

fertilising your business with more marketing

Farms have been diversifying for decades, but a huge amount of this activity now focuses on farm produce. How can primary producers grow their direct sales? We offer some ideas to help drive sustainable, profitable growth through all these "routes to market":

Farmers markets – We have 500 (mostly monthly) markets in the UK, turning over under £100m in total each year. Only 1 in 4 shoppers have bought from a farmers market:

- Can your market(s) be marketed differently / more heavily?
- Can your area sustain more markets (closer to shoppers)?
- Can they be made easier to get round (better parking, improved public transport links, an option of faster service)?

Other farm retail – Farmers markets plus Pick Your Own, farm shops (3,000 in the UK) and home delivery (box schemes etc) total £1,000m turnover each year. Word of mouth may be the most effective form of marketing, but are there opportunities to sell more by changing your marketing a little?

Supermarkets – UK supermarkets turn over more than £100,000m each year but are increasingly open to buying direct from producers. As a result, 1 in 7 supermarket shoppers actively buy local foods, often as part of big shopping trips on a weekly basis. However, supermarkets are clearly not the right route to market for every business.

Whether you will grow through farmers markets or sales direct to supermarkets, grasp – a business development firm – would like to help. grasp undertakes a wide variety of research into food marketing and, as a result of this work, is able to make a number of recommendations to primary producers who are developing direct routes to market. We hope they are useful ...

For larger projects **funding to develop your business may be available** from sources such as DEFRA, the DTI, the Princes Trust, Regional Development Agencies, EU funds, trade bodies or export organisations.

What makes us better?

1. **List what makes your produce unique. What could be unique about your business with a little extra effort?**

Someone from outside your business (for example: **grasp**, a regional food group or business link) will be able to see things differently and should give you new ideas.



2. **Find out about the people buying your products** by talking to people or commissioning a small piece of research. **What kind of new customers (and new routes to market) would you like?** In the light of this, question:

- What really makes you unique ... you must start to cross things off the lists as they look less unique (keep crossing things off!)
- What other things you are really prepared to do to be different
- Whether these things will be useful to your customers
- Whether you, your family and colleagues are happy to live with the unique things left on your list.

How could we present ourselves differently?



The average farmers market stallholder turns over about £500 per market. If you are under this, you have something to aim for! If you are over this, how much over it could you be? Increasing turnover might not be a case of increasing the volume you sell, 36% of shoppers will tolerate higher prices when actively buying British.

Consider if you can, the size of the opportunities through supermarkets. Even if you are not comfortable dealing directly with supermarkets, we believe farmers markets and farm shops will increasingly be competing with supermarkets. You need to **encourage current shoppers to spend more with you and less elsewhere** and **persuade new, supermarket-only shoppers to visit markets / shops.**

We passionately believe that many producers need to present themselves differently to do this, and that **spending money on your presentation is an investment that should pay back handsomely.** We recommend you:

- **Present yourselves to reflect what makes you usefully unique** – Clearly convey the benefits of this to the shopper, this will encourage people to try your products and come back for more.
- **Be consistent in the way you appear** – Have a clear identity that makes you instantly recognisable from one month to the next, at different farmers markets, in farm shops and on supermarket shelves. Your stall,

shop, packaging, van etc should consistently carry a good name. A picture/logo and a colour scheme can all form part of this image.

- **Think about ways of creating a striking atmosphere** – Keep your eyes open for good ideas from your fellow producers, but in the meantime here are a few we have already spotted ...

How can we sell more?

Make your display as attractive as possible: Use natural packaging and display materials wherever possible. Think about marketing materials like photographic images, and your branding. Encourage people to “eat with their eyes”, stimulating attention, interest, desire and action: driving sales! **grasp** advises on the development of marketing materials



Offer your products for tasting: This makes it less risky for customers to buy things for the first time (at markets it makes your stall look busy and people are attracted to stalls where there is a crowd)! You may need to think a bit laterally (and legally) about what to do and how, but the smell of your produce being cooked can be a fantastic advert in itself!

Offer bulk promotions: Larger packs at a discount, discounts for people buying several packs (eg for freezing in between markets!), give people something new to try for free if they buy twice what they normally do. **grasp** works on promotional development and analysis.

Add more value: Can you make your products more convenient to justify a higher price? Could you sell your products as ready-to-eat snacks? (If you sell potatoes: rumble them for boiling / chop them and add rosemary & garlic for roasting / pre-bake them for microwaving?). **grasp** works on product development and testing.

Produce leaflets: Reflecting your image and what makes you different, detailing shows you're attending, special events you are taking part in (eg agricultural shows), shops where you are stocked, where your farm shop is, details of any mail order / box schemes and your contact details! **grasp** works with printers to get your message across.

Excess stock: If you are left with stock after a market or a promotion, think about giving some away to local shops, restaurants, pubs and hotels with your leaflets - encourage people to become paying customers next time! **grasp** works on developing new sales channels.

Find out about people at markets / during tastings: What they, their friends & family need / where they work ... you may find sales opportunities and keep people with you at quiet times, encouraging more people over! Remember your regular customers' tastes, suggest new produce they should try, you might be able to do things especially for them that other people will also want. **grasp** offers sales training and product development.

Media coverage: You could actively look for media coverage when you have a story to tell. **grasp** offers media training and works with PR professionals to get your message across.

See if someone from outside your business can help you come up with ideas that are unique to you!

Summary

There are big opportunities for most primary producers to develop their direct routes to market through: farmers markets, farm shops, home delivery and selling direct to supermarkets. All of these activities demand extra resources, but funding is often available, alongside food marketing expertise.

Please contact us for a free telephone / email consultation ...

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... our website contains other useful articles:

www.grasp.org.uk

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