



# GROWING FOR MARKET 1: CHOOSING CROPS

New Roots Micro-Producer Academy: Module 3 of 8

## Summary

This is an introduction to the concept of market gardening or farming, and to selecting crops that fit the market channel that producers anticipate using.

**The need:** Growing for market requires a farmer to think differently about WHO they will grow for and WHAT crops will bring them the best money for their time, effort, and space available to them. This workshop will help them to conceptualize the difference between gardening and market farming, and begin to make plans for which crops they will grow.

# Who made this guide?

Collaboration and Testing

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** This teaching resource was developed by Aley Kent and Ellee Igoe of IRC Food and Agriculture Technical Unit, in partnership with the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED Solutions). Refugee farmer training programs across the country provided feedback on this lesson, which is now integrated throughout the guide. From 2015 to 2017, ISED partnered with twelve refugee farmer training programs through a USDA BFRDP educational enhancement grant, to support the design and testing of new and shareable teaching resources for culturally and linguistically diverse farmers. To learn more about this project, or to access the whole list of newly developed teaching resources for refugee farmer training programs, see the [New American Resource Library at https://nesfp.org/new-american-resources](https://nesfp.org/new-american-resources). For more in-depth explanations of the teaching approaches and activities used in these materials, please see the [‘Teaching Handbook: Refugee farmer training’](#). While these resources were designed with refugee audiences in mind, they can be adapted and used in any farmer training or incubator setting.

**VARIATION:**

Throughout this guide, boxes (like this one) contain variations and adaptations that serve varying programs and farmers. They are suggestions and reflections from other programs based on how they made this workshop work for them.

**TEACHING TIP:**

Throughout this guide, boxes (like this one) contain teaching tips to help you better facilitate farmer learning. Most come from other programs who have tested and reflected on using this lesson.

**DEVELOPER’S NOTE:**

Throughout this guide, boxes (like this one) contain notes from this guide’s developer that provide insight into how a lesson is typically taught at the developer’s program.

**ICONS:** You will find the icons below throughout this guidebook. They are there so you are prepared for the activity and can get an idea of what it will bring at a glance.



POWERPOINT



DISCUSSION



WORKSHEET

# Table of Contents

Adaptable except where noted.



## **4 IS THIS GUIDE RIGHT FOR YOU**

- Audience and Objectives
- Resources needed

## **6 WHAT DO YOU CALL IT? / ACTIVITY 1 / 15-20 MINUTES**

- PowerPoint or presentation on shared and distinct names of crops.

## **7 ESL VOCABULARY PRESENTATION / ACTIVITY 2 / 10-20 MINUTES DEPENDING ON AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

- PowerPoint to introduce the key words: **Customer, Commercial, Value, Quality, Crop, Map**

## **8 GROWING FOR MARKET PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ACTIVITY 3 / 30 MINUTES**

- Visuals on the differences between personal and commercial production.

## **10 WHO ARE MY CUSTOMERS? / ACTIVITY 4 / 15 MINUTES**

- Farmers answer questions to make some “best guesses” about who their potential customers are and what they want.

## **11 INTRO TO CROP PLANNING / ACTIVITY 5 / 30-40 MINUTES**

- Farmers become familiar with the concept of a crop plan or planting map practice planning with a schematic diagram

### **WHAT TESTERS SAY:**

“Great intro to get folks thinking about market vs. home gardening and to think about the place they would set aside in their bed for planting this high value crop - super useful”

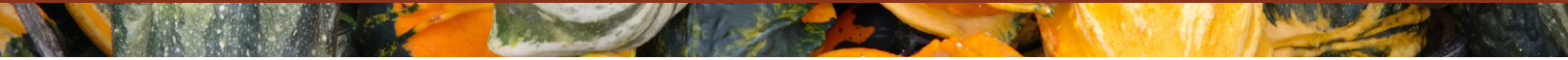
– *International Rescue Committee in Seattle WA*

“The Growing for Market presentation helped our farmers distinguish between high value and low value crops and planting crops with their customers in mind. The Who Are My Customers? Activity was useful to see who the farmers thought would attend the farmers’ market.”

–*International Rescue Committee in Tucson, AZ*

# Audience and Objectives

Adaptable except where noted.



**OBJECTIVES:** **Participants will:**

- Understand the difference between growing for personal consumption and growing for sale.
- Consider crops that can be profitable given their local audience and a small land base.
- Build a first draft crop plan based on high-value crops.

**TIME:** **1.5 hours**

**STRUCTURE:** Group activities, visuals and discussions.

**SIZE OF CLASS:** **Adaptable**

**INTENDED AUDIENCE:** English Language Learners who are exploring farming

**EXPERIENCE:**

- Helpful if farmers have had some exposure to shopping for food in local area.
- A season of growing food in the local area should be a prerequisite, as well as the previous class on markets.



# Resources needed

Adaptable except where noted.

**TIME: 1.5 hours**

**STAFF / INTERPRETERS: 1 Staff Members and 1 Interpreter**

**LOCATION: Classroom / packing shed etc.**

Classroom or similar, space for a farm stand set up for part 2 (can be done outdoors or indoors).

