ACEnet

GROWING OUR REGIONAL ECONOMY

# FARMERS MARKET TOOLKIT

# OUR MISSION

ACEnet's mission is to grow the regional economy by supporting entrepreneurs and strengthening sectors. We envision a resilient economy in which all people have the resources and opportunities to prosper.

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Athens Farmers Market Vendor - Baringer Farm

# INTRODUCTION

You have an idea for amazing products to sell at the farmers market, but find yourself wondering, "How do I start?" This toolkit is designed to help you turn your baby steps into a leap of faith. ACEnet is here to be a helping hand along the way.

The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet) is a nonprofit organization in Athens, Ohio. Our mission is to grow the regional economy by supporting entrepreneurs and strengthening economic sectors. In accordance with our mission, ACEnet is involved in several regional farmers markets and the development of vendors selling at these markets.

## ACENET'S ROLE IN FARMERS MARKETS INCLUDES:

- Building Entrepreneurial Capacity
- Investing in Local Food Jobs & Ownership
- Food Ventures Center for Specialty Product Creation
- Food & Farm Enterprise Center with ODA Licensed Meat Processing Facilities
- Increasing Healthy Food Access
- Fostering Collaboration with Markets and Vendors
- Social Media Promotion
- Market Vendor Training Programs
- Initiating EBT & WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- Planning for Market Pavilions

## WHY FARMERS MARKETS?

**Farmers markets provide an opportunity for local farmers to earn income while giving others access to fresh and healthy food. This exchange strengthens the culture of community, building a sense of trust, support, and friendship.**

## BENEFITS OF FARMERS MARKETS

- Tasting what fresh really means
- Preserving farmland & rural livelihoods
- Learning the cycles of seasonal produce
- Keeping money in our locally owned food economy
- Connecting with the farmers who grow your food
- A smaller carbon footprint to get your food home

# STARTING YOUR BUSINESS

## ACENET CLIENT INTAKE

ACEnet is here to help you with the basics of starting and growing your business. Our services are designed to help support and develop your business, leading to the overall development of the local economy. To begin the process of working with us, fill out an intake form, available at acenetworks.org/services/new-clients/. After completing an intake form, schedule an intake meeting with our staff. At the meeting, we will discuss which of our services will best meet the needs of your business. The more that you research before the meeting, the more that you will get from it. Explore our website to learn about what services we offer, gather information about the sector in which you would like to enter, and observe other businesses similar to the one that you would like to launch. There is a fee of $50 for the intake process. Before attending the meeting there are a few items that you should prepare:

## ALL CLIENTS

- Intake Form
- Budget/Financial Projections or Actual Financials (if existing business)
- Business Plan/Focus Area
- Marketing Materials
- Market/Competitor Product Research

## FOOD CLIENTS

- Examples of Packaging & Labelling
- Samples and Recipes for your Products
- Potential Product Names

## BUSINESS PLANNING

We have created a sample business plan template. This form includes information about your product, management, and financial forms. For a digital copy, please visit our website at acenetworks.org/services/new-clients/business-planning/.

## FINANCES

Finances can be daunting to business owners and upcoming entrepreneurs. Fortunately, there are many resources to help you. ACEnet staff members can aid in the location of financial tools. There are several local banks that offer loans and other financial services to small business owners. An excellent resource for financial assistance and access to capital is the Athens Small Business Development Center. Visit their website sbdc.voinovichschool.ohio.edu/ for more information about available financial services.

# PRODUCTION

ACEnet is home to three shared use production facilities to assist with your farm-to-market production needs. Our Food Ventures Center is located in Athens, Ohio. Our facility in Nelsonville, Ohio is home to our Food and Farm Enterprise Center and Wood Manufacturing Center. These facilities are for rent at a low-cost rate for ACEnet clients.

## FOOD VENTURES CENTER

To reduce some large upfront costs, ACEnet offers a full kitchen for production. Trained staff can help you to adapt and modify your single batch recipes to accommodate mass production, test pH levels, and obtain necessary certifications. The Food Ventures Center features three main spaces – The Central Kitchen, Thermal Processing Room, and Warehouse.

ACEnet holds the following licenses issued by our regional and state departments:

- Food Service Operation License for catering businesses, food trucks, etc.
- Cold Storage Warehouse License
- Frozen Food Establishment License
- ODA Division of Food Safety Registration

In compliance with the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, the following licenses need to be obtained directly by the client, which ACEnet can help with:

- Certificate of Bakery Registration
- Commercial Cannery License


ACEnet Food Venture Center Tenant - Butcher's Bites

## THE CENTRAL KITCHEN

Restaurant, food truck and catering businesses access the Food Venture Center for their off-premises enterprises. New food entrepreneurs and farmers learn how to scale their recipes and prototype products using commercial equipment with the assistance of our product development and food science professional staff. Many businesses utilize the kitchen during their start-up phase to develop and market their products before deciding if they should move into a restaurant space or set up a commercial kitchen of their own.

