



western **organic** network

Chef-Organic Producer Study

Organic Conference
Limerick IT
June 2011



WON Study 2009 - 2011

- Part funded by IFI
- Research into border region chefs and producers
- Study sought to address perception problems, practical challenges, and increase opportunities for local organic produce to reach local menus



Supplying Food Service: Benefits to local food producers

- Developing variety of market channels empowers producers - safety, sustainability and variety
- Educating consumers through chef endorsement; marketing producers' business - profile on local menus, increased direct sales via other market channels
- Once relationship and routine is established, comfort of secure weekly orders and ease of single 'bulk' transaction
- Wholesale price is for a reason – no stall fees, travel and market time, no waste, less cost
- Opportunity to plan expanding operation a season ahead



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Reported Issues (Food Service)

- Lack of supply and lack of choice of veg and herbs
- Lack of consistency and choice
- Inconsistency in quality, delivery, and price
- Wrong cuts of meat delivered, other cuts passed off as prime cuts
- Lack of co-operation, Failure to build relationships
- Failure to follow up on enquiries or samples left in
- Not enough product and supply across the board
- Will send in anything just to meet and order, regardless of quality
- Expect same price for poorer quality produce
- Just not proactive about approaching restaurants
- Supply inconsistent, costs too high, sourcing in local area difficult

(WON Study 2010)



Reported Issues (Food Producers)

- Slow/no payment – ‘burnt’ in the past
- Even 30 day payment terms as off putting
- Chefs who ‘quibbled unfairly over well considered prices’
- Repeated requests for produce out of season
- Products made/crops grown to order then dropped suddenly from menu



The Good News for Producers

- Chefs are flexible about ordering dates and delivery times and many are open to negotiate cash on delivery terms of payment
- Chefs deal with many small suppliers already
- Chefs unanimously expressed strong desire to be approached by food producers with info and samples

(WON Study 2010)



Good News For Chefs

80% of producers interviewed are keen to increase supply into local food service, more than any other market channel (retail, direct, box, market, farm gate).

(WON Study 2010)



Producer – Chef Pledge

Take the plunge, take the pledge,
understand, promise and then deliver
the following NINE commandments....

What Producers Can Do For Chefs

Prove your reliability: consistent product quality and superior service

Develop neat, professional handout/brochure about your farm/business that describes you and your production methods

3. Send advance notice of produce/products with the estimated harvest/production period start date, duration and price

4. Devise well researched, consistent, rational pricing structure and take time to explain it

5. Offer samples of produce to taste or prepare along with information on that produce

6. Deliver quantity and quality of produce agreed at time agreed

7. Ensure it is known how to contact you most efficiently (eg don't give an email address if you rarely use it!); always respond rapidly

8. Agree in advance how payments will be handled and give accurate, consistent, straightforward invoices/receipts on delivery

9. Keep clients up to date if there are any extraordinary weather/pest/production problems that might interrupt schedule

What Chefs Can Do For Producers

1. Make time to visit markets stall or request to visit farm
2. Take time to learn how this produce is grown and what's in season,
3. Agree the methods and frequency of communication and return calls
4. Examine your pricing structure and learn how and why some prices are not comparable with conventional and imported produce
5. Take time to explain any specific details about how you need produce to be prepared, sized or presented
6. Agree in advance at the start of the season how you will pay
7. Understand that small scale producers face pest/weather/production conditions – there cannot be the same reliability that imported food distribution offers
8. Give plenty of notice if your requirements change, understanding that they may have specially grown
9. Agree if or how the producer would like to be promoted on your menu, website and never use the relationship to imply to customers that you source more produce than is truthful



Conclusion

Study demonstrates:

- Much scope for developing harmonious relations
- Emphasising the local/fresh/quality value should be a high priority for organic producers when approaching chefs



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