**SUPPLIES: For Participants:**

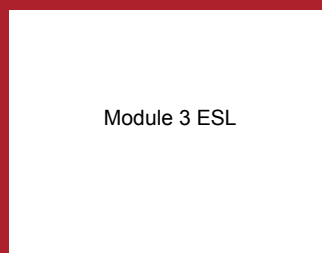
- Last year's crop maps (if applicable)
- Crop Maps and cutout crop pictures
- Pens, pencils or markers, glue, tape

**Materials Needed for Trainer:**

- This User's Guide
- PowerPoint presentation and/or printed visuals
- Module 3 ESL PowerPoint
- "What do you call it/Do you eat it" ppt
- "Who are my customers" Discussion guide
- "Intro to Crop Planning" Activity guide
- Classroom space



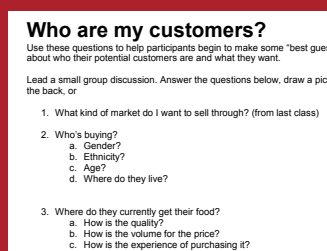
POWERPOINT PRESENTATION



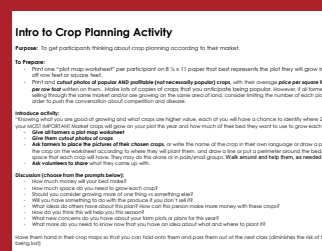
MODULE 3 ESL PRESENTATION



ICEBREAKER POWERPOINT



WHO ARE MY CUSTOMERS? GUIDE



INTRO TO CROP PLANNING GUIDE

# What do you call it/ Do you eat it?

1

**TIME:** 15-20 minutes

## **OVERVIEW:**

An opportunity for attendees to see how many “traditional” foods they have in common, and how many are unique to them. PowerPoint or presentation on shared and distinct names of crops.

## **MATERIALS:**

- PowerPoint presentation (or printed visuals) called “Ice Breaker: What do you call it?”



### **STEP 1: PRODUCE PHOTOS**

Present the pictures of produce. You can change, add, or subtract photos of additional crops as is most relevant to your class.



### **STEP 2: DISCUSS**

Ask if folks traditionally eat the fruit or vegetable, what they call it, which part they eat, and how they cook it. **Also/instead:** Do they grow it? Can they find it in stores nearby?

### **STEP 3: REPEAT**

Go through as many as the class seems interested in discussing.

# ESL Vocabulary Presentation

2

**TIME:** 10-20 minutes depending on how much you decide to engage the audience

**OVERVIEW:**

PowerPoint to introduce the key words: Customer, Commercial, Value, Quality, Crop, Map

**MATERIALS:**

- Module 3 ESL PowerPoint



**STEP 1: POWERPOINT**

Use attached PowerPoint to walk through the following vocabulary:

1. **Customer**  
A person or business that buys something from a store or business.
2. **Commercial**  
Making or trying to make a profit; not just for home use.
3. **Value**  
The importance, worth, or usefulness of something.
4. **Quality**  
The degree of excellence of something.
5. **Crop**  
A plant that is grown for food or other material
6. **Map**  
A drawing of an area that shows where things are.

# Growing for Market Presentation

3

**TIME:** 30 minutes

## **OVERVIEW:**

Visuals on the differences between personal and commercial production.

## **MATERIALS:**

- PPT: “Growing for Market 1, Choosing Crops”



## **STEP 1: POWERPOINT**

- Use the following to guide your presentation of the Basic Production, Part 1 PowerPoint.

## **TEACHING TIP:**

One tester suggested: “Ask people about their experience growing for market in the past and what skills they used to determine their customer, their price, and the crops they chose.

- SLIDES 2-6:** Market farmers think about their customer when making planting decisions.
- What does that mean to you?
  - Variety selection, amount needed weekly, etc.

What is the difference between these two customers that Kadija is selling to? Do they want the same thing? Will they buy the same amount? Will they pay the same price?

**At this point, you can conduct Activity 4: “Who are My Customers” to get participants thinking about what their customers are looking for.**

- SLIDE 7:** Market farmers maximize VALUE - what’s going to make you money for the time you put in?

- SLIDE 8:** Let’s take an example of these two products...carrots and kunde. (maybe replace kunde with whatever is most appropriate for your group).
- Which product has more customers?
  - Which is worth more? Which sells for a higher price?
  - Which are you better at growing?
  - Which would you rather grow? What other reasons do you have?



**SLIDE 9:** Insert pictures of high value vs low value (value as in \$/sqft) crops for your location and markets.

**TEACHING TIP:**

“I think the most effective part of the activity was the discussion regarding what farmers can provide that others can’t”

**SLIDE 10:** Some crops can give many harvests each year, giving you even more value per square foot. What are some examples?

**SLIDE 11:** Commercial farmers have a plan.

**SLIDE 12:** It’s exciting to think about all the things you can grow in your plot. But we also need to think about what will fit in your plot to make you the most money!

