Online Sales Platforms

There are numerous online sales platforms on the market today, which left us wondering which one to implement in your unique situation. We researched the currently available sales platforms, by diving deep into what each offered, attending webinars, asking questions and working with each platform individually. We then summarized the different models, and chose the best fit for our unique local food system.

Please note, our intentions are for **AGGREGATED** sales, multiple farms marketing collaboratively. Perhaps your community will call for something different, and therefore, we spell out the immediate gut reaction followed with pros and cons for each listed below.

All Platforms that we researched:

1. **Local Orbit:** https://localorbit.com/
   - **IMMEDIATE GUT: Platform has everything we could dream of wanting available. AMAZING looking platform.**
   - Benefits to Local Orbit:
     - Streamlined Purchasing: login, look, checkout
     - Payment Services - uses Stripe payment processing, can invoice, add PO #'s
     - Inventory Management, if product is listed in multiple areas, can pull inventory from both when ordered off one site.
     - Discount codes available,
     - Fulfillment logistics - packing slips, picking slips, labels for boxes, sticker availability
     - Marketing available, FRESH SHEET, auto catalog based on inventory, availability, market, newsletters available, pre-created emails for reminding vendors to update their inventory.
     - Analytics and reports available easily with one click
     - Very experienced in aggregation, small groups, and large groups.
     - $125/month for an aggregation group GROW plan
       - Can operate 3 separate markets with this plan
       - Additional plans available
     - Can create an availability list in PDF that you can hand out/post
     - Can't get in without requesting a demo…VERY hard to reach Local Orbit
       - *Rob, new CEO of Local Orbit was transitioning when this was populated.*
     - Rave reviews at conference Annelie attended, Linden Hills used this with success

2. **Farmers Web:** https://www.farmersweb.com/
   - **IMMEDIATE GUT: SINGLE admin entering all farmers data today, developing aggregation method starting 12/15/17. Easy to use software, customer support is great, pricing is fair. Runner up if platform was ready for our needs.**
   - Benefits of Farmers Web:
     - Can price by weight

- Secondary pricing for case prices
- Can create product catalog
- Can create specific delivery zone, pick up locations
- Lead time changeable so customer have to order by a certain time
- Can enter orders for chefs
- Abandoned shopping cart available, can see if they didn't check out
- Custom pricing available
- Easy to use software
- Customer support is great
- Pricing fee is fair, no setup fee
- Feature set is fairly complete
- Responding to farm requests
- Free test account to see demo videos. $40-$75/month per farmer
  - $75/month is the best model - allows for invoicing vs only using CC
- Can pay online or have terms available
  - Recommends square acct if we do regular charging to CC
  - There is an additional fee of 3.5% + $0.30 per transaction.
- Aggregation trial available through 1 platform, **NEW SITE PRICE TBD**
  - No portal for individual farmers to login and update their produce yet
  - **Would have to have a single dedicated Admin to use as is**
  - **As is admin needs to give individual farms their pick lists too**
- 75% of items don't have photos associated

3. **What's Good:** https://sourcewhatsgood.com/
   - **IMMEDIATE GUT: Though What's Good has a beautiful platform for the individual farmer, they are not ready for the aggregation piece. They have good customer service, % based cost, easy to use and phone app accessible. Willing to design around our ideas. Be careful to ask about WHITE LABEL vs % based**
   - Benefits of What's Good:
     - Notifications - as activity happens on the site
       - Orders
       - Updated availability
     - Can filter results by type of product
     - Can purchase from your "past purchased list"
     - Can't search by location
       - Will be built in by the end of the year
     - Can browse producers by state
     - Can specify who you want to buy from
     - Only people with accounts can view your pricing
     - Can share if you have certifications
     - Unique to their platform - Bids
       - For institutions to put out a request in general for certain products
       - Helps with planning for the farmers

- - - Vendors can access their inventory, specify the delivery options and place minimum orders on units.
      - Live messenger for customer service
      - They have an app, website is fairly mobile friendly
      - "Shipping" vs delivery
      - They try to use farmer feedback to shape the software
    - "Mike Gold, Farm Consultant, Info Tech Company - supporting/strengthening local food system. Focus on the marketplace. (Alive & Pickin Farm)
      - Trained in FSMA
    - Other marketing services available - logo, marketing, general promotion
      - White paper" available - can brand your online platform
    - Initially focused on wholesale, launched into retail sales this summer
    - Developing a "direct connect" option to see the other buyers in the area
    - Food hub/aggregation - working on implementing now
      - No way to designate multiple farms easily
    - **ROUGH Web Demo January 2018 w/What's Good**
      - Upon logging into the system, not only did the online payment platform not work, we were unable to see farmers in a demographically centered area.
      - It was made clear that unless we pay for the "White label" we will see everyone using the platform. (from California to Maine)
      - We asked the cost of the white label and were told the cost starts at $49/month and goes up to $1000/month depending on the size of the project.
      - Based on 8 -10 markets using it in MN, we were then informed our project would be closer to the **$1000/month**
      - This is for a system that does not have aggregation as a method they are currently capable of and a system that had a payment gateway that was not functioning.

