



Marketing for Profit: Tools for Success

Marketing Training for farmers Curriculum

Module 3 Overview: Customer Assessment

Workshops:

- People Sure Are STRANGE. Understanding the Customer
- BOGO's, Bouncebacks and the Cost of Freebies: Promoting the Product
- Every Silver Lining has a Cloud: Market Assessment and Analysis

Objectives:

- Farmers will learn how to identify the customer base in their community and the chief characteristics of those customers.
- Farmers will be able to identify customer characteristics that will match their business, products and marketing goals.
- The farmer will understand what branding is and its value to successfully market their farm and products.
- The farmer will learn to create marketing materials that incorporate their brand.
- The farmer will learn to do a SWOT analysis of their local food system, identifying strengths and opportunities that can help their business (including turning threats and weaknesses into opportunities).

Target Audience: The target audience is all farmers involved in or considering entering direct-to-consumer sales.

Time:

90 minutes, including Q & A for each workshop

Equipment/Materials/Supplies

- Laptop/projector/screen
- Easel/easel pad
- Marketing pens

Handouts:

None

Resources:

For further information on customer-assessment, visit:

- <http://www.buylocalfood.org/upload/resource/MarketingManual.2012.pdf>
- http://www.agmrc.org/business_development/operating_a_business/marketing/articles/how_much_should_i_spend_on_marketing.cfm
- <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/sites/default/files/documents/MarketingPlan.pdf>
- <http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Bulletins/Marketing-Strategies-for-Farmers-and-Ranchers>
- <https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/summary.php?pub=440>
- http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/138324/err128_2_.pdf

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce the topic of discussion, encouraging participants to participate in all three workshops in the series, as well as participation in the entire program of Marketing for Profit: Tools for Success.
2. Use the provided powerpoint presentation to present the material to participants.
3. Utilize the notes section of the PowerPoint for discussion points, activities and handouts to present the workshop for this module.

Options for Facilitation

This curriculum is designed to be user-friendly and as easy as possible to incorporate into your programming. The choice of how you utilize the materials is yours. You may use the PowerPoint presentations, play the archived recorded webinar or just use the notes as a guide as you verbally share the information. The amount of interaction you have in your workshop is also your choice. You can use direct instruction and simply share the information with participants or utilize the assignments provided for each session.

Archived Webinar Recordings

People Sure Are STRANGE. Understanding the Customer

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJBUNjUN_TU

BOGO's, Bouncebacks and the Cost of Freebies: Promoting the Product

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gk0afOQkiU>

Every Silver Lining has a Cloud: Market Assessment and Analysis

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QCMbfB5n94>

Feedback and Evaluation

This project is federally funded and requires documentation of all outreach efforts and follow-up. After you deliver this module, please email deggert@nyfarmersmarket.com or dgrusenmeyer@nyfvi.org and attach scanned copies of the Workshop Evaluation for or send copies to:

Diane Eggert
Farmers Market Federation of NY
117 Highbridge St., Suite U3
Fayetteville, NY 13066
Fax: 315-637-4691

**If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Diane Eggert
(deggert@nyfarmersmarket.com) or David Grusenmeyer (dgrusenmeyer@nyfvi.org)**



People Sure Are STRANGE!
Coming to understand the Customer

What we'll be talking about

- Finding customers
- Providing those customers great service

demographics

- Wikipedia has basic demographic information for just about every city and town you can think.
- Besides ethnicities, look at age demographics

Emerging ethnic marketplaces

- South East Asian- Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian are in Syracuse
- Serbian & Bosnian
- African- In Syracuse one of our more prominent African communities is Sudanese

Research keywords

- Multicultural + Office of/department of/services/resource center + your community
- Ethnicity + Community Center + Your Community

Examples in Syracuse

- SUNY-ESF Office of Multicultural Affairs
<http://www.esf.edu/students/multicultural/>.
- Spanish Action League
- Center for New Americans Refugee Resettlement Program

OFFICE OF
**MULTICULTURAL
AFFAIRS**



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- [Activities & Orgs](#) ▾
- [Academic](#) ▾
- [Business](#) ▾
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Multicultural Affairs

Mission

ESF Multicultural Affairs exists to support underrepresented students and to foster a campus community where cultural diversity is appreciated. The office seeks to be a center of cultural learning which prepares all members of the ESF community to effectively interact with others in an increasingly diverse and global society.



Dr. Raydora Drummer Francis

Director, Multicultural Affairs
24 Bray Hall
1 Forestry Drive
Syracuse, NY, 13210
Voice: 315-470-4915

Eileen Baldassarre

CSTEP Administrative Assistant
24 Bray Hall
1 Forestry Drive
Syracuse, NY, 13210
Voice: 315-470-4995

ESF Multicultural Affairs

Home

Calendar of Events

- [Fall 2012 Program Calendar \(PDF\)](#)
- [Cultural Observances Calendar 2012-13 \(PDF\)](#)

CSTEP—Collegiate Science & Technology Entry Program

International Students website

Internships

Library Resources

Lunchtime Learning Seminars

Multi-Ethnic Resource Directory of Syracuse & Onondaga County (PDF)

Organizations & Journals:

- [Multicultural Professional Scientific Organizations](#)
- [Professional Scientific Organizations by Major & Interests](#)
- [Multicultural Professional Scientific Journals & Magazines \(PDF\)](#)

Scholarships, Fellowships, Grants

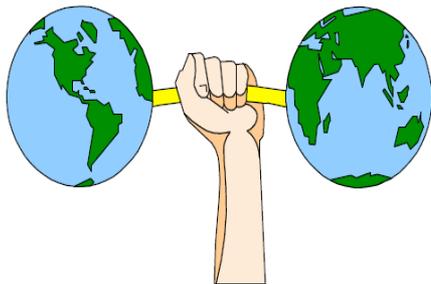
Student Cultural Organizations:

- [Other Cultural Support Groups](#)
- [The Baobab Society](#)



MULTI-ETHNIC RESOURCE DIRECTORY

OF SYRACUSE & ONONDAGA COUNTY
(And Environs)



THE WORLD WITHIN YOUR REACH

Compiled & Edited by

Raydora S. Drummer and Melissa D. Chinchilla

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Customer service

- Good customer service is getting a customer what they want. Great customer service is getting them something they didn't know they wanted.
- Great service is all about building relationships with your customers

- Ask questions that learn more about your customer, and help you understand the greater picture of their eating habits.
- What drives your customers buying habits: whole food, local food, seasonality, kids, flavor, traditions

What has brought this customer to you?

- Life long whole food eater?
- New parent?
- Friends recommendation?
- Change in diet/health concern?

service

- Good service can be as simple as knowing a group's dietary preferences.
- Giving samples.
- Customer sourced recipes.

Odds and ends

- SNAP benefits
 - <http://www.snaptohealth.org/snap-innovations/snap-at-farmers-markets/>
- Hospitals



Small Potatoes Sales & Marketing is a boutique marketing firm that specializes in working with small scale producers from Central New York. We offer a wide variety of consulting and advocacy services for all stakeholders in the CNY food system.

- www.iamsmallpotatoes.com
- @SmallPotatoes42
- facebook.com/SmallPotatoes42



The Farmers Market Federation of New York is a grassroots, membership organization of farmers' market managers, market sponsors, farmers and market supporters. Together, we have developed a spectrum of services to increase the number and capacity of farmers' markets in the state, develop the scope of professionalism in farmers' market management and improve the ability of markets to serve their farmers, their consumers and their host communities.

- facebook.com/FMFNY
- www.nyfarmersmarket.com



People Sure Are STRANGE
Coming to Understand the Customer
Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers
1/15/13 and 1/16/13
Presenter: Marty Butts, Small Potatoes Marketing

Webinar Questions and Answers

- 1. What about the Senior Farmer's Market coupons? Is that breaking open the senior citizen market?**

Senior citizens are traditional shoppers/eaters of fresh fruits and vegetables. Experience has shown that Seniors Farmers Market coupons may not break open the market, per se, but gives them additional buying power within the market.

- 2. If you are in a rural area can you search for county instead of town or city?**

You can still find demographic information for rural areas. You might start by looking at a local university. They often have demographic information about their surrounding community. Another source would be the local government, whether village or county. What you will run into, however, is that there will be smaller communities of ethnic groups, perhaps not large enough to support cultural services that will help you reach these groups.

- 3. Faith-based ethnically oriented institutions are tempting, but I have found them hard to crack as an outsider. Any advice?**

It is hard to break into any community that you are not a part of. But you would want to meet with them – clergy, community center, etc. to begin the conversation. You don't want to start with the idea that you want to sell them something. You want to tease out information about their faith, culture, food preferences, etc. Where do they buy their food and do they have adequate access to everything they need. What you are looking to accomplish is to satisfy an unmet need.

Other suggestions would be to advertise in the church newsletters or leave flyers to post on community boards. Finally, look into their secondary food projects, food pantry or feeding programs. Can you get your foot in the door by donating to their food projects?

- 4. Can these research tools be used to help determine what the market will pay for your products (community food budgets, etc)?**

The tools presented here will not give you this kind of information. There may be other websites that will give you some guidance. For instance, USDA offers a Wholesale Produce Price Indicator. But to get at the local level, visit other places where foods are sold and get a sense for what prices are. Not just local grocery stores, but visit farmers markets, independent grocers, local food stores, etc. Don't go into community centers to ask what their members would be willing to pay, rather ask where they shop. Then visit those places to get ideas of pricing.

5. What if the product is not really for the multicultural groups in your community but for the original people who lived there.? What key words to use then to find your customers?

You can substitute and consumer group into the word search and follow it up with your community name. What you are looking for is a community group that is supported by services that you can access. So, for example, use veterans/Syracuse to find veterans services in Syracuse. Finding local food eaters is a bit more difficult. But use words like natural foods or organic foods followed by your community. This may give you some useful information. Another would be independent grocers followed by your community.

6. How do you determine the food preferences of various communities of consumers?

Ask! Go into their community centers or contact their service organizations. Tell them you don't know much about their culture and would like to learn. Most would be happy to talk with you.

7. Where can I find a directory like your Multi Cultural Directory in my area?

If there is a University within 60 miles of you, contact them. Most universities put together cultural information to help their ethnic students feel comfortable in their new community. They usually have a Department of Cultural studies or services or community affairs office.

If you do not have a local university, contact your local government. They most likely have collected this information.

8. You talk about the SNAP program. What is that?

The food stamp program has been renamed SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This presents an opportunity to reach a very large community of people. Many farmers markets are now participating in the SNAP program. The market becomes an authorized SNAP retailer through USDA. They then have a point of sale terminal that will accept SNAP benefits. In exchange, they give the customer wooden tokens to use as scrip. The tokens can be used with any farmer in the market to purchase SNAP eligible foods. The farmers then redeem the tokens back with the market and receive their funds. The program is beneficial to all farmers in the market – they do not have to be individually authorized by USDA food and Nutrition Service, since the market is acting on their behalf, and it brings in extra revenue.

9. Can you tell me some references or resource materials where I can go to learn more about customer service?

The best information I found, and use in all my work and trainings, is the Zimmerman's Guide to Giving Great Service. Their website is www.zingtrain.com.

There is another book published by Project for Public Spaces on How to start a business at a local market. You can order it at this website: <http://www.pps.org/store/featured-items/how-to-start-your-business-at-a-local-market-a-vendor-handbook/>

"Why we Buy" by Paco Underhill might be another good book. While not specifically about customer service, it does cover much of the research behind the tactics retailers use to draw customers and build sales. It is an interesting read and you could get many tips from it.

10. I don't sell at farmer's markets, but I do sell year round from my farm which is out of the way other than during the summer season. How can i attract customers to my farm year-round (I have meats and cold season veggies to sell year round)

There are a couple of suggestions. You might try a share program. This will get customers to your farm each pick up day to get their share. While they are there you can also sell your other products. Another suggestion is to act as an aggregation point for multiple farmers, such as dairy products, fruit, etc. When you can offer a wider variety of product, it is easier to attract customers.

11. What is a share program?

This is similar to a CSA, Community Supported Agriculture, but on a smaller scale. This is where you prepay for a season's worth of a product, for example, paying up front for a weekly share of milk. Then the customer will pick up their share on a regular basis, i.e. weekly or monthly.

12. I run a farmers market in Hershey PA. We are surrounded by a Medical Center, 2 large corporations (Hershey Company and Hershey entertainment and Resorts), a new Nursery school. It sounds like a no-brainer for a market but it has been very difficult to penetrate. What are we doing wrong? We are not a very diverse area. We are a volunteer organization and at the moment we have a newsletter, email blasts by HE&R, Facebook page news, vendor Facebook pages, signage, and have worked with the chef/admin to development programs for our marketing campaign and find it difficult to get customers on a regular basis. Our vendors are all organic, grass-fed high quality foods. Any suggestions? Thanks so much in advance.

It sounds like there should be a lot of opportunity here. I would start with the corporations, then the hospital. Reach out to the HR (Human Resources) Department. Find out if they have an employee wellness program. You may be able to play into that program. If so, you may want to consider satellite markets in their parking lots. This would benefit their employees, although it could be open to the public. Or you can try a CSA style program. You can aggregate your farmers products and deliver weekly CSA shares to employees in these companies.

Individual farmers may want to contact the businesses of hospitals and offer to rent a parking space or two and set up an ad hoc farmers market.

Remember, contacting the HR Department, is not about what can you sell them, but about how you can meet their needs.

If the company does not have an employee wellness program and these suggestions don't get you anywhere, ask if the company is providing meals. In other words, do they have a commissary, dining room, or cafeteria where their employees meet. You might be able to get your farmers food on their menu. Not only will the employees eat the food there, but they might be enticed to seek out this fresh, local food at the market, as a result of tasting it in the company dining room.

13. Can you talk about any tips for landing restaurant accounts?

Restaurants are tougher to break into. They generally want to purchase all their product from one single source and have only one delivery. It saves them time. So the best bet is to provide a wide diversity of product, maybe collaborating with other local growers. The fewer phone calls the chef has to make to order product and the fewer trucks pulling into their driveways, the better they like it.

Chefs are now drawn more to heirloom varieties and heritage breeds. So if you can offer that, you will have a much better chance of getting in. Also, ask the chefs what their most popular dishes are. If you can provide the ingredients for those dishes, you will have a better chance.

You also need to begin your conversations with the chefs well ahead of your season. The conversations should help you to understand how they do business and how you can fit into that framework. If you can't, then working with restaurants may not be for you.

14. Our farm wants to get into selling raw milk on a small scale. Can you recommend a good source that can give us information on getting started?

Each state has their own regulations regarding the sale of raw milk. I would suggest contacting Cooperative Extension and the State Department of Agriculture. Keep in mind that this is a very sensitive issue and not everyone is in favor of it. When you contact your State Dept of Ag, you might want to leave off who you are and just say that you are calling for more information. Keep your name out of it until you have a better sense of the response you will be getting to such a business venture.

Another resource might be Weston Price Foundation, as they promotes raw milk consumption.

15. We do SNAPs and Senior Farmers Cards where the Senior are given a card with a certain amount of money attached and we scan the card and give out tokens until that amount is used. We use a different color token for the separate moneys.

Build on your successes. If the Senior program is successful, then look for ways to play off that. For example, look for senior centers or senior programs where you can promote the market. The same is true with SNAP customers. Look for ways to make connections. One example is the local WIC offices. They work with low income families. If they can make their clients aware of your market, you might be able to bring more SNAP dollars to your market's farmers.

16. Our Market is entering it's 3rd year. We conducted a survey last season and determined that the age group we're missing is the 30 - 45 year olds. We presume that it is parents with young kids in many activities. Any suggestions for drawing in those families that are so busy?

There are a number of things you can do here. First is to make your market kid-friendly. Add kid's activities that will have kids asking their parents to take them to the market. Things like face painting and balloon animals work well. Or activities that educate about food at the same time they are having fun, like coloring pictures of food, while that food is being discussed. (Organic Valley provides kids coloring books and crayons.)

You can also advertise in parent networks, such as the Holistic Mom Network. Church newsletters may also work.

If the problem is that parents are simply too busy to come to market because of the kids sports and activities, then you need to go to them. Go to the sports events and hand out flyers or coupons. Even better, hand them out along with a locally grown apple. But if they are truly too busy to attend the

market, you may have to accept that this is a demographic you cannot reach. But keep your market name in front of the m. When the kids grow up, they may take the time to come then.

17. We are a small community without much ethnic diversity whose farmers market has hit a plateau in both consumer traffic as well as desire for vendor participation - probably a direct correlation. Besides special events, is there anything in particular in your experience that you have found that has drastically revitalized both customer & vendor participation in your or any particular farmers market.

You need to find a way to make your market look fresh. You might try rebranding – update your logo and market signage, for example. (Word of caution. You cannot rebrand frequently or you will lose credibility with your consumers. But done well, it should last many years.)

Another suggestion is to add locations. A mobile market of your vendor's products may be able to reach consumer groups that you are currently missing. A satellite market may also help you reach new customers.

Adding new vendors could help draw in new customers. But it should be a different vendor than you already have. Try adding ready-to-eat foods. Bring in restaurants and other food purveyors to add a new element to your market. Many other markets have had great success, as these vendors have a powerful draw of their own.

18. I'm looking into marketing a few gourmet herbs and mushrooms. Restaurants and ethnic stores seem to be my best place to start. What is the best way to enter the markets, and approach these customers?

The approaches are different for grocers vs chefs. With both you will want to leave samples along with a sell sheet. You want to encourage them to taste your product and agree that it is worth putting it in their store or on their menu. With the chef, the product is purchased and used. But with grocers, the product is purchased then waits until a consumer purchases it. You will need to make samples available for the consumer. Make arrangements with the store to come in and sample your product with consumers

19. What is a sell sheet?

This is one of your premier marketing tools for wholesale. The front of the sheet is all the sexy stuff about your farm, along with pictures. For example, you are a 125 year old family farm raising heritage breed beef. The second side is all the nuts and bolts on how to do business with you. For example, you will tell the ordering process, the method of delivery, pricing, product size and minimum orders, and any other information they need to know to buy your product.



People Sure Are Strange!

Getting to Know Your Customer

Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers

Glossary of Terms

Customer Service

Customer service is about building a relationship with your customers. Good *customer service* is getting a customer what they want. Great *customer service* is getting them something they didn't know they wanted.

