



Competitive Agricultural Systems in Global Economy

Direct Farm Marketing & Tourism Activities to Keep the Farm

Issue

The value-added contribution by U.S. producers of consumer food expenditures has fallen from 22.8 percent in 1950 to only 7.9 percent in 1999. Global competition and modern production technologies have pushed the price of raw agricultural commodities downward so that many farmers and ranchers have found it difficult to remain in production agriculture. This is particularly true for farmers with land holdings next to urban centers where development potential exists. However, some farmers and ranchers have mastered the art of obtaining a higher profit margin from their agricultural land holdings by marketing food products and farm recreation directly to the consumer.

What has been done?

Two UA College of Agriculture and Life Sciences faculty put together the first annual Arizona Direct Farm Marketing and Tourism (DFMT) conference in 1995 at the same time they finished putting together a 250-page layman's publication on the topic. The educational curriculum was designed to provide producers with an A-Z

publication for finding the essentials needed to start and develop a direct farm marketing enterprise. Producers have been able to network and learn from each other at the annual conference by sharing their failures and success stories. The 8th annual conference was held at Young's Farm in Dewey, AZ in 2002. It draws both regular and new participants who are investigating whether they should try direct farm marketing. Generally 50 to 100 individuals attend the annual conference and the Handbook curriculum has reached thousands of people. Requests to utilize the Handbook for a short course or class have come from other Western states, and Australia, Canada, South Africa.

An interim board was recently formed to organize an Arizona Farmers' Direct Marketing Association. Issues the association will address include being a collective voice in the state for direct farm marketing issues, educational programs, collective buying of insurance products for members, coordinating better with Arizona Grown, developing a farmers' market directory, and creating an association web site.

Impact

Participants at the direct farm marketing conference (DFMT) in 2002 not only rated the topics presented as being relevant to their operation but indicated that they thought there was a high probability (3.2 on a 4.0 scale) that they would incorporate the information learned at the conference into their business operations. One hundred percent of the respondents said the conference enhanced their knowledge of the topics presented, and 100 percent said they would share the information they learned in the following ways: with another colleague (75 percent); with family (57 percent); with friends (46 percent); with community leaders (46 percent); with educators (32 percent) and with others (11 percent). One participant is networking with others who attended the conference to develop an organic farming enterprise that will include a restaurant and grass-fed beef program.

The DFMT Handbook is still widely accessed and maintains the #1 listing for "Direct Farm Marketing" on the Google search engine (rank is based on web sites selected by users).

"I actually used the information from your website to begin looking into marketing my eggs! I must have used a ream of paper and 2 ink cartridges printing it off. I found the section on business planning extremely helpful."
-participant

Funding

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