



**I WANT TO SUPPORT LOCAL PRODUCERS—BUT EVERY PRODUCT HAS TO EARN ITS PLACE ON THE SHELF.”**

## BACKGROUND

### RETAIL BUYER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manages product assortment, vendor relationships, category performance, and inventory
- Balances store mission with sales performance, margins, operational efficiency, and customer demand
- Works with distributors, suppliers, and internal teams to keep shelves stocked
- There are many roles that support the retail buyer, including store manager, category manager, pricing department, and distributors.

### PRODUCT MARKETING

- Promotes products through merchandising, recipes, demos, and local storytelling
- Looks for products that strengthen the store's identity and meet customer demand

### DEMOGRAPHICS

- Independent grocery store, food co-op, or regional specialty retailer
- Limited shelf space, staff capacity, and time
- Small profit margins and high overhead
- Products compete constantly for space and attention

## GOALS IN GRAIN PROCUREMENT



- Provide shoppers with unique and high-quality products that differentiate the store from conventional grocery retailers
- Increase product offerings from local and regional farmers, processors, and food and beverage businesses
- Balance support for local and regional businesses with the overall financial viability of the store
- Build long-term supplier relationships

## OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE INTEREST IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL GRAIN



- Clearly communicate the story behind local grain products, including the farmer, miller, and production practices
- Help customers understand how to use unfamiliar grains and flours
- Tailor product selection to each store's customer base rather than offering a one-size-fits-all approach
- Offer free products, introductory promotions, or seasonal launches that reduce the retailer's risk; build these incentives into your overall business strategy and budget
- Offer in-store demos for customers to sample products

## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO SOURCING LOCAL AND REGIONAL GRAIN



- Retail managers have little time for custom ordering, invoicing, or inconsistent communication
- Systems are designed for efficiency and often rely upon distributors instead of individual relationships with suppliers
- Small suppliers may struggle with logistics, packaging, distribution, and consistent supply
- Retail shelf space is limited. New products must outperform existing ones
- Local products often cost more and therefore require a compelling value proposition

## GRAIN PRICING CONSIDERATIONS



- Price matters, but shoppers also value local, organic, and sustainable products
- Products must remain reasonably cost competitive within their category
- Customers don't always compare price per ounce and often purchase based on package size or convenience
- Margins are small and shared across producers, distributors, and retailers
- Supplier-supported promotions can introduce new products while reducing purchasing risk

## EVALUATING GRAIN SUPPLIERS



- Strong customer demand for the products
- Reliable communication and responsiveness
- Product quality, freshness, and shelf life
- Retail-ready including consistent inventory, dependable delivery, appropriate packaging, and ability to accept digital orders
- Supplier willingness to collaborate on promotions and merchandising



## KEY GRAIN PRODUCT AND SUPPLIER ATTRIBUTES

- Strong product story
- Reliable communication
- Consistent quality and supply
- Easy ordering and fulfillment
- Attractive retail packaging

## MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

### SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

- Create merchandising toolkits with recipes, shelf talkers, signage, and educational materials
- Develop consumer education about cooking and baking with regional grains
- Provide market research that helps retailers understand consumer demand and pricing

### SUPPLIERS

- Make it easy to buy your products by simplifying ordering, invoicing, and delivery
- Reduce retailer risk by offering sampling, promotions, or introductory programs
- Support the sale of your products by providing packaging, recipes, signage, and compelling stories