



ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

PRODUCTION, MANAGEMENT & MARKETING

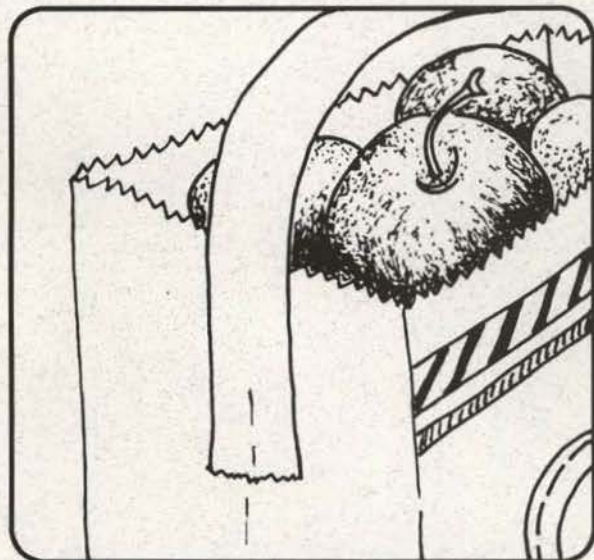
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Marketing your produce directly to consumers

V. J. Parker-Clark



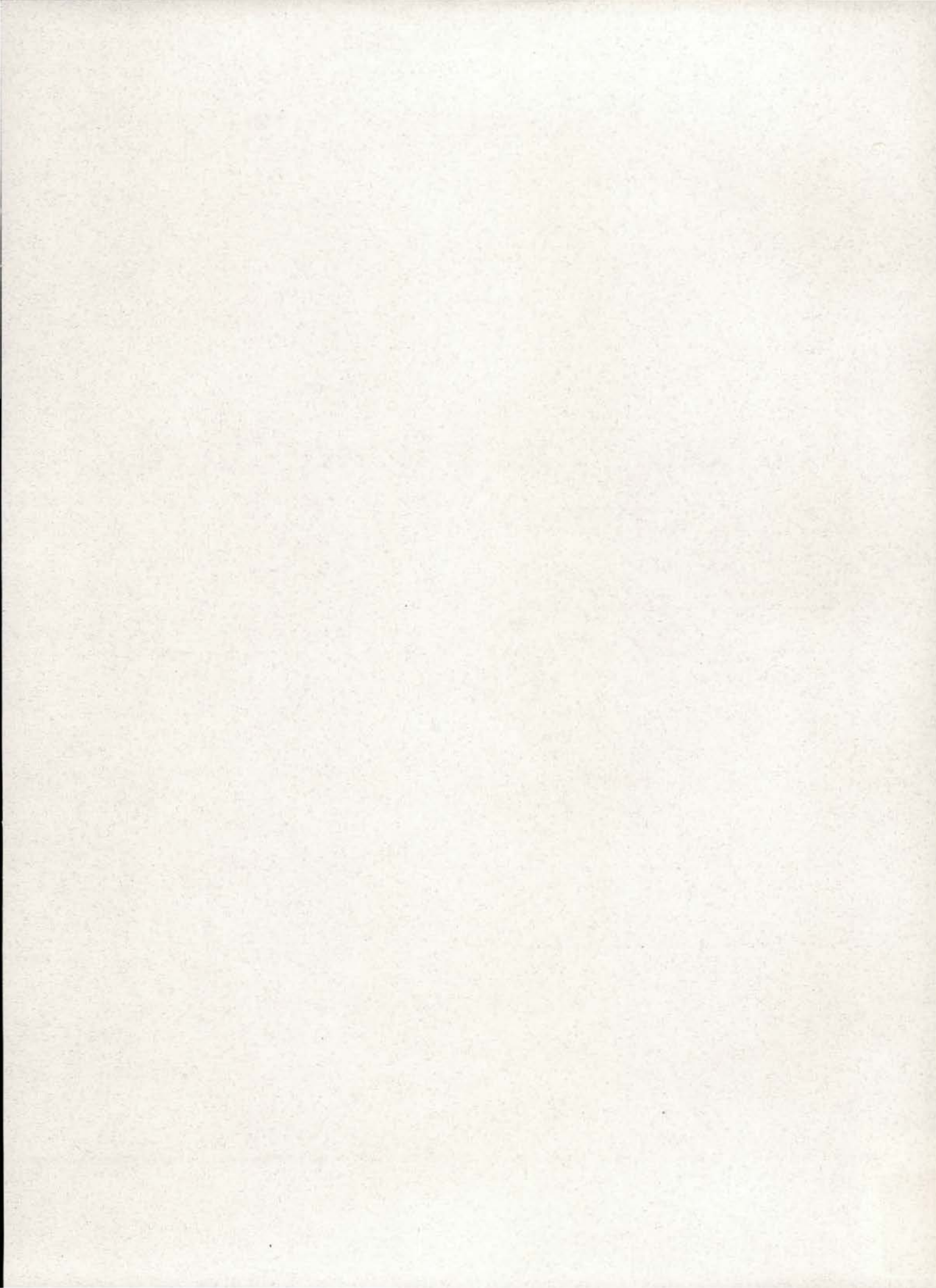
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Marketing your produce directly to consumers

