

Growers Employ Variety Of Techniques To Market Products

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HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) —

Although vegetable and fruit growers have many ways to sell their products, there is a way to take advantage of simple marketing techniques to ensure their success, according to a marketing expert who spoke to about 30 growers registered last week for the marketing short course at the Pennsylvania Vegetable Conference.

- One grower in Carbon County, who operates a roadside market, publishes a newsletter that she distributes free of charge to her customers, telling them about upcoming specials.

- An Erie County grower mails a color brochure to customers detailing what special promotions are upcoming at the market.

- One grower uses a \$30 computer software program to design and print up a calendar, which is distributed to customers. This calendar lists upcoming sales and special events.

- A grower in the central part of the state uses a direct mailing from a list provided at a vegetable stand to triple her business.

- One grower advertises a pruning seminar in the spring and gets a "real nice" turnout that helps to promote and sell products grown on the farm.

- A grower from the northeastern part of the state puts his farm name on plastic polybags to advertise the products grown on the farm.

- A grower of wholesale products, every year, tests products for pesticide residues and advertises that fact on the products grown. Another advertises that the orchard is a Penn State integrated pest management (IPM) testing site and posts whether pesticides are used on the products grown.

- One grower said that he often takes products out of display boxes and eats them in front of customers, to show that if he thinks it is safe enough for him to eat, it ought to be safe enough to buy for the family.

Growers need to do all that they can "to be the last one in," said Adrienne Zoble, founder and president of Adrienne Zoble Associates, Somerville, N.J.

Zoble provided guidance in creating a marketing plan from her quarterly newsletter, *Unconventional Wisdom*, to those registered

for the marketing short course at the state vegetable conference.

In her guidelines, "Perfectly Easy Planning," Zoble provided her step-by-step approach to identifying a marketing plan and making it work.

When promoting products, growers should keep in mind that it is more important to look at benefits rather than "features." Benefits include those principles about your business and products that satisfy people's emotional and psychological needs, also called those "warm fuzzies."

"It's not the quantity of marketing you do, but the combination of quality and continuity," said Zoble.

Features merely promote a certain product for a certain price. Benefits look into satisfying people's needs, as for freshness, quality, or other factors such as keeping products pesticide-free.

As in any other business, when marketing farm products, it's important to keep in mind the components of marketing — perception, price, product, promotion, people, and positioning.

Above all, growers should be "pro-active" about their product, stressing products' benefits and informing the buyers, whenever possible, about what went into growing and distributing the product.

In the '90s, "customer service" is becoming more important, as "high tech" changes into "high touch."

"People really like service and attention," said Zoble. They no longer want to be treated impersonally — they expect more customized, more personalized service.

When developing a plan, it is important to first diagnose what the situation is for the business in the marketplace, look at a company prognosis, set down goals and objectives, choose a strategy (in general), use tactics (the actual work of accomplishing the strategy), and look down the road, after implementation, of how the marketing is proceeding.

Zoble provided some guidance into how growers can work as marketers of their products to be "the last one in" — in other words, to secure a place in the market and build up long-term relationships with customers.

The more information you provide the customers, through news-



Examples of grower advertising were reviewed at the marketing short course. A panel reviewed samples from growers in the audience. The panel was composed of, seated, from left, Adrienne Zoble, Zoble Associates; Donna Miller, owner and designer for D Square Design, Lemoyne; Robin Hetherington, B&R Farms; and Rudy Grob, sales manager, Funks Farm Market, Millersville. The panel was moderated by John Stark, director of the Bureau of Market Development, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, standing.

letters, direct mailings, or customizing the packaging of the product, "the better off you are," said Zoble.

Examples of grower advertising were reviewed at the marketing short course. A panel reviewed samples from the Lehigh Valley Growers and from other growers in the audience.

The panel was composed of Adrienne Zoble, Zoble Associates; Donna Miller, owner and designer for D Square Design, Lemoyne; Robin Hetherington, B&R Farms; and Rudy Grob, sales manager, Funks Farm Market, Millersville. The panel was moderated by John Stark, director of the Bureau of Market Development, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

What the panel concluded: keep advertising simple (use less clutter), make it consistent (make use of only one logo), and emphasize benefits over features.

Many growers, according to Zoble, who advertise are taken up by the compunction to "put words, words, words in material to fill all the white space" in the ad. Trying to do too much in one space is distracting and confusing.

Also, many retailers are "married" to pages 2-3 of a newspaper and should learn to make use of other sections of the publication where they can more effectively target products.

"People are often overwhelmed and can't digest everything in the ads," said Zoble.

Also, use of pictures is vital to make advertising more attractive and effective.

An effective marketing tool is the use of a business logo, which varies in cost of design, which can range from \$200 to \$4,000, depending on designer. Designers

are listed in the phone book's yellow pages.

Another panel reviewed ways growers can personalize their business for customers. The panel, moderated by Stark, featured Bill Reynolds; Jon Johnson, policy analyst at the Center for Rural Pennsylvania; and Marty Wise, professor of marketing at Harrisburg Area Community College.

N.Y./N.J. Milk \$12.83

ALBANY, N.Y. — Dairy farmers who supplied regulated milk dealers (handlers) under the New York-New Jersey marketing orders during December 1994 will be paid by handlers on the basis of a uniform price of \$12.83 per hundredweight (27.6 cents per quart); the price for the corresponding month last year was \$13.48 per hundredweight.

Market Administrator Ronald C. Pearce also stated that the price was \$13.03 in November 1994. The uniform price is a marketwide weighted average of the value of farm milk used for fluid and manufactured dairy products.

A total of 11,267 dairy farmers supplied handlers regulated under the New York-New Jersey marketing orders with 960,033,002 pounds of milk during December 1994. This was an increase of 2.7 percent (about 25 million pounds) from last year. The gross value to dairy farmers for milk deliveries was \$124,382,471.03. This included differentials required to be paid to dairy farmers but not premiums, deductions authorized by the farmer, or assessments.

Regulated handlers used 423,013,594 pounds of milk for Class I, 44.1 percent of the total. This milk is used for fluid milk products such as homogenized,

flavored, low test, and skim milks. For December 1994, handlers paid \$14.71 per hundredweight (31.6 cents per quart) for Class I milk compared with \$14.88 a year ago.

Handlers used 152,641,158 pounds of milk for Class II products, 15.9 percent of the total. Class II products include fluid cream, eggnog, ricotta and cottage cheeses, ice cream, and yogurt. Handlers paid \$12.24 per hundredweight for this milk.

Milk used to manufacture Class III products including butter, cheese (other than ricotta and cottage cheeses), and whole milk powder totaled 354,306,324 pounds (36.9 percent of the total). Handlers paid \$11.44 per hundredweight for this milk.

Milk used to manufacture non-fat dry milk (Class III-A) totaled 30,071,926 pounds (3.1 percent of the total). Handlers paid \$10.23 per hundredweight for this milk.

The uniform price is based on milk containing 3.5 percent butterfat. For December 1994, there was a price differential of 5.8 cents for each one-tenth of one percent that the milk tested above or below the 3.5 percent standard.

All prices quoted are for bulk tank milk received from farms in the 201-210 mile zone from New York City.



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