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Market Ready™ Checklist for Direct Farm Sales to Restaurants

This list of best practices examines a series of basic business-to-business functions, outlining ideal starting points restaurant buyers would like to see regarding grower preparedness. Specifics will vary from restaurant to restaurant. These practices will help the grower/supplier communicate with potential restaurant buyers regarding their expectations for each business function.

Market Ready™ Direct Marketing

- ✓ **I understand what kind of customer typically eats at the restaurant I would like to sell to.**
- ✓ I know when/where/how often it may be possible for the restaurant to mention my products by name in their communication.
- ✓ I have easily-accessible, simple, clear, marketing materials (recipe card with brief farm history, website, social media) that provide information that a restaurant could use to tell the story of my product.
- ✓ I am aware of what kinds of promotion materials are available through sources like my state department of agriculture, grower association, or other 3rd parties.
- ✓ I am willing and available to host the chefs and their staff at my farm.
- ✓ I am open to being involved in events like food festivals, in-restaurant visits, and on-farm dinners that provide opportunities for my restaurant buyers to connect with my food and food products.

Market Ready™ Packaging

- ✓ **I understand that labeling can help build my farm's identity and improve product presentation**
- ✓ I understand the legal regulations for labeling my product, including verifiable label claims, weights, and business contact information.
- ✓ I have taken the opportunity to explain to chefs what terms like "grass-fed" and "natural" mean if I use them on my labels and/or packaging.
- ✓ I understand the typical industry standard packaging for the product I want to market from my farm and am prepared to deliver that kind of package to a restaurant.
- ✓ **I am prepared to spend extra time packaging my produce to a chef's specifications and have accounted for my extra time in the product price.**
- ✓ I have asked the chef how s/he wants it packaged.
- ✓ I have access to standard size cardboard produce boxes.
- ✓ I have relationships developed with processors/co-packers that can produce the desired cuts or processed products from my farm.
- ✓ I have selected the appropriate packaging to protect my product and preserve and protect its identity and integrity, and keep it free from contamination.

- ✓ I can use my packaging/labeling to work with my buyers on product traceability.
- ✓ I understand the legal packaging and labeling requirements for meat, dairy or processed products.
- ✓ I have relationships developed, or am developing relationships, with processors that a chef can work with my meat or dairy products.
- ✓ **I am prepared to show a chef the potential value for their restaurant in purchasing a whole animal or other larger quantities of product direct from my farm.**

Market Ready™ Pricing

- ✓ **I realize I may not be able to charge retail or farmer's market prices.**
- ✓ I have researched what prices chefs in my area might be paying for wholesale products.
- ✓ **I understand why the chef might value my product more than wholesale products.**
- ✓ **I can provide a written description of my product attributes, benefits and label claims.**
- ✓ **I can discuss the benefits of my product quality, freshness, or locally-grown attributes with my buyers.**
- ✓ If appropriate I am prepared to discuss each size, grade or cut of my product with my buyers.
- ✓ I have researched current market prices for my products and am aware of the transportation costs I will incur to deliver my product.
- ✓ I have worked out the processing and packaging costs and any other post-harvest costs associated with producing my final product long term.
- ✓ I have estimated the cost of delivering my product to the restaurant.
- ✓ I have priced the product at a level where I can make a profit and be a stable supplier.
- ✓ I can give an estimate of how much volume of product I can provide and for how long I can provide it.
- ✓ I can quote the buyer a delivered price for my product.
- ✓ I am prepared to quote a price per pound that I would accept for my product.

Market Ready™ Supply

- ✓ **I am prepared to discuss my potential products and product forms that may interest buyers.**
- ✓ I have approached possible chef clients before planting season to talk about my crop availability and their volume needs.
- ✓ **I have explained what varieties or product types I offer.**
- ✓ I have invited chefs into conversations about new product possibilities before the season.
- ✓ I can supply a consistent volume of product in the quantities acceptable to the buyer for a specified period of time.
- ✓ I have a plan to accomplish a steady production of my product.
- ✓ I am exploring season extension and other production options that allow me to increase volume of products supplied.
- ✓ I have identified my chef customers' direct email, voicemail, or the best way to reach them directly.
- ✓ I understand the importance of advanced notice to the buyer about my product availability and any possible changes in quantity or quality.



