



Direct Marketing of Agricultural Produce Through Farmers' Markets

Agricultural Economics/ International Agriculture/ Agri-Business

Overview

With the flood of imported agricultural produce coming into the United States from all over the world, even larger commercial growers are taking a second look at high-return marketing outlets like farmers' markets. Marketing systems that were profitable 50 years ago may not be profitable today. As land becomes more expensive because of urban growth, small farms of 100 acres or less are becoming even more popular. This leaves growers with the choice of selling their land to developers or getting into niche farming that uses direct marketing channels. Some growers will sell out altogether and migrate, while others will reduce acreage and start growing for specially contracted local markets."



Most farmers' market customers come to the markets for the superior quality and freshness, unusual varieties, and a chance to support local agriculture and meet the farmers who grow their food. And if these shoppers can get much higher quality at a competitive price, they're getting a lot better value for their money!

Many markets have been established to provide customers with fresh produce at lower prices than local supermarkets. In other cases the goal has been to provide fresher, superior product at competitive prices. Either way, the customer finds better value, which is defined by the relationship between product and price.

The largest market in the state is the Mississippi Farmers' Market in Jackson, just off the High Street exit near the fairgrounds. With an 18,000 square foot building and 32 stalls, it is open three days per week in season, and on Saturdays all year. The smallest is probably the one-day per year market in Crystal Springs, which is part of the annual Tomato Festival, the last Saturday in June each year. The Crystal Springs Farmers' Market is on a downtown street by the railroad tracks, has 15 to 20 vendors, with lots of tomatoes, watermelons, blueberries, and other summer produce.



Prepared by: Teddrick Hargrave, Research Associate, Wesley Whittaker, Ph.D., Agricultural Economics Program Leader, Veronica Igbokwe, Research Associate

Farmer Benefits

Farmers find a number of advantages in selling at farmers' markets.

- Sellers at farmers' markets often get a *larger cash return* for their product than through wholesale marketing.
- Sellers get *paid cash-in-hand*, instead of waiting 30-90 days or longer.
- Sellers *take pride and have fun selling* to the people who enjoy eating their produce.
- A farmers' market is a good place for *new growers who are perfecting production skills*.
- Growers enjoy the *interaction with customers* and other vendors, and say "This is my social life!"
- With interacting with the customers, farmers are able to *understand what the consumers want*.

Consumer Benefits

- Consumers get produce from the market that is superior quality.
- Consumers purchase products that are fresh.
- Consumers meet the farmers who grew their food.
- Consumers come to the market for unusual varieties.
- Consumers go to the market to support local agriculture.



Tips for Selling Produce at the Farmers' Market

THE MARKET

- Get a copy of the market rules from market manager.
- Make sure the market operating days and times are compatible with your schedule.
- Find out how much it will cost you to sell at the market.
- Check with insurance agents about adequate coverage.

EQUIPMENT

- You'll need a display stand if one is not provided.
- Create a neatly lettered sign for identifying yourself, the name of the farm, what you sell and where you're from.

- If you sale by the pound you need a scale.

DISPLAY

- Cleanliness, color and spacing are most important.
- Keep produce off the ground.
- Add some color to your stand or table.
- Remove produce damaged by customers.

SALES

- Know your produce-consumers are interested in how you grew it.

- Serve one customer at a time.
- Give samples.
- Tell them how to keep it.
- Have something to sale all season.
- Give customers personal opinions.
- It takes time to develop a profitable business.

PRICING

- Post your price.
- Know your competitors price and quality.
- It's easier to lower prices than to raise them; don't sell yourself short.

What Sells Well at Farmers' Markets

- Try to provide something different and don't compete with the super-markets.
- If you are considering making cheese, for example, don't make a bulk-standard cheddar.
- Carefully assess what's already on offer and selling well at your chosen markets.
- Pricing is important - it has to reflect costs of production but must not be too cheap and not too expensive, especially if a similar product is available in the area. Remember that your profit margin will be influenced by the cost of production and price.
- Quality is everything—people visit the market to get products that are superior.



Local Farmers' Markets

ADAMS

Adams County Farmers' Market
Operated by Alcorn State University
 613 Main Street
 Natchez, MS 39120
 Phone : 601-442-4648
 Contact: Helen Brooks
 (Perfect atmosphere to market & purchase agricultural produce.)

COPIAH

Crystal Springs Farmers' Market
 West Railroad Avenue
 Crystal Springs, MS 39059
 Phone: 601-892-3731
 Contact: Dr. Rick Snyder

LINCOLN

Brookhaven Farmers' Market-Certified
 Downtown Brookhaven in Railroad Park across from the Chamber
 Brookhaven, MS 39061
 Phone : 601-835-3460
 Contact: Rebecca Bates

CLAIBORNE

Claiborne County Farmers' Market
 On the corner on Main & Fair St.
 P.O. Box 607
 Port Gibson, MS 39150
 Phone: 601-437-5011
 Contact: Michael Wells

HINDS

Mississippi Farmers' Market
 929 High Street
 Jackson, MS 39202
 Phone: 601-354-6573
 Contact: Richard Butler

WARREN

Vicksburg Farmers' Market
 Downtown Vicksburg Waterfront
 Levee Street @ Grove Street
 Vicksburg, MS 39180
 Phone: 601-624-9484
 Contact: Mary Beth Lasseter

References

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. How to Sell at a Farmers' Market. Retrieved August 18, 2009 from www.mass.gov/agr/markets/farmersmarket/how_to_sell.htm

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce. Mississippi Farmers' Market. Retrieved August 18, 2009 from www.mdac.state.ms.us/n_library/departments/farm_mkt/frk_frm_markets.asp

New World Publishing. The New Farmers' Market Resources. Retrieved August 17, 2009 from www.nwpub.net/Benefits-of-farmers-Markets.html

Resources:

Department of Agricultural Sciences,
Agricultural Experiment Station
Alcorn State University
1000 ASU Drive, 750
Alcorn State, MS 39096-7500

Editorial Committee:

Wesley Whittaker, Ph.D.
Professor & Program Leader, Agricultural Economics

Teddrick Hargrave– Research Associate
Veronica Igbokwe– Research Associate

Dr. Ayona Funtikova
Professor of Agricultural Economics

Agricultural Economics/ International Agriculture/ Agri-Business

Phone: (601) 877-3975

Fax: (601) 877-6523

Email: wwesley@alcorn.edu



The university complies with all laws regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity in all its activities and programs and does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of age, creed, color, national origin, race, religion, sex, handicap, or military status.