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**Improving Market Access for Small and Mid-sized Producers through
Food Industry Electronic Infrastructure MarketMaker**

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Improving Market Access for Small and Mid-sized Producers through Food Industry Electronic Infrastructure MarketMaker

Abstract

In recent years there has been a growth in the interest of consumers to buy more locally. An increasing number of farmers are trying to meet the growing demand for locally produced products. Here in New York State, farmers who are direct marketing their product, either direct to consumer or direct to wholesale markets constantly are looking for additional avenues to connect to current customers or grow their customer base. NY MarketMaker is one avenue farmers across New York can utilize to make connections with their customers. This powerhouse database connects buyers, sellers and transportation services and is easily searchable, even for the ‘technologically’ challenged. Cornell Cooperative Extension (CUCE) in New York City began this project with the University of Illinois in 2007, and today the CUCE MarketMaker web site contains information on 3,391 food producers representing vegetables, fruits and nuts, dairy, grains, herbs, wine, and meat products from 56 counties. Our site, which contains over 84,000 New York food-related references, is part of a national network of state web sites that currently includes 15 states. MarketMaker is a **FREE** in-depth marketing tool to help small and mid-sized producers get sophisticated data to help them reach thousands of potential buyers.

New York State producers can get listed on the site at no charge, access census data to determine where targeted buyers are located in a given area, and find markets for products – such as farmers’ markets, grocery stores, restaurants, and other retail locations- in a map-based format. We created our own educational outreach program that would teach food entrepreneurs how to use the site and the basics of marketing value added food products. The main purpose of MarketMaker is to level the playing field. With this tool, small and mid-sized producers have similar market intelligence as the bigger producers.

A total of 45 hands-on MarketMaker presentations were given for producers at conferences, meetings, expos, harvest fairs and Empire Farm Days; New York MarketMaker received 934 new registrations and over 1.5 million hits. Many buyers and sellers actively posted advertisements at the MarketPlace. CUCE staff members conducted 23 online training sessions; participants were farm business management specialists, agricultural economic development specialists, fruits and vegetables specialists, and dairy specialists from across the state.

In order to measure farm-level impact of MarketMaker usage by producers registered with the site, the producer evaluation survey was conducted in August 2009. The structured questionnaire forms were sent to 700 selected producers. We have received 53.4% (374) responses by end of the November. Questions were focused on producers’ farm-level income increased from direct and niche marketing activities. Some selected results from the survey are described in this paper.

Based on producers’ responses the majority of MarketMaker participants are small and mid-sized producers and NY MarketMaker is helping them to access a direct and niche market and improve their economy. At the mean time NY MarketMaker helps increase availability of regional grown foods for the urban market and improve diet and health of NYC residents by providing a FREE access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

Keywords: Food Industry, Market, Producers, Processors, Retailers, Consumers, New York

Introduction and Background

MarketMaker is a national network of state Websites, currently available in 15 states, connecting producers/farmers and processors with food retailers, consumers and the food supply chain. MarketMaker was initially piloted in 2004 by a team of University of Illinois Extension researchers to build an electronic infrastructure that more easily connected food producers with economically viable new markets. The network contains one of the most extensive collections of searchable food industry related data in the United States. Each state's MarketMaker site allows users to query, map and locate food-related data. The site is open and accessible at no cost and is a web-based resource that brings market intelligence to small and medium-sized producers while developing the value-added food supply chain.

New York MarketMaker was developed and is directed by Cornell University Cooperative Extension in New York City. The site (<http://nymarketmaker.cornell.edu>) went live in July 2007 (Figure 1). It is an interactive mapping system that locates businesses and markets of locally grown agricultural products in New York, providing an important link between producers and consumers. We started collecting producers' information from different organizations in 2006 (Box 1). We gathered a database of farmers markets, and state and federally inspected processing plants. We organized all of the producers, processors, and winery information and we created the initial producer database for New York.

Figure 1: Food Industry Electronic Infrastructure NY MarketMaker

Box 1: Producers Database

Collected & Organized Producer Information

- Northeast Organic Farming Association-NOFA-NY
- Pride of New York
- South Central Agriculture Program
- Pure Catskill
- NY Dairy Association
- NY Beef Producer Association
- NY Corn Growers Association
- NY Potato Growers Association
- Hudson Valley Vegetables Growers Association
- Wine and Grape Foundation

Gathered a database of farmers' markets, state and federally inspected processing plants

The need for strategic food marketing data accessible to small and medium-scale producers has been a major issue at state and national levels for decades: it has been addressed by land grant institutions and food policy organizations from the national Community Food Security Coalition to New York groups (Cornell's Small Farms Program, Farmers' Market Federation of New York, NOFA- New York, Extension programs and others throughout the value-added food system).

Ongoing development of farmers' markets in New York State over 30 years is one indication of growing demand for fresh, quality produce and value-added foods from local and regional producers, but the farmers' market network is constrained by availability of farmers to be at markets regularly. Regional marketing groups (Pure Catskills, county-based 'branding' etc.) of farmers are expanding, with 'Pride of New York' an example of such marketing statewide. Recent efforts include Local Food Zone; NYC Board of Education; Council on the Environment of NY; NYC Watershed, and Farm-to-School networks.

