

Case Study Protocol

Case Study Protocol

The purpose of documenting North Country farm and food businesses that use a direct marketing or 'local foods' approach to selling their agricultural product(s) is to obtain a detailed impact analysis of this approach on: the business of each operation; the community that each is located in; and, the larger implications for the agricultural sector in the North Country.

The guiding questions for the case studies (i.e., questions the investigator must keep in mind during the interview) are:

How does regional/local food production and marketing in the North Country currently affect:

1. Agricultural production and farm profitability?
(Examples: diversity of farm products/value-added products, new markets and more sales)
2. Community and economic development?
(Examples: job/enterprise creation, cultural opportunities, social institutions, public health)
3. The environment?
(Examples: land use practices, food safety, open-space issues)

Each Extension Educator in the six North Country counties will be responsible for interviewing two businesses, total. The final 12 farm or food businesses will be selected by the team to represent an overall diversity of locations in the North Country and a mix of approaches to direct or 'local foods' marketing, including a dairy processor that uses regional identity marketing, a maple or honey producer that uses regional identity marketing, a Community Supported Agriculture farm, a farmers market vendor, a meat and/or egg producer that sells locally, a cooperative member that sells locally, a producer that sells Farm-to-Institution, a producer with a roadside stand, two producers that sell direct wholesale (wholesale market, auction, supermarket, gourmet shop, food co-ops, and/or restaurants), and two farms that are listed in a 'local food guide' (e.g., Adirondack Harvest member, ANCA Arts, Crafts, & Food guide, localharvest.org, Jefferson County or GardenShare's Local Food Guides).

Once the farms and food businesses have been identified, the case study interviews will be implemented as follows:

1. Extension educators will send a letter introducing the project and requesting an opportunity to interview a principle owner of the business or a representative of the owner (see "Letter of Introduction" included in this document).
2. Three days after the educator has sent the letter, the educator will call the business owner, reference the letter and the project, and request an opportunity to interview him or her, or a designated representative.
 - a. If the owner agrees, the educator will schedule a meeting.
 - b. If the owner declines to be interviewed, the educator will ask if the owner would be willing to reconsider given more information about the project.
 - i. If the owner agrees, the educator will call Katherine or Heidi to share more information.

Case Study Protocol

1. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the owner is then willing to participate, the educator will be advised to contact the owner and schedule a meeting.
 2. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the owner is still unwilling to participate, Katherine or Heidi will thank the owner for his or her time.
 - ii. If the owner disagrees, the educator will thank the owner for his or her time.
3. Once the meeting has been scheduled, the educator will send a confirmation letter, indicating the time, and referencing the following documents which will be included in the confirmation letter mailing:
 - a. The Human Subjects approved informed consent form (double-sided).
 - b. The 'Case Study Interview Guide', questions 1-32.
 - c. The Case Study Enterprise Information Form (double-sided).
4. Before going to the scheduled meeting the educator should print the following materials to share with the interviewee during the interview: (1) Two copies of the informed consent form; and (2) A second copy of the Case Study Enterprise Information Form of the interview guide and a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang at CCE St. Lawrence County, which should be used for returning the completed Case Study Enterprise Information Form.
5. The educator will then meet with the owner / representative as scheduled to conduct the interview according to the following protocol:
 - a. After introducing herself, the educator will hand the director a second copy of the informed consent form and read the form with the owner/representative.
 - b. The educator will then ask the owner /representative if he or she has any questions about the project and the informed consent form.
 - c. The educator will then ask the owner /representative to share his or her understanding of the project.
 - i. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the owner/representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the owner's files and one for the project files (send this one to Heidi at CaRDI).
 - ii. If the understanding is not accurate, the educator will clarify the issue at hand and assess the owner's/representative's understanding again.
 1. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the owner/representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the owner's files and one for the project files.
6. Once the informed consent form has been signed, the educator will:
 - a. If given permission to do so during the informed consent process, turn on a tape recorder and proceed with the interview, also taking notes.
 - b. If not given permission to use a tape recorder, proceed with the interview, recording it with notes only.
7. At the end of the interview, the educator should:
 - a. Remind the interviewee to complete and return the Case Study Enterprise Information Form, which we are asking them to fill out on their own.
 - b. Address any questions or let them know their question will be addressed by the project coordinators
 - c. Ask that the completed form be returned in a pre-addressed, stamped envelope within one week's time.
 - d. Thank the owner/representative for his or her time, and remind him or her that we will send them a draft copy of any publications relating to their interview, for their approval prior to publication and a final copy of the published document.
8. Once back at the office, within two days of the interview, the educator should:

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- a. Send the owner/representative a signed thank you note (see below), including a reminder to complete the interview form and a second form and stamped, return envelope, addressed to Katherine Lang.
 - b. If the form has not been received within two weeks of the interview, follow-up with a reminder that we need the form.
 - c. Send the signed informed consent form and interview tape to Heidi
 - d. Send the interview notes (one copy each) to Katherine and Heidi.
9. No more than six months after the interview, destroy the interview tapes (Heidi).
 10. No more than three years after the interview, destroy the interview notes and data (Heidi).

Case Study Letter of Introduction

***To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.*

Business Name
Business Address Line 1
Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Business Owner Name]:

I am an Educator, specializing in _____, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of _____ County. I would like to interview you about your [farm/food business] as part of a project called the *North Country Regional Foods Initiative*. You may have read about this project in the paper. The purpose of this study is to document the impact local/regional marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

Specifically, we would like to interview you about your business to get a detailed look at your direct marketing/local/regional foods operation – with a focus on why and how you started using your current marketing approach. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. Learning about your operation will help us to better understand the impacts of local and regional foods in the context of individual enterprises.

This interview should take about 2 hours. I will call you in approximately three days to follow-up on this letter and, if you are willing to participate in our study, set up a time when we can meet for the interview.

Thanks very much for your time,

Sincerely,

[Name of Interviewer]

Case Study Confirmation Letter

***To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.*

Business Name
Business Address Line 1
Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Business Owner Name]:

On behalf of the North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in our study of the social and economic impacts of local and regional food markets in the North Country.

This letter is to confirm that you've agreed to be interviewed by me on [day of the week, month, date] at [time of the day.] As we discussed, I will meet you at [location where you agreed to conduct the meeting.]

In preparation for the meeting, I've enclosed the *interview guide* I will be using to talk with you about your business operation and an "*informed consent form*." The informed consent form describes the focus of our study, the nature of the questions I will be asking, and your rights as a participant in the study. Although I will go over both the interview guide and the informed consent form with you prior to the start of our interview, please read both of these documents prior to our scheduled interview time and call me if you have any questions or concerns about either document. My number is [interviewer's phone number.]

Thanks again and know I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

[Interviewer's name.]

Name: _____

Interviewer: _____

Farm/Business Name: _____

Date: _____

Phone number: _____

Time: _____

Address: _____

County: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Case Study Interview Guide

Interview Introduction and Informed Consent Review

**Hand consent form to interviewee prior to reading the statement below.

As I've mentioned, I am an Educator, specializing in _____, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of _____ County. I am interviewing you as part of a project called the *North Country Regional Foods Initiative*. You may have read about this project in the paper. Thanks for agreeing to participate in our case study of direct marketing/local foods businesses. The purpose of this interview is to get a detailed look at your direct marketing/local/regional foods operation – with a focus on why and how you started using your current marketing approach. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The purpose of this study is to document the impact this type of marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

This interview should take about 2 hours. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. However, you are in no way obligated to participate in it. You will not be penalized in any way if you decline to participate in it. You may ask questions about the study both before committing to participate in it and at any time throughout the study. If you do choose to participate in the study, we would like to tape record our interview with you so we have something to refer to, to check facts. You may refuse to have the interview taped and still participate in the study. If you grant us permission to use the tape recorder, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. We will destroy the tapes no later than six months after the interview. We will destroy the interview guide notes and data no later than three years after the interview. You may also refuse to answer any question at any time and you may choose to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

The information we will be asking you to share WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with other direct marketing/local foods growers/processors' will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment, income, and profitability. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.* You may contact Cornell University's Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at uchs@cornell.edu, phone (607-255-5138) and website (<http://www.irb.cornell.edu>).

**Interviewer breaks from reading the informed consent form to address the following:

Do you understand these conditions? If so, please tell me what your role in this project is and the rights you have as a participant in this study.

If not, please let me know what I haven't explained sufficiently. [Clarify anything that the interviewee was unclear about.]

