



Wallace Center
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL



Beginner's Resource Guide to Direct Marketing Meat

September 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT
MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

Photo: Elisabeth Spratt

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

4

How this guide was created 5

II. What is Direct Marketing

7

III. Questions to Ask Before Using Guide

8

IV. Resources

11

Resource Snapshot	11
A. Direct marketing for beginners	12
B. Business planning and financials	14
C. Processing, butchering, cuts and carcass breakdown	16
D. Marketing strategies – how to get new customers	18
E. Label and certifications.....	20
F. Where to sell: on farm, CSA, farmers markets, online	22
G. Funding for direct marketing operations	23

IV. Conclusion

24

I. INTRODUCTION



Photo: USDA

This interactive resource guide contains resources that are organized to help a farmer determine how direct marketing meat can work for their farming enterprise. It is intended to be a “first resource” for new and existing farmers interested in starting or adding one or more direct marketing enterprises to their farm. Navigating direct markets to achieve profitability requires deliberate planning. This guide is intended to help you get started by providing high-quality, well-organized information. The goal of this guide is to make it easy as possible for a farmer to identify and choose the information that will be most helpful.

This resource guide is generally applicable across different geographic regions. It has been specifically informed by surveys and interviews with farms running successful direct market enterprises for their meat in the greater Chicago region. As one of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States, Chicago has a large number of consumers who are interested in purchasing high-quality, well-raised, and locally-sourced meats. Further, Chicago sits within some of the most productive pasturelands regions in the nation. The presence of a growing potential customer base that is under-served by local supply presents significant opportunities to increase pastureland profitability and grow regenerative grazing in the Midwest through better leveraged direct-marketing. Connecting these customers to farmers in their areas

can help increase direct market purchasing, per acre profitability, and farm viability. Well-managed pastureland has increasingly been proven to have [multiple positive environmental, economic, and social benefits for Midwest communities](#).

This resource guide focuses on opportunities for direct marketing beef, due to the number of resources dedicated to these products. When possible, it takes a multi-species perspective, recognizing that different meat animals may be a more accessible entry point for different farmers - particularly underserved farmers with fewer startup or on-going resources. Also, the diverse communities of Chicago and the Midwest are increasingly interested in different locally or regionally produced meat products. Providing more diverse direct market opportunities for more meat products produced by more farmers can create more benefits for a diversity of customers.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

I. INTRODUCTION

HOW THIS GUIDE WAS CREATED

This resource guide has been created by the [Pasture Project](#) - a decade-long initiative of the Wallace Center at Winrock International that is focused on advancing regenerative grazing in the Upper Midwest as a scalable, market-driven solution for building healthy soils, viable farms, and resilient communities. Since 2019, the Pasture Project team has collaborated with the [Delta Institute](#) - a Chicago-based nonprofit that works with communities throughout the Midwest to solve complex environmental issues - to understand the opportunity that Chicago presents to farmers interested in direct marketing meat. [Research conducted by the Pasture Project and Delta Institute in 2019](#) indicates that grass-fed beef demand in Chicago is accelerating by approximately 4 percent each year (4 percent in year one, 8 percent in year two, 12 percent in year three, etc.). Over a five year period, this growth represents 4,100 additional grass-fed and finished beefs needed to meet consumer demand in Chicago. These 4,100 animals would require approximately 78,000 additional acres of well-managed pasture - a significant, but manageable land area given Illinois' agricultural landscape and capacity to grow high quality animal forages. This research, in part, resulted in the Pasture Project creating a statewide working group for regenerative grazing in Illinois. In 2021, this working group produced the [Roadmap for Expanding Regenerative Grazing in Illinois: 2021-2025](#) which aims to increase well-managed pasture by 80,000 acres and grow market access for Chicago farmers.

The COVID-19 pandemic [significantly disrupted meat supply chains and availability](#), first with spikes in demand due to panic buying and later slaughter and processing bottlenecks due to plant closures and overflow. However, the pandemic also shifted consumer preference toward more local and regional purchases, as well as [toward increased willingness to purchase meat online](#). The [pandemic impacts on meat supply chains](#) are continuing to be understood. As the pandemic recedes, pre-existing and new direct market opportunities are available to farmers interested in selling to customers in the greater Chicago area. These opportunities are increasingly supported by additional investments in the infrastructure for meat processing, value-added product development, and market development from state and federal government agencies, as well as by the private and philanthropic sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the long-standing vulnerabilities in the meat processing sector and these entities are working with farmers, processors, businesses, and consumers in unprecedented ways to improve local and regional opportunities.