4. **Local Food Marketplace:** http://home.localfoodmarketplace.com/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: Great platform, easy to use, believe we are too small, VERY expensive. $999 to set up, $149/month PLUS cc processing fees +/- $50/month**
    - Benefits to Local Foods Marketplace
      - Pricing for hub or aggregation setting
      - Can use to sell to both individuals and wholesale
      - Suggested items feature at checkout
      - Can continue shopping (add on items later) until payment is processed
    - Normal fees start at $499 setup fee + $79/month per aggregation site (to start with) looks more like we would want the $999 setup and $149/month option (standard) though.
      - Hand holding for set up, each customer gets 4 training sessions. Intense set up.
      - Normal customers need 12-15 hours of training each
      - Each site fills out a questionnaire – pre-site building questionnaire
      - Web builder

- - - With one drop location/week – it would be $499 per start up – starter package
    - Multiple ordering windows complicates things. (Tues. and Fri. deliveries for example) – standard package $999
  - Stated ** *it really takes a champion to encourage and implement something like this into place. She suggested that we don't overinvest in places where you don't have structures in place.*
  - Authorize.net is their credit card processor. Hidden fees?
  - % based pricing…. $1.00 sales value, $1.30 charged for retail, $1.20 charged for wholesale - those mark ups go toward admin costs for our group.
  - Can put "on winter hold" for 6 months but there is a $29/month fee to do so
  - Food hub focused
  - Conversation often turned to pallets of shipments leaving the warehouse. This will not be the case for 95% of what we do. We are probably too small.

5. **Grazecart:** https://grazecart.com/
   - **IMMEDIATE GUT: Gorgeous site, for $199/month and not aggregation focused, there are better aggregation focused options out there for that cost.**
   - Benefits of Grazecart:
     - Good filtering for orders - pick up location - pick up/delivery options
     - Invoice, packing list, and labels
     - Can embed youtube video of how to cook something in the product description
     - Order reminder automatically sent out
     - Possible to do weight or by item (think squash or meat)
     - Delivery logistics - Delivery zones and Pick up locations available
     - Stripe Credit Card Processing Payment Gateway Available
       - 2.9% plus 0.30/transaction
     - Pricing Groups available
       - Wholesale
       - Distribution
       - Consumer
       - We set the pricing groups ourselves
       - We have to assign our item to each pricing group
   - For aggregation, can have multiple admin but they have access to everything
     - Can filter by vendor when looking at products
     - Billing comes from one account
       - One payment gateway to one account, we'd have to pay out to the separate farms
       - Can run reports on sales so you can cut checks
   - $64/month to start $199/month for "scale" level membership plus $35 annual fee for custom domain
   - Tech support is $30 for 30 minutes, basic consult is $125
   - Holding plan available $15/month for the winter
     - Keep web presence

- ■ Holds domain
- ■ Limited to 6 months

6. **Red Foods:** redmarketmn.com
   - ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: Very new, not sustainable yet, not reliable (closed for 7 months to upgrade platform 2016-2017) Katie hand cutting checks to farmers bi-weekly, scary.**
   - ○ Benefits of Red Foods:
     - ■ Free
     - ■ Each farmer manages their own inventory
     - ■ On-off switch similar to your airplane mode on your phone for products
     - ■ Chef chosen options coming soon, sorting by geographical location for 2017
     - ■ Doing updates based on feedback from members! ++
     - ■ Closed the whole site down for edits in the winter 2016, due to starting the entire site over, opened June 15, so far into the season!
     - ■ Listing products will be easy, which would encourage more farmers to use the program.
     - ■ RED intends on posting all products the farmers could have during the year and will use an on-off switch similar to your airplane mode on your phone, where you can turn the switch off when asparagus is over and on when tomatoes are here.
     - ■ Cost staying free for farmer to encourage farmers to use the program. If 80 farmers use RED, with 30 restaurants, they could become sustainable. There could be a cost in the next couple of years depending on changes that are suggested/implemented.
     - ■ Tried to design it similar to the layout of Sysco, special design focused on chefs
     - ■ Drop down box for each item with specifics like
       - ● Projected harvest date
       - ● Years farming
       - ● Product notes
       - ● Practices
       - ● Certification
     - ■ Ingredient focused, not farm focused
     - ■ Our focus would be to recruit farms
     - ■ Delivery instructions useful for chefs
     - ■ She would have to look at setting it up for our region, currently set for MN
     - ■ Other platforms are maybe trying to do too much and Katie's trying to focus on the chefs
     - ■ Trying to focus on the strength of individual farms not relying on 1 or 2 sales coordinators to do all the sales
     - ■ 12 total farms signed up last year to use RED, 2 used regularly, very inexperienced