Many such positive efforts are specific to an identified issue (NYC watershed) or audience (Farm-to-School). MarketMaker was created as an electronic media to provide strategic food marketing data and a forum connecting food supply chain partners engaged in value-added ventures statewide. The NY MarketMaker site highlights three such innovations: first, the national portal 'hosting' of the network by Iowa's Agricultural Marketing Resource Center; second; state-specific buyers and sellers forums for producers and those throughout the value added food chain; and third, separate 'drop down' for wineries due to New York's vibrant industry.

Goal and Objectives

Our goal is to make the NY MarketMaker site a resource for all farmers and businesses in the food supply chain and to increase the effectiveness, availability and use of real-time transaction sites that link producers with a wide variety of customers, including school cafeterias and food service providers, retail market outlets, processors, and other agricultural interests. We are as interested in helping a grocery store find farm-fresh eggs as we are in helping the farmer find a place to sell them.

The Main Objectives are;

1. Expend and improve the use of web tools to better articulate and supply markets by reducing transactions costs between buyers and sellers by injecting 'market intelligence' into the educational arena.
2. Improve the context of business-to-business, business-to-government (schools, food service institutions, etc), and business-to-consumer activities that enhance direct and niche marketing throughout the value-added food chain.
3. Increase availability of regional grown foods for the urban markets

MarketMaker is the unique direct marketing approach and the targeted consumers will gain access to regional farm fresh products and a better understanding of the source and nature of regional farm fresh products. NY MarketMaker is expected to help the following target audiences in many ways:

- **Producers:** Improve access to urban markets, Reduce barriers to supply urban markets, Increase opportunity to collaborate other producers
- **Processors:** Increase awareness of new business opportunities
- **Farmers Markets:** Recruitment of new producers to participate in farmers markets
- **Distributors:** Expanded view of the breadth of the regional food products
- **Restaurants/Chefs:** Identification of local niche food products
- **Institutional consumers (Schools, Hospitals, etc):** Increase in school menus of locally produced foods, Increase awareness by students of food systems

What Does MarketMaker Do?

MarketMaker is rich with demographic and business data that the user can query. Details can be summarized on a map to show concentrations of consumer markets and strategic business partners. Providing this kind of information in a map-based format makes much more sense than business lists and statistical tables. Census data is also a feature of the site. For example, a producer wanting to sell meat to Hispanic consumers can request a map showing the greatest concentration of upper-income Hispanic households, then request a complete demographic profile of those locations.

The following are some key points of MarketMaker features:

- Helps farmers and food entrepreneurs identify potential markets
- Helps consumers find fresh and locally grown food
- Helps farmers and other food related enterprises connect with other members of the food supply chain
- Educates users on Food Marketing and value-added Agriculture Marketing topics and regulations
- Identify potential markets by demographic characteristics
- Create lists of potential marketing partners by location
- Locate other producers, processors, wholesalers, food retailers, farmers markets and restaurants within the partner states
- Register your business or operations on the MarketMaker website so that other businesses and potential customers can locate you and your products.
- Food Industry Direct Marketing: Improving market access and increasing profits for small and mid-sized producers/farmers, Improving diet and health for low- income consumers

Who should use MarketMaker?

- Direct sellers searching buyers
- Buyers looking for specific products from farmers
- Traders on the internet
- On-farm retailers
- Farmers selling to restaurants
- Farmers selling to food processors
- Farmers looking for other farmers to partner with
- Restaurant chefs looking for product
- Institutional buyers looking for local product
- Farmers selling speciality processed foods
- Buyers finding local Farmers' Market
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- U-pick operations
- On-farm and Roadside Markets
- Retailers looking for local product
- Wholesalers looking for local product

Who are Target Beneficiaries?

Primary target beneficiaries for MarketMaker are small and mid-sized New York agricultural producers and value-added food enterprises using NY products: given ready access to 'market intelligence' by larger producers we have focused on smaller producers to increase their direct and niche market revenue via improved access to critical market information.

Small producers seeking direct marketing venues often face the choice of farmers' market participation (limited by days at market and travel costs) or farm sales to brokers and wholesalers. Online sales remain sporadic and un-integrated; MarketMaker can 'level the playing field' across the value-added food chain by strengthening relations between producers, intermediaries and consumers via use of electronic media and current producer data on linked web pages (Pride of NY, NOFA-NY, etc).

We motivated and assisted regional marketing associations and 'branding' groups used by small producers to increase their market visibility. MarketMaker exposure reached growers via collaborating Extension staff and faculty, Project Advisory Committee members and Coop Extension's communications system using Adobe Connect Sessions and hands-on presentations for producers (off-season) and potential direct markets (growing season).

Niche market targets include school food purchasing officers (NY Farm-to-School program) already using Market Maker to open up producer direct marketing to school districts statewide, NYC-based food manufacturing coalitions, college and other institutional food buyers, etc.

