



Selling Seafood in Rhode Island

Getting a Peddlers License

Farmers' Markets, Home Delivery

& Community Supported Fisheries (CSFs)

Guide and Factsheet

If you are interested in selling your seafood harvest at farmers' markets, establishing a home delivery route, or establishing a Community Supported Fishery (CSF), this document can serve as a guide to help you get started. If you have additional questions, we are happy to offer our support through the Fish Forward Initiative. You can learn more about this program and request free and confidential business support at cfcri.org/fish-forward.

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GENERAL REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Different seafood species have different regulations. In this guide, we will focus on allowable species that can be sold with the Direct Sales Dealers License.

As a Fisherman, in order to sell your catch at a farmers’ market, offer home delivery or sell at a Community Supported Fishery (CSF) pick up site away from your boat, you will need the Direct Sales Dealers License & Peddlers License as well as any local city/town permits depending on where you plan to sell.

Species	Sell Direct from Boat to Consumer	Sell Direct to Restaurant/Market	<i>Transport</i> to Restaurant/Market	<i>Transport</i> for Home Delivery to end consumers	Sell/Transport at Farmers Market or other location away from boat. (Ex: CSF/Farm Stand)
Approved Finfish/ Scallops/Conch	Direct Sales Dealers License	Direct Sales Dealers License	*NOT ALLOWED Restaurant or Market must pick up	Peddlers License	Peddlers License
Lobsters & Crabs	DEM Dockside Sales Endorsement	Direct Sales Dealers License	Direct Sales Dealers License	Direct Sales Dealers License	Peddlers License

**Transportation of finfish/scallops/conch is prohibited to end consumers and/or retailers per state regulation 250-RICR-90-00-15 Item 15.8 D.3.d and the Peddlers license only allows transport to end consumers.*

Note: Seafood may otherwise be transported in coolers or covered fish totes that are adequately iced.

1. The Direct Sales Dealers License can be applied for on the DEM Website with an annual cost of \$50.00 for 2021. For more information on this visit the DEM Website at <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/management/services/licenses/commfish.php>
2. The Peddler’s License can be obtained from the RI Department of Health at a cost of \$100 per year. However, the first year is prorated depending on when you apply:
Licensing Cycle Expiration Date 9/30: August 1 - December 31 = \$100;
January 1 - March 31 = \$75.00; April 1 - July 31 = \$50.00. The application can be found at <https://health.ri.gov/applications/FoodRetailPeddler.pdf>

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There are a few requirements to take note of:

- You will need to be certified and registered with the State as a Food Safety Manager. Courses can be taken in a class setting or online. Cost of training varies depending on the training provider you choose. You can find more information at <https://health.ri.gov/licenses/detail.php?id=257>
- You will need to submit an “operational plan” with your application. A sample plan can be viewed at https://www.cfcri.org/uploads/1/2/2/6/122670749/peddler_operational_plan_sample.pdf
- You will need “product insurance” as well. Cost will vary depending on which insurance agency you choose. A few suggested companies to obtain a policy are:
[Farm Family Casualty Insurance Company](#),
[Twin City Fire Insurance Company](#),
[Gallo Thomas Insurance Agency](#)

3. Local City/Town permits vary depending on location, contact information for each city and town can be found at <https://www.ri.gov/towns/>

FOOD SAFETY

There are many Federal and State Regulations that address seafood safety. Typically, seafood businesses, such as wholesalers & processors must follow the Seafood Hazards Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) rules & regulations. While retail establishments such as restaurants, retail markets & retail food peddlers are exempt from these rules, it is considered best practice to voluntarily follow HACCP protocols. At a minimum, as a peddler, you must be certified as a food safety manager as stated earlier.

For more information on Seafood HACCP, visit <https://web.uri.edu/foodsafety/seafood/>

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RHODE ISLAND FARMERS’ MARKETS

Selling at a farmers markets allows you to attract and establish a wide customer base. It also allows you the opportunity to interact and educate your customers to create long-term relationships and to enhance product recognition. Farmers markets are incredibly well attended and the demand for local food/products is already established. You can set your own prices and build your business brand.

There are currently 35 Farmers Markets in Rhode Island. In 2020, 8 locations had seafood vendors. As a peddler, you will only be allowed to offer whole fish (heading and gutting is allowed). You may want to consider collaborating with a “processor” to offer product in a format other than whole.

RI State Farmers Markets - Department of Environmental Management

- [RIDEM Farmers Market Vendor Application](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/documents/farmmark.pdf)
(<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/documents/farmmark.pdf>)
- [RIDEM Farmers Market Policies](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/documents/markets/farmmark-rules.pdf)
(<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/documents/markets/farmmark-rules.pdf>)

Farm Fresh Farmers Markets

- [Summer Market Locations](https://www.farmfreshri.org/programs/farmers-markets/summertime-farmers-markets/) (<https://www.farmfreshri.org/programs/farmers-markets/summertime-farmers-markets/>)
- [Winter Market Locations](https://www.farmfreshri.org/programs/farmers-markets/simsmarket/) (<https://www.farmfreshri.org/programs/farmers-markets/simsmarket/>)
- [Vendor Guide](https://www.farmfreshri.org/programs/farmers-markets/vendor-guide) (<https://www.farmfreshri.org/programs/farmers-markets/vendor-guide>)

Typically, applications to sell at farmers markets are due before the season starts around the months of March and April. However, for 2021 flexibility will be given to fishermen to submit applications as you gear up for the season.

