

CULTIVATING LOCAL CHECKLIST

Selling to restaurants and retailers

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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.

Understand the market and client needs

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Research target restaurants and retailers. Consider building and maintaining relationships with key decision makers in the industry (procurement managers, chefs, or store managers). Don't be afraid to call potential buyers or visit local restaurants to discuss opportunities.

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Consider working with distributors that specialize in connecting restaurants and retailers with local products. For help explore “placing your product (distribution)” on Ontario.ca.

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Understand the supply chain and plan your logistics. Ensure that you can provide consistent product availability - keeping in mind seasonality and demand fluctuations. Create a schedule for the production, packaging, and delivery of your products.

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Diversify your buyers to prevent over-reliance on a single client. Follow up with buyers regularly to ensure satisfaction with your products and adjust your products based on demand trends.



Preparing to sell



Comply with food safety requirements, labelling regulations, and relevant certifications. Ensure proper labelling, handling, and transportation procedures are in place. Be aware of any other regulatory needs your clients may need you to meet. Use the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's "Industry Labelling Tool" at inspection.canada.ca for help complying with labelling standards. Refer to checklists four in the Cultivating Local project for value-added food tips and check out "O. Reg 493/17: Food Premises" for more information on food safety.



Marketing. Develop a compelling story about your farm and create corresponding market materials including brochures, social media, and product photos.



Plan for demand and seasonality. Ensure flexibility by understanding your product's peak demand times and work with clients to plan orders in advance.

Pricing



Offer clear pricing and be open to negotiation. Be clear on your pricing structure, keeping competitive rates for bulk orders. Be prepared to negotiate terms, including pricing flexibility for large or long-term orders placed in advance of busy seasons. **Visit the "daily wholesale price reports"** page on agriculture.canada.ca to find daily market commodity prices for different produce and inform your pricing strategy.

Network and collaborate with industry groups



Explore local food festivals to **increase exposure and meet possible buyers** who might be looking to source more local products.



Explore resources like the Culinary Tourism Alliance, FeastON, and the Ontario "Eat Local" Groups page at sustainontario.ca.

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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