Identification of Barriers

Barriers identified by producers, extension educators, stakeholders and marketing association members during outreach for initial registration for NY MarketMaker include:

- The existing commodity system produces and distributes homogenous products in large quantities at the lowest price;
- Anonymous product movement through the food system by price alone is of limited value to small producers offering goods based on quality characteristics (organic, low-input, etc.);
- The present food delivery system includes 'collection points' around epicenters of production for large-scale food enterprises;
- This system often bypasses regions capable of providing high quality value-added food products or locally grown source-verified products not near these large-scale distribution points.

Economically significant markets (group with high income, niche or ethnic preferences) are increasingly visible. As the added costs for such products cannot be directly passed to consumers without impacting size and market feasibility, many such ventures remain high margin and small scale. Limited access to markets, high costs for market intelligence and scale-related inefficiencies have been identified by producers as primary barriers separating rural value-added enterprises from lucrative niche markets. Commercial transactions are the 'mortar' binding business into a cohesive system: electronic markets can reduce transaction costs and level the playing field for small producers. MarketMaker can help producers in many ways: [1] connect them to best-suited markets; [2] increase direct marketing options; and [3] positively impact producers and rural economies.

New York MarketMaker Training and Outreach

New York MarketMaker staff has conducted online training sessions with extension educators in 2008 and 2009. This online training session demonstrated the use of the MarketMaker website. Participants are allowed to be able to observe some commonly used features being used and hear about how they might be helpful to their marketing research efforts. We have completed 23 online training sessions with 75 attendees from 34 counties. Participants were farm business management specialists, Agricultural Economic development specialists, fruits and vegetables specialists, and dairy specialists from eastern, Western, Central and Metro regions (Box 2).

Box 2: List of Counties participated in the Adobe Connect Training (2008-2009)

- | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Albany | 10. Erie | 19. Niagara | 28. St. Lawrence |
| 2. Broome | 11. Franklin | 20. Oneida | 29. Sullivan |
| 3. Cayuga | 12. Fulton | 21. Onondaga | 30. Tioga |
| 4. Chemung | 13. Greene | 22. Ontario | 31. Tompkins |
| 5. Clinton | 14. Jefferson | 23. Orange | 32. Ulster |
| 6. Columbia | 15. Lewis | 24. Rensselaer | 33. Washington |
| 7. Cortland | 16. Livingston | 25. Saratoga | 34. Yates |
| 8. Delaware | 17. Madison | 26. Schoharie | |
| 9. Dutchess | 18. Monroe | 27. Seneca | |

The MarketMaker Online Training Curriculum includes:

PowerPoint Presentation: Introducing MarketMaker; history of national network; nature and character of the national food distribution system; MarketPlace (Buy & Sell Forum); resources; networking and collaboration; and current activities of NY MarketMaker.

Live Demonstration: Using MarketMaker (producer based data characteristics; retailer based data; wholesale and distributors; step by step search of a producer seeking a market; step by step search of a retail establishment seeking a producer; and attributes and their place in the system.

Follow-Up Discussion: Participants' feedbacks, opinions and suggestions, sending MarketMaker materials to participants for their future MarketMaker training with farmers, checking the list of producers, farmers markets, and winery from their respective counties.

Increased new producer registration on MarketMaker, augmenting project staff outreach with collaborative efforts from local Extension staff reached out via grower and marketing association meetings. Though the project is producer-centered, the awareness and involvement of retail food enterprises, processors and manufacturers is key to linking retail food actors and local producers. We have conducted outreach with trade shows and retail organizations (NY Hotel & Restaurant Association, etc.) who motivate them to use NY MarketMaker to access New York producers. We sent press releases to our extension colleagues to put them in their local newsletters. During conferences and meetings, we provided PowerPoint presentations, handed out MarketMaker materials, encouraged farmers to update their business profiles, and encouraged new producers to be listed on our site.

We have reached thousands of consumers and buyers at the Expo, Show, meeting, farmers markets, and green markets (Box 3).

Box 3: New York MarketMaker Outreach

How did we market to Consumers?	How did we market to Buyers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NOFA - NY Annual Conference ➤ Empire State Farm Day ➤ County Harvest Fairs ➤ Press releases ➤ Small Scale Processor Association Annual meeting ➤ Hudson Valley Vegetable Growers Meeting ➤ Farmers Markets ➤ Just Food CSA farmers meeting ➤ Brooklyn food conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International Restaurant Association & Foodservice Expo ➤ Summer Fancy Food Show ➤ School Food Programs Meeting ➤ NYS Restaurant Association Meeting ➤ Culinary Insitute and Culinary Schools ➤ New York City Food System Network Meeting

We provided MarketMaker materials, presented live Demo and encouraged them to use the MarketMaker site as a resource for buying locally grown products. From July 2007 to December 2009, a total of 45 hands-on MarketMaker presentations were given for producers at conferences, meetings, expos, harvest fairs and Empire Farm Days; New York MarketMaker received 934 new registrations and over 1.5 million hits. Many buyers and sellers actively posted advertisements at the MarketPlace.

