

DELIVERING THE ONTARIO FARMERS' MARKETS STRATEGY

Highlights of Accomplishments to Date

Spring 2009

The Key to Success Begins with Understanding the Consumer

Both partners in the Farmers' Markets Strategy conducted consumer research through Experienced Renewal Solutions in order to understand consumer behaviour as it relates to farmers' markets and buying direct.

Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA) surveyed consumers and farm marketers to understand what attracts or deters consumers to on-farm markets. They spoke to 1,074 consumers at 30 farms, conducted 79 surveys with on-farm marketers and 608 online surveys with individuals who don't typically shop at farms. Among the OFFMA findings:

Consumer Insights

- 76% of customers drive 30 minutes or less to an on-farm market.
- Family fun, fresh product and tradition are prime motivators.
- Fruits, vegetables, baked goods and agritainment are the top four on-farm purchases.

On-Farm Markets

- 60% derive more than half their total on-farm income from direct marketing.
- 85% on-farm markets are growing or producing the same amount or more than they did last year.
- 72% reported an increase in customers in the last two years.

OFFMA estimates that 750 on-farm markets receive 8,000,000 visitors annually.



A similar survey of 1,824 consumers initiated by Farmer's Markets Ontario (FMO) found:

- Freshness is what drives 57% of consumers to visit a farmers' market.
- 93% of consumers are motivated to visit a farmers' market because they want to buy directly from a farmer.
- There are 15 million shopper visits per year to Ontario farmers' markets.
- 67% of Ontario farmers' market shoppers state that buying directly from a local farmer is "extremely important".

Partners End 2008 with an Impressive List of Achievements

Promoting On-Farm and Farmers' Markets in Ontario

Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA)

OFFMA conducted a research study and then utilized the findings as the basis for a strategic plan. Their plan has been presented to members attending the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention in February. It will also be available to members and the public on the OFFMA website.

In 2008, a membership coordinator was hired. Fifty-eight new members have joined OFFMA largely due to a brochure and direct mail campaign. Prior to the membership drive, OFFMA would receive approximately eight new members during a year.

In an effort to increase awareness of OFFMA and reach out to attract non-traditional members, the organization is participating in various agriculture industry shows. In the recent past OFFMA attended the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention, Guelph Organic Conference, Southwest Agricultural Conference, the Community Shared Agriculture Conference, Growing Your Opportunities workshop and Canada Outdoor Farm Show as an exhibitor.

Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO)

FMO's major initiative in the last quarter of 2008 was the Ontario Farmers' Markets Impact Study to serve as a benchmark for future years, calculate the economic impact of farmers' markets, understand the barriers encountered by non-users and provide a detailed profile of farmers' markets.

FMO organized 22 food safety workshops across Ontario that attracted 859 participants, representing 64% of their members. The workshops were held in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Long Term-Care and the Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario. Thirty-four health unit-sanctioned hand-washing units were distributed.

To promote local farmers' markets, FMO revamped its website and offered a website development program to its members. FMO members could receive support for the development of a new website for their market or redevelopment of an existing website. To date, nine new farmers' markets websites have been launched, 10 are almost complete and 23 are in various stages of development. FMO intends to track website activity to evaluate their effectiveness.

In 2008 new farmers' markets opened in: Grimsby, Holstein, Maxville, M'Chigeeng, MyMarket Bloor Borden, MyMarket East Lynn, MyMarket SickKids, Ridgeway, Sorauren Park, Tory Hill and Warton.

