



MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

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Guiding Principles

History

The Halifax Regional Food Hub Co-operative (HRFH) emerged from a collaborative working group focused on strengthening the local food system in Nova Scotia. The initiative is rooted in the belief that local food is vital to community resilience and economic development.

Recognizing the challenges faced by small and medium-sized producers in reaching wholesale markets, HRFH was created to bridge this gap by providing aggregation, storage, marketing, and distribution services.

Initially guided by the Just Food Action Plan and a commitment to equity and food sovereignty, HRFH began by forming networks of producers and buyers across mainland Nova Scotia and HRM. With a phased approach to growth, the hub prioritizes partnerships, community engagement, and adaptability to meet evolving need

Mission

Our cooperative strengthens the local food economy by connecting small and mid-sized Nova Scotian producers with wholesale buyers in HRM, through a centralized system that simplifies aggregation, distribution and expands market access.

Vision

A resilient and equitable local food system where small and medium-scale producers thrive, wholesale buyers access local food with ease, and our region's food security and economy grow stronger through collaboration and sustainability.

Governance

The Cooperative is governed by a board of directors elected by the membership. The board is responsible for setting policies, hiring an Executive Director and setting the long-term vision of the Co-operative. The Board meets monthly, and all meetings are open to the general membership in a non-voting capacity. The Board will call an Annual General Meeting once a year, where they will review the previous year's financials and activities, discuss the next year's goals and vote on important matters. Decisions are made through a democratic voting process, and every member of the cooperative has one vote.

Membership Types & Rates

General Eligibility

Membership Application

Prospective members must complete the HRFH Cooperative Membership Application and submit it to the Executive Director for review. Producer members will also complete an initial product intake form and onboarding process. Membership is contingent upon approval and purchase of a membership share.

Membership Rates and Fees

Membership share \$50 + Annual fee for producer members: \$50 (following year)

Membership Benefits

- **Aggregation, storage (dry, cold, frozen)**
- **Online ordering and payment processing**

- **Order fulfillment and last-mile delivery**
- **Marketing and sales support**
- **Access to cold storage rentals (subject to availability)**
- **Vote at AGM**
- **Run for Board of Directors**

Membership Responsibilities

As a member of the Halifax Regional Food Hub (HRFH), you agree to:

- Actively support the mission to strengthen Nova Scotia's local food infrastructure, economy, and food sovereignty.
- Participate in Hub activities, meetings, and cooperative governance where possible.
- Uphold the cooperative principles of transparency, equity, and shared responsibility.
- Fulfill any financial commitments such as annual fees
- Maintain honest and accurate communication regarding your products, practices, and capacity.
- Collaborate respectfully with other members, staff, and partners to build a thriving local food community.
- Abide by all Hub policies, procedures, and quality standards.

Positive Member Behaviour

Members contribute to a respectful, inclusive, and cooperative environment by:

- Engaging constructively with all members and staff in meetings, communications, and operations.
- Respecting diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences within the local food system.
- Acting with integrity, accountability, and openness in all dealings connected to the Hub.
- Sharing knowledge, resources, and support to foster collective success.
- Being responsive to feedback and willing to adapt for continuous improvement.

- Not incurring debt within the co-operative

Conflict Resolution and Escalation

Conflicts, when approached constructively, can strengthen the cooperative. HRFH members are encouraged to:

- Address concerns directly and respectfully with involved parties whenever possible.
- Utilize Hub staff or designated mediators to facilitate communication if direct resolution is difficult.
- Follow the Hub's formal grievance and conflict resolution procedures when necessary.
- Approach conflicts with openness, active listening, and a commitment to collaborative solutions.
- Respect governance decisions while advocating constructively within the Hub framework.

Termination of Membership

Voluntary Termination

Members may choose to end their participation in HRFH at any time. To voluntarily terminate membership:

- The member must provide written notice to the Executive Director and make a request for the refund of their membership share (\$50). Refunds will only be issued if the co-op is in sufficient financial health to do so, as determined by the Board and required by the Co-operatives Act. The refund may be delayed until the co-op is in good financial standing.
- All outstanding invoices must be paid in full.
- Any equipment, containers, or shared resources provided by HRFH must be returned.
- A short exit interview or feedback form may be requested to help HRFH improve future services.

Involuntary Termination

HRFH reserves the right to suspend or terminate a membership that does not follow the bylaws and policies of the co-operative or act in the best interest of the co-operative. Some examples being:

- Repeated failure to meet product or safety standards
- Chronic late or missing deliveries
- Non-payment of invoices
- Discriminatory or harmful behaviour toward staff, members, or customers
- Breach of co-operative values, bylaws, or this handbook

Prior to termination, members will typically receive:

1. A written warning
2. A chance to address and correct the issue
3. A final decision by HRFH staff and/or the Board

In urgent cases (e.g. food safety risk, harassment), HRFH may suspend a member immediately while the matter is reviewed.