- ✓ I have a regular price and availability list available for chef customers.
- ✓ I am aware of other growers that may be looking for ways to get their products to restaurants and have started conversations about cooperative delivery.
- ✓ I have the ability to ensure that my product is delivered as promised if I am not personally delivering it to the restaurant.
- ✓ I am building good relationships with my restaurant customers so that if deliveries are delayed or mixed up, we can have an honest conversation about functional solutions.

Market Ready™ Delivery

- ✓ I am willing to offer delivery services in new areas to gain new clients.
- ✓ I am able to deliver my products to the restaurant's door.
- ✓ I have calculated the cost in time and fuel, etc., that is involved with delivering my product.
- ✓ I can arrange affordable transportation of my product to my buyer's requested delivery location at an acceptable frequency.
- ✓ I have asked the chef what days and times they want me to deliver and I can accommodate.
- ✓ I have an invoicing system that allows me to leave an invoice with each delivery and send an invoice via e-mail
- ✓ **I am building good relationships with my customers so that if deliveries are delayed or incorrect, we can have an honest conversation about their concerns and necessary corrections.**

Market Ready™ Invoicing

- ✓ I can provide a numbered invoice form with farm/contact name, address, email/website, phone/fax clearly visible.
- ✓ I have space on my invoice form to print the product name/description, weight/quantity, and price.
- ✓ **I have discussed invoicing with the restaurant manager and have made sure that my invoice statement or billing system meets their requirements.**
- ✓ I am prepared to accept payment at a later date beyond the actual product delivery time.
- ✓ I have a system in place to keep track of sales to each individual restaurant location.
- ✓ I have a system in place to keep track of how much I am owed by individual restaurant customers.

Market Ready™ Insurance

- ✓ I have asked the restaurant what level of product liability insurance is required.
- ✓ I have added the necessary product liability insurance coverage for my farm.
- ✓ I note my product's proof of insurance on all marketing/label materials.
- ✓ I have communicated with my insurance provider regarding changes in my marketing activity.

Market Ready™ Storage

- ✓ I know how much of my product a chef is able to comfortably handle in his/her kitchen storage space.

- ✓ I am willing to help a chef to come up with offsite storage options that can maintain my product's freshness, quality and food safety.
- ✓ I have developed best storage practices for my products.
- ✓ I have educational materials available for my customers describing storage & handling guidelines for my farm's products.

Market Ready™ Quality Assurance

- ✓ I have discussed cold chain requirements for my products with the chef and other food handlers.
- ✓ I have educated myself about safe food handling, proper temperatures, and storage of the products that I will be marketing direct from my farm.
- ✓ I am able to explain to my customers how my handling practices help to maximize the quality and shelf-life of my products.
- ✓ **I have the necessary documents for USDA and local health inspection where required.**
- ✓ I have the necessary documents outlining my organic production practices available to share with my chefs.
- ✓ I am planning to participate in GAP certification programs now or in the near future.

Market Ready™ Satisfaction Guarantee

- ✓ I have explained to the restaurant how my product will be delivered and presented.
- ✓ I have addressed any and all of restaurant's concerns about my product.
- ✓ I am working on a relationship with the chef that allows for honest dialogue about my product quality.
- ✓ I am able to make product adjustments to improve final product quality if necessary.
- ✓ I have other products or additional product to offer in the event that I need to compensate a restaurant client for poor quality.

Market Ready™ Communication

- ✓ **I have asked chef what the best way is to contact them personally to have conversations about my food product.**
- ✓ I have access to email, websites, social networking sites, and other communication channels to discuss product orders and quality.
- ✓ **I am making the effort to connect personally with my customers to improve the conversation and business relationship.**
- ✓ I have my buyers' contact information such as their direct phone numbers and email.
- ✓ I understand their preferred contact methods and times.
- ✓ I understand my buyers have many demands on their time, so I make appointments in advance.
- ✓ I understand the importance of advance notice about my product availability and any changes in quantity or quality.
- ✓ I am building good relationships with my customers so that, if deliveries are delayed or incorrect, we can have an honest conversation about their concerns.

- ✓ (My staff and) I present a professional and clean appearance when making business calls to potential customers.

These practices are offered as guidelines on expectations summarized over many firms. They are intended as reference points for self-examination of the farmers business practices to evaluate readiness for commercial markets and as a checklist for communicating on expectations held by specific buyers. **Market Ready™ Training** presentation, supporting resources, and additional helpful links are available at: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/agriculture/market-ready/index.html>