



Lesson Plan: Fuel the Farm

Speed Sales Challenge

Courses: Agricultural Business / Agriscience / Introduction to Agriculture

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson Length: 60 minutes; designed for three repeated 1-hour rotations

Topic: Energy sales in a cooperative setting

Essential Question

How can an energy sales representative identify a customer's needs and recommend cooperative products or services that create value?

National AFNR Standards Alignment

Applicable AFNR Connections

- Agribusiness Systems ABS.05.02. Assess and apply sales principles and skills to accomplish AFNR business objectives.
- Power, Structural, and Technical Systems PST.0.01. Apply physical science and engineering principles to assess and select energy sources for AFNR power, structural, and technical systems.
- Career Ready Practices CRP.04.01. Communicate using strategies that ensure clarity, logic, purpose, and professionalism in formal and informal settings.
- Career Ready Practices CRP.08.01. Apply reason and logic to evaluate workplace and community situations from multiple perspectives.

Learning Intention

We are learning to identify a customer's energy needs and recommend a product or service through a professional sales conversation.

Success Criteria- I can:

- Ask open-ended questions before recommending a solution.
- Match a product or service to a need the customer describes.
- Explain the recommendation without making unsupported claims.
- Respond respectfully to an objection and identify a clear next step.

Materials Needed

- Energy Sales Representative role cards
- Customer scenario cards: Row Crop Farmer and Livestock Farmer
- Common objection cards
- Product and service reference sheet
- Timer or projected countdown
- Student observation / feedback sheet



- Pens or pencils
- Optional name tags and product samples or photos

Vocabulary

Cooperative	Energy Account Manager	Consultative Selling
Dieselelex Gold	Propane	Lubricants and Grease
Fuel Additives	Tank Monitoring	Fuel Contract
Market Risk	Customer Objection	Value Proposition

Lesson Sequence at a Glance

Time and Lesson Component	Purpose / Facilitator Focus
10 min GROWMARK Overview	Introduce product lines, cooperative structure, resource sharing, and system careers.
10 min Energy Careers and Products	Highlight energy careers, products, and career opportunities.
30 min Speed Sales Challenge	Rotate through salesperson, customer, and observer role-play.
10 min Debrief and Closure	Share experiences, learning, successful questions, and recommendations.

Bell Ringer / Opening Prompt (2 Minutes)

Display or read the prompt:

“If a farmer already likes the current supplier, what could motivate the farmer to listen to another energy representative?”

Students briefly think, then share one possible reason with a partner. Use responses to introduce the idea that effective sales begins with understanding needs rather than immediately naming products.

Direct Instruction (18 Minutes)

GROWMARK and the Cooperative System (8 Minutes)

- Provide a high-level overview of GROWMARK, its main product lines, and how a cooperative structure supports resource sharing.
- Connect the cooperative system to the range of career opportunities available across the organization.
- Emphasize that energy sales roles combine agricultural knowledge, communication, customer service, and problem solving.

Energy Careers, Products, and Services (10 Minutes)

- Gasoline
- Diesel, including Dieselelex Gold
- Propane
- Lubricants and grease
- Fuel additives
- Energy programs, including price-lock fuel contracting and tank monitoring systems

Key selling points: Premium products can support equipment performance; lubricants and additives can help save fuel and reduce equipment wear; Dieselelex Gold is positioned to improve power and efficiency; tank



monitoring can help prevent fuel or propane runouts; and contracts can lock in pricing and access while reducing market risk.

Guided Practice (5 Minutes)

Model a short needs-analysis exchange before the role-play. Ask students what information the salesperson still needs before recommending a solution.

Sales Question	What the Question Helps Reveal
What does your operation depend on most during your busiest season?	Critical equipment, timing, and reliability needs.
What challenges have you experienced with fuel, propane, or equipment performance?	Pain points such as downtime, runouts, wear, or supply concerns.
What matters most when you evaluate an energy supplier?	Decision criteria such as service, relationship, reliability, price, or convenience.
How do you currently monitor inventory or plan purchases?	Possible fit for monitoring or contracting services.

