

PROPOSAL

Diversifying Your Farm Business Through On-Farm Food Service: A How-to Manual for Establishing Farm-To-Table and Pizza Farm Operations

Overview

With the exploding market for local foods and direct farmer connections, there is increasing demand for various forms of on-farm food service businesses. The Midwest and Minnesota in particular are in a position to lead this trend, particularly in the “Dinner on the Farm” and “Pizza Farm” arena with recent media coverage in leading publication from USA Today (“Pizza nights lure visitors to Midwest farms”) to Midwest Living. Note this media buzz occurred with only six such Pizza Farm operations open for business, two in Minnesota and four in Wisconsin.

However, while there is opportunity for farms to diversify and manage risk through such endeavors, no resources currently exist to support and navigate farmers through the start-up process. This is particularly important given the potential investment cost in on-farm commercial kitchen enterprises.

This start-up guide would uniquely help farmers successfully assess and evaluate the business planning. A particular focus will be on navigating and understanding the various regulatory categories under the Minnesota Department of Health for such start-ups and working with county and local inspections and zoning as well as liability and food safety compliance.

Modeled after the [Farmstay Manual](#), this On-Farm Food Service resource will be approximately the same length (50 pages) and incorporate case study examples from Pizza Farm and Farm-To-Table operations in both Minnesota and Wisconsin ventures close to the Minnesota border:

[The Red Barn Farm of Northfield](#) (Northfield, MN)

- Pizza and other value-added products (salsa)

[Two Pony Gardens](#) (Long Lake, MN)

- Pizza

[Squash Blossom Farms](#) (Douglas, MN)

- Recently completed successful Kickstarter campaign to build on-farm commercial kitchen for farm-to-table events and other value-added

[A to Z Produce & Bakery](#) (Stockholm, WI)

- First of the Pizza Farm operations; caters to Twin Cities market

[Lovetree Farm](#) (Grantsburg, WI)

We will solicit various perspectives and feedback on this guide, including farmers (both those already operating such businesses and starting out), the Minnesota Department

of Health and other regulatory agencies, the Minnesota Office of Tourism (marketing perspectives), etc.

This manual can also be readily adapted as a resource for other states as well as serve as a basis for workshop content at various farming conference and a potential webinar.

Outline

1. Introduction

A. About On Farm Food Service and This Manual

- Different categories of food service:

On-Farm Dinners & Meals

Pizza Farm Operations

Other: B&Bs?

B. Business Opportunities for On Farm Food Service

- Growth of local food market; tourism

C. Is Diversifying into Food Service for Me?

- How does this fit into other farm businesses?

2. Elements of On-Farm Food Service

A. Kitchen Definition

Minnesota Department of Health Categories

Food Preparation Areas

Assembly (i.e., pizza) versus fully cooked meals

Regulations

What Licensing Will I Need?

B. Meal Service

What can be served?

Incorporating farm products and other local foods

3. Setting up an On Farm Food Business

Business Structure Options

Employees

Financial Considerations

4. Liability and Risk Management

Insurance

Food Safety

Rachel: You probably have more here?

5. Marketing

Pricing

Setting Hours & Schedule

Reservation Management

Event Management: Seating, parking, bathroom facilities

6. Putting it All Together in a Business Plan

Food Service Start-up Checklist

Other diversification opportunities: Value-added

Resources

Development Team

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