V. J. Parker-Clark

In order to have a successful direct farm-to-consumer business, you must have a product desired by the public, develop an effective marketing plan, and make use of promotional techniques. Basically, through careful planning and operation, you must do everything you can to attract and keep customers. As a part of your decision-making process about marketing produce directly, you should answer the following questions:

- Is there a *demand* for your product?
- What are your marketing *alternatives*?
- Is there an *advantage* in selling direct?
- Are there *legal restrictions* on direct marketing your product?
- What are your *expectations* of direct marketing?
- Is your *location* satisfactory?

Why do you want a farm market?

Your reasons for wanting to establish a direct farm-to-consumer outlet probably include a desire for increased financial returns from farm production. If you own a small farm or truck garden, you may find that direct marketing means additional income even if you have insufficient volume or selection to attract processors and commercial buyers.

Besides additional income, several other factors may make direct marketing attractive to you. Direct marketing gives you the opportunity to own your own business and determine your own product mix. If you have the ability to raise specialty crops such as flowers, snow peas, ornamental corn, etc., direct marketing allows you to provide products during special seasons or to special groups. If you enjoy

dealing one-on-one with people — visiting with them about how you produce your crops, why your products are of the highest quality — then you will enjoy a direct farm-to-consumer marketing operation.

Your marketing needs will depend on the variety and volume of products you grow and the marketing channels available to you. Having a garden with excess produce is substantially different from having a large volume of produce that must be sold rapidly.

Will it sell?

Before you decide how to sell a product, you need to answer the question, "Will it sell?" You must know who will buy your produce, how to sell to these buyers, how much they are likely to purchase, and what price they are likely to pay: you must understand your market. This requires you to do some marketing research, which will provide information to help you project future trends and plan a marketing program. But first, you must clearly define the products and services you intend to provide.

Define your product/service

To develop a clear, usable definition, think about your product from the perspective of a potential buyer. Write the definition by summarizing the product features, service aspects, marketing season, and benefits to the buyer or user. As you learn more about the market, you may modify your product/service and, therefore, the product definition.

Product features — Describe the product varieties or types, its range of size and quality, product mix, and other characteristics. Example: "Corn — multicolored, white, and yellow; extra sweet, baby, ornamental, and popcorn."

Service features — Describe packaging, processing, method of delivery, information, or other services that

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accompany the product. Example: "Popcorn will be offered on the ear as well as in 1 pound and 5 pound packages. Ornamental corn will be sold husked. Customer requests for quantity will be honored. Directions for using ornamental corn in decorations will be available, and demonstrations will be given each Saturday at the market."

Marketing season — Determine the period of time for which you will offer the product and/or service. Example: "Corn available July-October only."

Benefits to customers — Write a brief statement to answer the question, "Why should the consumer buy from me?" Example: "Benefits to the customer include a fresh, locally grown product with no chemical residue, demonstrations of the uses of ornamental corn, and recipes for baby corn."

Capsule description — Formulate the essential concept of your enterprise in a short but complete statement. Include each characteristic above, but don't exceed 50 words. Example: "We offer many varieties of corn at bargain prices in three package sizes or in bulk. Additionally, we provide demonstrations and information on the uses of ornamental corn and recipes for baby corn."

Market research

Once you have clearly defined your product, learn as much as possible about your market, the competition, and consumer trends. To estimate your potential profit, you need to project potential sales and prices. To begin with, visit a local produce store or direct market outlet and note their prices and quality. Can you beat what is currently available to consumers in your area?

Then gather existing data from libraries, government offices, chambers of commerce, universities, Cooperative Extension offices, trade magazines, and computer databases. While it may be tedious, "secondary research" is often the easiest and least expensive way to obtain market information.

Secondary research

Demographics — Population characteristics, such as the number of people in a certain age group or average family size in a geographic area, may be useful. The number of people in the nearest city with incomes over \$20,000 can be obtained from your state's department of commerce, division of economic development, or your region's economic development council office. For example, Panhandle Area Council (PAC) in Hayden Lake, Idaho, publishes a report each year that includes this information.

