

How to set up a free e-commerce website for your farm



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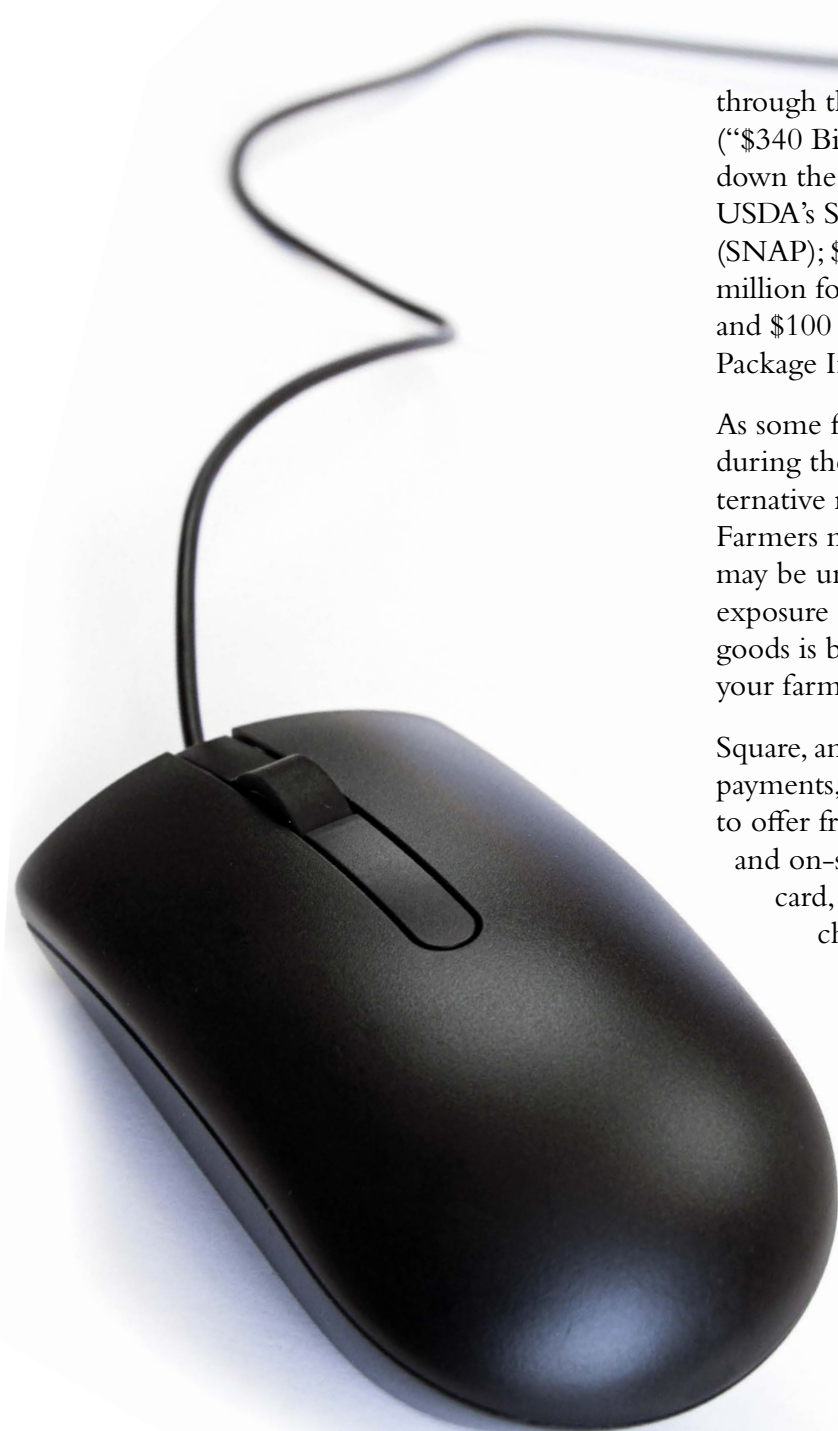
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During the COVID-19 national emergency, finding alternative strategies to sell your crops and value-added products is more important than ever. Though much has been written and televised about the 2020 CARES Act (COVID-19 Stimulus Bill), farms and farm operations are ineligible to receive Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans and Economic Injury Disaster Loan advances through the Small Business Administration's Coronavirus Relief Program.

However, the CARES Act does appropriate \$34.9 billion in emergency COVID-19 response funding for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). That \$34.9 billion appropriation includes \$9.5 billion

to support producers of horticultural crops and livestock, and producers that supply local food systems. Also included in the USDA's emergency funding is \$14 billion for supporting farm income and crop prices



