



SHARE YOUR FARM STORY: MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOL KIT
Farm & Agriculture Resources for Media (FARM)
WAYS TO ENGAGE MEDIA

1. Create Headlines with Impact

When writing a press release, pull the reader into your story by using headlines that have a catchy appeal, share emotions, solve problems, offer solutions, and/or that are big on benefits. Example: “Sustainable Agriculture Leads to Year-Round Local Eating.”

2. Make Information Newsworthy

Strike a balance between telling your story about your business and framing it in a newsworthy way to elicit interest. Journalists call it an “angle” to the story. The best release for print media, for example, is one that could possibly be printed with little or no editing by the editors; presenting your information in a fair, balanced and objective way increases this likelihood. Press releases should answer key media questions: who, what, where, why and when. Getting press coverage of your family farm as a “lifestyle” piece is one way to garner attention, but this type of story has lots of other potential candidates vying for a feature. Try making what your operation produces tie into a broader national issue, like America’s obesity epidemic, food security issues or health concerns related to how food is grown. For example, in the context of a mad cow disease outbreak, explain why your grass-fed and locally processed beef is a healthier and safer option.

3. Focus on Unique Qualities

Every farm operation is unique or special in some way. Perhaps it’s powered by renewable energy or offers a product inspired by a child’s 4-H project. Maybe one of your customers is someone famous (like a celebrity chef). Without detracting from the rest of what you’ve accomplished on your operations, craft a message around this unique aspect. Another strategy to garner media attention is to position your farm or business as a part of a larger newsworthy event or topic. Consider tying into some of the events about which the media are already searching for stories, like Earth Day (April 22) or National Organic Month (September).

4. Prepare for the Interview

Determine the journalist’s name/affiliation and ask when the article might run and if the writer or journalist has a deadline. Confirm the topic and consider requesting the questions in advance. Be prepared with details and prepared to back up your statements. Don’t assume the reporter knows much, or anything, about the topic, so start from the beginning. While mentioning your website is always suggested, providing some written material as well should not be overlooked.

5. Create your Own Tips

Many print media editors or producers of TV or radio programs search for simple, helpful ideas for readers, listeners or viewers. Create your own “tips” sheet to help facilitate this process. For example, develop a series of tips like “Farmer Johnson’s top ten ways to eat tomatoes” or “Five ways to add more vegetables to your diet, with recipes.” With the present obesity problem in the U.S. likely to only grow, devising a way to make the healthy products your farm sells address this issue would make your story more newsworthy, timely, relevant, and practical.



6. Host a Field Day on your farm

Remember the key ingredients: food, folks, fun and photo ops

The press searches out newsworthy and important happenings in their community. Most assignment editors and broadcast producers review press releases to determine which appear to be most newsworthy and relevant to their audience. By creating an event or happening, perhaps welcoming a new breed of dairy cow or completion of a wind turbine system used to completely meet your energy needs, attention can be focused on the value that the event has in your community.

Harnessing the fact that we live in an increasingly visual world, create a photo opportunity on your farm. Often a dedication ceremony, local celebrity visit, children or school group tour or special demonstration days help provide powerful visuals. Attract a crowd to an educational “farm day” picnic, potluck or farm tour. Consider offering a contest to generate excitement and make the event more visual. Have plenty of literature and information for the media, including your farm’s newsletter, brochure and a selection of previously published articles about your farm.

7. Offer a community educational seminar

Outreach into the community helps build bridges and address concerns neighbors might have related to how you approach farming or ranching. Seminars could address sheep shearing, food processing, flower bouquet arrangements, renewable energy or other aspects of your operations that might be of interest to community members.

8. List on Free Directories

Get your farm listed on one or more of the many free national Internet listings of CSA farms, farmers’ markets, pastured meat products, or organic products. This will be another means for media to access your information.

www.localharvest.org

www.eatwellguide.org (go to “suggest a listing” and suggest yourself)

www.csacenter.org (Robyn Van En Center)

www.allorganiclinks.com (Various organic products)

9. Set up a Press Room

Using the media kit templates available on-line on the NSAC site, set up a special section that links from your farm’s main home page to specifically target and assist the media. This can be called a “Press Room” or “Media Room” or “Information for Media” or “Media Kit.” Think of it as a “one-stop shop” to make things easier to someone who wants to do a story on your operations.

10. Be Quick to Respond

Answer all press inquiries immediately. As most reporters are on deadline, it is vital that you answer these inquiries right away, even if other farming priorities need to be put on hold for a short while. Give reporters a phone number where you can be accessed and a good time to reach you or set up a specific interview appointment time via e-mail.