SNAP

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the food stamp program.

Target Customer

Your *target customer* is the community of people who values what you do, who you are and your farm and who you can build a long term relationship with.



People Sure Are Strange - Getting to Know Your Customer

Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers Session Assignment

Key elements of your business plan is to identify the customer base in your market area, understand their culture and identify their needs and wants, then find a way to satisfy them. Research into the various customer demographics in your market area will help you to identify your target audience and make key decisions about your business and products to help you fulfill the needs of your identified target audience.

1. Using online tools, complete the chart below to help you understand the demographics in your community.

Neighborhood	Ethnic makeup (top 3)	Ave Age	Ave income

2. Within each of the identified neighborhoods, identify the food resources:

Neighborhood	# farmers markets	# CSA programs	# supermarkets	# ethnic markets	# other (identify)

People Sure Are Strange – Getting to Know Your Customer
Quiz

1. Getting demographic information down to the neighborhood level is possible with Wikipedia.
True or false
2. How do you define your ideal customer?
 - a. The one that shows up regularly
 - b. The market segment with whom you can build a long term relationship**
 - c. Senior citizens
 - d. Veterans
3. Certain populations have been identified as increasing across the country and specifically with respect to local food buying. Which of the following populations would be one of the identified emerging populations?
 - a. New parents
 - b. South East Asians
 - c. Serbian and Bosnians
 - d. Latino
 - e. Africans
 - f. SNAP consumers
 - g. All of the above**
4. How can you make connections with the local ethnic populations to learn about their food culture and buying habits?
 - a. Google service networks
 - b. Contact local ethnic community centers
 - c. Read ethnic-based newsletters and newspapers
 - d. All of the above**
 - e. None of the above
5. When researching a neighborhood food environment, what will tell you that there is a significant population of that ethnic group in the area?
 - a. Ethnic grocery stores
 - b. Ethnic community centers
 - c. Ethnic restaurants
 - d. Ethnic newspapers
 - e. All of the above
 - f. None of the above
 - g. A,B,D**

Marketing for Profit: Tools for Success

Promoting the Product



presented by
Lindsay Ott-Wilcox
1.29.13



A decorative border of various fresh fruits and vegetables surrounds the central text. The items include carrots, corn, tomatoes, leafy greens, purple flowers, a bunch of tomatoes, a yellow bell pepper, a bunch of green grapes, lemons, a pear, raspberries, a yellow bell pepper, a sweet potato, a head of lettuce, green beans, asparagus, corn, and a cucumber.

Step One

Build a Brand



Step Two

Integrate Your Brand into Marketing Materials



Step Three

Promote Your Product

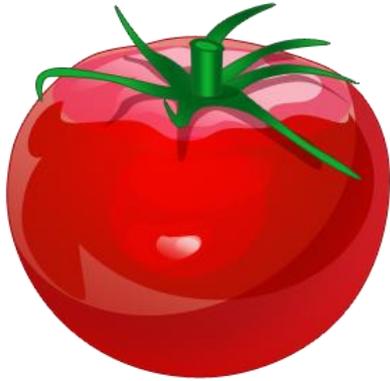
4 Ways You'll Benefit From This Session

- ✓ *Understand the Importance of Branding*
- ✓ *Discover How to Create a Successful Brand*
- ✓ *Learn Ways to Market Your Brand and Products*
- ✓ *Acquire Bottom-Line Boosting Promotional Skills*

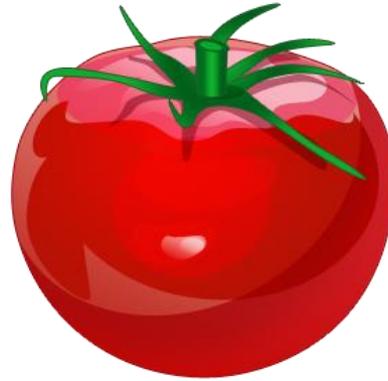
A decorative border of various fresh fruits and vegetables surrounds the central text. The items include carrots, corn, tomatoes, leafy greens, purple flowers, a green onion, a bunch of tomatoes, a yellow bell pepper, a bunch of green grapes, three oranges, a bunch of raspberries, a yellow bell pepper, a sweet potato, a head of lettuce, a bunch of green beans, a bunch of asparagus, a corn cob, and a cucumber.

Step One

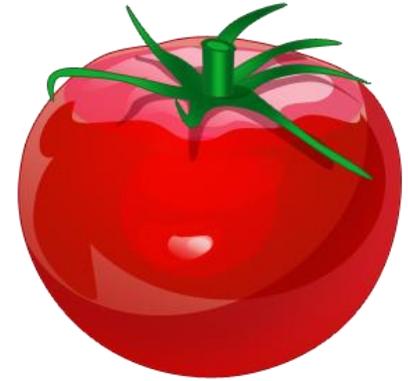
Build a Brand



Farm A
Beefsteak
Tomato
50 Cents



Farm B
Beefsteak
Tomato
50 Cents



Farm C
Beefsteak
Tomato
50 Cents

Farm C



“If you build your business around being the lowest-cost provider, that’s all you’ve got.”

– Seth Godin

Farm B



*What about NEW customers?
What about NEW competitors?*

Farm A



Builds a
Brand!

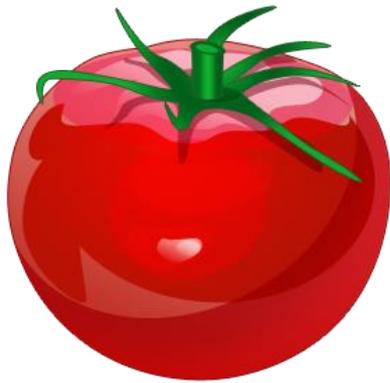


Pine Cone Lane
Farm

Produce to Pine For.

Rare Family
Farm

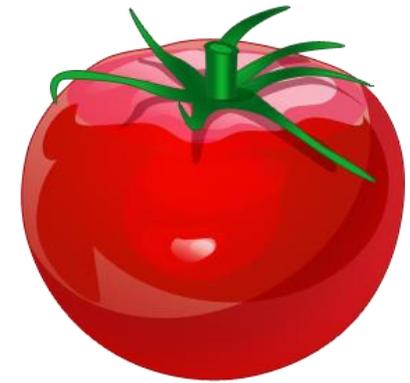
Red Hill
Farms
(No Signage)



Farm A



Farm B



Farm C

“If You Brand It. They Will Come!”

So...what is branding?

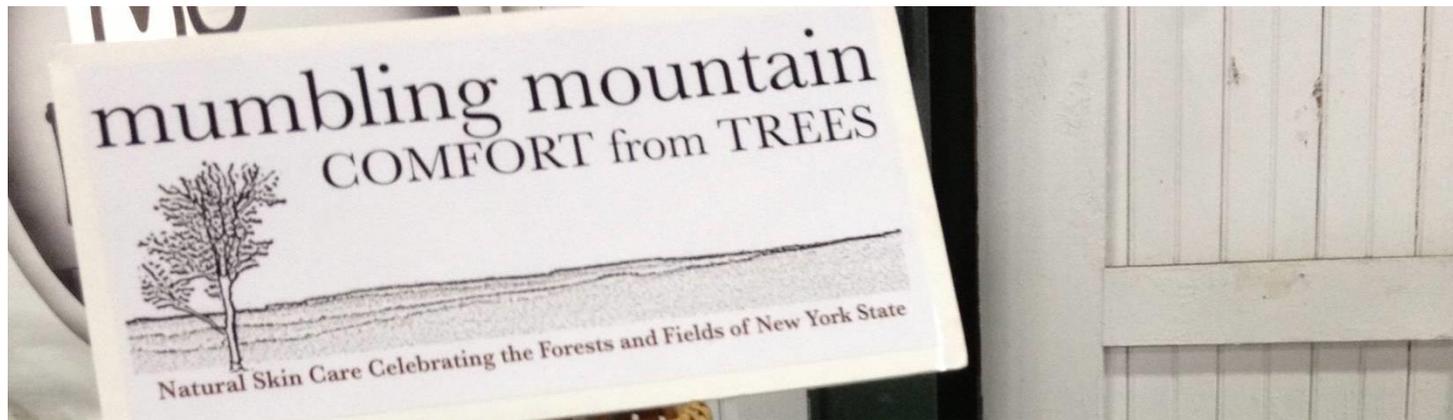
Definition of Branding

“Features that identify one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.”

-American Marketing Association

- 1) Business Name
- 2) Logo
- 3) Tagline
- 4) Typography
- 5) Colors
- 6) Attitude

Syracuse Regional Market Example



The Power of a Strong Brand

Customers less sensitive to your price increases

Increased customer loyalty – they seek you out!

Customers more inclined to talk about your products

Differentiate yourself from competition – no confusion!

Create or Assess Your Brand



“Branding = The Personality of Your Business”
You want to stand out in a crowd.

3 Rules When Assessing or Creating Your Brand

1. Is it Unique?
2. Is it Memorable?
3. Is it Consistent?

Where to Get Branding Help

1) Local College

Communications, Advertising, Marketing,
Art or Design Department

2) Local Ad Agency

www.adhub.com

3) YOU!

Create or Assess Your Brand

- 1) **Name:** If your farm does not have a name, think of unique attributes of your farm or what you specialize in.



- 2) **Logo:** What is a visual symbol of your farm or a certain product you offer? Even using your NAME as your logo can become a brand, you maybe able to create this yourself in Microsoft WORD.



1876



1950



- 3) **Tagline:** What do you PROMISE your customers?

What do you offer? Should be a short, descriptive statement.

“Grants and Education to Advance Innovations in Sustainable Agriculture”

Create or Assess Your Brand

4) *Typography*: The font/s you use.

Stylized Script

SANS SERIF v. SERIF

5) *Color*: Choose just one or two colors to define your brand.



JOHN DEERE

6) *Attitude*: The “feeling” you get from your overall brand.

Create or Assess Your Brand

*Sarah is a farmer who has a
unique blue barn.*

She is short on funds.

She specializes in root veggies.

*The farm has been in her family
for four generations.*

*Sarah does business in a friendly,
old-fashioned way*



Create or Assess Your Brand

- 1) **Name:** Sarah is a farmer who has a unique blue barn.
- 2) **Logo:** She is short on funds.
- 3) **Tagline:** She specializes in root veggies. *Get Back to Your Roots.*
- 4) **Typography:** The farm has been in her family for four generations.
- 5) **Color:** Americana
- 6) **Attitude:** Sarah does business in a friendly, old-fashioned way.



Blue Barn Farm Example



Does Sarah's Brand Meet the Requirements?

- 1. Is it Unique?*
- 2. Is it Memorable?*
- 3. Is it Consistent?*

Create Your Brand

Since 1887

**BLUE
BARN
FARM**

*Get Back to
Your Roots.*

**BLUE
BARN
FARM**



**BLUE BARN
F A R M**

www.istockphoto.com

Since 1887

**BLUE BARN
F A R M**

Your Brand > Branded Products

Creative Names!

**BLUE
BARN
FARM**

Turnips > Blue Barn Turnips

Butter Potatoes > Barn Door Golds

Sweet Potatoes > Blue Barn Sweets



Step Two

Integrate Your Brand into Marketing Materials

Marketing Basics



Perception is Reality



Every Customer Interaction with Your Brand Either Raises or Lowers their Perception of Your Farm

Marketing gives you the opportunity to get your brand out in front of potential customers and either raise or lower that perception!

Marketing Materials

On-Site
signage, displays

On-Line
social media, website, blog

On-Mind
mailers, advertising, public relations

On-Site Marketing Philosophy



Your at-market booth or farmstand IS both the OUTSIDE and INSIDE of a store.

How can you draw the customer in?

On-Site Signage

You **MUST** have a highly visible sign around your booth at market – as well as at your farmstand.

4 Questions to Ask

- ✓ Does it stick out?
- ✓ Does it stand up?
 - ✓ Is it branded?
 - ✓ Is it big?



Signage Without Branding...



*at-market signage
value perception*



Signage With Branding...



*at-market signage
value perception*



Syracuse Regional Market Examples



Syracuse Regional Market Examples



On-Site Displays



On-Site Laminated Signage

dry erase markers + laminate sheets = office supply store

BLUE
BARN
FARM Fingerling
Potatoes
5 for \$2

BLUE FINGERLING
BARN POTATOES
FARM
5 for \$2

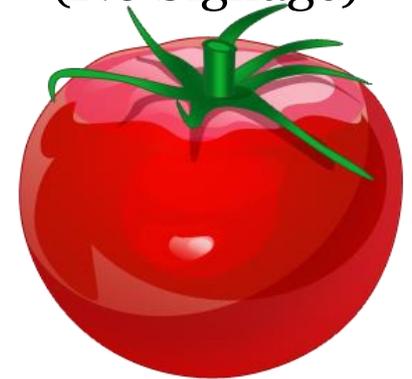
On-Site Laminated Signage - Descriptions



PineCone Lane
Farm



Red Hill
Farms
(No Signage)



Pine-Perfect Tomato



45 cents

- Juicy, Slightly Sweet
- Just-Picked
- Perfect for Burgers
- Harvested To NY Food Safety Standards



Syracuse Regional Market Example



On-Site Pre-Branded Signage



Buy Local. Buy Pride of New York.

✓ \$25 fee = you can use this logo!

✓ “Endorsement”

✓ Join the “buy local” movement

www.prideofny.com



✓ EBT Wireless Program

✓ Appeal to credit card + EBT users

✓ Attractive signage, shows

✓ willingness to be accommodating

Syracuse Regional Market Example



On-Site Food Safety Signage

**BECAUSE
WE CARE**

*We Follow Food
Safety Guidelines
Outlined by the
Farmers Market
Federation of
New York*

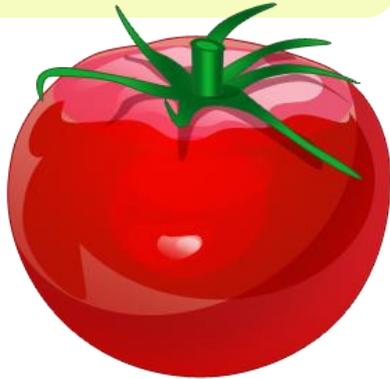
- ✓ *Show you care about customers*
- ✓ *Show you care about your product!*

www.nyfarmersmarket.com

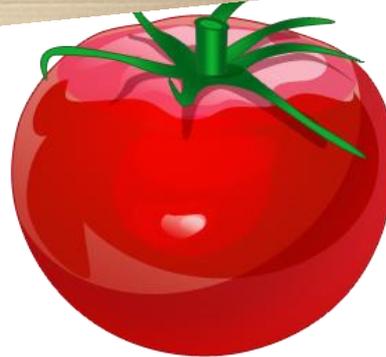
On-Site Displays



PineCone Lane
Farm

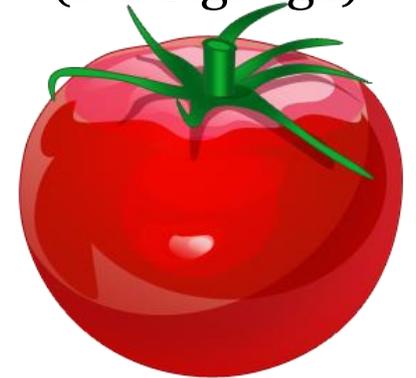


- Display table has boughs and pinecones next to produce



- Display table is bare with produce in plastic crates

Red Hill
Farms
(No Signage)



- Display table is bare with produce stacked on table

On-Site Apparel



PineCone Lane
Farm

- Farm owners wear beige shirts with logo



- Farm owners wear whatever they want

Red Hill
Farms
(No Signage)

- Farm owners wear what they wore to harvest!

Syracuse Regional Market Examples



Syracuse Regional Market Examples



On-Site Displays...A Note About Order!



Customers like to see ORDER + ACTIVITY!



Step Three

Promote Your Product

*“How much of your sales
do you leave up to luck?”*



What promotions are NOT...



Empower Yourself with Promotional Tactics



Invite the customer to choose your product.

Inspire

Excite

Reward

Don't *Deceive* the customer to choose your product.

Trick

Beguile

Empower Yourself with Promotional Tactics



Your goal: Create a longterm relationship with your customer.



Not your goal: Desperate serial dater!

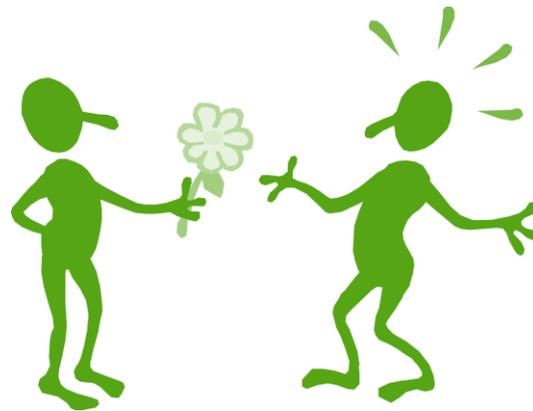
8 Promotional Tactics to Try

On-Site

- 1) Loss Leader
- 2) Freebies
- 3) Enter to Win
- 4) "Bring Back" Bucks
- 5) Partner for Profit

Off-Site

- 6) Get Social
- 7) Direct
- 8) PR



1) Loss Leader

WHAT: A product offered at an exceptional price, knowing you'll take a loss

WHY: The idea is to bring the customers "into" your booth or farmstand for the loss leader, then they will see everything else you have

EXAMPLE: A beautiful bin of apples, with an attractive sign

TIP: Limit quantities



2) Freebies

WHAT: Give something for “nothing”

WHY: Giving something for free with STRATEGY means you WILL get something in return.

3 EXAMPLES...

A) Free With Purchase

Incentivize and Reward

Create signage that alerts customers that with \$30 purchase, they will receive...

WHAT: new crop **WHY:** great way to try out

WHAT: branded tote bag or t-shirt
(bulk order from a local print shop) **WHY:** branding!

Or, try this

WHAT: buy 6, get 1 free **WHY:** encourage larger buy

B) Free to All

Recipe Card: Include a recipe that features multiple products that you sell. *Be sure to include your brand on the recipe card!*

Create a Recipe of the Month: Create signage that says “Free Recipe of the Month” which will encourage shoppers to return for the recipe (make sure they are tasty recipes!).

