

# Patrie's Raspberries on the Prairie Website Development and Internet Sales

## Final Report for FNC00-323

Project Type: Farmer/Rancher

Funds awarded in 2000: \$4,738.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2003

Matching Non-Federal Funds: \$2,652.00

Region: North Central

State: North Dakota

Project Coordinator:

[Patti Patrie](#)

## Project Information

### Summary:

#### PROJECT BACKGROUND

We no till farm 1500 acres of small grains, peas, and canola and run a 70 cow/calf operation in central North Dakota. Located in Wells County, 4 miles SE of Bowdon, our farm is located along highway 52 as it crosses ND from SE to NW. Most of the farm land is rented and three quarters of released CRP land were purchased in 1998 as pasture for a newly purchased herd of cattle.

The raspberry enterprise was begun in 1990 with 1 ½ acres of summer fruiting berries as a college project for our 3 children. In 1994 we experimented with fall producing raspberries and expanded to 7 acres of berries in 1996. We encourage the U-pick business but actually sell 4 times as many berries as “pre-picked” or as processed syrup or freezer jam. The syrup is co-packed by “Mable’s Taste of Home” with our berries and I make the freezer jam in a certified kitchen on our farm. We operate an on farm gift shop and a highway fruit stand during the berry season which extends from mid July through September. Our U-pickers come from an area within a 100 radius of our farm. tourists and state residents are our cliental at the fruit stand and most raspberry products are currently sold to ND residents at trade and food shows and summer street fairs.

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

It has been a little over three years since I applied and received word that SARE would support my value added farm diversification project by helping to fund a website and get the business of selling raspberries and raspberry projects into internet marketing. I would not have ventured into the project without the assistance and support of an outside entity. The computer scares me and to think that I would have to know how to take orders on the computer was bewildering.

I will share the positive and negative outcomes of my adventure in internet marketing.

Positive:

Our website [www.patriesraspberries.com](http://www.patriesraspberries.com) looks wonderful and I have received many

compliments.

The email address, [pick@patriesraspberries.com](mailto:pick@patriesraspberries.com) is clever and I have received many requests about picking times and retail show schedules. It is a great communication tool with my customers.

Customers have been able to print out the order form and add a personal check for a fairly easy way to receive product without the need for security or credit. We seem to develop a relationship with these customers more so than ones using credit.

The website was up about 1 year before I went ahead and added e-commerce to it so that customers could order online. Commark, Inc., the host, charges me 5% for handling the credit cards. That is easy for me! However, the sales did not take off immediately like I thought they might. The initial cost of adding online sales was \$265 and I pay \$25 a month hosting fee instead of \$19.95 for the brochure sight.

Negative:

It took too long to get the website up and running. I received the grant in the fall of 2000 and it was April/May of 2001 before we had a contract with Commark. It was January of 2001 before the site was up, just missing the holiday season. I found that both my personality and that of Commark, Inc. were not decisive, quick moving and decisions were delayed and time lost. I needed a mentor who would move me along, giving me the options and helping me to decide the fit for my business. I assumed the site was being developed when in actuality they were waiting on more information from me!

Setting a mailing/handling fee on the mail orders has sometimes cost me profit because I didn't keep up with the changes in the USPS. Postage is easier to recoup with the online purchases because I have added a shipping cost to each product incase it is ordered with other products.

I find it difficult to find time to make changes to the website and I know that is important to bring people back to the site. New recipes and pictures would be the best way to stay current and so far I have not pursued any changes. I am unwilling so far to do it myself and will rely on Commark to do them for me.

What I have learned:

The website owner needs to educate themselves on how to have the site placed before the public. I need to pursue exchanging or sharing links with other sites that can help bring more customers to my site. I may need to pay Commark to resubmit my website to search engines monthly so that it doesn't get buried under all the other sites. It would cost \$30 a month.

Having a website doesn't mean business will instantly grow. There is a lot of competition and one must keep up with product and service.

It is possible to access several reports about my website but I need to learn how to interpret them and put them to use.

I need to take more classes on the computer. I had hoped both my farm neighbors could help me more and they have their own pressures so I will need to do all the computer work, especially since my children are all gone from home.

Summary:

I felt having a website would help increase revenue and keep our business up to date. I have found the latter to be true but not the sales. We do not have the bumper crops of berries we had in the 1990's so the pressure is not on the family to market more intensely but it is still important to have a global presence in the world and keep all marketing options open. I'm happy to tell people they can find us at [www.patriesraspberries.com](http://www.patriesraspberries.com) and they know we are putting our best foot forward to promote our business. I like the response knowing they are going to check it out and

tell others about it.

#### OUTREACH

We will share the results of our internet sales with the public at Marketplace 2002, a farm and rural diversification share conference sponsored by Senator Conrad and the ND State Ag Department. This event draws approximately 5000 attendees. We have been included in past seminars either discussing the growing or marketing of our berries.

We will share the results of internet marketing with other fruit growers at the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (we are members) annual meeting in February of 2002 in St. Cloud, MN.

We will be available to speak at NDSU Extension Service seminars on recreational farm ventures, value added farm products or diversification projects. We have been invited yearly to do presentations.

## Research

### Participation Summary

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



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