



THE RIPEN ROADMAP

FOR FARMING SUCCESS

INTRODUCTION

The RIPEN Roadmap is our humble attempt to capture what it takes to build a successful, profitable farm. This is what we've learned and discovered over the years of farming, visiting, and working with farmers all over North America (and beyond). It is the lens that we use to view the agricultural entrepreneurship space we are in.

My brother and I started our business when we were 16 and 15 respectively. We really had no idea what we were doing and arguably made most of the mistakes in the book. (Some multiple times.)

But we had great mentors and teachers.

Our foundation was built from working with the incredible farmers in the Hudson Valley- arguably one of the most advanced small farm production regions in the US. But that was just the start. We traveled, read books, attended seminars, and asked questions... to the point that we were known as the "question boxes." And I think it was that insatiable thirst for knowledge that put us on the right track. When we struggled with our business plan, we researched how to improve. When we made bad hiring choices, we asked questions about vetting better. We struggled to sell our product and gave ourselves a "degree" in marketing.

When one of our team visits a farmer, talks to an industry partner, reads a book, or listens to a podcast we'll bring it to the table and debate for the inclusion of yet another concept, tool or idea. And I think that that's the right approach. Because...

"Once you stop learning you start dying."

- Albert Einstein

Go ahead, take a read through, and if you have something you feel we missed, send us an email at hello@growingfarmers.com. We read every email that comes in and are always curious and open to what you think.





THE 5 PILLARS

The RIPEN roadmap is made up of 5 pillars:

ROUTINE

setting you up
for success

INNOVATE

your business
model that
gives you
freedom

PRODUCTION MASTERY

produce your
product better

ENGINE

the systems
and team to
drive
productivity

NEEDS

of your
customers,
understanding
marketing

Each is dependent on the other four, and there is some crossover between them. I don't know any farm which excels at all 5, but there must be traction in all 5 for your farm to be successful.

ROUTINE

Who are you as a person and what is your personality?

- Know your personality.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Know your personal capacity.
- Ban the hubris.

As a business owner you are managing yourself.

- Be able to manage many balls at once.
- Push yourself to the limit.
- How does family fit in?
- Eat that frog!

Don't put off for tomorrow what you can address today.

- Set yourself up with personal systems for:

- > Financial
- > Time
- > Organizational
- > Filing information

Farming is not exact and can be messy.

- Weather
- Competition
- Failure, disease, etc.



What is happiness?

- Time freedom
- Money freedom
- Freedom from stress

Have the proper focus in your business.

- Holistic planning

Focus on the right rocks in your business.

- Life focus
- 3-5 year plan
- 1 year plan
- Quarterly plan
- Weekly plan
- Daily plan

You don't have to do it all.

- Outsourcing for success

Have an abundance mindset!

- Valuing your time
- Saying No

Identify and ban limiting beliefs.

- I'm carrying on the family tradition.
- It's my identity.
- I'm feeding America; people should support me.
- There's no money in farming...
- I have to farm according to a specific set of rules.
- This won't work for me.
- I already know this.



INNOVATE YOUR BUSINESS

What type of business do you set up?

- Sole Proprietorship
- LLC
- S-Corp

Build a basic business plan.

- Do market research.
- Run the numbers.

What does a successful business look like?

- Return on investment
- Cashflow
- Monitoring
- Year round
- Context

Resiliency is key!

- Redundant systems
- Monitoring
- Cash reserves

Know the law and take correct deductions and write-offs.

- Mileage
- Meals
- Continued education
- Office space
- Conferences
- Many, many more

Assess your marketing channels.

- Farmers markets
- Chefs/restaurants
- CSA > CSA types
- Wholesale
- Grocery
- Online/buying club
- Cost out sales channels
- How can you stack them?

Know industry standards and where you are.

- Attention to detail
- Differentiation

Consider other ways to look at profitability.

- Time
- Capital contributions

Record keeping is king, but don't get lost in the numbers.

- Computer programs are great
- A system is essential.

Overview your record system.

- Supplies used
- Product sold
- Product produced
- Hours invested
- Pounds per bed ft produced
- Sales per hour at markets

Find the right farm property.

- Owning is not essential
- Keep these principles in mind
 - > Access
 - > Water
 - > Markets
 - > Soil
 - > Weather
 - > Community

Accepting credit can easily add 15-20% to your sale!

- Credit card systems



PRODUCTION

MASTERY

Becoming a student is paramount.

- Knowing how you learn best is important.
- Be prepared to learn at a deeper level.
- Where do I get the best information?

Visit other farms and know the questions to ask.

- Solicit Feedback

Gain access to the best growers in the industry.

- Pay
- Volunteer
- Offer value

Vet Information!

- It's a wild sea out there
- Track records
- Openness
- Success stories

Know what success looks like .

- What does industry/university research show?
- What does success look like in your area?

Know your farm soil.

- Make sure it fits your operation.
 - > Vegetable production takes specific soils.
 - > Animal production is much more forgiving.
- Have a soil health growth plan
- Match the crop to the soil.

Keep track of your own success.

- Document
- Compare
- Set goals

Go outside your industry to learn.

- Logistics and material handling
- Irrigation
- Conventional Farming

Figure out a system that works for you!

Get the most out of conferences.

- The right conference
- Speed learn
- Networking

Find a successful farming mentor.

- Share information

Make wise purchases.