Current population figures can be obtained from town and city offices, libraries, local transportation depart-

ments, planning boards, school district offices, and other local agencies. National demographics are available from the Bureau of the Census and other public sources, as are regional and local demographics that describe income, age distribution, and other basic characteristics.

Information on very specific characteristics, such as the number of people in your area who process food at home (canning and freezing) may be difficult to obtain. While searching, mention your needs to resource people; sometimes special reports are prepared on unique topics.

Consumption — The number of pounds of garlic consumed per person per year since 1968 or the annual number of tourists that visit U-pick operations, for example, may be useful. The commodities for which this data exists are those which have been marketed for a long time (apples, grapes, potatoes, sweet corn), which generate many dollars or involve many acres or farmers (corn, wheat), and those covered by federal programs (wheat, honey).

Be cautious in your interpretation of data. Information for new products, such as cut flowers or garlic, may be out of date even if they are only a few years old. Also, consumption data describe national trends and may be less useful on the local level. USDA-ERS Statistical Bulletin no. 825, *Food Consumption Price and Expenditures, 1968-89* (May 1991), may contain useful information. Check your local library or write USDA-ERS, 1301 New York Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20005-4789.

Primary research

Observation — This includes counting the number of products, people, or events in a way that is relevant to your enterprise. Disadvantages include the labor required and the limited amount of information obtained from each observation.

Surveys — Surveys to determine people's needs and buying patterns may be written and distributed or taken over the telephone. Written surveys take more time to prepare but yield more information. They are usually mailed or distributed as shopping bag stuffers and handouts. Telephone surveys can yield much information quickly and, if limited to local calling area, are inexpensive. However, the interviewer must be persistent and pleasant, and respondents may tolerate only a small number of questions.

Evaluating your results

Once you have defined your product/service, know the demographics of your market area and the average amount consumed of the product(s) you want to sell, and have talked with people in your area about their needs and purchasing patterns, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- *What* am I selling?
- *What prices* will I likely receive for my product?
- *Who* will buy or use this product?
- *How much* of this product will people buy?
- *What volume* am I likely to sell in the market?
- How *strong* is my competition in the market?
- What are *future* trends for this product or service?
- How can I best *market* this product?

If you are not completely confident about your marketing projections, don't be discouraged. There is no way to predict the future with certainty. However, by gathering and understanding as much information as possible, you will learn if your product or service is in demand and the best options for marketing it directly — farmers' market, roadside stand, U-pick operation, etc. If your market research shows excess supply or that the trend is one of declining consumption and prices, do not pursue the enterprise.

How to market it?

If your market research shows there is a niche for your product, your next step is to decide how best to market it. Selecting a method depends on you, the farm location, the volume of products you plan to sell, and other factors that will be discussed below. Major direct-marketing options include roadside stands, roadside markets, U-pick operations, and farmers' markets. Other direct-marketing options include honor or self-serve selling, peddling, rent-a-tree or plot arrangements, subscription selling, gift baskets, and mail-order sales. Let's look at each of these options.

Roadside stand

A roadside stand is usually located on your farm to sell produce during harvest. You also may want to sell neighbors' products to offer a wider variety. A successful roadside stand should have adequate access, parking, and knowledgeable sales personnel.

Advantages of a roadside stand include the opportunity to perform chores during slack periods and lower transportation costs. A roadside stand can expand as consumer demand increases. Your roadside stand could grow into a large, successful roadside market as you gain experience and accumulate capital. A roadside stand allows you considerable flexibility with respect to size, season, and method of operation.

Roadside market

In a roadside market operation, you grow a portion of the produce sold and buy additional products for resale. Your market could operate year round by relying on wholesalers for produce during the winter

season. Some roadside markets sell products other than produce, but the operation is generally identified by its rural atmosphere and "home-grown" products. You should try to locate your market on your property to clearly indicate its direct association with your farm. This type of market is popular on the East Coast.

The primary advantages of the roadside market are the on-farm location and the diversity of products made possible by purchasing from wholesalers. Year-round employment is provided, and the additional income may eventually eliminate the need for off-farm employment.

Major disadvantages of a roadside market are the needs for a good location and substantial capital for facilities and inventory. Zoning regulations may require your market to be in a commercial zone rather than an agricultural zone.

U-pick operation

In a U-pick operation the consumer comes to your farm, does the harvesting, pays for the produce harvested, and transports it home. Consumer harvesting is best suited for crops that have a distinctive indicator of ripeness, such as color or size, or for crops that can be harvested all at once.

