



Introducing Marketing Principles in the Agricultural Sector

## Guidelines to Experiential Learning

*Farm Visits and Case Studies*

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## Introducing Marketing Principles in the Agricultural Sector

### Introduction

*Farm Inc.- Introducing Marketing Principles in the Agricultural Sector* is a co-funded project under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme - Leonardo da Vinci - Transfer of Innovation. Its main goal is to promote sustainable development of rural areas by increasing the quality and attractiveness of VET and lifelong learning systems and promoting innovative marketing strategy practices.

The project has been led and coordinated by the University of Macerata/UNIMC (Italy), managed by Militos Consulting S.A. (Greece), in consortium with INIPA Coldiretti (Italy), Farmers Parliament/LVFP (Latvia), Hellenic American Union (Greece), Copa-Cogeca (Belgium) and RNDO (Cyprus).

Building on the best practice LdV Proud Farmer project and on the basis of a needs analysis of the agricultural sector and the agricultural entrepreneur, conducted by the Farm Inc.consortium in the target countries, Farm Inc.developed an innovative training toolkit on marketing strategies in the agro-food sector, introducing new modules on territorial branding and internationalisation.

The results of the needs analysis reported the necessity to make farmers understand why marketing principles can be useful to them through blended learning (in-classroom training combined with on-the-spot practical training), introducing the best learning methods, such as exemplar case studies and experience-based learning approaches. In this respect, the analysis stressed the value of study visits and field day trips as an unmissable learning opportunity. Building on suggestions derived from the analysis, these guidelines try to give indications on how to best plan experiential education activities, such as farm study visits and, drawing from experiences of other farmers, introduce an “award initiative”, rewarding the innovative agricultural ideas of young farmers as a model of experiential learning.

### Farm Visits

Farm visits facilitate the learning process about local food systems for both students interested in entering into the agricultural sector as well as farmers wishing to improve their market positioning. Indeed, farm visits can be an excellent way to get out of the conference room or classroom to gain new perspectives on agriculture. They could clearly demonstrate the state before and the state after marketing principles have been applied in a certain context, to a certain farm and its products, and what results have been achieved.

It is deemed useful to predefine some topics for discussion and remarks and suggest possible correlations of the example provided during the visits. These correlations should be made both with the theoretical parts of the Farm Inc.online course and, more importantly, with the specific state of the selected farmer's enterprise/business in order to explain and define the margins of applicability of the case study to



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different products and/or sectors, or, even better, to farmers' own specific products/services.

The key points to focus before and during the visit would be:

- General information about the farm/company and produce;
- Description of the farm's/company's owner as a producer;
- Details about the farm/company produce;
- Information about clients/customers;
- Dealing with competitors;
- General information about the product distribution channels;
- Ideas to improve the farmers' future activities.





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### Managing the Farm Visit

During and after the Farm Visit, participants will have to analyse the situation from a marketing perspective, complete exercises and write a report on it, in order to better understand key points that will help them improve their own existing or future farm management strategy.

These topics and remarks can be used a) in self-training, as further reflection/exercise allowing farmers to better retain and structure the content and usefulness of the case study undertaken, b) in group-training, as a basis for the teacher/trainer to facilitate an open discussion among learners, monitoring and collecting the results of the collective input/answers, and providing learners with summary feedback and discussion results.

### Farm Visit questionnaire

This is a proposed questionnaire to be used for more effectively conducting a Farm Visit, ensuring the utmost benefit for learners.

#### **1. Short description of the farm**

- a. Profile
- b. Farm size
  - Small
  - Medium
  - Large

If possible, indicate:

The total area in ha (hectares) \_\_\_\_\_

The number of livestock \_\_\_\_\_

The different products \_\_\_\_\_

The products for direct sale \_\_\_\_\_

The type of commercialisation \_\_\_\_\_

The number of employees \_\_\_\_\_

The production per year \_\_\_\_\_



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### 2. The Farmer

How would you define the farmer as a businessman/woman?

Communicative                       Innovative                       Professional

Other qualities, please, describe \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does the farmer adapt to changes/has the farmer changed the business sphere? Please, describe.

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the farmer's most important (profitable) products?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any products hard to sell and what is the farmer's attitude/action towards these products?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which products/services offered by the farmer:

a. Are commonly consumed/ used?

b. Are top-of-the-line?

c. Are healthy or used in diets?

d. Are traditional or regional?

e. Are innovative?

f. Are seasonal/festive/luxurious?

g. Other qualities? (Please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does the farmer assign prices to his products?