Photo: USDA

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

I. INTRODUCTION

HOW THIS GUIDE WAS CREATED

After completing research on the Chicago demand for grass-fed and finished beef in 2019, the Pasture Project worked with Delta Institute to identify **areas around Chicago with the highest potential to expand regenerative grazing and meat production** for local markets. The Kishwaukee and Upper Fox watersheds were selected for a deeper **analysis of the potential benefits of increasing regenerative grazing** and the **potential for the existing supply chains (i.e. slaughter, processing, distribution, retail) to support increased livestock and meat production** oriented toward customers in the Chicago area. A specific **analysis of the potential for Chicago institutions to purchase locally-sourced grass-fed and finished beef** was also conducted.

The outcomes of this research were shared with farmers, agricultural educators, and other decision-makers during a full-day workshop in 2021. Feedback from this workshop highlighted many barriers farmers face in increasing regenerative grazing to supply new or expanded direct markets in the Chicago area. One such barrier was accessing well-organized, high-quality information resources on the fundamentals of direct marketing for meat. To address this need, the Pasture Project and Delta Institute created this resource guide. It is informed by a 2021 survey of farms in the Chicago area that are currently direct marketing meat, as well as detailed follow-up interviews with these farms. Both the survey and interviews focus on the information the farms have relied on or would like to have access to regarding direct market meat enterprises. Simultaneously, a review of all accessible information resources on direct marketing meat was conducted. Resources were solicited from farm surveys and interviews, as well as from desktop research and outreach to national partners working to increase direct marketing of meat. All resources were reviewed for relevance and quality before being organized into this resource guide.

This resource guide is a starting point for those interested in understanding direct marketing opportunities for meat. By providing a short, well-organized “first resource,” this resource guide seeks to help farmers understand how direct marketing meat can work within their farming enterprise. This resource guide is a repackaging of existing resources based on farmer needs and is designed to guide farmers to deeper learning, as it makes sense and provides benefit for their specific needs and interests. It is a curated, not a comprehensive guide and farmers are encouraged to continue exploring resources that address their unique interests - including working with other farmers in their area with shared goals.



Photo: USDA

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

METHODOLOGY FOR RESOURCE GUIDE CREATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

Direct marketing in local and regional food systems has been well studied and [resources are available for understanding the fundamentals](#). Many of these resources focus on direct marketing of fresh produce. However, meat is increasingly demanded by consumers willing to purchase directly from a farmer. The expansion of online retail platforms (including those selling products for other farms) and interest in local-sourcing, most livestock farms should consider “how” rather than “if” direct marketing works for them. This may be determined by the farm’s interest in working directly with different customers (e.g., meeting with restaurant chefs, setting up CSA shares, etc.), ability and willingness to cover start up costs (e.g., setting up a website, purchasing tenting and coolers for farmers markets, etc.), and - in some instances - having enough customers near them to make direct marketing profitable relative to their production costs and time available. In some instances, direct marketing may be inaccessible or too much work for a farm. For these farms, focusing on other enterprises - including working with other nearby farms interested in direct marketing to cooperatively overcome barriers - may be the better option than pursuing direct marketing independently.

Managing supply chains to ensure they deliver benefits for farmers, food chain workers, businesses, consumers and communities is commonly known as “value chain coordination (VCC).

What is value chain coordination?

Value chain coordination is a market-based approach to developing local and regional food systems that better serve communities. Value chain work includes the development of collaborative ties among businesses along the food supply chain, with the expectation that the economic position of these supply chain members improves. Value chain coordination describes leveraging the soft infrastructure, in the form of skills, competencies, and relationships, in a food value chain. With a strong soft infrastructure, individuals and organizations are far more readily able to acquire and utilize hard infrastructure. Value chain coordination is a set of roles, skills, and activities that foster soft infrastructure development to build regional economies and communities. Strong soft infrastructure, in the form of skills, competencies and relationships, provides the ability for individuals and organizations to acquire and utilize hard infrastructure in their communities.

Who performs value chain coordination?

