



The Market Basket

A Quarterly Update on Agricultural Marketing in Broome County
Fall 2009

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONLINE COURSES FOR NEW FARMERS

Are you a new or aspiring farmer who would like some guidance in the development of a farm enterprise, but has been unable to locate or attend any trainings near you? Are you comfortable enough with a computer to consider learning online? Cornell Cooperative Extension and the NY Beginning Farmer Project have created two basic online courses to help you think through the major factors related to farm start-up. Join experienced CCE educators and 29 of your new farmer peers in a dynamic learning experience that incorporates both self-paced readings and real-time virtual meetings with discussion forums, homework activities, guest presenters, and developing a customized plan for your next steps in farming.

Taking Stock: Evaluating Your Resources and Choosing an Enterprise.

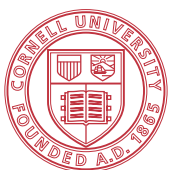
Before you choose what you intend to grow, it's important to understand the strengths and challenges presented by your property and have some clear goals for your operation in mind. This course will help you evaluate your farm's resources in light of your goals, and choose an enterprise that suits both. The course features weekly office hour sessions as well as real-time presentations by farmers and other experts who can assist you with your plans.

Course duration: 5 weeks beginning Oct. 16, 2009

Instructors: Laura Biasillo - CCE Broome County, and Erica Frenay – Cornell Small Farms Program

Markets and Profits: Make Money Selling What you Grow

For most farmers, growing their product is the fun part. But you don't put any money back into your pocket until you sell your product. And the money in your pocket doesn't grow unless you're selling at a profit. This may seem obvious, but it's what trips up so many new farmers who don't think of their operation as a business. Join this course to set or review your farm goals, learn about marketing options that are right for



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you, and take a hard look at your ability to create profit. This course features live weekly office hour sessions as well as real-time presentations by CCE farm business specialists.

Course duration: 6 weeks beginning January 8, 2010

Instructors: Steve Hadcock - CCE Columbia County and Dan Welch - CCE Cayuga Cty

COST is \$100 per course

TO REGISTER, please visit

<http://www.nybeginningfarmers.org/index.php?page=onlinecourse>

WORKSHOPS

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS VERSUS AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENTS – WHAT IS EACH PROGRAM FOR?

When you get the agricultural district paperwork do you wonder why you should fill it out? Do you understand the differences between the agricultural districts program and the agricultural assessments program? Come to a workshop on November 9, 2009 at 7 p.m. at Cornell Cooperative Extension-Broome County and hear from staff at the Broome County Soil & Water Conservation District as they explain the Agricultural Assessments program and from Laura Biasillo at CCE-Broome as she explains the Agricultural Districts program.

Cost is \$10/farm. Pre-registration is requested. Please call Carol at (607) 584-9966 to register or with questions.

GRANTS - OPPORTUNITIES, MYTHS AND REALITIES

There are several grant opportunities that could help your farming enterprise move in a new direction whether it is to research a new crop variety or market, assess the feasibility of a new enterprise or for adding value to existing farm products, and for energy conservation. Grant deadlines often come up during a farmer's busy time of year. In order to take advantage of grant opportunities, you need to have your ideas formulated and ready to go when a grant is announced.

Cornell Cooperative Extension is hosting workings in 5 south central NY counties to provide information about grant opportunities and what farmers need to do to write an effective grant. Planning ahead with a vision in mind is key. The meetings will help farmers formulate ideas for grants and provide a practice writing opportunity.

Check the calendar for a date near you.

FARMERS' MARKET VENDOR INTEREST MEETING

Come to a meeting on November 2, 2009 at 7 p.m. at Cornell Cooperative Extension-Broome County to learn more about becoming a farmers' market vendor for the 2010 season at the farmers' markets located in Broome County. Learn about the rules and regulations, insurance and permit requirements and possibilities for reaching a much larger customer base for your products. All types of vendors are encouraged to attend, but especially those raising meat & poultry.

Cost is \$10/farm. Pre-registration is requested. Please call Carol at (607) 584-9966 to register or with questions.

LOGISTICS OF VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS

Come to a workshop on November 17, 2009 at 7 p.m. at Cornell Cooperative Extension-Broome County and learn about the multitude of value-added agricultural products that you can make in your own home to sell at the retail level, whether at a farmers' market or in a storefront. You will learn about the products which can be made, the types of licenses and insurance you will need, equipment needs and more.

Cost is \$10/farm. Pre-registration is requested. Please call Carol at (607) 584-9966 to register or with questions.

EXPLORING CREDIT/DEBT MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County is offering a free Exploring Credit/Debt Management Issues workshop. This workshop provides information on selecting and using credit wisely, strategies for paying down debt, obtaining and reviewing a credit report, and understanding a credit score. Participants receive free credit management tools.

Advance registration required. Please call (607) 584-5016 for available dates and locations.

