

# DIRECT RETAIL Farm Marketing

## What's Your Specialty?

This is the first in what is to be a regularly appearing column about direct retail marketing, made available through the Pennsylvania Retail Farm Market Association Inc. (PRFMA Inc.) and Penn State Cooperative Extension.

PRFMA Inc. is a resurrected and re-energized non-profit group with the mission, "To benefit members through education, promotion, cooperation and representation of Pennsylvania direct-to-consumer agricultural marketing."

It is not intended to be limited to those with roadside stands, but is intended to be an organization that encompasses all those who market directly, such as aquaculture facilities with direct marketing, Christmas tree retailers, orchard and fruit growers, honey growers, etc.

If it can be raised on a farm and sold directly, then the association may well the organization where

answers, promotion and representation can be found.

The new board of directors is headed by Rob Ferber, and the organization is supported through PRFMA Executive Secretary John Berry, who is also the Lehigh County Cooperative Extension and regional Penn State Cooperative Extension marketing agent. To join the organization, contact Berry at PRFMA, Lehigh County Cooperative Extension, 4184 Dorney Park Road, Allentown, PA 18104-5798, or (610) 391-9840, or e-mail at jwb15 at psu.edu.

### JOHN BERRY

#### Penn State Extension Agricultural Marketing

To maintain a profitable sales volume, retail farm markets need to offer something special — you need an edge!

Why would I consider stopping at your market?

My regular grocery store has carrots, apples and potatoes. If my only goal is securing adequate food for the family, shopping can be done in one stop at the nearest

strip mall.

Successful retail farm marketers realize I'm not just looking for food, I'm seeking an experience.

A chance to participate in the food cycle appeals to today's consumer.

We all know that friendly staff members with extensive product knowledge are the best salespeople.

Adding to this with painted face pumpkins and gourds, heirloom and ethnic varieties, herb garden planters, mixed hot peppers, product demonstrations, pick-to-order sweet corn, microwave recipes, drive-through service, or grandma's apple turnovers in our product mix helps establish market uniqueness in the customer's mind.

### Think About The Future

Look at the big trends affecting the industry.

Products, processing methods, customer expectations, prices, competitive organizations, prices, competitive organizations, imports and exports are all essential components of future direction.

Sixty-two percent of consumers are more concerned with food safety know than five years ago.

Spoilage and the use of chemicals and pesticides are their top concerns about the food they eat.

Soft wheat consumption is down — fewer donuts and cakes are being consumed.

Consumer demand for produce is continuing to increase. (I realize the need for a healthier diet.)

That's bad news for regional wheat producers, but good news for fruit and vegetable growers.

### Peaceful, Soothing

Roadside markets offer a welcome relief from the sterility of supermarkets.

The trend in produce purchase continues toward the feeling of fresh, safe and convenient.

A roadside market is not a convenience store. Shopping at a farm market is an experience.

The longer a customer stays, the more he will generally purchase.

Picnic tables, baked goods, crafts, snacks and food demonstrations encourage customers to stay longer, enjoy themselves and spend more.

Farm market retailers limit their chances for profitability if they:

- Don't accommodate customers and instead try to make them work on the retailer's terms;

- Don't look for new opportunities, because it's not worth the trouble;

- Don't worry about emerging trends, because they believe their old ways of doing business will always apply.

### More Money

Instead, to make more money, encourage larger purchases by providing a larger selection.

An assortment of products gen-

erally attracts more repeat customers. If you only have apples, have several varieties of apples, or use alternative packaging, such as cider, pies, jelly, dried apples, or sell them by the pound, peck of bushel. Another, self-explanatory, concept is "rent-a-tree."

Every marketer hears now and then, "Your price is too high!"

What the prospect is really saying is that their desire to buy was too low.

The goal is to increase the prospective customer's desire to buy, rather than argue about price.

Establish the benefits, create more desire for them and minimize the price compared to benefits. Try selling value, not price.

### Customer Demands

There are several customer demands that hold for most situations.

Customers want a consistent supply (every day); more variety, and/or strains; ready-to-eat; knowledge of where it was raised; smaller or more convenient packaging or purchasing units; natural and safe food; they want flavor and something with eye appeal; and they want the freshest, best quality possible.

Quality is by far the trait most sought by consumers.

But quality is more than the product being offered for sale. Quality includes everything from road signs and the parking area to a wholesome atmosphere and clean facilities.

One of the keys to successful retail farm marketing is this: Ask your customers what they want, then satisfy what they want.

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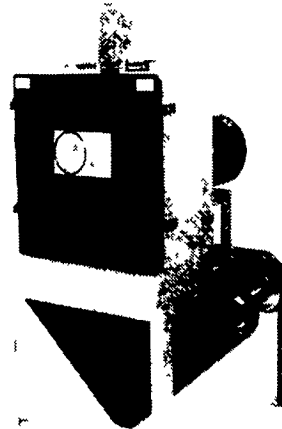
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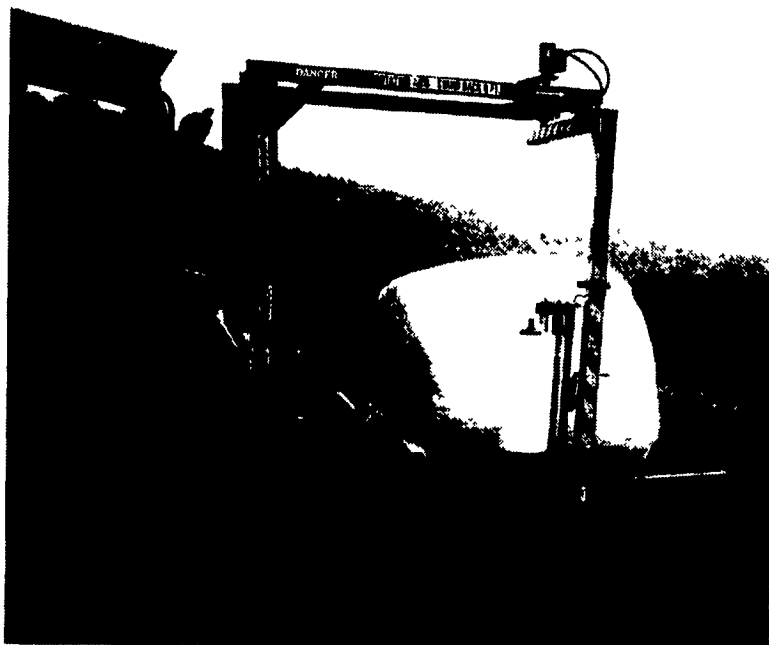
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