



A Farmer's Guide to:
**Agricultural Technology
Platforms**



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National Institute of Food and Agriculture
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NORTHEAST
EXTENSION
RISK
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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 set-up include:

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



Checklists

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

Financial

- E-commerce platform
- POS system
- Excel spreadsheets
- Quickbooks
- _____
- _____

Marketing

- External marketing service
- Social media
- Personally branded website
- Online storefront
- A connection with community
- _____

Production

- Farm management software
- Online record keeping
- Tool to create reports
- Crop production/ planning tool
- Records for organic certification
- SOPs
- _____

Legal

- Access to legal education
- Pro bono legal services
- Negotiated lease
- _____
- _____
- _____

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..

1

Change some of your platforms but keep them separate

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.

2

Adopt a more centralized/ streamlined platform ["All-in-one"]

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.

3

Keep current system in place

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 [YouTube Channel](#) or posted to our [resource webpage](#).
- [Fact sheets](#) 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

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