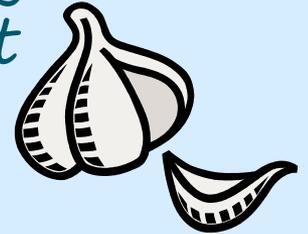


Dish: _____ Recipe Serves: _____

C) Free Sample

“Live” *sampling* offer prepared food featuring your items, include recipe card

Strategic sample customer always buys your greens, offer a free garlic bulb and suggest they try it sauteeing the greens with this fresh garlic!



Element of Surprise Gift = Powerful

Mo' Dough Example

Surprise Gift from a Loved One Example

Sample Size Lara Bar at Wegmans Example

3) Enter to Win

WHAT: Giveaway!

Basket of your harvest or \$30 gift certificate

WHY:

Collect email or mailing addresses on entry form that you can use to send a newsletter

Create excitement about your farm or business

Like loss leader, draw people to try your products



4) “Bring Back” Bucks

WHAT:

Print a simple branded “dollar” that you give customers after a purchase.

Spend \$25, get \$2 “bring back” bucks

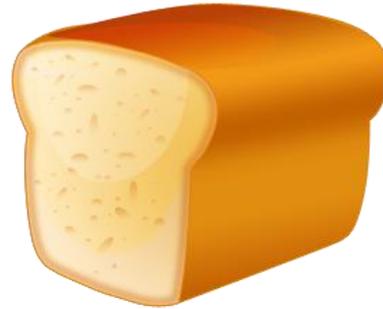
WHY:

Encourage customer to make your farmstand or market booth a regular part of their routine.

Rewarding customer for their loyalty.



5) Partner for Profit



WHAT: You sell jam. Find a baker and offer to feature his bread at your farmstand/booth – ask that he do the same for your jam!

WHY: Be in two places at once – more branding exposure and more chances to sell product.

HOW: Look around your market...

5) Partner for Profit - Example



6) Get Social

WHAT: Claim your FREE space on at least 2 of these social media sites...today!

Facebook



Twitter



Pinterest



Instagram

WHY:

Who Uses Social Networking Sites

% of internet users within each group who use social networking sites

More people are accessing social media on their phones than ever before...



All internet users (n=1,873)	69%
Men (n=886)	63
Women (n=987)	75*
Age	
18-29 (n=351)	92***
30-49 (n=524)	73**
50-64 (n=567)	57*
65+ (n=404)	38
Race/ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic (n=1,355)	68
Black, Non-Hispanic (n=217)	68
Hispanic (n=188)	72
Annual household income	
Less than \$30,000/yr (n=469)	73*
\$30,000-\$49,999 (n=356)	66
\$50,000-\$74,999 (n=285)	66
\$75,000+ (n=501)	74**
Education level	
No high school diploma (n=129)	65
High school grad (n=535)	65
Some College (n=513)	73*
College + (n=692)	72*

Source: Pew Internet Civic Engagement Tracking Survey, July 16 – August 07, 2012. N=2,253 adults ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English

7) Direct



WHAT: Permission-based marketing

WHY: You are being invited into their world.
How will you use that privilege?

HOW: With branded communication that
brings value to your customer!

7) Direct Example

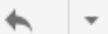
RE: Saturday Night at Steve's 1.26.13

Inbox x



 Beth Walker

Jan 22 (6 days ago) ☆



to Cc: maryannantuna, joeantuna, judmik, shari.antuna, lukercole, mbarnes4, bcwilcox, me, atticat204, cmburcham00

Hello!

I have attached the menu for this Saturday 1.26.13. We hope you see something that you like. Please forward the menu to anyone that may want to join us for dinner.

For parties of 6 or more, please give us a call at [315-468-4535](tel:315-468-4535) or after 4:30pm on Saturday [315-468-3380](tel:315-468-3380).

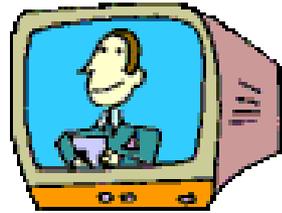
Thanks very much,
Jai & Beth Walker

Beth Walker
Northland Communications
Project Manager
Phone : [\(315\) 671-6237](tel:315-671-6237)
Fax : [\(315\) 671-6337](tel:315-671-6337)

Find Us Online at: www.northland.net
Call Us Toll-Free: [1-800-499-8421](tel:1-800-499-8421)

 Steve's Saturday Menu 1.26.13.docx
24K [View](#) [Download](#)

8) Public Relations



WHAT: FREE publicity on local media outlets

WHY: The news media is “hungry” to feature authentic voices and experts in ag

HOW: Is there something in the news that you could provide expert commentary on?
How are shorter winters affecting crops?

Just a quick review...



A decorative border of various fresh fruits and vegetables surrounds the central text. The items include carrots, corn, tomatoes, leafy greens, purple flowers, a bunch of tomatoes, a yellow bell pepper, a bunch of green grapes, three lemons, a bunch of raspberries, a yellow bell pepper, a sweet potato, a head of lettuce, green beans, asparagus, a corn cob, and a cucumber.

Step One

Build a Brand



Step Two

Integrate Your Brand into Marketing Materials

A decorative border of various fresh fruits and vegetables surrounds the central text. The items include carrots, corn, tomatoes, leafy greens, purple flowers, a green onion, a bunch of tomatoes, a yellow bell pepper, a bunch of green grapes, three lemons, a bunch of raspberries, a yellow bell pepper, a sweet potato, a head of lettuce, green beans, a bunch of asparagus, a corn cob, and a cucumber.

Step Three

Promote Your Product

Thank You!



BOGO's, Buy Backs, and Freebies Promoting Your Products

Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers 1/29/13 and 1/30/13

**Presenter: Lindsay Ott-Wilcox, Clear Channel
Communications and Lindsay Ott Communications**

Webinar Questions and Answers

- 1. Should your name portray what your product is? Wake Robin, the example used here, doesn't portray dairy.**

It is not necessary for your name to portray what you actually do. Instead, it needs to be memorable so that people will associate it with who you are and what you do. In this case, the name is derived from a wildflower that grows profusely on their farm. It gives the impression of a quiet, serene pastoral image to their customers.

- 2. We have a sheep farm that sells breeding stock and wool products made from our flock. We recently started selling veggies at a local farmer's market. We are using a logo that was designed for our sheep business. Our tag line is "We're All about Ewe". Because of the addition of our vegetable line, should we change our logo.**

Rather than changing a logo that has already been established, evolve the logo instead. You might try to incorporate the past; i.e. the sheep into a new logo that is more inclusive of your whole farm, maybe adding rows of crops in the background behind the sheep. The current tagline can still be effective, as it promises that you are all about your customer. But if you want to alter it to incorporate the current business, it could be something like "It's all about Ewe and veggies too!".

- 3. What adjustments should be considered to the BRAND of a family farm that is highly diversified? i.e. we raise beef cattle for breeding stock and for beef, we have a garden center, a U-Pick and wholesale berry orchard and other business enterprises within the farm. Do we use multiple tag lines depending on the enterprise we are talking about on the farm?**

Most likely the farm is named for the family and the family name can be the brand and be incorporated into each of the farm enterprises. Maintain the same font, coloring, attitude, etc to make the brand consistent. So it's not necessary to have a logo for each enterprise. Have the family name as the central brand/logo and use this within each of the enterprises.

- 4. Can you give some examples to make something more memorable?**

It's all about the simplicity of the image. Keep the logo to only 1 or 2 colors. More than that and it becomes less memorable. Also, maintain the same fonts throughout the brand, marketing materials and promotions. Finally, keep the graphics simple. The more simple the design, the easier it is for the consumer to recognize it.

- 5. Do you have any thoughts on branding a farmer's market as a whole?**

Use the market name, or if you don't have one, create a unique name – location based, community based. But be sure it's a name that will fit your market for many years (i.e. if you location has to change and that's your name, you'll need to start from scratch.) The logo and brand does not have to capture each individual product being sold in the market. Rather use something representational of all the food/ag products sold in the market, for example, a carrot can represent the entire market.

6. What about copywriting your logo?

Once you have created something, you are the copywriter and that gives you certain rights. So when you create something and begin using it in the public domain, you have rights to that piece. If someone copies it, you can get a cease and desist order to have them stop. You are protected by copyright with any piece of original artwork you create - most often logos are covered under this because they are original artwork. However, names, taglines and other brand assets are most often NOT covered under copyright, and if you are concerned that these elements are at risk of plagiarism, get them trademarked. Trademarking is more complicated and can get expensive because you will most likely want to hire legal support!

7. Are there good, free resources for learning about trademarking and copywriting?

You can Google these concepts and get lots of free information. Since the regulations surrounding trademarking and copywriting change frequently, you will want to revisit the web frequently for updates. But the best option is to contact a local law firm and pay for an hour of their time to get your questions answered. One hour is not that expensive and you will get correct and up to date information.

8. Am I allowed to use images from Google for my promotion materials?

No, click on the images that come up on a Google search. They will take you to where the image resides. This site will tell you if you can use the image and how the image can be used. Often, they will allow using the image only for educational purposes and will not allow it to be used in your logo/brand or marketing materials. Better to go to www.istockphoto.com and purchase usable images there, following the guidelines for usage with each photo.

9. What about using the clip art at Microsoft Office sites? The clip art there is free.

Again, these images are generally allowed for personal or educational purposes and not allowed for marketing purposes. On each of the clip art sites is a page that gives the legalese for usage of the clip art.

10. I have approached a few graphic arts /logo designers. Can you give a range of figures for what would be a reasonable fee structure? I have been quoted from between \$80 to \$160 /hr.

The \$80 hourly fee is reasonable. The one requiring \$160 per hour is steep and should come with extras, such as frequently winning awards and with a team approach to their work. But it is better to get a project quote rather than an hourly quote. You will have no idea how long it will take to create your logo, but if you know the end price, you are better able to make a decision on whether it is affordable. You can also look at the quote and find ways to cut the costs. For example, if they offer you 3-4 designs to choose from, you can ask them to cut it down to only 2 or 3. Many agencies will want to meet with you so they can get a better feel for who you are. You can cut back the amount of time they have with you to cut the cost of the final project.

11. If I am going to work with a professional to design my logo/brand, how should I pick one?

You would look at hiring an agency the same as you would in hiring an employee. You want to meet with them and interview them. Get to know how they work and whether that will fit your needs. Ask about their fees and ask to see samples of their work. Ask how deep their bench is – do they act as a team or is each person in the agency acting/creating unilaterally. You will get the best bang for your buck with a team approach. Ask for references. Who do they currently work with and contact them for their opinion of their work, their fees and their integrity.

To help find an agency you can contact adhub.com. But you may also look at logos and brand identities that you think are good work. Ask that company who they use. If they are not direct competitors, chances are they will share that information with you.

12. How important to product promotion is the packaging of a sold product?

Unfortunately, packaging can be as much as 90% of the promotion of the product. Think in terms of “perception is reality”. When a product is packaged in a haphazard or unprofessional manner, people will think the product is also haphazard and unprofessional. They are turned off by the packaging and won't buy the product. However, a well packaged product will attract attention, give the impression of a great

product and encourage sales. It doesn't matter whether the product is really good, it's the perception that the packaging brings to the product.

13. Are business cards still relevant?

Yes, especially in business to business marketing. But customers will still pick up your business cards at the market or your farm stand so they have contact information. The business card is handy and a size that stores easily in a wallet. But a better idea at the market or your farm, would be an index sized card that offers more than just your contact information. It will be unique and memorable. But usable information on it and it will become a keeper, posted on the consumer's refrigerator for future reference.

14. What about small, affordable tokens i.e refrigerator magnets?

These are great "freebies" that you can provide your customers. They give information, help them to recognize your brand and keep your business at the forefront for the customer. Local print shops are great resources for promotional items and their printing costs are usually competitive because they work with a number of businesses they will outsource the job to. You can also go to www.Vistaprint.com for more ideas. They will create some of the promotional items for you, especially affordable business cards.

15. Are punch cards successfully used for promotion?

Punch cards are good in theory, but unfortunately they are often left behind in a drawer - only frustrating the cardholder who forgot to bring it to market that week. This is especially true when the requirement is make many purchases (i.e., buy ten, get an eleventh free). That is a lot of times the customer must remember their punch card! Instead, consider a shorter time frame: buy five, get the sixth 1/2 off - or free, depending on your price point. Also, be clear what exactly the customer has to do to get a punch in their card. Is it spend over \$10? Is it a certain item you want them to purchase? Is it bringing a friend with them? The punch card is a promotional tool that can be used to encourage the type of repeat business you want. It's worth a try!

16. What is your feeling on professional produced plastic corrugated signage?

Some people are concerned that they are using signage that is too professional while selling at a farmers market. They are not like the others using homemade signs. The concern is that they are not folksy enough and this will hurt them. Instead, it gives the customer the perception that you have taken great care in creating professional signage, making it easier for them to know what your product is and the price, as well as reinforcing your logo. The professional signage will help you to gain sales.

17. What is relationship between price signage size and product display? How Big is too big for price signs. 8x11 seems big for market signage.

When you place signage in your baskets or displays of product, only 1/2 to 1/3 of the sign is visible to the customer, so an 8X11 sign will be needed to ensure enough signage is visible to include your brand and the product price. But also, you want a sign that is big enough to include additional product information. A sign can be your "silent salesperson", so the more information you can include on a sign, the more informed your customer will be and the more likely they will stay at your booth waiting their turn to be waited on since you have already "answered" their questions.

When doing special promotions; i.e. buy one get one free; you will want to use extra large signage to make it prominent so every customer can see the sign from a distance.

18. Is there a "best way" to organize frozen/refrigerated foods for sale at farmer markets?

Because you cannot display your refrigerated or frozen products, you need to find other ways to make your table attractive and informative. Use signage and pictures of the product to draw attention and let people know what you have. Some people will use empty cartons or packaging to display on the table. Others have found coolers with clear tops to let consumers see in, without compromising the temperature controls of the coolers. But the bottom line is to make your table both attractive to draw people to you, and informative to educate them on your products.

19. Can the food safety course created by the Farmers Market Federation of NY be accessed by any grower from the website? This isn't the same thing as a GAP's audit I know, but is there some type of audit if you take the training?

The Farmers Market Federation of NY, in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County has created a series of guidelines for food safety at direct marketing venues, i.e. farmers markets, roadside stands, CSAs, etc. The guidelines are not GAPs for farm production and post-harvest handling, but guidelines to keep food safe while en route to and during retail sales. The guidelines are fairly universal to anyone, although there are a few guidelines that follow NYS regulation, such as temperature requirements. The guidelines are available at <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/food-safety/protocols.html> and available to anyone. The guidelines are self-regulated and not subject to audit.

20. Do you have examples where social media is being utilized by farm products consumers? We are investing in it but so far with very limited results.

There are many farms and ag-based organizations that are very effective at using social media. First, it does not require much time and its free, so that makes it appealing. We also see by statistics, that our customers are on social media, so this is your chance to reach them. First, promote that you are on social media. Use signage at your table, farm stand, etc, to let them know you are on social media and invite them to follow you. But also, give them a reason..."follow us on facebook, give link, to learn more about our farm, our family and our products". Then give them useful information in your posts, such as information about your production practices, what products will be in the market next week, and recipes to use the products you are selling each week. In the off-season (if you are not year-round), use your posts to engage them in the happenings on your farm as you gear up for the next season. Use human interest stories to draw interest and engage them in discussion.

21. If I was to start using social media, which is the best one, if I am only going to use one?

Probably Facebook would be the first choice. Many people use it in place of a website and it is very effective in engaging consumers. There are sections that a farm business can use to let consumers know more about them – the "About Us" section, the photos section, etc. all allow you to let people know who you are and what you are all about. The posts are like your website contents, giving your followers information and news about your farm and products.

Twitter will work, but it has limited post sizes, so it does not allow you to let people know as much about you and does not have the features that allow you to use it in place of a website. Instagram is basically photos. It can be a great place to hold your photos, but you can link to them through your Facebook page. Pinterest is a great visual site. It is rapidly catching up to Facebook because of its visual nature, but is not as good as Facebook in connecting to and engaging your customers. However, ALL four social media sites work well in partnership. But if choosing only one, it should be Facebook.

22. Are there popular hash tags in Twitter Farmers Markets ought to be utilizing? Also, I've never used Pinterest, seems like a lot of potential for pretty pictures... are there special tags to take advantage of?

Hash tags are used to align yourself with conversations taking place on social media. While there may be some that you could follow, the best idea is to create your own conversation, with your own hash tags that people will follow.

23. What about a you tube video to promote your farm or product?

You Tube is a great social media to promote yourself. It is inexpensive and people really enjoy the visual. First, you don't need a professional to do your videos. In fact, it is better if it is NOT professionally done. Use your movie function on your cell phone and take short videos of your farm. You can use this to create a series of short videos to tell stories about your farm, for example, the first video can be sowing seeds in the ground. A week later, the video shows the seeds sprouting and poking through the ground. The third video will show the plant starting to develop leaves, etc. Or create a video that shows how you prepare for market day, or create a "hints and tips" video on using your farm products. The goal is to educate your viewers about your farm and your products in short video clips. Once they are uploaded on You Tube, you can use the URL to link the video to your other social media venues, Facebook, Twitter, and even your email correspondence with your customers.

24. Any comments or cautions on using QR codes on product labels and at markets?

QR codes connect consumers to websites, phone numbers or product information to help companies educate consumers and provide them with easy access to more information. The advertising world was sure QR codes would take off and be a critical piece of advertising. However, they have been very slow to catch on. But as a caution, it is not appropriate in a direct marketing venue. One of the advantages you have over other retailers is that consumers have direct access to you, the farmer. You want to encourage your consumers to talk to you, ask you questions, learn about your farm and your products directly from you. That's how you build long term relationships with your customers. If your customers are, instead, using QR codes to learn more, then you are nothing different from the supermarket, faceless and impersonal.

25. Is there a simple way to offer products for sale and online ordering in email or other social media?

E-Commerce is increasingly important. You can create e-commerce on your website that will create a shopping cart system, allowing customers to purchase from your menu of products. Then, by integrating pay pal, you can easily collect credit card payment for each sale.

