

# Ask a Farmer: Discussion Guide

## Objective

- This discussion guide provides thought provoking information and topic questions to help you develop an Ask a Farmer program in your local area. The goal of this program is to create an event in which farmers will interact with consumers through one-on-one conversations.
- As you listened to our committee talk about this new program, we hope you gleaned a lot to help you fill in information and answer questions that will help you plan your event.

## What is the Ask a Farmer program?

- The AFBF Promotion and Engagement Committee started the Ask A Farmer program as a way to raise consumer awareness by engaging in one-on-one conversations. This program provides tools and resources to help your Farm Bureau members bridge the gap between consumers and farmers through direct personal contact.



*Why do you feel it is important to host an event like this?*

## Objectives of the Ask a Farmer program:

- Consumers are more curious than ever before about the food they eat. The purpose of the Ask A Farmer program is to help build trust with the consumer by offering opportunities to interact with farmers. You and your Farm Bureau members can promote agriculture and strengthen the relationship with consumers by combining trust, understanding and engagement.



*What specific message(s) will be addressed at your event? Some examples: Discuss what farm products you raise, explain the difference between organic vs non-organic products, dispel the myths of factory farm vs family farms.*



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## Telling Your Story

- Telling your story about how you raise your farm products is important. We shared that the biggest impacts are made through direct conversations. Some others shared about the commodities they grow and the disconnect with consumers.



*List the details that you want to share about your farm, the products you raise and how each one becomes a final product of either food, fuel or fiber.*

## Examples of Customer Interactions

- In one of the video clips, CEO Miller explains the importance of making a connection with the consumer. He states that if the consumer understands what our needs are, what we are doing and why we are doing it, they will begin to understand the reason behind the decision and actions farmers take each day. We know farmers in the U.S. grow safe, abundant and affordable food for American consumers. Our goal should be to help consumers understand how and why we do this.



*How does your farm experience relate to the consumer? What are specific examples that demonstrate how you would connect with the consumer through this experience? What are things you both care about?*

## Create Your Event Plan

- You have been provided with a simple event planner outline that will help you determine what needs to be done in order to plan a successful event. Use the information in this guide to help you design and create a work plan that you can use to plan out your event and help bridge the gap between the consumer and where their food comes from. *(Feel free to use the back of this paper to brainstorm!)*

## Where do I find more information?

- Free Training: Farm Bureau University
- Training from AFBF Promotion and Engagement committee at Target Training or CCI at Convention
- Local Extension Agents



# ASK a Farmer

## Event Planner

PROMOTION  
& ENGAGEMENT

**Purpose:** Promote the opportunity for consumers to have authentic, in-person experiences with farmers that build consumer trust and confidence in American agriculture.

**Steps for success:** Follow these 5 simple steps to host a successful event.



**Step 1: Set your direction:** Determine what your objective is and what you want to accomplish. Write your short term and long-term goals and include action steps to achieve your goals. Determine who your audience is and what target messages you want to share. Think about the questions they may have ahead of time and prepare answers to those questions.

*For Ex:* Visit a culinary school and host a Q&A session with culinary students. The goal is to become their resource for information about food and agriculture. Provide them with your contact information or invite them to tour your farm.



**Step 2: Choose a venue and contact them:** What is the location where you want to hold an event? Who is the main contact? Reach out to ask if they are willing to host the event, what dates work for them, and then set a date for the event. Determine what role they will play during the event.

*For Ex:* Local grocery store, culinary school class at their school, local fair booth, civic organization, chamber of commerce, farmer's market, community agriculture day.



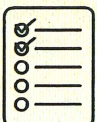
**Step 3: Create a plan:** You have the why, what, when and where; now you need the how and how much! Determine your communications, preparation and budget needed. For example, do you need to advertise or brand your event? Is it possible to advertise in collaboration with the venue? Remember to use free social media event postings or contact local radio stations for inexpensive time slots. What expenses such as transportation, food, banners, handouts or radio ads would be needed? Do you need to schedule a time to prepare or train the volunteers for their part in the event?

*For Ex:* You're going to a local grocery with farmers and want to invite the community out. Advertise in the store's weekly flyer with a graphic, date and time. Create a post on their social media page and share it. Hang posters at businesses. Create pull up banners, and handouts for day of the event. Have a budget for the banners and handouts.



**Step 4: Organize a team:** Who will be there to help put on this event? Will there need to be shifts for people to cover time slots or is there a limit to how many people can go? Engage members and their areas of expertise as you plan interactive conversations at the event.

*For Ex:* 10 members attend grocery store event. Station one person at the entrance of the store, and station remaining people throughout the store in different sections like the milk aisle, meat case, or bread and pasta areas.