New York MarketMaker Producer Evaluation Survey

In order to measure farm-level impact of MarketMaker usage by producers registered with the site, we conducted the producer evaluation survey in August 2009. The structured questionnaire forms were sent to 700 selected producers (meat, dairy, vegetables, fruits and nuts, grains, herbs, specialty) on August 14, 2009. We have received 53.4% (374) responses by end of the November.

Questions were focused on " how many percentage of producers' farm-level income increased from direct and niche marketing activities", " how many marketing contact did they get through MarketMaker", what market channels do they use or plan to use in the near future, how would they use MarketMaker site effectively and many other questions. Some selected results from the survey are described in this paper.

The following Figure shows the responses of producers how did they learn about MarketMaker. Thirty eight percent of respondents described that they learned MarketMaker at a grower meeting, 31% by an extension meeting, 13% through a web link, 9% by internet search, 7% by New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI), and the remaining 2% through another farmer respectively (see Figure 2).

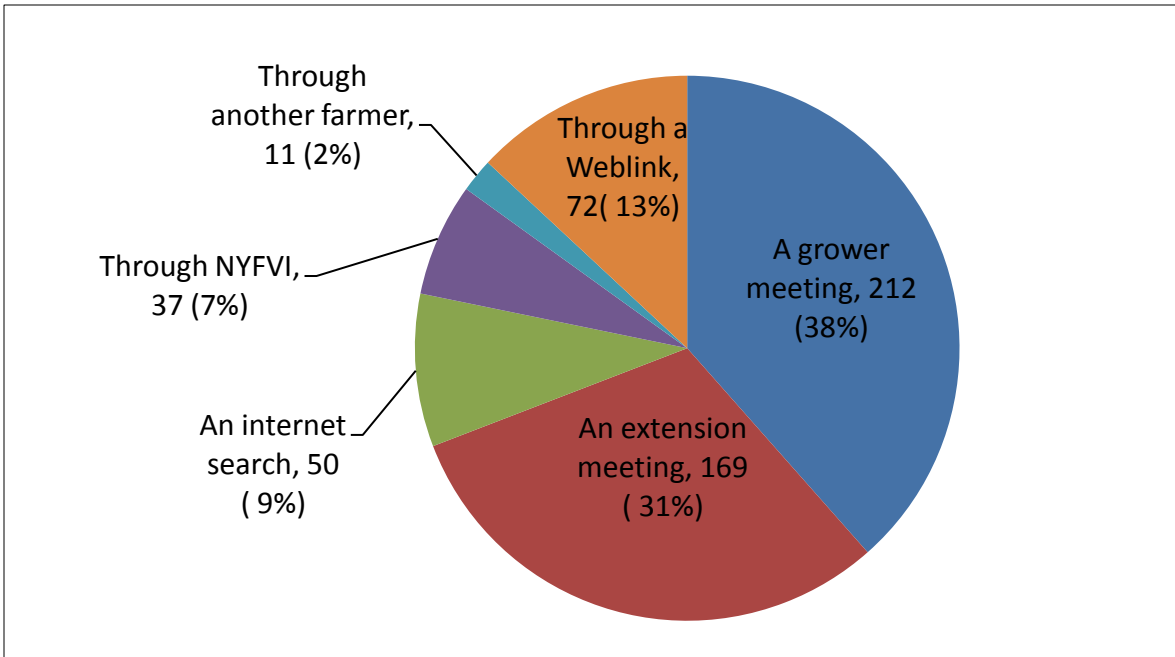


Figure 2: Producers' responses to how they learned MarketMaker (N=374)

