What farm stories are newsworthy for the mass media?

Reporters aim for stories to be
1) Accurate
2) Interesting and connected to most people
3) Timely
4) Slightly dramatic or very dramatic, depending on the situation

Media find it difficult to cover processes, such as production agriculture or finding good help for the farm. They need a presentation concept, called a "news peg" or "news hook," on which to hang the content or story. News pegs command readers or viewers attention and interest, and make the story relevant or newsworthy.

While there's no single standard of newsworthiness, all media forms must contain at least one of these elements:

- **Timeliness** - Is the farm topic relevant to current public concerns or daily life?
- **Proximity** - Are the events nearby? Will people feel real or imagined kinship with the farmers or others in the story?
- **Importance** - Will the information about agriculture change people's lives or outlook?
- **Progress** - Is there something new or improved in the farm community to draw and hold people's attention?
- **Unusualness** - What's different or unique about the finding or interaction? Are any everyday assumptions dramatically challenged?
- **Human interest** - Are there strong emotions to engage the public?
- **Tension** - Is there conflict or the possibility of resolution?

The stories that get used by the media are stories about people. Whether you're interested increasing public awareness about an issue, announcing a farm event, marketing a product, looking for support about a farm-level issue, or trying to create a positive farm image, couch the story in terms of its impact on real people, especially children.

Categories of farm-based stories that are likely to receive greater attention by the media:

- **Breakthroughs or innovations** - Report of a new way of raising or processing crops, a new major market breakthrough (such as international sales), or exceptional-looking varieties of crops.

- **Annual or seasonal stories** - tie in with planting time, harvest time, strawberry season, sweet corn season, pumpkin season, Christmas tree season.
Superlative stories - The oldest, the largest, the first, the last, the smallest, the fastest, etc.

Disaster on a farm - fire, flood, disease, storm, etc. Also, any theft, vandalism, harassment, criminal trespass stories.

Personal health issue from farm - How a consumer might benefit medically from a particular farm product

Weather (of course) - the wetness, the dryness, the storm, the sunshine, the heat, the cold, etc.

Consumer trends - Connecting farm directly to something in vogue or fashionable. Linking local farms to food price concerns for the general public.

Dispel common views of farmers - Common view of farmers is “they work hard, despite tough times.” Report of a farm that is thriving in contrast to the common paradigm.

Tough times made tougher - Any farm family under threat - from encroaching development, neighbor dispute, labor loss, weather troubles, crime, etc.

Special farm events open to the public - an open house, petting zoo, festival, etc. Event must have good photo opportunities, be well-attended, and somewhat unique.

Categories of farm-based stories that are NOT likely to receive greater attention by the media:

Farmers are good people working hard - this is accurate, but is already well-known. No drama. Farm profiles with no controversy are not newsworthy.

Farmers feed you three times a day - this is a marketing pitch, not news.

My farm has a new product - Businesses release new products every day. It must be truly exceptional - the first, the biggest, proven healthiest, etc.

Farm open for tourism - Unless there is a special event that is open to the public (preferably free), agritourism is just another farm income opportunity, and is not newsworthy.