



Produce Department Manager

Job Description

Location: Blue Hill Co-op, Blue Hill, Maine

Status: Full-time | Hourly | Non-Exempt

Reports To: General Manager

Supervises: Produce department staff

Compensation: Level 4 pay scale, DOE

Benefits: Dental, IRA, store discount, paid time off (PTO), professional development

Meetings: Attendance at regular Manager Meetings required

About Blue Hill Co-op

Blue Hill Co-op has been rooted in the Blue Hill Peninsula since 1974, serving our community as a member-owned natural foods cooperative. We are proud to be part of one of the most vibrant local foods economies in Maine, partnering with hundreds of regional organic farmers and producers to bring exceptional food to our neighbors.

In August 2019 we opened a beautiful new storefront in the heart of Blue Hill — a space designed to reflect our values and deepen our connection to the community we serve. With annual sales now exceeding \$10 million and a dedicated team of roughly 80 staff, we continue to grow with purpose.

We believe the way food is grown, prepared, and shared matters. If that resonates with you, we'd love to hear from you.

Position Overview

The Produce Department Manager is one of the most visible and relationship-driven roles in the Co-op. Fresh produce is often the first thing our customers see and the clearest expression of our commitment to local, organic, and seasonally appropriate food. This role is responsible for every aspect of that expression — from the relationships we build with local growers to the way a display looks at 8am on a Tuesday.

The right candidate is a skilled produce professional who is also a genuine advocate for local and organic agriculture. They understand that buying from a nearby farm is not just a sourcing decision — it is an act of community investment. They lead their team with clarity and care, listen closely to customers and producers, and bring both operational discipline and seasonal creativity to everything they do.

Core Competencies

- **People Leadership:** Lead, develop, and support a produce team that takes pride in their work and feels valued in the Co-op.
- **Local & Organic Advocacy:** Champion local, organic, and sustainably grown produce — know your growers, know their practices, and bring that story to the floor.
- **Producer & Community Relations:** Build authentic, lasting relationships with local farmers, regional distributors, and the Co-op's member-owners.
- **Merchandising & Quality:** Maintain a department that is safe, beautiful, and worthy of the farmers who grew what's in it.
- **Financial Stewardship:** Manage inventory, margins, and labor with discipline and transparency.
- **Communication:** Communicate openly with your team, peer managers, and the General Manager.

Key Responsibilities

Team Leadership & Development

- Recruit, hire, train, schedule, and supervise all produce department staff.
- Foster a positive, inclusive, and mission-aligned team culture where staff feel informed, supported, and proud of the work they do.
- Conduct regular performance check-ins and annual evaluations; support staff growth and recognize strong performance.
- Ensure all staff are trained in proper produce handling, display, rotation, labeling, and food safety procedures.
- Develop and maintain useful, up-to-date department training materials and SOPs.
- Facilitate regular department meetings to share information, set expectations, and build team cohesion.
- Address performance concerns promptly and fairly, in coordination with the General Manager and People & Culture Manager.

Local & Organic Sourcing

- Actively prioritize sourcing from local Maine and regional New England farmers, especially those using organic or sustainable growing practices.
- Build and nurture direct relationships with local growers — visit farms when possible, understand their seasons and challenges, and advocate for their products on our shelves.
- Seek out new local sourcing opportunities continuously; be a connector between the Co-op and the farming community we are part of.
- Ensure the department's product mix reflects the Co-op's values: local first, organic whenever possible, and always transparently sourced.
- Stay current on organic certification standards, sustainable agriculture practices, and regional food system developments.
- Communicate sourcing stories to staff so they can share them with customers authentically.

Buying, Pricing & Inventory

- Manage all purchasing for the produce department, including ordering from UNFI, local farms, and direct delivery accounts.
- Set prices to achieve margin goals while remaining fair to both customers and producers; negotiate terms with vendors thoughtfully.
- Maintain optimal inventory levels based on sales data, seasonal availability, and anticipated demand; minimize shrink through disciplined rotation and ordering.

