



New Training Program for Professionals To Help Farmers Sell to Schools, Colleges and Other Institutions

Institutions– from small group homes and summer meal programs, to schools, colleges and hospitals – feed millions of New Yorkers annually and are major purchasers of food and farm products. A growing number of institutions are interested in purchasing more food grown in New York, especially fresh and minimally-processed fruits and vegetables, but also eggs, meat and dairy.

To take advantage of these markets, farmers need to understand product specifications, packaging, food safety, insurance and other requirements of schools, government agencies, food service management companies. Equally important, growers need to establish relationships with end buyers as well as with distributors and food hubs who service them.

Benefits of Program Participation

Farm to Institution Market Readiness Training, based on the award-winning *MarketReady™* training, is an interactive, participatory program for up to 25 Extension educators and other professionals that want to work with farmers to sell more food to institutions. Participants will gain the skills and knowledge to:

- offer workshops to growers about institutional markets and the procedures and requirements of food service management companies, state agencies, school districts and other institutional buyers.
- help growers build relationships with buyers in the supply chain in their region as well as at the state level, and
- provide ongoing assistance and opportunities to growers who have taken the workshop.

Thanks to funding support from Northeast Sustainable Agriculture & Research Education (NESARE), there are no fees to participate in the training, which includes a two-day training conference and hotel accommodations in central New York on January 27-28, 2016. All training materials and promotion support for grower workshops are also provided.

Potential Participants

Eligible participants include: Cornell Cooperative Extension educators, economic development agency, non-profit and government agency staff, professionals at food hubs, cooperatives, or supply aggregators who work with farmers on business and marketing skills. Trainees will be selected via a competitive application and will be expected to participate in the training activities listed below and to deliver at least one workshop to growers in 2016.

Farm to Institution Market Readiness Training Program

Participants in the *Farm to Institution Market Readiness Training Program* will:

- Participate in a webinar on December 17, 2015 10-11:30am.
- Visit institutions and interview up to two buyers in their region to identify best supplier practices during December and January. Lists of institutions, buyers, and interview questionnaire will be provided.
- Attend a training conference on January 27-28 in central New York. The first day will be led by nationally-recognized expert Tim Woods, author of *MarketReady™*; on the second day, trainees will tour food service departments with buyers at a school, college, or other institution, as well as a distribution business that services institutions.
- Offer Market Readiness workshops to growers in 2016. Templates for promotional materials, registration forms, and training materials will be provided, as well as support to publicize workshops.
- Gather information about growers who attend workshops, maintain a log of follow-up assistance, and survey growers in the Fall of 2016 and 2017 to measure impact of the training(s).
- Participate in bi-monthly conference calls during 2016 and 2017 to share learning and experiences from workshops as well as assisting growers and building connections with institutional buyers.

Apply Today!

Applications for the *Farm to Institution Market Readiness Training Program* are due by November 30th.

To apply, go to: <http://goo.gl/forms/h2MXZDwriw>

For more info: Glenda Neff at gneff@farmland.org or (315)702-3066

NOTE: Cornell Small Farms Program and Northeast SARE will be offering an Educator training and bus tour in April, 2016 called *Sparking a Wholesale Revolution: Preparing Small and Mid-size Farmers to Enter Larger Markets*. This training will prepare NYS educators to assist producers who are primarily direct-marketing but seeking to explore larger markets such as restaurants, grocery stores and food hubs. Info is available here: <http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/projects/wholesale/>