

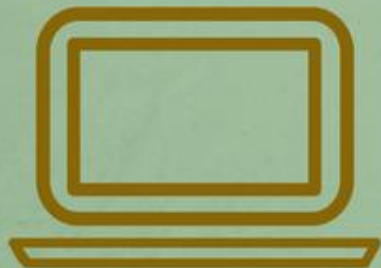
NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets

NCSU | NCA&T | NCDA&CS

From the NCGT Social & Online Media Guide for Food Producers

FARM & FOOD BUSINESS GUIDE TO PINTEREST



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



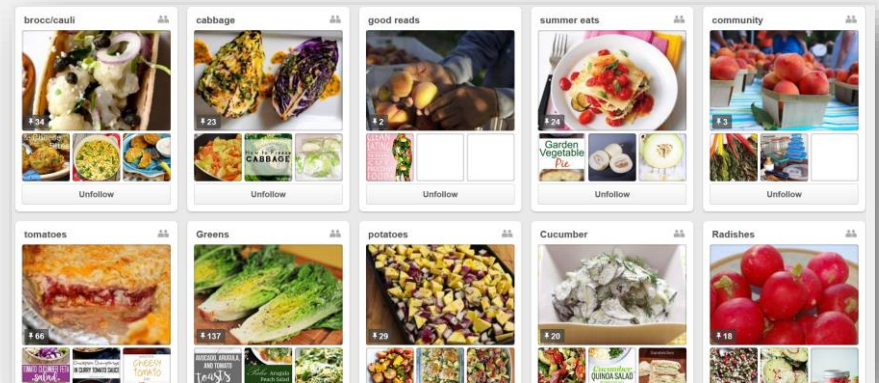
About Pinterest

Pinterest is a social media tool designed to share images. It can be accessed on the web or from a smartphone or tablet application (app).

Farmers and food businesses are great candidates for Pinterest, because the image-based platform encourages beautiful photos – and **what's prettier than a farm or a freshly made local food product?**

Farms and food businesses can share photos of their unique activities, such as farm tours, pick your own, field days, and other events, as well as their products, staff, and fields or facilities.

Pinterest 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.



Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative in the Sandhills Region of NC has a full Pinterest board – with all kinds of different products, recipes, stories, and more.
<https://www.pinterest.com/sf2t/>

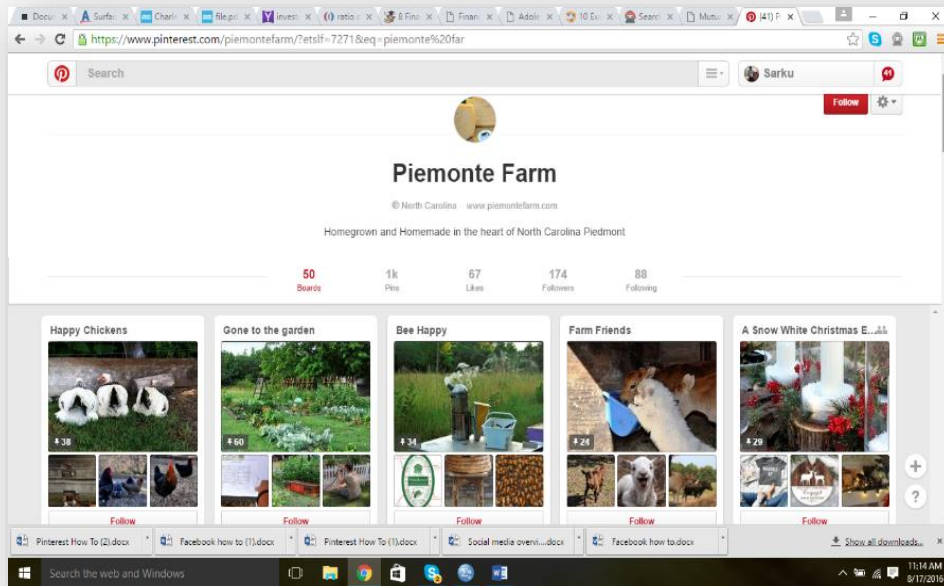
Buyers' Tip

Pinterest is a beautiful way to let the photos of your farm or food business speak a thousand words!

Pinterest has more than 100 million users and the most pinned categories are Food & Drink (good news for farmers and food businesses!), Crafts, Home Décor, Holidays, and Events.

Pinterest for Farm and Food Businesses

- You can save images to Boards, which are collections of images around a central theme. Some farms have a board for each type of item they produce – like honey, vegetables, or meats – or boards for different operations on their farm – like fields, processing, or the farm stand.
- Pinterest is also a great place to see what other farmers or are making, selling and doing to promote their businesses. This can give you new ideas, keep you connected to other farmers and food businesses around the world, and provide a tool for seeing what is working for others using Pinterest marketing.



One example of a farm's Pinterest page is Piemonte Farm in Guilford County:
<https://www.pinterest.com/piemontefarm/>.

- People will “follow” your Boards on Pinterest, which means they’ll see new pins as you post them. The more followers you have, the larger the audience for your photos!
- You can “follow” other Boards – like those of other farms, your farmers’ market, other food businesses or your local shared kitchen. This will help you see new ideas, and help you find new followers!
- Unlike email, Instagram or instant messaging, which are relatively private, the things you share on Pinterest are **more public**, which means they'll usually be seen by lots of other people.

