

Market Planning and Marketing of Fresh Produce

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of sustainable agriculture requires the development of alternative production techniques and marketing strategies. Marketing is defined as the commercial functions involved in transferring goods from producer to consumer. Marketing is not just the final transaction of receiving a check. The acts of buying supplies, renting equipment, paying for labor, advertizing, processing and selling are all part of a marketing plan. Marketing should begin as the first ideas for an enterprise start to bubble. Some say marketing is everything a business does, that it is the most important aspect of any business, and the only action that results in revenue. Agricultural marketing is where the producer, the processor, the distributor and the consumer meet.

Even though a number of viable marketing channels and strategies exist, many limited resource producers have not been able to fully take advantage of these channels. The reasons for lack of participation in these markets by small-scale producers are varied and have been studied extensively. Limited resource or small-scale producers are often faced with more extensive obstacles than do the large producers. They generally have less education, and lack the resources to participate in alternative production or marketing methods. Overall, small and limited resource producers do recognize the need to increase their competitive advantage in the market place, and have in some cases created alternatives to traditional ways of doing business. The expansion of community supported agriculture, farmer's markets and niche efforts in specialty products is increasing annually. Institutional markets such as schools, hospitals and other direct markets can play a vital role in sustaining local producers and local economies. This paper draws heavily on the work and experience by the authors working with small and limited resource agricultural producers. It outlines and recaps the many marketing channels and/or strategies that small-scale producers could access and utilize. It further highlights the pros and cons of each of the marketing channels. The merits of selling a product before it is produced are emphasized.