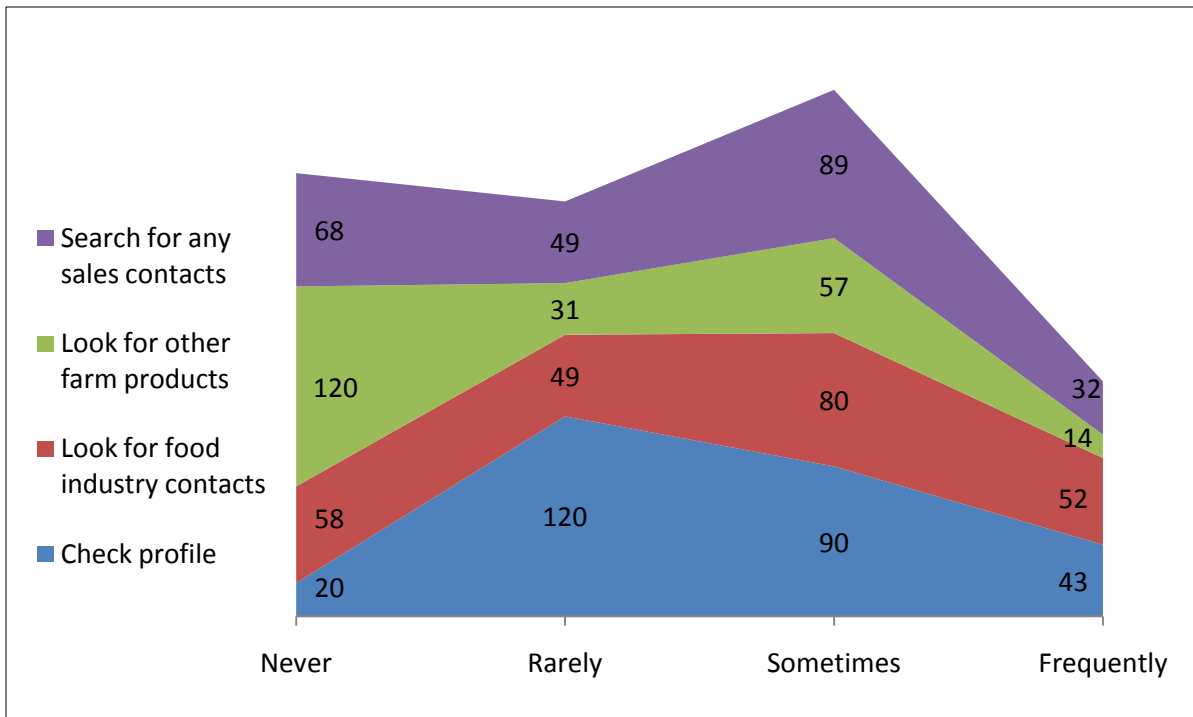


Figure 3: Producers' responses to how they use MarketMaker (N=374)

Figure 3 shows the responses of producers how they use MarketMaker site. Thirty two respondents answered they frequently search for any sales contacts, 89 said sometimes, 49 said rarely, and 68 said never. Fourteen respondents said that they frequently look for other farm products, 57 said sometimes, 31 said rarely, and 120 said never. Fifty two said they frequently look for food industry contacts, 80 said sometimes, 49 said rarely, and 58 said never. Forty three producers responded that they frequently check their business profile, 90 said sometimes, 120 said rarely, and 20 said never.

The following Table shows the responses of producers regarding their marketing contacts that have some through MarketMaker. Eighty five respondents answered “yes” they have got marketing contacts through MarketMaker, 147 said “no” and 127 said “ Not sure”. Among them 80.5 % said they have got 2-4 contacts, 17% said only one, and 2% said 5-10 contacts. Forty six respondents answered they have used the MarketMaker directory to contact others. Among them 81% said they have got 2-4 contacts, 15% said one contact, one respondent said 5-10 contact, and the another one said more than ten contacts.

Table 1: Producers’ responses to their marketing contacts come through MarketMaker (N=374)

Question/ Responses	Have you had any marketing contacts that have come to you through MarketMaker? If yes, how many?		Have you used the MarketMaker Directory to contact others? If yes, how many?	
	Yes	85	23.7%	46
No	147	40.9%	194	55.4%
Not Sure	127	35.4%	110	31.4%
One	15	17.2%	7	14.9%
two-four	70	80.5%	38	80.9%
five-ten	2	2.3%	1	2.1%
more than ten	0	0.0%	1	2.1%

Producers estimated the dollar value of their business sales helped/started by MarketMaker in seven groups ranged from under \$100 to \$25,000 or more (see Figure 4). Out of 374 total responses, 8 producers responded that MarketMaker helped their business sales in the dollar value of \$5,000-\$9,999, 36 responses showed the estimated dollar values of \$1,000-\$4,999, 132 producers responded the dollar value of \$500-\$9,999, 136 responded \$100-\$499, and the remaining 52 answered under \$100.