Setting Up Your Pinterest Profile

- ❑ Create an account and choose a username & password for your business at <https://www.pinterest.com/>. This is a simple process requiring just an email address.
- ❑ Make sure you feature your business name on your profile for maximum exposure. Use your business name as your username, or change your profile name to your business name after your profile is set up.
- ❑ Add a paragraph about who you are and what you're interested in to the "About" section on your Pinterest profile. It will show up right under your photo, and will be one way that users can find out more about you.
- ❑ Connect your account with your Facebook and Twitter accounts. Not only will it help you gain followers, but making this connection adds social media icons under your profile picture that link to your Facebook and Twitter profiles: <https://help.pinterest.com/en/articles/share-pins-and-boards-facebook-or-twitter#Web>
- ❑ Use the plus sign (+) to upload images or videos you take with your phone or camera. Add your website URL to your pictures, so people can go straight to your farm or business: <http://wendymoore.net/2013/05/how-to-add-a-url-to-an-image-on-pinterest/>.
- ❑ After uploading, choose a Board name (for example, a board name like "Market Days" could contain photos of your stand at the farmer's market with a customer. The board will be created when you click on "Create."
- ❑ Next, click on your username to display the board you just created and "choose send to your other social media accounts" – this will transfer your image to Facebook or Twitter automatically!

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.

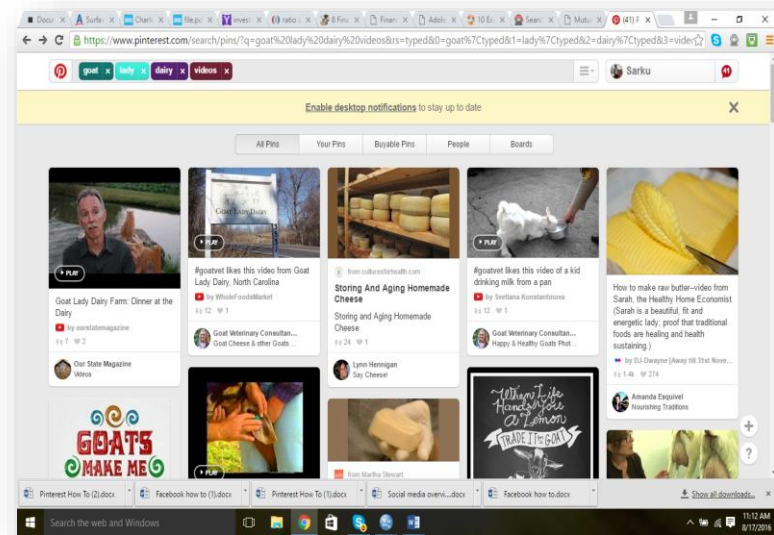
Adding Images and Content to your Pinterest Profile

You take a photo (either with your phone, or by downloading one from your camera on to your computer).

You save a photo to Pinterest (usually to a board you name; boards are collections of Pins organized by different themes, like Recipes to Try, Farmers Market Experiences, or Strawberry Harvesting).

- ✓ When you save something, more people get a chance to see it.
- ✓ In order to drive traffic back to your site, save other pins as well as your own.
- ✓ When they want to see or do more, people click Pins to visit the website it came from. When your website is connected to your Pins, then customers can check out your site, arrange a farm tour, buy products from your online store, sign up for your newsletter, or find other ways to connect with you (like following you on other social media accounts, or finding out when you will be at the local farmers' market).

You build up your business by continuing to add images and photos, helping people discover your farm and food business and learn the story behind your products and services.



Use content on your page to showcase what you do!

Make sure your profile includes your website, email address, and other social media accounts. Make it easy for people to find you once they've seen your Pin!

Utilizing your Pinterest Profile for Marketing

- ❑ Pin content steadily, instead of in huge bursts, to maximize exposure and engagement.
- ❑ Come up with creative and interesting board names based around themes, like Making Cheese, Baby Goats, Harvest Day, Canning Day, or Pick Your Own). Names get shared whenever you pin something, so make them enticing. Be creative — you need to keep your board names short. There isn't a lot of room for long descriptive titles.
- ❑ Mix pinning your own unique finds with doing lots of "repinning," which is repeating someone else's pin to your followers. The person whose image you repin gets notified via email, and they also get a credit on your pin, which increases their following. A farmer could share pins of his neighbor's new barn or a pin of the farmer's markets he attends. Encourage others to repin your images, too!
- ❑ Pin videos! Pinterest has a special section just for pinned videos, and there are far fewer videos than images on Pinterest at this point, so use them to distinguish yourself. Any YouTube video is easy to pin.
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/221731981625113904/>
- ❑ When you pin an image, add a description under it. Be smart about descriptions — a description will stay with an image as it gets repined all over the Pinterest world. If the image is something from your own site, use your business name in the description.
- ❑ Your customers simply have to search your name on Pinterest and follow you to receive updates. They can follow your boards or pins or any ideas that interest them.

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."

"It's great fun for our 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!"

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/>.



The Biltmore Estate's Winery is one of several in North Carolina that maintain an active Pinterest page, showcasing their vineyards, location, events, food pairings, and more.

<https://www.pinterest.com/biltmorewines/?etslf=5984&eq=biltmore>

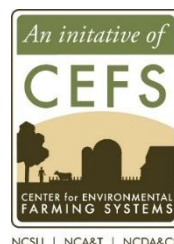
About the NC Growing Together Project

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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