



Farm-based Fundraising

Basics about Working with Farms

Holding a FarmRaiser at your school means working closely with farms to choose products to sell and coordinate logistics. It's a great opportunity to promote local farm businesses to your school community and either develop new relationships with local farms or add a new component to an existing relationship. All the schools and farmers we have worked with have been enthusiastic about this new, healthy, local fundraising activity, and your local farmers will probably be as well.

Farmers are busy and will have an eye to their business as well as their community. This sheet will help you make a successful plan with your local farmers.

Before contacting farmers, you should know if a FarmRaiser will work at your school and have an idea of which kind of FarmRaiser you wish to do—a mixed box of veggies with one farm, or a multiple farm FarmRaiser. Both styles have been successful. Pick the one that works best for you and your school.

The Mixed Box of Veggies

A mixed box model means the farm must be flexible enough to provide an unknown number of boxes. We have found that the mixed box works well for vegetable farms with some experience, who offer Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares (weekly delivery of mixed boxes of veggies) as well as selling their products in other ways. Although the mixed box FarmRaiser is not actually a 'CSA', farmers will know what you are talking about if you say, "A CSA box of veggies."

Benefits to Farmers:

The box lets farmers be flexible. Since they will put whatever is ready that week into the box, they don't need to break a promise to have spinach if a bug ate all the spinach.

The box can earn a better amount for the farmer. You can talk with them about price. They may charge \$25-40 depending on the size of the box you agree upon, and they aren't splitting the customers with other farms.



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Multiple Farms

The multiple-farm FarmRaiser has its own benefits. It works well for farms who sell many different products as part of their business, as well as for farms who sell one or two things.

More farms can participate, which means more farms get the visibility and exposure to your customers. They will each make less money, as the products are lower cost and sales are divided among farms.

Contact the farms early in the year (see below) but then you will need to check with them before you send out your brochure to make sure they have not had a crop failure. For example, a farm might offer butternut squash, but then the summer's weather might mean their squash is not ready when they thought. Another farmer might be able to supply the missing crop. You will need to be flexible.

How to find a farm

In making your selection about what farm/farms to work with on your FarmRaiser, you can choose to reach out to farmers that are already involved with your school in some way, such as by being located in your town, having children in the school, donating or selling food to the school, hosting field trips, or just being involved in the area community. In the Upper Valley you can search the [Valley Food & Farm Guide](#), and many other places have a similar guide to local farms. If you are stuck for ideas, call your local Extension office, Farm Bureau, or USDA office for ideas.

A farmer will be involved with farm-based fundraising because they are interested in educating kids about farming, and/or they are looking for new customers and see the school as a way to get the word out about their products to a new audience. Think about how a farmer will benefit from being involved. Like other farm to school programs, FarmRaisers build relationships that benefit everyone over the long term. Many farms are open to the possibility of field trips for students.

Contacting Farms

When you call farms will depend on when you are holding your FarmRaiser. Most schools have prepared in spring and sent sales brochures home in the fall for pickup in mid-October, or multiple deliveries from Sept-Nov. It's always better to call farms as early in the year as possible. Winter is generally slower for most farms and they will have more time to talk and think. Even if you don't decide on products



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FARM Raiser

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during a first call at least you will both know that you are planning this fun project together. If you can't call them early in the year, things just may be more rushed and some farms may say, "Not this year." If they are too busy or uninterested, they may not call you back.

Before you call farms you should know the following things

- What are you raising money for?
- What kind of FarmRaiser are you doing?
- What kind of products would you like from this farm?
- Are you asking them to sell at wholesale prices
- What will your 'markup' be on their products
- Who will be the contact person for farmers?
- Are you expecting farms to deliver the products, or will someone go and pick them up?
- Is this a busy time of year for this farm? For example, it's hard to reach New England vegetable growers in May, which is their busiest time. You will have more luck if you call at the right time of year.
- What is the delivery or pickup date for the products? Even a range of a few weeks is more helpful than not knowing what time of year.
- If you offer local meat for sale, it will come frozen and you may need to make arrangements at your school for storage.

How to contact a farm:

Both email and calling are great ways to reach farmers. Think about what kind of farm you are calling and that will help with time of year and day to call. You may need to play phone tag a little before finding a good time for you both to talk.

If you like, use our ['email script'](#) as a way to help you reach out.

Vital Communities is here to guide you through your FarmRaiser. Please call Laura at 802-291-9100 x107 or email Laura@vitalcommunities.org if you have questions or need more information.

Good luck!



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