- Process special orders, pre-orders, and product holds according to established procedures; communicate clearly with customers and staff.
- Coordinate with the Receiving Coordinator on delivery schedules, invoice reconciliation, and back room organization.
- Maintain accurate product data, pricing, and labeling in the Catapult POS system.

Merchandising & Department Standards

- Ensure the produce department is consistently attractive, well-stocked, clean, and inviting — a display worthy of the farmers behind it.
- Create seasonal, visually appealing displays that highlight local and organic offerings and tell the story of where food comes from.
- Coordinate with the Marketing Administrator on signage, producer features, and promotional programs.
- Maintain all refrigeration cases, produce sinks, and walk-in cooler on a regular cleaning and maintenance schedule; report equipment concerns promptly.
- Implement and monitor proper food safety, sanitation, and labeling practices throughout the department at all times.
- Ensure compliance with applicable state, local, and federal regulations governing produce handling and food safety.

Financial Management

- Develop, implement, and achieve approved department budgets including sales, margin, and labor targets.
- Monitor financial performance regularly; maintain working knowledge of sales numbers, margin reports, and labor expense ratios.
- Keep accurate departmental records including financial records, vendor information, and internal documentation.
- Manage labor scheduling in alignment with budget, sales patterns, and operational needs.

Customer & Community Engagement

- Provide and model warm, knowledgeable, and engaged customer service on the produce floor every day.
- Respond promptly and professionally to customer concerns, requests, and product inquiries.
- Listen actively to member-owner feedback and community requests to inform buying decisions and keep the department responsive.
- Participate in Co-op events, producer showcases, and community-facing initiatives that celebrate local food and agriculture.
- Represent Blue Hill Co-op's values and mission in all vendor, grower, and community relationships.

Qualifications

Required

- 3+ years of produce management or department leadership experience in a retail grocery setting.
- Genuine passion for local food systems, organic agriculture, and values-driven retail.
- Proven ability to build and lead a positive, high-performing team.
- Strong knowledge of produce handling, quality assessment, rotation, and food safety best practices.
- Excellent communication and relationship-building skills with staff, vendors, growers, and customers.

- Solid understanding of retail buying, inventory management, and margin fundamentals.
- Ability to work a flexible schedule including early mornings, weekends, and occasional evenings.
- Ability to lift up to 50 pounds frequently and work in cold environments including walk-in coolers.

Preferred

- Established relationships with local and regional produce growers in Maine or New England.
- Experience in a cooperative, natural foods, or mission-driven retail organization.
- Familiarity with organic certification standards, sustainable agriculture, and farm-direct sourcing.
- Experience with Catapult POS, UNFI ordering systems, or comparable retail tools.
- Knowledge of NCG programs or cooperative retail benchmarking.

Physical Requirements

- Frequent standing, walking, bending, reaching, and lifting throughout the shift.
- Ability to lift and move up to 50 pounds; occasional heavier lifting with assistance.
- Regular exposure to cold temperatures in walk-in cooler and refrigerated cases.
- Tasting and sensory assessment of produce quality as needed.

Who You Are

You know your way around a walk-in cooler and you’ve probably charmed more than one farmer into giving you the first pick of the season. You care about where food comes from — not as a talking point, but as a genuine conviction — and you want to work somewhere that shares it. You build a beautiful department not because someone is watching, but because it matters. You listen to your team, you listen to your customers, and you make time to listen to the growers who are out in the field every day making our shelves possible. You’re ready to lead, and you want to do it somewhere the mission is real.

Acknowledgment

By signing below, the employee acknowledges receipt of this job description and confirms their understanding of the responsibilities, expectations, and standards of the Produce Department Manager role at Blue Hill Co-op.

Employee Name (print): _____ **Date:** _____

Employee Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Manager Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Blue Hill Co-op is an equal opportunity employer and cooperative.