

How is Idaho's Bounty supporting local farmers?

What is the value of buying local food directly from the producer?

Idaho's Bounty serves only as a marketing and distribution outlet for producers. The Co-op does not own the products, it simply provides them for sale online by the producer, and delivers them. The Co-op never sets the price of items for sale, the producers do, which is a unique situation that is beneficial for both producer and consumer. Bill Gale, who owns and operates Mesquite Cattle Co., thoroughly understands the benefits that Idaho's Bounty provides.

One of the main reasons so many farmers live in debt - or go broke and quit farming - is that when they sell to the commodity market, they don't get to choose the price they sell for. Bill explained that the price farmers receive for crops can fluctuate so much that it may not even cover the costs put into producing them. Idaho's Bounty provides a stable market for producers, in that they know the price they receive for their goods will not fluctuate dramatically from year to year. The online co-op allows them to set prices that are competitive with other producers and that the market can handle, while covering their costs of production and marketing.

Another advantage of selling through Idaho's Bounty Co-op is that Producers have direct contact with their customers, and are thus motivated to create a higher quality product. On the beef commodity market, a cattle rancher sells a calf through an auction barn to a feed lot, who sells it to a meat packer, who sells it to a grocery store, who sells it to the consumer. A farmer in this situation is only concerned about the weight of the animal they are selling and may cross-breed cows for faster growth. Cross breeding, however, creates more gristle and a poor quality meat. Also, calves who end up in a feed lot are fed a high energy diet of corn, soybean meal and food

waste (among other things), making them gain weight rapidly, and be quite unhealthy when they are processed into beef. Bill related it to a person who only ate candy bars and drank soda every day for the last 6 months of their life. They, too, would gain weight quickly and become quite unhealthy!

Bill sees the value in grass feeding his cows for three years before selling them, because it results in higher quality, healthy beef. He is not motivated by price alone, but by the feedback of his customers. It costs more to feed cows for longer, but Bill knows that his customers demand quality and are willing to pay for it. Bill can't compromise the taste or health benefits of his product because he is held accountable by his customers.

Working towards sustainability in the future, Bill is purchasing an "heirloom" breed of cow that has not been bred to eat corn and fatten quickly. He wants to revive and maintain the gene pool of traditional grass eating cows, who have a talent of turning forage into milk and meat. Idaho's Bounty's market model gives him this opportunity in that he knows people appreciate and are willing to support him in this quest.

Selling a high quality, healthy product to people who are willing to pay for it enables Bill to have a sustainable business that he can pass on to his children. He appreciates being able to do what he loves while creating a more sustainable future.



Imagine . . .

Knowing where your food comes from, who is producing it, and their ethics and farming practices

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