26. What would you add to this for promoting to restaurants?

It is especially important to have a clear brand for your business when selling to restaurants. They will want you to let them sample your products, then leave them with information, i.e. brochures, sell sheets. If you are well branded, then you will stand out as a consummate professional, raising your credibility with the chef. In addition, the brand is key if the restaurant chooses to promote their use of local foods by listing you on their menu. Your brand will stick out with diners who will then seek you out on their own. Another good suggestion for capturing restaurant trade is to offer to co-promote the restaurant. Let it be known on your website and your social media sites that your products are featured at XYZ restaurant. The chefs may find this appealing and use your products because of the extra bonus they are getting with your promotions.

27. Any advice on marketing local farm products to school districts for school meals?

Again, this is business to business marketing and your brand is key. It shows your professionalism and lends credibility to your product, making it a more appealing purchase for them. In addition to branding, you will need to do a great deal of cold-calling to reach out to school food service directors. When they ask for more information, you will need to have your marketing materials ready for them. Create brochures and sell sheets that will provide them all the information they need on your products and how to do business with you. Each piece should carry your brand and provide your contact information.



Promoting Your Product

Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers

Glossary of Terms

Brand

Your *brand* includes the features that distinguish your business and products from those of other sellers. A *brand* includes your business name, logo, tagline, typography, colors and attitude. Overall, your *brand* reflects the personality of your business.

Logo

Your *logo* is a distinct mark that identifies your business. It should stay the same and only change a few times over the life of your business.

Marketing

Marketing is what you do to get your brand out in front of potential customers. Marketing efforts will either raise or lower the consumer's perception of your business.

Promotions

Promotions are the activities you undertake to invite the consumer to choose your business and products.

Public Relations

Public relations is about letting media sources know about your business and products. It can be as simple as sending out timely and newsworthy press releases.

Tagline

Your *tagline* is a statement that accompanies your logo and business name that conveys what you offer and/or what you promise your customers. It should be unique and based upon a key benefit.

Typography

Typography includes the font/s you use when promoting your business. The *typography* you use can convey certain attributes of your business.

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Published by the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), the national outreach arm of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, with funding from the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA.

Also available at:
www.sare.org/publications/marketing.htm



Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers



Creative marketing ideas range from extending farmers market sales through the winter (left) to diversifying from grain into pumpkins (right). The Bolsters of Deep Root Farm in Oregon's Willamette Valley and the Walters in Kansas have both realized new profits. – Market photo by Ted Coonfield; pumpkins by William Rebstock

FOR 23 YEARS, ALL THE MILK FROM JEFF AND JILL BURKHARTS' 80-cow dairy in central Iowa left the farm in a bulk truck for processing and sale in the commodity markets. These days, however, the farm's milk takes a different route to customers. In 2002, the Burkharths decided to build a bottling plant and start selling their milk directly from the farm.

Today, the Burkharths' 80-acre rotationally grazed farm has become a regular destination for customers throughout the Des Moines area, attracting 100 visitors a day and up to 400 when they hold a special event. As the Burkharths had hoped, visitors leave the farm with gallons of fresh, pasteurized milk as well as other products.

"Business is booming," says Jeff Burkhart, who received a grant from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program in 2004 to test two marketing strategies: an open house event and a Website launch. A year to the day after filling

their first milk bottle, the Burkharths premiered their Picket Fence Creamery with an open house that drew more than 900 people for farm tours, children's activities and special sales offers.

The Burkharths have been innovators before. In 1988, they divided their 80-acre grass farm into paddocks, where they rotationally graze 80 Jersey cows moved twice daily to ensure ideal field conditions. Once they started the creamery, they began making butter, cheese curds, and 25 flavors of ice cream. To include other farmers in their venture, they turned the creamery store into a local foods marketplace, featuring everything from eggs, beef, elk and bison, to maple syrup, baked goods, popcorn and wine from 76 other central Iowa families.

"We're taking the raw product, which is the grass, and then adding value to it by feeding it to the cows, then taking the milk and bottling it or processing it into butter, ice cream and cheese," Burkhart says.

“Our customers really seem to appreciate it – they can see and smell and touch everything, they can watch the processing through the observation window, and they really think that’s neat.”

The Burkharths team up with two other farms nearby – Prairieland Herbs and Northern Prairie Chevre – to share advertising costs and prompt customers to make a day of their farm experience.

Shifting to on-farm sales has been a lot of work, the Burkharths say, but the rewards are many. For one, the couple now earns a good living. Just as important, the new enterprise has fostered family togetherness. “We’re doing this as a family,” Burkhart says. “We get to work together, our kids are here, and we don’t have to commute to work. That means a lot.”

Proactive marketing strategies have proven the key to success for many agricultural enterprises. Rather than accepting the relatively low prices typically offered by wholesalers, direct marketers put the power to turn a profit back in their own hands by capturing a greater share of the consumer dollar. Direct marketing channels offer direct connections to customers, providing them an opportunity to buy fresh products – grass-fed beef, just-picked vegetables, or decorative pumpkins – and knowledge about how they’ve been grown. In return, farmers and ranchers learn what their customers like, then fill those needs with products, often at a premium.

This bulletin from the Sustainable Agriculture Network describes successful direct marketers, most of whom researched their new enterprises with funding from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. It includes tips about how to start or improve a number of alternative agricultural marketing channels

and provides links to extra, more in-depth information. (RESOURCES, p. 20.)

Direct marketing strategies are numerous and varied. Before beginning to sell direct, identify markets with special needs that offer large enough volumes to provide profitable returns. Also consider researching and writing a business plan, which will help you evaluate alternatives, identify new market opportunities, then communicate them to potential business partners and commercial lenders. (See p. 18 and RESOURCES, p. 20.)

Organic foods have held steady as one of the fastest-growing niche markets for several years. More recently, demand for pasture-raised meat and dairy products has risen considerably, with a small but significant subset interested in ethnic specialty meats, such as Halal and kosher-slaughtered products. Buying trends also support a rising interest in food grown and produced locally or regionally, so savvy farmers and ranchers are distinguishing their products by location and quality. Finally, e-commerce has become an established mechanism for sales of all kinds.

Consider selling at farmers markets, opening a CSA operation, developing value-added products, offering on-farm activities like educational tours, selling via the Internet, or marketing to restaurants and schools. You can go it alone, or you can team up with others in a cooperative. Most farmers use a combination of marketing methods – both value-based strategies bringing higher returns and volume-based channels selling more products – finding that diverse marketing strategies provide stable profits and a better quality of life.

FARMERS MARKETS

SINCE 1994, THE NUMBER OF U.S. FARMERS MARKETS HAS MORE than doubled to about 4,000, reflecting an enormous demand for farm-fresh produce.

Most farmers markets offer a reliable, flexible outlet where vendors can sell a wide range of fresh produce, plants, honey, value-added products like jams or breads and even (depending on local health regulations) meats, eggs and cheeses. For beginning direct marketers, farmers markets can be a great place to start. To locate farmers markets in your area, go to www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/ or call USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service at (202) 720-8042.

Aaron and Kimberly Bolster have been marketing their fruits and vegetables in Oregon’s Willamette Valley since 1998, gradually expanding Deep Roots Farm from three to more than 100 acres. Their diversified approach to marketing includes a community supported

Jeff and Jill Burkhardt opened an on-site creamery to showcase their Iowa dairy products, which they promote through farm days and a new Website developed with help from SARE.

–Photo by Jerry DeWitt



agriculture program, sales to restaurants, local supermarket chains, and even cannery crops. Yet, farmers markets have consistently been among their best outlets.

In 2006, Deep Roots' employees were selling at 12 farmers markets a week during the height of the season. Several are in Portland, a city known for its vibrant and bustling markets that offer everything from heirloom vegetables to bouquets of freshly cut flowers, dry beans, specialty breads, fruit, nuts, beef, lamb and even rabbit.

Asked what makes for a successful farmers market stand, Aaron Bolster emphasizes "the old cliché that you have to have a quality product at a good price. People need to have a reason to come back." Customers develop loyalty to particular farms based on price, quality, the range of offerings, their desire to support local farmers, and the personal connection they feel with you and your farm.

Farmers markets vary widely in size, setting and sales volume. If you're not satisfied with farmers market options in your area, you may be able to improve them by forging alliances with other members of your community. Merchants' associations, chambers of commerce and other civic groups have come to recognize the power of farmers markets to draw customers into retail areas.

Betty King, a University of Kentucky extension specialist for community development, calls farmers markets "America's first grocery stores." King was part of a group eager to emulate the success they saw in the city of Lexington, which enjoys a thriving farmers market with as many as 60 vendors. In neighboring Woodford County, King and other community leaders were eager to encourage a new market in the town of Versailles.

When Versailles' downtown underwent renovation, developers offered to create a covered space where the market could operate year-round. The Woodford County Extension Service built a certified community processing kitchen, and a SARE grant helped fund a training program for farmers interested in developing value-added products to diversify their market offerings. Downtown merchants show their support for the market by purchasing bedding plants and other items from the farmers for seasonal decorations.

The Woodford County Farmers Market now has 10 to 12 vendors selling produce, honey, meat, cheese and freshwater shrimp. "You have to start small and grow the market," King says. "Farmers should realize that they have to invest, too." For example, paying higher stall fees to pay for advertising or a salaried market manager can pay dividends later.



A similar partnership in Santa Rosa County, Fla., spearheaded by a SARE community innovation grant, led to the establishment of Riverwalk Farmers Market in downtown Milton and the creation of a "Santa Rosa Fresh" marketing program to highlight produce grown within the county. Cooking demonstrations with themes like "Cook it Like Your Grandma Did" and "It's Too Darn Hot to Cook" drew record crowds. Other special events featured antique car shows and swing dancing demonstrations.

The county hopes to erect a permanent covered structure for the market on the courthouse square. Another plan is to let high school students earn community service hours to gain eligibility for state college scholarships by working at the market. "It really fits with our mission for the farmers market to have an educational component," says Chris Wilcox of the Santa Rosa Economic Development Council.

Most growers enjoy interacting with other farmers, and many say that cooperation is as important as competition. Expect to have slow days when you do not sell all that you bring, and be prepared to encounter bargain hunters. You may want to investigate gleaning possibilities; many food banks and homeless shelters will pick up extras directly from your stand or farm.

If you're interested in selling at farmers markets, keep in mind:

- 🍷 Successful markets are located in busy, central places and are well-publicized.

Betty King, a Kentucky extension specialist, calls farmers markets "America's first grocery stores." She opened a new market in Versailles, Ky., and provided training for farmers interested in diversifying their offerings.

— Photo by Ted Coonfield

- ☛ Don't deliberately or drastically undersell your fellow farmers. The more farmers and farm products at the market, the more customers.
- ☛ A good market manager promotes the market and enforces its rules.
- ☛ Selling at a farmers market may provide contacts for other channels, such as special orders or subscriptions.
- ☛ Get feedback from your customers. You can learn a lot about what they find desirable – and what to grow next season.
- ☛ For tips on displaying produce, pricing and other practical advice, consult *The New Farmers' Market*. (RESOURCES, p. 20)

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA)

CSA, A MARKETING METHOD IN WHICH MEMBERS OF A community invest in a local farm operation by paying up-front for a share of the harvest, has been growing steadily since it first appeared in the U.S. in the late 1980s. The community idea carries over into the farm itself, with members dividing the weekly harvest as well as the risk of crop failure. Moreover, most CSA farms invite members to learn more about their operations through farm visits, volunteer opportunities and potluck suppers.

No two CSA farms are alike. Most supply produce. They also might provide flowers, berries, nuts, eggs, meat, grain or honey. Farmers may ask members to come to the farm to pick up their shares, or they might

deliver them to centrally located distribution sites. Families run some CSA farms, while others involve groups of producers to supply additional goods. Many CSA farms ask members to commit time and labor to the operation, which not only lowers costs, but also allows members to learn more about what it really means to grow food.

In and around Concord, N.H., eight organic vegetable growers decided to try a cooperative CSA. With a SARE grant, the group worked through the logistics, from the creation of a legal entity called Local Harvest CSA to weekly food production and delivery. Being part of the cooperative makes it possible for the growers to combine what they produce best or substitute for others' crop losses. Co-op members also learn from each other, sharing information about production issues like seed varieties and fencing options. Since forming in 2003, the group has slowly expanded its roster of farmer-members and doubled its number of shareholders to more than 200.

Another model comes from northern California's Full Belly Farm. Run by a team of four farm partners, Full Belly hosts a year-round, 800-member CSA with drop-off sites throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Full Belly Farm employs 40 workers and grows nearly 80 different types of vegetables, herbs, fruits and nuts as well as flowers, eggs and wool. They also sell at farmers markets and to restaurants.

"I wanted to create a different model than what I grew up with," says Paul Muller, who was raised near San Jose in a family of dairy farmers and now is one of the Full

Full Belly Farm in northern California has cultivated a loyal base of members for its community operation, which provides 80 different types of vegetables and even wool. Paul Muller is one of four farm partners.

– Photo by Neil Michel/Axiom



Belly Farm partners. “On our farm, we have great relationships with our end users – they are the ones we grow for, and they have confidence in our integrity” about how Full Belly Farm produces their food. “They have no question about feeding it to their kids.”

Full Belly Farm has been organic since the 1980s, and hosts an award-winning annual “Hoes Down” festival including kids’ activities, farm tours, food and music. Muller received SARE’s Patrick Madden Sustainable Farmer Award in 2006.

Many CSA farmers produce weekly or biweekly newsletters describing the harvest and providing recipes. Others reach out electronically through listservs or Websites. Full Belly Farm’s Website describes their CSA program in detail – including drop-off locations, prices and payment schedules, a harvest calendar and a newsletter specifying the contents of the weekly CSA box, among other things.

When evaluating CSA as an option for your farm, consider:

- 👉 Your location. Can you find enough members? Can they drive to your farm; or do you need to establish community drop-off sites?
- 👉 Labor. Do you have enough paid support or volunteers to handle the extra jobs involved in CSA, such as packaging?
- 👉 Your willingness to sponsor events on the farm, publish a newsletter and provide other services that help customers feel connected to the farm.

ON-FARM SALES & AGRITOURISM

ON-FARM SALES

JUST LIKE PEOPLE ENJOY WATCHING MILK BOTTLING THROUGH the Burkharts’ observation window (see p. 1), they seek opportunities to shop at farm stands and interact with farmers right where they live. In response, farmers are becoming more attuned to ways they might maximize their offerings. Some pick-your-own operations, for example, have expanded into wedding facilities, farm camps and gourmet specialty stores.

Earnie and Martha Bohner, who started with a pick-your-own operation with no buildings, electricity or running water in 1983, created a Missouri Ozarks destination that now attracts carload after carload of customers, especially in June, July and August, when nearby summer camps are in session.

They began with a long-term plan for Persimmon Hill Berry Farm based on family goals and values. Within 10 years of purchasing 80 acres, they were cultivating 3 acres



of blueberries, 1 acre of blackberries, 2,000 hardwood logs for shiitake mushrooms and 120 apple trees. In addition to the products, they provide amenities: clean restrooms, a picnic table and shade trees – and tidy field edges.

“We create a place where people can enjoy themselves,” Earnie Bohner says. “People don’t come all the way out here to get cheap food. They come because it’s fun and the berries are absolutely fresh. As much as we can, we give them contact with ‘the farmers.’ The more we can do that, the more people go away with that memory.”

An Indiana grower’s use of integrated pest management and shrewd marketing attracted a bevy of new customers to his crop farm. In 1992, Brian Churchill began using integrated pest management on some of Countryside Farm’s 100 acres of sweet corn, melons, tomatoes and other produce. In 1994, with a SARE producer grant, Churchill began scouting for pests, withholding routine spraying and building better habitat for beneficial insects. He cut insecticide costs drastically, then decided to use that as a marketing hook.

First, Churchill attracted the attention of local chefs with an “expo” (see p. 13). He also opened a thriving roadside stand, where the corn is the big seller.

“We drive the point home about using less chemicals all the time,” he said. “I have been growing sweet corn now for 16 years and the customers keep coming back and bringing friends with them. It’s been great.”

Once he perfected his system, he expanded into watermelons, pumpkins and squash and began inviting school children to visit to learn more about farming, judicious agri-chemical use and pollination. In 2005, 1,500 students visited the farm. “Our farm has grown a lot since the grant,” he says.

Marlene Groves and husband, David, provide tours of their 2,000-acre Kiowa, Colo., buffalo ranch to promote a better understanding of agriculture, ecology and nutrition.

– Photo courtesy Buffalo Groves



The Walters' 100 varieties of pumpkins and squash attract 15,000 visitors every fall. The new enterprise has brought their daughter's family back to the Burns, Kan., farm.

— Photo by William Rebstock

In the Pacific Northwest, Larry Thompson grows 43 fruit and vegetable crops on 140 acres in Boring, Ore. Once he decided to convert his parents' farm from wholesale produce and flung open the farm gate to the suburban Portland community, his neighbors began coming and haven't stopped.

Many call Thompson a pro at "relationship" marketing, forming bonds with customers who see a value in local produce raised with few chemicals. Each year, thousands of students – as well as other farmers and researchers – visit his farm to learn about his holistic pest management strategies and view his bounty of colorful crops.

AGRITOURISM

POTENTIAL AGRITOURISM ENTERPRISES ABOUND. FIGURE OUT what's unique about your farm and your skills, and use those things to create an enjoyable, educational experience that will appeal to your customers. The key to agritourism is authenticity and creativity.

Becky Walters planted her first acre of pumpkins on her central Kansas farm in 1988 after her boss at a local greenhouse gave her seed for a new miniature pumpkin that was popular at nurseries and farm markets.

"My husband caught a big razzing at the co-op," she recalls, "but I made \$583 selling them, twice what we would have made on the 5 acres of milo we usually had in that field."

Like most of their neighbors, Becky and her husband, Carroll, had been growing milo and soybeans and grazing cattle for the commodity market. With grain and beef prices hovering at or below the cost of production, the couple was eager to find a way to

breathe new profits into the 1,700-acre farm where Carroll had grown up.