Products produced in this area typically include prepared foods, pasta, baked goods, pretzels, and no-bake snacks.

| CENTRAL KITCHEN EQUIPMENT | |
|---|---|
| 5 Stainless Steel Tables | 80 Qt Hobart M 802 Mixer |
| 3 Wooden Bakery Tables | 60 Qt Univex Mixer |
| 1 Poly-top Prep Table | 10 Qt Hobart D300 Mixer |
| Commercial Charbroil Grill | 10 Qt Hobart A-200f7 Mixer |
| 6 Gas Convection Ovens | Hobart Deli Slicer |
| 2 Electric Convection Ovens | Hobart Bowl Chopper |
| 2 Electric Combi-Ovens | Excalibur One Zone 12 Tray Dehydrator |
| 2 Vulcan Double Deck Convection Ovens | 20+ Rolling Sheet Pan Racks |
| Dedicated Cooling/Fermentation Room | 50+ Full Size Cooling Racks |
| Dedicated Drying Room | 100+ Full Size Baking Sheet Pans |
| 2 Dough Proofers & 1 Dough Sheeter | 100 lb Digital Receiving Bench Scale |
| Roll-In Blast Chiller | 2 Sanitizing Stations with 3-Bay Sinks & Drying Racks |


ACEnet Food Venture Center Tenant - Dr. May's Thai Kitchen

# DRY PACKAGING ROOM

ACEnet clients use the Dry Packaging Room to make their products retail-ready by utilizing table space and specialized equipment to portion each unit into its finished packaging and apply necessary labeling. Supplying a dedicated room means that producers are free of the bustle of the Central Kitchen for this integral step.

| DRY PACKAGING ROOM EQUIPMENT |
|---|
| Counter-Top Chamber Vacuum Sealer |
| Pedal Operated Heat Sealer |
| 4 Stainless Steel Prep Tables |
| 2 Bread Slicers |
| 100# Scale |

To schedule a tour of the Food Ventures Center or talk to our Food Enterprise Coordinator, contact **AdamK@acenetworks.org**


**ACEnet Food Ventures Tenant - Crumbs Bakery**

# THERMAL PROCESSING ROOM

Thermal processing is the combination of the temperature and time required to eliminate a desired number of microorganisms from a food product. ACEnet staff members, licensed by the Better Process Control School, provide training to new entrepreneurs in areas of thermal processing, sanitation, and food safety procedures. Staff are certified and available to conduct pH analysis on products.

Products typically produced in this area are shelf-stable and include salad dressings, sauces, salsas, apple sauce, and condiments.

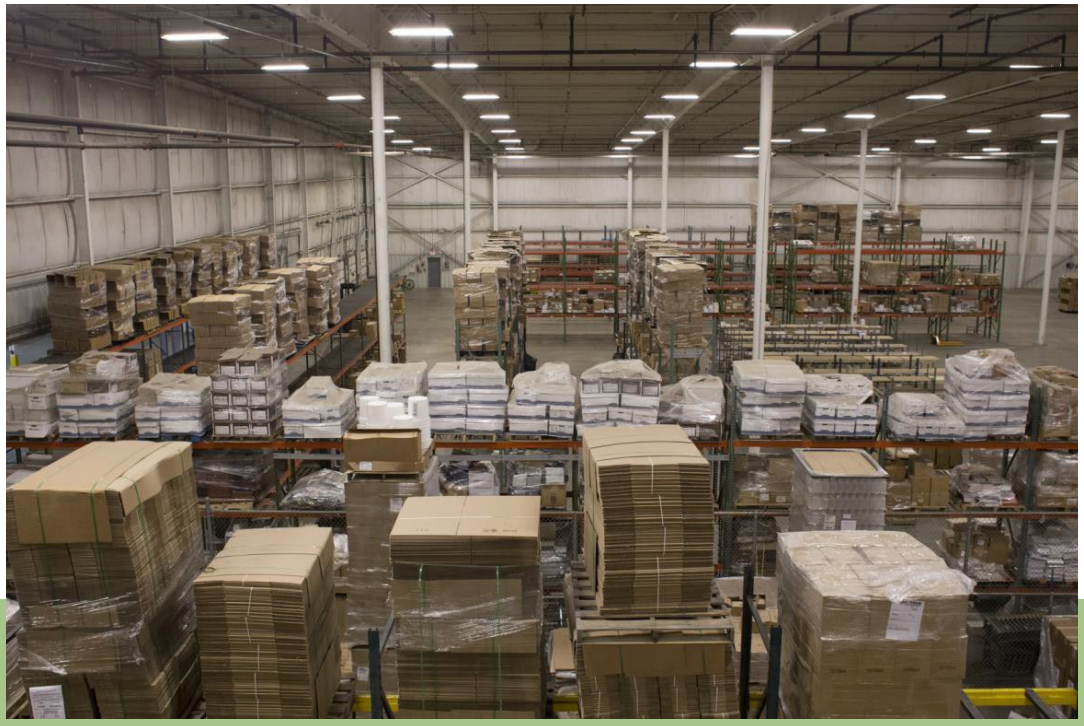
| THERMAL PROCESSING ROOM EQUIPMENT |
|---|
| 2 45-Gallon Steam Kettles with Swivel Mixing Arm |
| 1 95-Gallon Steam Kettle with Swivel Mixing Arm & Ad-Mix |
| 1 145-Gallon Steam Kettle with Integrated Mixing Arm |
| Fully Integrated Pump System including Transfer & CIP |
| Bottling Line with Twin Head Simplex Volumetric Piston Filler |
| Capping Machine |
| 40 Qt Vertical Chopper Mixer |
| Electric Tilt Skillet (TS-106) |
| Automated 20 PS Boiler & Condensate Return System |
| Automatic Can Opener (Edlund 610) |
| 3-Bay Dishwashing Sink with Drying Rack |

