

# Let's talk ...

*in ways that resonate with consumers and build trust*



Growing your food with care.

[www.watchusgrow.org](http://www.watchusgrow.org)

Stop and think about the language you use every day. Most consumers today didn't grow up on farms and aren't familiar with "ag speak." Research shows consumers want to hear from farmers and those in the food industry about how their food is grown. Simple word choices can build trust in farmers and today's farming practices.

## Instead of:

Operation .....

Producer .....

Produced .....

Livestock, # head .....

Treatment .....

Animal rights .....

Pesticides/herbicides .....

## Try:

Farm

Farmer

Grown or raised

Cattle, cows, animals

Care for

Animal well-being

Preventing weeds and pests from damaging crops

## **Remember:**

What you say may not mean the same thing to you as it does to a consumer. Keep this in mind as you connect with consumers about food.

What you say:	What consumers hear and think:	What you might say: Connect on a shared value first, then share reasons to believe
You can be confident your food is safe.	I'm not sure I trust you. You're part of the process and have a vested interest .	We have a tremendous responsibility to those who depend on us for food. We're the first link in the U.S. food supply, which includes multiple checkpoints with rigorous testing and food inspections. We don't want to do anything to jeopardize the world's safest food supply.
Most farms today are still family farms .	But I hear so much about factory or industrialized farming .	Many farms today have several generations of a family involved. Just like other businesses, we've grown and adapted to changing markets and tighter margins. Farm size doesn't affect animal care. Larger farms have more employees, so we still care for each animal individually.
We use antibiotics to treat sick animals.	I've heard there is overuse of antibiotics on farms.	When an animal is sick, it's my responsibility to provide humane care. Antibiotics are expensive, so we use them only when we need them, and under the care of a veterinarian. We also make sure the medicine has cleared the animal's system before it goes to market. If we don't, no company will buy our meat or milk.
We only apply the necessary amounts of fertilizer and chemicals.	There's evidence of residues in our water and on our food.	Unlike home weed or pest control applications, I must be certified before I can make an application on my farm. Today's herbicides (to control weeds) and pesticides (to control bugs and pests) are designed to naturally break down in the soil. We apply only the smallest amount needed, and only where it's needed. But a strong storm at the wrong time could mean residue winds up in the wrong place. We're always trying to lessen that chance by timing our applications carefully, reducing tillage and using buffer strips (land we don't use to grow crops) to keep what we apply exactly where we apply it.
GMOs help us grow more food with fewer resources.	You're benefitting from a new technology that may not be safe.	I trust major health organizations, like the American Medical Association and the World Health Organization, which tell us GMOs are safe. Since the introduction of GMOs in the U.S., more than a trillion meals have been eaten without incident. Certified organic is a choice for those who want to avoid GM foods.
Supplemental hormones are safe.	I'm worried about long-term effects, including girls maturing earlier.	I understand your concern with hormones, which are naturally occurring in all plants and animals. For beef cows, a small implant is placed in the animal's ear, which increases lean meat and reduces fat. A 3-ounce steak from a treated animal has 1.9 nanograms of estrogen versus 1.2 ngs from a hormone-free animal. A baked potato has 225 ngs of estrogen. For dairy cows, only some receive a hormone, and it's identical to natural hormones – so there's no difference in the milk. As to why girls are maturing earlier, the research suggests it's due to eating more calories.