Bit by bit, the Walters expanded that original acre of pumpkins to 16 acres. They built a processing kitchen so they could create value-added products. Then they added a gift shop, a swinging bridge over their creek to appeal to kids, a corn maze and educational tours to draw customers to their farm, ideally located for a tourism venture just minutes off the Kansas Turnpike.

Today, the Walters grow more than 100 varieties of pumpkins, gourds and winter squash – from minis to giants – along with tomatoes, peppers and onions. Planting many squash varieties also helps the Walters spread risk, since different types thrive in different weather conditions. Drawn by the variety and convenient location, as many as 15,000 visitors flock to Walters' Pumpkin Patch in the six weeks leading up to Halloween.

"People come just to see all the different kinds that we have," says Becky Walters, who received a SARE farmer/rancher grant to experiment with ways to add value to pumpkins by making salsa. The product, after experimentation with the recipe and the right jar for packing, dovetails with their tourism efforts, complements their other vegetables and provides new jobs in their community.

The enterprise has been so successful that her daughter and son-in-law have moved back to the farm to help out. With their two young grandsons beginning to get involved in the business, Becky says, "it feels like a real family farm again."

To expand their educational efforts for school groups, the Walters will teach visitors about native frogs and fish in their farm pond and incorporate information about the Walnut River, which surrounds them on three sides.

"I think having an idea of doing something and jumping off the cliff to do it is the hardest part," Walters says. "Sometimes it takes what I call 'thinking outside the barn.' When you put a pencil to it, it just doesn't make sense for us to grow the conventional crops any more."

The Walters and others who offer educational programs for school groups recognize that teaching children usually requires special skills and always a good set of ideas. To engage children, consider getting them involved in projects – whether it's digging potatoes, planting corn, or decorating pumpkins. Keeping groups small helps. Of course, ensuring safety is paramount, especially on farms with heavy equipment and other hazards. If you don't have the resources to develop educational programs on your own, consider working with local schoolteachers, FFA groups, or others in the community.

Marlene Groves of Buffalo Groves, Inc., in Kiowa, Colo., developed youth education programs – including an “American Buffalo” Girl Scout patch program and an educational youth buffalo project for 4-H – to teach about buffalo history. The ranch’s “Bison Reader,” a youth activity sheet, is a favorite at many schools and nature centers. Efforts like these, Groves says, foster a better understanding of ecology, agriculture and nutrition. Mainly, she wants kids to know where their food comes from.

The Groves teach people, young and old, about their ranch and their niche product during ranch tours. They charge \$25 per person, refundable in the form of store credit, and also offer customized tours for private events.

“It takes work to run tours” on a 2,000-acre ranch, Groves acknowledges, “but we want to showcase what we’re doing.” They lead visitors on walks, talk about grazing management and point out native grasses and wildflowers. “Of course, the highlight is going out to see the buffalo herd,” she says.

Offering tours is a way of taking advantage of consumers’ and the media’s interest in farm life, Groves says. As part of that, “tell a good story – tell your own story,” she advises. In addition to selling meat on the ranch, they also market and deliver directly to customers in Denver and Colorado Springs and from their Website.

Other ranchers have expanded into diverse on-site activities, offering hunting, fishing, bird-watching, horseback riding or hiking. In Colorado, co-owners of the 87,000-acre Chico Basin Ranch began offering working ranch vacation packages in 2000. While it’s taking time to make that side of the business fully profitable, they feel they’re moving in the right direction, says ranch manager Duke Phillips.

While some people visit just for birding, which brings lower returns, “we have packages where people stay for a week and we get paid well for that,” says Phillips. “We have to balance what we do with our values, the reason we’re here as ranchers.”

Chico Basin was among a group of ranches in Colorado, Wyoming and other western states that benefited from a SARE grant exploring various types of community-based direct marketing models for ranch owners seeking to diversify. The key is to put a value on the natural resource amenities provided by ranchlands and to find ways for urban- and suburban-based consumers to enjoy those amenities.

COMMUNITY-BASED FARM TOURISM

FARMERS CONSIDERING WAYS TO PUT THEMSELVES ON THE MAP, literally, might team up with state or regional agencies

to promote rural economic development through farm-based tourism activities. In many parts of the United States – not just traditional vacation destinations like Hawaii or New England – tourism can make a significant contribution to local economies, and attractive, well-managed farm operations can do a lot to draw rural tourists. Explore local government, quasi-government and business connections to participate in local festivals, get listed in state tourism brochures or be featured in regional public outreach campaigns.

In Minnesota, the nonprofit Renewing the Countryside organization used a SARE grant to promote local food-based tourism. Working with groups like the Minnesota Bed & Breakfast Association and the University of Minnesota Tourism Center, RTC developed a promotional campaign called Green Routes. Printed maps and an online directory (www.greenroutes.org) guide visitors to farmstands, craft shops and other rural destinations. “There’s a lot of interest in and support for ‘green’ travel, and farmers are a big piece of that,” says RTC’s Jan Joannides.

Similar efforts are underway in Rhode Island, where the Rhode Island Center for Agricultural Promotion and Education launched “Rhode Island FarmWays,” a campaign to highlight farms as tourist destinations. The goal, says Center Executive Director Stuart Nunnery, is “to help showcase Rhode Island’s farms as places of significant beauty, culture, ecology and history. Those farms are crucial to maintaining Rhode Island’s quality of life.”

With help from a 2004 SARE grant, Nunnery and colleagues have held professional development workshops for farmers, provided grants to help producers initiate farm-based tourism activities and created a

Hidden Meadows Farm in West Greenwich, R.I., a member of the state FarmWays agritourism campaign, hosted the public during a Thanksgiving weekend of on-farm activities. The farm sells Christmas trees and value-added products.

– Photo by Jo-Anne Pacheco



Nutritional tests on meat from Buffalo Groves in Colorado found the cuts were significantly lower in calories and cholesterol than grain-fed bison meat, providing a marketing angle for David and Marlene Groves.

– Photo courtesy of Buffalo Groves

Website listing farm-based attractions statewide. The Rhode Island Center also negotiated a \$250,000 loan package with the state Economic Development Corp. to provide small loans to farmers to develop or expand agritourism and direct marketing activities. Finally, the team is focusing on streamlining the regulatory process by which farmers can set up farm stay or bed & breakfast operations.

“Our farms have a variety of untapped assets that can create products and experiences for visitors,” says Nunnery. “They could be walking trails, historical features, wildlife, heritage livestock, horticultural diversity or just a spectacular landscape. We have farms with beautiful grasslands preserved by conservation easements. One of the farms we’re working with has ancient settlements and artifacts being excavated by university archaeologists.”

If you’re interested in on-farm sales and agritourism, consider the following.

- Check your local extension office for information about how to construct sales stands, small market buildings and produce displays. From building materials to permits, establishing a stand can prove expensive.
- Social skills and a scenic, clean, attractive farm are crucial for success in agritourism and can overcome a location that is less than ideal.
- Farm visitors may interfere with main farm activities and pose a liability risk. Consult your insurance adviser to ensure adequate liability coverage.
- In the tourist business, you are never really off-duty. Expect late-night calls and working holidays.
- State departments of agriculture often offer assistance in setting up farm festivals and similar activities. State tourism bureaus also can offer a wealth of ideas and information.

DIRECT MARKETING MEAT AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS

AFTER YEARS OF WATCHING FEED PRICES RISE AND PORK prices fall and wondering how they could stay profitable, Denise and Bill Brownlee of Wil-Den Family Farms in Pennsylvania decided in 2002 to exploit what they saw as a market advantage – their outdoor production system where hogs farrow and finish on pasture without growth stimulants and with minimal antibiotic use.

Given the time commitment involved in direct marketing, the Brownlees started by scaling back from 170 sows to 60, aiming to sell 900 to 1,000



animals a year at a premium price. Over the past several years they’ve explored a variety of direct marketing strategies. A SARE grant enabled them to partner with a local nonprofit group to test a subscription service for meat, in which up to 100 members would purchase annual shares of pork chops, sausages, bacon and ham.

What they found was that customers were more comfortable with monthly meat subscriptions than with annual meat shares. “We tried to pattern it after how people are used to buying from vegetable farmers: paying upfront,” Denise Brownlee says. “For whatever reason, they were hesitant to commit.” Their experience shows that translating marketing strategies from one type of product to another can require some tweaking.

Decades ago, most meat and animal products were sold directly to customers, but all that changed with the advent of the modern feedlot-to-wholesale system. Recently, consumer concerns about nutritional health, food safety and animal welfare have spurred renewed interest in buying animal products directly from the source. Producers, meanwhile, see the value of re-connecting to consumers.

Making the most of your direct marketing efforts requires being able to explain to customers why your product is better than what they can find in their local supermarket. To make specific nutritional claims for

your product, consider getting samples tested by an independent lab. With a SARE producer grant, David and Marlene Groves tested their 100-percent grass-fed bison meat, which they sell directly from their Colorado ranch. They learned that the meat was slightly lower in fat and significantly lower in calories and cholesterol than the standard published values for bison meat.

“It’s very hard to confidently market your product if you don’t completely understand it,” Groves says. “Most buffalo for sale in the supermarket is grain-fed, and it’s much fattier.” Once customers understand the difference, they often are more inclined to buy Buffalo Groves meat.

Another expanding market opportunity for sustainable livestock producers centers on health. Health care practitioners and individuals seeking to improve their diets in response to concerns about chronic disease, pain syndromes and various disorders are fueling demand for better quality meat. The University of North Carolina Program on Integrative Medicine used a SARE grant to compile a directory of locally raised, grass-fed livestock products after receiving repeated requests for such information from holistic health care providers in the area. Part of their research included sources of meat with desired levels of omega-3 fatty acids.

For livestock producers facing an increasingly concentrated market with a few large processors controlling prices, direct marketing offers the opportunity to retain a greater share of product value. Marketing meat and animal products, however, means making food safety issues paramount. (See box at right.)

Provide cooking instructions, especially for grass-fed meats, which require lower cooking temperatures than conventionally produced meat – “low and slow,” as Texas rancher Peggy Sechrist likes to describe it. If possible, provide samples. With a quality product, sampling can be the most effective form of marketing.

Jim Goodman of Wonewoc, Wis., began direct-marketing organic beef not only to increase profits, but also to talk with and educate his customers about sustainable beef production. After 16 years of selling to packing companies, Goodman now delivers beef to restaurants, a farmers market and directly to friends and neighbors. Customers are getting used to ordering by e-mail in the winter, so direct marketing continues during the winter through scheduled deliveries.

“Traditionally, farmers never see their customers,” says Goodman, who regularly drives 75 miles to Madison to deliver beef. “It’s nice to be able to hand your customers a package of burgers with tips on how to cook it and be

able to tell them how the animals are raised.”

When he takes a 1,500-pound steer to the packing plant, he receives about \$1,000. That same animal brings \$2,500 minus about \$450 in processing costs, when he sells it directly.

“People are willing to pay more for direct-marketed organic beef,” he says. “Once you get regular customers, you develop a friendship with them. Then people start talking about buying meat from ‘my farmer.’ It really is the way marketing should be done, the farmer delivers a quality product, and the consumer is happy to pay them a fair price, everyone wins.”

Cooperatives provide another route for direct marketing meat. In 2001, a group of Iowa livestock producers launched Wholesome Harvest, a cooperative featuring organic meat sales in five Midwest states. Co-op founder Wende Elliott, who raises lamb and poultry, got a grant from SARE to research the potential – since realized with steady sales. “Only by working together can farmers protect the added value of organic meat and capture premium prices,” Elliott says. (See p. 15 for more information on co-ops.)

Recently, consumer concerns about nutritional health, food safety and animal welfare have spurred renewed interest in buying animal products directly from the source.

ANIMAL PRODUCT LABELING & CLAIMS

Meat producers address consumer safety concerns through regulatory avenues as well as processing and inspection. Before launching a direct meat-selling venture, decide where and how you want to market. The type of processing and inspection you choose limits where the meat can be sold, dictating whether you can sell across state lines and whether direct to consumers or wholesale.

For more information about meat inspection and overall marketing regulations, see the *Legal Guide for Direct Farm Marketing*, developed in part with a SARE grant. To learn more about direct-marketing beef, from slaughtering to promoting and advertising, consult *How to Direct Market Your Beef*, published by SARE’s Sustainable Agriculture Network. (RESOURCES, p. 20.)

You may want to develop labels describing how you produce your meat, specifying your feeding, medication and other practices and/or where you farm or ranch. Check with USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) at www.fsis.usda.gov, (202) 205-0623 and the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service’s Livestock and Seed Program, www.ams.usda.gov/lsg, to create accurate, legal claims.

For organic labels, see USDA’s National Organic Program Website – www.ams.usda.gov/nop – or call (202) 690-0725 with questions. For regulations and information related to food safety in livestock products other than meat and eggs, such as milk pasteurization, visit the Food & Drug Agency’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at www.cfsan.fda.gov.

To better address the needs of the small business community, including farmers and ranchers, FDA assigned its small business representatives (SBRs) to respond to questions such as how to find the FDA regulation(s) pertinent to your product. To find the SBR nearest you, visit www.fda.gov/ora/fed_state/Small_Business/sb_guide/smbusrep.html.

PROMOTING MEAT TO ETHNIC MARKETS

To expand sales of their lamb and goat meat, Larry Jacoby and Judy Moses built new connections with the growing populations of Mexican and Somali immigrants in western Wisconsin. Their efforts – advertising in multiple languages, promoting visits to their 140-acre farm in Downing, Wis., and attending customer weddings, among them – have resulted in a substantial increase in annual sales.

“We like working with a variety of people, it fits our interests intellectually,” said Judy Moses, who, with husband Jacoby, received a SARE farmer/rancher grant to explore new ways to promote to culturally diverse customers. “Once you get into their network, you’re in. When we have goats for sale, the word spreads quickly and customers come.”

Now, they sell almost all of their goats and about 40 percent of their lambs to ethnic customers at premium prices. In busy periods during the Muslim month of Ramadan, Christmas and New Year’s holidays, monthly sales of adult goats, kids, and 80-pound lambs surge.

In 2005, they sold more than 500 live goats and lambs during the holidays at an average of \$100 each.

Moses and Jacoby learned a lot over the two years of their grant project about how to reach new customers, many of whom speak limited English, come to the farm at all hours, and want to slaughter their animals according to religious customs.

Moses’ co-worker at her off-farm job, a Somali native, sparked the project by suggesting that local Somalis, many of whom work at a Barron, Wis., turkey processing plant, craved fresh goat meat. While Moses and Jacoby tried ads in ethnic magazines, established a multi-lingual Website and posted information on bulletin boards and tourist information centers, word-of-mouth brought the most customers.

A friend who worked at the processing plant encouraged some of her Somali co-workers to visit Moses’ and Jacoby’s



Shane Opatz

Shepherd Song Farm, where they raise about 400 goats and 300 lambs annually on pasture.

In keeping with tradition, the Somalis wanted Halal slaughtering practices involving a Muslim imam. Moses found a state-inspected processor 14 miles away willing to slaughter goats in the preferred manner with the local imam present to supervise. Moses and Jacoby adapted in other ways, too, growing accustomed to unannounced visits from families, some of whom liked to pick up

animals in the midst of the winter holidays. Many of those visitors bought 10 to 20 goats at one time. They even bartered occasionally, with Jacoby swapping lamb for a new pair of leather boots imported from Mexico, among other items. Customer relations soared.

“Mexican and Somali families have sought us out,” Moses said. “These families purchase something more than food – a memory of their heritage while strengthening family bonds.”

SEASON EXTENSION

WHETHER YOU’RE SELLING AT FARMERS MARKETS, THROUGH a CSA or on your farm, lengthening your marketing season can be critical to spreading your workload and evening out your cash flow. It can also help maintain relationships with customers and allow you to offer year-round employment to key employees. While some farmers enjoy having off-season “down time” to make repairs or plan for the coming year, others find that practicing seasonal diversification makes for a more well-rounded farm enterprise.

Season extension involves using greenhouses, unheated hoop houses, row covers or alternate varieties to push fruit and vegetable crops earlier into the spring or later into the fall.

In Oregon, farmers Aaron Bolster of Deep Roots Farm and Anthony and Carol Boutard of Ayers Creek Farm teamed up with the Oregon Farmers’ Market Association on a SARE-funded project to test the idea of extending a popular Portland farmers market through the winter

months. Customers got acquainted with the wide array of local products available year-round, while farmers gauged off-season demand. Deep Roots used hoop houses to grow late-season greens and other cold-hardy crops; other farmers, like the Boutards, offered value-added products based on their summer berries and other specialties.

“This is an area where there used to be a lot more emphasis on winter production, but with more shipping and competition from the South, it kind of fell away,” Bolster says. “Now, with the demand for local produce, there’s a real opportunity for farmers who are willing to take it.”

A key goal for Bolster and the Boutards was to keep people employed year-round to foster good workers. They also found the winter market was a catalyst for them to grow more vegetables year-round, then try shopping any extra product to local stores and restaurants. “In winter there’s certainly more risk, but it’s worth it,” Bolster says.

Sometimes, the key to capturing a valuable market is timing. Having the earliest local sweet corn or tomatoes

at the farmers market will command a price premium; the trick is to keep customers coming to your stand through tomato season and beyond. Thinking creatively about how to maximize the overlap between peak demand and peak production is an important part of direct marketing. Becky Walters of Burns, Kan., developed her distinctive pumpkin salsa after selecting an early-maturing pumpkin variety to coincide with tomato and pepper season.

Another part of season extension has to do with understanding the seasonal preferences of your target market. Meat producers often find that customers buy ground beef in the summer and roasts in the winter, for example. In Colorado, the Groves have learned that they have to ship on Thursdays because many people like to receive their meat on Friday for special weekend meals. Moreover, the Groves say that bison sales are strong around the winter holidays and into January, apparently because people resolve to eat healthier meats around the first of year. Finally, raising heritage turkeys for the Thanksgiving market has proven a yearly boon for many poultry producers.

VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS

IN 1986, EARNIE AND MARTHA BOHNER BEGAN MAKING JAM IN rented facilities near their farm in southern Missouri. Since then, Persimmon Hill Berry Farm has built a processing kitchen to make value-added products, from jams to sauces. To create specialty items that would appeal to customers, the Bohners did their homework. First, they worked with a chef to perfect recipes for jams and barbecue sauce. Later, with a SARE grant, they sought ways to

add value to shiitake mushrooms. After market research, including detailed cost comparisons, showed that freeze-drying on site would be prohibitively expensive, the Bohners decided to dry their fresh shiitakes off-site, then convert the high-value product into a top-shelf shiitake soup mix.

