

KEYS TO SUCCESS FOR SMALL FARMERS

1. **Choose something you love to do.** It's hard work under the best of circumstances. If you are doing it just for the money, it's unlikely the energy, creativity, and satisfaction necessary for success will be present.
2. **Create a high quality product.** Quality is the single most important element that will differentiate your product from mass produced alternatives. More and more consumers want fresher, better tasting, healthier products than those available from large retailers.
3. **Start small and grow naturally.** Invest your ingenuity first, labor second, and money third. If you start small, the effort you put in and the income you generate are more likely to be matched. Let the market demand dictate your growth.
4. **Make decisions based on good records.** Base business decisions on what is, not on what you hope or guess the situation to be. Even if everything else is right, poor financial management and decision-making can still kill your business.
5. **Follow demand-driven production.** Produce what your customers want. Get to know your customers. Keep adjusting your products according to their tastes and purchases.
6. **Establish a loyal customer base, preferably local.** In addition to high quality and meeting customer demand, focus on your niche. Personal contact, exceeding expectations, providing steady supply, and community involvement will help secure a strong base of repeat customers.
7. **Provide more than just food or a product.** People are hungry for a connection to the rhythms of the earth and for a sense of community. Provide your customers with an experience of the satisfactions and spiritual rewards of your farm life. Provide them with some fun, peace, and relaxation.
8. **Get the whole family or partners involved.** Value-added processing takes additional energy and skills. When several family members are involved, each person can contribute his or her unique talents and specialize for efficiency.
9. **Keep informed.** It is important to keep informed about your customers, your competition, the laws concerning your business, and other producers like yourself.
10. **Plan for the future.** To be successful, you have to know where you are headed. Each path requires different courses of action. Set goals for your business and a plan of action to achieve them.

Compiled by John Fouts. For more information, contact WSU Extension at (509) 524-2685 or email John Fouts fouts@wsu.edu.

Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.