

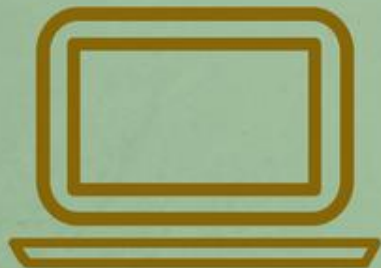


NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets

From the NCGT Social & Online Media Guide for Food Producers

FARM & FOOD BUSINESS GUIDE TO FACEBOOK



Created by Enoch Sarku, NCGT Local Foods Supply Chain Apprentice,
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United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

Important Notes about this Resource Guide

These guides are designed for farmers, advocates, market managers, Extension agents, and others who work with farm and food businesses. Each guide outlines step-by-step instructions for utilizing various social and online media to market farm and food businesses, not only for direct-to-consumer markets but also because wholesale buyers increasingly want their farmers to have an online presence for co-marketing purposes.

This guide demonstrates how to use Facebook as a social media platform to promote a farm or food business. Facebook is one of the most widely-used social media platforms across the globe. Other social media platforms are also available, such as Twitter, Pinterest, and many others.

The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement of that product/service, nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2013-68004-20363. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Advice in this guide includes tips from a local accounts representative for a regional grocery store chain, to help farmers and small food manufacturers grow their online presence and drive customers to the stores where their products are sold.



About Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website, also accessed through a phone application (app), intended to connect friends, family, and business associates. It is the largest of the social media sites in the world. Users create a profile page that shows their information to friends and friends' networks. Increasingly, businesses are utilizing Facebook as a free platform for promoting and marketing their products and services.

After creating a profile, many users create pages for their food businesses to use to keep in touch with customers. The profile typically includes a Status, Location, Friends in other networks, Photos, Notes, Groups, and Wall.

Facebook is free: you can set up a profile, add content, and connect with others at no cost. They do offer online advertising services at a cost, but those are additional services.

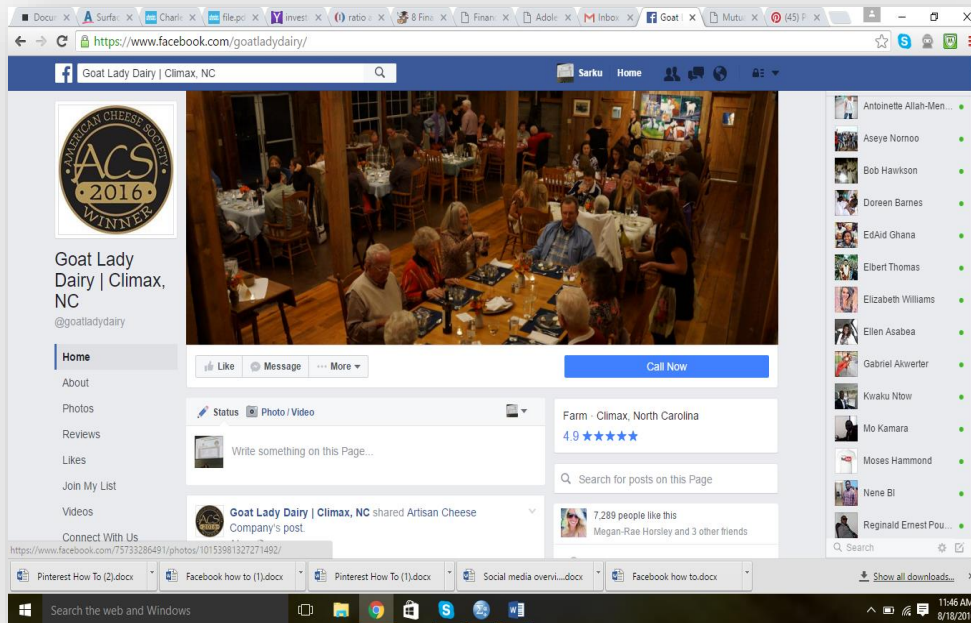
Buyers' Tip

Facebook has over 1.5 billion users worldwide.