SAVE ENERGY, SAVE DOLLARS

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County is offering a free Save Energy, Save Dollars workshop to assist participants reduce their energy bills, discover low-cost/no cost energy conservation methods and learn of community resources to financially assist residents in making home improvements. Each household will receive a free energy savings tool kit.

Advance registration is required. Please call (607) 584-5016 for available dates and locations.

MAKING ENDS MEET

Cornell Cooperative Extension-Broome County is offering a free money management workshop called Making Ends Meet. Participants will set financial goals, develop spending plans, and learn ways to manage their debt. Each household will receive a free money management tool kit.

Advance registration is required. Please call (607) 584-5016 for available dates and locations.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ARTICLES

Take a lesson from some successful new winter markets in upper New York state.

by Mary C. Gruszka

Although summer markets are in full swing, it is not too early to plan markets for the winter season. Customers still want seasonal produce and other goodies that markets provide, and some markets provide local food through the cold dark days of winter, benefiting farmers, vendors and communities.

For example, last winter (2008-2009), the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets counted almost 40 winter farmers markets, including seven new markets in the Hudson Valley and eastern Mohawk Valley regions of New York.

The new Schenectady Greenmarket (Schenectady County), which had the audacity to start in the wintertime, was a roaring success. That market continues its planned year-round operations outdoors during the summer.

Other new markets that debuted last winter were the Eco-Fabulous Community Indoor Seasonal Farmers Market @ Robin's Market in New Paltz (Ulster County), and the Red Hook Winter Farm Market (Dutchess County). These two markets were formed by local community supported agriculture (CSA) farmers to create outlets for their produce and also to help other local farmers reach customers in the winter. The Red Hook market was winter only, while the New Paltz market started up again in the summer.

The Ulster County markets in Rosendale and Saugerties extended their regular market seasons with new winter markets, as did the Westchester county-based Community Markets.

This more than tripled the total amount of winter markets available in the area. Sensing a phenomenon and also desiring some of the fruits and vegetables, greenhouse greens, farm fresh eggs, cheeses, breads, soft and hard ciders and other winter market offerings, I visited most of the new winter markets and over the winter spoke with all of the market managers and some of the participating vendors to discover how these markets got started, why vendors decided to participate, what issues the organizers and vendors faced and how they addressed them, and the overall results. They offered a wealth of practical information.

Plan early for winter farmers markets

Starting a winter market is not an overnight project. Plans need to be made early so vendors will have enough time to prepare. The market managers and vendors interviewed here said when the decision to start winter markets comes late in the regular season, it is too late for most produce farmers to provide adequate supplies throughout the winter. For prepared food producers, this is not as big a problem.

Developing a winter market is an interactive process of recruiting interested vendors, selecting a good mix of products, and a finding a suitable location to house it.

Some well-established markets, like Greenmarket in New York City, held 16 of its 17 winter markets outdoors (as listed by NYS Ag and Markets), but in the upstate communities where these new winter markets were started, the market managers we talked to knew that indoors was the only way to go. They wanted comfortable places where customers and visitors would come in from the cold, warm up, linger awhile, shop, and visit with friends and vendors.

Find a location

Market managers took the following factors into consideration when searching for suitable locations for their winter markets:

- Close proximity to the location of the regular season market or in a central location of town
- Enough room for the desired number of vendors and vendor space requirements
- Space for customer seating
- Plenty of on-site or nearby parking spaces for customers, and for vendors with their trucks and other vehicles

- Affordability
- Availability on the desired days and times
- Availability of tables and chairs and access to restrooms
- Ramps or elevators (depending upon the facility) and enough entrances for easy vendor load in/out
- Easy access from major roadways
- Support of facility owner or sponsor

Recruit market vendors

Before market managers commit to winter markets, they need to recruit a core group of vendors. The New York managers with regular season markets first contacted their own vendors and then added to their list for the new winter markets. The managers looked for and often found vendors from markets in nearby towns where there were no winter markets.

The Saugerties market was able to add a goat cheese vendor, and the Rosendale market added a quiche producer – both of whom had not vended during the summer season because of other market commitments.

Scheduling was also a consideration for vendors who attended multiple markets. Some of the vendors approached by the Schenectady Greenmarket’s winter market also sold at the Troy year-round market, about a half-hour drive away. Because the Troy market is held on Saturdays and the Schenectady market is on Sundays, vendors could participate in both markets.

Some vendors who responded positively had seen announcements about the new winter markets, heard about them from friends or by word-of-mouth from other vendors. Managers said favorable stall rates were a big help in attracting vendors.

“We were able to get the Recreation Commission to give us dates through the winter at a reduced rate from what they would normally charge,” said Dennis Kaye, one of four market manager/founders of the Rosendale Farmer’s Market. “This made it financially feasible for us and our vendors.”

A new winter market can face reluctance from potential vendors. After all, winter provides much needed downtime from a busy growing, producing, harvesting and marketing season. In addition, a new market is an unproven entity, and winter does not make the sale easier.

“I wondered whether people in Schenectady would really come out on a Sunday in really bad weather,” said farmer Gwen Hyde, Windy Willow Farm, Perth, N.Y.