“The development of new products is something we work at all of the time,” says Earnie Bohner. “New farm products and enterprises help keep us interesting to our return guests and give our first-time guests more motivation to come and see us.” Today, their sales of value-added products accounts for 50 percent of the farm’s gross income.

Processing fruits and shiitake mushrooms allows the Bohners to use “seconds,” extend their marketing season and diversify their marketing outlets.

Dan and Jeanne Carver diversified their central Oregon ranch by developing a variety of value-added products from their sheep flock. With a SARE farmer/rancher grant, Jeanne Carver tested the market, then targeted lamb and wool sales toward high-end consumers and commercial buyers. Now, they sell Imperial Stock Ranch lamb to upscale restaurants in Bend, Ore., wool in yarn-and-pattern kits for hand knitters, and ready-to-wear woolen and lambskin fashions.

“Our customers love the quality of our product, the flavor profile of the meat, the feel of the wool, and the message of the land and sense of place,” Carver says.

Direct-marketing their lamb led to selling some of their main product – beef – directly as well. “The marketing project has increased awareness and visibility of



Greenhouses and high tunnels – unheated, pipe-framed structures – offer options for producing before and after the traditional season. Easy-to-construct tunnels have been especially popular for off-season fruits and vegetables that fetch premium prices.

– Tunnel photo by Mark Davis; greenhouse photo by MB Miller.

left to right

To add value to local fare, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont developed pizza on-the-go featuring a portable oven and diverse products, from wheat to vegetables to meat. Lisa Harris of NOFA-VT demonstrates.

– Photo by Lindsey Ketchel



Sheep rancher Jeanne Carver developed a line of woolen garments such as fleece vests featuring their Oregon-raised wool, adding value to a typically low-priced commodity.

– Photo courtesy Imperial Stock Ranch



what we grow, how we grow it and, most importantly, how we manage the land,” says Dan Carver. “Once the chefs [buying Imperial Stock Ranch lamb] tour the ranch and see the roots of their product, they ask “How do we get your beef?” The demand is there,” he notes, “but it will grow only as fast as our processing and distribution will allow.”

In the Northeast, where festivals proliferate, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) used a SARE grant to research a variety of prepared foods for sale at fairs, festivals and farmers markets. Their goal was to develop a healthy value-added product that featured diverse local ingredients purchased directly from farmers and appealed to festival-goers. The answer turned out to be pizza.

To make it work, NOFA-VT needed a portable oven. They contracted with a Maine company that specializes in wood heating to build them a wood-fired French clay, copper-clad oven, with help from a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant. They then set it on a trailer so it could be pulled from event to event by truck. In 2006, “Vermont Farmers’ Fare” began selling 12-inch pizzas made from Vermont-grown wheat, vegetables, cheese and meat.

The pizzas “are a big hit!” says Enid Wonnacott, NOFA-VT’s executive director. “No one can believe the crust is made, partially, from local wheat. One of our goals was to get local food on the radar screen of people who may not even think about the farms in their community and what is available from those farms.”

Wonnacott and others planned the portable pizza project to offer farmers a direct market benefit, and also to encourage them to sell their own value-added

products. The oven also cooks bread, pies and even roasted vegetables.

Value-added opportunities are everywhere. Examine your product and brainstorm about how processing might increase its value. Fruit growers can dry their product or make wines, juices, vinegars, spreads, sauces, syrups and preserves. Grain growers might create cereals and baking mixes. Dairy operators can bottle milk or make cheese, while livestock producers might sell dried meat or specialty cuts.

When you add variety to your product line, you increase the choices presented to your customers and your chances for expanding your sales volume.

Some things to keep in mind when contemplating value-added products:

- Consider projected costs and returns carefully before investing in specialized equipment for value-added products. Often it makes sense to work with a co-processor to test your market.
- Some of the best value-added items make use of by-products or seconds.
- Seek the experts. Consult with your state Extension Service, Department of Agriculture or small business groups about packaging, processing and recipe development.

SALES TO RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS

RESTAURANTS, ESPECIALLY HIGH-END RESTAURANTS, PROVIDE lucrative markets. Chefs and restaurant patrons pay premium prices for top-quality, distinctive, locally grown products – if they are available in quantities that warrant inclusion on the menu. Some states and regions have created marketing programs to encourage restaurants to feature local farm products, and an increasing number of restaurants identify farms in their menu item descriptions and in other promotions.

The challenge often lies in getting farmer-chef relationships established. In some areas, organized sampling events have brought farmers and chefs together to talk about seasonal availability, preferred crops and varieties, volume, post-harvest handling and delivery logistics.

In the mid-90s, after receiving a SARE farmer grant, Brian Churchill held an “expo” for 50 chefs from top restaurants in nearby Louisville, Ky. “We showed we can produce the volumes they need in as good or better a quality as they can get anywhere,” Churchill says.

The SARE grant started Churchill down a path he continues to tread more than a decade later. He expanded his “IPM sweet corn” to 60 acres and sells that and other produce to two chefs, who pick up their requests at the farm twice a month.

Another SARE-funded project in northwestern Arkansas organized 11 “All-Ozark Meals” at restaurants, delis, farmers markets and other locations in 2003. Enthusiasm from the event translated to more local purchasing by restaurants and groceries and a new commitment from a regional environmental group to support farmland preservation issues. Several chefs who cooked for the All-Ozark Meals now participate in a popular competition at the Fayetteville Farmers Market, in which chefs have two hours to shop at the market and then prepare a three-course meal using all-local ingredients. Strong media response has confirmed the value of farmers’ stories when it comes to selling food.

In Hawaii, a SARE-funded effort known as the “12 Trees” project is combining new crop development with culinary expertise, organic growing techniques and agritourism. Farmer and organizer Ken Love solicited input from chefs to identify 12 tropical tree fruits with commercial potential. Then, project leaders and volunteers planted trees on a demonstration site where farmers and researchers could learn about production methods – and tourists and local residents could come to see, taste and buy unusual fruits. Over the course of the project, it evolved from a research plot to a tourist destination.

“This came about solely because of community involvement,” Love says. “So instead of a university test plot, we have an attractive public park complete with educational displays on sustainable agriculture.”

As the trees come into full production, the Kona Pacific Farmers Cooperative will market the fruit to area restaurants. Students at the West Hawaii Culinary Arts program have been involved in developing recipes for

the fruits, which include loquat, pomegranate, mysore berry, tropical apricot, figs and more.

“Everyone wins and benefits from this project,” Love says. “Researchers have a sustainable certified organic field for tropical fruit production tests, and chefs and student chefs are exposed to a wide variety of fruit that they continue to purchase from local growers.”

The 12 Trees site, located near the culinary school, was designed for visitors. Self-guided tours with field signs highlight information for growers and consumers. Two natural amphitheatres provide space for local groups to hold on-site workshops on such subjects as pruning and grafting. It also draws visitors to the 101-year-old historic Kona coffee co-op.

Other farmers report success from approaching local chefs directly.

“It seems that every type of restaurant has its own particular needs,” writes Jan Holder in her book,



top to bottom

Rare Hawaiian striped bananas are among the local fruits with a “wow” factor grown at the 12 Trees demonstration site in Kona and are a potentially hot crop for area chefs.

– Photo by Ken Love



Upscale restaurants like Restaurant Nora in Washington, D.C., feature ingredients procured from local farmers as a hook to draw customers.

– Photo by Edwin Remsberg



How to Direct Market Your Beef (RESOURCES, p. 20), adding that locally owned restaurants are a much better bet than franchises. “Restaurateurs usually want fresh, not frozen beef. They also want a uniform product. The last thing a restaurant manager wants is a customer complaining that last time he ordered this steak it was a lot bigger, or leaner, or more tender, or whatever.”

Restaurants already working with seasonal, locally produced foods might be most willing to work with you, Holder says. Providing weekly availability lists can help educate chefs and other food service personnel about their options.

Prospective restaurant suppliers should consider:

- 👉 Upscale restaurants and specialty stores pay top dollar for quality produce and hard-to-get items. According to Eric Gibson’s *Sell What You Sow!*, growers can expect a minimum of 10 percent over wholesale terminal prices for standard items at mainstream restaurants.
- 👉 Most restaurants buy in limited quantities, and sales may not justify the necessary frequent deliveries. Growers should line up buyers a year in advance and develop secondary outlets.
- 👉 Call buyers for appointments and bring samples.
- 👉 Meat producers can offer a variety of cuts, and even bones for soup stock, but most restaurants will want fresh products.
- 👉 Major selling points include daily deliveries, special varieties, freshness, personal attention and a brochure describing your farm and products.
- 👉 When planning your crop mix, talk with chefs and specialty buyers, who are constantly looking for something new. Successful restaurant sales depend

on meeting the changing needs of your buyers.

Other farmers and nonprofit organizers are exploring the potential of direct farm sales to institutions like schools, hospitals, and senior-care facilities. Philadelphia’s nonprofit Food Trust received a SARE grant in 2003 to strengthen farmer access to markets in the inner city. Working with farmer groups, extension services and institutional buyers, the group brokered marketing relationships, matching farmers with buyers, bargaining for better prices and coordinating deliveries.

Among the project’s successes was the creation of a “Farm Fresh” fruits and vegetable option for people participating in a “share food” program run by a state nonprofit organization. That program offers discounted monthly food packages with a labor commitment. About one-quarter of participants now choose fresh produce that was not previously available.

Sales from farms to Philadelphia schools is set to top \$200,000 in the first two years of the group’s farm-to-school project, according to Food Trust staffer Patrick Gorman. A special kindergarten initiative is supplying Pennsylvania farm produce for morning snacks at 11 schools, three days a week. The project has nutritional and educational benefits for the children as well as economic benefits for the farmers.

Selling to schools can be challenging – budgets are limited, many decision-makers are involved, and many schools no longer manage their own kitchens. But as public concern over childhood obesity grows, new opportunities for school food programs are opening in many parts of the country. Privately run schools and institutions often have more flexibility than public schools.

left to right

Philadelphia’s nonprofit Food Trust created linkages between Pennsylvania farmers and city schools, such as farm visits. A kindergarten student visits Solly Brothers farm in Bucks County, Pa., with his class.

Among the sales of locally produced food brokered by The Food Trust: a special morning snack for kindergarteners.

– Photos by Bonnie Hallam



COOPERATIVE MARKETING/CAMPAIGNS

SOME DIRECT MARKETERS GO IT ALONE, BUT MANY FIND THAT teaming up with others shares skills and abilities, moderates the workload and minimizes hassles.

After Terry and LaRhea Pepper's single buyer reneged on a contract to buy their entire crop of organic cotton near O'Donnell, Texas, they found themselves with bales of raw cotton and no buyer. Scrambling for an alternative, the Peppers decided to try converting the raw product into denim. LaRhea Pepper, who had majored in fashion merchandising in college, contacted companies interested in finished fabrics and secured a new buyer.

"We realized, then and there, that security and profitability depended on our assuming responsibility for processing and marketing our cotton," La Rhea Pepper says. "We don't rely on anyone else."

The Peppers joined forces with other organic and transitional cotton growers to form the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative. Through the co-op, they shared marketing expenses and risks, then dealt with buyers as a team.

"We were realistic," LaRhea Pepper says. "We realized we couldn't deliver a consistent supply as the only producer."

When the cooperative was formed in 1991, it brought together 40 farm families who sought to market their organic and transitional cotton. The cotton co-op sells raw, baled cotton or an array of processed products such as personal hygiene aids and a diversity of fabrics through their Website.

As more members of the co-op were drawn into marketing decisions, they also saw the need to create new products, expand markets and promote themselves. They diversified the product line to include chambray, flannel, twill and knits. Lower grade, shorter staple cotton, not suited to clothing, is used to make blankets and throws. Most recently, an "Organic Essentials" division was created to manufacture facial pads, cotton balls and tampons. The co-op board continues to look for other opportunities to add value to their cotton, and for partners in the industry who are willing to share the cost and risk.

The benefits of marketing agricultural products with others also appealed to Janie Burns of Nampa, Idaho, who raises sheep, chickens and assorted vegetables on 10 acres. A relatively small farmer, she is a large-scale promoter of local food systems. With a SARE grant, Burns investigated whether a growers' cooperative would help area farmers become more efficient and profitable, while offering their community access to

fresh, sustainably grown vegetables.

"We went to every list of people involved in direct marketing," Burns recalls. They surveyed 150 people within the Boise/Twin Falls area, which shares a similar climate and crops, about their interest and capabilities. Then, they identified markets, such as restaurants, natural food stores, a cafeteria, a hospital and a school.

The Boise-area farmers agreed to form their own co-op under the name Idaho Organics Cooperative, Inc. Now, the group has it down to a science. Every Sunday, co-op growers send lists of what they will have for delivery that week, including quantity, description and price, via fax, to their customers. Based on responses, the farmers harvest, then pool produce at a central location for boxing and delivery.

In Tennessee, in a similar venture with a value-adding twist, farmers who wanted to convert their harvest into high-value products formed a marketing cooperative called Appalachian Spring. With a SARE grant, Steve Hodges and the Jubilee Project investigated the feasibility of using a community kitchen in the nearby town of Treadway, then co-marketing their products – a variety of salsas, fruit spreads and personal care goods. Once they crunched the numbers and saw a positive prognosis, they began selling the items through the co-op's Website as well as through retail locations such as a regional airport gift shop.

The group also sells seasonal gift baskets to area church groups, a terrific way to highlight local products. "We tried wholesaling at first," Hodges says, "but we found that small processors just can't compete against big companies, even with a co-op." In addition to joint marketing, co-op membership offers other benefits, like sharing equipment and bulk ordering supplies.

Cooperative marketing can be a great opportunity – or a headache. Here are some tips on how to make it work for you:

- 👉 The USDA Rural Development Business & Cooperative program offers information and assistance in setting up and managing a cooperative marketing effort. It's a great place to start (RESOURCES, p. 20).
- 👉 Consider a marketing club, an informal cooperative that relies on using member marketing skills. Many extension offices offer training programs and assistance in setting up marketing clubs.
- 👉 Join a nonprofit farmer network group to share ideas and inspiration.
- 👉 Adequate market research and business planning are keys to successful cooperative marketing.

In Tennessee, farmers who wanted to convert their harvest into high-value products formed a marketing cooperative called Appalachian Spring. With a SARE grant, they opened a community kitchen.

left to right

The Mountain Tailgate Market Association unites a number of small farmers markets representing 150 small farms in western North Carolina, funding a multi-media promotional campaign, among other ventures.

— Photo by Charlie Jackson

Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaigns sponsored by Food Routes (www.foodroutes.org) boost sales of local products across the United States.



BUY LOCAL CAMPAIGNS

PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS CAN ENGAGE CONSUMERS AND PROMOTE purchases from farmers and ranchers. In 2003, California vegetable grower MaryAnn Vasconcellos approached the Central Coast Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D) with the idea of launching a campaign informing consumers why and where to buy local. Vasconcellos, who had spoken with many area growers while conducting workshops for the nonprofit Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), reported that many were asking how they might better market their products.

To Vasconcellos, the time seemed right to approach California consumers with messages about how they could convert a growing interest in food to supporting local farmers. If consumers were willing to pay for open spaces by supporting local producers, why not help connect growers and consumers by branding their food, fiber and flowers as local?

With a farmer/rancher grant from SARE, Vasconcellos and the Central Coast RC&D designed and launched a Website, designed a “buy local” label and created a marketing structure that farmers could see working. The “Buy Fresh Buy Local” campaign was designed to reflect the wide array of products and the diversity of their operations, which included u-pick, farm stands and markets and such varied goods as alpaca fleeces, grass-fed beef and lamb, as well as fruit and vegetables.

“Buy local” campaigns are underway in many parts of the country. Nationally, the FoodRoutes Network

offers low-cost and customized publicity materials to help you or your group start a “buy local” campaign.

In remote rural areas, farmers banding together have strengthened market development. Ten farmers markets representing 150 small farms in western North Carolina joined forces to form the Mountain Tailgate Market Association (MTMA), bringing the power of a group behind promotion and performance. The term tailgate market, in fact, may be unique to the rural South, referring to lots and school yards where farmers drop their tailgates to reveal fresh-picked bounty. Since tailgate markets lean toward a show-up and set-up style, the small venues can be challenging to promote for farmers, many of whom have limited resources, as well as their small rural communities.

A SARE grant provided the resources to develop a logo for the association, conduct a multi-media promotional campaign, survey shoppers and vendors at all 10 markets, and conduct a workshop for the vendors. According to project leader Charlie Jackson, a farmer who is also on staff of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, the SARE activities resulted in heightened visibility of the markets, brought many new customers, provided a strong base of information on customer and vendor perceptions of the markets and strengthened the cohesiveness of the group.

Surveys were particularly valuable, considering that about 1,600 customers and 60 vendors responded. The rapid feedback guided future promotional decisions. For example, the surveys indicated that most new

customers found the markets through word of mouth, so the vendors capitalized on that by asking customers to bring a friend on a particular market day designated as Summer Celebration. That day was the season's high point for traffic and sales.

"It's inspiring to see a group of farmers sitting down and planning together," Jackson says. "Group promotion is a major benefit of the association." That cooperation has led to plans for a 100-vendor market in Asheville, N.C.

INTERNET

AS INTERNET SALES CONTINUE TO GROW, CREATIVE FARMERS are jumping on board. The convenience of Web shopping appeals to today's busy consumers looking for unique products. The good news: You don't need to be a copywriter or a computer expert to tap into millions of potential buyers, although maintaining a successful Website can be challenging and time-consuming. Website design services have gotten more affordable in recent years, so contracting this out may make sense.

Even if you don't plan to sell your products over the Internet or via mail order, hosting a Website describing your farm, your location, hours, seasonal availability and other information makes good business sense. More and more people use the Internet as an all-purpose research tool in place of phone directories, maps and guidebooks.