Producer and Processor Members:

Allowed Products & Product Categories

Allowed Products

Produce

- All products must be of the freshest and best quality possible, harvested as close to the pick-up time as possible.
- Vegetables must be whole and unwashed, unless coming from a GAP-certified farm.
- Vegetables must be rinsed to remove field dirt and debris.
- All products must be pre-weighed to exact weight if being sold by weight, and quantity must be kept consistent if being sold by the bunch.

Meat And Seafood

- All meat and seafood must be processed in a provincially licensed facility and kept frozen in compliance with the food safety regulations of Nova Scotia.
- Meat vendors must also retain records, invoices, and receipts to allow for tracking of meat products.
- All meat vendors must ensure meat products are labeled indicating the plant number(s) where meats have been slaughtered and processed.
- Pre-packaged meats and seafood must have labels on the package.
- Meat products must be kept at a frozen temperature, -18°C or lower.
- All meat and seafood must be boxed separate from other products and must have “Keep Frozen” indicated on the label.

Eggs

Eggs must:

- Be washed and graded at a licensed facility, as required by provincial law
- Must be stored at a temperature of 4°C or lower.
- Be labelled with the farm name and pack date

Value-Added Products

Value-Added Products

Items made from local ingredients that include, but are not limited to:

- Preserves, jams, pickles
- Fermented goods
- Baked goods
- Beverages
- Sauces and condiments

Producers must have:

- All required food safety certifications and inspections
- Accurate labelling including ingredients, allergens, and expiry dates

Additional product categories (e.g. wild-harvested, herbal, non-food items) may be considered on a case-by-case basis with Board or staff approval.

Packaging Standards

All products delivered to the Halifax Regional Food Hub must be packaged in a way that ensures product integrity, food safety, and ease of handling and distribution. Producers are responsible for providing clean, appropriately sized packaging for each item and for maintaining high standards of cleanliness and presentation.

General Packaging Guidelines

- **Packaging must be clean, durable, and appropriate** for the product being sold. This includes being moisture-resistant, able to protect from contamination, and suitable for cold storage (where applicable).
- **Reusable containers** (e.g., crates, clean egg cartons, or totes) are encouraged where feasible. These must be clearly labeled with the producer's name and sanitized prior to delivery.

Labelling Standards

Each product must be clearly labeled with the following:

Producer name

Product name

Unit size/weight

Product Standards

Food Safety

We take food safety seriously and expect all producers to follow practices that reduce the risk of contamination. All products sold through the HRFH must meet NS Food Safety Regulations or the Safe Food for Canadians Act.

Any meat, seafood or value-added product needs to be approved by the Public Health Officer before being added to the Food Hub. All products that require temperature control to maintain their safety are required to be prepared in a facility that has a Food Establishment issued by Nova Scotia Environment.

Safe Food Handlers Certification

At least one person involved in the production or processing of value-added products should hold a valid Safe Food Handling Certificate.

This is required for producers making ready-to-eat products, prepared meals, baked goods, and similar items.

Grading

While formal grading is not required for most products, all products must be of **market-grade quality**—free from spoilage, major blemishes, pests, or other defects (unless otherwise specified, ie: seconds, B grade). HRFH reserves the right to return or refuse any product that does not meet its quality standards or customer expectations.

Certifications

Producers must provide copies of valid certifications (if applicable), including but not limited to:

- Organic certification
- Ocean Wise or other seafood sustainability designations
- Food safety certifications

Products sold with certified claims must have up-to-date records on file with the hub.

Pricing

Producers set their own prices. The Halifax Regional Food Hub adds a 25% mark up to the set price. This mark up supports the operational cost of running the food hub. Producers are encouraged to adjust their prices to reflect the administrative, marketing, and distribution work that the food hub assumes on their behalf. Prices must be submitted by the weekly product posting deadline.

If you want the consumer to pay a specific price divide that by 1.25. For example, if you want your item to cost the consumer \$5, divide by 1.25 = \$4.00

- HRFH reserves the right to consult with producers on pricing that is significantly above or below market norms.
- Producers are encouraged to factor in all production and delivery costs when pricing products.

Weekly Order Cycle

Vendor Product Posting

Listings should reflect **accurate availability and current pricing**. Vendors are responsible for managing inventory levels in the system.

If a vendor does not update their listings, previously posted products may be hidden or removed at the discretion of HRFH staff.

Receiving Order Confirmation

Deliveries and Receiving

Distribution

Billing and Payment

Troubleshooting

Packaging and Container Recycling

Product Refusal, Customer Complaint and Credits

Appendixes

Membership Application

Quick Start check-list

Ordering Software Guide & Troubleshooting

Weekly Flow Chart

Orders must be dropped off at specified drop off spots Monday and Thursday afternoon. Or delivered to the Food Hub no later than 9am Tuesday and Friday morning.