\_\_\_\_\_

How does the farmer intend to broaden his production?

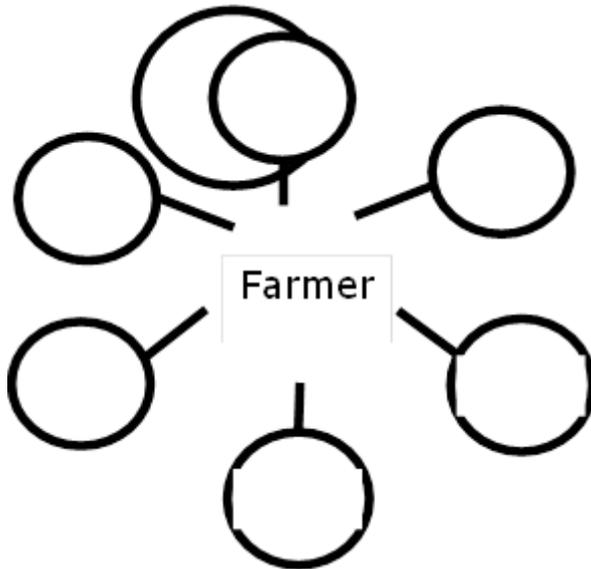
\_\_\_\_\_



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### 3. The clients

Who are the farmer's clients? Draw clients' network



What impression does the farmer leave on his customers?

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Most of the farmer's clients are....

local

regional

from the whole country

other \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Promotion

What are the promotion and advertising methods/tools used (brochures, open-house, depot at another farm, through farmers committees, store, social media, media, etc.)?

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What methods does the farmer use to analyse the existing and potential clients' network?

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How does the farmer communicate with his clients/customers (email, phone, social media, website, store, brochures, open-house, depot at another farm, through farmers committees, etc.)?

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### 5. Placement

How does the farmer sell his products? What distribution channels does the farmer use?

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Does the farmer distribute products directly? Is he/she well-equipped for direct distribution? Please, describe.

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### 6. Competitors

Does the farmer face competition / have competitors? Please, describe.

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How does the farmer deal with competition? Please, describe.

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What makes the farmer's products different from those of other competitors? Please, describe.

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What are the strengths and weaknesses of the farmer compared to his competitors? Please, describe.

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### 7. The Price

What is the farmer's price strategy for his/her products compared to the strategy of other producers?

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### 8. The Product

What is the farmer's logo saying about the farm, the farmer and his products? Is it interesting, well-recognized?

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Do the products have additional quality labels/certificates? Please specify.

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Is the farmer investing in new technologies to increase the competitiveness of his/her products?

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How does the farmer store his/her products?

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Does the packaging promote the visibility of the farmer's products? Are they easily recognized? If yes, in what way?

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### The Report

Following a Farm Visit, a report should be compiled, on the basis of the questionnaire. It could be a short description of the farm representing the case study, including main characteristics of farm products/services, production entity, profit/loss trends, % of sales, typology of target market selected, typology of customers, distribution channels, image strategies, innovative marketing strategies, etc.

A more detailed description could be provided for: what could the farm do to improve the level of production/sales; how to address identified weaknesses to diversify production or target selected market; what channels of distribution or what typology/number of customers could be reached.

Successful elements and strategies put in place by the farm should be underlined to demonstrate what results have been reached, when applying the operative changes dictated by these successful elements.

### Tips when arranging a Farm Visit

#### 🗨️ **Identify Your Audience**

Tailor the experience to the particular interests and motivations of the anticipated attendees. Who are you trying to educate and what should they learn? Perhaps your participants are culturally diverse individuals coming from an urban or suburban background; for them general on-farm exploration would be enlightening.

#### 🗨️ **Select Case Studies**

Begin by doing some research on the region where the Farm Visit will take place, to make sure the tour you are planning truly represents the local agricultural food system. Growing seasons is also a factor to take into account when deciding the time/period, place and kind farms to be selected. Some food producers, such as dairy farms, may be available for visits all year round, while a certain crop or food season may require scheduling during a specific time of year.

#### 🗨️ **Contact Potential Farms**

Begin initial contact well in advance, addressing critical details such as date, tentative arrival and departure times, parking options for a bus or van, and farm potential for accommodating the planned number of participants. Ask if the farm requires or recommends anything for the visitors, such as a dress code. It's also helpful for the farmer to have some insight about your visiting group, so have information ready about the participants' general areas of expertise and how they relate to food and farming. Preferable, even send them in advance. Give the host guidance about aspects the group may be most interested in seeing and/or studying.