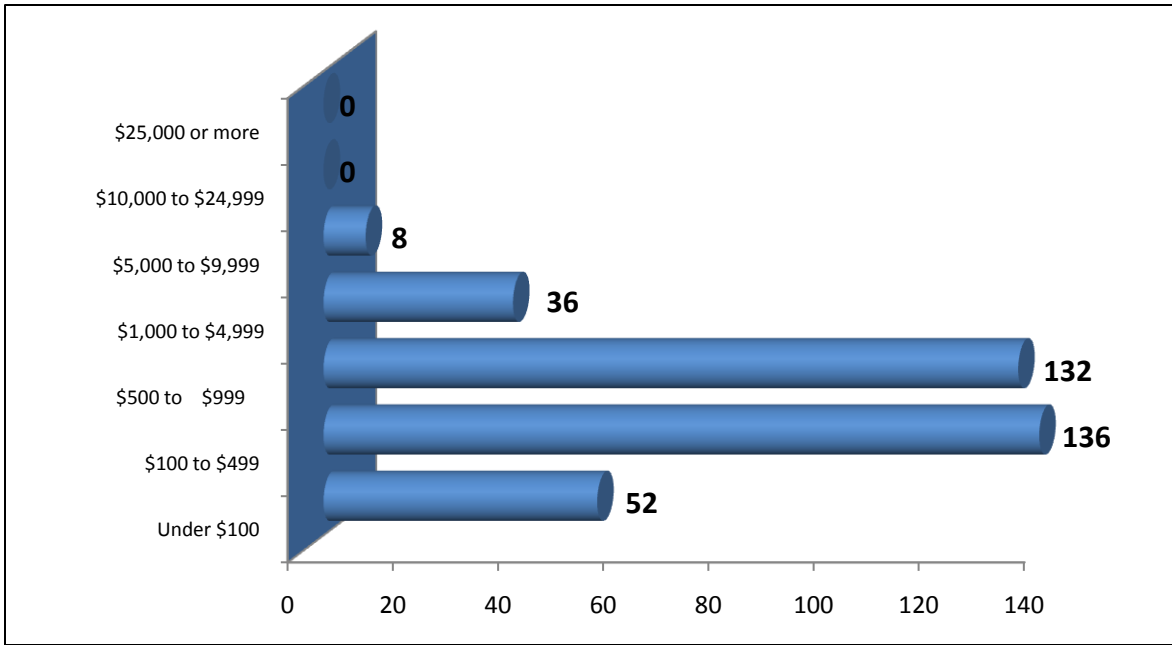


Figure 4: The dollar value of the business sales helped by MarketMaker (N=374)

Producers were asked their total farm sales (gross income) from last year and percentage increase over previous sales. Out of 374 respondents 27% said that their gross income was less than \$10,000, 25% answered between \$10,000-\$49,999, 19% responded between \$50,000-\$99,999, 11% said \$100,000-\$249,999, 8% said \$250,000-499,999, 5% answered \$500,000-\$999,999, 3% responded \$1,000,000-\$1,999,999, and the remaining 3% said \$2,000,000 or more (see Figure 5).

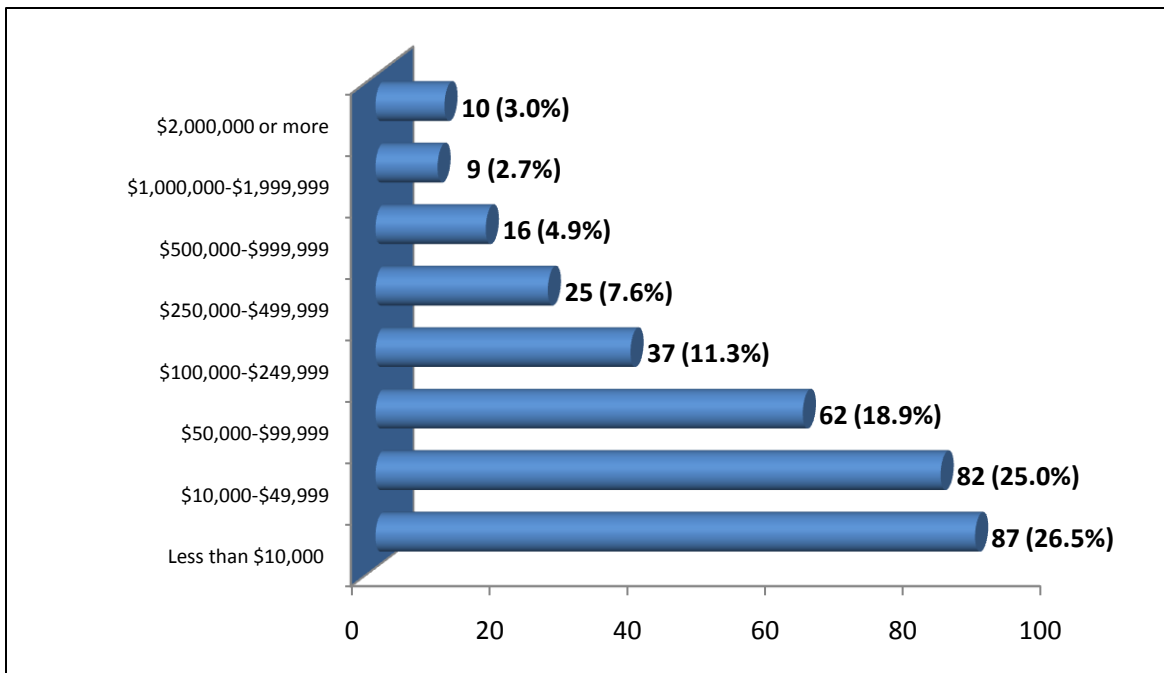


Figure 5: Producers' last year's total farm sales - Gross Income (N=374)

The majority of the total respondents described that 10-25% of their farm-level income increased from direct and niche marketing activities, 26-50% increased by 74 respondents, and 51-75% increased by 2 respondents, and less than 10% increased by 84 respondents respectively (see Figure 6).