A Website is also a terrific place to tell your story, a tried-and-true marketing strategy. Have a friend or

relative with a knack for photography – or a local art student or newspaper photographer – capture images of you, your family, key employees, your products, and a scenic view of your farm or ranch. Include a short "about us" section describing your farm's history, goals and values. Remember that reporters and researchers rely on the Internet too! Having an accessible, easy-to-navigate Website can multiply your promotional opportunities later.

Maryland farmers Robin and Mark Way developed a Website as part of a multifaceted "branding" campaign for their diversified, pasture-based livestock operation, Rumbleway Farm. Along with the Website, Robin Way made business cards, brochures, T-shirts, and an attention-getting farm sign, all featuring the farm's signature yellow chicken outlined in green. Way even created her own farm "blog," a software tool that lets you post regular entries in a journal-type format to share news, recipes, or other ideas. Way asserts the Website and other measures have had a huge impact on business.

Marketing cooperatives can offer a broader range of retail products on a single Website, increasing traffic while saving on the cost of Website design and maintenance. Appalachian Spring Cooperative (see p. 15) tried other marketing avenues, but found the Internet among their most effective channels.

Participating in online information gateways can result in extra business. Nationally, localharvest.org lists close to 10,000 venues where farmers and ranchers sell their products. The Maryland Extension Service, with help from a SARE grant, expanded an Internet-based sheep and goat marketing project begun in the Northeast to include the mid-Atlantic states. The new Website, www.sheepgoatmarketing.info, includes producer and processor directories as well as other resources such as a calendar of relevant religious holidays.



FEATURED FARM/RANCH WEBSITES:

- Appalachian Spring Coop, www.apspringcoop.com
- Buffalo Groves, Inc., www.buffalogroves.com
- Chico Basin Ranch, www.chicobasinranch.com
- Full Belly Farm, www.fullbellyfarm.com
- Persimmon Hill Farm, www.persimmonhill.com
- Rumbleway Farm, www.rumblewayfarm.com
- Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative, www.organicessentials.com
- Walters' Pumpkin Patch, www.walterspumpkinpatch.com
- Wholesome Harvest, www.wholesomeharvest.com

A SARE-supported project in New England found that farmers could grow and crush canola for both meal and biodiesel, which brought a competitive price.

The Website “helps me put buyers and sellers in contact,” says project leader Susan Schoenian, who hopes to add nationwide listings. “All of the producers I come into contact with credit the site with helping them to sell breeding stock and meat animals.”

Many state departments of agriculture now maintain online directories of organic farms, pick-your-own farms and farm stands. Make sure your farm is included on these, and if possible, feature your Web address in your listing. Having links to your Website appear on other sites will improve your ranking among results returned by Internet search engines.

You can also drive traffic to your Website by gathering customers’ e-mail addresses and then sending weekly or monthly e-mail announcements to advertise new products, special events or seasonal offerings.

Now that Internet marketing has proliferated, online competition for consumers’ attention is fierce. Attracting buyers can be difficult when hundreds of other farmers offer similar products in catalogs or Websites. To stay in the game, you need to maintain a good Website. If it’s not current, a customer will zip away with a click of the mouse.

If you’re interested in investigating the potential of mail or Internet marketing, keep in mind:

- When it comes to effective design, less can be more. Resist the temptation to overload your Website with flashing banners and fancy fonts.
- Once you have a great Website, you still have to attract users. Strive to get a good ranking on search engines like Google by driving people to your site from online links and e-mail alerts. Good Web designers know how to improve your ranking by using keywords. Having a distinctive farm name can also be a plus.
- List your Web address and other information in online directories that strive to connect farmers and consumers, such as localharvest.org, eatwellguide.org and eatwild.com. Most of these sites are eager for new listings and will allow to you to create a customized entry free of charge.
- Update your Website often with your latest product information and news about the farm.
- Make sure the site is secure for credit-card users, and provide regular and toll-free numbers for customers who prefer to use the phone.
- Find reliable and cost-effective shippers who will deliver products on time in good condition.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

FARMERS GROWING GRAINS AND OILSEEDS MAY FIND NEW markets if interest in bio-based fuels continues to grow. Ethanol and biodiesel processing plants are increasingly common in the Midwest, while smaller-scale projects are being tested in the Northeast and other areas.

A SARE-supported project in Maine and Vermont found that farmers could grow and crush canola for \$293 per ton, yielding 1,180 pounds of meal and 92 gallons of oil. Including the income from sale of the meal, the break-even price of the biodiesel processed from the canola oil came out at \$3.09/gallon – a competitive price for a renewable fuel.

“Farmers are interested in producing a crop whose value is tied to the price of fuel,” says project leader Peter Sexton. “There’s also a great deal of personal satisfaction to be gained from producing your own fuel.”

While it’s hard to say exactly how the renewable fuels market will develop in coming years, with processing technologies improving and demand on the rise, fuel-crop production offers an array of opportunities for creating value-added products.

Installing photovoltaic panels or wind turbines, can reduce energy expenses over the long term and provide additional interest for farm visitors. See www.sare.org/coreinfo/energy.htm for more information about farm-based renewable energy.

EVALUATING NEW FARM ENTERPRISES

WHETHER YOU’RE LAUNCHING A NEW FARM BUSINESS OR retooling an existing one, analyzing all of your possibilities is crucial to the success of your venture. Consider writing a business plan, a road map that specifies your priorities, goals and objectives. Moreover, business plans provide a framework for reviewing your progress and pointing out the need for mid-course corrections.

If you want to undertake business planning, consider using *Building a Sustainable Business: A Planning Guide for Farmers and Rural Business Owners* (RESOURCES, p. 20), a 280-page guide to planning, implementation and evaluation. The book, co-published by SARE’s Sustainable Agriculture Network, includes dozens of worksheets to help you navigate the process.

With an existing farm operation, you should be able to do a basic enterprise analysis using the records you have to keep for tax purposes, says Seth Wilner, a county extension agent with the University of New Hampshire. “Look at your profitability, then look for anomalies. Maybe you thought blueberries were a profit center, say, but they’re not. So maybe you should shift things around.”

TRYING A NEW VENTURE? FIRST, MAKE A SOLID PLAN...

Before Earnie and Martha Bohner, farmers since 1982, launch value-added products, they analyze all the costs and benefits. After starting their farm with two acres of blueberries, they added other small fruits, then began processing them. Today, they cultivate 7 acres in Lampe, Mo., and enjoy a comfortable income. Yet, they adopted each new enterprise only after asking a series of soul-searching questions, such as:

- Will the product fit in with the farm operation?
- Is the product consistent with the farm's mission and purpose?
- Will the product be economically sustainable?

In 2004, they explored freeze-drying shiitake mushrooms as a new way to add value. Armed with a SARE farmer grant, Earnie plunged into research. He found an inexpensive dryer, but it required a prohibitive amount of energy to operate, a cost he needed to justify with a

lucrative end product.

When he ran the costs – raw product, packaging, bags, labels, packing and shipping – he found that the freeze-drying was considerably more expensive than air-drying, a distinction that might be lost on customers.

Earnie ran the numbers on further processing the mushrooms into soup mix, adding still more value. Drying the mushrooms off site brought down their costs, and they could charge enough for a premium soup mix to more than offset them. The Bohners debuted the soup mix in 2006 to an enthusiastic response.

What's next? More planning as the couple attempts to move into wholesale marketing of shiitakes.

"After evaluation in three to four test markets, we will be better able to make an economically sound decision as to whether we can justify building our own freeze-drying facility," Earnie says.



Martha Bohner

You might consider seeking outside help with a specific element of your plan, like marketing. For a medium-sized direct marketing farm business, working with a marketing consultant will typically cost between \$1,000 and \$3,000. Hiring a consultant is a good idea if you're not sure how to get started or if you lack the time to go through the process on your own. "It's definitely a worthwhile investment if you're in the retail market," Wilner says. "It's a lifetime investment."

Failure to judge the true demand for a product is a common cause of failure in many business ventures. To improve your odds, be thorough about your market research. Good research entails finding out as much as possible about your planned products or services. Investigate as many marketing options as possible and identify several that look promising. The more ways and places you have to sell your product, the better your chances of success.

Promotion and customer relations should be part of your marketing plan. A common rule of thumb for promotional expenses is 3 percent of projected sales.

In New Hampshire, Wilner helped three farms improve their bottom line by working with a marketing consultant, partly with a SARE grant aimed at building marketing skills for both farmers and county Extension.

For example, Beaver Pond Farm, a well-established farm near Newport, N.H., specializing in pick-your-own

raspberries, used the consultant's advice to improve signage, raise prices on some items and adjust the layout of their farm stand to improve product visibility. They planted blueberries to diversify their crop mix and began selling meat, apples, cheeses and milk from other local farms in addition to their own products.

"People want more one-stop shopping. The customers haven't batted an eye on the price hikes," Wilner says. "The farm's gone from breaking even or maybe losing a little money to having two good seasons."

Marketing activities are guided by a variety of regulations at federal, state, county and municipal levels. Some vary by type of enterprise and location, while others are more general. Legal considerations include the type of business ownership (sole proprietorship, partnership, etc.), zoning ordinances, small business licenses, building codes and permits, weights and measures, federal and state business tax issues, sanitation permits and inspections, food processors' permits and more. For more information, consult the *Legal Guide for Direct Farm Marketing* (RESOURCES, p. 20).

Adequate insurance coverage is essential. Every operator should have liability insurance for products and premises, employer's liability, and damage insurance to protect against loss to buildings, merchandise and other property. Ask your insurance agent about liability and loss insurance specifically designed for direct-market farmers.

Resources

GENERAL INFORMATION

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program.

SARE studies and spreads information about sustainable agriculture via a nationwide grants program and practical publications. (301) 504-5230; sare_comm@sare.org; www.sare.org. See the *Direct Marketing Resource Guide* at www.sare.org/publications/dmrg.htm.

Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC).

Provides on-line information resources, referrals and searching on alternative marketing topics. (301) 504-6559; afsic@nal.usda.gov; www.afsic.nal.usda.gov. See comprehensive directory, *Organic Agricultural Products: Marketing and Trade Resources*, www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/OAP/srb0301.htm, or request free CD.

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center.

Information resources for value-added agriculture. www.agmrc.org.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), USDA. Information on direct markets, funding sources and publications about sales to schools/restaurants. www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/MSB/publications.htm.

ATTRA. National information service offers 200+ free publications. Call (800) 346-9140; Spanish:

- (800) 411-3222; or go to <http://attra.ncat.org> for:
- *Direct Marketing Business Management Series*
 - *Adding Value to Farm Products: An Overview*
 - *Fresh to Processed: Adding Value for Specialty Markets*
 - *Bringing Local Food to Local Institutions.*

Growing for Market. National monthly newsletter for direct market farmers. \$30/yr. growing4market@earthlink.net; (800) 307-8949; www.growingformarket.com.

North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, Southampton, MA (413) 529-0386 or (888) 884-9270; www.nafdma.com.

FARMERS MARKETS/AGRITOURISM

Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California by University of California, Davis. <http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/5327/3866.pdf>.

Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development.

Lists publications on running farm-stands, promoting "agri-tainment," etc. www.caed.uga.edu.

Direct Farm Marketing and Tourism Handbook by the University of Arizona. <http://ag.arizona.edu/arec/pubs/dmkt/dmkt.html>.

Farmers Market Promotion Program. Grants program from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service for farmers markets, roadside stands, CSA. www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/FMPP/FMPPInfo.htm. Also see *Farmers Market Consortium Resource Guide*, www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/Consortium/ResourceGuide.htm.

Managing the Liability and Risks of Farm Direct Marketing and Agritourism by USDA's Risk Management Agency. Resources for understanding and analyzing potential liability risks. http://www.communityagcenter.org/Risk_Liability/Risk_Introduction.htm.

Market Decision Making Toolbox for Farmers Markets. Michigan Food & Farming System. www.miffsmarketline.org/projects/green.html.

Resources for Farmers Markets by the Northeast/Midwest Institute. Includes market locators and funding sources. www.farmersmarketsusa.org.

The New Farmers' Market: Farm-Fresh Ideas For Producers, Managers & Communities by Eric Gibson. Tips for farmers and market managers and city planners. \$24.95 + \$3.95. www.sare.org/publications/newfarmer.htm; (301) 374-9696.

Sharing the Harvest: A Guide to Community-Supported Agriculture by Elizabeth Henderson with Robyn Van En. Lays out the basic tenets of CSA for farmers and consumers. 270 pp; \$24.95. (800) 639-4099; www.chelseagreen.com.

Tourism & Community Development Resources & Applied Research Clearinghouse, University of Wisconsin, Madison. www.wisc.edu/urpl/people/marcouiller/projects/clearinghouse/Tourism%20Resources.htm.

DIRECT MARKETING MEAT AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS

CSU Chico Grass-Fed Beef Website. Includes research articles reviewing the documented health benefits of grass-fed beef, information on how to create a label for your meat that complies with federal regulations, recipes and more. www.csuchico.edu/agr/grassfedbeef.

Farm Fresh: Direct Marketing Meats and Milk by Allan Nation. Answers to how, how much, when, or where to sell grass-fed meat or milk for the highest profits. 251 pp; \$35.60. www.stockmangrassfarmer.net/cgi-bin/page.cgi?id=361.html.

How to Direct Market Your Beef by the Sustainable Agriculture Network. Practical tips for selling grass-raised beef to direct markets. 96 pp; \$14.95. www.sare.org/publications/beef.htm; (301) 374-9696.

VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS/PROCESSING/SELLING DIRECT

Farmers and their Diversified Horticultural Marketing Strategies by the Center for Sustainable Agriculture. 48-minute video, \$15. www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/Videos/marketvideo.htm; (802) 656-5459.

Food Marketing & Processing Food Map. A comprehensive clearinghouse of marketing and processing information on identifying new markets, locating processing equipment, etc. www.foodmap.unl.edu.

Safe Sell Dairy: Creative Ways to Sell Dairy Products at Farmer's Markets by Courtney Haase. Product presentation, sampling and good market etiquette. 76 pp.; \$8. www.nunsuch.org/safesell.htm.

Selling Directly to Restaurants and Retailers by UC-SAREP. Tips for a successful, entrepreneurial relationship with local restaurants, retailers. www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/cdpp/selldirect.pdf.

BUSINESS PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses, by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and the Sustainable Agriculture Network. A guide for agricultural entrepreneurs. 272 pp; \$17 + s/h. www.sare.org/publications/business.htm; (301) 374-9696.

Farming Alternatives: A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of New Farm-Based Enterprises (NRAES-32). \$8 + \$3.75 s/h to Natural Resource, Ag & Engineering Service. http://extensionpubs.umext.maine.edu/ePOS/form=robots/item.html&item_number=1036&store=413&design=413; (607) 255-7654.

The Legal Guide for Direct Farm Marketing by Neil Hamilton. Tips about legal issues when direct-marketing farm products. \$20 + \$3 s/h to Agricultural Law Center, Drake University. www.amazon.com; (515) 271-2947.

New Farm Options University of Wisconsin Extension. New niche markets and business start-up issues. www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets.

NxLevel. This agricultural entrepreneurs program module offers in-depth training and materials for farmers seeking marketing opportunities. www.nxlevel.org; info@nxlevel.org; (800) 873-9378.

USDA Rural Business and Cooperative Programs. Supports cooperatives in areas such as marketing. www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs; (202) 720-7558.

SARE works in partnership with Extension and Experiment Stations at land grant universities to deliver practical information to the agricultural community. Contact your local Extension office for more information.

This bulletin was written by Laura Sayre, a freelance writer based in Bucks County, Pa., for the Sustainable Agriculture Network and was funded by USDA-CSREES under Cooperative Agreement 2004-47001-01829.



Promoting the Product

Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers

Session Assignment

Branding your business is how you will relate the personality of your business to your customers. But first you must clearly identify what your business personality is, from your perspective, as well as your customer's perception. Once you have the elements of your brand identified, then you are able to build your brand, integrate your brand into your marketing materials and successfully promote your products.

- 1) Identify the qualities of your business and/or products that will help you to create a brand.**
 - a. Unique attributes of your business, name or product**

 - b. What would make a visual symbol of your business? Identify concepts and rough sketch of what your logo should look like.**

 - c. What do you promise your customers? What do you offer? With this information, create a tagline that speaks to your offerings and ties into your visual symbol (logo).**

 - d. What is the "emotion" or "feel" that you should convey that will match your business/product line, logo and tagline? i.e. conservative, contemporary, etc. What font would you use to match the desired emotion?**

 - e. The colors you chose should match the feel of your logo and typography. What colors will you use to convey the personality of your business?**

 - f. Review your responses to each of the elements above. What is the overall "attitude" that your branding gives? Does this match what you perceive to be the personality of your business?**

2) From other presentations, you have identified your competitors. Does the branding you have created above distinguish you from your competitors? In what ways?

3) Now that you have created a brand, what ways can you use this brand to build its recognition with your customers? Be specific in the ways you will incorporate your brand into all aspects of your business and your marketing. Here are some ideas to get your started:

SIGNAGE/BANNERS

NEWSLETTER

APPAREL OF EMPLOYEES

GIVEAWAYS (TOTES, PENS, ETC.)

VEHICLE STICKERS

Promoting the Product Quiz

1) What is the better marketing strategy?

- a. Lower costs than competitors
- b. Letting your reputation speak for itself
- c. Marketing based on brand recognition

2) Which of the following are NOT elements of a brand

- a. Logo
- b. Tagline
- c. Font
- d. Color
- e. Attitude
- f. Product
- g. Price

3) There are three rules for creating an effective brand. Which is NOT a rule for a brand creation?

- a. It is unique
- b. It is expensive
- c. It is memorable
- d. It is consistent

4) What are the benefits of branding? Circle all that apply.

- a. Customers will be less sensitive to price increases because you have built strong brand loyalty.
- b. With that increased loyalty, customers will seek you out. They remember you and will look for you.
- c. If you have a strong brand you do not need to do any advertising or promotions.
- d. Because customers remember you, know your name and your products and you have built that loyalty, customers will be more inclined to talk about you and your products, helping you to reach even more customers.
- e. When you have a strong brand identity, you are distinct from your competitors.

5) Promotional tactics should: Which is not true?