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### ☛ Arrange Group discussion

Encourage participants to engage and discuss about their experiences before and during the visit.

### Case studies

#### Learning through successful experiences: The Oscar Green award

The *Oscar Green Award* is a prize (2015 represents its 9<sup>th</sup> edition) given to young entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector by Coldiretti Giovani Impresa. The award addresses individuals, partnerships, farmers, craftsmen, travel operators, as well as designers and researchers linked to the agricultural sector.

The project aims at developing young people's initiatives in agriculture or in the food sector, which have made it to the market and flourished due to the use of sustainable and innovative business models.

In order to be eligible, new project ideas must first represent one of the categories mentioned in the award rules under the auspices of Impresa2.Terra; Campagna Amica; Paese Amico; We Green and Fare Rete:

- Impresa2.Terra: This category addresses candidates who have demonstrated innovation and creativity in the application of new technologies to traditional food and agriculture.
- Campagna Amica: This category refers to the development of *Made in Italy* products that are original, while the business models need to be innovative and responsible to the end consumer by being safe for the individual and for the environment.
- Paese Amico: This category is for governmental bodies and institutions which participate, support and share Coldiretti initiatives.
- We Green: This is the environmental category dedicated to sustainable social farming and production models.
- Fare Rete: This category refers to cross-sector initiatives/project among farmers and start-ups or firms with an established network. The initiative/project must demonstrate inventiveness as well as an established synergy among the participants, regardless of whether each participant belongs to the agricultural sector.

Applicants who are under 40 years of age can apply online before the set deadline. The next step is candidacies' evaluations and selections at regional level. At the final stage, the three (3) candidacies with the highest score are admitted to the nationwide finals, competing, according to their category, as mentioned above.

The resulting fifteen (15) national-level finalists get national media coverage as well as visibility on the Oscar Green website. *The Oscar Green Award* is given to five (5) candidates in the five (5) categories at a final public event.



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Oscar Green provides an opportunity to share success stories of young people that were able to set up businesses and see their ideas succeed. It is an opportunity that can spark new ideas for other young entrepreneurs and give hope and the desire to break free, experiment and innovate.

Watch Oscar Green promotional video [here](#)

### Some of 2014 winners' stories



#### *Microalgae as a life-extending elixer*

Veneto - Matteo Castioni

Matteo's Spiruline and haematococcus microalgae are widely used in cosmetics and as diet supplements in low calorie diets as they are rich in minerals, proteins and natural anti-oxidants. Microalgae have recently been proven to serve as natural (E.U. approved) fertilizers and as a defence from fungi, bacteria and viruses in plants. Click [here](#) for more information.



#### *Kids and adults love these bread chips*

Puglia - Domenico D'Ambrosio

Light, crunchy and in a great variety of flavours from plain to cheesy, you can eat these chips even if you're watching your weight because they're light and easy to digest. That's Domenico D'Ambrosio's secret of success in the long-running traditional family business. This brilliant idea came from the Altamura tradition of stripping away the bread crust from the buns, which led to the "panatina": a fine extra-thin cracker, made of durum wheat. This peculiar grain chip is made for all tastes, especially directed to those who have dietary demands or who are just simply watching their weight. It's as flavourful as a potato chip and can accompany your afternoon aperitif.



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### *Bees that fight pollution*

Campania - Salvatore Sorbo

Salvatore Sorbo has put his bees and hives to good use to protect the environment in his "Dear Earth" project. *Dear Earth* bio-monitors the environment in the ravaged areas of the Neapolitan countryside through the innovative use of bees. In conjunction with the University of

Naples and Molise, beehives are transformed into biological monitoring stations, each of which can monitor up to 7 square kilometres, measuring levels of pollution in the surrounding environment. The bees never complain, they feed on the local nectar, sample the water and take these back to their hives for monitoring.



### *Flying strawberries – that carry I.D.*

Lombardia - Guglielmo Stagno

D'alcontres

Near central Milan, Guglielmo's firm has photovoltaic solar panels heating his greenhouses, where he keeps

strawberries in a hydroponic lab suspended in mid-air. The produce (strawberries) is then carefully distributed throughout the city in the traditional mini-car/trike known as the "Ape". He produces jams, fruit juices, decorative plants and most importantly, his famous fruit salads and milk shakes made on the spot for curious passers-by and tourists. Quality certification and product tracing are the highest priority: photos and QR codes are used to trace each individual strawberry along its production path. Click [here](#) for more information.