If your business is not on Facebook, you are missing a vibrant, exciting element of modern business marketing. Once your profile is set up and you begin adding images, you will be on your way to a whole new world of online market promotion. Buyers love to see farm and food businesses with well-developed social media: it helps us to promote you to our audiences, and helps your customers know where to access your products!

Facebook for Farm and Food Businesses

- Facebook allows you to **send messages about your farm activities** and **post status updates** on what is being planted for the season and what is ready for harvest, and to keep in touch with your customers and the community.
- You can also share different types of content such as farm **photos, market day announcements, live action videos** such as new baby goats on the farm, cheese making and step by step recipes are a few ideas.



- Eventually your 'friends' will also post to your site. Perhaps showing their kids devouring your strawberries, the fresh peach pie they made after visiting your farm stand or their visit to your pick your own operation. Their friends will see their posts and like them, creating a virtual cascade of 'likes' and potential new customers.
- Unlike email, Instagram or instant messaging, which are relatively private, the things you share on Facebook are **more public**, which means they'll usually be seen by lots of other people.

One example of a farm's Facebook page is Goat Lady Dairy in Climax, NC:
www.facebook.com/goatladydairy/

Setting Up Your Facebook Profile

- ❑ **Create a Facebook account.** In order to create an account for your farm or food business, you need to create a personal account by signing up at <https://www.facebook.com/>.
 - ❑ Go to www.facebook.com and select “Sign Up for Facebook.” Follow the prompts to provide your personal information and create your account.

- ❑ After your account has been created, **create a Page for your business.** (This will keep your personal and business information separate, and Facebook Pages allow you to do more business-related promotion than a personal profile will.)
 - ❑ Visit facebook.com/pages/create, or go to your profile and select “Create a Page” on the left sidebar. This link can be accessed either from your computer or on a smartphone.
 - ❑ A Signup page is displayed: provide your farm or food business details.
 - ❑ Click “Create Page” and note the link at the top of the new page; this will be what you use to share your page on marketing and promotional items.

Before You Begin:

Take the time to thoughtfully prepare a short biography of yourself, your family, and your farm. A good target is between 250 and 350 words.

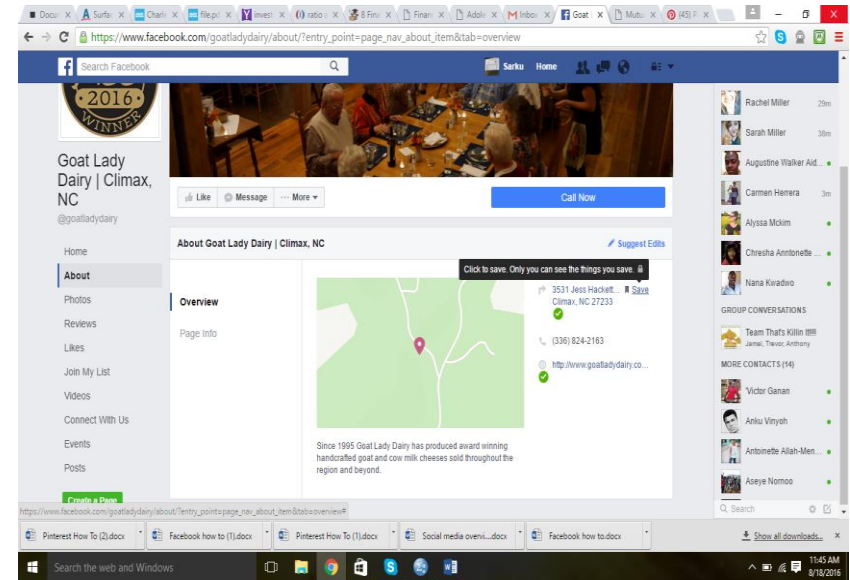
A good bio tells the story of your business, places it in the context of your particular geographic area, and explains your motivations for being a part of the larger local food system.