**SLIDE 13:** So we’ll spend some time now to start working on our “crop plans” for the coming year.

***At this point, you can conduct ACTIVITY 5: Intro to Crop Planning “game”***

# Who Are My Customers?

4

**TIME:** 15 minutes

## **OVERVIEW:**

Through small group and question and answer sessions, participants begin to make some connections between their market and the crops they will grow. Participants consider some of the things that might help them stand out.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- “Who are my customers” Discussion guide



## **STEP 1: DISCUSSION**

Lead a small group discussion and/or have participants draw pictures to reflect on the following questions

1. What kind of market do I want to sell through? (from last class)
2. Who's buying?
  - a. Gender?
  - b. Ethnicity?
  - c. Age?
  - d. Where do they live?
3. Where do they currently get their food?
  - a. How is the quality?
  - b. How is the value? Or the volume for the price?
  - c. How is the experience of purchasing it?
4. What can I provide that others can't? (Different products? Better/fresher product? Better value? Better experience?) What can be “special” about my products or business?
5. How can I work to provide something better to my customers?

## **VARIATION:**

One reviewer suggested: “Bring in some info on different customer types - if the farmer is newer they may not know what types of customers are out there. This could be a good opportunity for peer teaching also, if some farmers have been here longer. Instructor could bring in some data about demographics/ different types of customers out there.”

# Intro to Crop Planning Activity

5

TIME: 30-40 minutes

## OVERVIEW:

Farmers think through the “demand” at their intended market and choose the three best crops for them to grow for that market. Farmers become familiar with the concept of a crop plan or planting map practice planning with a schematic diagram.

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Last year’s crop maps
- Crop Maps and cutout crop pictures
- Pens, pencils or markers, glue, tape
- “Intro to Crop Planning” Activity guide



## STEP 1: DISCUSSION

1. What [kind of] market will you sell at?
2. Think about your customers. What do they want to buy? (encourage volunteers to say what they think people want to buy)
3. Now think about your skills and interests: Which crops are you good at growing? Which do you like to grow? Which ones do you think you can get better at growing? (again, encourage people to share)
4. Which of the crops that you listed will make more money at your market? (These are your most important market crops.) Show the “high value crops” slide if it helps.
5. Point to each crop and ask people to raise their hands for each one that they would like to sell.
6. **Especially if there is a lot of overlap:** What might happen if everyone in this class decided to grow the same thing for the same farmers market or grocery store? (competition, also disease)
7. How can we avoid that situation?



## STEP 2: LOOKING BACK

1. **Give all farmers a Plot Map Worksheet** that aligns with their actual farm plot. Explain that this is a drawing of the row or bed they will plant in.
2. **Give all farmers (or put a pile on each table) cutouts of crops** grown last year
3. **Ask all farmers to identify** where they grew their crops last year and see if they can place them on the plot maps. If they can place all of them great! If not, see if they can identify one crop in one bed. If they can't place any of them that is okay too.
4. **Discussion:** Production records are very important because it is very hard to remember little details from season to season.
  - How many farmers had difficulty remembering where their crops were planted last season?
  - If you don't remember where or what you planted last year, how can you learn what grew well?
  - What you were able to sell?
  - How much room it took up?
  - Why else might it be good to keep records of where things grew? (disease, etc)

## STEP 3: PICKING MARKET CROPS FOR THIS SEASON

- **Give all farmers a new plot map worksheet** "So now, knowing what you are good at growing and what crops are higher value, each of you will have a chance to identify where 2-4 of your MOST IMPORTANT market crops will grow on your plot this year and how much of their bed they want to use to grow each crop."
- **Give them cutout photos of popular AND profitable (not necessarily popular) crops**, with their average **price per square foot or per row foot** written on them. Several copies are encouraged, especially for crops that you anticipate will be very popular. However, if all farmers will be selling through the same market and/or are growing on the same area of land, consider limiting the number of each picture in order to push the conversation about competition and disease.
- **Ask farmers to place the pictures of their chosen crops**, or write the name of the crop in their own language or draw a picture of the crop on the worksheet according to where they will plant them, and draw a line or put a perimeter around the bed/row space that each crop will have.
- Ask volunteers to share what they came up with.

### TEACHING TIP:

One tester suggested revisiting the crop plan: "I think it would be worth revisiting the Intro to Crop Planning activity multiple times since I think farmers could still use more practice with planning, especially with regard to how much money they can expect to make."

**VARIATION:**

One reviewer suggested that you could “do a sorting activity of high vs. lower value crops and bring in a price list from local growers or a produce supplier.”



**STEP 4: DISCUSSION (CHOOSE FROM THE PROMPTS BELOW)**

1. How much money will your bed make?
2. How much space do you need to grow each crop?
3. Should you consider growing more of one thing vs something else?
4. Will you have something to do with the produce if you don't sell it?
5. What ideas do others have about this plan? How can this person make more money with these crops?
6. How do you think this will help you this season?
7. What new concerns do you have about your farm plots or plans for this year?
8. What more do you need to know now that you have an idea about what and where to plant it?

Have them hand in their crop maps so that you can hold onto them and pass them out at the next class (diminishes the risk of them being lost).