



Advocating for Agriculture 2.0

Millions of American consumers are growing up in urban areas, generations away from farm life. This lack of understanding of today's agriculture has led to rampant misconceptions and fear about farm practices.

It's time to set the record straight.

The people who value and understand today's agriculture must be part of the daily conversation about food and farming. If you're interested in helping to build back trust in American agriculture, focus on this: never let misinformation about farming and food go unanswered. This means joining in and sharing what you know, learning how to answer the tough questions and encouraging others to do the same.

This can be done through personal conversations, letters to editorial leaders in the news media, and engaging with social media just to name a few approaches.

First it's important to understand the point of view of our target audience.

What consumers are saying about farming and their food:

- They are very concerned about the safety of their food
- They love farmers but not modern farming or technology in farming
- They are suspicious of anything "corporate" or "big"
- They want straight talk –straight from the source
- They are concerned but not very informed
- They get information from friends and the internet
- Women (moms) are talking about, and sharing, food information most

What is CommonGround?

CommonGround is a grassroots, national effort by farmers and people who support agriculture, to create genuine conversations with key consumers and influencers to build understanding and trust. The program focuses primarily on women from farm families and urban and suburban women connecting over shared values and concerns. While CommonGround is grassroots, it must also be sophisticated and strategic in order to reach the target with meaningful and topical information. If we're not smart about how we reach out, we won't be heard. The program uses carefully planned events, media relations, paid media and social media to reach influencers and key consumers with the true story of what goes into producing this country's food.

What makes CommonGround different?

- It is grassroots—real farmers, volunteering their own time to increase understanding
- It is woman focused—moms are the audience talking most about food issues. That means misinformation spreads quickly in this group; we believe the truth can too.
- It has no set “messages” or “talking points” –farmers are encouraged to talk about their own experiences, practices and values in growing and raising food.
- CommonGround uses an approach, not of persuasion, but of building genuine trust—positive, inclusive, credible & real
- It is open source—the program is funded by the United Soybean Board and the National Corn Growers Association but it is meant to be open to all partners and individuals who can use the program to reach consumers
- It’s built on a partnership between individual state programs and a national program
- It is based on the idea of many resources, few rules.

CommonGround Rules of Engagement

- I will stay positive.
- I will not tell others what to eat.
- I will not criticize any consumer food choice or farming practice.
- I will not criticize any organization or individual who represents another point of view.
- I will share my experience and my values in modern farming, along with facts from credible sources to increase consumer trust in agriculture.

Our Greatest Tool: Social Media

Food is one of the hottest topics online and much of the talk is related to where food comes from and how it is grown and produced. People who know today’s farming, need to get in on the conversation. Here are tips on how to make the most of social media opportunities and a glossary of social media terms to make it easier.

What to think about when using social media platforms: (**Social Media Platform:** includes any social media site you participate in (eg. Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, blog, etc.)

1. **Listen:** Listening to what consumers, critics and other influencers are saying in the social media realm is crucial. This will be the best way to gain intelligence about what issues are most important to consumers. Pick a few bloggers, chefs, and anti-modern ag types to monitor. Listen to what they are saying about food to gain prospective. Below are some ways to listen:
 1. **Search Tool:** Use social media to search like you would on Google. Search for hashtags, topics, people, etc.
 2. **Monitor:** Set up a monitoring service like HootSuite or TweetDeck to easily review what others are saying about you and the topics you are interested in.

2. **Content:** When generating content on social media platforms you need to make sure it is relevant content and you are maximizing our social media capabilities. Tips on how to do this:
 1. *Localize Content:* Talk about your farm and town whenever you can. Many are not connected to what really happens in agriculture or rural America, so it is your chance to share.
 2. *New Content:* When you post on one social media platform make sure you post on all of them. It is important to promote yourself and what you are doing as a farmer and advocate. For instance, if you write a blog, let everyone on Facebook and Twitter know you have a new post. This will increase visibility and followers. We also encourage you to post content on the CommonGround Facebook fan page and mention CG in tweets.
 3. *Select Favorite Platform:* Pick what you like most, and stick with it. When you like doing something, normally you stick with it and are more passionate about it. The same is true for social media.