# WAREHOUSE

ACEnet has warehouses in Athens & Nelsonville that receive and store deliveries, and serve as distribution hubs for many of our specialty food producers.

| WAREHOUSE EQUIPMENT |
| --- |
| Walk-in Coolers |
| Walk-in Freezers |
| Warehouse Storage Cages |
| Distribution Space |
| Pallet Jacks |
| Drive-up Loading Docks |
| Batch Coding & Labeling Equipment |

To schedule a Nelsonville tour, contact **ChrisQ@acenetworks.org**



ACEnet Nelsonville Warehouse

# FOOD AND FARM ENTERPRISE CENTER

The Food and Farm Enterprise Center in Nelsonville includes two dedicated processing facilities, one for meat and one for produce, for your farm-to-market production needs. Our facilities are ODA licensed and inspected, and are available at an hourly rate. Having a licensed and inspected facility dedicated to processing meat allows our tenants to sell wholesale instead of only being able to sell direct to consumers or to restaurants under a monetary cap.

ACEnet holds the following licenses issued by our regional and state departments:

- Cold Storage Warehouse License
- Frozen Food Establishment License
- ODA Division of Food Safety Registration
- ODA Division of Meat Inspection Registration

| FOOD & FARM ENTERPRISE CENTER EQUIPMENT | |
|---|---|
| Biro 3334SS Meat Band Saw | Hobart 60 QT Mixer |
| Biro 922SS Meat Grinder | 500 Single Chamber Vacuum Packaging |
| F. Dick Sausage Stuffer 24 lb. Capacity | 96' Poly-Top Work Table |
| 30 Gallon PowerPan Electric Tilt Skillet | H. HTS Scale & Custom Label Printer |
| Double Deck Full Size Combi-Oven | Cooler/Freezer Storage |
| A. P. Hurrichill Reach-In Blast Chiller | Warehouse Storage |

ACEnet Food & Farm Enterprise Center Tenant - Pork & Pickles

# WOOD MANUFACTURING CENTER

For farmers managing woodlots and creating product lines from their timber, ACEnet provides a shared-use Wood Manufacturing Center facility to host and assist regional wood manufacturing businesses. Our Wood Manufacturing Center offers a variety of equipment to grow woodworking small businesses. The space is available for rent at an hourly rate. We have additional warehouse space available for workers to rent for workers' own equipment.

ACEnet also assists with business planning, marketing, financial management, provide incubator space, can connect timber farmers to woodworkers, and can help timber farmers start their own woodworking business.