Interactive Activity / Laboratory (30 Minutes)

Fuel the Farm: Speed Sales Challenge

Students conduct realistic sales conversations in small groups. The salesperson learns about the operation, the customer presents needs and concerns, and the observer records evidence of effective communication.

Roles

- Energy Sales Representative: A new GROWMARK Energy Account Manager seeking to earn a new customer's business.
- Customer: A farmer who has purchased energy products from a GROWMARK competitor for five years.
- Observer / Coach: Listens for needs-based questions, a product-to-need match, professional objection handling, and a clear recommendation.

Customer Scenarios

Scenario	Customer Need	Operational Concern
Row Crop Farmer	Reliable diesel during planting and harvest	Equipment downtime is costly.
Livestock Farmer	Reliable propane for heating livestock facilities	Winter propane supply is critical.

Activity Directions

1. Form groups of three and assign salesperson, customer, and observer roles.
2. Give each customer one scenario and one or more objection cards.
3. Round 1, about 7 minutes: Conduct the sales conversation. The salesperson asks questions, identifies needs, and recommends a fitting product or service. The customer raises a realistic objection.



4. Observer feedback, about 2 minutes: Share one strength and one specific opportunity using the checklist.
5. Rotate roles and repeat until each student has practiced a new role. Adjust round length as needed for group size.
6. Use the final 3-5 minutes for groups to select their strongest question and needs-based recommendation for the debrief.

Common Objections

- “I am happy with my current supplier.”
- “I like working with my current salesperson.”
- “Your prices are higher than what I pay now.”
- “Switching suppliers seems like extra work.”

Observer Checklist

Look For	Evidence / Notes
☐ Asked open-ended questions before recommending a product	
☐ Connected a customer need to a specific product or service	
☐ Explained the value of the recommendation clearly	
☐ Acknowledged and responded professionally to an objection	
☐ Ended with a clear next step or summary	

Debrief and Discussion (7 Minutes)

- Which question helped uncover the most useful customer information?
- Which product or service was easiest to connect to a customer need? Why?
- Which objection was most challenging to address?
- What made a recommendation sound helpful rather than pushy?
- How did the cooperative structure or resource sharing strengthen the value offered to the customer?

Assessment

- Facilitator observation during needs-analysis questions and product recommendations.
- Observer checklist evidence from each role-play round.
- Participation in the debrief and ability to explain a product-to-need match.

Exit Ticket

Students respond to all three prompts:

- Name one question you would ask before recommending an energy product or service.
- Choose one customer scenario and recommend one GROWMARK product or service. Explain the connection.
- Write one professional response to a common objection.



Support

- Provide sentence starters such as “Tell me more about...,” “What happens when...,” and “Based on what you shared...”.
- Allow students to use the product and service reference sheet during the conversation.
- Pair hesitant speakers with a peer coach and begin with the observer role.
- Offer simplified role cards that highlight only the customer need, one concern, and one objection.

Enrichment

- Require students to make two recommendations and explain the tradeoffs between them.
- Ask students to respond to two objections while maintaining a customer-focused tone.
- Have students create a 30-second follow-up summary that includes a next step.
- Invite students to compare how the conversation changes for row crop and livestock operations.

Closure (3 Minutes)

Revisit the essential question:

How can an energy sales representative identify a customer's needs and recommend cooperative products or services that create value?

Ask each student to share one word or short phrase describing an effective energy sales conversation, such as “questions,” “reliability,” “listening,” “value,” or “trust.”

Extension Activity

- Students interview a local agricultural operation about energy needs, supplier selection criteria, and reliability challenges, then prepare a one-page needs summary.
- Career Exploration: Students identify one GROWMARK energy career and list the technical knowledge, communication skills, and customer-service behaviors the role may require.

Facilitator Preparation Notes

- Print and separate salesperson, customer scenario, objection, and observer materials before the rotation.
- Decide how groups will rotate roles and display the round timing where students can see it.
- Keep the product overview high level so the activity remains focused on needs discovery and communication.
- During role-play, coach students to ask before telling, connect benefits to stated needs, and avoid arguing about objections.
- For three rotations of about 25 students each, reset role cards and observation sheets between groups.