- a. Invite customers to choose your product
- b. Make customers happy to do business with you
- c. Create long term relationships with your customers

d. Allow you to trick customers into buying your product

6) Social media is becoming increasingly important in reaching consumers. Which is not a true statement?

a. Social media is time-consuming and expensive

b. Facebook is the most used social media site used at this time

c. Social media builds a personal relationship with your customers

d. Social media is used by over 5 billion people

7) Signage is a critical marketing tool. It should: Which is not a true statement?

a. Include your branding

b. Stand out

c. Help to tell your story

d. Construction isn't important, just the message

e. Promote your product



Every Silver Lining Has a
Cloud!

Market Assessment & Analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS

- ◆ Strengths
- ◆ Weaknesses
- ◆ Opportunities
- ◆ Threats

SWOT ANALYSIS

• It's important that when you do a SWOT analysis, that you are honest in how you assess your business. Having friends, family, peers, or anyone else who knows your business well can be very valuable.

• You can use SWOT to assess your business, your marketplace, your workforce, or any other aspect of your business.

S

trengths

• What is a strength in one community may not be in another. This is snapshot of market strengths across the country.

• If there is a strength from your community we've missed, please share when we get to the feedback section.

S trengths

- ◆ History and Tradition
- ◆ Growing Public Awareness
- ◆ Unmatched Growth
- ◆ Quality
- ◆ Creativity
- ◆ Cool Factor



S trengths

• History and Tradition

- holidays
- celebrations
- ethnic diets



S

trengths

• Growing Public Awareness

- 75% of specialty food retailers say “local” is the most influential food claim.
- www.bealocalist.org

S

trengths

- Unmatched Growth
 - Buying locally has moved from a trend or a fad, into a full-blown movement.

S

trengths

.Quality

- Food picked at the peak of ripeness is better. It tastes better and it's more nutritionally dense.

S

trengths

.Creativity

- Creative people are drawn to the local food movement.
Find ways to put them to work for you.

S

trengths

.Cool
Factor



W eaknesses

• Weaknesses can also represent opportunity, especially if you're able to overcome it in a creative or collaborative way.

• If there is a weakness from your community that you've been able to overcome, please share when we get to the feedback section.

W eaknesses

- ◆ Price is still King
- ◆ Seasonality
- ◆ Traditional wholesale accounts are built for the big guys
- ◆ Lack of Collaboration
- ◆ Technology barriers
- ◆ Some less polished business skills

Weaknesses

• Price is still King

- Some consumers will always value the lowest price over anything else. Small scale production tends to be more expensive.

W eaknesses

.Seasonality

- People are not in tune with seasonality the way your farm is! They want what they want, when they want it.

W eaknesses

- Traditional wholesale accounts are built for the big guys
- Retailers and restaurants prefer being able to buy everything they need on the back of one truck.

W eaknesses

• Lack of Collaboration

- Some farmers and food producers see the other farmers in their community as the competition, rather than as a partner. A rising tide raises all boats.

W eaknesses

- Technology barriers

- Shoppers are buying online more than ever. And local food shoppers are learning about local products and farms online as well.

Weaknesses

• Smaller infrastructures and support networks.





hreats

.Threats are usually things you can't control. That doesn't mean you shouldn't recognize them. You need to know thereout there, and be prepared in case they affect you.



hreats

- ◆ Localwashing
- ◆ Catastrophic weather events
- ◆ Lack of succession Planning
- ◆ Changing Regulations
- ◆ Environmental Degradation



hreats

• Localwashing

- Big companies have already started advertising campaigns to leverage the idea of buying locally.



hreats

• Catastrophic weather events

- Floods
- Droughts
- Hurricanes
- Tornadoes



hreats

- Lack of succession planning

- Farms are being lost to changing generations.



hreats

• Changing Regulations

- ◆ While some states are changing regulations to make it easier to produce food, some agencies are doing the opposite.



hreats

• Environmental Degradation

- ◆ Keep in touch with what environmental concerns are being raised in your community.
- ◆ Some of you out there will be affected by these issues.



pportunities

- The local food system right now is a world of opportunity. This list is in no way all encompassing.
- Please share places you've seen opportunity!



pportunities

- ◆ Facilitated Market Places
- ◆ Places People Gather
- ◆ Emerging Demographics
- ◆ Value Added Products
- ◆ Social Media
- ◆ Allergen Communities
- ◆ SNAP



opportunities

• Facilitated

◆ Examples in New York State

- www.wholeshare.com
- www.farmiemarket.com
- www.field-goods.com
- www.foodshedbuyingclub.com
- www.thegoodfoodcollective.com



opportunities

• Places People Gather

- large workplaces
- community centers
- hospitals
- schools & universities



opportunities

• Emerging Demographics

- new parents
- Latino
- Southeast Asian
- African



opportunities

• Value Added Products

- your own line
- selling ingredients to other producers
- co-branded



opportunities

.Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Pinterest



pportunities

• Allergen Communities

- Gluten Free
- Soy-Free



pportunities

• Changing Regulations

- Check with your state Agriculture & Markets office to find out about cottage food laws.



pportunities

.SNAP

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program





.@SmallPotatoes42

.www.iamsmallpotatoes.com

.facebook.com/SmallPotatoes42



[@NYFarmersMarket](https://www.instagram.com/NYFarmersMarket)

www.nyfarmersmarket.com

www.facebook.com/FMFNY



www.nyfvi.org

facebook.com/NewYorkFarmViabilityInstitute



Every Silver Lining has a Cloud Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers 2/12/13 and 2/13/13 Presenter: Marty Butts, Small Potatoes Marketing

Webinar Questions and Answers

- 1. One way to think of fads versus trends is “A fad is people going to diners. A trend is people building diners.**
- 2. Is www.bealocalist.org competition for www.localharvest.org ?**

Local Harvest is food specific and is basically a listing service. Balle is about more than just food, it is all local businesses, but thinks of food as the entry point for getting consumers to buy local. Balle is more the “feet on the ground” within communities helping to build the buy local movement.

- 3. I looked into Balle and saw that it is expensive to contribute. If it’s not in my area, how do we get involved without spending big bucks?**

Many local Balle organizations use sliding fee scales or will accept trades for membership. For example, Small Potatoes Marketing gives free one hour consultations to members of the Syracuse First (local member of Balle) in exchange for its membership fee. If there is no local affiliate, contact the one nearest you and ask them what is involved in getting one started. Develop an organizational steering committee to help, but make sure the committee has a diversity of backgrounds, including promotions and advertising.

- 4. What kinds of things do we trade with to get assistance from creative people?**

Food! Whatever it is you are producing, that’s what you use to trade. So it could be eggs, baked goods, a discount on a CSA share or a discount off product at your farmers market booth. Some people will even do it for free, but it is better to offer something, so that if you go back to them, they are more willing to give you service again.

- 5. When inviting a film crew on to the farm, what parameters should I establish for copyright, unused footage, etc?**

This is really up to you and what you are comfortable with. Some people will have an open-door policy, while others are much more protective, such as not wanting their children to be filmed and placed on the internet. So have the conversation with the filmmaker up front. Learn what the plans are for unused footage or outtakes, how the film will be used and distributed. Let them know your thoughts and how

you want the film used. Come to terms up front. But if you are not comfortable with a “gentleman’s handshake” or verbal agreement, then ask them to put things in writing. This is especially important if they have made the initial contact rather than you seeking them out.

6. How do you explain the market saturation in farmers markets in the entire state of Maine?

In terms of saturation in numbers of markets, that would come from a recognition of the value that a market brings to a community. Many community leaders and local governments find farmers markets are an inexpensive and effective way to build community and a local economy. They are also looking for ways to preserve a local agriculture base and bring healthy food choices to their residents. They are promoting the creation of farmers markets in communities all across the US to reap these benefits. In terms of saturation within each market, it might be that you have to seek out other market venues to sell your products. That might mean farmers markets in other communities, but it also might mean finding other avenues, such as direct to restaurants, grocers, or adding value to your products to differentiate them from others and finding markets for your products that way.

7. What about over-saturation of products? Some of our farmers market members say let the free market and customers decide. Others say, too many tomatoes drowns out the market. What’s your opinion?

This is where you need to find a way to differentiate yourself from others. What can you do to set yourself apart – raising new varieties of the same product, changing to heirloom varieties or heritage breeds. You can process your foods into added-value products.

8. Additional weaknesses: transient populations, such as summer tourists, army bases; where people come and go. Another is trying to get traffic to a rural farmers market.

This would be a tough customer base to build long term relationships with. It’s as if you will need to start each season from scratch. Outreach for you will be key – look into opportunities to get your farm out there; i.e. farm fairs, open farm days. Also reach out to local businesses where you may be able to promote your farm or business to their employees.

For the rural farmers market, it is difficult to grow when you are constantly seeing the same faces, with few new ones to reach out to. You might want to consider a satellite market at a new location where your farmers will be able to reach a whole new customer base.

9. Another weakness is farmers market management that is slow to catch onto using professional management.

This goes back to the comment that you should use professional services whenever possible. You could look into farmers market grants through USDA to help pay a market manager. Also, look into farmers market associations that provide training for market managers. Many states have a statewide

association. The Farmers Market Federation of NY, serves New York State's farmers markets. You could also look into trainings given by the Farmers Market Coalition, a national farmers market association.

10. Any proven strategies to increase your prices without annoying your regular customers?

If you are selling to a grocer or other wholesale account, give them advance notice on the increase and tell them why. Give them the opportunity to buy extra quantities before the price goes up. It will be much harder in a direct marketing setting, such as a farmers market. You can't promote a price hike. But talk to your customers one on one. Let them know why you had to increase and they may understand. If they are upset or concerned, you can give them a one-time break, either hold the old price for this time only, or offer a discount this one time. I would not, however, put up a sign announcing the price hike, even if it is based on a weather calamity. If others in the market experienced the same weather issues but are not advertising a price hike, consumers will think you are the only one and taking advantage of the issue to raise your prices. Also, in this case you want to talk about the price hike with your customers, you don't want a sign to do that for you and leave questions and concerns on your customers' mind that you could have alleviated with a discussion.

11. How do you find the non-Walmart customers that don't mind paying a higher price?

These customers do exist in your community, but it can be hard to find them. Can you find where they are buying now? Understand what they are purchasing and how they are buying. You may want to look into a farmers market or adopt a CSA program for your farm.

12. Sometimes the backs of farmers trucks at farmers markets is unattractive, but also the coolers and boxes don't look very appealing. How would you improve on that?

You need to build displays that are appealing and invite people in. So incorporate those coolers and boxes into a well-designed display. Your table could be tipped at a slight angle toward the consumer. One big way to draw attention is to separate your product colors. Don't have red peppers next to red tomatoes. Separate them with other colors. When products are grouped together by color, the consumers eye is drawn over the top and on to something that is different and stops their eye. Some with food groups. You don't want all your greens piled together. Break them up to keep the consumer's eye from wandering and instead stopping at each and every product on your table. You might think about how you can dress up your coolers. Photos of your farm and the animals that produced the foods in your coolers would help draw attention to your booth and help drive sales.

13. I have trouble getting farmers to focus on their marketing strategy. Advice?

First, ask them who their target audience is. Get beyond the initial response that it is everyone, because everyone eats. But drill down to who the ideal target is. Then help them to find ways to connect to that consumer community. You may have to show them the depth of the consumer group they have chosen to emphasize the opportunity that they represent.

14. Additional threats:

- a. uncontrolled costs, like grain for animals, utilities, gas and oil.
- b. Government subsidies
- c. An historical perception that local/ farm direct is really supposed to be cheap

15. You talk about various consumer groups, can you prioritize these groups in terms of impact on sales, visitation to farmers markets?

This will be different for every community, but in Syracuse, NY, which is considered representational of the US, the order would be New parents, Latinos, Southeast Asian, then Africans. You will need to look into the demographics of your community to determine what is most important in your community. The webinar “People Sure are Strange”, archived at www.nyfarmersmarket.com, goes into how to find the consumer groups in your community in depth. Another source would be to look up Cornell University’s Department of Applied Demographics. They have county profiles on each county in New York State.

16. Additional opportunities:

- a. Niche markets, like heirloom vegetables, heritage breed meats, free range or grass fed meats.
- b. Another opportunity for dairy farmers is milking A2A2 milk or family cows. A2A2 milk from cows carrying those genes are better than those cows with A1A1 milk genetics, which has been linked to diabetes and autism in kids. This is from studies done in New Zealand and Australia.

17. Please share information on the new Vermont Cottage Industry regulations.

This regulation opens up food processing in home kitchens. It’s a low cost/low risk way of helping producers get started in food processing. You can learn more at <http://cottagefoodlaws.com/state-regulations/vermont-cottage-food-law/>

18. From DC, local food movements are associated with Gentrification and that maps onto race lines. Very touchy. Sometimes prices are assumed to be higher even when they aren't Have photographed prices in supermarket to show, but that's defensive.

Product comparison is a great technique to use to break the price misconceptions that many people have toward local food. Another idea is to offer some type of specials, like buy 5, get 1 free, that give the illusion of cheaper prices.

19. I raise goats in rural Northeast, PA. How is the ethnic market reached in urban areas?

Again, the webinar “People Sure Are Strange” covers this in depth. But you need to understand who the ethnic groups are in the urban areas you are looking at. Then find ways to connect with that community.

One great way is through community centers within the ethnic community. Another way is through ethnic grocers. You can learn what products, pricing constructs, you need to match. You may also find the grocer a willing buyer. If you are in the NYC area, look up Just Food. They can help connect you with urban and ethnic CSAs or farmers markets.

20. We are hoping to start a SNAP incentive program (a \$4 spent= \$4 match).... have heard we need a letter of approval from the state in order to do this? Have you heard this? We're in Oregon.

USDA regulation for the SNAP program states that you cannot treat SNAP consumers any differently than cash paying consumers, even if you are treating them better. To do an incentive program, it was required to apply for a waiver. However, as SNAP incentive programs began to expand across the country at farmers markets, USDA gave a blanket waiver, allowing incentive programs. This may be a requirement of the state agency that operates the SNAP program in Oregon. You should contact your state's EBT director. Before you do, go to the USDA FNS website to learn more about the waivers. Then you are armed with information before you have that discussion.

21. Should we expect heightened health regulation oversight, especially with these facilitated marketplaces? I see traditional grocers stores emphasizing food safety first. Whole foods is a recent example.

Definitely the larger the grocer, the greater the scrutiny for food safety will be. Most larger supermarkets, at least in NY, are requiring farms be GAP certified and have a 3rd party audit done. This kind of scrutiny would be very hard for the smaller farms to handle. But it is not always the case with smaller grocers. They may be concerned about food safety, but are not putting the requirements on their farmers that the big stores are.

22. In CT, three of the largest supermarkets will only buy from state GAP certified farms. Do you foresee these regulations forced on the small farmer? The problem with GAP is that it is quite costly for the small farmer to comply.

At this time, the Food Safety Modernization Act is exempting small scale, direct marketing farmers. This will allow you to continue to sell at your farm stand, CSA and farmers market without having to be GAP certified or go through any other 3rd party audit. However, as small farms begin to scale up and look for larger buyers, you should scale up your efforts toward GAPs standards so that when the time comes that it becomes a requirement, you are prepared.



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Glossary of Terms

Facilitated Marketplace

When a third party helps make the connections between farmers and consumers, such as an online farmers market, that is known as a *Facilitated Marketplace*.

Emerging Demographics

Groups of consumers increasing over time within a market area, such as a growing Latino population, is an emerging demographic.

Localwashing

Localwashing is when companies align themselves with the local food movement to help them sell their products and thereby devalues the movement.



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Session Assignment

While you have already prepared a SWOT of your market area and your place within it, this exercise will help you assess the status of your local food system and what challenges and opportunities there will be for your business within your own local food system. As you look at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, be sure you look at what it means for your business and how you can turn each into an opportunity for you.

- 1. Looking within your own community, identify the strengths you see of your community's interest in local food purchasing. Once you have identified those strengths, how can you take advantage of those strengths to benefit your own business?**

- 2. It has been said that creative people are attracted to the local food movement and they look for ways to help promote it. Identify the creative people in your community that you may be able to tap into to benefit your part of the local food movement. Indicate how you can partner with each of the people you identify and what you can trade for their services.**

- 3. Identify potential weaknesses of the local food movement in your market area. What can you do to turn these weaknesses into opportunities for you?**

- 4. Threats to the local food movement are things that are out of your control, such as weather events. Can you identify potential threats to local food within your community and suggest ways to safeguard against or minimize these threats for your own business?**

5. **Government regulation will play a part in your business, depending on the product you intend to sell or the marketplace in which you plan to sell. Research state, local and federal regulations and determine what regulations will impact your business and what you must do to comply. For example, selling bedding plants will require a nursery license from the NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets, as well as a sales tax certificate from NYS Sales and Taxation.**

6. **Several opportunities within the local food system were identified on the webinar. Can you identify some of these opportunities within your own community and how you could take advantage of these opportunities?**
 - a. **Facilitated Marketplaces:**

 - b. **Places where people gather**

 - c. **Identify the emerging demographics in your community**

 - d. **Value added products**

 - e. **Social media opportunities**

 - f. **Others?**

Every Silver Lining has a Cloud Quiz

1. True or False. A SWOT analysis will force you to look at your market environment in terms of how it can impact your business, whether it be opportunities or challenges.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Which of the following statements about the growth of the local food movement is not true?
 - a. 75% of food retailers indicate that local food is important to their consumers.
 - b. Local direct to consumer food sales exceeded \$11B in 2012
 - c. Local food is a fad that will eventually die out.
 - d. The growth of interest in local food is outpacing the growth of the organic food movement.
3. To those consumers that make their food buying decisions based solely on price, you should:
 - a. Reduce your price until you can win them over.
 - b. Discuss with them the error in their decision making process until you can win them over.
 - c. Accept that is the case with some people and concentrate on those that value quality above price.
 - d. Promote your product as superior to the cheaper foods and insult anyone who doesn't agree.
4. Social media is a personal way to reach your customers and potential customers. Match the social media with its key characteristics.
 - a. Facebook 2
 - b. Twitter 1
 - c. Instagram 4
 - d. Pinterest 3
 1. Short posts, good for B2B connections
 2. Often used in place of a website and is the #1 place for consumers to get information about businesses and products
 3. Very visual in its connections with consumers
 4. Photo site that can be directly connected to other social media