Winter markets can be a real hassle for some vendors. Freezing temperatures, heavy loads of product and winter precipitation can be limiting factors.

“Our products are heavy, weighing 40 pounds per box, and we need to use a hand truck to get things in and out,” said Tom Maynard, Maynard Farms, Ulster Park, N.Y.

“You have to show up earlier than usual. And [for some markets] you have to park on the street, you’re fighting banks of snow that the snowplow left and you’re fighting icy conditions and low temperatures.

“We have to load the trucks the night before and put heaters in them, otherwise the product [fruits, root and winter vegetables] will freeze.”

On the other hand, indoor winter market locations can help attract vendors. David Siegel, Muddy Farm, Stone Ridge, N.Y., used to sell at New York City Greenmarket outside in the winter cold. He had nothing but favorable comments about the Rosendale and Saugerties new winter markets he attended.

“For me, the winter markets are luxurious,” Siegel said. “First of all, they’re indoors. In the city, I was outdoors and had to keep the products from freezing.

“These [new winter] markets provide all the tables, and I don’t need to set up a tent. It’s much easier than during the growing season.”

Set market schedule

Other important considerations for winter markets are the days and hours of operation and how often the market will be held during the month. These may need to be different from those of the regular season.

The Schenectady Greenmarket was held weekly on Sundays starting at 10 a.m. Rosendale, Saugerties and Red Hook markets decided to open only once a month. Rosendale stayed with Sunday, the same as its regular season market; Saugerties moved from Saturday to Sunday during the winter because that was when the Senior Center location was available; Rosendale chose the first Sunday of the month, while the Saugerties winter market was held on the Sunday closest to a major holiday.

The Eco-Fabulous market in New Paltz was held twice

monthly, on the third and fourth Saturdays. The Ulster County markets were aware of each others' schedules and coordinated their day and time decisions.

"As an individual farm, we felt there was not enough produce to do [the market] every week," said market manager and founder Billiam van Roestenberg. "This [winter market] is new, and we didn't want to step on anyone else's feet.

"Our philosophy is to cross-pollinate and work together so people in our area can have access to fresh produce every weekend."

Across the Hudson River in Red Hook, organizer Miriam Latzer intentionally kept the winter market to once a month on the second Saturday for the three-month market period. A produce farmer herself (Hearty Roots Community Farm), Latzer was concerned that there would not be enough products for markets open more often.

"Several vendors and all the customers now think it would be great to have more than three markets next winter," Latzer said. "But a few of us, including myself, are wary that we will have two \$500 days instead of one \$1000 day. And winter is supposed to be a time for rest."

The New Paltz and Rosendale markets initially started at 9 a.m., but they found customers weren't arriving until later in the morning. They shifted the start time to 10 a.m. and stayed open for three or four hours.

"Nine o'clock in the morning was too early, especially on a Sunday," Kaye said. "There are a lot of people who go to church, and the churches usually aren't out until past 11. Plus, if there's one day when people sleep late, it's on Sunday."

The Saugerties' monthly Sunday market started at noon, which was part of the reason for its popularity, according to produce vendor Rhonda O'Brien, Healthway Farms, Highland, N.Y. Yet, downriver in Westchester County, both the Mamaroneck indoor market, which ran every Saturday, and the Briarcliff market, held every other Saturday, successfully started early at 8:30 a.m.

Some vendors of the monthly markets thought adding a second day during the month would work well, but perhaps not on consecutive weeks, as customers tend not to stock up for the entire month. Others were unsure if more people would come if the markets were held more often.

Promote the winter market

Promotion, so important for any farmers market, was especially critical to attract customers to the new winter markets. The New York winter market managers shared some of the ideas they used to make people aware of their existence and provide information about the types of vendors, products, and events.

Most markets had limited advertising budgets, yet they found creative ways to get the word out. The Schenectady Greenmarket attracted a great deal of media attention with multiple press releases. Perhaps the novelty of starting a new farmers market in the winter was part of the draw, but the market's continuing success kept producing favorable comments.

"We developed a good web site with a calendar and upcoming events," said market manager Cheryl Nechamen. "We also sent out a newsletter by e-mail and encouraged people to sign up for it."

Among the market's draws were entertainment, drawings and chefs' demos. The most successful promotion, according to Nechamen, was the sale of \$2 wooden tokens that could be used with any vendor.

The Red Hook market was announced with a street banner, donated by the fruit vendor, Migliorelli Farm. It was hung across a major intersection in town. "We sent fliers home with elementary school children and took all the free internet postings that we could find," said Latzer. The Red Hook winter market became a pickup point for her CSA, which brought in more customers.

The Rosendale market advertised in local church bulletins and in weekly newspapers. Other marketing strategies for the new winter markets included posters placed around town, blogs, listings in newspaper and radio community events calendars, and e-mail blitzes.

Signage was especially important in directing customers to winter market locations. Saugerties' market volunteers even put up donated lawn signs on the main roads leading to the market. In addition, the market maintained larger permanent signs at strategic spots in the town.