**Step 5: Review your plan and execute it:** Did you fill out each step on this guide? Have you found volunteers to help and are your goals being met? Be sure to collaborate with your county or state Farm Bureau. Remember to take pictures!

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### 6-8 Weeks Before the Event: Initial Planning

- **Define Event Goals & Theme:** Establish clear goals (conversations with farmers, farm tours, community engagement, local food promotion, education about agriculture).
  - **Secure Venue and Date:** Confirm location (farmers market, culinary school, civic organization, library, farms, etc.) and the event date.
  - **Reach Out to Partners:** Contact local commodity groups, stores, farmers, ag industry partners and community partners for participation.
  - **Set Budget & Plan for Expenses:** Determine the event's budget (advertising, materials, venue, transportation, etc.) and communicate with your Farm Bureau board or sponsors to determine funding streams.
  - **Call for Caring Volunteers:** Start recruiting volunteers who are passionate about agriculture to help with event setup and planning.
    - Increase volunteer recruitment efforts by engaging community groups, local 4-H or FFA chapters, and agricultural organizations.
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### 4-6 Weeks Before the Event: Partnerships & Logistics

- **Confirm Participating Farmers & Collaborators:** Finalize which farmers are participating and finalize the partnering vendors or organizations.
- **Finalize Event Schedule:** Create a detailed agenda for the event (Q&A session, cooking demos, community mealtime, tours, educational stations).
- **Order Event Materials:** Order promotional materials (flyers, posters) and event supplies (tables, tents, signage), if needed.
- **Confirm Venue Details:** Discuss logistics with the venue about AV needs, parking, accessibility, and any restrictions.
- **Promote Volunteer Opportunities:** Continue to recruit volunteers within Farm Bureau or possibly through FFA or 4H.

## **2-4 Weeks Before the Event: Marketing & Promotion (if needed)**

- **Design Flyers & Posters:** Create visually appealing flyers and posters with event details (date, time, location, activities).
    - **Distribute Flyers:** Place flyers at local stores, libraries, schools, and community centers.
  - **Promote on Social Media:** Create event pages and posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Use hashtags like #MeetAFarmer, #LocalAg, #FarmToTable, etc.
  - **Advertise in Local Media:** Reach out to local newspapers, magazines, and radio stations for event coverage. Consider community radio opportunities for promoting the event.
    - **Radio Spots:** Work with local radio stations to run event promos and interviews with farmers, volunteers, or organizers. This can build excitement and awareness.
  - **Coordinate Culinary School Activities:** Finalize menus and cooking demos with culinary partners.
  - **Prepare Educational Materials:** Compile fact sheets, pamphlets, and activities to educate the public about local agriculture and farming practices.
  - **Set Up Event Website or Page:** If possible, create an event webpage or use social media to continuously update people about the event, including special activities or featured farmers.
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## **1 Week Before the Event: Final Prep**

- **Confirm All Details with Partners:** Reconfirm participation with farmers, volunteers, and local businesses.
- **Finalize Event Materials:** Ensure all printed materials (schedule, maps, signage) are ready.
- **Promote Final Reminder:** Post a final reminder on social media, email newsletters, and place last-minute flyers in high-traffic areas like grocery stores, schools, and community centers.
- **Volunteer Coordination:** Send event day instructions and schedules to volunteers, including any training they may need for tasks like packing food or directing attendees.

## Event Day: Setup and Execution

- **Morning (3-4 hours before the event starts):**
    - **Arrival & Setup:** Volunteers and farmers arrive to set up booths, tables, tents, and signage.
    - **Check Audio/Visual Equipment:** Ensure all equipment for cooking demonstrations and educational displays is set up and working.
    - **Place Educational Displays:** Set up farm product displays, agricultural facts stations, and food pantry packing areas.
    - **Coordinate Volunteers:** Ensure volunteers are stationed at key spots and understand their roles (e.g., helping with food pantry packing, answering questions).
  - **1 Hour Before the Event Starts:**
    - **Check In Volunteers:** Ensure volunteers know their duties and locations, and provide any last-minute updates.
    - **Double-Check Farmers & Partners:** Confirm that all vendors and partners have what they need and are ready for the event.
    - **Final Walkthrough:** Walk through the event space to ensure everything is in place and ready.
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## Post-Event: Breakdown & Follow-Up

- **Cleanup:** Volunteers and vendors help break down booths, banners or whatever you have utilized, and clean up the venue.
- **Thank You Notes:** Send personalized thank-you notes to all partners, farmers, volunteers, and anyone who contributed to the event's success.
- **Evaluate the Event:** Hold a debrief session to evaluate what worked well and what could be improved for future events.
- **Follow-Up with Attendees:** Send a survey or thank-you email to participants and attendees to gather feedback and build on future success.
- **Share Success on Social Media:** Post event photos, thank you messages, and any community impact highlights.