

Connecting the Farm to Consumers 101

Today's Environment:

Only 1.8 % of the population lives or works on a farm.

By a young adult's 21st birthday, they will have watched 30,000 hours of television or videos and sent or received 250,000 emails.

In the United States, there are 4.1 billion texts/day and 2 hours of video uploads per minute per day.

Consumers are easily persuaded by all media sources.

AGVOCACY.....are you ready?

Are you ready.... to advocate for agriculture; to tell your story; to bridge the gap between producers and consumers? Here's how:

1. Take advantage of invitations to attend or deliver educational programs and presentations. Hand out business cards and farm brochures.
2. Open your doors to farm tours, open houses and other on-farm events. Ideas:
 - Offer guided farm tours to schools, legislators, and service clubs
 - Treat neighbors to an ice cream social or a pig roast
 - Plan a spring planting or fall harvest celebration
 - Offer birthday parties on the farm
 - Host an animal care seminar with your veterinarian and MSU Extension educator
3. Embrace social media.
 - Brand your farm with a Facebook Fan Page
 - Blog about your farm & industry
 - Develop a website
 - Produce and share videos

4. Welcome conversations and be prepared to answer questions about life on the farm, Michigan agriculture and any related industries. For example:

"Our farm is a fourth generation family farm. We strive to produce high quality, nutritious potatoes for Michigan families and beyond."

"Michigan is the 2nd most agriculturally diverse state in the nation. Its farmers produce more than 200 food and fiber products."

"Michigan ranks 1st in the nation for production of 18 commodities including: tart cherries, pickling cucumbers, dry beans, blueberries and twelve floriculture crops."

5. Tell your story and keep it basic!

Write, practice and deliver the "elevator speech"; a 30-60 second verbal description of what you do and why you do it.

Develop a mission statement for your farm to communicate the value of your farm and industry.

Write a tagline and use it on business cards, farm signage, brochures, websites, newsletters, advertisements and email signatures.

Create a logo for your farm that symbolizes your farm in a positive light.

6. Word of Mouth Marketing

Take advantage of every opportunity to market your farm and to have friendly, informative conversations with neighbors, community influencers, decision makers, industry professionals and visitors. People are more likely to say positive things about your farm if they understand and support your mission.

For more information contact MSU Extension educators
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Reference: "Leading the Conversation"; United Dairy Industry of Michigan & the Michigan Dairy News Bureau

To contact an expert in your area, visit people.msue.msu.edu, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3364).

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