Winter markets satisfy vendors

In summary, the survey showed vendors, for the most part, were highly satisfied with the winter markets they attended. They gave credit to the organizers and vendors.

"I am genuinely very surprised at how successful both markets were," Siegel said of the Rosendale and Saugerties winter markets. I expected them to be good, but they are very well supported.

"This is a testament to the quality of the markets during the growing season, but also the promotions that the organizers have done."

Hyde said that attending the winter Schenectady Greenmarket was "absolutely worth it. She added that she could pretty much sell everything she brought.

"What's fabulous is that customers said to me, 'Thanks so much for being here.' People were very appreciative of the market, the vendors, our produce, local agriculture and small businesses."

Maynard said the winter markets were what he expected. "I certainly would never do a summer market with that kind of gross; it just wouldn't be worth it at all. But in winter, things are tighter and it's all household labor – money that we actually get to keep as opposed to having to pay [hired] labor."

Most of the vendors contacted for this article said they plan to continue attending winter markets. The initial success of the 2008-2009 winter markets has also prompted farmers to add to their crop plans for the 2009 growing season.

"I'm planting more root crops, including some I'm growing for the first time, like rutabagas and parsnips," Hyde said. "My planting schedule is to have more vegetables later in the year."

O'Brien expects to harvest greater quantities of certain crops. She plans to rent space from a neighbor to help increase the storage space she needs for her produce.

After attending the Troy, Schenectady, Rosendale and Saugerties winter markets in the 2008/2009 season, Maynard said the emphasis of his 2009 crop plan is more storage items, especially root crops. "I doubled my potato order," he said, adding that his plans included increased acreage of onions and garlic.

Maynard had previously cut back on his winter squash crop for the past couple of years, but he plans to reverse that trend in anticipation of attending multiple winter markets in the 2009-2010 season. It is fortunate that he already has four storage rooms on his farm.

"It's time to get back into storage squash, to keep it longer and to pay more attention to its curing so that we can have it all the way into February," he said. "And if I can pull it off, there are also several radishes that will store well into the winter – right up until February if you keep them right." Siegel, who runs a one-man operation, said he also hopes to have more products in the future, despite limited storage. "I definitely plan on having more eggs and greens next winter, and I also want a better set up for growing sunflower greens that what I had in 2008.

"I don't have the time or field space to grow enough root crops for beyond December at a winter market, but I hope to plant at least enough potatoes this year to last until February. I'm also hoping to come up with some grand new idea for a winter crop for next season.

"Winter markets are a great tool and a great opportunity for farmers to be creative with their products and their marketing."

Benefits of winter farmers markets

As the survey has shown, winter farmers markets are a win for all concerned. They provide farmers and vendors much needed income during their slower months. "It's made a huge difference in the viability of the farm," Maynard said of his participation.

The market managers and vendors said winter markets help vendors maintain ties with their customers. Because winter markets have a more leisurely pace than regular season markets, vendors can spend more time with their customers, developing and renewing personal relationships that result in repeat business throughout the year.

With their shorter season, winter markets can try out new vendors, and vice versa. They can attract new customers who may then become steady regular season market goers. Winter markets are also great community gathering spots.

"There's not a lot to do in the winter for people who are not into winter sports," Kaye said. "[Winter markets] give people a chance to get out."

And of course there's the food. As Latzer put it, "People don't hibernate in the winter, and they crave local food."

~ Mary C. Gruszka is, among many things, a freelance writer and the market manager for the Sullivan County (NY) Farmers' Markets Association for the 2009 season. In addition to market managers and vendors mentioned in the article, the author also thanks the following for their contributions: Judith Spektor and Barry Benepe, Saugerties Farmers' Market; Miriam Haas, Community Markets; Annie Mardiney, Rosendale Farmer's Market; Rae Stang, Lucky Chocolates, Saugerties, N.Y.; Marjan Beebe, Dutch Desserts, Kinderhook, N.Y.; Dominique De Vito, Hudson-Chatham Winery, Ghent, N.Y.; Joan Filiberti, Rock & Rolls Artisan Bakery and Cafe, Highland, N.Y.; Carol Clement, Heather Ridge Farm, Preston Hollow, N.Y.

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HOW MUCH ARE CONSUMERS WILLING TO PAY FOR LOCAL, ORGANIC, AND NUTRITION ATTRIBUTES?

Brad Rickard, *Assistant Professor*

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Introduction

Product labels often include health claims, nutrient content, details describing production methods, and information about where the food was produced. Many states have promotion programs for "Locally Produced" foods in order to support products grown in their state. Are consumers more interested in organic products, locally produced products, or nutritional products? Specialty crop producers interested in pursuing niche markets need more information to describe the benefits of various labels.

