



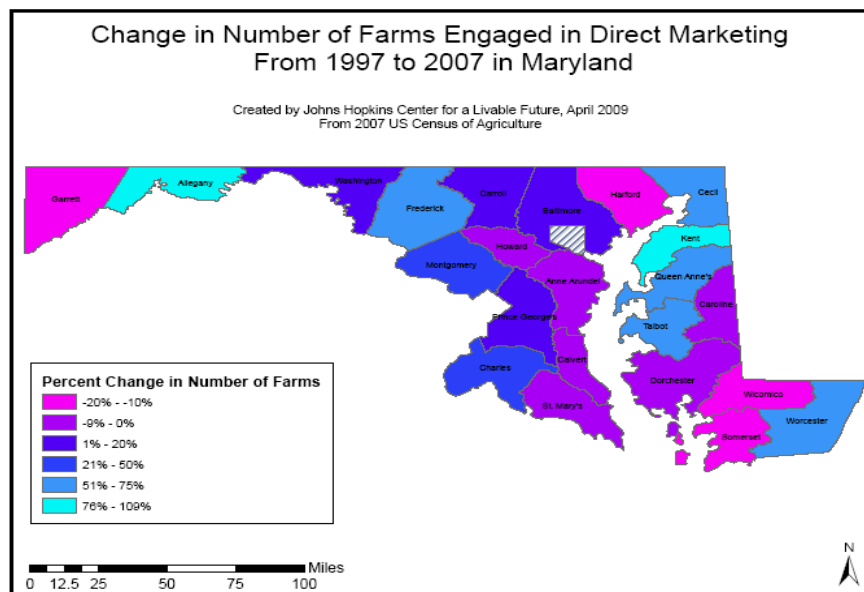
Mastering Marketing *Highlight*

Ginger S. Myers - Regional Extension Specialist, Marketing • 301-432-2767 x338 • gsmyers@umd.edu
Western Maryland Research & Education Center • 18330 Keedysville Road • Keedysville, MD 21756-1104

Direct Marketing Feeds “Buy Local”

Grocery stores and brokers have been purchasing “in-season” produce for years. As the season progresses, a glut of product drives down prices, allowing stores to capitalize on lower inventory costs. One solution to these falling prices, was for farmers to try to get local produce into more stores. But, the problem with local into retail is mainly about distribution. Distributors usually work with brokers, not directly with producers.

Over the past 10 years there has been a significant increase in “direct marketing” farm produce in Maryland, putting a face and a story on locally grown or processed foods. The following graphic shows the dramatic increase in the number of farms engaged in direct marketing in Maryland since 1997.



Locally grown foods and products are now unique and "special" to consumers simply because by buying direct (e.g., local), consumers feel they can short circuit the industrial production and distribution systems, a source of food safety concerns and debatable production practices. The popularity of “local” is based on authenticity-real products, from real farmers.

Producer-only markets, transparency in sourcing products or livestock, accurate labeling, attention to food safety issues and concerns, and always offering high quality products are not just cornerstones of customer service, but form the keystone in the “buy local” trend. Directing marketing through farmers markets, agri-tourism operations, CSAs, and on farm retail stands provides an advantageous link in the distribution chain between consumers and producers.