An individual who performs value chain coordination roles may be considered a Value Chain Coordination Professional (VCCP), the entities in which the work of value chain coordination takes place, such as food hubs, local governments, or organizations may be considered Value Chain Coordination Entities (VCCE). Value chain coordination may be performed by one individual within an organization, or by several people in multiple organizations. Different types of entities perform value chain coordination, including businesses, organizations and individuals. Sometimes businesses in the chain fulfill these roles, while other times external support actors, like governments or nonprofits, perform the work. Some businesses have a part of their operations directly in the value chain, such as aggregating or distributing products, while another arm of their entity focuses more on providing technical assistance, organizing convening events, conducting assessment and research or working on policy.

[I. INTRODUCTION](#)[II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING](#)[III. SELF REFLECTION](#)[IV. RESOURCES](#)[V. CONCLUSION](#)

III. QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE USING GUIDE

To understand how direct marketing could optimally benefit your farm business, you should first reflect on why you are interested in direct marketing, what you already know, and the goals you have for engaging in direct marketing. The questions below are opportunities for you to “take stock” before jumping into the resources included in this resource guide. By better understanding your unique needs, interests, assumptions, and abilities, you can focus your use of these introductory resources to build your knowledge where it is most beneficial for the time you are able to dedicate.

Take some time to reflect on the questions below and write down your thoughts. This is not a quiz with the “right answers” but rather an opportunity to gather your thoughts before exploring resources. Such reflection is a good exercise to undertake with others that might be operating or developing a direct marketing meat business with you. Documenting your responses will allow you to focus your learning and also provide an opportunity to revisit these responses later and update them based on what you’ve learned or experienced. These responses can also help you develop the best direct marketing plan for your circumstances and interests.

The goal of this self reflection is to help you create a direct marketing relationship management plan that will help you be successful in direct marketing.



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I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

III. QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE USING GUIDE

- ? What interests you about direct marketing meat?
- ? What experience do you have with direct marketing meat? Other products?
- ? What have you learned about successful direct marketing meat from talking to or observing other farms? What do you think you should avoid?
- ? What assets (e.g., financial resources, land, location, employees, family dynamics, website, social media, customers, etc.) do you already have that could help you be successful with a direct marketing meat enterprise?
- ? What products (e.g., whole animals, halves, quarters, cuts, value-added products, etc.) are you interested in selling?
- ? What are your local and regional options for slaughter and processing to help you produce these products? Do you have a relationship with them already?
- ? How much do you think your customers are willing to pay for your products? How will you set your price to cover your costs and make a profit?
- ? What is it about your farm and meat products that will stand out to customers?
- ? Who are your current customers? What about this works and what would you like to change or move away from?
- ? What new customer are you interested in reaching? How could you leverage your assets or connections to reach these new customers?
- ? Where (e.g., on-farm, farmers markets, grocery stores, restaurants, online, etc.) do you want to sell your products directly to customers? What about these market channels are appealing to you?
- ? Who could you partner with on your farm or in your community to make your direct marketing enterprise more successful?

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

IV. RESOURCES



I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

IV. RESOURCES



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A. DIRECT MARKETING FOR BEGINNERS

The resources in this section will help you build a strong foundation on the basic concepts and practices associated with direct marketing meat. While some resources may be specific to a particular meat (e.g. beef) the basic information presented can be relevant to other species. Further, some resources may present ideas and perspectives that are somewhat outdated or that you might not agree with. However, all of these resources provide good, overall information on the fundamentals of direct marketing that can help you establish a firm foundation for a new or expanding enterprise.



Consider Direct-Marketing Beef

- **Publisher:** Agri-View, national industry publication
- **Year:** 2019
- **Category:** News Article
- **Duration:** Approximately 3 minutes

A brief self-assessment and guide on what to consider when embarking on a direct-to-consumer business.



Guidelines for Selling Grass fed Meat Locally

- **Publisher:** Southwest Grassfed Livestock Alliance (SWGFA), producer member-based organization with a Southwest focus
- **Category:** Summary outline
- **Duration:** Approximately 7 minutes

A short outline of direct marketing basics including establishing pricing, working with processors, customer service, and record keeping.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

Grass Based Meat Marketing

- **Publisher:** Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota based nonprofit organization
- **Year:** 2021
- **Category:** Videos
- **Duration:** Approximately 17 minutes

Three short video series with tips and tricks from different farms that have had success direct marketing their grass-based meat products.