Consumer response to your product's label information should have important implications for product differentiation strategies. We distributed a mail survey to examine

consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for four attributes—USDA Organic, Pennsylvania (PA) Preferred, No Sugar Added, and Low-Fat—in applesauce. Consumer responses to label information on processed fruit products are not well studied, yet these products can easily accommodate labels regarding nutritional traits as well as organic and locally grown attributes. Furthermore, the per capita consumption levels of processed fruit products have fallen between 1998 and 2008 and there is significant interest in ways to increase sales in this category.

The Survey

Our survey was mailed to 3,000 households in Pennsylvania with a response from 1,521 residents. Table 1 shows that our respondents were older and more educated than the state's population but were a reasonably close representation.

A series of questions on the mail survey examined how consumers might "choose" among applesauce products differentiated by label information and by price. One question from the study is shown in Figure 1; here the respondent is asked to select which of four applesauce products differentiated by price and product attributes they would buy. Respondents were presented with four of these choice sets, and each choice set included four applesauce products. The prices of the products ranged from \$1.59 to \$2.49, in 30-cent increments. This price range was designed to overlap with prices of 24-ounce applesauce products observed in grocery stores at the time the survey was distributed.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample and Total Population

| Sociodemographic Characteristics | Study Sample | Population of All 67 Counties in PA |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| | percent | |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 53.2 | 47.3 |
| Female | 46.8 | 52.7 |
| Age | | |
| Less than 45 yrs | 25.5 | 47.2 |
| 45–59 yrs | 35.8 | 25.8 |
| 60 yrs & over | 38.7 | 27.0 |
| Education | | |
| < High school grad | 8.0 | 18.1 |
| High school grad | 29.0 | 38.1 |
| Some post high school | 29.6 | 21.4 |
| College grad & over | 33.4 | 22.4 |

Figure 1. An Example of a Choice Set Used in the Consumer Survey

SITUATION 1: If the following types of applesauce were available, which **one** would you buy?



Results and Implications

The findings from the study were used to calculate WTP values for the various attributes; economists use WTP measures to describe the additional value that consumers place on an attribute found in a product. Here the WTP values refer to the additional dollars per 24 ounce container of applesauce. A negative WTP indicates that the respondent

would have to be compensated in order to choose a product with the attribute. Since preferences for food products vary among consumers we decided to split our sample into four subgroups. The four subgroups were developed based on responses about past purchase patterns, and include consumers that purchased i) neither local or organic products, ii) local but not organic products, iii) organic but not local products, and iv) local and organic products.

The WTP values are shown in Table 2 for the four market segments. The first column highlights how different consumers are often willing to pay different amounts for the same attribute. Some consumers would need to be compensated to accept the organic trait; however, other consumers were willing to pay as much as \$0.35 for the organic attribute, about a 20% premium. The PA Preferred attribute had a positive and large effect on the likelihood of a product being selected by all consumers. The WTP for the PA Preferred attribute ranged between \$0.28 and \$0.51, a price premium of between 15% and 30% relative to the range of prices included in our survey. Consumers had a positive WTP for the No Sugar Added attribute and this result was most important for consumers that purchase organic products. The Low-Fat attribute was expected to have an insignificant impact on the likelihood of a product being selected, since applesauce is naturally low in fat; however, the results show that including a “Low-fat” label would decrease the likelihood of the product being selected.

This study has shed some light on the effects of product attributes on consumer choices among applesauce products, and how those effects vary among four market segments. While further study would be required to determine if the relationships found here apply to other products or other consumers, several findings may be useful to producers that are exploring market opportunities for specialty crops. Our findings suggest that the locally produced attribute (PA Preferred) was by far the most important to consumers, followed by the No Sugar Added and then USDA Organic.

“Smart Marketing” is a marketing newsletter for extension publication in local newsletters and for placement in local media. It reviews elements critical to successful marketing in the food and agricultural industry.

SPARROW FARM – GETTING READY TO MAKE THE MOST OF WINTER PRODUCTION

Judith M. Powell, *The author is a freelance writer from Whitefield, Maine.*

In Ted Sparrow's greenhouse on a bleak March day during mud season, summertime colors contrasted a dreary grey world outside. As a peppery fragrance of herbs and mixed greens perked the olfactories, bees buzzed overhead and red ladybugs on shiny green leaves took on the importance of crown jewels. Pale green lettuce to red-stemmed beet greens and orange-stemmed chard were thriving. Who would have guessed this greenhouse could provide so much.

Winter production and sales All winter, while 8 feet of snow accumulated outside, the Sparrow's heated 20-by-100-foot greenhouse stayed busy growing produce for two winter farmers markets and several health food stores. Winter marketing moved 10,000 pounds of tomatoes, 800 pounds of chard, 1,000 pounds of cucumbers and 200 pounds of lettuce, all certified organic. Once every two weeks, fresh produce and 300 dozen eggs filled the Sparrow Farm delivery van for its run to eight health foods stores in central to southern Maine. Come spring, fields are prepared for planting the additional output that will be needed to keep up with the surge in customer demand seasonal farmers markets bring. Once the weather clears in May, organic seedlings grown at the farm are transferred to the field. Squash, string beans, peppers, eggplant and more beets, plus another 5,000 pounds of tomatoes, 1,000 pounds of chard, 2,000 pounds of cukes, 1,000 pounds melons and 5,000 pounds of potatoes are grown outside to supplement greenhouse output. **History** Sparrow and his wife Karen started their farm in Pittston, Maine, in 1985. They began with sheep. We started out with 100 ewes on rotational grazing. We had 50 acres, which wasn't enough land for profit. We made about \$100 per ewe selling meat, fleece and pelts retail from the farm here, Sparrow explains. Gradually, we changed from sheep to organic vegetables, then added cranberries and organic laying hens. Our goal was to get enough income.

