

Learn To Build A Farmers' Market

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Direct marketing of farm products has become increasingly important to New York state farmers.

Traditional farm enterprises such as grain farming, dairy and wholesale fruits and vegetables — are becoming more and more unprofitable as costs of inputs continue to spiral while prices received by the farmer are at all time low levels.

Direct marketing farm products offers farmers an increase in the share of the consumer's food dollar they can receive. But farmers wishing to take part in direct marketing enterprises may need to make changes to their current farming operation. They need to focus on a production technique or identify a niche that is in demand by consumers that they can fill.

Farmers wishing to test new

farm enterprises and products, such as specialty crops and value-added farm products, discover that farmers' markets are an excellent vehicle for direct marketing their products to the consumer. They offer a ready-made customer base that even newcomers to a market can benefit from.

Rents for space are low compared with other retailing outlets. And because displays, signage, and other fixtures required to start direct marketing are not as sophisticated as in formal retailing outlet. Start-up costs are also significantly less at a farmers' market.

However, many farmers have not taken advantage of the important economic opportunities offered by farmers' markets. This can be the result of a

number of factors, including farmers' unfamiliarity with the market's potential for sales, their uncertainty about what products can be sold successfully, or their lack of knowledge of the direct marketing and merchandising practices needed to succeed at the markets. As a result, existing farms faced with economic uncertainty may be lost to agriculture when they could be revitalized and sustained through participation at farmers' markets.

The Farmers' Market Federation of New York is undertaking a new project aimed to eliminate the uncertainty that prevents farmers from taking advantage of the direct marketing opportunities of farmers' markets. Farmers wanting to transition their farming operation to in-

clude a direct marketing approach and those interested in starting out in farming will be encouraged to participate in this project.

As a first step, farm tours have been organized across the state through July and August 2000. The tours will look at innovative production techniques, various niches, and value-added products. Program participants will learn about each farming operation; production methods, business issues, and marketing techniques; and have the opportunity to ask questions and network with others with similar interests and issues. The program will culminate in a two-day workshop with classroom style training in marketing skills and production techniques.

The program goals are:

- To increase the profitability of small family farms with transition training.
- To allow people to enter into agriculture in a cost effective

manner and with basic knowledge and skills needed to be successful.

- To introduce more growers and producers to direct marketing and to increase the farmer participation in New York's farmers' markets.

- To increase the opportunities for consumers to purchase local, nutritious, fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as other agricultural products, direct from the producer.

The summer tours will be at each farm from 1-3 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Everyone is welcome and there is no cost involved in participating, but preregistration is requested so that we know how many people to expect.

Reservations can be made by calling the Farmers' Market Federation office at (315) 475-1101. Partial funding for this program has been provided by a grant from the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service.

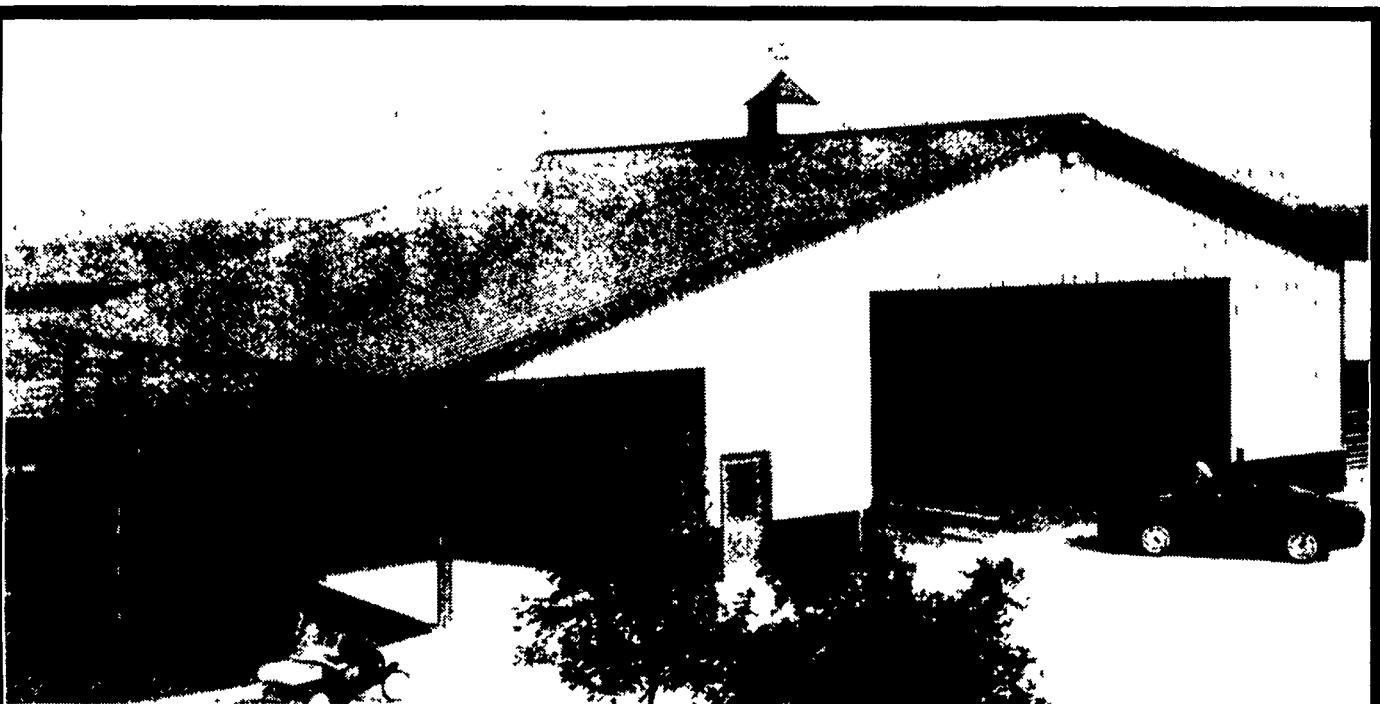


Bucks Pomona #22

Members of Bucks County Pomona Grange #22 donated \$2,200 to 11 charities in June at Plumsteadville Grange #1738, Plumsteadville.

Each year the money is earned by Pomona Grange members selling pizza at the annual Middletown Grange Fair and is donated back to different Bucks County charities and communities. One of the missions of the Pomona Grange is community service.

The following people represented their respective charity and accepted the checks presented by the Bucks County Pomona Grange. Rev. Roland and Barbara Carlson, Pipersville, represented Discovery Services Project; Susan Hauser, Bristol, represented A Women's Place; Nancy C. Stroukoff represented Bucks County Housing Group; James Petruzzi represented Habitat For Humanity of Greater Bucks; Elsie Wright, Yardley, represented Chandler Hall; Christine Bowman, Bristol, represented Special Equestrians; Bruce McNaught, New Hope, represented Bucks County Audubon Society; Shirley Trinchela represented Meals on Wheels (Riegelsville); Laura Clappison represented Meals on Wheels (Woodside); and Kim Szymanowsk and Joe Heany, Tincum, represented Meals on Wheels (Tincum). Meals on Wheels (Central Bucks) also received a donation.



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