Available at hourly cost or equipment rental fee, contact Chris Quolke at **ChrisQ@acenetworks.org** for more information on pricing. We have additional space available for workers to rent for users' own equipment and creations.

| FOOD & FARM ENTERPRISE CENTER EQUIPMENT |
|---|
| Steff Power Feeder |
| Apollo Sprayer |
| Dust Dog & Jet- Dust Collectors |
| Jet Shaper |
| Sawstop 10" Industrial Table Saw |
| Jet Belt Sander |
| Grizzly 37" Drum Sander |
| Jet 20" Planer |
| Laguna Band Saw |
| 8 Loading Docks |
| Garage Entrance Next to Wood Center |
| Warehouse Storage |


ACEnet Wood Manufacturing Center Tenant - Ohio Is Home

# ACEnet FOOD VENTURES CENTER FEES & SERVICE RATES

| SERVICES | TYPE | FEE/DETAILS |
|---|---|---|
| Dry Storage – Pallet | Monthly | $25/pallet space |
| Refrigerated/Frozen – Pallet | Monthly | $70/pallet space,<br>$50/pallet space if multiple |
| Refrigerated Space | Monthly | $2.50/sq. ft. |
| Frozen Space | Monthly | $3/sq. ft. |
| Secured Cage – Large | Monthly | $175 |
| Secured Cage – Medium | Monthly | $120 |
| Secured Cage – Small | Monthly | $25-65 (depending on size) |
| Tabletop (No Equipment) * | Hourly | $10 |
| Prepared Foods (Equipment) ** | Hourly | $15 |
| Bottling/Filler | Hourly | $20 |
| Meat Processing Room | Hourly | $20 |
| HACCP Plan | Flat Fee | $30 – Modification of HACCP<br>$50 – Creation of HACCP |
| pH/Aw Analysis | Flat Fee | $10 each |
| Nutrition Facts Panel | Flat Fee | $20 each |
| Product Development | Flat Fee | $25 per product |
| Label Printing | Flat Fee | Client purchases paper |
| Label Design | Flat Fee | $75 – One label, 3 edits |

**2021 FVC Fees & Service Rates for clients in this publication are subject to change**

*Strictly doing tabletop work and not using any of the kitchen equipment (i.e. ovens, stove, blast chiller, mixers, etc.)

**Prepared Foods: Work involving using any of the kitchen equipment

# FARMERS MARKETS

Your product is ready to go to the market! Which market will you choose? You may choose the one closest to your home, the one with the least competition, or the one with the most customers. Visiting the markets that you are considering will help you to gauge which market will be the best fit for you. While you are at the market, talk to customers and other vendors to get a better feel for their experiences at the market. Make a list of pros and cons after visiting each market to help in your decision-making process.

## LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

### Athens Farmers Market
1000 E. State Street Athens, Ohio | Athens Mall & Parking Lot
Saturdays 9AM – 12PM | All Year
Wednesdays 9AM – 12PM | April – December

### Chesterhill Produce Auction
8380 Wagoner Road Chesterhill, Ohio
Mondays & Thursdays 5PM – 7PM | May – October

### Meigs County Farmers Market
Main Street, Pomeroy, Ohio | Levee Parking Lot
Saturdays 10AM – 1PM | May – October

### Perry County Farmers Market
100 Public Square Somerset, Ohio | Market on the Square
Saturdays 9AM – 12PM | May – October

### Lancaster Farmers Market
West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, Ohio
Parking Lot between Broad St and Columbus St
Saturdays 8:30 AM – 12PM | May 5 – October 6

### Keller Market House
134 S. Columbus St. Lancaster, Ohio
Wednesday 11AM – 6PM, Thursday & Friday 11AM – 5PM,
Saturday 8:30AM – 3PM | All Year

## MARKET APPLICATIONS

To begin your journey at the market of your choice, you must begin with the application process. These can typically be found on the market's website. The application usually includes basic information such as your name, the name of your business, and a description of your products. There will also be a fee for selling at the farmers market and renting market space which varies from market to market.

## MARKET DAYS

Preparing for farmers market days can be quite time consuming. The day before the market, make sure that your products are ready for the market. This could include picking vegetables, baking pies, or putting the finishing touches on your crafts. Try to pack up your vehicle the night before the market to avoid feeling in a rush in the morning. Make sure that you give yourself plenty of time to arrive at the market and set up your booth without feeling rushed. Sales and crowd size are likely to fluctuate throughout the day and peak times can vary from market to market.

Weather can be a challenging variable at outdoor farmers markets. You should be prepared for extreme heat, rain, and even snow at year-round markets. Weather conditions can affect the number of customers in attendance at the market. Making your booth as adaptable as possible to weather conditions can help to maximize your sales during challenging conditions.

Athens Farmers Market Vendor - Cherry Orchards

## PRICING

Observe the prices of others selling similar goods within your farmers market. Also take note of how much your product sells in the market as a whole, such as supermarket prices and prices at other farmers markets. You can also calculate the cost of goods sold. Cost of goods sold is an accounting term used to represent the total cost of producing a good. While it may be difficult to have an accurate estimate for how much water you used to water only your tomato plants, do your best to calculate how much the materials used to produce your product cost. Do your prices allow you to make a profit overall?

