

## Increasing Sales in Small Farms Using Web Based Classifieds

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### Introduction

According to the USDA, the majority of farms in the United States are small farms, those farms that sell less than \$250,000 (USDA, 2005). Over ninety percent of the farms in Florida are small farms (USDA, 2007). In order for small farms to be economically sustainable, reliable revenue generation is a must.

Small farms tend to be limited in their ability to sell to a large geographic region. Sometimes the normal avenues for marketing products (i.e. brokers, other wholesalers, landscapers, retail outlets) will slow or stop. Sometimes the size of the market is incompatible with the size of the operation trying to sell its products. Additional or more profitable marketing avenues are sometimes needed to increase product sales or profits.

An increase in sales will occur if more customers purchase products or if a higher percentage of the sales transaction is going to the seller. One way to achieve both these objectives is direct marketing via the web. Integration of online marketing into standard marketing practices could help producers sustain or increase their profitability.

One free and relatively easy way to begin an online marketing effort is the use of Craig's List. [www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com). Craig's List is an international classified advertising resource, segmented to serve local geographic regions. The Craig's List website states that the website began as a hobby to track San Francisco events, but has grown to cover local classifieds and forums in more than 570 cities and 50 countries worldwide. Although currently run as a "for profit" website, the majority of the classified ad placements are offered free to the public. Craig's List is an extremely popular website currently claiming 40 million users in the United States alone. As a result of that popularity, advertisers are currently posting more than 30 million classified ads each month. The tremendous popularity of this website, when combined with local segmentation, has the potential to offer small farms increased local visibility and a new revenue stream.

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## How to Use Craig's List

It's best to open a Craig's List account because it provides better control of your ads. According to Craig's list, "User accounts may be required, depending on a number of circumstances (e.g., category, city, etc). In general, it is much easier to edit, delete and re-post your ads if you manage them through an account. If you post frequently, it

To use this free service, an online user must begin at [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) . In the bottom left corner of the homepage are links to "Help" and "About Us" pages.

These pages contain official terms of use, FAQs and other helpful information.

To open an account, click on Help

Then on "CraigsList user accounts."

Then click on "create new user account."



### classified postings

- [how much does it cost?](#)
- [how to submit a post](#)
- [how to reply to a post](#)
- [how to edit or delete a post](#)
- [how to report](#)
- [how to include a picture](#)
- [resend publish/edit/delete email](#)
- [craigslist user accounts](#)

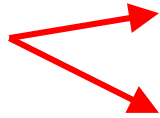
### [about](#) > [help](#) > user accounts

[create new user account](#)  
[log in, view recent posts](#)  
[reset password](#)  
[paid posting accounts](#)

## craigslist: account signup

To create an account, enter your email address below, and type the verification word you see in the

Enter your e-mail address and the verification word



email address:

verification word:

SUG Seltz

stop spam. read books.

create account

Craig's List will then send a confirmation e-mail to the address you listed.

Click on the link in the e-mail. You'll be taken to a screen that asks for a password. Write the password down.

Next you'll be asked to agree to the terms of use.

When you do you'll see your account homepage. In the upper right corner it will say "post new ad in...."

Click on the GO button to proceed.



[craigslist](#) > [home of dkp205@ufl.edu](#) [\[log out\]](#) [\[settings\]](#) [\[help pages\]](#) [\[help forum\]](#)

post new ad in: tampa bay area

showing posts for the last 30 days, for other posts, please search below

search for postings

	year	month	day	
start:	2009	/ 2	/ 25	select a date range <input type="button" value="v"/>
end:	2009	/ 3	/ 27	

(max range of 180 days)

[ [active](#) [pending](#) [removed by me](#) [expired](#) [flagged/deleted](#) ]

regardless of status (active, expired, deleted), all posts will appear on this list. we are not able to offer a removal option at this time.

all times Pacific

**no postings found**

The next choice concerns the type of ad you wish to place. **Most small farm operations will have items for sale and will choose “for sale.”**

- [electronics](#)
- [farm/garden for sale](#) (legal sales of agricultural livestock OK)
- [free stuff](#) (no "wanted" ads, pets, promotional giveaways, or intang

A choice of the type of items is next. **Most small farm operations will choose “farm/garden for sale.”**

At this point you might be asked which area of your region you’d like to post an ad. Otherwise you’ll go directly to the “create posting” screen.