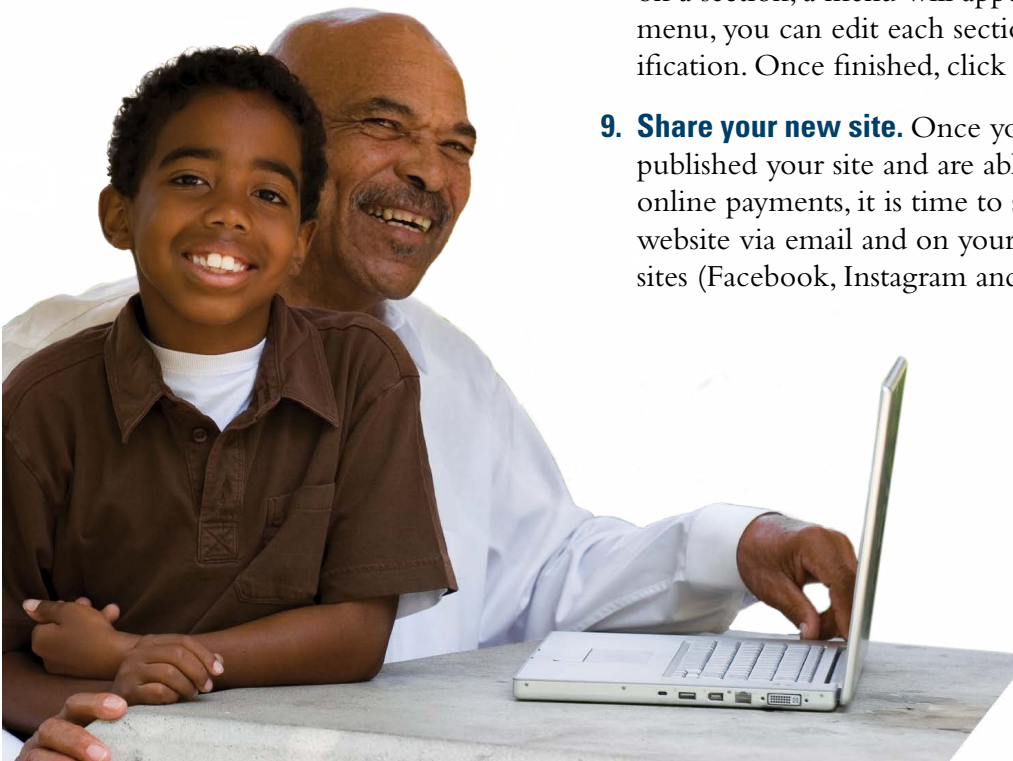
through the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation ("\$340 Billion Surge," 2020). AgInfo.net further breaks down the appropriations as follows: \$15.5 billion for the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); \$8.8 billion for child nutrition programs; \$25 million for the USDA's Rural Development programs; and \$100 million to boost rural broadband ("Stimulus Package Includes Aid," 2020).

As some farmers markets are choosing not to open during the pandemic, farmers should be looking into alternative methods of distributing products to customers. Farmers must also be aware that some at-risk customers may be uncomfortable attending farmers markets due to exposure concerns. As such, one way to sell your farm goods is by developing a free e-commerce website for your farm.

Square, an Internet processor that can accept credit card payments, has teamed with the website developer Weebly to offer free e-commerce websites. Square is an online and on-site point-of-sale website that handles credit card, Apple Pay and Google Pay payments. Square charges 2.6 percent of the amount to be paid, plus \$.10 per tap, dip or swipe of credit card transactions. Weebly is an online web building platform that allows you to build free and paid websites. Though there are other ways to build a website, the combination of Square and Weebly offers farmers the opportunity to develop and launch a simple, quick and ready-to-sell website within an afternoon.

Here are the steps to start your e-commerce website:

- 1. Go to squareup.com.** Once you're on Square's website, scroll down to the section titled, "Reach more customers online." Click on "see ways to sell online." You will be taken to a page to start your free e-commerce site.
 - 2. Click on the "Start a Free Online Store" button.** You will be taken to a registration page on which you will sign up for square and your free online store. The registration will take several steps in which you have to include your business or farm name, estimated annual revenues, type of business (outdoor markets, grocery, etc.) and address.
 - 3. Next, select the type of site you will need.** It is recommended to choose the "single ordering page" option at this time. This will save you time and allow you to get your produce and other items for sale faster.
 - 4. Determine how you plan to fulfill orders.** For most farms, choose "Allow pickup" and "Allow delivery."
 - After you decide on how to fulfill orders, Weebly will start to design your website. On the next page, you will be taken through seven steps to complete your site, including designing your site and adding items to sell.
 - 5. Select the features you want on your site.** It is recommended to keep the site simple at this point. The goal is to start selling. We advise you to choose "Sell food or items for pickup or delivery," "Collect email addresses," "Include a contact form," and "Display location & hours." After selecting your features, click on "Next."
 - 6. Design your site.** Drag or upload your logo if you have one. If you do not have one, click on "skip this step." Next, add your style by selecting from the 5 styles listed and choose the main color of your typography. Here is where you will add your products and set pricing. Be sure to take excellent pictures of your products. Next, click "Finish."
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- 7. Set up your domain (website address).** You can choose to find a custom domain to buy, use a domain you already own, or use a “Square” domain.
- 8. Edit and personalize your site.** From here, you can alter the header (title) text to your farm name, add menu items, create your main banner, and complete the “Contact Us,” location and hours, email subscription, and footer sections of your site. You can also add more website sections if you like. When you click on a section, a menu will appear. From that menu, you can edit each section to your specification. Once finished, click on “Publish.”
- 9. Share your new site.** Once you have published your site and are able to accept online payments, it is time to share your website via email and on your social media sites (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

References

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