A U-pick operation requires far less harvest labor, handling, packaging, shipping, and storage than other marketing alternatives. You receive immediate payment upon harvest with no deductions for shipping, handling, spoilage, or risk of price change. Consumers enjoy selecting fully ripe fresh products and tend to buy in quantity for home canning and freezing. They also assign some recreational value to their U-pick experiences.

Disadvantages include the need for a large parking area, possible crop damage, getting enough pickers to harvest the entire crop, increased risk of accident and liability, and having to tolerate inexperienced pickers.

Farmers' market

Whatever the name — open-air market, curb market, community produce market, or farmers' retail market — the primary function of this type of market is to bring together two or more producers for the purpose of selling locally-grown produce to local consumers.

Market facilities range from a large permanent structure with individual stalls to a parking lot where vendors sell from the back of pickup trucks. The facilities may be owned and operated by individuals, corporations, or cooperatives, or they may be owned by a city or a municipality. Most farmers' markets function under a formal set of rules, guidelines, or by-

laws agreed to by the sellers. Your state's department of agriculture may have a listing of farmers' markets within the state.

A farmers' market offers advantages to both producers and consumers. For you and other producers, collective selling attracts more customers. The product mix and number of sellers also offers consumers a greater variety of produce that is usually fresher and less expensive than in local stores. To some, the farmers' market provides an opportunity to special-order produce directly from producers in quantities for home canning. Other advantages include the opportunity for low-income families and older citizens who have limited mobility to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

Disadvantages of a farmers' market include the fact that you must absorb the costs of transportation and of selling your products. Time spent selling means time away from the farm. You also may find that limited market days may not provide a large enough sales volume to cover the added marketing costs. Also, most markets are not open year round. A final disadvantage may be the difficulty of finding good market managers at an affordable salary level.

Honor selling

When your sales volume does not warrant full-time sales people and you trust your customers, you may want to use this option. With honor or self-serve selling, you stock your sales room or outlets with available products, and consumers serve themselves, leaving payment in a cash box. Self-serve selling results in reduced sales labor requirements, but increases the risk of pilferage and theft.

Peddling

This is a direct-marketing option in which you sell and deliver to homes, retail stores, institutions, and restaurants. You might also sell off the back of your truck or door-to-door where permissible. The advantages of this type of direct marketing include low overhead cost, easy entry into the peddling business when a product surplus exists, and easy exit from business when product supply is short. Since you are transporting the product to the customer, your farm location is not as critical. Peddling disadvantages might include legal restrictions, required licensing, difficulty in identifying customers, and a possible fly-by-night image.

Rent-a-tree

In this option, also called "plot arrangements," consumers make a contract with the grower for the yield of a certain tree or row in the field. Generally, you agree to do all the cultural operations to produce the product and supply the equipment for harvesting.

The renters have the use of the tree or plot for the duration of the contract and do the harvesting.

The primary advantage of the rent-a-tree arrangement is reduced harvest labor expense. However, disadvantages include increased effort in identifying individual trees or areas and in modifying cultural practices to satisfy customers.

Subscription selling

In this type of marketing, consumers sign up for a season's worth of produce. They subscribe for a certain amount of produce each week (1 bag, 2 bags, etc.) and indicate what their favorites are. They agree to take produce that may not be their favorite when quantities of those crops require you to distribute them. You deliver to the customers' homes or places of work and provide recipes for unusual vegetables and fruits as well as for "the same old vegetables."

This type of marketing is becoming popular in populated areas, or where families are too busy to garden or do not have space. An advantage of this type of marketing is that your farm does not need to be in a "good" location, nor do you need a stand or building in which to sell your produce.

Gift baskets, mail-order sales

These methods are popular options with products that can be packaged attractively and have limited perishability (apples, herbs, holly, and dried flowers). Gift baskets and mail-order sales are not as location-dependent. If you can participate in a group catalog or work with others to produce gift baskets, your selling season may be extended and your customer base increased.

Location, site selection, and facilities

A major factor in your decision on how to direct-market your product is location. You can still market your product by other methods if you do not have a good location, but for roadside stands, U-pick operations, and farmers' markets, location is important. The ideal location will:

- Be on a well-traveled road near population centers.
- Be clearly visible to potential customers.
- Be located away from sharp curves, hill crests, and high-speed highways.
- Be on the right-hand side of a road leading into town.
- Have adequate parking for customers.
- Have access to necessary utilities.
- Be near other direct-marketing enterprises.

Direct-sales operations have been very successful when located within a few miles of a city, town, or resort area. As "bedroom areas" for the larger communities spring up, the opportunity to establish direct-marketing facilities nearby are greatly enhanced.