Direct Marketing

- **Publisher:** National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), national nonprofit organization
- **Year:** 2016
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** Approximately 43 minutes

From ATTRA, This publication discusses direct marketing and the benefits and risks associated with selling agricultural products directly to customers. It covers popular direct marketing strategies, including farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and direct sales to restaurants, institutions, and food hubs, as well as agritourism and Internet-based direct marketing.

Profitable Meat Marketing

- **Publisher:** NC Choices, an initiative of North Carolina State University based out of North Carolina
- **Year:** 2019
- **Category:** Webinar
- **Duration:** Approximately 2 hours

A four-part webinar series on marketing strategy, market research, communications, and a strong focus on pricing.

How to Direct Market Your Beef

- **Publisher:** The Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), is the national outreach arm of the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program
- **Year:** 2005
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** Approximately 2 hours

An in-depth, how-to guide on enterprise planning, pricing, marketing research, processing techniques and seasonal planning. Includes case study examples of farms that direct market their beef.

Direct Marketing Meat-Webinar Series from High Five Meats

- **Publisher:** High Five Meats, Montana based livestock ranch
- **Year:** 2020
- **Category:** Webinars
- **Duration:** Approximately 7.5 hours

High Five Meats created a five course webinar series that covers the basics of direct marketing; starting out, pricing, processing, marketing, and shipping. These webinars take an in depth approach and get into the details of each of the content areas. Each course includes guest speakers with specific expertise to the subject matter. Note: the cost of this series is \$49.



I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



B. BUSINESS PLANNING AND FINANCIALS

Understanding the financial realities of direct marketing - what it could and should do for your overall farming enterprise - is essential for long term success. This understanding must begin with understanding your costs of production, followed by your costs of direct marketing to different customers. If the prices these customers are willing to pay for your products won't cover the cost of your production and direct marketing in the long-term, then careful consideration should be paid to undertaking direct marketing of your meat products. Efficiencies in production and direct marketing can influence the viability of your direct marketing business, and can build a willingness for different customers to pay a reasonable premium for different meat products. Business planning is best done in advance and good planning is only possible with good information, both about your farm and the markets you seek to access.



Breaking Down the Cost of Grassfed Beef

- **Publisher:** Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), a partnership of North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- **Year:** 2016
- **Category:** Infographic

This infographic summarizes the costs of grass-fed beef production.

[I. INTRODUCTION](#)[II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING](#)[III. SELF REFLECTION](#)[IV. RESOURCES](#)[V. CONCLUSION](#)

Farm-direct Marketing: Financial Management

- **Publisher:** Oregon State Extension, Extension service
- **Year:** 2020
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** 10 minutes

This guide provides the basics of financial management for direct-marketing business and financial planning.

Farm-direct Marketing: Merchandising and Pricing Strategies

- **Publisher:** Oregon State Extension, Extension Service
- **Year:** 2016
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** 18 minutes

This guide provides an overview of what you need to create a comprehensive merchandising plan.

Pasture Project Pasture-Raised Beef Calculator

- **Publisher:** Wallace Center at Winrock International, a national nonprofit organization
- **Updated:** 2020
- **Category:** Calculator

This calculator includes five year cash flow projections and a value calculator for purchase and sales descriptions. It's designed for farmers that raise beef in either cow-calf, finishing, or direct market enterprises but can be modified for any pastured-based animal production.

Cornell Meat Price Calculator + Direct Marketing Meat and Introduction

- **Publisher:** Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University based in Ithaca, New York
- **Year:** 2021
- **Category:** Calculator + Webinar
- **Duration:** Webinar is approximately 1 hour and 17 minutes

This calculator is a tool that helps producers set prices for specific marketing channels. The associated webinar is an instructional video on how to use the meat pricing tool.

Edible-Alpha Podcast

- **Publisher:** Food Finance Institute, network of consultants based out of Wisconsin with a national focus.
- **Year:** varies
- **Category:** Podcast
- **Duration:** Varies, approximately 1 hour, each

A podcast series that focuses on building and funding food profitable food businesses. Episodes include conversations with consultants, entrepreneurs, bankers, and investors.

