

A Recipe for Change

Small on-farm changes can keep up with shifts in consumer demand.

What do you get when you combine four different generations? Limitless and readily available knowledge at your fingertips and on your farm. You're probably waiting for the punchline, but in all seriousness, you get a vastly changing consumer demand.

We know that quickly changing consumer demand hugely impacts farmers and ranchers. But is your operation prepared? Does it matter for your small farm or large ranch? The short answer is probably. How do you change things for the world

of "woke" and "cancel-culture" where consumers are bouncing from product to product with little to no loyalty? Short term, small changes may be the ticket. Let's look at two ways consumer demand is changing, and how small changes might benefit your operation's profitability and even create new opportunities for your next generation.

Change is inevitable, and it doesn't have to be scary. As farmers and ranchers, we know what is best for us. Yet, we are consumers, too. Start

by looking at what you're already doing — it's okay to highlight your initiatives whether on social media or your website. I can see the trend now: #FARMPROUD. As you continue to implement new ideas for changing consumer demand, start small so you can do each well. You can only move up from there. **HW**

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Consumer Change

No. 1 — The baby boomers and Gen Xers are getting older. Millennials have surpassed the number of boomers in the population, and Gen Z is making its way into the workforce. This is a lot of generational change in a small amount of time, and it has created massive change in the way we consume food.

Boomers often had a sense of loyalty to their supermarket and regular big-name brands. Simple-tasting food was good for them. As Gen Xers stepped into adulthood, we saw a demand for fresher foods to be prepped and cooked at home. Millennials are massive influencers in the market and are more inclined to seek out artisan or independent retailers over supermarkets and big-name brands. They are conscious about what goes into their food, so they read their labels and seek fresh, organic and responsibly-sourced products.

The change doesn't stop here. Gen Zers are growing up in a different time where we see a more globalized thought process. Younger consumers are adventurous eaters, and social media helps them discover new recipes, restaurants and products.

No. 2 — As we talk about diversifying and responsibly producing food for the consumer, it only makes sense to add sustainability into the conversation. With pressures from our leaders and the desire to create a better place for their children, younger generations are placing a high priority on low environmental impact when it comes to the way their products are grown and made. We are no strangers to terms like non-GMO, grass fed, cage free, organic, etc., but there are emerging terms like carbon neutral foods, cell-based proteins or plant-based that we will hear consumers throwing out more and more. **HW**

On-Farm Changes and Strategy

No. 1 — We're not too far from another generation changing the way they and older generations consume food. Marketing beef directly to consumers and telling your farm's sustainability story is potentially a great way to attract younger consumers. For many of us, burgeoning urban populations are coming closer and closer to our doors.

Younger generations have become very mindful of where their meat and dairy came from, what the livestock ate and how the cattle were raised. Luckily for many farmers and ranchers, they're already managing their herds ethically and responsibly, and many of us use programs provided by the American Hereford Association for data tracking and advanced record keeping. It's okay to pat yourself on the back for these initiatives and slap a sticker on your packaging that proudly displays your practices.

No. 2 — Sometimes the sustainability topic can get in the weeds when it relates to farming and agriculture. Fortunately, for this conversation, we can continue to keep this simple and straightforward. We learned from the first example that many farmers and ranchers already have sustainable practices in place that would be a great addition to a younger generation's shopping cart or lineup of favorite brands.

Beyond the way you raise your herd, perhaps there are indirect ways you've already been working towards a more sustainable future. Examples could include consumers learning of an on-farm solar project or even how your operation uses ethanol or biodiesel in transportation. **HW**