



## Step 1: Get Started - Farmer Self-Assessment

The following questions are designed to help you determine your interest and ability to market your food products to local schools. This information is not necessarily for sharing with schools but is essential for you to know and will be helpful when you begin talking with school food service directors and/or distributors about supplying food to local schools and/or school districts.

### 1. Farm Business and Description

Have your contact and basic farm information available *in writing* when you begin conversations with school food service directors, including:

- a. Your name and farm/business name, address, phone number, fax number, email address, and website, if applicable; a business card with this information is helpful
- b. What are your months of operation for production, and for marketing?
- c. What days and hours is your farm business open?
- d. What days and hours are you available?

#### *Farm Description*

- e. What size is your farm? How many acres are in production? Would you be willing to expand production to additional acreage? Would you be willing or able to adjust your crop mix on your current acreage?
- f. What are your full costs of production per acre, and per crop, including all labor? What is the minimum amount in profit per crop you need to continue to grow that crop?
- g. Farm Products and Production
  - i. School food service directors are often most interested in fruits and vegetables for school meals programs, but some schools are also interested in purchasing specialty products for special events. Other farm products like apples, flowers, honey, maple syrup or pumpkins are good for school fundraisers. What types of products do you grow/raise?
    - Fruits
    - Vegetables
    - Meats
    - Dairy
    - Eggs



## MARKETING MICHIGAN PRODUCTS

A S T E P - B Y - S T E P G U I D E

- Specialty Products
- Herbs
- Plants, trees
- Flowers
- Fiber Products

ii. If you grow fruits and/or vegetables, please note which ones in the chart below. Which products might you be willing and able to grow and sell, if schools express interest? Remember, flexibility is key.

| Vegetable                                  | Currently Grow and Sell  | Willing to Grow and Sell |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Asparagus                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Beets                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Broccoli                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Brussel Sprouts                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cabbage                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carrots                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cauliflower                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Celery                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Corn                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cucumbers                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Green Beans                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Greens (collards, kale, etc.)              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Eggplant                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lettuce (Romaine, Bibb, etc.)              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Onions                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parsnips                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Peas                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Peppers                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Potatoes                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pumpkins                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Radishes                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Salad Greens                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spinach                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Squash, summer<br>(yellow, zucchini)       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Squash, winter<br>(butternut, acorn, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



## MARKETING MICHIGAN PRODUCTS

A S T E P - B Y - S T E P G U I D E

|                                  |  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Tomatoes (cherry, slicing, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Turnips                          | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Other:                           | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> |

| Fruit        | Currently Grow and Sell  | Willing to Grow and Sell   |
|--------------|--|--|
| Apples       | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Blueberries  | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Cantaloupe   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Cherries     | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Grapes       | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Muskmelon    | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Pears        | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Plums        | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Raspberries  | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Rhubarb      | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Strawberries | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Watermelon   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Other:       | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> |

h. Production practices (Please check all that apply):

i. Certified/verified practices

- Certified organic
- Certified naturally-grown
- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified
- MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program) verified

ii. Other practices

- Organic
- GMO-free
- Integrated pest management
- Pesticide free
- Synthetic chemical free

- Hormone free
- Pasture-raised
- Grass-fed
- Free-range
- Hydroponic
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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- i. Pest management
  - i. Please describe your pest management practices, including integrated pest management.
  - ii. Are you willing to inform school customers of pesticide applications, if applicable?
- j. List annual inspections and certifications your farm/business receives from USDA, state, or local inspectors and/or third-party auditors or certifiers, and their frequency (annual, bi-annual, etc.). Gather your latest inspection reports, certification documentation, farm plan and/or food safety and sanitation plan. Are you willing to share these inspection and/or certification reports with school customers?
- k. Do you have a HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) plan? If so, please describe.
- l. Do you have an insurance policy that has product liability coverage? What is the payment limit? If you are willing to host school field trips, does your insurance offer liability coverage for your property/premises, often known as general liability?
- m. Do you have greenhouses and/or hoop houses on your farm for extended season production? How does this affect your product availability?
- n. Do you have post-harvest storage facilities on your farm? If so, for what products? Please describe.
- o. Are you able to wash and/or pack farm products? If so, note which products can be washed and packed, and describe if applicable. (Please note that additional certifications are required for processing farm products.)

**2. Sales**

- a. Are you primarily a wholesaler or retailer? To which types of markets do you currently sell farm products?

- b. Who are your current customers?
- c. What percentage of your total farm sales does each comprise?
- d. Where are they located? Where and when/how often do you deliver to them?
- e. Would they be willing and available to serve as references for you?
- f. Are there other available market outlets near schools to which you can sell your products?

**3. Logistics - Ordering, payment, delivery**

- a. How do you prefer customers place orders? By telephone, fax, email or website?
- b. How often do you prefer customers place orders? Monthly, weekly, or on a specific day of the week?
- c. How will products be packaged for school customers? Please describe but note that this can often be negotiated with school customers.
- d. Do you have a minimum amount, volume or dollar value for orders and/or delivery?
- e. How far are you willing to travel per order and/or delivery? Or would you consider a delivery fee/charge for customers that require further travel?
- f. Many school districts require deliveries to multiple school sites. Are you willing to deliver to more than one location per order?
- g. How many times per week or per month are you willing to deliver?
- h. Do you have a refrigerated truck? If not, please describe delivery method.
- i. Will you allow school customers to pick up products at your farm if they would prefer? If so, what are the best days of the week and times for order pick up?
- j. Can you provide invoices upon delivery, and include a receipt of delivery form to get signed by school customers? (See Sample Invoice in Appendix III.)



# MARKETING MICHIGAN PRODUCTS

A S T E P - B Y - S T E P G U I D E

- k. What are your requirements for payment? Within 15, 30 or 60 days?

#### 4. Marketing and Service

- a. What is your policy for products of poor quality? Are you willing to offer credits or returns? Be clear about your policy with school customers, and remember that good customer service goes a long way in building good relationships with customers.
- b. Are you willing to provide taste tests for potential school customers?
- c. Are you willing to sell products for school fundraisers? Or would you be interested in developing a special line of products for farm to school fundraisers?
- d. Are you willing to have school customers visit and tour your farm/business?
- e. Is your farm available for student field trips? If so, please describe a plan or program for field trips.
- f. Are you available to visit school cafeterias and/or classrooms and talk with students about your farm products and how they are grown?