This is a place to brag! Tell the story of who you are and why people would support your business. Local food consumers want to build relationships with their producers, and this is the best place to start.

Adding Content and Images to your Facebook Profile

Your profile will look a little bare at first. Add images, contact information, and content to spice things up.

- ❑ To add a cover image – that shows up across the top of your profile – click the Camera icon in the lower left corner and add an image from your computer or smartphone. Tip: use great photos that display your farm or your food product!
- ❑ To add other images in an album, select “Images,” then select “Add New Album,” and follow the prompts to upload pictures.
- ❑ To add a single image, you can create a post: from the main profile page, type your description of the image in the status box. Then select the image icon to attach a photo, and hit “send.”



Use content on your page to showcase how to reach you and what you do.

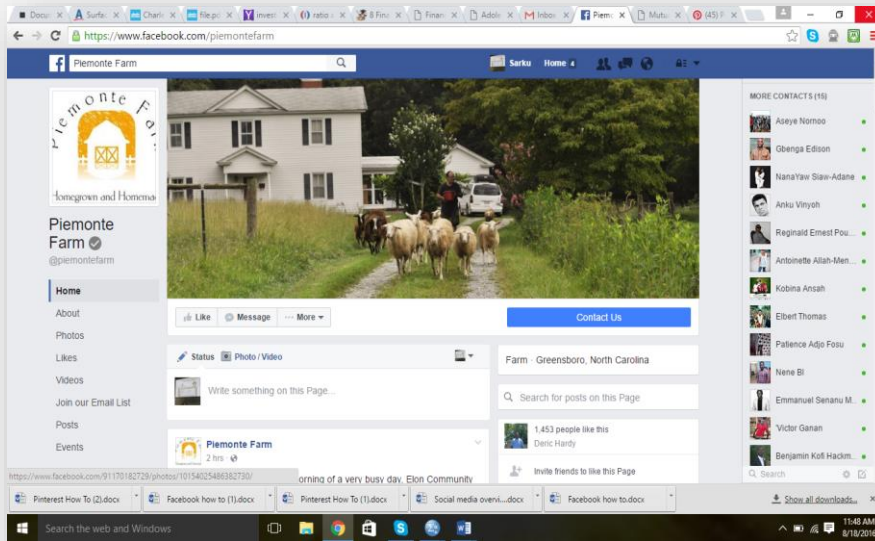
Provide a mapped location, your phone number, and your website address.

Include any market days, hours of operation, or days open for tours.

Utilizing your Facebook Profile for Marketing

Using Facebook, you can

- ❑ Share photos of daily farm operations and products to sell
- ❑ Share drought and disease conditions
- ❑ Create a forum for discussions about farming methods, tools or techniques, and at-home gardening tips
- ❑ Tell stories from the farm, or about your family and staff
- ❑ Share what makes your products special: how you farm and what your food business or farm does that is unique



Tip: Post at least once a week to make sure you keep people engaged! You can even schedule posts ahead of time by using the clock icon at the bottom of your post – select the time and date and Facebook will publish when you choose.

Idea Box

Post photos of early spring planting or all hands on deck during harvest time.

During your crop's primary season, post the varieties for sale each day, plus recipes, photos, or funny anecdotes from customers.

Post pictures of your food product in the process of being made – fresh vegetables waiting to be cut, pureed fruits, or other colorful steps in the process.

“In the fall, we sell pumpkins, and the farm is especially picturesque, so we use a lot of pictures. Many families come back year after year with their kids to take photos, and many are kind enough to share them with us on Facebook.”

“It's great fun for our Facebook fans to see photos of their friends and neighbors. We also ask people to post photos of the jack-o-lanterns they've carved – we've seen some really creative designs!”

Joining Groups & Networks and Adding Other Users

Facebook groups give you an opportunity to network with your industry peers as well as potential customers. They offer higher visibility for your brand, and networking with peers. You can join up to 6,000 Facebook groups, but focusing on a few where you know you'll be active regularly is best.

Joining A Facebook Group

Before you join a group, make sure it's a good fit.

