

This Facebook post by Long and Scott Farms may be of interest.

Long and Scott Farms

April 17 at 11:40 AM

In response to the recent articles and news concerning agriculture, we feel it is our responsibility to share with you, the consumer, why we are having to make some of these difficult decisions and our side of the story. With the extra time on your hands, we hope you will read our lengthy explanation for some of the negative views and headlines. The business of Long & Scott Farms has always been a predominately commercial business. While we appreciate the support of the retail aspect of our business- we do not currently have the infrastructure required to make the changes necessary that would make up for the loss of our commercial business. We would love to be able to expand our retail operation, but to be honest, we have been in a survival mode since 1998- when the surrounding farms were bought out by the state leaving Long & Scott as the only remaining farm in the area. At that time, we made changes necessary to diversify our business, adding our retail market and pursuing agritourism. While these changes have been beneficial, the majority of our business continues to be on a commercial basis- selling produce by the truckloads to cucumber processors and terminal markets. Unfortunately, the changes brought about by the virus have either completely stopped those sales or reduced them drastically. Ergo, the unfortunate and sad situation we are currently facing of having to leave a beautiful and bountiful crop of cucumbers in the field. This equates to 200 acres or 4 million pounds which we cannot afford to harvest because we have no cucumber processing orders, and minimal fresh market cucumber sales.

The biggest misconception we have heard is that this should be donated, instead of left in the field. On one level, you are correct, some of it should be donated, and it is. We donate 4 to 5 million pounds of produce annually. On another level, at this point we are struggling to pay our employees, as is everyone, so how can we possibly pay to harvest the crops only to be given away? This cannot be done if you want to stay in business. In addition to donating harvested produce, we also allow Society of St Andrews and volunteers into our fields to glean (the act of collecting crops after they have been commercially harvested). While we appreciate your calls and encouragement, the retail revenue that is generated represents only 8 percent of our total business, which is a drop in the bucket compared to the commercial revenue. On so many levels- economic, political, and social- I can guarantee no one is more discouraged, frustrated, or frightened by the situation we are facing than we are. We have over twenty families that are directly dependent on Long & Scott for their income and livelihood.

Our reason for writing this is because we genuinely want you to understand our dilemma and position. We do not consider ourselves victims and do not want to be pitied. We are not asking for a handout, but a hand up or a helping hand. While we know these are tough, trying, and uncertain times, and we do not know what the future holds, because of our faith, we do know who holds the future. Agriculture is a choice that we made- it is our livelihood and how we were raised for multiple generations. It is in our roots and in our blood, sweat, and tears. What we are asking for is your understanding. For years we have been attempting to make our crops available in chain grocery stores.

Every year there are several family farms that have been basically put out of business by chain stores that do not support locally grown produce. Without mentioning any names, sadly, a popular Florida based grocer has not made any effort to carry our products. It is going to take a monumental movement and huge effort by you, the consumer, demanding local and American grown to ensure a change happens. Because of the pandemic, it is currently not even required to label food as foreign grown.

Without drastic changes, and if we don't get the country back to business as usual, we will continue to struggle, and you cannot get mad at the farmer who is forced to have to leave crops to rot in the field. No farmer in their right mind would willingly let that happen, after having invested so much money, time, and effort in these crops. You as the consumer bear some of the responsibility for farmers not to be put in this position.

Buy local! Demand Local! While it is not likely to make up for the loss of our commercial revenue through retail sales, many are asking how they can help. First and foremost, your continued prayers. Secondly, volunteer and donate to your local food banks, such as Second Harvest Food Bank and Society of St Andrews. Money contributed to them helps with logistics and getting crops out of the field. And finally, we cannot say it enough, BUY LOCAL! We appreciate the opportunity to express and explain our position.

Thank you and God bless.  
The Long & Scott Farms Family