A substantial portion of customers stop at roadside stands out of impulse because the stand or products appeal to them. An adequate flow of traffic by your stand is especially important if you think impulse buying will be an important part of sales. Before you decide on a roadside stand, you should figure your cost of production, price your product, and determine how many sales per day you would need to cover those costs plus overhead. One way to do this is to determine the average number of cars that travel past your proposed market location each day (do this as a part of your market research) and divide that into the figure you calculated to cover your costs. That will give you a ball park figure of how much each car load of people would have to spend in a day just to keep your market door open.

If you lack adequate traffic by your farm, you may want to consider an off-farm location for your stand or market. In evaluating off-farm sites, you should be aware of additional expense in renting, transporting products, staffing, security, etc.

Offering an "experience" along with the market or U-pick will draw customers. You may consider having a petting zoo, Oktoberfest, hay rides, picnic areas, camping facilities, or other activities and services that will draw customers to your farm market.

Site selection

There are two major considerations in site selection: the convenience of the customer and the convenience of the operator. For the convenience of the customer, your facility should be easily visible from the highway. USDA studies have shown visibility is influenced by physical characteristics such as a long, level stretch of road, the outside of a broad curve, or near the top of a long sloping hill. The site should offer easy exit from and return to traffic. Consumers do not like to turn abruptly from the flow of traffic into a driveway leading to a roadside stand or market, so many consumers will pass your direct-sales operation if the turnoff is the least bit dangerous or the turn difficult to make. To eliminate this danger, consider constructing a wide shoulder turn off lane. Before changing the entrances to your property, however, you should check the right-of-way or other regulations with the proper state or local agencies.

The best site from your standpoint as the operator may be near your home. If your operation is close to

your house, you need not be at the facility continuously, and the location may be economical from a security and sales standpoint. Costs may be reduced by extending the utilities from the home to the roadside stand or control point of a U-pick operation. However, be sure to evaluate your family's feelings about increased traffic and commotion near your home.

Facilities

Most direct-farm marketers start out small and expand as customers and volume increase. If you have a barn, shed, or packing house, you might be able to convert it to a roadside stand for less money than it would cost to build a new facility. Also, unless great care is taken, a new building may destroy the "on-the-farm" atmosphere important in attracting customers.

Design considerations include customer convenience and safety, ease of operation and labor requirements, construction cost, all-weather operation, appearance (the farm image), ease in altering or relocating displays, low-cost expansion later, storage requirements including refrigeration, water supply and sanitary facilities, and preparation area.

The size and shape of the building should be in direct proportion to your planned business volume and the permanency of the enterprise. You should anticipate lighting, water, drains, and refrigeration needs, and evaluate whether to install them initially or at a later date. Facility expansion can be very expensive.

Your stand or market should include a sales room, a preparation area, and a walk-in refrigeration area where you can hold foods at the proper temperatures.

Display equipment

Many types of display equipment are on the market: dry racks, wet produce racks, ice produce racks, and mechanically refrigerated produce cases. Display equipment does not have to be elaborate, but should be adequate to do the job. It should have shelving that can be easily cleaned, washed, and maintained.

Traffic flow within your market

You should give considerable thought to traffic flow *within* your market. Arrange displays, shelves, and racks so they guide consumers automatically on a predetermined path. This path should pass nearly all the items displayed for sale (this may increase impulse buying). Traffic flow also makes it easier to direct the customers to a central check-out station and scale.

One of the best places to study traffic flow is inside your local supermarket. Spend an afternoon or two

watching how people are guided by the position of displays and the location of products. Put what you learn to work in your market.

If you have a U-pick operation, control of the product and customers is also important. To accomplish an even and complete harvest, you should lay out, stake, or rope off fields into blocks or rows. Do not permit customers to pick helter skelter in the fields except in a salvage-type operation. Visit successful U-pick operations to see how customers are guided through the fields and to the check-out area.

Parking

Mark the parking area clearly, and if space is available, mark individual parking places with logs, poles, lime, or rope. If a parking design is established, most customers will park accordingly.

Parking is critical if you have a roadside stand. You should project your parking needs based on your expected business. The following general rules may be helpful:

- One parking space should be allocated for each \$100 worth of annual business anticipated.
- About 15 parking spaces should be allowed for each 100 cars expected daily.
- About 4 square feet of parking space should be allowed for each square foot of market size.
- Parallel parking spaces, if used, should be 22 feet long by 10 feet wide.
- Angle parking should be angled at 90°, 60°, or 45°.
- Spaces should be marked on the ground.

