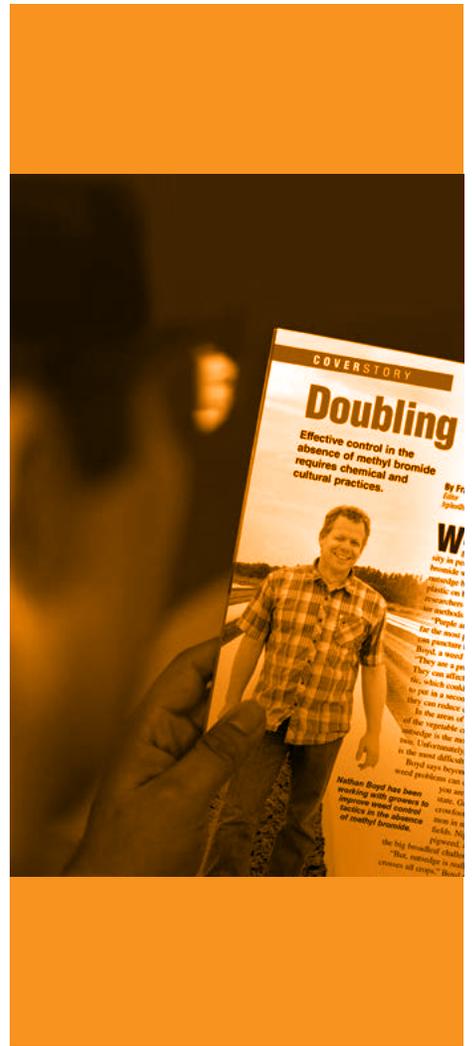


WHITEPAPER

# 2015 MEDIA USE SURVEY



— AMERICAN/WESTERN —  
**FRUIT GROWER**

AMERICAN  
**Vegetable Grower**

**FLG** **FLORIDA**  
GROWER

**A**s fruit and vegetable growers' use of the Internet for work has increased over the past decade, media outlets like *American Fruit Grower*, *American Vegetable Grower* and *Florida Grower* have developed a range of digital media in order to provide growers with the information they need when they need it in the format they prefer.

This evolution has created new marketing / communications opportunities for suppliers trying to sell their products to growers, but now marketers are challenged to identify the most effective media platforms for their own marketing plan. How do growers value the information they get from magazines compared to the information they get online? When growers want more information about a product, where do they go first? Does website advertising really work? And, amid all of these new information sources, how do growers use and value traditional information sources such as print magazines and trade shows?



To better understand which media platforms growers use, Meister Media Worldwide emailed a survey to more than 20,000 U.S.-based fruit and vegetable growers in August 2015. These growers were sent two invitations to participate in the survey, and more than 275 completed the survey. Data collection was closed on Sept. 4.

### Who are these growers?

Survey respondents average more than 58 years old, and 96% of them serve in a management capacity at their company.

These growers farm a wide range of acreage, which mirrors that of the full audience profile on *American Fruit Grower*, *American Vegetable Grower* and *Florida Grower* magazines. (The average size farm for those who took the survey is 389 acres.)

Perhaps the most important piece of information about these growers is that more than 88% of them are involved in product purchasing at their operation, so this research gives marketers insight into the behavior and preferences of the decision makers marketers want to reach.

More than **88%** of growers surveyed are involved in product purchasing at their operation.



## What information sources do the growers use?

The first goal of the survey was to identify which information sources the growers use and how often they use them. Enewsletters clearly top the list in terms of frequency of use (used at least weekly by 75% of respondents), no doubt driven in part by the volume of newsletters sent to growers and the frequency of these sends.

Interestingly enough, segmenting the results to focus just on the growers 55 year and younger shows just how important digital media will be going forward as this portion of the industry relies even more heavily on websites and social media than do their older peers.

Of greater interest is how growers view these information sources as a vehicle through which they learn about new products. The staying power of print magazines is particularly evident here nearly 73% of the growers identified magazines as one of the top two sources from which they learn about new products while no other information source was listed by more than 30%.

## Use of Information

Information Source	% Using at Least Weekly	Growers <55 Yrs Old Using At Least Weekly
Email newsletters	74.9%	76.0%
Trade magazines	56.5%	58.2%
Industry websites	54.8%	64.4%
Social media	37.3%	43.4%
Dealers / suppliers	35.3%	37.8%

## For Finding New Products

Information Source	% Identifying as a Top Two Source	Growers <55 Identifying as a Top Two Source
Trade magazines	72.3%	70.6%
Email newsletters	29.3%	30.6%
Tradeshows / Conferences	25.4%	27.1%
Other growers	25.4%	24.1%
Industry websites	19.5%	21.8%
Manufacturers reps	17.2%	15.6%
Direct email	6.6%	7.1%
Direct mail	6.4%	4.7%
Social media	4.7%	7.1%
Webinars	2.0%	2.9%



Nearly **75%**  
of growers surveyed  
use email newsletters  
at least weekly.



Younger growers' preference for the digital media can be seen here, too – “industry websites” jumps from the fifth most-popular response overall to the second most-popular when just looking at responses from growers 55 and younger.

The value of traditional communications channels is further illustrated when you ask these growers which of the various information sources are useful during their product purchasing process. And, while trade magazines are clearly the No. 1 source through which growers learn about new products, other growers become much more popular when the time comes to make a buying decision.

Nearly **75%** of growers surveyed identified trade magazines as useful during the product purchasing process.



What information sources are useful during the product purchasing process?