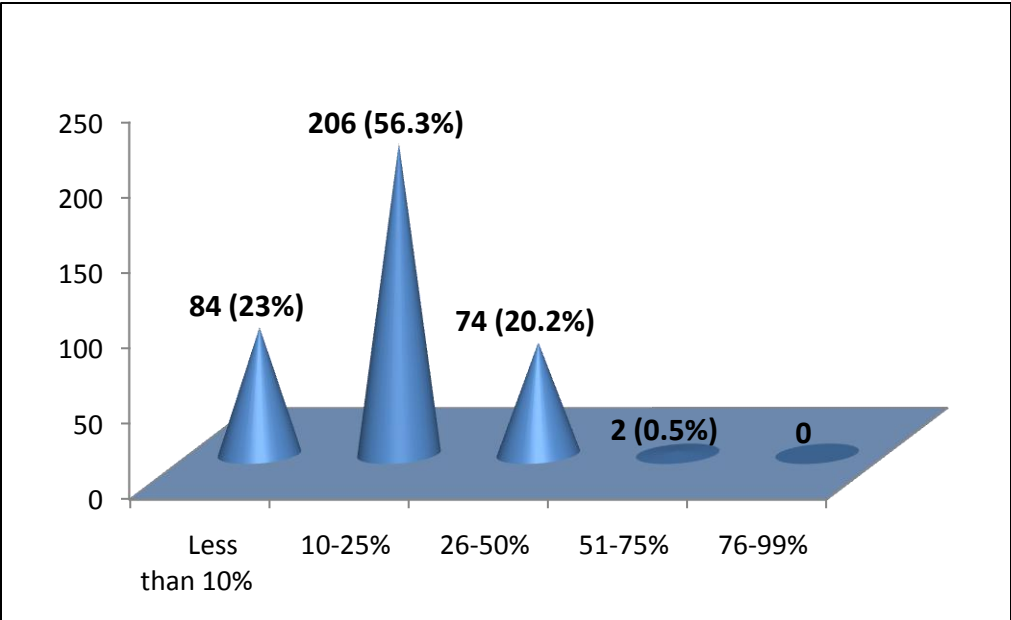


Figure 6: Percentage of farm-level income increased from direct and niche marketing (N=374)

Producers were asked the different market channels they currently use or plan to use in the near future. Thirty percent of respondents use on-farm retail, 20% use local food store, 18% use farmers markets, 15% use wholesale, 10% use restaurants, and 7% use community supported agriculture (see Figure 7).

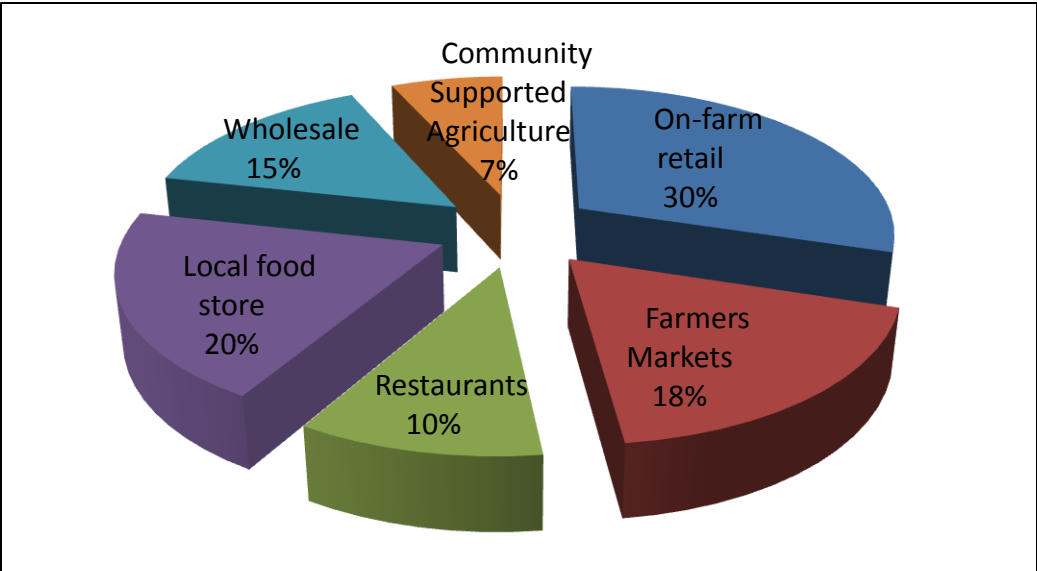


Figure 7: Market channels currently use or plan to use in the near future (N=374)

New York MarketMaker Outcomes

Finding the demographics of a market - and pairing a product to the right niche - used to be the exclusive domain of large producers with deep enough pockets to pay for a market analysis. New York MarketMaker is providing access to a database of growers, food processors, wineries, retailers, wholesalers, farmers' markets and restaurants in New York State.

NY MarketMaker staff outreach via mailings, emails and presentations during the year 2008 and 2009 measurably increased producers registration levels, and staff continue to receive calls, emails and faxed and updated forms with many new registrations. The increase in interest by producers' in MarketMaker is demonstrated by the fact that we have received 10-15 emails daily and 20-25 phone calls/week in 2009, whereas in late 2007 we were getting only 2-3 emails and 1-2 phone calls/week. A number of producers who are not 'online' are actively updating their data via phone and/or fax.

Meetings, presentations and talks have increased the awareness of producers and processors on how to use MarketMaker site. We reached hundreds of producers at the annual conference of Northeast Organic Farming Association, Vegetable and Fruit Growers Expo, Hudson Valley fruit growers' conference, NY state meat producers association conference, and NY Small Scale Processors Association' conference. From July 2007 to December 2009, a total of 45 hands-on MarketMaker presentations were given for producers at conferences, meetings, expos, harvest fairs and Empire Farm Days; New York MarketMaker received 934 new registrations and over 1.5 million hits. Many buyers and sellers actively posted advertisements at the MarketPlace.

