

Agriculture Insights

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Plan For A Prosperous Roadside Produce Stand

With today's economy in agriculture, many farmers are looking for new income opportunities. One potential idea may be a roadside produce stand. Roadside produce stands can offer consumers freshness, quality, competitive prices and the nostalgia of visiting a working farm. As with any business venture, proper planning is critical to ensure success. Here are some important considerations:

Planning/Management - By starting your roadside produce stand small you can explore the market potential while reducing your risk in a large investment. Research your potential markets before the first seed is planted. A

large investment of time should be expected in managing a roadside stand. Allocate your time according to importance. Some of the factors you may juggle will be labor, marketing, customers, production and inventory.

Location - One of the first significant decisions to make is the proper location of your roadside stand. Your stand should be located at a highly visible point along a heavily traveled road. A sign which is easy to read, simple, and has a distinctive color or logo is a wise investment. An adequate plan for ample parking is an important part in choosing your location. If a customer can not find a parking

space, you will lose their business. Customers need to be able to safely enter and exit your parking area. Your township may require you to fulfill certain specifications in regard to location, signs and parking.

Production Challenges - Roadside markets need to offer a wide variety of multiple crops to satisfy the customer's demands. Managing the production of these various crops is essential with regard to irrigation, fertility and pest control. Quality of your produce is a second production challenge. Customers are accustomed to the perfect appearance of produce in grocery stores, and will expect this from your stand. A consistent supply of produce is a third production challenge to consider. Successive plantings can help provide a lengthened harvest season, but you may want to develop a business relationship with another local produce grower or wholesaler for an alternative in case a shortfall in your supply would occur. Post-harvest handling is a fourth component that will require special attention. Handling and storage requirements will vary according to the different types of produce, but quality is the essential thing to keep in mind with all of your produce after harvest.

Marketing - Developing a marketing plan for your produce stand will help you focus on

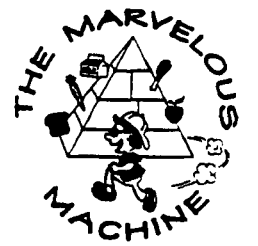
essential steps in reaching your customers. This may be as simple as placing signs strategically on a road or running ads in your local newspaper. Collecting the names and addresses of your customer's will enable you to send them newsletters informing them on what is in season or recipes using your products. Another idea to incorporate into your marketing plan is providing daily harvest reports on your answering machine that customers can call.

Maximizing Sales - With your goal of selling produce in mind, when a customer enters your stand, you want them to purchase as much as possible. Cross marketing your produce is one option you can take. An example of this is selling salad dressing next to your lettuce or whip cream with your strawberries. Point of sale signage can be used with easy to read produce names and prices. Including recipe ideas beside your products may incline your customers to try new vegetables or fruits. Offering value-added products raises the prices of your products and possible sales. An example of this may be jams and jellies from your berry crop or pumpkin pie from your pumpkins.

Before beginning your roadside stand, speak with your local township officials to verify

your township regulations. You should also contact your legal advisor and insurance agent about any special liability issues you could face. Also check with all other appropriate agencies to examine the need of any special permits or legal requirements that may exist. Your local county extension office is an excellent resource to utilize in planning for your roadside produce stand.

Don't miss the 2nd annual Farm-City Day on May 13 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the North Museum. Local agriculture businesses and organizations will be on hand to offer city dwellers a wide range of farming-related activities and demonstrate the integral role that agriculture plays in their daily lives. Please send your questions or comments about roadside produce stands or the Farm-City Day to Brent Landis at The Lancaster Chamber at blandis@lcci.com, or (717) 397-3531.



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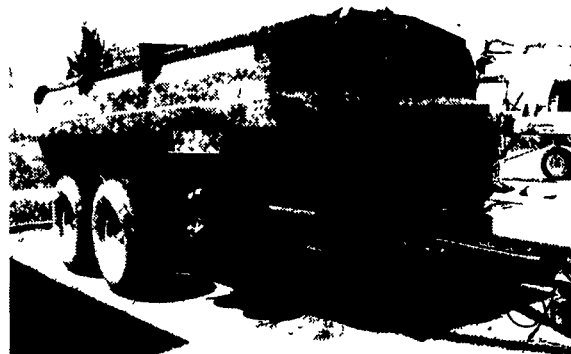
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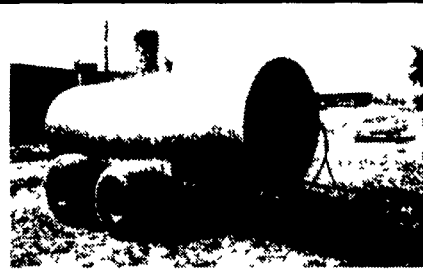
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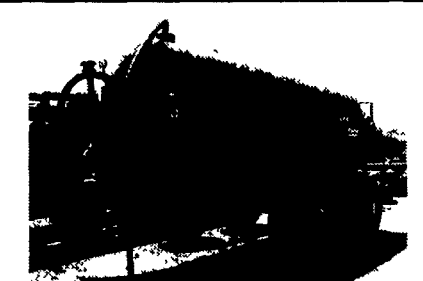
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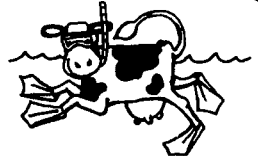
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