Depending on the farmers market, you may be required to have your own equipment such as a tent, table(s), hand washing station & supplies, 3 bay wash station, scale (certified by state weights & measures), food grade poly bags, etc.

A note to consider: Selling at a farmers’ market is not ideal for everyone as fishermen already work long hours and this pathway takes time away from the boat. You must interact with lots of people, and there are additional market rules and regulations that you have to abide by. Therefore, selling seafood at a

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farmers’ market might be a good role for a family member deckhand/crew member or even a trusted friend, who can apply for a peddler’s license, purchase your seafood & work closely with you to help you build your brand.

ESTABLISHING HOME DELIVERY SERVICE

The Home Delivery Model is another creative option for direct sales. While delivering lobsters & crabs to individual homes only requires the direct sales dealers license, delivering approved species finfish, scallops & conch requires the peddlers license as well.

A fisherman may transport seafood in adequately iced coolers and/or adequately iced fish totes with covers. It is recommended to pre-bag customer orders in food grade polybags.

A helpful tool that will assist with organizing a delivery route is MapQuest’s Multi-Stop Route Planner (<https://www.mapquest.com/routeplanner>)

ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY SUPPORTED FISHERY (CSF)

The simple definition of a Community Supported Fishery (CSF) is an alternative business model for selling fresh, locally sourced seafood. CSF programs, modeled after increasingly popular Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, offer members weekly shares of fresh seafood for a pre-paid membership fee.

The first successful community supported fishery program began in 2007 as a pilot project out of Port Clyde, Maine. There are now over 500 CSFs across America with several different business structures to include sole proprietorship, partnership, corporate & cooperative, just to name a few. The Local Catch Network, a national organization, is now spearheading the initiative. Learn more at <https://localcatch.org/>

CSA’s in Rhode Island are well established. A quick search on the Farm Fresh Website <https://guide.farmfreshri.org/food/csa.php> will give you a list of about 650 of them. While the most convenient scenario for a fisherman would be to have consumers find you at your boat, you may want to consider collaborating with one or more CSA farm sites to establish as a pick-up location for your seafood and take advantage of the local food backbone that has been established in agriculture.

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MARKETING TIPS

No matter how you sell direct to the consumer, it's up to you to build your brand and promote your products to the public. Outlined below are some helpful tools and resources to help connect with customers.

- **Social Media:** Social media is probably the most cost-effective way of marketing and promoting your products. It's free and helps you reach a wide and diverse audience. Through social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram you can post details about dock locations, selling times, species, and prices. You can also help promote by posting pictures and videos. The key is to consistently post on a regular basis and the “algorithm” will put you in front of more viewers. You can also ask your family, friends and current customers to share your posts. There is power in word of mouth.
- **Website:** Another great way to build your brand is by creating your own website. Here you could include your personal story, pictures, the species you harvest, your contact information, and your favorite seafood recipes. With a website you could even set up the ability for customers to pre-order seafood from you. A downside to developing a website is the recurring costs to host and maintain your website.
- **Fish Line App:** Fish Line is a free and easy-to-use app for your phone that connects you to a consumer base looking for fresh locally caught seafood, available on Google Play and the Apple App store. You can post information such as species, price, times you will be at the dock, payment methods that you accept, the exact location of your dock, and your contact info. It is important to keep your information updated on the app as the consumer base grows in our area. If consumers login to the app and fishermen are not posting regularly and there isn't current information or any information at all, consumers will not use it. Consistency and patience are the keys to using this app.
- **Printable Resources:** Another method of promoting your fresh seafood products is handing out print resources to your customers. You could create business cards with your contact information or cards with recipes to encourage your customers to try new species.
- **RI DEM Seafood RI Website:** The RI DEM has a website dedicated to helping Rhode Islanders locate local seafood. You can also post your details here to help more consumers find you. [Rhode Island Seafood - Taste the Ocean State- Rhode Island -RI Seafood \(http://dem.ri.gov/riseafood/\)](http://dem.ri.gov/riseafood/)

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- **The Local Catch Network Seafood Finder** – The Local Catch Network is a community-of-practice made up of fishermen, organizers, researchers, and consumers from across North America that are committed to providing local, healthful, low-impact seafood via community supported fisheries and direct marketing arrangements in order to support healthy fisheries and the communities that depend on them. You can join the network and post your information on their seafood finder at <https://localcatch.org/join/>. The benefit of joining this network is the ability of any out of state local seafoodies who may be tourists in RI to find you.

Overall, there are many creative ways to promote and market your seafood. If you have ideas and need some assistance with setting it up and getting it going, let us know and we will be happy to help!

ACCEPTING PAYMENT METHODS

There are a surprising number of options when it comes to payments. Just about everyone carries a credit card these days and many people have payment apps on their phones, so it's definitely worthwhile to consider payment options other than cash. It is also critical to keep good records of purchases and to keep organized. These apps can help you do that.

- Venmo
- Square
- PayPal
- Google Pay
- Apple Pay

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CLOSING REMARKS

We hope the information we have provided in this guide has planted a seed. If you would like to explore any of the options we discussed, the Fish Forward team is here to help you! Please send any questions you may have to fredmattera@cfcri.org or shayerooney@cfcri.org

Or you can sign up for free and confidential business support through the Rhode Island Small Business Development Center at

<https://www.risbdc.org/reg.aspx?mode=counsel¢er=14070&subloc=0>

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