Be prepared to make change according to your prices. Consider using rounded numbers like $1 instead of $0.99 to help you with making change on market days. If you have items priced at $1.25, $3.75, etc. make sure that you have plenty of quarters and other change for customers. Taking all of these things into consideration will help you to make your prices fair both for you and your customers.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

In all businesses, customer service can be make or break. Having excellent customer service can be the difference between a sale and a potential customer walking away empty handed. Greet those who approach your booth with a smile and stand frequently to appear more inviting. Aim for efficiency, understanding, and kindness when interacting with customers.


Athens Farmers Market Vendor - Deep Roots Farm

## BOOTH DESIGN

Creating an appealing display helps to attract customers to your booth. Most booths begin with some form of shelter to protect customers, products, and you! It is typical at our regional farmers markets for vendors to use pop up tents as a shelter.

The sales floor is the primary area of your farmers market display. Your booth should have plenty of space for customers to move about and view your product offering. You can try a U shaped or V shaped table layout to allow customers to walk into your booth. Make sure to have a clear checkout area that allows for a small line to form. Take traffic flow into consideration when evaluating these options.

Test different techniques to display your products. The feeling of abundance is key. Vertical displays can help bring products to a customer's eye level and let people can see your range of products as they walk by. Stacking wooden crates, creating a stair step tiered display, or developing a creative new display are effective ways to create a visually appealing vertical display. Using circles have been known to create a welcoming feeling. Offering samples and recipe cards can also be used to attract customers and show how products can be practically integrated into their lifestyle.

Create signs that clearly label the prices of your products. These can be individual signs for individual products, a large chalkboard with all your product prices, or both. You can also utilize signage to promote special products or sales.

The "backroom" is an area referring to the area behind your sales floor. This area is typically is where you will store extra supplies. The backroom may be your vehicle or space under your tables. Regardless, make sure that this area is kept clean and tidy. Hanging a banner or utilizing table cloths can help to hide clutter from boxes and bags. Make sure that the backroom is organized in a way that allows you to move around freely without risk of tripping.


**Example of Farmers Market Booth Design - Credit: @diygardenfun**

## USE THE SPACE BELOW TO SKETCH A DESIGN PLAN FOR YOUR FARMERS MARKET BOOTH

# MARKETING

Marketing is a crucial piece of any successful business. While you may not have the means to hire a full-time professional marketer or invest in a massive marketing campaign, there are steps that you can take to market your business well. Working through each of the following tools will allow you to develop a plan that better emphasizes your strengths and improves upon your weaknesses.

## 4 Ps OF MARKETING

Creating or improving your marketing strategy starts with analyzing the current state of your business. We have included a few tools to help you reflect and strategize. The first exercise uses the 4 Ps of marketing to give a bird's eye view of your business. This will allow you to understand different basic elements of your business and create a strategy that utilizes these elements to increase sales. The 4 Ps are Product, Promotion, Price, and Place (sometimes called distribution). These categories reflect the cycle of your sales- what you make, how much it is sold for, where it is sold, and how you make your product known in order to be sold. Reflecting on these stages and looking for ways to optimize and leverage them for increased sales is key.

### The 4 Ps of Marketing Worksheet

**PRODUCT – What are you selling or planning to sell?**

**PRICE – How much should you sell your product for? What is a competitive price among others in your market? How much profit will you be making? How much are customers willing to pay?**

**PROMOTION – What methods do you plan to use to promote your product? Social Media? Newspapers?**

**PLACE – Where do you plan to sell your product? One local farmers market? Multiple farmers markets? Farmers markets and wholesale?**

# SWOT ANALYSIS

The next tool provided is a SWOT analysis. This tool is used to observe the internal Strengths and Weaknesses of your business and the external Opportunities and Threats. After reflecting on how your product is sold with the 4 Ps of marketing, the SWOT analysis allows you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of this cycle. The opportunities and threats portion of this analysis allows you to look at the market you are in as a whole. Take time to observe other businesses in your farmers market. What are they doing well that inspires you to improve? Look at other similar businesses in your industry or those who sell at other farmers markets across the country. Is there a new product, service, booth layout, or other concept that your customers would enjoy? Is this new opportunity something that you could feasibly take on?

