Sunny Hill Farm Marketing Plan

**Overview of Farm/Operation**:

Sunny Hill Farm is a certified organic vegetable and meat farm operated by Niechelle Wade and her children. The farm is located on land in the family for generations and previously was a dairy farm. The farm raises vegetables using season extension technology (high tunnel), grassfed beef and pastured pork. Sunny Hill Farm participates in a variety of marketing channels – direct marketing at three local farmers’ markets and wholesaling to various health food/local food stores. They operate a blog, Facebook and Twitter page as well as maintain a farm website. In the past few years, Sunny Hill Farm has experienced periods of being out of product for extended periods of time. They have utilized this as an opportunity for education of their customers – which has worked in their favor as customers return for continued purchasing once products are back in “stock”.

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|   | **North Windsor Berries Sales Trends** |
|   | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** |
| **Marketing Channels** |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Farmers' Market** |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Meats |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Produce |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Honey |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Value-Added |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Freezer Trade** (meats) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Wholesale** |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Honey |   |  |   |   |   |   |
| Produce |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Meats |   |   |   |   |   |   |

New plans for Sunny Hill Farm include starting a weekly television show on public television that will highlight shopping for and cooking local foods. Each week they will visit a different farm, bring back products and take into the kitchen to show to prepare and eat those farm-fresh products. This will be a great marketing tool for not only the farm, but all others who are involved in the local foods venue.

**Marketing objectives: What are you trying to accomplish?**

Sunny Hill Farm wants to use technology, the television show, and their presence in direct marketing venues to drive sales.

* 50% increase in traffic to blog, Facebook page and website by June 2013
* 150% increase in traffic to blog, Facebook page and website by Dec 31, 2013

They have reported that through use of their blog highlighting specific products they sell (cuts of meat or types of vegetables) their sales at the market that week (and following) is up. Through their participation in this grant they were able to get a logo re-design for the farm as well as a template for a newsletter that can be distributed both electronically as well as in print. This was a concern as some of their customers do not possess email or use the Internet. They also wanted the ability to “bank” content during the slower times of the year for use during busier times and the newsletter, along with blog posts, seemed the best way to accomplish this goal.

Sunny Hill Farm wants to increase those following them and purchasing products through their various marketing channels.

* Level sales of meats for 2013 into 2014 due to herd size being cut in half with a family situation change;
* 100% increase in sales of produce in 2013; and
* 200% increase in sales of value-added items in 2013.

They instituted a price increase for their meats in June 2012 and this has helped with sales. Another price change will be re-visited at the end of 2013.

Sunny Hill Farm wants to market smarter so they will be focusing their efforts on the television show whose content can then feed into their other marketing mechanisms as opposed to working on content for each one individually.

They see their customers as everyone; even though they offer a certified organic product Sunny Hill Farm believes in providing a quality product at a price which they can live on and customers are comfortable paying. There is definitely a dichotomy of their customers at the market in terms of the products they typically purchase. This purchasing increase will come from several different marketing tactics; the first is a continual focus on customer/consumer education regarding the uses of various cuts (especially “utility” cuts) and types of produce, the second is the television show referenced above, and the third is intentional and continual use of their marketing/communication channels: blog, Facebook and (e)newsletter.

**Market Research: What is the market size?**

The market size for the local foods movement is often difficult to quantify, though the market for certified organic products (meats and vegetables) has a lot of data. USDA ERS has information on the organic market: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/natural-resources-environment/organic-agriculture/organic-market-overview.aspx>.

The highlights include:

* Customer preferences for organic have shifted from a lifestyle choice to being consumed at least occasionally by a majority of consumers;
* Price premiums remain high for organic products;
* Sales of organic products still increases year-over-year; and
* NY is the number three state for certified organic farms.

Since Sunny Hill Farm’s customer base is located mainly within Broome and Tioga counties the market size is much easier to determine. See the table below showing their different types of customers and percentages of the population.

Insert table – Laura needs to do.

Additionally, through a customer survey completed in 2011, ~98% of customers were located within Broome County so marketing strategies could be focused on the immediate area to encourage word of mouth customer traffic.

**Competition: Who else is doing this?**

There are no other certified organic vegetable or meat farms located in Broome County. There is one other located in neighboring Tioga County. There is some competition with other grassfed beef and pastured pork direct marketing farms, but this number is also quite low (2-3 in Broome County; another ~2-3 in neighboring Tioga County).This creates a great opportunity for Sunny Hill farm to carve a niche in the market.

**Communication Plan: How will you reach the market?**

This was discussed in the “Marketing Objectives” section, but it deserves more fleshing out. From the customer survey conducted in 2011, several themes can be gleaned to inform future marketing strategies:

* A majority of Sunny Hill Farm’s customers learn about their products by visiting them at the farmers’ market;
* A majority of their customers rated their variety of products and friendly-ness at market higher than their organic certification; and
* Recipes & tips topped the list of tactics that would encourage them to purchase more, or more frequently;

Sunny Hill Farm will adopt a three pronged approach developed during the winter of 2013. This will include creation of a plan for weekly (or bi-weekly) topics to be addressed on the blog and Facebook page. These topics could include: health benefits of organic, local, grassfed, etc…; how to prepare the utility cuts (not everyone wants a steak/can afford one); tips on buying from local farms; what happens on a farm; etc… The newsletter will be used for communication with customers on specials, happenings on the farm, etc.. There is potential for coupons to be developed for use with Facebook and blog viewers as many customers of Sunny Hill Farm hear about them through word of mouth. Second is the television show (referenced earlier) currently in the development phase will be a great communication mechanism for several reasons. First, the audience for public television generally subscribes to lifestyle preferences and beliefs aligned with the organic and local foods movement. And second, the sheer number of those potentially watching (need audience numbers from television station). This also plays into Sunny Hill Farm’s belief in the value of customer/consumer education of local foods; whether they purchase from their farm or not what is good for the local foods movement is good for everyone. And if consumers don’t know how to prepare something, they won’t purchase it.