



Ag Opportunities

- Small Farms
- New Family Farms
- Agricultural Alternatives

Volume 24, Number 12
December 2013



-
- [Lots of Learning This Winter Season](#)
 - [Monthly Beginning Farmer Webinars - IPM, Irrigation and Cold Storage](#)
 - [Great Plains Growers Conference Agenda](#)
 - [Farm Commons Webinars \(Legal Topics\)](#)
 - [Free Marketing Webinar Series](#)
 - [USDA Announces Notice of Funding Availability for Value-Added Producer Grants](#)
 - [Farmers Market of the Ozarks and CRAFT Educational Courses](#)
 - [Small Farms Winter Webinar Series](#)
 - [Grants and Financial Assistance](#)
 - [In Print/On-Line/In The News](#)
 - [On The Calendar](#)

Lots of Learning This Winter Season

Farmers are busy people. They work hard and they love their job! But I also know that farmers need to take a break. Why not make that break a learning experience?

There are lots of upcoming learning opportunities this coming winter season. Be sure to check them out and attend at least one of them. Then incorporate some of the ideas you learned into your next season. More details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

If you do attend any of these conferences or webinar series, drop a line into the Missouri Beginning Farmers Program's [Facebook page](#) and let us know what you thought of it and share your ideas of what you learned!

Farm Commons Webinars (Legal Topics) - Begins Dec 2

This is a series of free webinars with a focus on legal issues for the farm.

Farmers Market Federation of NY - Begins Dec 4

This is a series of free webinars with a focus on marketing.

Livestock Symposium - Dec 6-7

This two day symposium covers the gamut of all livestock that can be found on the farm from cattle to goats to sheep to horses and guard animals.

Great Plains Growers Conference - January 9-11

This is a 5 state conference for vegetable and fruit growers. The first day consists of day long preconference workshops.

Southern Sustainable Ag Working Group Annual Conference - January 17-18

This conference is geared towards more southern production practices but yet still apply to most of Missouri farms. This event includes preconference workshops and farm tours.

Missouri Farmers Market Association Annual Conference - January 24-25

This conference is for farmers' market managers, vendors at farmers' markets, volunteers and supporters at farmers' markets. The first day includes farm tours and a banquet.

North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association Annual Conference - Jan 31-Feb 5

This is THE conference to attend if you want to know all about direct marketing. The conference moves around the country and this year it will be held in Kansas City. The conference has pre and post conference bus tours of farms in the area that direct market, preconference day long workshops and an excellent trade show where you will see everything imaginable to direct marketing.

Missouri Organic Association's Annual Conference - February 6-8

This conference is a 4 state conference for anyone who is going organically whether certified or not. The first day consists of day long preconference workshops.

Upper Midwest Organic Farming Annual Conference - February 21-March 1

This conference has been the conference to attend for organic production and marketing. It is still a fabulous conference but with the increasing upgrade to the Missouri Organic Association's (MOA) Annual Conference, you may want to skip this conference and go to the closer MOA conference.

Monthly Beginning Farmer Webinars - IPM, Irrigation and Cold Storage

The Missouri Beginning Farmers Program's monthly webinars continue this month with another round of informative and exciting topics for beginning (as well as experienced) farmers.

The December monthly webinar will be on On-Farm Crop Storage: Planning, Design and Management with Scott Sanford from the University of Wisconsin. Scott has been working with farmers on on-farm storage for years. He just recently completed a grant about on-farm cold storage. He will be sharing his findings with us. So join us on Monday, December 2nd from 7-8:30 pm.

To join the below webinars go to univmissouri.adobeconnect.com/debikelly and sign in under "guest" with your name. All webinars begin at 7 pm and end by 8:30 pm. Each webinar will be recorded and added to the [Online Learning Community](#).

Dec 2 - On-Farm Vegetable Crop Storage with Scott Sanford, Michigan State University

Feb 3 - Farm Equipment – Tractor and Implement Sizing with Charles Ellis, University of Missouri Extension Regional Ag and Natural Resources Engineer Specialist.

In the meantime, check out the archived webinars. To view archived webinars, go to the [Online Learning Community \(OLC\)](#) and listen to them:

- November 2013 – Irrigation for Small Farms
- October 2013 – IPM Practices to Do Now for Next Season
- September 2013 - SARE Farmer/Ranch Grant Writing
- June 2013 - Sustaining Livestock Health
- May 2013- Ten Simple Steps to Safer Produce
- April 2013 - Cut Flowers
- March 2013 - On-Farm Poultry Processing
- February 2013 - Goats and Sheep
- November 2012 - Starting a CSA
- October 2012 - Grazing Sheep with Cover Crops
- September 2012 - SARE Farmer/Rancher Grant Writing
- May 2012 - Legal Issues in Direct Marketing
- April 2012 - Grazing Goats Folder Grazing Goats
- March 2012 - Financing for Beginning Farmers Folder Finance for Beginning
- February 2012 - GAPs and Food Safety Folder Good Agricultural Practices
- January 2012 - Assessing the Economics of Crop Choices on a Start-up Market
- December 2011 - Introduction to Rotational Grazing Folder Introduction to Rotational
- November 2011 - Value Added Rules and Regulations Folder Rules and Regulations: Compliance for Direct Marketing
- October 2011 - Beginning Beekeeping
- September 2011 - Grant Writing for the SARE Farmer/Rancher
- August 2011 - Direct Marketing Meat Folder Direct Marketing of Meat
- July 2011 - Selling Successfully at Farmers' Markets
- June 2011 - Social Media Marketing (marketing on the web)
- May 2011 - Introduction to Soil Management for Sustainable
- April 2011 - Organic Farming Introduction
- March 2011 - Pastured Poultry for the Beginning Farmer
- February 2011 - Getting Started Folder 10 Things to Think About When You Start Farming

