



Mastering Marketing

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Why Buy Local?**
- **On-Farm Processing Project**
- **Grants**



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Equal access programs

Are You Eating a Third Hand Tomato?

STOP! Before you take another bite, you might want to consider that your food choices have a much bigger impact than you could ever imagine.

Nothing beats the flavor of field-ripened Maryland tomatoes harvested at the height of their ruby blush. These tomatoes were planted and harvested using good agricultural practices that render them disease free and miles fresher. Many store tomatoes were picked somewhere west or south of Maryland, sold to a broker, and then sold to the grocery-store chain for

distribution. That's a third-hand tomato.

Supermarkets consider produce to be locally grown if it is produced within a 12 hour drive of their store, or roughly within a 600 miles radius. The National Association of Farmers' Markets has two types of "local" definitions. Local is defined as a radius from the market in which case 30 miles is ideal, but up to 50 miles is acceptable for larger metropolitan areas. Or, the definition of local may be a county boundary or other geographic boundary such as a national park.

Buying local keeps your food dollars circulating in your community. Local farmers act as trusted producers of healthy food and are the stewards of ecosystems and watersheds. Their fields discourage urban sprawl, promote sustainable developments, and protect farmland. Buying local food helps make farming more profitable and selling farmland for development less attractive.

Buying locally grown Maryland produce is easy. Here are some simple tips:

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Processing for Profits Project

The University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Future Harvest-CASA are partnering on a project to identify and propose policy options that encourages on-farm food processing, and cultivates innovation in small batch food processing.

The objectives of the project include:

1. Identify differences in regulatory requirements for on-farm processing and value-added farm enterprises in Maryland, surrounding states, and other northeast states.
2. Evaluate and compare on-farm processing regulations using a stakeholders' meeting. Communicate results to participants and policy-makers. Develop a barriers list.

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“Shoppers want to purchase products directly from farmers because they taste good and they enjoy meeting and talking with farmers.”



Tips to Increase Market Sales

Farmers’ markets and roadside stands offer farmers the ability to reach consumers willing to pay a fair retail price for farm products. Shoppers want to purchase products directly from farmers because they taste good and they enjoy meeting and talking with farmers. Yet, consumers have many choices when choosing which roadside stand to visit or from which farmer to purchase products. Here are tips to help you increase your sales of products sold directly to customers.

1. Be energetic and happy to see a customer! Talk to customers and develop relationships. Customers come back because they want to do business with someone they know.
2. Have informed workers who know about the products being sold. Be aware that customers may not appreciate being helped by young children.
3. Distribute flyers or a farm newsletter to let customers know who you are, where you are located, and your days and hours of operation. Include farm goals, objectives, and mottos in farm literature. Use terms like service-minded, quality, sustainable, and organic.
4. Develop a mail or email list. Ask customers if they would like to have their names added to your mailing list.
5. Create a farm postcard announcing the opening of your business and mail it three weeks prior to the beginning of market season.
6. Make and distribute a list of products that will be available in coming weeks.
7. Products should have prices clearly marked. Products should be easy to reach.
8. Recommend product uses. Offer recipes or cooking instructions, especially for unusual products.
9. Offer the unusual -- sell garlic with tops or Brussels sprouts on stems.
10. Pre-pack for customer convenience. “Mix and match” or “grab and go” through the use of netting, bunches, or bundling.
11. Offer free samples and be attentive to sample appearance. Make sure to follow health department rules and regulations for sample distribution.
12. Visit other farmers’ markets or roadside stands to see for yourself what works well and what doesn’t. Talk to other farmers.

Additional Resources:

The New Farmers’ Market: Farm-Fresh Ideas for Producers, Managers and Communities, 2001, by Vance Corum, Marcie Rosenweig and Eric Gibson, New World Publishing, 11543 Quartz Dr. #1, Auburn, California 95602

Growing for Market, published monthly by Fairplain Publications, P.O. Box 3747, Lawrence Kansas 66046, 800-307-8949, or www.growingformarket.com.

Third Hand Tomato continued...