Many problems arise from improperly prepared and surfaced parking lots. Good drainage will prevent pot holes, ruts, and corduroyed surfaces. Dust is often a problem and should be controlled. If your parking lot is dusty, your market will be dusty. Customers do not like to breathe, see, or eat dust.

Merchandising strategies

Through merchandising, you can increase customer satisfaction. Merchandising includes many aspects of direct-market selling such as product selection, processing and packaging, pricing, display, inventory control, advertising, sanitation, customer service, and employee appearance and behavior. An easy way to explain merchandising is to define it as the art of selling or the "market dance." The intent of merchandising should be to sell available products as profitably as possible, to build clientele satisfaction, and to encourage repeat sales. Accomplishment of this goal cannot be left to chance.

As you begin to develop a merchandising plan, you must remember merchandising means supplying what the customer wants. Be creative and imaginative. In direct marketing, customers expect above all to find high quality and freshness, but they also expect the market to be clean and attractive. Summarized below are merchandising principles that generally apply to all direct marketing.

Your products

Freshness and quality are more important than having a variety of products. However, you can often increase sales by having companion products (of good quality) like dill and pickling cucumbers, carrots and peas, etc. If you have only one product for sale, such as apples, you might consider offering more than one variety, or alternatives in processing or packaging such as cider or apples by the pound, peck, or bushel. You might also sell some cut up and packaged as ready-to-eat or dried.

Handling and storage

Because fresh and flavorful products are your main draw, proper handling and storage are important parts of your merchandising plan. Protect perishables from the sun, overheating, and drying out. Avoid bumping and bruising produce (customers can be cautioned about this, too).

Display and packaging

Displaying and packaging products attractively can increase sales with little extra effort or cost. Display items in bulk quantities when possible because this gives customers the impression of a good selection and adequate supply. Using wooden baskets, crates, or barrels gives that country-fresh look.

If you provide carry-out bags for bulk items, make sure they are stamped with your market's trademark or logo. You may also want to sell canvas shopping bags stamped with your logo for those shoppers who do not want to use paper or plastic.

Packages and containers should fit your customers. Through a market survey, you will know if your customers are families who like ready-to-cook veggies, or two-person households who love to cook from scratch. Know who your customers are and provide packaging that tells them you recognize who they are and that you want to meet their needs.

Use display tables and racks whenever possible. Products displayed on the floor are difficult for customers to inspect, and it takes about four times as many products displayed at floor level to give the same visual impact as a display at elbow level.

Most customers hesitate to show ignorance of what an item is or how it might be prepared, so for an unusual item include in the display a descriptive card, a recipe folder, or a picture of a prepared dish featuring it. These helpful hints may tempt customers into trying something new and different. Strive to keep everything neat, clean, and tidy, including the floors and salespeople. These efforts will result in more impulse buying by customers who enjoy your market.

Pricing

Price tags are a must. Many customers like to compare shop. By displaying prices, you will help them enjoy shopping at your market, and you will save time for all concerned. You can sell the same items at different prices if you separate the products according to quality factors (such as color, variety, size, shape, blemishes, minor cuts or bruises) and display them on different tables. Sometimes a basket, box, bag, or a package priced as a unit will return the same price per pound, but will appear to be a better buy from the consumers' standpoint.

Customer service

Poor customer relations will destroy your business quicker than anything else. People do not have to trade at your stand. They will go where they feel appreciated; where the salespeople put them ahead of everything else. Try to learn your regular customers' names, addresses, sizes of families, names of family members, likes and dislikes, social life, how frequently they entertain, if they like to try new recipes and new vegetables, and if they like to be sold on a product or to shop only from a shopping list. If you employ salespeople, insist they also know your customers.

You can show your appreciation for your customers by occasionally rewarding them with an extra apple, flower, or vegetable. A baker's dozen is a small-town market touch, a nice way of saying "thanks" for continued patronage. Practice any courtesy that will make a lasting impression and make your customers feel appreciated.

In merchandising, you should always think ahead. Keep customers informed as to what items are arriving within a few days, next week, and even next month. For example, you can clue customers in on when the first sweet corn will be ready. Post a schedule of items expected in the stand, U-pick operation, or farmers' market. Also include these schedules in newspaper ads.

Promotional strategies

Selling directly to consumers means you must let them know about your business and its location.

Having the best produce, the best service, and the best price is pointless if you have no customers. Advertising and promotion are legitimate business expenses. Common advertising and promotional techniques include word-of-mouth; signs; newspaper, radio and television ads; direct mail; and booths at fairs and exhibits.