During their transition from livestock, We found out that farming is not an exact science, Sparrow says. Their heavy clay, scanty buckton soil was not good for growing vegetables. They had problems with insects and disease, and rain and wet conditions ruined many tomatoes. As they learned which crops do well field-grown and which would be more

profitable protected in a controlled environment, they constructed three greenhouses: one heated with propane and two as season extenders. I sited them with their long sides facing south, keeping the small north side covered with a reflective aluminum-faced insulation. With steady light and less disease from sheltering the crops from rain, their yields and quality increased. My rate of production doubled in the greenhouse because I can control conditions, he says. Since the farm's organic certification in 1984, Sparrow hones his techniques to control disease. Crop rotation is one. You cannot grow the same crop in the same place every year. Beneficial insect usage is another. I have built up a protective insect population over the years, and my bees, dragonflies and ladybugs survive over the years and build up. I don't use pesticides. They take out the good bugs along with the bad. Bumblebees are purchased annually from IPM (integrated pest management) outlets, and one quadrant of the hive is placed in the greenhouse and three quadrants go in the cranberry bog.

Egg production

The farm added free-range laying hens 10 years ago, and eggs provide a steady income stream year-round. One winter, we brought in 800 hens in crates and we put them in the greenhouse. Then, we were using shredded paper as bedding. Businesses gave us their paper for free if we picked it up, but commercial paper shredding took away our supply. Now we raise our own chicks organically. We raised 600 this year and are going up to 1,000 next year. A new house for new chicks was built with radiant heat in the floor. They stay warm all winter, and we don't have to deal with lights, so it's safer. We run electric hot water through pipes and had zero chick loss this winter. Despite raising their wholesale price in 2007, egg demand stays strong. Chicken feed prices increased when corn was diverted to ethanol production, so we had to adjust. Eggs are an inexpensive protein for people compared with beef, Karen explains, and health food store customers keep on buying.

Cranberries

There's a market for organic cranberries, the farm's records show after 10 years of production. Sparrow Farm berries are sold fresh and frozen in cello packages, and damaged seconds are made into sauce in their licensed home kitchen. Sauce can be custom-ordered, e.g. without sugar

for diabetics, and about 50 12-jar cases are sold annually. The cranberries are grown in three bogs on 2 acres. The fresh market requires that berries to be colored up. This happens later in fall when nights turn cold, around Columbus Day. We harvest dry, which can be tricky because we're fighting the chance of frost. This year, the farm invested in a mechanical harvester. You can't rent harvesters around here, Sparrow explains, so I'd have to spend two days driving to Massachusetts going to get and return it, so it's going to pay off. Another investment this year was their large walk-in cooler purchased used from a local florist shop, which replaces several coolers. Bags and boxes of cranberries, produce and eggs can now be organized and managed much more easily than before.

Consumer trends

We pretty much sell out at market, Karen says. It was customers who pushed for having a winter market. The retrenching economy is not impacting the Sparrows. We're seeing an increase in consumers. They're looking for fresh year-round, and consumers are paying attention to food safety after so many recent food recalls. Also, many do not want to support cross-country shipping and its costs and implications, so they'll go looking for local.

Future plans

Sparrow keeps assessing ways to streamline and improve effectiveness. We're not fully automated yet. Now, only our greenhouse heat and exhaust fans are automated. We need more fans and automatic lights that come on when growing conditions are less than optimal. He'd someday like to convert to solar power. I like to have the sun heat our water by using coils that I'd attach to the end of the greenhouse, but this is pretty expensive. He's hoping that the developing stimulus packages might include environmental grant money for small businesses. A little green money would be put to good use at Sparrow Farm, and Sparrow would be off and running finding new ways to reduce electric energy reliance. This article originally appeared in the August 2009 issue of *FARMING: THE JOURNAL OF NORTHEAST AGRICULTURE* and has been reprinted with permission. For more information, please call 800-422-7147 or visit us on the Web at www.farmingmagazine.com. **The unique challenges of direct marketing meat**

Marketing fruits, vegetables and flowers directly to consumers through farmstands, farmers' markets and pick-your-own has been a profitable farm marketing strategy for a long time now. Direct marketing meat, while not new, is certainly less common, probably because of the unique challenges associated with it.

