



1. Participants

Approximately 21 people joined in this teleconference presentation and discussion session. Participants included consumers, farmers, farmers' market organizers, and government and non-profit employees involved in the agricultural sector. Participants were from both rural and urban areas of the province, including:

- St. John's
- Pasedena
- Happy Valley-Goose Bay
- Corner Brook
- Bonavista
- Carbonear
- Holyrood
- Parson's Pond

2. Introduction

After a round of introductions of all on the line, Rick Kelly of the [Food Security Network](#) provided some introductory comments and information on:

- **The Food Security Network NL (FSN)** as a membership based non-profit organization with the mission to actively promote comprehensive, community based solutions to ensure physical and economic access to adequate and healthy food for all.
- **Food security** as existing when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. Food security also means that the people who produce foods are able to earn a living wage.
- **The importance of fostering a healthy, sustainable food system** which focuses on local, seasonal foods, the health of the population, building communities, local economic development, and supporting local producers, processors, distributors and retailers.
- **Four new Best Practices Toolkits** for community organizations, including a **Farmers' Market Best Practices Toolkit**. All four toolkits are available at FSN's website: <http://www.foodsecuritynews.com/best-practices-toolkits.html>. The toolkits provide Step-by-step guides and resources to help you start community gardens, farmers' markets, community kitchens, and bulk buying clubs.

3. Keynote Presentation: Lorenda Ebbett – Direct Marketing Farm Products

Lorenda Ebbett, who owns and operated Meadow Brook Farm near Tatamagouche, NS, gave an overview of the pros and cons of direct marketing methods, examples from her own farm experience and tips and considerations for those considering marketing their farm products

directly. The following points complement those in the PowerPoint presentation. Listen to the audio recording for the full presentation.

Deciding to build a poultry abattoir: The closest abattoir was over two hours away from the Ebbetts, so having their own abattoir was appealing. The decision resulted in a tripling of their chicken sales.

Retail Location: It is important to make sure the front of the store where customers come in looks nice.

Pros of a retail store: It is easier to market a whole animal rather than particular pieces – wholesalers tend to want a large number of the same piece, rather than whole animals. Make partnerships with other producers in order to fill large orders to wholesalers and restaurants.

Vary products according to tastes: Consumer tastes over time and according to season, so change which processed products you are selling. For example, Meadow Brook Farm sells pot pies only during the winter.

Profits: Need to be in tune to the profits/losses of the business. Being busy doesn't necessarily mean profit.

Values: Stay focused on your vision, or philosophy, as a business.

Costs of growing: Things can snowball while growing a business: land, materials, staff, etc. A good way to grow partnerships and keep debt levels low is to share equipment with other farmers.

4. Key Questions and Information from the Following Discussion

Following the Keynote Presentation, participants had the opportunity to ask Lorenda questions about her experience in farm direct marketing. Some key information included:

Q: How long did it take to get the license for the inspected slaughter facility?

The license wasn't the hard part – building the facility took longer. Getting propane installed and finding contractors able to build the facility took a long time. The inspection process was fairly easy.

Q: How many people are employed in the marketing side of the farm business?

Two full time staff people are employed at the meat shop during the busy season (summer). Only one full time staff person is employed over the winter. Four to five people work part time in the poultry abattoir one day a week, with two more working one or two additional days.

When building an abattoir you should speak to food safety people in government before you begin building, at the beginning, to find out all the requirements.

Q: Did your partners have the same values in how they produced their food?

The Ebbetts don't sell boxed meat from far away at their store. They do source some meat from local producers, but they can't guarantee what has been consumed by the animals or how

they have been treated. The Ebbetts are up-front with any customers who ask about the meat in their store, letting them know where it came from.

Q: What methods have you used for promotion of your products? Have you used marketing companies to help with promotion?

While that aspect of marketing is important, the Ebbetts have mostly used road signs, radio advertisements, and word of mouth. It is very hard to gauge the success of advertising. Selling at the Tatamagouche farmers' market when first starting out was a great way to get visibility and promote the business.