## SWOT Analysis Worksheet

**STRENGTHS – What are your strong points? What makes your business special?**

**WEAKNESSES – What areas can you improve?**

**OPPORTUNITIES – What opportunities are there for you to take advantage of in the market? A new product? A new market?**

**THREATS – What are your competitors doing well (customer service, booth design, sampling etc.)? Are there any market-wide threats, such as a national supply shortage or drought?**

# TARGET MARKET

Choosing a target audience is about de ining who needs what you're selling. Who do you plan to sell to? This can be broad, like "anyone interested in eating healthy foods" or narrower, such as "restaurants desiring locally grown wholesale tomatoes." Your target market can include more than one group. If you are already selling, consider who buys your products most often and how you would like to expand your customer base. If you have not started to sell yet, think of who may be interested in your product.

Keep your customers and desired customers in mind as you prepare marketing materials to attract them.

## Target Market Worksheet

**DEMOGRAPHICS – What are your customers like? Are they in a particular age range or from a certain geographical area?**

**NEEDS – What are your customer's needs? Are they looking for fresh foods? Organic foods?**

**SOLUTIONS – What are you offering customers? What are your products?**

**INTERACTIONS – How frequently will you interact with customers?**

**GROWTH – How can your relationship with current customers grow? How can you increase your customer base?**

# MARKETING STRATEGY

Using the observations made in the exercises above, begin to plan your marketing strategy to accomplish your overall business goals. Consider the messages you would like to send to your customers that will help you to achieve these goals and what methods you will use to communicate these messages.

### What do I want to communicate to customers?

- What impression do I want to give my customers?
- What values do I want to communicate?
- What do I want my brand to be associated with?

### What will I do to accomplish it?

- What images and videos will I use to communicate my values and messages?
- What colors will convey and compliment this message?
- What slogans and sayings will communicate this message?
- What words and language will I incorporate to communicate this message?

### What platforms will I use to accomplish it?

- What social media platforms are my customers most likely to use?
- What are the costs and benefits of advertising using traditional methods?
- What types of banners and signs should I use to promote my business at the market?

### How will I successfully implement this plan?

- How often will I post to social media and do I have adequate technology?
- What is my overall marketing budget?
- What additional trainings can I do to improve the quality of my marketing?
- What metrics will I use to measure the success of this plan?


# BRANDING

It is important to have a consistent and appealing brand that accurately reflects your business. Whether a customer is shopping online, in a store, or at a farmers market for your product, your brand should be recognizable. In your marketing plan, you established what values and messages are important to you and you would like to share with customers. When solidifying your brand, make sure to keep these values central throughout the process.

## LOGO

Logos are the symbol of your business. Customers will recognize your business by your logo, so making sure that your logo is positive, memorable, and communicates the story of your business is crucial. ACEnet has an in-house graphic designer to help our clients with a variety of design needs, including logo design. For more information about logos, visit our website and view our Branding Toolkit, "What Makes a Good Logo?" at acenetworks.org/acenet- consulting/toolkits.

## THEMES

Choosing a general theme for your brand can help make your marketing efforts more coherent. For example, it may be natural for a family farm to focus on sustainability, family, country living, or a combination of these themes. Staying consistent with themes that match your brand and values help to give all your materials a unified voice. Your colors, logo, packaging, and market display should all reflect a central idea that allows customers to identify your brand in a positive light.

## COLORS

Choosing colors for your brand can help to further communicate your message to customers. You may notice how colors symbolize emotions or actions. A traffic light is the perfect example. At a traffic light, we know that green means to go, red means to stop, and yellow means to slow down because the light is about to turn red. Similarly, the movie "Inside Out" makes emotions into characters. The characters are colored based on association to the emotion. Sadness is blue, joy is yellow, fear is purple, disgust is green, and anger is red.


While you may have noticed some of these color-based themes naturally, there has been extensive research done on the use of colors in marketing. If you are interested in learning more, a good place to start is this article, "The fundamentals of understanding color theory" by Kris Becker. 99designs.com/blog/tips/the-7-step-guide-to-understanding-color-theory/

| COLORS | ASSOCIATIONS | EFFECTIVENESS |
|---|---|---|
| White | Cleanliness, Purity, Calm | Puts customers at ease |
| Black | Boldness, Elegance, Power, Formality | Allows produce to stand out |
| Red | Action, Excitement, Energy, Impulsive | Stimulates appetite & encourages customers to act now |
| Pink | Fun, Energetic, Youthful | Often symbolizes softness and femininity |
| Orange | Creative, Playful, Enthusiastic | Associated with affordability |
| Yellow | Fun, Energetic, Youthful | Eye-catching & exciting |
| Green | Life, Freshness, Health, Nature | Good for organic or eco-friendly products |
| Blue | Confidence, Calm, Security, Trust | Enforces reliability and loyalty |
| Purple | Royalty, Luxury, Relaxation | Signal softness by using a pale tone and mystery or intensity with a deep tone |
| Brown | Stability, Age, Comfort | Natural and down to earth |

