

# ask a farmer

## toolkit

Building consumers' trust and confidence in agriculture.



## Background

The digital information explosion makes fast, easy, and free information available to anyone and it can be produced by anyone. Growing and diverse information sources include social media and alternative news outlets as well as the rise of content creators and social media influencers.

Misinformation about agriculture is increasing in part due to the fact that digital influencers no longer back up their thoughts and opinions with science and there is little to no accountability. Many of the digital conversations and perspectives are emotionally driven.

The need to build consumers' trust and confidence in agriculture has never been greater. Most consumers are generations away from the farm and have limited access and opportunities to engage directly with farmers. With expanding urban growth, consumers are unaware of where their food comes from.

The good news is that there is great consumer interest and desire to learn and understand where their food comes from. A strong majority (81%) of adults trust farmers with almost half expressing that they trust farmers a lot.

An AFBF study showed that consumers' trust in agriculture increased by 20% (30% in millennials) when they have the opportunity to engage directly with farmers. The Ask a Farmer initiative recognizes that as an opportunity to create face-to-face events that bring consumers and farmers together.



## About

Ask a Farmer is a year-round program that county and state Farm Bureau volunteers can use to effectively reach consumers of all ages and backgrounds and provide direct consumer to farmer contact. This planning toolkit is designed to help you get started thinking about projects that will engage people in your community. Included are sample activity ideas, media outreach, sample text, and plenty of room to customize Ask a Farmer to your area.



# planning

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## How to use the toolkit

- Ask a Farmer activities are divided into Farm to Fork and Farm to Community categories.
- Browse through the suggested events/activities, making note of those that are appealing and might be a good fit with your Farm Bureau volunteers.
- Be sure to consider available resources (volunteer time, funds, etc.) when evaluating events and activities.
- Organize a meeting of decision-makers who will be involved in your Ask a Farmer project(s). Provide copies for everyone of the feasible events/activities for discussion.
- Adapt and customize the suggestions (or develop your own) to fit the needs and resources of your community and meet your volunteers' goals.
- Each page includes volunteer engagement ideas and key messages





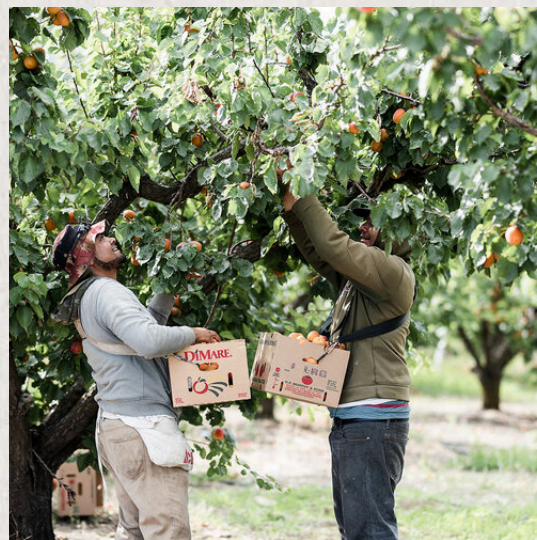
# planning

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## Publicity Value

- Early in the planning process for Ask a Farmer events or activities, consider the news and publicity value and how you might promote information to reporters at local media outlets or on social media platforms.
- Consider the following:
- Have you established relationships with local media outlets? If not, contact the local reporter/broadcaster to introduce yourself as a source of information about agriculture and Farm Bureau.
- Visits with local reporters can help you build rapport and generate interest in your program and Farm Bureau.
- Social media event invitations are free and easy to spread your message quickly.
- A variety of publicity tools are available that can assist you in obtaining coverage of your event.
  - Media alert
  - Pre-event Social Media Push
  - Realtime Social Media Posts
  - Post-Event Social Media Posts
  - Post-Event News Release
  - Post-Event Follow-up





# farm to fork

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## farmers' market

Farmers' Markets are an opportunity to build a connection between urban and farm living. Consumers have a growing interest in buying products directly from growers and building relationships with farmers and ranchers.

