

Branding Tools and Supplies

Putting your farm's logo on your products can increase market recognition, increase brand awareness, and create new marketing opportunities. Labels, twist ties, bags, and hang tags all have the potential to increase sales of your product. Branding also provides a way to let customers know what's special about what they've bought: is it local, organic, or sustainable? Is it grown on a family farm? Branding can communicate these attributes in a retail environment where other differentiation may be lacking.

Getting Over the Minimum Order Hump

For the small- and mid-sized grower, the need to meet large minimum orders of customized marketing supplies, or to order large quantities to get reasonable pricing, can be a significant challenge. Fortunately, branding supplies tend to represent a relatively small portion of the overall expenses for an operation, and should yield a significant return on investment.

Under dry storage conditions, branding supplies should last for several years, so if you can find a way to utilize generic, non-variable information, buying in bulk should be a reasonable investment.

Generic branding products have a way of developing new uses over time. "You will certainly find new ways to use generic stock that you have around," Garden of Eagan's Linda Halley says.

Twist Ties

Custom-printed twist ties can actually cost less than the generic ties available from restaurant and grocery supply houses. Deciding on a unique color that matches your brand is important to make the ties stand out.

Surveyed growers all used Bedford Industries for their custom twist tie needs. All of the surveyed growers used ties without a specific product name on them.

Labels

If you market your product through stores, restaurants, and distributors, a label is almost mandatory. Most growers use a label between 3 x 5 and 4 x 6 for labeling product cases. Work with a reputable provider of produce labels to get appropriate glues and coatings for the wet, cold environment produce labels are likely to encounter.

A label gun makes applying the labels much easier, approximately doubling production speed. These guns advance the label to the next gap when the trigger is squeezed, and include a roller to press the label onto the packaging or produce.

A thermal printer can provide flexibility in labeling. With over twenty different clamshelled herbs, Rock Spring Farm uses a Tharo label printer to customize a

pre-printed color template with black and white product information. They have also used it to print recipes on labeled, bagged products.

Hang Tags

Designed to hook onto a rubber band holding a product bunch, hang tags provide more room for information than a standard twist tie, and may be necessary for marketing into large groceries where the front end relies on scanners and PLU numbers rather than intimate knowledge of the produce department to differentiate or identify products. At Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables, farmer Jack Hedin made the decision to abandon hang tags for their broccoli bunches, feeling that they didn't provide enough of a market advantage to justify the time and expense of applying them to the rubber bands.

Printed Bags

Pre-printed bags usually have specific product information, but they do provide significantly more space to "tell your story" than other branding methods. However, they are an expensive and relatively "fixed" option, since you pay for the container and the label all at once.