



# OPERATING A PROFITABLE SMALL FARM

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FACT SHEET 17

## Advertising and Promoting Your Product

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### I. Mission: Attracting Customers

Your farming operation could produce the best products in the region and your market could provide the best service in Frederick, but your farm business would suffer until you were able to attract customers to your market site. Successfully advertising and promoting your operation and products is as important as any other part of your farm business operation.

### II. Promotion

Before you begin the task of promoting your farm business operation, you first need to identify what kind of business you are, who are your customers, and what are you going to provide? You will need to develop an image and style that fits your personality and the perception of the business you wish to convey. Before you begin your promotional campaign, be sure that you are ready and are able to fulfill or live up to your promotion ads. Remember that promotion can bring a customer in one time, but only quality and service will bring them back again.

*Develop a promotion plan.* This plan doesn't have to be anything complicated. Developing a plan helps to bring all your thoughts together, get them organized, and provides you with a set of guidelines to follow as you undertake your project. Your plan should begin with an *objective*. It is here where you write down what it is you want to accomplish with your promotional campaign. Examples can be increasing

the number of customers, sales, or public recognition of your business. The next items in your plan are: 1) What is the *message* to be conveyed in the campaign, and 2) Who is the *audience* you want to hear this message? How you are going to get this message delivered to your target audience, your *strategy*, is the next item in your plan. This will include public relations, advertising, and news releases. The final item in your plan is the *budget*. This is where you figure out what your promotional campaign is going to cost.

A well-thought out, organized public relations campaign can be an extremely effective method of promoting recognition of your farm business operation and products at a minimal cost. Supplying fruit baskets, hats, and t-shirts for door prizes and table centerpieces all with your logo or farm name at area community functions are very effective public relations opportunities. Offering tours of your farm and special school functions such as pumpkin picking during the Halloween season are others. It will not hurt if your operation is known for its public service as well. Providing food items to the needy will be good for you personally and good for your business. Taste-testing and free product samples at fairs and community shows are fantastic for getting your logo and name known to the public.

### III. Advertising

Advertising in today's market can be very expensive, especially for the small farm bud-

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get, so you are going to have to make it pay. Be sure to exhaust all the resources for free promotion and advertising before you decide to buy advertising. Take a good look at the cost and what you can reasonably expect in return; don't do it unless you can afford it and are sure it is worth it. Find some ways to evaluate your advertising. Certainly measuring the increase in sales or people visiting your business are ways. Some others include the use of redeemable coupons and asking customers to fill out a brief survey that includes how they heard about your business. This also accomplishes getting them on your mailing list.

There are several different ways available to you to advertise your farm business operation. How you do it largely depends on your budget, audience, and your personal style of presenting your message. There are pros and cons with each method of advertisement; you simply need to select the method(s) that fit your

needs the best. Newspapers, radio, and television will reach large numbers of people, but are expensive. Road signs are effective for operations that are dependent upon capturing the attention of people traveling along a highway. Direct mail flyers, postcards, and newsletters are effective at maintaining contact with customers and should fit in well with a small farm promotional plan. Mailings are great for informing customers of what you will be offering, when it will be available, and what is new with your farm business. This type of advertising can take some time, but the personal touch is good for customer relations. Personal computers make this task much easier today. The challenge will be to develop and maintain a mailing list. Coupons and drawings for prizes are a couple of painless ways to develop a mailing list.

Reference: Gibson, E. "Sell What You Sow: A Guide to Successful Produce Marketing."