### volunteer projects

- Sponsor an Ask a Farmer event at a local farmers' market, allowing customers to ask questions of farmers/ranchers.
- Host an interactive booth (prize wheel, etc.) to engage attendees.
- Create a farmers' market scavenger hunt to find certain fruits and vegetables and specific farmers.
- Sponsor a concession stand featuring Utah's Own products for an hour during a farmers' market.
- Provide a welcome packet, water or an item for all vendors with a Farm Bureau graphic and information and/or QR code.
- Organize farm visits from customer sign-up lists.
- Set up a "Grow and Know" table



### micro-volunteering opportunities

- Make calls to recruit volunteers
- Set up tent, table, chairs, etc.
- Create printed materials, posters, etc.
- Deliver printed materials to the farmers' market
- Post photos, promotions, etc. on social media
- Collaborate with the farmers' market manager

### key messages/themes

- Food choices
- Farmers and ranchers care for the local community
- Nutrition
- Establish common ground/shared values between farmers and consumers



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## grocery store event

Connecting with consumers in local grocery stores and their point-of-purchase location is one way to engage them and answer questions about the entire food chain from farm to fork.

### volunteer projects

- Set up Ask a Farmer banners throughout the grocery store (Dairy, Vegetables, Fruits, Eggs, Meat) and station a farmer/rancher who grows that commodity to engage in conversations with consumers.
- Invite local media personalities to participate and/or publicize your event
- Work with a grocery store to organize a marketing campaign to share “local faces” of agriculture and feature local products.
- Work with the grocery store to place fun farm facts around the grocery store. Create a scavenger hunt that includes answers from the fun facts.
- Select a winner and buy the fresh foods in their shopping carts (milk, eggs, cheese, butter, ice cream, meat, vegetables, fruits, etc.)



### micro-volunteering opportunities

- Provide information to consumers before/during an event
- Invite local farmers/ranchers to participate in the event
- Create fun farm fact sheets
- Create the scavenger hunt
- Set up Ask a Farmer Stations throughout the grocery store
- Contact the grocery store manager to get “buy in” for the event
- Create and print handouts
- Help customers bag groceries and deliver bags to their vehicles

### key messages/themes

- Establish common ground and shared values between farmers and consumers
- Food choices
- Nutrition
- Farmers and ranchers care for their local community



# farm to fork

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## family dinner series

Over twenty years of scientific studies document that nightly family dinners bring positive results — more resilient children, better academic performance, stronger family bonds of connection, and better eating habits to mention a few.

The Family Dinner Series is a fun, interactive way to get families on board with dinner while introducing them to farmers and ranchers who grow their food, good nutrition, and cooking together.

At each dinner, families meet a local farmer or rancher and learn about the history of their farm/ranch, what they grow, how they grow it, the reasons why they love what they do, and the challenges they face.

Play a slide show with pictures of their farm and family as they speak. Try to incorporate the farmer's crops in the dinner menu so the families can make the connection between the grower and the food at their table. When possible, purchase food from the farmer/rancher for the families to take and enjoy at home.

Allow time for Q&A. This part of the program does a great deal to foster trust between the farmer/rancher and the families and brings greater appreciation for the food produced by Utah farmers and ranchers.

## volunteer projects

- Collaborate with Extension's Create Better Health to invite families experiencing food insecurity to participate in a dinner series.
- Invite insurance agents and their families to participate in a dinner series.
- Invite elected officials and their families to participate in a dinner series.
- Invite farm families and non-farm families to participate together in a dinner series.



# farm to fork

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## micro-volunteering opportunities



- **Facilitators:** These people will lead the dinner event itself. Ideally, they will be comfortable presenting information and leading group conversations. It's nice to have more than one facilitator so they can take turns leading different portions of the evening.
- **Event Coordinator:** This person manages the details of the evening. He or she will coordinate with the event space, make sure the room is set up with tables and chairs, AV, food tables, plates and utensils and generally oversee the planning logistics.
- **Food Coordinator:** This person coordinates with Create Better Health staff to determine menus, buying food, and coordinate with the Miracle of Ag Foundation for donated food.
- **Meet a Farmer Coordinator:** This person coordinates with the farmer/rancher by extending the invitation for them and their family to come to dinner. This person also makes arrangements with the farmer to speak and also makes arrangements to purchase produce from the farmer to give to the participating families.
- **Communications Specialist:** Send out dinner invitations, weekly support emails, and surveys at the end of the dinner series. Create PowerPoint presentations if needed.
- **Children's Activity Coordinator:** This person helps coordinate and manage the children-focused activities during parent instruction.
- **Greeter:** Someone to greet families as they trickle in, hand out nametags, and show them to their table.
- **Photographer:** Someone to take photos and videos of families cooking, playing games, and having discussions.

