

## **Making Your Market Fit Your Product and Your Product Fit Your Market**

Keena Tracy, Little Ridge Farm  
101 Gould Rd. Lisbon Falls, ME 04252

[LittleRidge@gwi.net](mailto:LittleRidge@gwi.net)

Starting a new farm is challenging. One of the greatest challenges is narrowing down what type of products your farm will offer and how they will be marketed. Farmers can market their product through several avenues: farm stands, CSA, farmer's markets, wholesale, senior farm shares. And within each of those markets lie a myriad of ways one can present their product. And in recent years with one-stop shopping on everyone's mind and the new wave of growing food all year round, the temptation to "do it all" is hard not to fall prey to.

I run a 112 family (75 full share) summer CSA and a 40 family Holiday and Winter CSA. Yearly I raise 50 turkeys, 10 beef cows and 8-10 pigs. The shareholders have access to PYO strawberries and raspberries and a free PYO flower and herb garden. I sell select products wholesale in the fall/winter. I have 5 workshares who work 2 hours a week for 18 weeks during the summer and a husband who works full time off the farm but likes to drive the tractor on the weekends and grow the PYO flowers. This past year I decided to hire a person to work 6-12 hours a week. Other than that I run most of the farm's ins and outs on my own.

At the beginning I sat down and created a set of goals that expanded over 3 years; from prefarm through the first year as a full time farmer with customers. I made conscious decisions about how I wanted the farm to look and run and fully thought about what I thought I could handle, what the population would be interested in buying and what I would enjoy doing. I believe farmer health is as important as soil health.

- What products do you like to grow?
- Do you like to work with the public?
- Do you have parking for the public?
- Do you like packing vegetables or putting things into bunches?
- Do you want to or have the time to make deliveries?
- Do you want employees or apprentices?
- Would you mind going to a farmer's market every week for most of the year?
- Do you live close to your clientele?
- How much and what type of land do you have?
- What can make you the most amount of money with the least amount of work?

Every entity of the farm has its own budget: PYO fruits, the livestock, jams.... It has to make money\* and it has to be fun.

\*Money: My monetary goal for the farm is to be self sustaining (i.e., not to use "personal" money to make the farm run) and to make \$30,000 profit yearly. I want to be able to run the farm and still keep my house/land if something happened to my husband's job—not necessarily *support* the entire household.

## **CSA:**

### Summer Share:

It is a free choice, market style approach. Members come once a week May/June-October, Tuesday or Friday from 3:00-7:00p.m. I set out all of the produce and folks choose what they want up to a given weekly amount. Yearly average: Half shares 6lbs/week and full shares 11lbs.

### Holiday Shares:

Free choice, 30lbs of produce plus items such as homemade rolls and apples. One pick-up just before Thanksgiving and another just before the December holiday.

### Winter Shares:

Free choice, 15lbs of storage crops and extras like a bag of hoophouse greens, dry beans or frozen berries. Pick-ups are once a month January-April

### Meat:

All animals are sold in bulk in the fall. Priced per lb hanging weight.

### PYO raspberries and strawberries:

Priced per lb. Everything on my farm is self-serve and bring-your-own container.

### Wholesale:

4000lbs of Carrots and Winter radish. I chose these specifically so that my packaging is simple, the crop is not “delicate”, I can wash them in a root washer, and all of the harvest/deliveries are done in a couple of months rather than spread throughout the season.

Basically I've tried to create a business that would allow me to farm as much as possible, get to know my community and still have personal space with my husband. Consciously I did this. Again I create a set list of goals and stick to them.

Every single person is unique: interests, situation, soil, farm infrastructure and location.