Guide to Illinois Laws Governing Direct Farm Marketing

- **Publisher:** Illinois Stewardship Alliance, Illinois-based nonprofit organization
- **Year:** 2013
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** 1 hour, 15 minutes

This guide seeks to inform farmers and growers about what they need to know to legally sell farm products directly to consumers in the state of Illinois.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



Photo: USDA



C. PROCESSING, BUTCHERING, CUTS AND CARCASS BREAKDOWN

Moving live animals to slaughter and managing various processing activities can help you maintain consistency and efficiency in getting your direct marketing customers what they want. For those direct marketing meat, this requires one or more people in the enterprise playing an informed and active role in each step of the slaughter and processing phase - including closely managing the relationships that help ensure a high-quality cuts and value added products. Knowing what your different customers want to purchase and how consistently they want to make those purchases will help you plan and maintain the right slaughter schedules and processing decisions. Understanding how slaughter and processing happens can also help you know what to ask for and understand what you'll be getting back.



The Butcher Kept Your Meat?

- **Publisher:** Penn State University, land-grant research university based in Pennsylvania
- **Category:** Fact Sheet

A fact sheet that illustrates the steps on how a live 1200 lb steer turns into 475 pounds of meat.



Selling Beef Direct to Consumers? Find the Right Processing Plant

- **Publisher:** Beef Magazine & Greg Bloom, national industry publication focused on cattle
- **Year:** 2020
- **Category:** News Article
- **Duration:** Approximately 3 minutes

Tips on what to look for in a processor for direct marketing sales.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



Beginner's Guide to Local Meat Processing

- **Publisher:** Niche Meat Processing Assistance Network, extension based national community of practice
- **Year:** 2017
- **Category:** Fact Sheets
- **Duration:** Approximately 2 minutes, each

Four fact sheets for a quick crash course on meat processing. While these fact sheets are geared toward processors, they are helpful to anyone who is new to the livestock industry and wants to learn more about processing.



NMPAN Listserv & Newsletter

- **Publisher:** Niche Meat Processing Assistance Network (NMPAN), extension based national community of practice
- **Category:** Listserv and Newsletter

This listserv and newsletter has over 1,000+ members across the nation including small-scale processors, farmers, ranchers, cooperative extension personnel, federal and state employees, and others.



Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection Directory

- **Publisher:** United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), federal government organization
- **Category:** Database

Searchable database of USDA inspected processing facilities.



State Help/Find a Processor

- **Publisher:** Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN), extension based national community of practice
- **Category:** Database

A database of state affiliates that can assist small meat processors and producers. This database can also be used to search for state-inspected and custom meat processors. Use the above listed resource for USDA inspected processing facilities.



Colorado State University Meat School: Meat Cutting for Different Markets

- **Publisher:** Colorado State University, land-grant research University
- **Year:** 2019
- **Category:** Webinar
- **Duration:** 2 hours

This webinar from Colorado States was part of a series titled, "Meat School" that details meat cuts and breakdowns for different markets.



Photo: USDA

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



D. MARKETING STRATEGIES – HOW TO GET NEW CUSTOMERS

Direct-marketing meat requires you or someone in your individual or cooperative enterprise to actively and consistently build relationships with new and diverse customers interested in different products at different price points on different timelines. While this can be complex, balancing your target customers and using the right marketing strategies to reach them can help move more popular and less popular cuts and products consistently. Effective marketing not only depends on understanding trends and preferences for different target customers, it also requires developing the compelling branding, communications infrastructure, packaging, and other assets that will help you reach customers, tell your story, distinguish yourself from competitors, and - ultimately - build the consumer trust that results in sales. Direct marketing depends on effective marketing and ensuring that you or someone on your team has these skills is crucial for success.



10 Tips for Farm Social Media

- **Publisher:** Clemson Extension, extension service based out of South Carolina
- **Year:** 2021
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** Approximately 12 minutes

This guide is designed for farm operations who might already have social media accounts and are interested in increasing the impact of their social media presence and driving up sales.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



The Farm Marketing Makeover

- **Publisher:** Seven Sons Farms, pasture raised livestock producers based in Indiana
- **Year:** 2019
- **Category:** Videos
- **Duration:** 4, 8-12 minutes

These instructional videos guide producers through website design, online visibility, and email strategies for direct marketers.



Social Media Tools for Farm Product Marketing

- **Publisher:** National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), national nonprofit organization
- **Year:** 2012
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** Approximately 35 minutes

This guide offers an overview of online marketing options and tips on using them effectively.



Find and Engage with Customers on Social Media

- **Publisher:** Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT), nonprofit organization based in Illinois
- **Year:** 2019
- **Category:** Webinar
- **Duration:** 1 hour

A marketing expert gives an overview in this webinar on creating a farm marketing strategy and how to navigate social media engagement.