## WEBSITE

Having a professional website can be a great tool for customers to learn about your business. You may wish to offer sales online or simply use it as an opportunity to showcase what you have to offer. Regardless, having a well-developed and engaging website can lead to increased sales. A website allows you to tell your story using photos, videos, and words in a more controlled environment than social media alone. Your website may include the history and story of your farm or workspace, photos of daily activities, contact information, details about how to purchase your products, or anything else that you feel would be engaging and useful to customers. Make sure to use clear visuals as the focus of your website. ACEnet offers website creation and touch-up services to clients on a case by case basis. See our website for more info: acenetworks.org/services/new-clients/fees-and-service-rates/

# SOCIAL MEDIA

Connecting with your consumer is the ultimate goal in creating a social media account for your business. By sharing things—including stories about your product, photos from your farm, recipes, anecdotes and the things you love about your work—you solidify your brand. Social Media has become an important tool for marketing your business. Thankfully, it is free and user friendly. With a few basic skills business owners can produce effective, quality content. Facebook and Instagram are two major platforms that offer settings specific to businesses.

## WHY SHOULD I USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media can help educate the public about your business. If you raise pastured poultry, for example, it can allow you to explain to a larger audience why you think pastured poultry is beneficial. If you grow produce certified organic, you can use it to educate the population about organics and to establish yourself as an authority on the subject. The caution here is to make sure that you are providing accurate information in an appropriate tone.

Social Media can help connect you with new consumers and improve relationships with existing customers, i.e., direct buyers, restaurants, chefs, etc., that you would not have encountered otherwise. If you have a website for your farm, social media can be an excellent way to drive new people to your website or blog.

## GENERAL SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

It is important to start a business page instead of solely marketing your business on your personal Facebook or Instagram page. Having designated business social media pages allow for customers that you may not know personally to follow and learn about your business. Using a business page also allows you to access business-specific features such as reviews, page "liking" rather than "friending," and post boosting.

- Be sure to answer questions and comments in a timely manner
- Maintain a kind, positive, and professional attitude
- Use clear images. For tips on capturing the best shots with your phone to use on your social media platforms, check out ACEnet's free Photography for Social Media webinar: acenetworks.org/acenet-consulting/webinars/#photography-for- social-media
    - Another free resource: acenetworks.org/acenet-consulting/toolkits/
- Hashtags were made to be seen and get you seen. Use relevant hashtags to your business, but keep it interesting and mix it up with every post. Use popular hashtags with 10,000 posts and more for best visibility
    - Hashtags for something specific that you grow (#organic #tomatoes) could be paired with whimsical and honest hashtags (#hardwork #farmerlife)
- Check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors before posting. It may help to ask a friend or family member to check for errors as well
- Find a balanced posting schedule that works for you. 1-3 times per week is a average.
- Tag your farmers market and other partners when appropriate to increase the audience that will view your post

## FACEBOOK

Facebook is a social media platform that allows users to share photos, videos, and text posts with other users. Facebook is the most popular social media form among older generations but is still used by Millennials and some older Gen-Z. Facebook is often used to search for the hours, offerings, reviews, and basic information of a business. Facebook content is typically focused on a photo, video, or graphic to catch the attention of your customers. Facebook posts are often more text heavy than Instagram posts, but it is important to be concise enough to keep the attention of the reader. If you're unfamiliar with setting up a Facebook business page, please check out ACEnet's free Facebook Business Basics webinar: acenetworks.org/acenet-consulting/webinars/#facebook-business-basics

## INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a content sharing platform centered on photo and video sharing. This platform is popular among Millennials, Gen-Z, and other younger generations. However, Instagram is being used increasingly by older generations as well.

Instagram posts are focused on the photo or video that is shared, with a brief caption beneath it. Up to 10 photos and videos can be uploaded in a single post, but typically less is more. Instagram posts are generally less text-heavy and more visually focused than Facebook. Instagram users are generally more focused on aesthetics and visually pleasing content.

## CONTENT

What you post on social media matters. Social media posts communicate your brand and product to people outside of your regular customer base. Social media is the perfect place to be creative and engaging with content. Below are a few ideas to help you begin brainstorming content ideas for your own business.