- If it's a closed group, you won't be able to see activity until you join. If you join and find the group isn't for you, it's okay to leave the group.
- Read the "About" section. This will give you an idea of whether it's right for you.
- Many groups have rules about what can be posted.
- Search names of Groups you may know. This could include farm groups, or vegetable producers' groups, or food business groups that you are interested in.
- Join groups that your customers are joining too.
- Once you find a group you want to join, send a request to be part of that group. If your request is accepted, you will have access to the group.



Community Food Strategies maintains a group for North Carolina Food Councils & Networks that many farmers and food businesses join.
www.facebook.com/groups/NCfoodcouncils

Make life easier by adding other users!

Have a great farm or business staff? Is your partner better at taking photos? Add other users to your Facebook page so that multiple people can post images and content. Make sure it's someone you trust.

- Click Settings at the top of your Page.
- Click Page Roles in the left column.
- Type a name or email in the box: ...
- Click Editor to select a role from the dropdown menu.
- Click Save and enter your password to confirm.

More Resources for Building Web and Social Media Platforms

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has agents in your county who can help you navigate marketing for your business. Find your local county center at:

<https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center/>.

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has an Agribusiness Development Division that houses resources for business development:

<http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/agribiz/index.htm>.

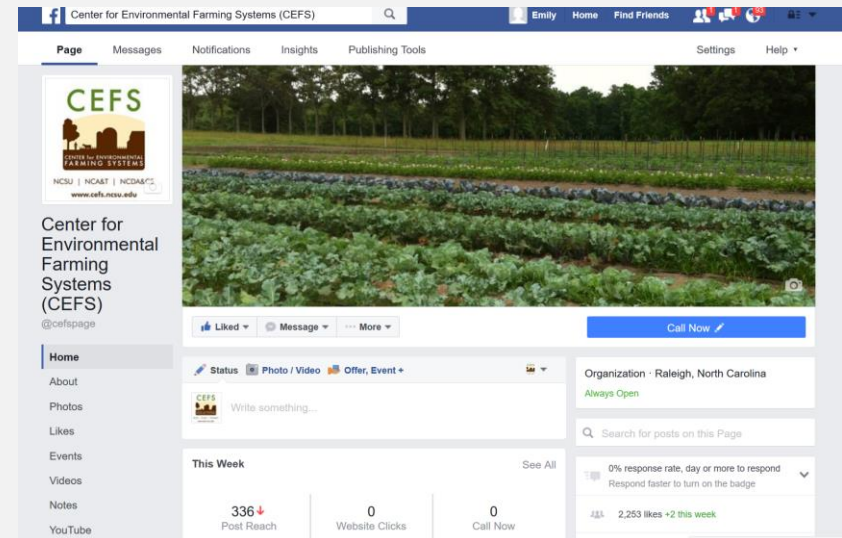
The Center for Environmental Farming Systems' NC Growing Together Project provides a number of resources for farmers who need to build online marketing in order to work with wholesale buyers:

<https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/for-producers/>.

NC Cooperative Extension has a step-by-step guide to marketing your agritourism program with social media:

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/using-social-media-to-market-agritourism>.

SSAWG (Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group) provides a guide for internet marketing (sales through your website) at: <http://www.ssawg.org/internet-marketing/>.



CEFS uses its Facebook page to connect with and showcase farmers; share information about projects, programs, and upcoming events; and co-promote our partners across the state.
www.facebook.com/cefspage

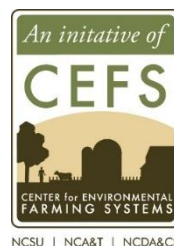
About the NC Growing Together Project

NC Growing Together is a five year (2013—2017) USDA-funded project in North Carolina.

NCGT aims to bring more locally-produced foods into mainstream markets, strengthening the economics of small to mid-size farm and fishing operations and their communities.

NCGT is an initiative of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, a partnership of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T), North Carolina State University (NC State), and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS).

For more resources aimed at helping local producers access mainstream markets, please visit www.ncgrowingtogether.org.



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