A New(ish) Frontier: Exploring Online Direct-to-Consumer Sales Platforms for Farmers
YOUR PRESENTERS

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AGENDA

• Welcome
• Considerations for choosing a platform
• Website platforms with e-commerce capabilities
• Platforms developed for farmers
• Other online selling options
• Resources
• Q & A
Where to even start?!!?!!
ONLINE RESOURCES

E-COMMERCE RESOURCES

DECISION SUPPORT TOOLS

National Young Farmers Coalition – Farmer’s Guide to Direct Sales Software Platforms
This publication, created by the National Young Farmers Coalition, compares farm-specific software platforms that support direct-to-consumer sales, and highlights related educational resources.

The Land Connection – Considerations for choosing an e-commerce platform
This set of questions from The Land Connection is designed to help you narrow your e-commerce selection by assessing your current resources and needs.

Oregon Tilth – Questions for Considering Online Sales Platforms for Farms Direct Marketing
A list of questions compiled by Oregon Tilth to consider when choosing an online selling platform.

https://thelandconnection.org/resource/e-commerce-resources/
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Do you already have a website?

YES!

Was it built for selling?
Are there e-commerce plugins available?

No :/
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Do you already have a Point of Sale (POS)?

YES!

You may already have access to an online storefront.

No :/
SELF-ASSESSMENT

What do you want to be able to do?

- Integrate with other software!
- Generate pack lists!
- Customize CSA shares!
- Sell by the pound!
- Visualize delivery routes!
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PRODUCT ASSESSMENT

How easy is it to use?
(For both the seller and customer?)
Survey created and distributed by FairShare CSA Coalition & University of Wisconsin Extension. Report coming soon!
PRODUCT ASSESSMENT

Ease of use:

• How comfortable are you with tech? Your customers?
• What tech support is available?
• Security & privacy
• Mobile friendly
GET ONLINE

• Having an online presence is necessary and there are lots of options

• Social media is great as a marketing tool but don’t focus all of your energy there

• Spend your time wisely → most farmers don’t have a lot of time

• Your store and/or website are more than just a promotional strategy, they are necessary channels for sales — use them!

• There are options out there for people with various degrees of technological understanding – hopefully we can help you find what is best for you
LETS GET ON THE SAME PAGE

- **Domain:** A web domain is an actual presence on the Internet, such as a web page.

- **Website:** A website is a collection of web pages and related content that is identified by a common domain name and published on at least one web server.

- **Online Store:** Where consumers go to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the Internet using a web browser.

- **Plug-in:** A software component that adds a specific feature to an existing computer program, thereby allowing for more customization.
LET’S GET ON THE SAME PAGE

- **Web Hosting Service**: A service that allows individuals and organizations to make their website accessible via the World Wide Web.
- **Processing Company**: A company that provides online payment systems.
- **E-commerce Platform**: Enables businesses or individuals to sell products online.
- **Web Designer**: Someone who designs websites with a focus on visual and consumer experience.
- **Web Developer**: Someone who actually builds and codes websites so that they are functional and all of the pieces work together.
WORDPRESS

• Known as the website factory...all you need is a domain and a hosting service

• WordPress is an open-source platform that allows you to build your website

• WordPress offers its own hosting services but you can also find a 3rd party site to host

• WordPress is the most widely used website building platform and there are lots of resources for beginners
WORDPRESS

• PROS:
  • WordPress is great because it is extremely customizable - there are an infinite number of plugins and developed themes that allow you to build
  • There are lots of sites that can help you set up your site

• CONS:
  • Everything is pretty much a la carte which means it can get expensive
  • All plug-ins don’t necessarily work well together
  • It takes a lot of maintenance and updates
  • The more plug-ins and add-ons you have, the greater the chance of things just not working properly
  • If your site is complicated, you will probably need someone to manage it for you
HOSTING

• There are a lot of different options for hosting
• WordPress does offer hosting packages, but some 3rd-party sites might be worth investigating
• Here are some top options:
WIX & SQUARESPACE

• “Drag-and-Drop” platforms that are sometimes called the “all-in-one” options

• Provide a clean, easy to navigate website with built-in store and processing → need a third party POS/processing company to sync to your store

• Website & E-commerce website options → make sure you pick the right one

• Buy a domain, build your website, create your online store, build your brand, and sell your product
WIX & SQUARESPACE

• PROS:
  • Easy to use → website construction, sales platform, online store, etc.
  • Can build something as simple or complex as you like
  • Integration with G Suite (calendars, email, etc.)
  • Great themes with customizable pages and layouts with lots of options