## key messages/themes

- Establish common ground and shared values between farmers and consumers
- Address misconceptions
- Nutrition & healthy choices
- Food insecurity
- Farmers and ranchers take care of their resources

Contact [susan.furner@fbfs.com](mailto:susan.furner@fbfs.com) for more information and how to get started with a Family Dinner Series in your area.



# farm to community



## foodie event

Foodie events for the “at-home chef” engage attendees in learning about local food and beverages in a fun, relaxed environment.

## volunteer projects

- Set up a “Grow and Know” table for your event
- Host a reception featuring local foods and beverages
- Plan a cooking challenge (i.e. Omelet Contest) between two teams with preparation of local products (team could be made up of a chef, farmer or rancher and local media personality).
- Look into options for a “Breakfast on the Farm” event
- Considering hosting a “Taste of (your county or your state)” event

## micro-volunteering opportunities

- Contact potential sponsors and other key people to get involved in the event
- Set up before or clean up after the event
- Serve food samples
- Staff the registration table
- Take photos at the event for use on social media and/or to distribute to local media
- Announce door prize information
- Provide giveaways for swag bags

## key messages/themes

- Address misconceptions
- Food systems
- Nutrition
- Healthy choices
- Food safety



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# farm to community



## county/state fair

County and state fairs provide a platform where diverse audiences will engage farmers and ranchers in brief conversations to have their questions answered about agricultural practices and food production.

### volunteer projects

- Host an animal birthing tent or booth with a video
- Create an interactive information booth
- Host a baby animal tent
- Engage children at a “digging for prizes” in a corn pit
- Plan a community dinner to celebrate state/county commodity diversity
- Arrange a fundraiser through food concessions
- Arrange for buyers for the Jr. Livestock show and donate animals to the Miracle of Agriculture Foundation to be distributed to local food pantries
- Plan a scavenger hunt for children and adults
- Sponsor a “still exhibit” or photography display featuring rural life, farm families, animal care, healthy food, etc.

### micro-volunteering opportunities

- Provide educational materials about agriculture for give aways and/or provide feedback to organizers
- Provide animals for a live animal tent.
- Volunteer your time at a county/state fair booth
- Promote activities by delivering posters, ads, etc. to local businesses

### key messages/themes

- Animal care
- Address misconceptions
- Establish common ground/shared values between farmers and consumers
- Food, farm, and rural living safety information
- Nutrition



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# farm to community



## food giveaway events

Farm Bureau is committed to helping put food on the tables of those in need. Many Utahns face food insecurity. The spirit of farm communities has always been one of working together and giving back. Local community events bond neighbors while working to reduce food insecurity.

## volunteer projects

- Hold a produce-gleaning project, helping local farmers pick produce from the fields after harvest for donation to local food pantries
- Host a charity shooting event to benefit food banks in the state
- Host a barn dance with an entrance fee of food donations to give to your local food pantry
- Volunteer at local food pantries
- Collaborate with your county YF&R in a Harvest for All project
- Hold a "Stock the Livestock Trailer with Food" event
- Get a team together and participate in the Miracle of Agriculture Foundation Golf Tournament
- Collaborate with the Miracle of Agriculture Foundation to bring a food giveaway to your local food pantry

## micro-volunteering opportunities

- Post flyers at area businesses prior to the event
- Communicate with others about the event on social media, radio, TV, etc.
- Set up donation drop-off sites at the entrance
- Gather donations for delivery after the event
- Take pictures during the event and post them to social media or send them to local media

## key messages/themes

- Nutrition
- Farmers and ranchers care for their neighbors and communities
- Food insecurity



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