Word-of-mouth

Compared to other forms of advertising, word-of-mouth is the least expensive, but the most difficult to use. This type of advertising has to be earned. While satisfied customers will sing your praises, dissatisfied ones will shout their criticism. Word-of-mouth will bring customers to you if you show interest in your customers and their families and consistently offer courteous service, high quality produce, and reasonable prices. Early-in-the-season customers should leave your market feeling good so they share their positive experiences with friends.

Signs

Signs, if properly made and used, can be one of the most effective advertising and promotional techniques. A sign is usually the first indication motorists have that your market is just ahead. In less than 10 seconds, these silent aids must attract attention, identify your market, tell the location, and announce what is for sale. Therefore, signs should be large, easy to read, and depict a farm-fresh image. Messages on blackboards or scrawled in crayon on cardboard are difficult to read and give the impression of a second-rate, unprofessional market. Your market's farm-fresh image may be clouded by association with such things as soft drink or cigarette ads.

A sign that merely reads "fruits and vegetables" will not attract as many customers as one that lists a variety of products. Skillful use of symbols (an apple or ear of corn) may convey ideas better than words. Include your market logo on the signs. Do not put too much information on your road sign since a traveling motorist will be unable to read all of it.

The color of letters strongly affects the distance from which your sign can be read. Choose bottle green on white, scarlet red on white, black on white, and navy blue on white. Select colors to contrast pleasingly with the background against which the sign will be viewed and to distinguish it from other distractions.

There are a variety of national, state, county, and local regulations regarding the placement and type of signs you may use. Because of this, before erecting a sign on a building, piece of property, along a highway, at an intersection, or on a county road, inquire at local offices for information about sign ordinances.

Newspapers

Newspapers offer three possibilities for advertising and promotion: the news story (free publicity), the display ad, and the classified ad. Each of these is somewhat different in method, but each achieves the same results — informing customers who you are, your market's location, items for sale, and business hours.

Newspaper advertising can prove effective if you use it continually throughout the season. Use display ads on a regular basis to announce new items, an oversupply of one commodity, or a short supply of another item. Include your logo so consumers will recognize and be conditioned to look for your ad.

Buyer's guide and maps

Various directories, guides, and maps can be made, but essentially they all contain the same type of information. A good buyer's guide will include the name and address of each direct marketer in the area, the location and directions for getting to the markets, a listing of commodities handled, the season of availability, the methods of sale, and the hours of operation. In addition to written descriptions, the guide may include a pictorial map, a county road map, or a sketch of the highways, roads, or streets on which the various farm operations are located.

Direct mail

Mailing cards, flyers, or letters to a long list of people is time consuming and expensive, so if you use direct mail, make sure the list is up-to-date. You can collect names by asking customers to register in a guest book or fill out a card, or you can compile a list of names and addresses from customers' checks.

You may want to send cards at the start of the season to tell established customers when you are opening for business, or you may use printed cards to announce the arrival of particular commodities as they come into season. You can also use direct mail for public relations purposes by remembering your customers on Christmas, birthdays, and other special occasions. Sometimes a simple "thank you" will create a lasting impression on your customers. The personal touch is invaluable.

Radio

Although radio time is expensive, radio spots are within the budget of most direct marketers. You must, however, carefully plan and execute radio spots so they reach the intended audience. Radio advertising sales people can help you prepare the script, determine the length of the spot (usually 10, 15, or 30 seconds), and select the appropriate times of day to reach the greatest number of listeners.

Television

Television is usually more expensive than radio, but it may reach a much larger audience. Therefore, before eliminating this advertising medium as a possibility, you should talk with station personnel to determine if television advertising will bring the results you want for the money you are able to spend.

Point-of-sale materials

Point-of-sale or point-of-purchase materials are another means of advertising and promotion. Many customers save recipes and other suggestions for using seasonal produce. These materials will help sell your products in the future by helping customers find new uses for familiar produce or by showing them how to use unfamiliar products.

Fairs, exhibits, display booths

These provide another way of putting the product before the public, this is another opportunity to collect names and addresses for your mailing list. You may want to team up with other direct marketers, especially if you participate in a farmers' market association or a buyers' guide. Also, if the exhibit, fair, or display booth is scheduled when your market is open for business, operating both the home place and the exhibit booth might be a good idea.

