



Mastering Marketing

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center
- Marketing In An Upside Down Economy
- 2007 Census Of Agriculture Released

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Equal access programs

New Website Makes University of Maryland the Place to Go for Info on Rural and Community Development



The Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center (MREDC) is now the place for the agricultural and natural resources community to go for valuable information thanks to the creation of a new website: mredc.umd.edu. The website was formally introduced at the Maryland Ag Commission meeting on Feb 11.

MREDC was established by the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) to serve these communities through programming and support. **The need for such an effort was identified through a series of statewide listening sessions and documented in a Maryland Agriculture Commission report to the Governor.**

Specifically, MREDC's mission is to:

1. Serve as a portal for educational and outreach resources in marketing and business development planning;
2. Assist entrepreneurs in agriculture and natural resources enterprises in developing new marketing plans and opportunities;
3. Serve as a launching pad to a wide variety of web-based university, community, and professional resources for developing profitable, sustainable businesses.
4. Provide new and next-generation farmers with access to training, mentoring and business development resources; and provide continuing education and networking opportunities for agricultural support agency personnel, Extension staff and agricultural economic development specialists statewide.

(continued pg.3)

Marketing in an Upside Down Economy



"Make lemonade out of lemons" is a fitting call to action for marketing in an ailing economy. Everywhere you turn, there's bad economic news and concern about family budgets, jobs, and overall financial security. Yet, people still need to eat and farming, while not inflation-proof, is in a better position than most other industries to weather a recession.

But what about the individual producer's economic position? Commodity producers will have to weather the storm in the world market arena, which seems to change daily. There are steps small producers, direct marketers, and self-employed service providers can take

now to re-position their products, expand or change your market segments, and get prepared to take full advantage of an up swing in the economy when it comes.

First, take a hard look at the products and services you provide. Should you drop some of the varieties you produce, drop some of your marginal markets, or re-package your services to maintain a baseline of sales? Segment your products and concentrate on those with the best returns for now - grow the four varieties of peppers that sold the best for you and don't count on selling those few super - hot ones. Or, start offering group riding lessons at a reduced cost or frequency to maintain your stable clients. Landscapers could offer additional services such as a free lawn aeration with a seasonal mowing contract. Look for ways to make your product and services a better value for the money and tell your customers about those attributes. Diversification and flexibility will be the key elements of production and marketing plans in 2009.

Use this slower time to develop new products or services. That's what other industries do during slower times of the season. For example, they develop or install new software programs, work on their marketing materials, or look for ways to improve their administrative efficiencies. Update your website, take new farm or promotional pictures, revise your marketing materials, take a training course or offer one to your employees. Take this time to think through your business model and make those revisions you and your accountant, insurance provider, business consultant, or Extension agent have been proposing.



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(Maryland Rural Enterprise Website continued from Page 1)

www.mredc.umd.edu

Providing Tools for Business Success



The College and MCE were very responsive in meeting this need and dedicated to helping AGNR enterprises prosper."

"Agricultural and natural resources businesses and the people who run them are facing challenges today involving finances, changing land-use patterns, government regulations, and more," says Dr. Nick Place, Associate AGNR Dean and Associate Director of the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE). **"The college and MCE are dedicated to helping agricultural and natural resources enterprises prosper,** and we anticipate that the MREDC will be a keystone in the college's Economic and Community Development Initiative and will serve as a model for similar efforts elsewhere. The launching of the website is just the first step."

The website contains podcasts, video presentations, webinars and other resources, including regional contacts and supporting agencies that will enable Extension faculty to expand their programming resources. "Our hope is that our faculty will contribute their expertise, publicize events, post interactive presentations, and otherwise use this website to assist their clients with such issues as entrepreneurship, business development, alternative enterprises, intergenerational transfer of businesses," says Regional Extension Marketing Specialist Ginger Myers.

2007 Census of Agriculture Released



The U.S. Department of Agriculture released its every-five-year Census of Agriculture showing that in Maryland since the last Census conducted in 2002 there are 636 or 5 percent more farms, 25,874 or 1 percent fewer acres of farm-

land, and 16 percent more female principal farm operators. The latest figures indicate that farmers enrolled 57 percent more farms and 48 percent more acreage in conservation programs between 2002 and 2007. From an economic standpoint, the value of agricultural products sold increased 42 percent to \$1.84 billion while production expenses increased by 137 percent to \$1.55 billion. Average net farm income increased 59 percent from 2002 to 32,161 per farm.

"These data show a true and increasing commitment by farmers to use conservation

practices as part of their farm management and to protect the environment for future generations and I thank them for that commitment," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Agriculture is resilient and a critical part of our state's economy, quality of life, environment and food supply and one that we are committed to strengthening."

Maryland Department of Agriculture
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD. 21401

The Inside Quote

"...no other human occupation opens so wide a field for the profitable and agreeable combination of labor with cultivated thought, as agriculture."

President Abraham Lincoln

Useful On-Line Marketing Resources



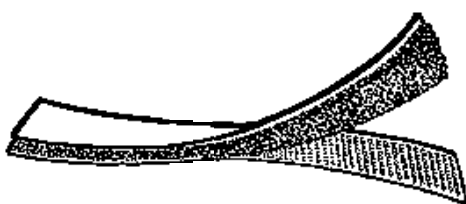
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE INFORMATION ACCESS
Alternative Farming Systems Information Center
National Agricultural Library

The Organic Agriculture Information Access is an electronic collection of historic United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) publications related to organic agriculture. In this collection, there are almost 200 documents published before 1942 (before synthetic chemicals became widely used) that contain state-of-the-art information and data that is till very pertinent for today's agriculture. This collection is provided by the Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, a part of the National Ag Library, with funding from the USDA National Organic Program and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/n/nal/>

FYI ...

Need a Great Product Idea? Go Take a Walk



For thousands of years, man has walked through fields of weeds and arrived home with burrs stuck to his clothing. It's amazing no one took advantage of the problem until 1948. George de Mestral, a Swiss engineer, returned from a walk one day in 1948 and found some cockleburs clinging to his cloth jacket. When de Mestral loosened them, he examined one under his microscope. The principle was

simple. The cocklebur is a maze of thin strands with burrs (or hooks) on the ends that cling to fabrics or animal fur.

By the accident of the cockleburs sticking to his jacket, George de Mestral recognized the potential for a practical new fastener. It took eight years to experiment, develop, and perfect the invention, which consists of two strips of nylon fabric. One strip contains thousands of small hooks. The other strip contains small loops. When the two strips are pressed together, they form a strong bond. VELCRO, the name de Mestral gave his product, is the brand most people in the United States know.

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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.