



Fraga Farmstead Creamery LLC

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fatc farmer aid tech corp

An Idea
A Pass-it-Forward Deed

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what it is now...

WHY we need a Farmer Aid Tech Corp (FATC) at this juncture in time!

The current re-shuffling of the market place in groceries is unprecedented.

Americans used to get about half of their meals in restaurants and fast food establishments. Many of those have closed leaving people to buy more groceries than ever, and cooking at home more than ever. **People suddenly have more time and less money—another impetus to cook from scratch.** This has created a focus on ingredients that previously had more of a meal deal focus.

The American food distribution system is designed to provide about half of all of the food stuffs to restaurants and institutional food customers—customers who are now not taking any deliveries. Now, this half of the food supply is not reaching end customers, creating some food shortages. **Customers are aware of empty shelves and a very brittle food delivery system, and now valuing access to food more.**

The grocery store is now considered a dangerous place, staffed by front line workers. Not to mention, more and more people are ordering food via Amazon or shopping services—in effect, buying food on the internet. People use to think buying shoes “on the internet” was nuts. That’s what people thought about buying groceries on line, too—about an ‘eternity’ of a month ago.

All of the aforementioned factors create an enormous opportunity for local farmers who are nimble enough to reach the newly receptive, digital audience.

Anecdotal tales from farmer friends paint two pictures:

- **One of despair** where farmers have suddenly, overnight lost their main institutional customers, and are close to ruin.
- **The other one of opportunity and prosperity** for farmers who where already had an on-line presence, and on social media. Whereby, they are now more easily reaching a newly receptive (and captive) audience with their sales doubling from a year ago.

why fatc is needed...

Those farmers thriving right now are doing it by using technology well. **The farmers that are currently struggling could use the same technology; that is, if they had time for it.** There is a fundamental difference between the hair stylist who is home during the shut down, and the cattle farmer who lost her/ his restaurant customers:

- The hair stylist is home with suddenly lots of time, able to fill out applications, and wait on hold. There are loans that s/he can apply for and forbearance on major payments!
- The cattle farmer has no income either. However, like the hair stylist, s/he is not eligible for emergency loans and continues to work as hard as ever, likely harder since s/he now forgoes any hired help out of concern for cash flow.
- The cash flow concerns are very real: all the cattle still requires feeding, mortgage and equipment loan payments continue, and so do all other bills. All costs basically continue, while income has ceased.

Currently, there are many initiatives to help the laid off workers, but not very many to help the farmers. This makes sense since farmers are a very small percentage of the population!

COVID-19 is a challenge to all, but it is also an opportunity. Given that the shut down is going on roughly for the amount of time that it takes for new habits to take hold (six weeks as per psychologists' account), **we could come out of this with a better food system than we went in with. MORE home cooking, less institutional meals, and better ingredients coming straight to the consumer from the farmer at prices that can sustain the farmer!**

What is needed now is for the farmers that are NOT on-line with their offerings, to get help to achieve an on-line presence. I myself watched a webinar early on during the COVID-19 pandemic about "how to position yourself for digital sales". It was informative and utterly overwhelming for me. The technical details, the scope of the task, my frayed nerves, and my lack of sleep all seemed to make this an impossible, but necessary cliff to climb.

I got lucky. After posting a farm goods in exchange for help to move my website online ad on Craigslist (CL), received many, MANY offers of help. **I availed myself to one person; and within a week, I was on-line taking pre-orders for our farm!**

What surprised me is the number of folks that offered to help. so many stated, *"I'm bored. That sounds like fun. I like good food. I want to help a farmer"*.

There is need for tech help by desperate farmers and there is willingness by tech savvy people to help. This is where the **Farmer Aid Tech Corp (FATC)** comes in. It puts this resource (tech help) in touch with the need (farmers strapped for time and needing expertise). **In the end, we will all benefit!**

- **The farmer** that has diversified her/his sales channels, and is now able to reach customers directly will be more financially stable—assuring more great food can reach all of us!
- **The tech folks** that participate will feel good about their own knowledge and ability to help, and will likely learn a lot about "what a farmers life really looks like" making her/him in the future a more educated customer!



That's it for the Why. Now for the How...

A farmer that has been helped pays it forward by finding another farmer that needs help. **No money changes hands.** The farmer that pays it forward provided a “scholarship” of \$100 of farm goods to the next tech person. The \$100 amount is derived by honoring the barter system. The scope of the help is about eight hours worth of work both in tech and in farmland.

A barter system should honor each other's times equally. Even though an engineer may charge that rate for one hour, this is not about paying the engineer customary wages—this is not the point; this is a voluntary program, it should not be a problem! The tasks should be completed over a two to three week period to keep the energy fresh, and the end in sight, attainable.

Right away, we could use help creating a **Farmer Aid Tech Corp (FATC) Questionnaire** to determine a farmers needs and wants. The following is an incomplete list of tasks graphic designers, web designers, copy writers, marketing mavens, etc. could assist a farmer, e.g.:

- Social Media e.g. teach how to set-up and use Instagram
- Build/Construct/Tune a web site
- E-commerce assistance.
- Customer connectivity i.e. newsletter, sign-up forms, etc.
- Create recipe cards, banners, business cards, etc.
- Teach best-practices for using a digital camera on the mobile/cell phone; this includes:
 - Instructions on how to take good, professional photos of the farm
 - Assist the farmer posting photos on the internet

There are probably many more areas that farmers could use assistance. There are probably many more areas that tech folks know how to help. **The following is a guidance outline of a possible schema that can be used:**

1. First, the tech person reviews the “menu”, and highlights tasks that s/he is comfortable and able to provide assistance.
2. After the farmer reviews the “menu” of different offers of assistance the tech person can provide, they mutually agree on a scope of work, and put it in writing. Basically, this becomes a work proposal.
3. The farmer agrees to make her/himself available, and a schedule is established between the two parties.
4. Then, the work commences.

My next step: I am connecting a tech person and a farmer. **I am providing \$100 in farm goods as a scholarship. I will encourage the farmer and the tech person to pass it on, and find matches out there for the next help-match!**

After this step I am done. **If, however, someone wants to take on this program offering, and keep it going, creating more match-ups by farmers and tech folks, creating a data base, etc.—this would be a very, VERY nice thing for all of us!** I would be happy to stay involved in a very peripheral manner, or not. I just hope this little idea seed will sprout into a big tree!!