Harnessing Your Farm's Story to Build a Successful Brand

- **Publisher:** Ag Law Education Initiative, initiative out of the University of Maryland
- **Year:** 2021
- **Category:** Webinar
- **Duration:** 1.5 hours

This three-part webinar series is designed to help Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) strengthen their farm marketing strategies by hearing from BIPOC farmers about their branding journeys and learning about the legalities of branding, digital marketing, and protecting intellectual property.



Create a Farm Website that Sells

- **Publisher:** Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT), nonprofit organization based out of Illinois
- **Year:** 2019
- **Category:** Webinar
- **Duration:** 2 hours

In this webinar, a marketing expert walks through the principles and tips on creating an engaging farm website.



Colorado State University Meat School Class: Marketing

- **Publisher:** Colorado State University (CSU), land-grant research university
- **Year:** 2019
- **Category:** Webinar
- **Duration:** 2 hours

This webinar is the first class out of five in a series hosted by CSU Extension titled, "Meat School". Class one goes over basic marketing tactics and strategies for local grass-fed meat, including real world examples and market analysis.



How to Acquire and Keep an Online Customer

- **Publisher:** Seven Sons Farms presented by Land Stewardship Project (LSP), nonprofit organization based out of Minnesota
- **Year:** 2021
- **Category:** Webinar
- **Duration:** 3.5 hours

This very thorough webinar is presented by Seven Sons Farm on the success and failures of their marketing strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



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E. LABEL AND CERTIFICATIONS

Certifications can help convey your farming practices and product quality characteristics to consumers in a way that may be more familiar or trusted. These certifications are often most effective when a trusted relationship with a consumer isn't yet in place or a customer requires verification of practice or product qualities. Most certifications require a fee and that verification of specific standards are in place and maintained. While many meat enterprises that directly market their product do not rely on third-party certification in place of personal assurances to customers, they could play a role for your enterprise depending on your goals and customers.

GRASSFED LABELING OPTIONS AND STANDARDS:



American Grassfed Association Label Standards

A grass-fed certification program with pasture-based standards; no dedicated animal welfare or handling standards.



Certified Grassfed by AGW

A label that guarantees food products come from animals fed a 100% grass and forage diet, raised outdoors on pasture or range and managed according to the high welfare and environmental standards.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

HUMANE AND ANIMAL WELFARE LABELING OPTIONS AND STANDARDS:

Meat, Egg, and Dairy Label Guide

This guide from ASPCA goes over the most common animal welfare labeling claims and what they mean and what certifications ASPCA recommends.

Certified Humane Certification Program

An overview of what it means to be certified human through Human Farm Animal Care

Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW

Label that guarantees animals are raised outdoors on pasture or range for their entire lives on independent farms using sustainable, high-welfare farming practices.

Global Animal Partnership (G.A.P.)

An animal welfare certification program with a tiered labeling system that includes both enriched indoor and free-range/pasture-based standards.

OTHER CERTIFICATIONS AND LABELS

Food Alliance Certification for Livestock Producers

The Food Alliance sustainability standard for livestock operations describes in general terms a vision and goals to improve management in several areas of concern, including conservation, animal welfare, and on-farm working conditions.

USDA Grass Fed Small & Very Small Producer Program

USDA certification program for producers who market fewer than 50 cattle per year.

Audubon Conservation Ranching Initiative

The Audubon Conservation Ranching Initiative offers a certification for beef products produced on pastures that meet Audubon's standards for "bird-friendly land." The program is not offered in all states but is expanding.

Certified Naturally Grown (CNG)

CNG offers peer-review certification to farmers and beekeepers producing food, flowers, and fiber for their local communities by working in harmony with nature, without relying on synthetic chemicals or GMOs.

The Center for Good Food Purchasing Standards

The Center for Good Food Purchasing provides a framework for large institutions to direct their buying power to local producers. They analyze the procurement data from these institutions and provide a verification seal.

