

# PIE CENTER IS HERE TO HELP

Through its research and outreach, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources translates the knowledge and understanding of consumer perceptions into the confidence to communicate and educate others about agricultural and natural resources issues.

By continually looking for ways to help farmers and consumers communicate more effectively with each other, the PIE Center envisions a public that is informed and engaged in protecting agriculture and natural resources.

Even though the public might not understand agriculture, consumers are interested in learning more — don't be afraid to tell your story.



Center for  
Public Issues Education

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# CONNECT

WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS



# CONSUMERS CRAVE LOCAL

Consumers are hungry for local food options. How can you feed their interest and fill your wallet?

Researchers from the University of Florida found that 77 percent of Floridians agreed or strongly agreed that buying local food was important, and more than half of consumers buy local food on a weekly basis.

Floridians spend \$8.3 billion annually on local food and do so because they value freshness and want to support the local economy, according to the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The PIE Center partnered with the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation through a specialty crop block grant from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to examine what types of media and messages resonate with Floridians when making their food purchasing decisions. The two organizations have researched what consumers think about local food since 2011.

Even though consumers in the study described farmers as faceless, vanishing and rare, they wanted to know the person responsible for growing and producing their food and thought farmers were hard-working.

Consumers in focus groups most preferred face-to-face communication as a way to receive information, followed by print ads, news stories, brochures and websites. Respondents to an online survey held equally positive views about information received through print, video or online channels.

Growers can simulate face-to-face communication by using messages that highlight a personal connection between the consumer and the people responsible for producing the food. Consumers want to hear from farmers, not organizations or companies.

Customers respond favorably to messages that are short and informative. Messages should focus on the freshness of local food and its impact on the local economy.



## PROMOTE YOUR OWN PRODUCTS

Use these tips, which are part of the Center's comprehensive program, to help connect with customers. For more information, contact your local Extension agent or visit [piecenter.com](http://piecenter.com)



**“I FEEL LIKE I’M SUPPORTING MY NEIGHBORS... MAYBE ME BUYING FROM A FARMER WILL KEEP HIM GOING.”**

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### **UNDERSTAND WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT LOCAL FOOD**

Communicate about your local products by highlighting the attributes consumers value.

### **KNOW WHY CONSUMERS BUY LOCAL FOOD**

Understand what motivates consumers and learn how to capitalize.

### **DEVELOP A BRAND FOR YOUR FARM AND PRODUCTS**

Decide what words, images and phrases resonate with both you and your customers.

### **SELECT MARKETING STRATEGIES BEST FOR YOU**

Tailor your local food promotion to your product or personality.

### **PREPARE TO COMMUNICATE HONESTLY**

Promote your successes but be ready to inform customers if there is a problem.

### **GET COMFORTABLE TALKING TO YOUR CUSTOMERS**

Consumers want to hear from you. Learn from each other and build a relationship.