



HOW TO USE

# Farmers Markets to Grow Faster Online

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# Introduction

The traditional model for many Farms to sell directly to consumers has been through Farmer's Markets. Customers come to a centralized location and meet local Farmers face-to-face, making it easy to create personal connections and sell your Farm products on hand.

While more Americans are increasingly aware of the importance of supporting local Farmers and accessing sustainably grown food, the attendance at farmer's markets has been steadily declining. With spotty attendance, unpredictable outcomes, and reliance on several external factors (e.g., good weather), many Farmers are eager to expand their reach and build more stable recurring revenue.

To grow your business and ensure long-term success, it's essential that Farms meet buyers' expectations of convenience to purchase from your Farm products anytime, anywhere. The most successful Farmers use markets as an avenue to grow their online business, doubling (and tripling) their average order size with larger online purchases, driving more consistent Farm sales, and attracting a bigger, more loyal customer base.

This eBook is intended to equip Farmers with the tools and tactics to leverage at markets to grow their business online and create long-term Farm success.



**Farmers who complement their market attendance with online ordering have increased their average order size by 4x. Why?**

Because online sales offer buyers the ability to access all your available inventory, and you drive more consistent revenue for your Farm.

## CHAPTER 1

# Focus on Direct-to-Market Efforts

While 94% of Americans want to support local businesses, 99% of consumers do NOT regularly attend farmer's markets. The trend towards online ordering has disrupted in-person selling opportunities as 1 in 3 adults have ordered groceries online in the past year.

Americans are creatures of convenience and have come to expect to access every product and service online on their own time, shaping the way local Farmers build their business. Where's the silver lining? Farmers who complement their market attendance with online ordering have increased their average order size by 4x (versus in-person sales). Why? Because online sales offer buyers the ability to access all your available inventory, and you drive more consistent revenue for your Farm versus markets.

Here's how Farmers use online activities to complement their market presence, grow operations, and scale their business:

**WEB STORE.** Farmers making 6-figure incomes online (\$100,000+)

have found that an online store that never closes is key to their success. They can direct buyers to purchase products anytime, anywhere, and Farmer's don't have to rely on unpredictable market attendance to ensure they're covering their weekly or monthly costs.

**EMAIL.** Consistent communication with buyers through email is the most effective way to actively reach potential and existing customers. 89% of Americans check their inbox every day, and 1 in 5 Americans check their email 5x+ per day. Consistent emails from your Farm ensures you're at the top-of-the-inbox with updates and information on how to shop, increasing average Farm revenue by up to 35%.

**SOCIAL MEDIA.** Facebook and Instagram are great channels to passively engage existing and prospective buyers. 82% of Americans use social media to connect with friends and family, find local businesses, and interact with various brands. When Farms post 2-3 times per week on social media, it helps drive your Farm's brand awareness and stay top of mind among customers.

Why wouldn't you engage buyers in a place (online) where they visit daily



versus relying solely on farmer's markets? Build personal connections at the market, but the key to your Farm's ongoing success is to expand your customer base and secure more recurring sales. Here's how:



**MAKE 1:1 CONNECTIONS AT THE MARKET.** Markets are an opportunity to expand your network, meet with potential and existing customers, and convert attendees to online buyers. Use a QR code or a clipboard and a sign-up sheet to collect customer emails. Farms that invest in collecting email addresses at the market have proven to grow their customer base by more than 150%+ in less than 12 months.

**POST FLYERS AT LOCAL BUSINESSES.** Where do your buyers regularly congregate in your city or county? By aligning your Farm brand and presence with their daily lives, buyers are more likely to purchase from your Farm. Partner with local organizations (cafes, fitness centers, and churches) and post flyers about your products, including your website address and a QR code to sign-up for special promotions. Align your pickups with these locations to make it convenient for buyers to access your Farm products at places they already frequent on a routine basis.

**BE ACTIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY.** Increase your Farm Brand's visibility by sponsoring or supporting community events to fuel loyalty to your business. Being present pays dividends with buyers who are eager to support local businesses. Provide the food, labor, or simply sponsor T-shirts for a local fundraiser or community event.

Be sure your Farm Brand is always visible, and don't be shy by asking organizers to recognize your contribution.

Promoting your Farm in person will lead to more consistent sales when there is a clear "call-to-action" to go online to purchase. Customers prefer to shop from your Farm where it's most convenient. Aligning offline interactions with your Farm's online presence will make it easier to increase sales, streamline operations, and create a strong brand in your local community.

-  **This Farm Grew from \$20 to \$88 Per Order**
-  **This Farm Increased Sales by Focusing on Fewer Markets**
-  **Growing Your Business with Convenience**

“ Having a self-serve store is great. In the middle of the night, people are still buying stuff! It's awesome that my Farm store never closes. **We've never found ourselves sitting on products we couldn't sell.**

FARMER TOM, MICHIGAN





## CHAPTER 2

# Build your Customer Base

In addition to selling your Farm products at the market, the most important activity your Farm should focus on is capturing customer details. The key to long-term Farm success is to “own your customer base,” which means that your Farm possesses all your buyer details to regularly engage them online. This includes name and email address – at a minimum!

When Farms sell through third-party distributors or marketplaces, the middleman owns the customer relationships (not your Farm), and they keep more of the profit margins, too.

When Farmers have direct customer relationships with a large base of prospective buyers, it's easier to grow brand affinity, build loyalty, and generate more consistent sales. When Farms give up customer relationships to a third-party distributor, it's difficult to control pricing, scale operations, and build recurring revenue across a diversified base of buyers (which is more resilient to market instability). Of all the Farms that fail online, 82% have less than 100 customer emails.