We have designed and delivered educational sessions for extension colleagues to increase producer familiarity with NY MarketMaker and its marketing potential. We provided materials to help producers registered with MarketMaker use the site to improve marketing strategies. We conducted Adobe Connect Online Training sessions with Agricultural educators to train participating Extension colleagues to then train and assist producers to register and make better use of MarketMaker website. CUCE staff members conducted 23 online training sessions with 75 attendees from 34 counties; participants were farm business management specialists, agricultural economic development specialists, fruits and vegetables specialists, and dairy specialists from across the state.

Though the project is producer-centered, the awareness and involvement of retail food enterprises, processors and manufacturers is key to linking retail food actors and local producers. We have conducted outreach with trade shows and retail organizations (NY Hotel and Restaurant Association, International Restaurant and Foodservice Expo of NY, Summer Fancy Food Show of NY, etc.) who motivate them to use NY MarketMaker to access New York producers. We will continue to conduct more outreach with retailers and consumers in the year 2010. Outreach to producer groups will continue throughout the year 2010 to maximize direct marketing by site users.

As a rough 'proxy' for interest by producers and retail food actors in the New York MarketMaker website, the total number of visits has increased from 0.4 million in 2008 to 1 million in 2009. Over that period, the national network of partner states with MarketMaker sites has grown from 10 states in 2008 to 15 states in 2009. The total number of visits to MarketMaker sites nationally was over 12 millions only in 2009. At present, two states are in the process of developing their respective sites: each user, regardless of where they are in the United States (or the world) has ready access to the entire network.

Today the national MarketMaker network contains the most extensive collections of searchable food industry related data in the United States and provides information on 6,395 farmers/food producers, 1,975 farmers markets, 550 wineries, and 387,145 food-related industry from 15 states. New York MarketMaker's producers' database contains 657 vegetable growers, 480 fruits and nuts producers, 272 dairy producers, 208 grains, 222 herbs, 448 specialty products, and 407 meat producers, 216 wineries, and 481 farmers markets and represents participation from 56 of the state's counties. These numbers make New York the state with the most producer participation in the entire MarketMaker system. Our site contains over 82,000 New York food-related references.

Based on producers' responses the majority of MarketMaker participants are small and mid-sized producers and NY MarketMaker is helping them to access a direct and niche market and improve their economy. At the mean time NY MarketMaker helps increase availability of regional grown foods for the urban market and improve diet and health of NYC residents by providing a FREE access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

Conclusion and Policy Implication

The following are some keys to marketing success:

- **Market Knowledge:** Knowledge of the market- you need to know your market in order to market to it.
- **Customer knowledge:** Know your customer, including understanding of customer demographics.
- **Competition knowledge:** Knowledge of your competition- who are you competing with? What are your competitive strengths and advantages?
- **Creativity:** Finding a unit market and /or product.
- **Business Sense:** Sound business sense includes accounting skills, computer skills, people skills, and the ability to interact with people.
- **Maintain Awareness and curiosity:** Be aware of who your customers are, and curious about how the mix might be changing in terms of demographics and personal needs. Be curious about what they might be missing or wish for that links them
- **Be Knowledgeable:** Know what you are selling, how to use what you sell, and look for additional ways to utilize what you sell. Know what your customers want, and if you choose to try new items, know how to produce them.

Marketing and financial education for producers

As small-and mid-sized producers consider entry into larger markets they are faced with many decisions that haven't necessarily been factors in direct or small-scale wholesale marketing enterprises, such as contracting, appropriate business models and financial planning. Ready access to appropriate decision-making tools will enable producers to make the best choices for their operations.

Aggregation and distribution

Many regions in the United States lack aggregation facilities and distribution systems essential for large market engagement by smaller producers. Additional regulatory frameworks exist for livestock, poultry and dairy products that can increase barriers to product aggregation and distribution. Electronic marketing systems have great potential to facilitate product distribution.

Supply chain transparency

This opportunity area includes such topics as product traceability and certifications required by large markets. Producers entering new market scenarios face numerous challenges around these topics. Transparency is necessary for consumer confidence and to establish links between producers and consumers, as well as to meet regulatory and large market purchasing requirements.

Need for more producers

General agreement exists that supply of local agricultural products, especially within a large market context, is insufficient to meet current and future projected market demand. If this demand is to be met many more producers with necessary production and marketing skills need to be developed and engaged. This opportunity area might be considered in a 'green jobs' context.

Consumer expectations for local foods

People seeking local food products have expectations regarding values that will be taken into account regarding agricultural production and product delivery. Distributors desiring to take advantage of marketing benefits from local foods need to be knowledgeable regarding these expectations in order to take advantage of market opportunities and provide best value to their customers. Often, expectations include attributes such as organic or humane livestock certification that can add supply chain costs but also have potential to increase profitability.