

## A Farmer's Guide to:

# Agricultural Technology Platforms



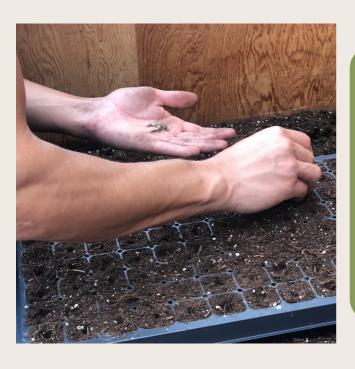
Thanks to our partners!





#### Welcome!

The agricultural technology (ag tech) field has grown significantly larger in the past decade. With so many tools available it can be challenging to navigate this landscape. The goal of this guide is to equip farmers with the information they need to make decisions about ag tech in a way that maximizes their personal benefit. The way farmers utilize ag tech can and should vary by individual based on current systems, personal preference, and business model.



No matter how much or how little farmers currently utilize different ag tech services, it is important to regularly reevaluate current practices, set goals, and make changes. Whether you are starting from scratch or looking to refine your operations, this guide will help you plant the seeds for success!

#### **Contents:**

- 1. Overview
- 2. Checklists
- 3. Options
- 4. Goals Worksheet
- 5. Resources

### **Getting started**

Starting anything new can be challenging. The best way to get started is by familiarizing yourself with the options available to you. In the ag tech area, there are a multitude of options available. Some services specialize in one area such as marketing. Alternatively, some platforms combine services and act more as an all-in-one platform to manage your business.

#### What is out there?

While this is not an exhaustive guide to every platform, we will mention a few examples and include links to more resources at the end of the guide.

- Barn2Door
- Food4All
- GrownBy
- Harvie
- Forager
- Local Food Marketplace

#### **Benefits**

Benefits of a personalized and optimal setup include:

- Cost-savings
- · Increased organization
- Analytics/reporting
- · Saves time
- Expands reach
- · Taps into local markets
- Manages risk
- · Scales business





Check all of the types of technology platforms or software systems that your farm currently utilizes

Financial	Marketing
E-commerce platform  POS system  Excel spreadsheets  Quickbooks	External marketing service Social media Personally branded website Online storefront A connection with community
Production	Legal

## **Guiding Questions**

- What is missing from your checklists above?
- Would your farm benefit from adding some of those missing services?
- Would it cut costs to combine multiple services to one platform?
- · Where are you spending most of your time?
- It is a good time for you to change platforms?
- When are you least busy or have extra time to make a change or invest in a new technology?
- · What are the cons of switching platforms?
- · What are the potential benefits?



## **Options**

Now see which options could make sense for your farm based on the selections you have made in the checklists..



Change some of your platforms but keep them separate



Adopt a more centralized/ streamlined platform ("All-in-one")



Keep current system in place

#### Example:

You currently use Ecel, do your own social media, sell in person at farmers markets. You could switch to Quickbooks, continue using social media and start using Harvie for an online CSA.

#### Example:

You currently use Excel, do your own social media, sell in person at farmers markets. You could switch to an all in one platform like Barn2Door that includes marketing, online ordering, reporting and business planning.

Maybe now is not the right time to make changes and you can use this tool to plan your next move.

Chose 1-2 options and write it in the goal fields. Use the worksheets to organize your next steps and think about pros and cons of 1-2 options.

# GOAL WORKSHEET

**DATE:** 

GOAL:	
WHY?	
PROS	CONS
STEPS TO TAKE	
•	
•	
•	
•	

# GOAL WORKSHEET

**DATE:** 

GOAL:	
WHY?	
PROS	CONS
STEPS TO TAKE	
•	
•	
•	

#### Resources

There are many resources available that go into greater detail about specific platforms, costs, risk management, and different technologies. Here are a handful of additional resources to supplement this decision tool:

#### **New Entry Resources**

- New Entry Ag tech workshop recordings are all available on our <u>YouTube</u>
   Channel or posted to our <u>resource webpage</u>.
- <u>Fact sheets</u> from each Ag tech workshop are posted on the New Entry website:
  - Legal
    - Legal Considerations
    - Financial Readiness to Acquire Farmland
    - Lease Building to Acquire Farmland
  - Financial
    - Record-keeping Made Easy
    - From Excel to Quickbooks
    - Point-of-Sale (POS)Data
  - Production
    - Keeping Production Records
    - Keeping Records for Soil Health
  - Marketing
    - Which E-Commerce Platform is Right for Me?
    - Navigating E-Commerce Platforms: An Introduction to GrownBy and Food4All
    - Navigating E-Commerce Platforms: An Introduction to Barn2Door and Local Food Marketplace
    - Navigating E-Commerce Platforms: An Introduction to Forager and FarmDrop

#### **Additional Resources**

- <u>Guide to farm direct sales software platforms</u> by the National Young Farmers Coalition
- Consumer ratings and guide to e-commerce platforms
- Questions to ask when choosing an e-commerce platform
- <u>Lake Pepin Local Online Platform Comparison Chart</u> for Aggregated Sales
- <u>COVID-19 Sales and Marketing Resources</u> published by North Central SARE