Building a robust customer base is key to the long-term viability of your Farm business.

Here's how Farmers can create a loyal customer base:

**GROW YOUR EMAIL LIST.** Start by collecting emails from existing and prospective buyers at the market. Bring a QR code or a clipboard and a signup sheet to the markets to capture emails! Print flyers to hand out at markets informing new customers of your online store, and encourage website visitors to sign up for your newsletter (with an email capture pop-up) to access the latest news and promos from your Farm.

**BUILD YOUR BRAND.** Fostering interactions with customers directly will build local affinity for your brand. Hands down, a local product that's higher quality and comes from a local business will always win over a commodity product! Take microbreweries, for example. Local breweries are located in every city across America, where buyers would happily spend more money on a local microbrew than a commodity beer. With consistent branding (on all channels) reflective of your Farm, more customers will choose your products over commodity items.



**ENGAGE CUSTOMERS ON ALL CHANNELS.** Buyers are busy and often forget to purchase from Farms when they're not top of mind. The most successful Farms consistently engage buyers on all channels (web, social, and email) to fuel sales, stay top of mind, and build brand loyalty. Send weekly order reminders and post on social media (Facebook and Instagram) 3-5 times per week. By showcasing your products, sharing pictures of the Farm, and offering unique promotions, you will see an increase in loyal customers.



**Connecting with Community & Growing a Farm Brand**



**Owning your Customers for Long Term Success**



**What Farmers Can Learn from Microbreweries**

“

I heard a tip from your Direct Farm Podcast to pay employees \$1 for every email collected at the market. **I told my daughter to try it out – she made \$30 last week!**

PROTEIN FARMER, WEST VIRGINIA





Of all the Farms that fail online, 82% have less than 100 customer emails. Building a robust customer base is key to the long-term viability of your Farm business.



## CHAPTER 3

# Meet Expectations of Convenience

The rise in online shopping has paved the way for buyers to expect a convenient shopping experience. In fact, 63% of Americans said that convenience is “*very important*” when it comes to grocery shopping, and they are willing to pay for it.

Farmers with an online store that offer buyers the convenience of direct-delivery, or pick-up at the market, earn 2x more in average monthly revenue (versus Farmers who do not). Buyers are willing to pay more for high-quality products that offer convenient purchase options. There are many ways Farmers can satisfy buyers’ expectations:

**SUBSCRIPTIONS.** Americans average 9 paid subscriptions to products and services they use and love – your Farm can be one of them. Americans prefer the “click-it and forget-it” experience with products they trust. Offer Subscriptions to your most popular items that routinely sell out or are purchased regularly. Farms find that they enjoy up to 80% revenue certainty every month with Subscriptions -

locking in purchase commitments (building brand loyalty), securing orders in advance, and building recurring cash flow for their business.

**BUNDLE BOXES.** 90% of customers will opt into Farmer-recommended bundles boxes. When Farmers bundle items, they move more of their inventory, increase their average order size, and cater to various needs of buyers. The most successful Farms only offer their most desirable specialty products (e.g., bacon, filet mignon, or chanterelle mushrooms) in bundle box formats and average between 5-7 bundle options in their inventory.

**PRE-ORDERS.** Products that are high in demand, seasonal, or sold in limited quantities should be available to Pre-Order (e.g., heritage turkeys, copper river salmon, or huckleberries). Customers love the ability to secure orders months in advance, which makes inventory planning easier for Farmers ahead of the season. Offer Pre-orders to Subscriptions to collect cash months in advance of harvest and create buzz for your Pre-Orders by offering limited-time promotions.



### FLEXIBLE PAYMENT OPTIONS.

Give buyers flexible payment options to expand the size of your available market and generate higher conversion rates. Allow customers to pay upfront or pay-as-you-go to accommodate different budgets. Some buyers will enjoy the ability to space out payments, while others will have the capital to pay the entire amount in advance (with a promotional discount).




### MULTIPLE FULFILLMENT OPTIONS.

76% of consumers shared that having multiple fulfillment options influences their purchasing decision. Consider making the farmer's market a pickup location for customers. Having multiple pickup spots around town will be convenient for more customers to access their orders. If your Farm is considering a direct-delivery service, choose one zip code to start with where the majority of your customers reside. 40% of Farmers average delivering 1-2 days per week, while 60% of Farmers charge more than \$5 per delivery order!

Convenience is the tipping point for Farm success. Buyers will choose to shop from your Farm regularly if it's a simple, easy, and enjoyable

experience from start to finish. Gradually invest in offering convenient purchase options for your customers. You'll find more consistent sales and an increase in repeat customers.

-  **Accepting Pre-Orders for 2022? This Farm secured \$40,000+**
-  **3 Steps to Position Your Farm for Local Success**
-  **Secure Sales Before the Busy Season**
-  **Tom's Tactics to Doubling Sales**



Barn2Door was right, bundles work! We added a Meat Bundle to the store and sold out in 24 hours! **We had to add more into inventory and are almost sold out again!**

DAIRY FARMER, IOWA







The rise in online shopping has paved the way for buyers to expect a convenient shopping experience. **63% of Americans said that convenience is “very important”** when it comes to grocery shopping, and they are willing to pay for it.



## Conclusion

By following these steps to supplement your activities at the market, your Farm can create a lucrative business - catering to all buyers online and offline. Leveraging your time at the markets is essential to grow your business, expand your customer base, and streamline your operations. When you pair a convenient online ordering experience with access to fresh local products, engage new buyers, and interact with existing customers, your Farm will grow exponentially faster.

Barn2Door provides an all-in-one solution to help Farmers grow and manage their business. If you're curious why successful Farms use Barn2Door to run their business, [watch this 5-minute video](#).



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