Information Source	% Identifying as useful	Growers <55 Identifying as useful
Other growers	81.5%	82.0%
Trade magazines	74.3%	73.2%
Tradeshows / Conferences	64.2%	67.3%
Industry websites	58.1%	64.0%
Email newsletters	53.1%	55.0%
Manufacturers reps	48.9%	47.6%
Direct email	35.2%	38.7%
Direct mail	25.5%	25.6%
Webinars	19.4%	20.5%
Social media	19.1%	23.4%



Younger growers appear to research their product purchases most thoroughly of all the growers given the increased number of them to deem so many of the different information sources as useful to informing their product purchasing decisions. Email newsletters is the only information source to earn a “useful” designation from fewer younger growers than overall growers.



When the growers go online for work, they almost always start at the same place – a search engine. (And, according to Google Analytics data, that search engine is almost always Google, which accounts for 10 times as much search traffic to [GrowingProduce.com](http://GrowingProduce.com) as all other search engines combined.)



These growers look for a wide range of information when they go online, but the most common topic should not surprise: more than 82% of them said they go online often for weather information. The second-, third- and fourth-most popular topics also make sense. Insect control, disease control and variety information all represent problems that the growers need to have solved.

### What information do growers seek online?

Topic	% of ALL Growers Going Online for Info Often	Growers <55 Identifying as useful
Weather	82.4%	86.1%
Disease control	52.8%	58.8%
Insect control	52.2%	60.0%
Variety information	51.0%	59.4%
Industry news	44.3%	51.5%
Equipment	42.0%	51.8%
General production	38.3%	42.7%
Marketing	21.8%	25.0%

Nearly **83%** of growers surveyed go online often for weather information.



Responses to this question may offer the clearest picture yet of how much more likely younger growers are to use websites for their businesses. When comparing responses between younger and older growers, the younger growers reported they are more likely to go online for *every type of information* we asked about.

The use of mobile technology obviously represents the latest change in digital technology, so the growers' use of different devices warrants attention. While nearly 90% of the growers report using a desktop computer, nearly two-thirds of them use a smartphone while 36% say they're using a tablet for work. (Smartphone use jumps to 77.3% among growers 54 or younger while tablet use remains fairly consistent among growers of all ages.) In case you're wondering, only 3% of the growers said they're not using any of these devices for work, and they were all older than 55.



**60%** of growers reported having downloaded at least one app for work.



**30%** of growers report using an app for work on a daily basis.

Adoption of mobile devices obviously plays a big role in growers' use of apps to better run their businesses, and about 60% of these growers (75% of growers 54 and younger) report having downloaded at least one app for work. However, app usage remains fairly minimal – most of the growers who have downloaded apps for work report only having downloaded three or fewer, and only 30% report actually using an app for work on a daily basis.

Growers are somewhat more apt to use social media than they are to use apps, however. Slightly more than 44% of them (and 61% of growers 54 and younger) told us they use at least one social media platform for work while nearly the same number reports not using social media at all – neither personally nor professionally.

## Conclusions & Takeaways

**So, what is a marketer trying to sell to fruit and vegetable growers to do today?**

For starters, the importance of having a multi-media approach to your marketing is obvious. Most of the information sources out there have sizeable audiences but none of them offer complete market coverage. Maximizing your advertising and communications reach requires using multiple channels to deliver your message.



Secondly, digital media has to be a priority for companies, starting with your own website. The youngest growers value websites most of all while also showing more interest in newsletters, video and social media than the average grower. This high-value audience warrants focused attention and service. Companies lacking a commitment to educating and engaging growers online (good content, fundamental search engine optimization, etc.) risk missing key sales opportunities today and in the future.

Companies would also be wise to view this general information through the lens of their own customer base. Survey your customers to understand the types of information they seek customers online. Look at the Google Analytics on your website to understand how effectively you're attracting search traffic.

Companies should also evaluate their marketing spend across different platforms. Print magazines (think advertising and public relations) clearly still hold value, as do tradeshow exhibits. The question is how much of your budget should be dedicated to each.

## About Our Brands

*American Fruit Grower*®, *Western Fruit Grower*™, *American Vegetable Grower*®, and *Florida Grower*® magazines serve as top information sources for specialty crop growers seeking information about production techniques, crop protection, farm management, new varieties, and more. Our readers are commercial fruit, vegetable and citrus growers as well as other allied professionals in the specialty agriculture industry.

GrowingProduce.com is the digital location to find out the latest news and trends in the fruit, vegetable, and citrus sectors. The site features relevant content from integrated, cross-market resources from *American Fruit Grower*®, *Western Fruit Grower*™, *American Vegetable Grower*®, and *Florida Grower*® magazines. Featured videos, useful analysis, and opinion help round out this industry resource.

Our brands corporate headquarters are located in Willoughby, OH, in the Cleveland metro area where its parent company, Meister Media Worldwide, was founded in 1932.

## About Meister Media Worldwide

Meister Media Worldwide provides integrated media solutions for worldwide specialized agriculture. A leader in the industry, the company provides information and networking opportunities to global markets, including fruits and citrus, vegetables, cotton, ornamental horticulture, precision agriculture, plant protection and Latin American agriculture. Meister Media produces 11 regular magazines, along with eNewsletters and more than 20 websites, as well as trade shows and Connect events. In addition, Meister Media produces custom print products, web development, videos and strategic business development services. Contact us at [info@MeisterMedia.com](mailto:info@MeisterMedia.com).

### For more information, contact:

Bob West  
Director of Interactive Sales  
440-602-9129  
[BWest@meistermedia.com](mailto:BWest@meistermedia.com)

Gerry Bogdon  
Group Publisher  
407-539-6552 x14  
[gnbogdon@meistermedia.com](mailto:gnbogdon@meistermedia.com)

Richard Jones  
Group Editor  
440-602-9217  
[rljones@meistermedia.com](mailto:rljones@meistermedia.com)

Visit us on the web at [www.GrowingProduce.com](http://www.GrowingProduce.com)