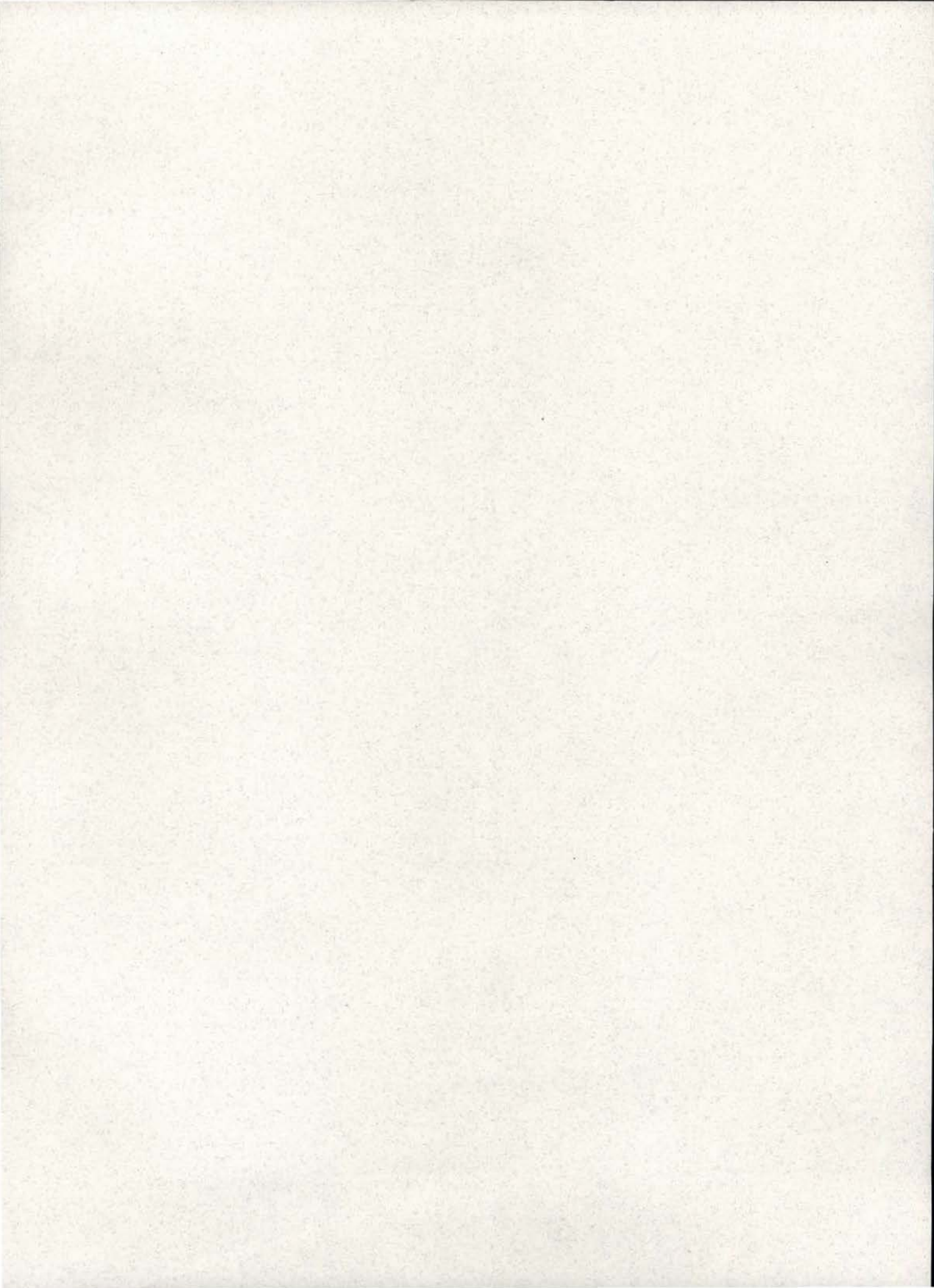
For further reading

Three excellent resources for more in-depth information on marketing are *Farming Alternatives, A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of New Farm-Based Enterprises*, NRAES-32; *Produce Handling for Direct Marketing*, NRAES-51; and *Facilities for Roadside Markets*, NRAES-52, all available from the Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, Cornell University, 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Ithaca, New York 14853.

The Farmer-to-Consumer Marketing series, PNW 201-206, published by Washington State University, are also excellent publications. 25¢ each.

To order copies contact the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System office in your county or write to Bulletin Office, Cooperative Extension, Cooper Publications Building, Washington State University, Pullman.

Many states have a direct-marketing association. In 1992 Idaho did not have such an association, but a specialty foods association does exist as well as numerous farmers' market associations. There is also a national farmers' direct-marketing association that meets annually. Contact the Idaho Department of Agriculture, Marketing Division, 2270 Old Penitentiary Road, Boise, Idaho 83712, for more information on these associations.



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