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*Case Study Interview Guide*

*\*Once it is clear that the interviewee understands the project, his/her role in it, and his/her rights, continue on to finish reading and ask them to sign the informed consent form:*

I have read/heard and understand the above conditions for this interview. I understand that the information, including financial data about the organization, will be published in research reports exploring the impact of local and regional foods initiatives in the North Country. I acknowledge that I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to review and approve any written materials before they are published. I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Interviewee)

In addition to agreeing to participate in this interview, I hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ / do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ / do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Interviewee)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

Project Coordinator Contact Information:  
Katherine Lang  
St. Lawrence County Cooperative Extension  
1894 State Highway 68  
Canton, NY 13617  
Phone: 315-379-0926  
Email: kaa20@cornell.edu

Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman  
Community and Rural Development Institute  
Development Sociology, 39 Warren Hall  
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853  
Phone: 607-255-0417  
Email: hmm1@cornell.edu

\*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on \_\_\_\_\_.

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**North Country Regional Foods Initiative Case Study**

This interview is part of a project called the *North Country Regional Foods Initiative*. Thanks for agreeing to participate in our case study of direct marketing/local foods businesses. The purpose of this interview is to get a detailed look at your direct marketing/local/regional foods operation – with a focus on why and how you started using your current marketing approach. There are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. The purpose of this study is to document the impact this type of marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

This interview should take about 2 hours. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. However, you are in no way obligated to participate in it. You will not be penalized in any way if you decline to participate in it. You may ask questions about the study both before committing to participate in it and at any time throughout the study. If you do choose to participate in the study, we would like to tape record our interview with you so we have something to refer to, to check facts. You may refuse to have the interview taped and still participate in the study. If you grant us permission to use the tape recorder, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. We will destroy the tapes no later than six months after the interview. We will destroy the interview guide notes and data no later than three years after the interview. You may also refuse to answer any question at any time and you may choose to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

The information we will be asking you to share WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with other direct marketing/local foods growers/processors' will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment, income, and profitability. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.\* You may contact Cornell University's Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at [uchs@cornell.edu](mailto:uchs@cornell.edu), phone (607-255-5138) and website (<http://www.irb.cornell.edu>).

over

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**North Country Regional Foods Initiative Case Study**

I have read/heard and understand the above conditions for this interview. I understand that the information, including financial data about the organization, will be published in research reports exploring the impact of local and regional foods initiatives in the North Country. I acknowledge that I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to review and approve any written materials before they are published. I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Interviewee)

In addition to agreeing to participate in this interview, I hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ / do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ / do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Interviewee)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

Project Coordinator Contact Information:  
Katherine Lang  
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1894 State Highway 68  
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## *Case Study Interview Guide*

11. How are you able to adjust to market demand within the farm/food business? (i.e., expand, shrink, change varieties). What are limits to production?

12. What are your current delivery methods?

13. What are the advertising/promotional strategies for the farm/food business? (Local food guides, Adirondack Harvest, newsletter, labels, brochures, POS materials)

14. How do you establish your prices?

15. How are your customers currently involved with the farm/food business (work days, tours, CSA members)? Do you have a lot of repeat customers? Do you track this? Do you think it is an important issue?

### *Case Study Interview Guide*

- **Economics Note:** *\*\*Information from the following section will only be used in combination with data from other businesses for publication, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data.\*\**

16. How many acres are there in production? How many in total? Rented?

17. What was the level of investment to begin this operation?

18. Where did the funding come from for the investment (loans/commercial lenders, family, friends, investors)?

19. What are your general feelings about the profitability of the direct marketing/local food operation? (How long did it take to make a profit? Has profitability been improving each year?)

20. Have there been cash flow problems? At what times in the production cycle? What has caused these problems?

21. Is liability insurance an important issue?

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- **Collaborations**

22. What organizations or individuals in the community, county or state do you collaborate with? In what ways?
23. Can you estimate the value of this collaboration to the enterprise?
24. Do you participate in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program or accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)/Food Stamps?
25. Can you estimate the value of this collaboration to the enterprise?
26. What do you see your role as in the community as a farmer/food business owner? (land use, public health)

## *Case Study Interview Guide*

### **II. Farm/Food Business Evolution**

I'd like to hear a little more about how this operation came to be and what changes have occurred over time:

27. How did you educate yourself about farming and marketing in general? (e.g., trial and error, workshops, organizational memberships, reading, a mentor, etc.)

- Identifying alternatives, options- where do you get info?

28. How has the business changed over the time of your involvement?

29. Why-motivation? – what was the big picture driving the business?

30. How are decisions made to change?

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31. What information would help you in making such decisions in the future?

32. What else would like to share with me regarding local/regional foods and direct marketing operations in the North Country?

Thanks!

