

On-Farm Composting Toolkit

WORKSHEET

QUESTIONS TO ASK POTENTIAL PARTNER FARMERS

About this worksheet: Go into your first conversations with farmers knowing what you want to better understand. This worksheet will lead you through the development of informed questions for farmers you're hoping to partner with on food scrap diversion programs.

Opening reflection: What is it you most need to understand about farmers you're thinking of working with? What is it they need to understand about you?

Consider: The complicated and demanding nature of farming can mean that farmers don't always have their full attention on conversations they have with you when you talk to them while they're working (on their farm or in settings like a farmers market). There may be things you can do to set the conversation up so that there's a chance of a focused exchange, such as asking the farmer whether there's a particular day (like a rain day) or a particular time of year (like the winter) or place it's better to meet.

COMING UP WITH QUESTIONS

Here are questions that we suggest asking potential farmer partners during one of your early encounters. Keep track of answers you've already heard in earlier conversations.

1. How do you describe your farming model? (or confirm what you think you know about their farming model)
2. Are you interested in accepting food scraps from your community for on-farm composting?
3. How would you define the community you (would) accept food scraps from? (CSA members, folks from your farmers markets, etc.)
4. What concerns do you have about accepting food scraps from community sources? (For example, management burden, contamination concerns)
5. What would you want your role in this collaborative project/program to be – or not be?
6. What support would you need to feel comfortable collaborating with us on this?
7. What do you want to make sure we keep in mind as we move forward?

Now it's your turn. What additional questions do you have for potential partner farmers? Which of those seem best suited to ask in the first exchange?

Closing reflection: Where are you most comfortable having generative first conversations like these? How do you want to set up the meeting so that it works for you, too? Go through the exercise again, coming up with questions you'd hope a partner would ask you and how you would answer questions about support and approach.

Consider: Lasting partnerships are often relational rather than contractual. Think first about building a solid and trusting relationship with a farmer partner rather than what you can get out of working with them.

Visit www.onfarmcomposting.org to submit questions or comments about this tipsheet and download more.

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The On-Farm Composting Toolkit was funded by a USDA Rural Utilities Solid Waste Management Grant. The Composting Association of Vermont is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Get the full toolkit at www.onfarmcomposting.org.