

Social Media and Online Marketing: An Introduction

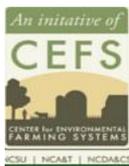
There are many ways for farm and food businesses to take advantage of the free marketing tools available through social media and online marketing. Free websites can be built using Wix or other websites in a user-friendly setting. Social media, such as Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram, and other networks, can reach hundreds or even thousands of people with information about your products.

Using these types of tools correctly will not only help you build your customer base and your brand loyalty – they can help you sell more products into wholesale markets as well. This brief guide provides a look at specific tools for working with wholesale markets to increase demand for your products through social media and online markets. Three other NCGT publications provide step-by-step guides to Facebook, Pinterest, and Wix, designed especially for farmers and food businesses (available at www.ncgrowingtogether.org/#for-producers).

Building the Basics: Your Wholesale Marketing Package

Wholesale buyers who work to include local products in their portfolio want to see those products succeed. Often, they have access to a large customer base with a significant geographic spread, and they can leverage that network to market you and your farm. Here are a few things every farm should build and manage as they begin partnerships with wholesale buyers:

- 1. An online presence.** Keeping an *updated primary online presence* – whether that is a website, a Facebook page, a blog, or another page – is critical for directing online traffic to your site and providing them more information. Although you may have more than one online platform, it's important to keep your primary presence as updated and comprehensive as possible. Include information such as where your farm is located, how to contact you, what you grow or produce, and where your products are found. If you offer on-farm hours, make sure your hours are listed there, along with an email address and a phone number.
- 2. A great farm and farmer bio.** 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. The bio should talk about who you are, where you are, your motivations for being part of the larger local food system, and what you've chosen to grow or produce. This is a place to brag on yourself and your farm, and to tell the story of who you are: consumers want that relationship with the people from whom they buy food!
- 3. Pictures that speak a thousand words.** That old saying is especially true for food: pictures of food are usually beautiful, and they speak directly to everyone! Make sure you have one or two good pictures of your product in each phase: from the plants in the ground, to the harvest, to the market table or stand display, to the plate. Showcase a few others of your farm, your family working on the farm, or other unique elements, like animals, creeks, orchards, or other focal points. You don't have to pay for professional pictures, but find someone who's handy with a smartphone camera if you can, and make sure they're reduced in size so that they can easily be shared online (usually no larger than 256-425 kb is a good photo size for sharing online).



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SOCIAL & ONLINE MEDIA GUIDE FOR FARM & FOOD BUSINESSES IN WHOLESALE MARKETS

Additional Information

NCGT has created a Social & Online Media Guide that contains step-by-step instructions for building a farm or food business website and setting up various types of social media accounts. For more information, visit www.ncgrowingtogether.org.

Getting Started: A Glossary of Social Media & Online Marketing Terms

– This symbol represents a tag for categorization on Twitter, also called a hashtag (a symbol placed directly in front of a word or words to tag a post on Twitter).

Blog – Short for “weblog,” this is a special kind of website for self-publishing, often done by the owner of the site, with a space reserved for comments.

Categories – Ways to organize content on a site, especially blogs. One typical way to store both current and archival blog posts is by an alphabetical list of topical categories.

Content – Any text, image, video, audio, app or other material published on the Internet for audience consumption.

Dashboard – Any area of administrative control for operating applications, especially social media settings, blogging software, and user profiles for websites that offer multiple customization options.

Facebook – A dominant, free-access social-networking site which is available to companies and any person 13 years or older.

Friends – Individuals connected to one another’s profiles on a social networking site, most frequently used with Facebook.

HTML – Hypertext markup language (HTML) refers to the text-based language which is used to create websites.

Hyperlink – Known as “link” for short, a hyperlink is a word or phrase which is clickable and takes the visitor to another Web page. This page can be within the same site or on a completely different site.

IP Address – This series of numbers and periods represents the unique numeric address for each Internet user.

Landing Page – A stand-alone Web page that a user “lands” on, commonly after visiting a paid search-engine listing or following a link in an email newsletter. This kind of page often is designed with a very specific purpose for visitors.

LinkedIn – A business-oriented social networking site for professionals. LinkedIn allows members to connect with other users on the network, share status updates, and participate in groups and chats, although with a career focus.

Listings – A listing is a website’s presence in a search engine or directory.

PDF – “Portable Document Format” is a type of file for viewing documents, created by Adobe.

Podcast – A series of audio or video content which can be downloaded and listened to/viewed offline

Profile – A profile is a personal page within a social network created by a user for sharing with others on the network. The profile provides basic biographical information and often links to the profiles of the user’s friends/connections.

Ranking(s) – The position of a website’s listing(s) in search-engine results pages. The higher a rank, the more visible a page is.

Search Engine – A website that allows users to search the Web for specific information by entering keywords.

Search-Engine Optimization (SEO) – The process of using website analysis and copy/design/structural adjustments to ensure both the highest possible positioning on desired search-engine results pages and the best experience for a given site’s users.

Social Media – Refers to all online tools and places that are available for users to generate content and communicate through the Internet. These media include blogs, social networks, file-hosting sites and bookmarking sites, among others.

Social Network – A site or community on the Internet where members can interact with one another and share content. This term is more or less used interchangeably with “social media” in reference to Internet marketing.

Subscribing – The process of opting in to an email newsletter or adding an RSS feed to an aggregator.

Tag – A keyword (often in a string) which is attached to a blog post, tweet (see “hashtag”), social bookmark or media file.

Tweet – A “tweet” is the special name for an entry made on the microblogging site, Twitter. Up to 140 characters long, tweets can consist of status updates, news, commentary, or anything an individual wants to communicate to followers.

URL – “Universal” or “uniform resource locator,” this string of letters and numbers separated by periods and slashes is unique for every Internet page. A page’s address must be written in this form in order to be found on the World Wide Web.

Webinar – A Web-based seminar containing audio and video, often in the form of a slide deck.

YouTube – The most popular video-hosting and video-sharing site, it is also currently the largest search engine after Google. Users can view, upload and comment on video content for no charge.

Definitions provided by www.fathomdelivers.com/glossary, where more information is available.