Chief among those challenges is surely the fact that most consumers today are not accustomed to buying meat anywhere other than a supermarket. Even butcher shops are few and far between nowadays. Though they may make a special trip to a farmstand or farmers' market for fresh produce and baked goods, shoppers are still likely to stop at the grocery store for other staples like meat, milk, orange juice, cereal, paper goods and health and beauty aids.

Just like small fruit and veggie growers who don't produce the volume to supply large distributors, small grass-fed livestock farms must rely on alternative marketing models.

Through a grant from the Iowa State University's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, two non-profit organizations — Practical Farmers of Iowa and Food Alliance Midwest — collaborated several years ago to help farmers with grass-fed operations better market their products. The project included a feasibility study of marketing sustainable meat products through cooperative buying clubs and CSAs, workshops on direct marketing for farmers and processors in northeast and southwest Iowa, and case studies of three Iowa farms.

Consumer focus groups in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa; and experiences of farmer participants played into the development of marketing materials for grass-based beef and lamb producers. In the process, investigators considered consumer reaction to terms such as "free range," "pasture raised," "grass fed" and "natural."

The research showed that health and nutrition were the most important factors in consumer food-buying decisions, followed by taste and whether the food was locally raised. Environmental benefits ranked lower than other factors.

Focus group participants felt that they knew what "free range" meant but were unsure about "grass fed." The term "natural" is over-used and therefore meaningless, according to participants.

Among the perceived barriers to pasture-raised meat products were:

- Lack of trust in unknown sources – particularly those seen as unregulated or lacking standards
- Expect pasture-raised products will cost more, which means they expect more
- Concerns about affect on taste
- Need for convenience
- Resistance to buying in larger volumes

This article was originally printed in the August 2009 issue of Farming, the Journal of Northeast Agriculture by Diane Baedeker Petit.

To address these barriers and take advantage of the positive consumer attitudes revealed in the focus groups, the study made the following recommendations:

Focus on direct benefits like better taste and healthy attributes.

- Promote these and other key benefits (antibiotic & hormone free, environmentally friendly, animal wellbeing, etc.) using simple terms and phrases.
- Find ways to address concerns expressed about the taste and tenderness of grass-fed meats.
- Address price issues.
- Address food safety concerns head on
- Address convenience issues with easy ordering and better access to product.

A presentation on the research results, the case studies, and training materials are available on the Leopold Center's website at http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/grassfed.htm.

Of course, marketing meat is much more complicated than marketing fruits and vegetables because of the federal and state regulations involved. The Kansas Rural Center offers a fact sheet on "Marketing Grass-fed Beef" that covers not only consumer attitudes, but also packaging, labeling, grading, pricing and regulatory considerations. It is worth noting that the fact sheet, found at <http://www.kansasmruralcenter.org/publications/grassfedbeef.pdf>, is 10 years old so you might want to do some research to verify whether there have been any changes to the regulations it references.

One of the chief recommendations of the Iowa study was to develop a strong brand identity for your farm. This can help with trust issues and foster loyalty. It's also appropriate, given the term's ranching origins. Seems things have come full circle in meat marketing.

October**2009**

| <i>Sun</i> | <i>Mon</i> | <i>Tue</i> | <i>Wed</i> | <i>Thu</i> | <i>Fri</i> | <i>Sat</i> |
|---|------------|--|---|------------|--|--|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 International Year of Fiber Festival at Binghamton University All Day Southernfialpacas.com Stone Bams Center for Food & Agriculture Harvest Fest 10am-3pm Stonebamscenter.org |
| 4 International Year of Fiber Festival at Apple Hills Southernfialpacas.com | 5 | 6 | 7 1-4pm: Organic Field Day: Season Extension, Winter Growing & Storage Blue Heron Farm, Lodi, NY nofany.org | 8 | 9 | 10 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Finger Lakes Farmstead Cheese Open House 607-272-2292 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 6pm Trees for Fall Color, Cutler Botanic Garden, CCE-Broome | 14 Noon: Ag in Uncertain Times Webinar Series: Families facing uncertainty in agriculture http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimes/ | 15 | 16 Beginning Farmer Online Course starts (5 weeks) nybeginningfarmers.org | 17 Fruit Wines & Fruit Farms Bus Tour (607) 584-9966 2009 Northeast Animal Power Field Days Nofany.org |
| 18 2009 Northeast Animal Power Field Days Nofany.org | 19 | 20 | 21 Noon: Ag in Uncertain Times Webinar Series: Families facing uncertainty in agriculture http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimes/ | 22 | 23 Cornell University Sheep & Goat Symposium http://www.sheepgoatmarketing.info | 24 Organic Beekeeping: Preparing Hives for Winter The Pfeiffer Center, Chestnut Ridge, NY. Pfeiffercenter.org Cornell University Sheep & Goat Symposium http://www.sheepgoatmarketing.info |
| 25 | 26 | 27 7-9pm: Grants - Opportunities, Myths and Realities CCE-Tompkins, 615 Willow Ave, Ithaca | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