The Halal Meat Introductory Guide

University of Minnesota Extension gives an overview of halal markets, farming and processing requirements, and steps to have products certified.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



F. WHERE TO SELL: ON FARM, CSA, FARMERS MARKETS, ONLINE

Direct marketing is not a new idea; farmers have been selling their products directly to customers for centuries. However, in current times, there are more opportunities to sell directly to consumers using recently emerged or refined models and technologies. Farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) share programs, farm stands, online stores, buying clubs, or other arrangements can all be leveraged individually and in combination to create the right direct markets for your farming enterprise. Each has its “pros” and “cons” that must be understood and planned for to ensure you’re able to attain your goals. For example, farmers markets require you to be at a specific place at a specific time while abiding by market rules and engaging in a high level of dialogue with customers. These markets require tables, coolers, and other materials. By comparison, an online store is more passive but requires arranging for shipping or dropping off products to customers - which has its own material requirements. One direct market isn’t necessarily better than another, but some may be easier or more profitable for you to operate based on your available customers, preference, and circumstances.



Perishable Shipping Toolkit

- **Publisher:** GrazeCart & Seven Sons Farm, pasture raised livestock producers based out of Indiana
- **Category:** Directory

This resource guide was created to help producers acquire the three basic components every perishable shipping box requires to function properly. Contact info for recommended suppliers in each category are included on each tab of this spreadsheet.



Direct Sales Software Platforms

- **Publisher:** National Young Farmers Coalition, member-based nonprofit organization with a national focus
- **Year:** 2020
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** Approximately 10 minutes

An overview of online direct to consumer software options, including transactional costs and key features, and models of direct sales.



The Direct Market Farmer’s Guide to COVID-19

- **Publisher:** Local Line, e-commerce platform built for farmers and producers
- **Category:** Guide
- **Duration:** Approximately 24 minutes

Overview of the recommended pivots to make a successful direct-to-consumer business in COVID-19 era. Includes shipping, delivery, online advertising, and pick up locations.



Start Selling Online & Shipping in Five Days

- **Publisher:** Alderspring Learn, part of Alderspring Farm, a grassfed beef ranch based in Idaho
- **Year:** 2021
- **Category:** 5 module mini-course
- **Duration:** Approximately 1.5 hours

A five module course that walks producers through the process of setting up an online store, shipping, packing boxes and more. Note: this course leans towards Shopify users.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



Photo: USDA



G. FUNDING FOR DIRECT MARKETING OPERATIONS

Several grant programs are available to assist with marketing, processing, or other needs. Funding opportunities are available at the federal level, described below, and many more are offered at the state or regional level. Some examples of state or regional resources are compiled here, but this is not a comprehensive list, so please be sure to look into options in your state.



Value-Added Producer Grants

- **Funding source:** United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

These grants can be used for expenses related to producing or marketing a value-added agricultural product (including differentiated meat products like grass-fed). Funds may be used for planning/feasibility study activities, for working capital, or for some eligible salary and inventory expenses. In 2022, maximum grants were \$75,000 for planning activities and \$250,000 for working capital needs. Matching funds are required.



Farmers Market Promotion Program

- **Funding source:** United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

This grant program funds projects that “develop, coordinate, or expand direct-to-consumer markets”. Agricultural businesses are eligible, as are producer networks. Projects can include market analysis, online sales operation or expansion, consumer outreach, and more. In 2022, capacity building projects may request between \$50,000-\$250,000. Matching funds are required.



North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Farmer/Rancher Grant

- **Funding source:** Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

These grants can be used to learn marketing skills or explore other ways to improve farmer livelihoods, among other topics. In 2021, maximum grant amounts were \$15,000 for individual applicants or \$30,000 for two or more farmers working together.



Missouri Value-Added Agriculture Grant Program

- **Funding source:** Missouri Department of Agriculture

These grants can fund marketing plans, studies, consulting, legal assistance, and more for farmers in Missouri. In 2022, maximum grant amounts were \$200,000. Matching funds improve competitiveness of proposals.



Chicago Food Policy Action Council (CFPAC)

CFPAC tracks and posts requests for application announcements related to local funding opportunities for producers. For example, this 2022 blog post around funding for [healthy food distribution to suburban Cook County communities](#) from Cook County Department of Public Health.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION

IV. CONCLUSION



Photo: USDA

Direct marketing should be considered by any farm that produces livestock. This approach to connecting directly with different customers can be leveraged to be both profitable and enjoyable. However, it must be navigated carefully to ensure it meets the needs and goals of your farm enterprise. This resource guide has been designed to help you better understand direct marketing for meat and what it might mean for your farm enterprise. We encourage you to revisit this guide periodically as your knowledge and experience expand.

Did we forget a key resource that you've found helpful?
Contact us at www.pastureproject.org

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS DIRECT
MARKETING

III. SELF REFLECTION

IV. RESOURCES

V. CONCLUSION



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