**Best Local Farms: To Fold or To Sell?**

**Decision Memo – Example**

**Fast Facts**

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| **Founders:** | Danny Miller (MBA, Entrepreneurship) and Lauren Chenarides (Ph.D., Agricultural Economics) |
| **Company:** | Best Local Farms, founded in 2016 |
| **Location:** | State College, Pennsylvania |
| **Industry:** | Direct-to-consumer food delivery |
| **Products:** | Curated beef boxes: *The Epicurean*, *The Tail-Gater*, and *The X-Fit* |

**Background**

In 2016, two graduate students from Penn State—Lauren, a Ph.D. student in Agricultural Economics, and Danny, an MBA candidate in Entrepreneurship—launched **Best Local Farms**, a direct-to-consumer beef delivery company based in State College, Pennsylvania. Their mission was simple: connect local farmers to health-conscious and community-minded consumers through high-quality, responsibly sourced beef.

Lauren’s coursework and research on food systems had exposed her to the challenges local producers face in reaching consumers. Danny, passionate about branding and marketing, saw an opportunity to combine local sourcing with a modern subscription model. Together, they developed a Squarespace website, refined their visual branding, and began selling three curated boxes of beef:

* **The Epicurean Box:** premium cuts for food enthusiasts and home chefs.
* **The Tailgater Box:** family-friendly grill-ready assortments for football weekends.
* **The X-Fit Box:** leaner, high-protein cuts aimed at fitness-conscious customers.

To expand value for customers and differentiate themselves, they began partnering with other local purveyors—like a beekeeper from Bellefonte—and added recipes and cooking tips to their website. They also planned to host informal community events called “Meat-Ups,” where customers could meet the farmers behind their products, share cooking ideas, and connect over locally sourced food. Within six months, they had grown to over 50 monthly subscribers, developed repeat customers, and gained recognition from *State College Magazine* as one of the area’s promising food startups.

**The Decision Point**

As momentum grew, life intervened. In spring 2017, Lauren received an offer for a tenure-track position as an assistant professor at Arizona State University, and Danny was recruited by a marketing firm in Washington, D.C. Both offers were career-defining, but they came just as Best Local Farms was reaching its early growth inflection point.

With limited time and geographic separation ahead, the co-founders had to decide what to do with their business. Their options were not simple:

1. **Fold the company** and thank their customers for six months of support.
2. **Sell or license the business model** to a local buyer—specifically, *CrossFit Nittany*, which had approached them about purchasing the brand and continuing the “X-Fit Box” concept for its members.
3. **Try to maintain operations remotely**, hiring a local coordinator to fulfill orders and manage customer communication.

Each option carried trade-offs. Folding would allow them to exit cleanly but felt like abandoning something they had just proven could work. Selling would give the concept a life beyond them—but at what value, and to what extent could they ensure it stayed true to their mission of supporting local producers? Continuing operations remotely might preserve their vision but risked operational chaos given their new full-time commitments.

**Considerations**

Lauren was particularly focused on the **mission and legacy** of the business. “We created this to support local farms,” she reflected. “If it continues under CrossFit Nittany, I’d want assurance that local sourcing remains central.” Danny saw the opportunity through a **marketing and brand lens**—a clean sale could provide both of them with portfolio credibility and a modest financial return. He also recognized that the brand’s energy had been built on personal relationships and their combined local presence.

Financially, Best Local Farms had minimal debt and positive cash flow, but its valuation was uncertain. A quick sale could net roughly $10,000 based on brand assets, existing customer lists, and remaining inventory. Keeping operations running remotely could sustain revenues but would require hiring, new management systems, and additional working capital—resources neither founder could easily provide.

Both co-founders cared deeply about their reputation and about delivering on promises made to customers and suppliers. Folding would feel abrupt and potentially damage the relationships they had worked so hard to build in the State College community.

**The Ask**

What should Lauren and Danny do?

Should they sell Best Local Farms to CrossFit Nittany, entrusting their brand to new hands, or close operations and walk away on their own terms? How should they weigh the company’s mission, their professional trajectories, and the value of what they built in just six months?