



Components of a Local Food System: Cooperatives & Retail Distribution



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Starting & Sustaining Great Relationships



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Lesson 1:

Know Your Niche

*Take broad goals and ground them in something simple and achievable



Serve Your

Mission Eastern Carolina Organics was founded to cultivate a sustainable food system by providing a viable production and distribution network to our customers and farmers.

distribution

We serve consumers who aren't going to farmers markets & CSAs and the growers who want to produce the volume to feed the wholesale



Lesson 2:

Honesty is the best policy

*If you don't know- ask.

*Buyers *should* be your best teachers.



Lesson 3:

Start With What You Grow Well (and like to grow)



Use Teamwork & Collaboration

- Identify supply opportunities
 - Consider crops, farmers, equipment, labor
 - Consider variety vs specialty production; compare demand with distance to market
- Pricing
 - Calculate costs of production
 - Conduct market research (surveys + comp shopping)



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Lesson 4:

Survey Your Market

- *Start Simple- What crops are they looking for?
- *Protect the Community- have they talked to other farms about these crops this season?
 - *What price range can they generally pay?
- *What weekly volume would they generally need?



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Lesson 5:

Don't Over-promise!

- *Research if the acreage & labor can match the price range
- *If so, follow up with what harvest window you expect to be able to deliver these items
- * Also confirm in advance: weekly harvest volume, variety preferences, packaging needs



Lesson 6:

Make a Realistic Schedule

- *Advanced Notice
- *Pricing Check-in
- *Availability Notification
- *Order Deadline
- *Confirming Orders
- *Delivery Days/Times
- *Payment Terms



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Lesson 7:

Be ready for anything...
and persist!

- * Anticipate and Over-communicate Problems
 - *Crop Surprises—deal ASAP!
 - *Errors—deal ASAP!



Lesson 8:

The “little things” are very, very big

- *Host farm tours
- *Visit the warehouse and stores, talk to all depts/levels
- *Offer ads/sales
- *Thank them for support in terms of \$\$
- *Offer to conduct marketing demos



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Lesson 9:

Recognize we're building a movement and changing a system

- *Typical business rules don't always apply
- *Typical farming rules don't always apply
- *Keep in mind *all* of the components of a LFS



Lesson 10:

Surround yourself with people you like and trust

* Integrity is especially important in a value-based business



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