3. **Engagement:** *Social Media is about engaging in conversations. You can do this in various ways.*
 1. *Ask:* Pose questions to your followers and friends. Questions can be about food or ag. When you pose a question, make sure you moderate the discussion.
 2. *Respond:* Answer all posts or mentions. Being responsive and timely is good social media etiquette.
 3. *Keep a purpose in mind:* Retweet or repost social media content, pictures and blog posts that support agriculture. Giving others a voice can help you expand yours.

Now that you have some ideas about how to pump up your content, let's talk about the most popular social media platforms and ways to help CommonGround out.

Top Five Ways to Help CommonGround through Social Media

1. Follow Us
 - a. www.twitter.com/CommonGroundNow
 - b. www.facebook.com/CommonGroundNow
 - c. www.youtube.com/user/findourcommonground
2. Monitor your social media platforms to find misconceptions about farming and food and dispel those misconceptions.
3. Share our Content. Tell everyone about CommonGround using your personal social media platforms.
4. Mention Us in Tweets, Facebook Posts, on your blog or YouTube Video. It is as easy as including our website, Twitter handle, etc. You can also mention us on Twitter by using our hashtag (#CGConvo).
5. Post a photo on Facebook to show you support CommonGround, and more importantly agriculture.

Social Media Glossary

Twitter

www.twitter.com

CG: www.twitter.com/CommonGroundNow

Hashtag: #CGConvo

- **@:** The @ sign is used to mention usernames in Tweets and have conversations with relevant user names. When you put an @ sign in front of someone's username, the tweet will link back to their Twitter profile.
- **Avatar:** The image you use to represent your profile. It is your profile picture.
- **Bio:** The brief description used to define who you are and what your interests are on Twitter. The bio will remain on your profile page.
- **cc:** To understand what cc: means, think of an email. You cc:, or carbon copy, someone on an email not necessarily because you are writing to that person, but because you think they would find the contents of that email important. With Twitter, cc: is the same thing only you are ccing others in your Tweet.
- **Direct message:** Direct messages are private messages you can send to someone you are following. They can only be 140 characters.
- **Fail Whale:** The Fail Whale is an image of a whale held up by birds and nets. You will see the fail whale when Twitter is on overloaded or having technical problems.
- **Favorite:** Mark favorite tweets by clicking the yellow star next to the message. This will help you keep track of important tweets.
- **#FF:** #FF is a popular hashtag that stands for "Follow Friday." You should use this on Fridays to suggest who others should follow.
- **Follower:** Someone who receives your Twitter updates.
- **Following:** People who you want to see tweets from. You will see tweets from the people you follow on your homepage timeline.
- **Hash tag:** A hash tag (#) is a way of organizing your updates for Twitter search engines. Users prefix a message with a community-driven hash tag to enable others to discover relevant posts.
- **Lists:** Keep people who you follow organized by creating lists. Twitter lists can be either public or private.
- **Mention:** Mentioning another user in your Tweet by including the @ sign followed directly by their username is called a "mention". Also refers to Tweets in which your username was included.
- **Reply:** A Tweet posted in reply to another user's message, usually posted by clicking the "reply" button next to their Tweet in your timeline. Always begins with @username.
- **Retweet:** Abbreviated as RT, retweet is used on Twitter to show you are tweeting something that was posted by another user. The format is RT @username where username is the Twitter name of the person you are retweeting.

- **Trending Topic:** Subjects that are popular on Twitter at the moment. You can find trending topics on the right hand side of your home page.
- **Tweet:** A Tweet is a Twitter update. You can only use 140 characters or less to tweet personal messages, random thoughts and post links.
- **Twitter Apps:** Short for Twitter Application. If you have a smart phone, we recommend you use one of the many Twitter applications available.
- **URL Shortener:** Since there is a 140 character limit on Twitter you need to shorten you URLs (links). One great URL shorten is Bit.ly.
- **Username:** AKA Twitter handle, is used to identify you on Twitter for replies and mentions.
- **Via:** When you reword a tweet or link into your own tweet, you need to give some of the credit to the original poster of the material. Utilize this when you take an idea from someone, but give your own thoughts.

Twitter Shorthand:

- ***ab/abt:*** about
- ***b/c:*** because
- ***B:*** be
- ***b4:*** Before
- ***BR:*** Best Regards
- ***cld:*** could
- ***DM:*** direct message
- ***EM / eml:*** e-mail
- ***EMA:*** e-mail address
- ***F2F:*** face to face
- ***H/T:*** heard through
- ***IC:*** I see
- ***idk:*** I don't know
- ***OH:*** overheard
- ***PRT:*** please retweet
- ***TMB:*** tweet me back
- ***U:*** you

What can you do on Twitter for CG?

