of your produce. You may be able to speed each sale by slightly changing your current routine or habits. Some systems might reduce the amount of carrying, lifting and loading that you or your workers do. Additionally, a clean, well run sales area can give customers a pleasing experience and reinforce assurances of food safety.

Will rearranging my sales area save me money?

Any time saved in your sales area will save you money. Indirect savings come from creating a more comfortable work area that will be healthier and less hazardous for you and your workers. Indirect financial benefit also comes from the repeat business of satisfied customers.

How can I analyze my sales area?

On paper, diagram the flow of your product from field to checkout (PYO) or from field to cooler to sales area. Diagram the path your workers take as they perform tasks, and also the path a customer takes through your sales area. Have an outsider describe the flow so you don't overlook any details you might take for granted. Videotaping the sales area in operation may also help to reveal inefficient steps.



A well-lit, uncluttered corner for weighing and ringing up sales at the Country Bumpkin farm stand, Lake Delton, WI.

What are some considerations for efficient layout?

- Consider the general “flow” of the tasks in your sales area. Try to create a clear, uncluttered task line for product and workers to follow.
- Is your space large enough for your sales needs?
- Is there plenty of light, especially at the scale and at checkout?
- Is the floor level and smooth enough to allow you to use wheeled carts or hand trucks? A concrete floor is most effective, followed by asphalt and packed roadbase gravel. Dirt or wood chips hold water and are unsanitary. With a level smooth floor, large volume ready-picked operations can set up a pallet system with narrow pallets and a specialized hand truck. See our publication entitled “Narrow Pallet System” for more information.
- Is there enough shade for workers, produce, and customers waiting to check out? Would it help to suspend a tarp? Can you use fans or mosquito netting to improve worker and customer comfort? Is drinking water available? Do you have a hand washing station? If your workers stand for long periods on concrete or gravel, consider using rubber anti-fatigue mats.

WORK EFFICIENCY



Tip Sheet

A series of tip sheets on labor efficiency for berry and vegetable growers.

*by Astrid Newenhouse
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- Are supplies such as carriers or berry boxes kept where they are needed? Are other items kept out of the way (perhaps overhead)? Is the scale handy and easy to use?
- Are your workstation heights adjusted to the individual workers? For lightweight items, efficient work height is halfway between wrist and elbow, measured when the arm is hanging at the worker's side. For heavier items it is slightly lower. Could some workers use a step stool? Could some tasks be done while sitting?
- Are work surfaces easy to sanitize?
- Are you using rollers, wheels, conveyors or carts to their best advantage? For example, you might benefit from a section of roller table installed near the cooler, or adding a pair of wheels to one end of a table so the table can be moved easily for set up or storage.
- Does your cooler size fit the needs of your operation? If a cooler is too small, time and energy may be wasted trying to deal with overcrowding, and fruit quality may suffer.
- Does the width of your cooler door fit your loading/unloading system? If you are using a walk-in cooler with a narrow door, you may want to consider adopting a system of narrow pallets and a specialized hand pallet truck. Or you may choose a low platform, 5-wheeled handcart with a center swivel wheel for easier maneuvering in the cooler.
- Are you quickly and effectively communicating with your customers? Is your signage clear and easy to read? Are the letters large enough to be seen from a distance? Is your PYO system logical and easily explained so that first time customers quickly grasp the idea?

- Do you use a memo board or chalkboard in your sales area? They can give you a system for quick communication with your workers, for example as a check-off list for tasks. Chalkboards or memo boards can also provide easy answers to customers' common questions, such as "Today's varieties are Jewel and Honeoye". These messages can lend a welcoming, inclusive feel to the farm experience.
- Is your pricing system easy for workers to use? Would it help them to post "quick reference" cards for commonly sold units?
- Do electrical cords and outlets have Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters? They are inexpensive and easy to install and can prevent electrocution.

Where can I get more information?

Some references for sales areas and roadside stands are listed below. Your state agricultural library may have other useful information. *These references are provided as a convenience for our readers. They are not an endorsement by the University of Wisconsin.*

Facilities for Roadside Markets. Arthur W. Selders et al., 1992. Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service (NRAES), 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Cooperative Extension Ithaca, NY 14853-5701. (607) 255-7654..

How to Establish and Operate a Roadside Stand. Michelle Woods and Anne Zumwalt, 1990. Univ. of CA Davis Small Farm Center Publication ANRP 010, 29 pp, \$5. (530) 752-8136.

This material was developed by the Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits Project, whose goal is to find and share work efficiency tips that maintain farmers' health and safety and also increase profits. For more information, call (608) 265-9451 or visit our website at <http://bse.wisc.edu/hfhp/>

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Research for this publication was funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Work Efficiency Tip Sheet: Streamline your sales area