- Shop at a farmer's market, farm stand, or pick-your-own operation
- Join a CSA or Produce Subscription Service
- Patronize supermarkets that purchase produce from local growers
- Patronize restaurants that use ingredients from local producers
- Ask your food supplier about the exact sources of their food

Plant your food dollars close to home. When you buy local food, you vote with your food dollar. This ensures that family farms in Maryland will continue to thrive and that healthy, flavorful, and plentiful food will be available for future generations. Check out these websites for a list of farmers' markets, roadside stands, farm markets, and producers who sell direct to the public in Maryland:

University of Maryland Cooperative Extension - www.MarylandAgriculture.info

Maryland Department of Agriculture - www.mda.state.md.us

United States Department of Agriculture - www.ams.usda.gov/FARMERSMARKETS

NESARE Grants Available

The Northeast Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program has posted the 2009 Farmer Grant and the Partnership Grant applications to its website at www.uvm.edu/~nesare/.

Farmer Grants test new crops, practices, and systems through on-site experiments and share the results with other farmers. Grants average about \$5,200, and are capped at \$10,000. Farmer Grant applications are due December 16, 2008.

Partnership Grants are awarded for on-farm research and demonstration projects developed by agricultural professionals who work directly with farmers. Grants are capped at \$10,000. Partnership Grant applications are due December 9, 2008.

The Inside Quote

"All right, every day ain't going to be the best day of your life. Don't worry about that. If you stick to it you hold the possibility open that you will have better days "

—Wendell Berry

Processing for Profits continued...

3. Convene workgroup of regulators, farm Extension educators and specialists and project participants will develop policy recommendations for changes to current regulations to increase adoption of on-farm processing enterprises by Maryland farmers.
4. Develop a "White Paper" on the subject of on-farm processing and regulatory changes to be used as a tool to recruit legislative champions for changes to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).
5. Research, write, and publish a user-friendly Farmers' Guide to On-Farm Processing in Maryland.



This project is intended to assist others who are trying to establish on-farm processing enterprises and provide policy makers with concrete examples of the capacity and demand among Maryland farmers for more profitable outlets for their raw products.

Your assistance is vital to the success of the project and I hope you will plan to attend the workshop for farmers and regulators and share your insights and concerns.

Watch for an announcement of the date and location of the workshop to be in late February or early March.

FYI ...

Build on What You Know

Do you have experience or expertise that you could turn into a business?

Amy Dacyczyn is probably America's most famous penny pincher. In the mid-80's She and her husband Jim established ideas from the beginning as to what they wanted their lives to be – a large family, Amy as a full-time Mom, and a large farmhouse in a rural area. All this on Jim's \$30,000 military salary. Conserving cash became Amy's obsession and putting her ideas into practice, they managed to save \$49,000 in seven years while still raising and feeding six children.

Amy then decided to share her success with other tightwads and in June 1990, *The Tightwad Gazette*, was born. Produced from 1990 until 1996, the publication had over 50,000 subscribers. When Amy ceased the newsletter, she published three compilations of the newsletter material. Over 475,000 copies of these three books are in print.

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Visit <http://AgMarketing.umd.edu> for more information on the agricultural marketing program. For more information on WMREC, visit <http://wmrec.umd.edu>.

Comments and suggestions regarding the newsletter are always welcome. References to commercial products or trade names are made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by University of Maryland Cooperative Extension is implied. Articles and photographs can be reprinted with permission.

Useful On-Line Marketing Resources

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Did you know there are 197 CSAs and Roadside stands operating in Maryland this year? That's just a sample of the kind of information available from the Maryland Department of Agriculture through their newly revised website. This site is an excellent source for information on Licenses and Permits, Animal Health, Plants, Conservation, Marketing, Publications, Directories, and Maryland's Best products. You can also subscribe on-line to receive the Department's excellent e-newsletter..

For more information visit:

<http://www.mda.state.md.us>

Zip Skinny

Market research often begins with determining how many potential customers there are in your area. A good resource for determining populations, household make-up, and demographics is *Zip Skinny*. By entering zip codes by towns or states, you can view that zip code's most current U.S. Census data.

For more information visit:

<http://www.zipskinny.com>