November

2009

| <i>Sun</i> | <i>Mon</i> | <i>Tue</i> | <i>Wed</i> | <i>Thu</i> | <i>Fri</i> | <i>Sat</i> |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 Strategic Marketing Conf 7-9pm: Grants - Opportunities, Myths and Realities CCE-Tioga, Owego | 3 Strategic Marketing Conf. Marketingpwt.aem.cornell.edu | 4 7-9pm: Grants - Opportunities, Myths and Realities CCE-Cortland, Cortland | 5 7-9pm: Grants - Opportunities, Myths and Realities CCE-Chemung, Elmira | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 Noon: Ag in Uncertain Times Webinar Series: Operating in risky environments http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimes/ | 12 7-9pm: Grants - Opportunities, Myths and Realities CCE-Schuyler, Human Services Bldg, Montour Falls | 13 Farm-Based Education Conf (Tarrytown) Farmbasededucation.org NESAWG Conf. (Albany) www.nesawg.org Pride of NY Harvest Fest, NYS Fairgrounds harvestfestny.org | 14 Farm-Based Education Conf (Tarrytown) Farmbasededucation.org NESAWG Conf. (Albany) www.nesawg.org Pride of NY Harvest Fest, NYS Fairgrounds harvestfestny.org |
| 15 Pride of NY Harvest Fest, NYS Fairgrounds harvestfestny.org | 16 | 17 | 18 Noon: Ag in Uncertain Times Webinar Series: Operating in risky environments http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimes/ | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 6pm Garlic, Rhubarb & Asparagus Community Room, Town of Chenango Bldg \$7pp 584-9966 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

December

2009

| <i>Sun</i> | <i>Mon</i> | <i>Tue</i> | <i>Wed</i> | <i>Thu</i> | <i>Fri</i> | <i>Sat</i> |
|------------|------------|--|---|--|--|------------|
| | | 1 | 2 Noon: Ag in Uncertain Times Webinar Series: /Pulling it all together: Managing Ag Enterprises in Uncertain times http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimes/ | 3 Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture Young Farmers Conference Stonebarnscenter.org | 4 Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture Young Farmers Conference Stonebarnscenter.org | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 6pm Unusual Perennials \$7pp Community Room, Town of Chenango Bldg (607) 584-9966 | 9 Noon: Ag in Uncertain Times Webinar Series: /Pulling it all together: Managing Ag Enterprises in Uncertain times http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimes/ | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 Noon: Ag in Uncertain Times Webinar Series: /Pulling it all together: Managing Ag Enterprises in Uncertain times http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimes/ | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

BUYING, SELLING OR TRANSFERRING A SMALL BUSINESS

WORKSHOP PRESENTED BY: SCORE® CHAPTER 217

The Binghamton Chapter of SCORE® is sponsoring a small business workshop on Buying, Selling or Transferring a Business.

Date: Saturday, October 17, 2009
Time: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Location: Broome County Library
Court St. Binghamton, NY
Fee: \$25.00

The workshop will cover the following topics:

- Valuing a Small Business
- Selling & Exit Planning
- Legal Issues
- Buying a Small Business
- Buying a New or Existing Franchise
- Succession Planning of Rural Businesses

To Pre-Register Call: Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce – 772-8860

Make check payable to: SCORE® Chapter 217,
c/o Greater Binghamton Chamber
PO Box 995
Binghamton, NY 13902

REGISTRATION FORM – Workshop on Buying, Selling or Transferring a Small Business (10/17/2009)

NAME(S) _____

COMPANY _____

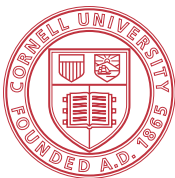
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Save the Date... Building Local Living Economies Workshop October 24th, 2pm in Delhi. Farm Catskills is bringing noted author and speaker Michael Shuman to Delhi to talk about building strong and vibrant local economies. Michael is an economist, author of books about locally owned businesses and relocalizing economies including Going Local and The Small-Mart Revolution, and director of research and American Legion in Delhi, followed by a book signing and a tasting featuring local foods. If you have a business that you would like to promote at this event, let us know. Thank you to the Pure Catskills buy local campaign and the O'Connor Foundation for helping to sponsor this important event!

Learn the answers to these and more vegetable pest management questions at this Cornell Cooperative Extension workshop, Wednesday, September 30, 4:00-6:00 p.m. at Our Green Acres farm in Owego, NY. Gain the skills and knowledge you need to control pests that want to eat your veggie crops. Disease and insect identification, life cycles, and both organic and integrated pest management approaches to pest control will be discussed. We'll practice pest-ID hands on in the field, so dress appropriately. Bring a sample of a sick plant from your farm for identification.

Program costs just \$10, registration is requested. Please call 687-4020 or e-mail meh39@cornell.edu <<mailto:meh39@cornell.edu>>

Wednesday, September 30, 4:00-6:00 p.m. Vegetable Pest Management
Our Green Acres, Owego, NY. (3965 Waverly Rd., also known as 1 mile west of Owego on 17C)
What's eating my broccoli and how do I deal with that powdery stuff on pumpkin leaves?