[tampa bay area craigslist](#) ([hillsborough co](#)) > [farm/garden for sale](#) > create posting  
Your posting will expire from the site in 30 days.

[ logged in as [dkp205@ufl.edu](#) ] [ [logout](#) ]

[tampa bay area craigslist](#) > [hillsborough co](#) > [farm & garden](#)

Posting Title:

Price:

 \$ 

Specific Location:

Reply to: [dkp205@ufl.edu](#)

hide

anonymize (will show as: [sale-xxxxxxxx@craigslist.org](#))

Posting Description:

[Add / Edit Images](#)

[Continue](#)

**Fill in all pertinent information** including a title, your location, and price. Provide as much information as possible.

In the description, remember to speak the language of your buyer. If at all possible, include pictures.

One section of the form asks whether you wish to hide your e-mail completely or anonymize it. Hiding your e-mail means there will be no e-mail showing in the ad

Reply to: [dkp205@ufl.edu](#)

hide

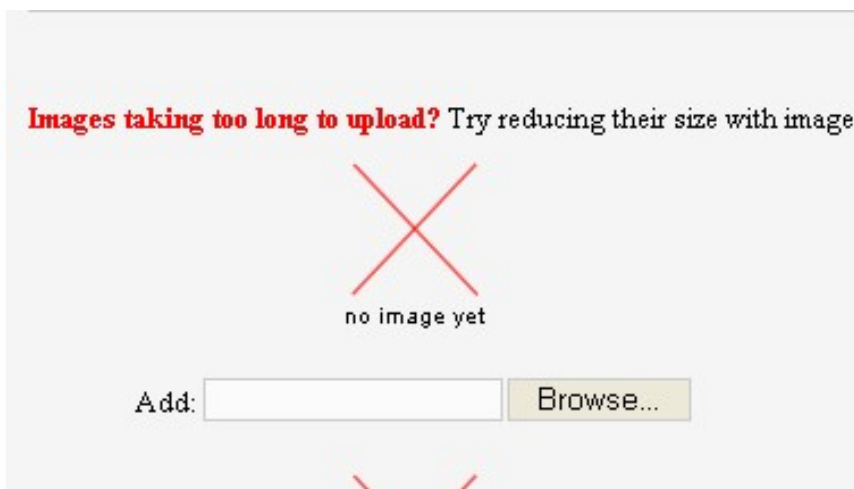
anonymize (will

Posting Description:

If you choose to hide your e-mail, be sure to provide a phone number or other method of contact. Otherwise your customers will have no way to reach you.

Anonymizing the e-mail address means Craig's List will create an e-mail for you that looks like this: [xxxxxxx@craigslist.org](mailto:xxxxxxx@craigslist.org). They will then relay e-mails directed to that address to your e-mail account. Your e-mail will not be revealed unless you reply to your customer's e-mail.

To add pictures, click on the "Add/Edit Images" button near the bottom of the page. Then click the "Browse" button, and find the appropriate image in your computer. Search through your computer's directory to locate your first image file. The image will automatically be uploaded and the "X" for that first entry will change to an "O". Repeat this step for the second, third, and fourth images, if



necessary. Click "continue" at the bottom of the page when you're finished. You'll be able to see your ad, with the images included, on the review screen before submitting the post.

### Rules for Posting

There are some rules that apply to a posted classified on Craig's List. Rules state "You may post to one category and in one city, no more often than about every 48 hours."

The rules also state "If you are submitting a post that is similar to another currently active post of yours on the site, you will get a blocked message. Removing the active post will allow you to post the new ad, unless the active post is less than 48 hours old."

Having your own account will allow you to delete and repost ads as needed. Also, no agent may post for the seller other than the seller themselves. Any regional, state or national laws still apply to the sale of agricultural products.

### Summary

To expand their local sales base, small farms must engage in marketing efforts to contact potential buyers. During the past decade many potential customers have begun searching online for products. Newer methods of marketing products online have the potential to offer small farms increased local visibility and a new revenue stream. Web-based classifieds such as Craig's List have proven to be a profitable opportunity. Small farms using this marketing technique have increased their sales 25% to 150% with minimum effort. As a result, sales have increased hundreds of dollars per week.

### References

[www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com), (accessed March 20, 2009).

Farm Structure: Glossary, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FarmStructure/glossary.htm>,  
Economic Research Service, USDA (accessed March 23, 2009).

*Census of Agriculture 2007*, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA  
<http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/> (accessed March 23, 2009).