

CULTIVATING LOCAL CHECKLIST

Social media

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Starting or diversifying a farm business requires careful planning, especially when exploring direct sales channels. Through the Cultivating Local project, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has developed a series of nine checklists to support you in your direct-to-consumer sales journey.

Choosing your social media platform(s)

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Tailor your choice to your audience. For example, Facebook is most popular for adults over 35, Instagram and TikTok are more popular with younger audiences, and YouTube is a primary source of educational food information across all age demographics.

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Time management. Ensure that you can realistically manage the profiles attached to your business.

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Determine what kind of content you want to create. Different platforms suit different styles of content creation: Instagram - visual content; Facebook - community posts, updates, event creation; TikTok - short videos; YouTube - educational videos and vlogs; X - short text updates.

Social media best practices

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Contact information. Always include links to your website and information on how to place orders/purchase your products on your social media.

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Quality visuals and accommodating content. Use consistent branding and real photos of your farm, products and customer stories to build trust. Also use simple language that is accessible for all audiences. Try tools like Canva to create appealing content easily.

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Be intentional and consistent with your posts. Posting consistently, tailoring themes to seasonal needs, and reusing content across platforms will make your message stronger. Try tools like Buffer and Hootsuite for scheduling your posts.



Building engagement



Encourage engagement by setting aside time to respond to comments, direct messages, and to ask for questions/comments from viewers.



Boost visibility by encouraging shares, tags, referrals, and contests, or by partnering with other farms, related businesses or influencers.



Networking and skill building. Follow other farms, food businesses, or local pages for ideas. Check out resources including marketing influencers or businesses in your area and LinkedIn training courses.

Set goals and track progress



Determine why you are creating content and track progress by using tools like Google Analytics to monitor key performance indicators. This will allow you to see which social media platforms are driving things like traffic and purchasing.



As your business grows, consider marketing new goods and services on a separate account to tailor your content to the appropriate audience. For example, if your pick-your-own flower shop starts offering wedding flowers, consider a separate account to reach engaged couples (and link it to your main business accounts).

In response to consumer demand and growing interest in opportunities to sell local, OFA's Cultivating Local project has developed a series of nine checklists, nine recorded workshops, a resource hub, and a final report. To learn more, visit: ofa.on.ca/cultivating-local/



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