- ○ **UPDATE 1/29/18**
  - ■ RED's 2018 version is expected to go live March 1. We are redesigning its look and user experience.
  - ■ Essentially, it is a copy of last year's version, with a few extra features including:
    - ● Geographic parameters for sales (farmers can limit sales within a radius)
    - ● We have a couple options for your "market page". For a fee, we could build you a specific page that housed all the farmers associated with a market on it. If you'd prefer to simply use geography as the narrowing factor, that would be simpler and without cost.
    - ● Duplicate listings (as per Sara's feedback!)
    - ● We are adding a one-time $30 membership fee to each farmer who sells through our platform and chef who buys from us.
    - ● Reverse listing — where chefs get to ask the network of farmers for specific products.

7. **Locally Grown.net:** http://locallygrown.net/welcome
   - ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: This one is hard. The site is not appealing, customer sample pages to scroll through, LOTS of customers use them. % based fee charged. Some of them are really not bad!**
   - ○ Benefits of Locally Grown
     - ■ 3% of market sales
     - ■ List of markets using their site shared
     - ■ Upon clicking on sites being used, the listings appear clunky
       - ● Shows products that have 0 inventory
       - ● Shows page 1 of 76 to scroll through
       - ● Very few items per page
       - ● Not great photos
     - ■ Not modern looking
     - ■ Not great support
     - ■ uTube video available
     - ■ Customers pay all at once. It is up to the market managers to get money back to the growers.
     - ■ The system provides reports to make that easy, but it is not automated.
     - ■ The software fee has a real-time ticker, like a taxi cab. You can pay the 3% on your own schedule.
     - ■ They provide basic customizations (seasonal themes, etc.) but the CSS is exposed to you so you can hire your own designer to customize it extensively.

8. **Farm Spread:** https://www.farmspread.com/

   Immediate Gut: The platform for Farmers Markets is wonderful. They are supported by the Farmers Market Coalition, but thus far they are only a platform to save market docs, set up market layouts. Not produce for sale even from individual vendors let alone aggregation.

- Focused on farmers markets
- They are talking about developing an online sales platform/aggregation capacity. Not there yet.
    - The market would act as an aggregator
- "Virtual market"
- Nice toggle list of programs and partnerships (SNAP, PoP, farmers market coalition)
- Easy to create multiple markets
- $276/year?
    - Cost more for more stalls
- Keeps records of vendor documents submitted (market agreement, bylaws etc)
- Special events form so vendors can sign up for specific events
- Specific fees for the market as a whole for the season can be spread out among vendors (eg porta potty)
- Can accept vendor fees online right now
    - Probably would be fairly easy for them to extend that to the institutional buyers
- Nice embeddable widgets for websites - market maps, list of vendors
- Farmspread.com/features
    - Compares to managemymarket and market wurks
- They are working on the online sales platform part of it
    - Online reservation first
        - For pick up at the market
    - Then they will try to implement the actual onlines sales platform.
    - They'll keep us in the loop as they develop that
- From market manager perspective it's a really good platform but not for aggregation

9. **Barn 2 Door:** https://www.barn2door.com/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: No aggregation, they would have to develop something for us. Thought they were responsive and the ap looks nice, it is not appropriate for our project.**
    - Benefits of Barn 2 Door:
        - $10/month per farmer
        - Auto re-posting to keep the store full
        - Wholesale vs retail vs private
            - Private could be used for paul & frans, etc
        - Automate customer list
    - Unique - App, they are marketing for us, we're across multiple sites so easier to get hits, being able to manage retail/wholesale easily. Automatically reposting so farms don't have to go in every week if they know what their availability, very easy to share availability off the store inventory, working directly with chefs,
    - No aggregation available

10. **Farm Match:** https://www.farmmatch.com/sellonline
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: Absolutely not. Max forgot the meeting, no aggregation available, hard to navigate and not appealing site.**
    - Forgot meeting??
    - Described what we're looking for, they're basically not there yet. 12 month timeline
    - Working on developing marketing, software help, payment processing help
        - Thinks that farmers web is too hands off with marketing
        - They're trying to be the "amazon" of farm buying
    - Automates payments
    - Customer pays online fee, not farmer
    - The mission is to make local foods easy to search for, buy and use.
    - This appears to locate farms, but unsure how to order from them.
    - No aggregation at this point.

