



# FACT SHEET · DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGIES

The following examples are among the many diversification strategies or approaches employed by farmers or ranchers across the United States that were featured on the Renewing the Countryside website.

## Value Added

EXAMPLE: “My profit margin on tomatoes skyrockets with the added-value drying process,” comments owner-grower Zita Kwartek of New Hope Farm in Rapid City, South Dakota. “Air drying paste tomato varieties in an on-site enclosed dryer utilizes the sun to dry the tomatoes, a process taking longer than commercial dryers using electric heat but lowers our cost and improves flavor.”

## Niche Crop or Product

EXAMPLE: “Our crops are custom harvested,” says Eero Ruuttila of Nesenkeag Cooperative Farm about his farm’s pea tendrils, herbs and other vegetable crops. “We offer farm fresh products, harvested less than twenty-four hours from the field to restaurant kitchen. The executive chef or sous chef, to whom we sell directly, appreciate the freshness they’re getting — and sharing — with their customers.”

## Farming/Ranching Method

EXAMPLE: Alderspring Ranch outside Salmon, Idaho, practices intense rotational grazing to raise its grass-fed beef. “It’s kind of like mowing a lawn,” comments owner Glenn Elzinga. “By constantly moving our critters around everyday, this maintains the tender regrowth of young grass and a diversity of greens which are fresh and high in nutrients. It’s like a healthy salad bar for cows and definitely improves the quality and taste of the meat.”

## Marketing

EXAMPLE: “I’m not doing anything differently than I did when I first opened Paradise Farm Organics in 1985,” comments MaryJane Butters. “My big difference in running the farm was to put a face to food by renaming my farm and products MaryJanesFarm. I branded myself. Suddenly, my products took on the passion in my heart for the things I believed in. By branding yourself, you can be your product as a farmer and create loyalty and trust.”

## Diverse Skill Sets

EXAMPLE: “The small farmer has to get retail prices for their products,” concludes Joel Salatin who owns the nationally-acclaimed Polyface Farm with his wife, Teresa. “We have to secure the higher margins that retail prices bring. Therefore, we’ve learned to wear lots of hats. We’re farmers, yes, but also accountants, marketers, negotiators, graphic designers, public relations people. By diversifying skill sets within your farm — doing what other farmers often let others do for them — we can keep more of the money ourselves.”

## Land Use

EXAMPLE: “Of our approximately fifty tillable acres available for vegetable production, thirty-eight acres are actually owned by our CSA members,” shares Bob Bower, General Manager of Angelic Organics. “The thirty-eight acres owned by CSA shareholders has allowed Angelic Organics to secure a long term land base by accessing the capital of the people who get our vegetables. We have the complete authority over the land without needing its ownership.”

