

E-Commerce Platforms for Farmers

Prepared by members of the Takoma Alliance for a Living Economy (TALLE), a working group of Takoma Park Mobilization, in partnership with the Montgomery Countryside Alliance.

The material presented below is based primarily on a March webinar held by Oregon Tilth that featured presentations by five online sales platforms for farmers. This basic information was supplemented by research on each of these platforms' websites and correspondence with some of the platforms. In addition, a sixth platform was added based on further research by the TALLE team.

Our overall assessment is that any of the five platforms presented on the webinar would help farmers set up online e-commerce sites along with associated communication tools to help increase reach. These are good options for farmers who want to go online, but the number of such options may pose challenges for farmers in making a choice. There may be a need for a consultant or county agent to work with farmers to help them decide on a selling strategy and platform. In addition, continuing technical support may be needed, although some of the platforms do provide such assistance.

Some of the platforms are also appropriate for CSAs and food hubs

I. Oregon Tilth Webinar

<https://tilth.org/education/resources/online-sales-platforms-for-farmers/>

Answers to Oregon Tilth questions at these links:

- [Barn2Door](#)
- [Food4All](#)
- [Harvie](#)
- [Local Food Marketplace](#)
- [Open Food Network](#)

Summary Comparison Chart

Platform	Pricing	Support	Comments
Barn2Door	Three levels from \$708/year to \$1188/year plus one-time set up fee [from \$299 to \$499]. Most farmers at middle level. Full info here: https://www.barn2door.com/feature-breakdown	Assign account and onboarding managers. Large team (>50) to help farmers.	Lots of features (newsletters, website, etc) plus bookkeeping/tracking tools.

Harvie	\$500 one-time set up fee; 7% transaction fee; 2.9% + 30 cent/transaction for credit card sales	Provides support staff for customers and farmers. Marketing, website, and social media assistance.	Primary focus is helping farmers sell through CSA. 90-day money back guarantee. Requires minimum of \$25k/year goal for sales.
Local Food Marketplace	Two main levels. Starter for \$499 set-up fee then \$79/month. Standard is \$999 set-up plus \$149/month	Onboarding process to train and guide farmers in use of platform. Help launch web presence and provide continuing support	Designed for farmers, CSAs, and food hubs.
Food4All	No monthly fee. Buyer pays CSA fee. Buyer and seller split credit card fee.	Offer email and phone support to help farmer get set up. Like to work through a local resource (eg an intern) they train.	
Open Food Network	Free, but accept donations. Will probably assess a fee at some point.	Mostly through user guide and videos, but do provide email support.	Not-for-profit. Seeking to “build a new food system that is fair, local, and transparent.” Communities can bring farmers together to create “virtual farmers markets” or food hubs. Buyers can collaborate to buy for co-ops, other groups.

From the Farmer (not mentioned in webinar)

- DMV based
- <https://fromthefarmer.com/>
- Appears to be an intermediary between farmers and consumers. Buys from farmers, sells online to consumers.

- Might be good way for farmers to ensure a steady buyer, depending on prices, but farmers almost certainly will be “price takers” and will get less per unit than if they were to sell directly to consumers.
- Could be part of a strategy to diversify income streams

II. Especially Useful Links for Additional Information

Farmer’s Guide to Direct Sales Platforms

- <https://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Farmers-Guide-to-Direct-Sales-Software-Platforms.pdf>

Includes a comparison chart of most of the online sales platforms mentioned in this report along with several others. In addition, provides marketing education resources, including courses, guides, strategies.

CAFF Farmers Guild: CSA & Online Sales Resources for Farmers

Many useful resources and links to platforms

<https://www.caff.org/csa-resources/>