11. **Farmigo:** https://www.farmigo.com/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: No, Farmigo stated they would not be a good fit.**
    - Demo requested
    - Message from Farmigo:
        - *Thanks for reaching out. From what you described, I don't think Farmigo would be a good fit for you. Farmigo works with many Food Hubs, but hubs that are focused on the direct to consumer channel and all of them that we work with have a subscription component to their model in addition to large a la carte web store offering from many producers.*

          You described a la carte wholesale food hub model. For that, Local Food Marketplace or Local Orbit would be a better fit. If you are considering a subscription model as well then I would be happy to talk and share more.

12. **FoodHubPro:** http://www.foodhubpro.com/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: No response**
    - Sara requested demo 12/1, they never followed up
    - One page website, with very little data

13. **Farm Logix:** http://farmlogix.net/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: No response**
    - Nice looking site and ap looks appealing
    - Annelie sent email 11/21, no answer as of 11/27
    - Sara sent an email 12/1, software is CloudSlot
    - Upon clicking on the user portal and registering it is a website with zero information in it.
    - There are broken links in the main FarmLogix site, not looking like it is well maintained.

14. **Manage My Market:** https://managemymarket.com/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: For managing markets, not aggregating**
    - Farmers Market management software
        - Assign vendor stalls
        - Accept vendor payments
        - Record sales
    - Short uTube video on site

15. **Farmers Market.com:** http://www.farmersmarket.com/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: BAD LINK - dead**
    - Serving Indianapolis and surrounding counties at this time
    - They have an option for us to become a host for aggregation – with 25 or more members (emailed 3/29/17 for more info)
    - Delivery options
    - Earn rewards the more we use it.
    - This is more for finding a delivery location than coordinating an aggregation

16. **Small Farm Central:** http://www.smallfarmcentral.com/member-assembler
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: No - not aggregation platform**
    - CSA ONLY $38-$75/month x 12 months/year
    - Farm Fan for markets – texting options
    - Interesting site to refer to for stuff but not online platform of choice
    - Not an aggregation platform at all

17. **Foodko:** http://www.foodko.net/eng#/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT:BAD LINK, wrong country**
    - Wrong country
    - Cute looking site
    - Can't see a demo without signing up for a free trial

18. **The Food Assembly:** https://thefoodassembly.com/en/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: WRONG COUNTRY**
    - Wrong country (London)
    - Cute website
    - Everything is based on % of sales

19. **Market Mobile:** http://www.farmfresh.org/hub/
    - **IMMEDIATE GUT: Not available in our area**
    - Serving RI, MA, CT only at this time. Wish this was available locally
    - Good short video explaining process
    - Love the concept
    - The site needs work

20. **Twin Cities Local Foods:** https://www.localfoodmarketplace.com/twincities/
    ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: CLOSED**
    ○ Closed September 2016

21. **Local Dirt:** http://www.localdirt.com/
    ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: Dead site**
    ○ Links are broken/not functional
    ○ Free
    ○ Hard to follow
    ○ When clicking links, site states that someone is "stealing your info"
    ○ MN Grown began this +/- 5 years ago with very little success

22. **Open Food Network:** https://staging2.openfood.com.au/
    ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: Australia only, wrong country**

23. **Eat from Farms:** http://eatfromfarms.com/
    ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: more like a marketing service, not aggregation platform**
    ○ $150/year
    ○ Newsletters available
    ○ Marketing service available to farmers
    ○ Storefront platform
    ○ Website builder

24. **Produce Marketplace:** http://theproducemarketplace.com/
    ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: No**
    ○ Ship produce across the US
    ○ Similar to "stock market" can raise and lower prices all day long
    ○ $99/month to start with
    ○ US wide, not regional
    ○ No aggregation methods
    ○ Buyers need to create accounts/pay too

25. **Market Maker:** https://national.foodmarketmaker.com/
    ○ **IMMEDIATE GUT: This is USDA run, dead links and not monitored**
    ○ No "partner" in MN or WI currently
    ○ USDA run, and we have learned that these links become outdated rapidly
    ○ Farm locator, not online platform for shopping

26. **Big Wheel Barrow:** http://bigwheelbarrow.com/
    ○ IMMEDIATE GUT: Available only in Austin, TX
    ○ No aggregation available, only farms in Austin linked to buyers in Austin