### CONTENT IDEAS:

- Post photos of what you will bring to the market the night before or morning of the market. List out what products will be available
- Post photos or short videos of daily activities such as harvesting, feeding animals, etc.
- Share relevant articles and posts relating to your field, but prioritize your own content
- Post photos of baby animals, pretty flowers, a nice sunset over your field, or other picturesque moments
- Take a photo of your booth at the market so that customers know what to look for
- Look for marketing holidays that suit your products and make a post highlighting that product. For example, National Tomato Day is April 6th
- Have a professional video made to share the history and motivation behind your farm
- Share updates on what you are planting and harvesting, what products are in season, or what you are doing to prepare for the next season.

## PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

Most modern cell phones have the capability to take quality photos and videos. Learning basics, such as how to frame photos, can be extremely beneficial to increase the quality of your posts. The most important aspect of social media photography and videography is clarity of the image and sound (if applicable). Make sure that your phone or camera is focused and try to keep it steady. A friend or family member may be able to help you capture clear images.

In addition to regular posts, consider investing in professional photos and videos of your product, farm, and even headshots of you! Having a solid, high-quality set of photos of your product can be a great tool to use for your social media content, website, printed materials, and other promotional items. For tips and tricks on capturing the best shots with your phone to use on your social media platforms, check out ACEnet's free Photography for Social Media webinar: acenetworks.org/acenet-consulting/webinars/#photography-for-social-media

## TRADITIONAL MARKETING METHODS

You may find it beneficial to utilize traditional marketing materials in addition to social media. Business cards, flyers, recipe cards, and rack cards can be beneficial to display and hand out at farmers markets. Testing out a small batch of printed materials at a farmers market will help you to estimate their effectiveness and the amount that you can distribute weekly. Remember to incorporate the colors, slogans, logos, themes, and language that you have previously determined to keep your brand consistent across all platforms. ACEnet has a Multimedia Designer on staff that can help with the creation of these materials.


Athens Farmers Market Vendor - Shagbark Seed & Mill

# ACENET MULTIMEDIA DESIGN EXAMPLES

ACEnet's multimedia department provides branding and marketing materials for our clients as they request. Each service is a separate fee, if interested please contact the multimedia designer for costs and services. It's essential to get your business started with your logo branding, marketing material, and packaging.

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CREPE, CROQUE & CO.


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# RESOURCES

We highly encourage vendors to do their own research in addition to using our services to find strategies that work best for their business. The internet provides a plethora of information and examples of successful Farmers Market vendors that can be used as inspiration for your own business.

## WEBSITES

### ACEnet – acenetworks.org

For more information about ACEnet services, visit the ACEnet website for more details about how our services can help grow your business.

### Farmers Market Coalition – farmersmarketcoalition.org

This website provides a variety of information regarding farmers markets. This includes national metrics and data, frequently asked questions, market research, and a resource library that allows you to view information by category.

### Project for Public Spaces – pps.org

The Project for Public Spaces works with a variety of public initiatives including farmers markets. The website shares applicable information about successful markets and how farmers markets can be improved.

### Ohio Farmers Market Network – ohiofarmersmarketnetwork.org

The Ohio Farmers Market Network provides webinars, events, and an annual conference for Ohio Farmers Market vendors and market managers.


Meigs County Farmers Market Vendor - The Herbal Sage Tea

## BOOKS

The New Farmers Market by Corum, Rosenzweig, & Gibson
Tilling the Soil: Cultivating an Entrepreneurial Vision in Your Family by Joel Salatin From Kitchen to Market: Selling Your Gourmet Food Specialty by Stephen F. Hall

## WEBINARS

On our website, ACEnet offers a variety of webinars to assist small business owners. Webinars currently available include the following topics:

- Google Business Basics
- Photography for Social Media
- Facebook Business Basics
- Lean Business Canvas
- Specialty Dairy Products series: Budgeting, Marketing, Best Practices
- Local Meat Products series: Scaling Up, Entering Markets, Meeting Protocol

Our webinars can be found here: acenetworks.org/acenet-consulting/webinars/

The Ohio Farmers Market Network is also a great resource for webinars. Check their website under the "Events" section for an up to date schedule of webinar offerings.

## ADDITIONAL TOOLKITS

Additional toolkit, like this one, are available on our website for specific interest areas

- Agri-Tourism - Creative ways to market your farm or rural business
- Branding – What Makes a Good Logo
- Various toolkits relating to the local meat industry, including – Labeling, Logos, Marketing Materials, Photography, Producer Tips, and Retailer Tips

## TRAININGS

There are a variety of trainings and conferences available regionally. These events may be hosted by ACEnet or other partner agencies. Topics can vary from social media to health and safety regulations. Follow us on Facebook to stay up to date on local trainings from ACEnet and other organizations.

ACEnet
GROWING OUR REGIONAL ECONOMY

## USE THE SPACE BELOW TO RECORD ADDITIONAL NOTES


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