- **#FF:** Tell you followers to #FF fellow CG volunteers or @CommonGroundNow on Fridays. This will increase the awareness of the movement.
- **#CGConvo:** Utilize the CommonGround hashtag (#CGConvo) in your tweets that talk about farming and food.
- **Mention:** Mention other users in your Tweets as often as possible. You can mention other CommonGround volunteers, influencers and CommonGround itself. It is important to know

Twitter's main purpose is to have conversations about farming and food with other users. Mentioning others is the primary way to have those conversations.

- **Twitter Chats:** Twitter chats are a great way to spread the CG message. When you participate in a chat, a group of people are essentially following a hash tag on a specific day and at a certain time. Make sure you use the appropriate hash tag in your tweets to signify you are a part of the chat. Great chats to participate in include:
 1. #blogchat: **About:** Bettering your blog. **Moderators:** @blogchatnews @MackCollier. **When:** Sundays, 8:00pm to 9:00pm CST.
 2. #agchat: **About:** The mission of #agchat is to keep an ongoing, open dialogue amongst the various players in the agriculture, farming and ranching worlds. For people in agriculture, including those in the business of producing food, feed, fuel and fiber. (agchat) **Moderator:** @mpaynknoper. **When:** Tuesdays, 7:00pm to 9:00pm CST.
 3. #foodchat: **About:** Monthly conversation Designed to bring consumers together with agriculture on the third Tuesday of each month to bridge the farm gate to the consumer plate. **Moderators:** @foodchat and @mpaynknoper. **When:** Third Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm to 9:00pm CST.

Facebook

www.facebook.com

CG: www.facebook.com/CommonGroundNow

- **Profile:** Individual Facebook page
- **Fan Page:** Page were a brand, company or cause can share news with fans
- **Group:** Private or public, designed for interaction amongst group members
- **Post:** Update on your current status or info on your wall in the form of a link, photo, video
- **Message:** Similar to email, only between you and the sender(s)
- **Friend:** Person you have given permission to see your Facebook updates
- **FB:** Abbreviation for Facebook

What can you do on Facebook for CG?

- **Tagging:** Tag people in your status updates: To mention someone in your status, type an "@" symbol before that person, page, brand, event or company's name.
- **Submit Photos:** Upload a photo to our Facebook page. CommonGround wants consumers to understand and trust the people and the work behind their food. To join the conversation, submit your photo waving as if to say, "When you want to talk about food, talk to a farmer."
- **Respond:** Respond to Comments on the CG Fan Page. Also, when there is a new post on the CG fan page, respond to the post.
- **CG Fan Page Wall:** We encourage you to share links, pictures, etc. on CG Facebook fan page wall. The more content you are sharing with consumers, the better.
- **Events:** Invite others to CommonGround events posted on the fan page.
- **Spread the word:** Suggest that others become a fan of CommonGround.

YouTube

www.youtube.com

CG: www.youtube.com/user/findourcommonground

YouTube Tips:

- **Short and Sweet:** YouTube videos need to be short to keep your viewers attention. Keep videos as close to two minutes as possible.
- **Co-Stars:** Feel free to feature other family members, children, friends, pets, etc.
- **Audience:** Remember your audience, many consumers are agriculture novices, so explain things as simple and straight forward as possible.
- **Engage on Multiple Levels:** Make your videos entertaining and informative and provide your viewers with fresh content. Your goal is to bring your farm to your viewers' computer screens.
- **Show off:** Showcase different parts of your farm—from the field, to the barns, to your office.
- **Converse:** Casual conversations-as if you were talking with someone face-to-face

What can you do on YouTube for CG?

- ***Tell a story:***
 - Explain what you do to take care of your animals and/or crops.
 - Talk about the daily chores you complete on the farm to keep it running.
 - Tell viewers what steps you take on your farm to protect the land.
- ***Tag:*** Tag your videos with relevant keywords. These keywords should be consumer focused to reach the right audience.
- ***Video Titles:*** Put some thought into your video titles. Make them unique and as engaging as the content you filmed for your video.
- ***Tell us what you think:*** Follow our YouTube channel and comment on our videos. We want to know everyone's thoughts and opinions about the topics we discuss.