### Case Study Interview Guide

*\*\*\*Interviewer breaks from asking questions to give a hand a copy of the following form “Case Study Enterprise Information Form” to the interviewee, along with a self addressed envelope for returning the completed question to the project coordinators. (Use Katherine’s St. Lawrence County address). Interviewer should review the question with the interviewee before completing interview. If this form has been completed in advance of the interview, please be sure to ask the participant if he or she wishes to change anything now that they’ve read and signed the informed consent form.*

#### Case Study Enterprise Information Form

*Note: \*\*Information from the following section will only be used in combination with data from other businesses for publication, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data.\*\**

What is the current enterprise mix?

| Products/Services                       | Scale (acres/head)                     |                                                                                    | 2007 Volume of Production (bushels/lbs.) | % Total Gross Farm Receipts |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                         | Start                                  | 2007                                                                               |                                          |                             |
| <i>Example:<br/>Pasture-raised beef</i> | <i>15 yearling<br/>Holstein steers</i> | <i>21 cattle –<br/>brood cows,<br/>feeder, stocker<br/>and finished<br/>cattle</i> | <i>2800 lbs. retail-cut beef</i>         | <i>50%</i>                  |
| <i>Tomatoes</i>                         | <i>.5 acres</i>                        | <i>.5 acres</i>                                                                    | <i>160 bushels</i>                       | <i>35%</i>                  |
|                                         |                                        |                                                                                    |                                          |                             |
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|                                         |                                        |                                                                                    |                                          |                             |
| <b>Totals</b>                           |                                        |                                                                                    |                                          | 100%                        |

Over

## *Case Study Interview Guide*

Within the following ranges please indicate total gross farm/business receipts for 2007:

- |                                               |                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$5,000    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 to \$99,999   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 to \$19,999  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 to \$249,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to \$39,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250,000 or more      |

**Thank-you**

## CASE STUDY ENTERPRISE INFORMATION FORM

**Please return to:**  
**Katherine Lang**  
**North Country Regional Foods Initiative**  
**CCE of St. Lawrence County**  
**1894 SH 68**  
**Canton, NY 13617**

*Note: \*\*Information from the following section will only be used in combination with data from other businesses for publication, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data.\*\**

What is the current enterprise mix?

| Products/Services                              | Scale (acres/head)                     |                                                                                    | 2007 Volume of Production (bushels/lbs.) | % Total Gross Farm Receipts |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                                | Start                                  | 2007                                                                               |                                          |                             |
| <i><b>Example:</b><br/>Pasture-raised beef</i> | <i>15 yearling<br/>Holstein steers</i> | <i>21 cattle –<br/>brood cows,<br/>feeder, stocker<br/>and finished<br/>cattle</i> | <i>2800 lbs. retail-cut beef</i>         | <i>50%</i>                  |
| <i>Tomatoes</i>                                | <i>.5 acres</i>                        | <i>.5 acres</i>                                                                    | <i>160 bushels</i>                       | <i>35%</i>                  |
|                                                |                                        |                                                                                    |                                          |                             |
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|                                                |                                        |                                                                                    |                                          |                             |
| <b>Totals</b>                                  |                                        |                                                                                    |                                          | <b>100%</b>                 |

**Over**

## CASE STUDY ENTERPRISE INFORMATION FORM

Within the following ranges please indicate total gross farm/business receipts for 2007:

- |                                               |                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$5,000    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 to \$99,999   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 to \$19,999  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 to \$249,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to \$39,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250,000 or more      |

**Thank-you**

*Case Study Thank you Letter*

*\*\*To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.*

Business Name  
Business Address Line 1  
Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Business Owner Name]:

On behalf of the entire North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your business in the context of local and regional food markets. You have helped provide us with a snapshot of how local food market opportunities impact your business, the North Country region and the agricultural sector in the North Country more generally. We are grateful to you for your time and insights.

We will be compiling and analyzing the information you and other business owners shared with us and publishing it in a report on the social and economic impacts of regional foods in the North Country. Before our report is published, you will have an opportunity to review the information you provided us to be sure it is accurate. Once the report is published, we will also send you a copy.

In addition, as a token of our appreciation, we've entered your name into a drawing, along with others who also participated in the case study component of our project. The winner of this drawing will receive a gift certificate to Hohmeyer's Lake Clear Lodge.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please call either of the two project coordinators of our regional initiative:

Katherine Lang, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County, 315-379-9192, x 261

Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, Community and Rural Development Institute, Cornell University  
607-255-0417

Sincerely,

[Interviewer's Name]