

CULTIVATING LOCAL CHECKLIST

Selling your products online

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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.

Your online presence



Start by creating an online presence with a website and/or social media platform. Choose between building an online storefront with a website builder that has an E-commerce feature (e.g., WordPress, WooCommerce, or Shopify) or hiring a web developer. If you are looking for a farmer specific online selling platform, check out Local Line.



To create a website, you will need to **purchase a domain name**. This is done by choosing a registrar (e.g. CIRA, GoDaddy), creating your domain name, selecting a domain extension (e.g. .org, .ca, .com), and providing contact and payment information to register it. Your preferred domain may not be available, so think of more than one option that fits your farm.



Important features of an online storefront include: a shopping cart, secure server (a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) which most website builders have), payment process, being user-friendly, and syncing with your inventory.



Check out the **key regulations for selling online in Ontario** by visiting the “e-business security, privacy, and legal requirements” page at feddevontario.canada.ca.



The ordering process



Make it easy to order. You are required to list your products, prices, and payment instructions clearly under Ontario's Consumer Protection Act. Use photos and descriptions that help people understand your product.



Ensure the payment process is straightforward and be clear about any additional fees. Consider using upfront payment methods and use a secure, trusted checkout system like Square or Shopify.



Be transparent about your return, refund, and cancellation policies as required under the Ontario Consumer Protection Act.



Product delivery. Choose if you will offer pick-ups, meet-up locations, or delivery, and communicate these options clearly. Tools like Optimal Route can help with planning delivery routes and keep customers informed on delivery progress.

Communications strategy



Communicate regularly. Let customers know what is in season, about your new product launches, what's available and the options for payment. Consider creating key website pages to allow the customer to learn about your business.



Direct your social media engagement to your storefront or website. Some social media platforms, like Instagram, also allow you to incorporate a storefront directly on the social media app.



Review what works and adjust as you go. Ensure customers have a way to communicate with you and don't be afraid to ask for feedback.

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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