• CONS:
  • The E-commerce platform is part of a website, so you have to build a website to use the store
  • Sales channels are hard to separate
  • Not suited for different pick-up days or packing CSA boxes
  • Not able to sell by package weight
  • Not cheap, but not crazy expensive
PAYPAL

• 2.9% + $.30

• Still allows for processing and has partnered with various POS providers but doesn’t offer their own POS system → they brand the card readers, but it’s through a third-party provider

• Allows for personal accounts and business accounts
STRIPE

• Fees: 2.9% + $.30

• Just like PayPal except completely business focused

• Has a LOT of various partners for POS, integration with your accounting software, etc. → might be a little overwhelming for some
SQUARE

• Mostly used for POS systems, but does allow for online stores that you can link to from your website (or embed)
• Lots of different rates
• Farmers like using it for the following sales channels:
  • Farmers markets
  • On-farm sales
  • Home delivery
SQUARE

PROS:

• There is a FREE option for your online store if you also use their POS system → you still have to pay the processing fees
• Helpful reporting and analytics options
• Easy to set up and use
• Professional look and flexible storefront
• Customers like it and it looks professional

CONS:

• Hard to make changes to your store from a mobile device
• Not a lot of flexibility with pick-up dates and times
• Inventory system is a little clunky and hard to integrate with multiple pick up locations
• System can be a bit slow and clunky
• Not farm specific
• Can’t sell by weight in online store
SHOPIFY

- E-commerce focused websites/online stores that are built to help you sell your product → Square on steroids
- Hosting cost plus the transaction costs → the % charged on each transaction goes down when you buy a better plan
- Farmers have found it useful for most sales channels, especially home delivery and on-farm
SHOPIFY

**PROS:**

- Lots of features and options
- Easy to add products, especially if you have a lot of SKUs
- Cost
- Straight-forward setup and easy to use with website to help with marketing
- Security / secure checkout
- Lots of reporting options
- All-in-one web POS system

**CONS:**

- More options than most farmers probably need → can make it complex to set up
- More expensive than some other platforms and most apps/add-ons cost money
- Some aspects are hard to change without hiring a web developer
- Not marketed or built for farmers so some options just don’t work well for certain methods of sale
FARMER-CENTRIC PLATFORMS

• Barn2Door (https://www.barn2door.com/)

• GrazeCart (https://grazecart.com/)

• Harvie (https://www.harvie.farm/)

• Local Food Marketplace (https://home.localfoodmarketplace.com/)

• Local Line (https://site.localline.ca/)
What it offers:

• E-commerce storefront
• Credit card payment processing
• Offline payment options
• Accounting tools & integration
• Marketing tools & integration
• Distribution management
Farmers liked using it for:

- Home delivery
- On-farm sales
- Initial or basic CSA share sales
- Wholesale

What farmers didn’t like using it for:

- Multi-farm sales
- Direct to grocery
- Food hubs
BARN2DOOR

• PROS:
  • Easy to set up.
  • Easy to manage inventory, pick lists, orders, and invoices.
  • Clean and intuitive customer facing side (non-tech savvy)
  • Allows for variable weighted products and different price structures for different customers.
  • Customer service.

• CONS:
  • Cost of set up is high.
  • Mobile view of store is bad.
  • Reports and analytics are lacking and hard to use.
  • Does not allow CSA or subscription management.
  • Does not allow for different pricing for shipping/delivery/farm pickup.
GRAZECART

What GrazeCart offers:

• E-commerce storefront
• Credit card payment processing
• Offline payment options
• Accounting tools & integration
• Marketing tools & integration
• Distribution management
What sales channels farmers like using it for:

- Home delivery
- On-farm sales
- Multi-farm sales

What sales channels do farmers think it doesn’t work well for:

- Farmers markets
- CSA programs
- Food hubs
GRAZECART

PROS:

• Functional with lots of features
• Professional looking and easy to use
• Built by farmers
• Pre-order and delivery options
• Great inventory system – can track inventory by the package but charge by the weight
• Multiple pricing options for different kinds of customers
• Good customer service
• Flat-rate cost

CONS:

• No POS option yet
• Pick-up locations and times can be confusing to customers and are not easily changed by the farmer
• Have to be creative to integrate with farmers market or CSA programs
• Page-builder is a bit limited
• Flat-rate cost
HARVIE

What Harvie offers:

• E-commerce storefront
• CSA subscription management and CSA multi-farm programs/add-ons
• Credit card payment processing
• Offline payment options
• Accounting tools & integration
• Marketing tools & integration
• Distribution management
What sales channels farmers like using it for:

- Home delivery
- On-farm sales
- Multi-farm sales

What sales channels do farmers think it doesn’t work well for:

- Farmers markets
- CSA programs
- Food hubs
HARVIE

• PROS:
  • Complete CSA customization and options for sales outside of CSA program
  • Algorithm that packs shares based on customers preferences
  • Marketing services, recipes, newsletters, etc. for both farmers and customers
  • Highly organized and adaptable platform
  • Harvie University

• CONS:
  • Can be confusing for customers to learn how to use the site → big learning curve on both sides
  • Technical limitations
  • The cost is fairly high (percentage of sales) but with the CSA model you can pass it on to customers
  • Some restrictions to admin access that requires farmers to contact Harvie directly
  • Everything is branded as Harvie
  • Customer support
LOCAL FOOD MARKETPLACE

What Local Food Marketplace Offers:

• E-commerce storefront
• CSA subscription management and CSA multi-farm programs/add-ons
• Order forms
• Multi-farm / food hub features
• Credit card payment processing
• Offline payment options
• Accounting tools & integration
• Marketing tools & integration
• Distribution management
LOCAL FOOD MARKETPLACE

PROS:

• Different pricing structures for different types of customers
• Set case/order minimums for different customers
• Consolidates pick lists from all types of customers
• Customers can login and track their orders and unpaid invoices in their own account
• Adaptable with great add-on features
• Ease of use for farmers and customers
• Customer service

CONS:

• Not designed for small individual farms – mostly designed for food hubs
• Relies on the admin to update and add things, no the individual farmers
• Training and set up takes a bit of time and is challenging for many → required classes
• The admin (market managers or food hubs) have to pay the farmers out direct → individual farmers can’t link their accounts
• Expensive but looks outdated
What sales channels farmers like using it for:

- Wholesale
- Food hubs
- Multi-farm sales

What sales channels do farmers think it doesn’t work well for:

- Direct to grocery
- On-farm sales
- CSA programs
- Farmers market
LOCAL LINE

What Local Food Marketplace Offers:

• E-commerce storefront
• CSA subscription management and CSA multi-farm programs/add-ons
• Order forms
• Multi-farm / food hub features
• Credit card payment processing
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• Accounting tools & integration
• Marketing tools & integration
• Distribution management
What sales channels farmers like using it for:

- Home delivery
- On-farm sales
- Food hubs
- Farmers market
- Direct to restaurant

What sales channels do farmers think it doesn’t work well for:

- Direct to grocery
- CSA programs
- Multi-farm sales
LOCAL LINE

PROS:

• Low cost compared to competitors → they have both percentage and flat fee options
• Ease of use and design (though some people disagree)
• Updating store inventory is easy
• Allows for infinite products with various customer account types
• Easy pick-up and delivery logistics
• Variable weight and price options

CONS:

• Doesn’t work well for Markets to use for processing orders for multiple farms
• Can be quite glitchy with Square integration, logins, and ordering
• Low-tech pick list and order generation
• No order status tracking
OTHER ONLINE SELLING OPTIONS

• Selling socially – Ecwid

• Aggregated marketplace – Market Wagon

• Other aggregators:
  • Get tapped into your community!
  • Your local food hub
  • Multi-farm CSAs & buying clubs
ECWID

- Free tier - online storefront (limit 10 products)
- 1st tier ($15/mo) – Instagram & Facebook stores, mobile POS (limit 100 products)
- Additional features free through 2020 on all paid plans
MARKET WAGON

PROS:
• Handle orders & deliveries
• Large service area

CONS:
• Charge 25% of sale to farmer
• Farmer delivers product to MW & packs orders
FOOD HUBS

Chicago

• Healthy Food Hub

Southern IL (Carbondale)

• LEAF
MULTI-FARM SELLING

• Cooperative opportunities to access major markets
  • Stewards of the Land
  • PrairiErth Food Hub

• Who’s in your neighborhood?
There are a lot out there, here are some from our E-commerce Resource Page:

• National Young Farmers Coalition – Farmer’s Guide to Direct Sales Software Platforms -
  Software-Platforms.pdf

• The Land Connection – Your Virtual Farm Stand: Getting Up and Running with MarketMaker and
  Local Line - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjkDY-6Xv5Y&feature=youtu.be

• Oregon Tilth – Online Sales Platforms for Farmers - https://tilth.org/education/resources/online-
  sales-platforms-for-farmers/
Questions?

Thanks for joining us!

If you’d like to follow up, please reach out:

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