- Quality pays
- Cost analysis
- Vet before purchasing
- Reserve fund
- Multi-use equipment
- Listen to your team
- Maintenance

Sharpen your saw!

- Figure out what you don't know and learn it.

Set up your production systems for success!

ENGINE

SYSTEMS & EMPLOYEES

Set up systems for success.

- a system for everything

Running a lean farm is paramount.

- Specify value.
- Identify steps.
- Make process flows.
- Only produce enough.
- Eliminate waste in the process.

Ask “why?” time after time.

Lean applies to all parts of the business.

- Washing/packing
- Field production
- Sales and marketing
- Employees

The theory of constraints

- Identify your bottlenecks.

Be lean on purchasing.

- Don't tie up cash.
- Keep low supply levels.

Building SOP's into your business

- Why?
- What should be systematized?

How to build a SOP

- Name it.
- Write the scope.
- Develop the task description.
- Describe each task in detail.
- Trial and get feedback.
- Monitor for compliance.

Technology systems for your farm

- Monitoring
- Alerting
- Managing

Do you need an employee?

- What can you outsource?
- Is the profit there?

What jobs should your employees do?

- Repetitive
- What you are not good at
- What you don't want to do

What type of employee are you looking for?

- Intern
- Apprentice
- Seasonal
- Long-term

The Hiring process

- Finding applicants
- Application
- Screening
- Checkout
- Probation
- Attitude

The Training process

- Initial training
- Promotion based on performance



ENGINE

SYSTEMS & EMPLOYEES CONTINUED

Managing

- The one minute manager
- Communication
- Come on, not go on.
- Openness
- Small teams
- Whiteboards

Identifying and training leadership

- Setting up roles
- Let them make decisions gradually. Set clear goals.
- When are they ready to lead?

Employee Problems

- Leadership failure
- Personal Problems
- Incompetence

Bus Stop Ahead!

- Tactfully and professionally fire.



NEEDS OF YOUR CUSTOMER

Marketing, although the 5th pillar, is one of the most important pillars. You need to understand who you are and how to tell your story, which customers to cater towards, and how to advertise to your customers through traditional and social media.

Marketing theory

- Know your why
- Tell your customer's story
 - > You want them to be the hero.
 - > You are the guide.
 - > Show them success or failure.

What is your customer's problem?

- External
- Internal
- Philosophical

Understand the curse of knowledge

- You
- Your customers

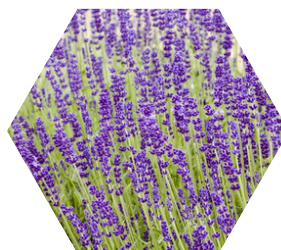
Develop customer persona

- Gender
- Income
- Family structure
- Beliefs
- Develop both positive and negative

The 80/20 rule of customers

- Know who to focus on and who to fire

Understand and use social proof in your business



Your product matters

- Developing an awesome product
- What type of product are you offering?
- How is it special?
- What is your pricing?
- Should you use sales?

Sales is built on relationships

- #1 marketing tool is word of mouth
- The circle of awesomeness
- A great refund policy
- Interact with your customers
- Call out your all-stars
- Give gifts

Educate your customers

- Recipe cards
- Newsletters
- Co-branding with other organizations
- Newspaper columns
- Website
- Farmer interaction
- Farm tours and special events

How can you cobrand and upsell?

- Working with others
- Easy value-adding

NEEDS

OF YOUR CUSTOMER CONTINUED

Brand your farm

- Who are you?
- What sets you apart?
- What persona are you giving off
- People need to interact with you 7 times

Writing words that sell

Media - a strategic guide

- Tell your customers story
 - > What do you need on a website
 - > Your call to action
 - > One liner
- Blogs
- Email
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Messenger

Setting up your CSA for Success

- Should you have a CSA?
- Create community
- Quality counts
- Quantity counts
- Product counts
- Demonstrate success
- Tell your story
- Know trends
- Value add

Selling to chefs

- What type do you want?
- How to interact
- Communication with chefs on your system
- Questions to ask
- Produce tips
- Timing and supply and demand
- Know your costs
- Billing and payment

How to double farmers market sales

- Show up
- Be present
- What does that look like
- Full displays
- How to achieve
- How to sell seconds
- Merchandising techniques
 - > Block color
 - > Vertical
 - > Butt space
 - > Purse space
 - > Round tables
 - > Signage
- How to make your stand beautiful
- Consistency in product and setup
- Who are you?

Selling wholesale

- What does it take to sell wholesale?
- Packaging/branding
- Pricing strategies
- Setting up your wholesale system
- What type of buyers do you want
- Questions to ask

Buying Clubs/Online sales

- Setting up your system
- Interacting over the web
- Fulfillment and packaging
- Picking the right delivery sites
- Value-adding and add-ons





IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO THRIVE

I SAY GOODBYE TO THE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS, PROFITLESS SEASONS, AND CONSTANT STRUGGLES. WE'VE HELPED THOUSANDS OF FARMERS GO FROM STRUGGLING TO THRIVING, AND WE CAN HELP YOU, TOO. OUR COACHING, COMMUNITY, AND COURSES WILL HELP YOU NOT ONLY RUN A SUCCESSFUL FARM, BUT ALSO THRIVE IN BUSINESS AND LIFE SO YOU CAN HAVE THE SUCCESS AND FREEDOM YOU ALWAYS WANTED.

COME SEE GROWING
FARMERS FOR YOURSELF