

OVERVIEW



**A curriculum written for use by Extension agents
in training specialty crop producers to make informed choices about
promoting their farm and their product**

Program Goal

This program will help guide producers in making informed choices appropriate for the promotion of their farm and product.

Introduction/Rationale for agents

Consumers have become more interested in reconnecting with their food and the farmers that produce it. This has sparked the growth of the local food movement into a multi-billion dollar industry in Florida. One of the main reasons consumers purchase local food is because they can interact directly with the producer. Producers who can effectively communicate with consumers about their farm, products, and practices have an advantage when marketing and selling to those consumers.

Due to this increased demand for locally grown food, the local food industry can be a very lucrative endeavor for producers. Yet, despite this movement's growing popularity, questions remain about the characteristics of local food that appeal to consumers, and which foods consumers consider to be local. Being able to discern what local food consumers will purchase, the factors influencing consumer purchases, and where they will purchase local food will influence which producers are successful in capturing this market.

Producers have to go beyond developing a better understanding of consumers and their purchasing patterns. Producers have to establish good relationships with consumers, and one key component of relationship building is using effective communication strategies to build trust. Communication between producers and consumers can be challenging when they have different backgrounds and experiences. As a result, it's important for producers to develop and test product messages that resonate with consumers. In doing this, producers can form relationships, build trust, and generate and retain consumers. Once key communication and messaging strategies have been tested, a variety of marketing methods are available to producers who will make choices about media channels, marketing schemes, product labels, and branding programs.

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Developing a valuable promotional plan through the use of this curriculum will allow producers to begin a conversation with consumers about where their food comes from. Developing transparent relationships with consumers can lead producers to a stable clientele base, a better operation, and higher sales of local food. After attending this curriculum training, producers will be able to:

- Explain what consumers think about local food.
- Describe factors that influence whether or not a consumer buys local food.
- Identify words and images to use in communication with consumers about their local food products.
- Identify and select strategies to market and communicate about their local food products.
- Understand how to talk to consumers about their farm, practices, and local food products.
- Develop a story for their farm to share with consumers
- Write a local food promotional plan for their farm.

Using the Curriculum

The modules can be taught independently or combined for a six-module curriculum. Each module provides a PowerPoint, suggested script, activities, resources, and an evaluation. Additionally, each module provides participants with the opportunity to develop a component of a promotional plan for their farm and local food products. If all modules are completed, the participant will have a completed promotional plan.

In addition to an evaluation for each module, there is also an overall evaluation available. All evaluations are available for hard copy distribution or electronic distribution. If you wish for your participants to complete the overall evaluation electronically, they can complete the evaluation at this link https://ufl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_40AiRQALAjTo6mF. In the electronic evaluation, the participants will be required to enter the name of their instructor as well as the date that they completed the workshop. You can obtain the results of the electronic evaluation by emailing piecenter@ifas.ufl.edu or calling 352-273-2598. For questions contact Dr. Joy Rumble at jnrumble@ufl.edu or calling 352-273-1663.

This curriculum was made possible through funding provided by the Florida Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and was developed in collaboration with the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. We hope that you will find these materials useful when working with producers throughout the state. A digital version of the curriculum materials can be found at piecenter.com/training/local or a hard copy can be requested from the emails/phone numbers listed above.