Great Plains Growers Conference Agenda

Plan to attend the Great Plains Growers Conference, January 9-11 2014 in St. Joseph, MO. The conference will be held at the Fulkerson Conference Center, Missouri Western State University, 4525 Downs Drive, St. Joseph, Missouri.

Check out the program for new all-day workshops presented by wonderful speakers throughout the conference! We will have educational information from all 5 states - Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota, along with vegetable specialists and growers from those states. There are 40+ exhibitors in a trade show with the latest seeds, supplies, equipment, and grower information. There will also be ample opportunities to visit with other growers, exhibitors and speakers.

Thursday Preconference Workshops

- High Tunnels

- Soil and Irrigation
- Farm to School
- Tree Fruits
- Advanced Beekeeping

Tree Fruit

- 11:00-12:00 Dealing with Wildlife Damage in Fruit and Nut Plantings,
Dr. Scott Hygnstrom, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- 12:00-1:30 Lunch
- 1:30-3:00 Apple, Peach, and Cherry Varieties Worthy of Consideration,
John Clements, University of Massachusetts
- 3:00-3:30 Break
- 3:30-4:30 Stone Fruit Diseases,
Gerald Adams, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Beginning Organic

- 11:00-11:45 Starting an Organic Farm: do's and don'ts,
Leslie Touzeau, The Salad Garden
- 11:45-12:30 Rewards of Organic Farming and Marketing Strategies,
Charlie Hopper, Missouri Dept. of Agriculture
- 12:30-1:30 Lunch
- 1:30-2:15 From Harvest to Delivery of Quality Vegetables to Customers,
Shane Hanson, Door-to-Door Inc., KC, MO
- 2:15-3:00 How to Succeed in Selling Your Farm Produce: finding your market niche,
Beth Matson, Never Ending Harvest
- 3:00-3:30 Break
- 3:30-5:00 Farmers Panel on Effective Marketing of Vegetable Product,
Panelists: Angela Hemwall, Pierpont Farms, Columbia, MO, Curtis Milsap, Millsap Farms, Springfield, MO; and Beth Matson, Never Ending Harvest, Hancock, IA

Vegetable IPM

- 11:00-11:45 IPM Strategies to minimize Foliar Diseases in Vegetables,
Dr. Dan Egel, Purdue University
- 11:45-12:30 Prevention & Management of Key Insect Pests in Vegetables,
Dr. Rick Foster, Purdue University
- 12:30-1:30 Lunch
- 1:45-2:30 Identification & Management of Bacterial Diseases in Tomatoes,
Dr. Dan Engel, Purdue University
- 2:30-3:00 Trap Cropping and Cover Crops: on-farm research results,
Rusty Lee, Lee Farms, Turxton, MO
- 3:00-3:30 Break
- 3:15-4:00 Invasive Insects Threatening Vegetable Production in the Midwest,
Dr. Jaime Pinero, Lincoln University
- 4:00-4:45 Greenhouse IPM: from seed to post-harvest,
Rick Trinklein, Trinklein Brothers Greenhouses

Post-Harvest Handling

- 11:00-11:45 Packing Produce Efficiently,
Laurie Hodges, University of Nebraska
- 11:45-1:00 Lunch
- 1:00-3:00 On-Farm Cold Storage: planning, design, management,
Scott Sanford, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- 3:00-3:30 Q & A
- 3:30-4:15 Shelflife and Postharvest Quality of Tomatoes Grown in High Tunnel vs Open Field,
Cary Rivard, KSU

Cut Flowers

- 11:00-11:45 Growing and Selling Specialty Cut Flowers,
Gretel & Steve Adams, Sunny Meadow Farms, Columbus, OH
- 12:30-1:30 Lunch
- 1:45-3:00 Hand Tied Bouquets for Markets and Weddings,
Gretel & Steve Adams
- 3:00-5:00 Hand Tied Bouquets continued
Gretel & Steve Adams

Saturday Conference Tracks

Small Fruit

- 9:00-9:45 Blackberry Growth & Development,
John Strang, University of Kentucky
- 9:45-10:30 Producing Berries in Iowa,
Dean and Judy Henry, Berry Patch Farm, Nevada, Iowa
- 11:00-11:45 Blueberry Automated Quasi-Pulse Irrigation,
John Strang, University of Kentucky
- 11:45-12:30 Spotted Wing Drosophila Management,
Jaime Pinero, Lincoln University
- 1:30-2:15 Marketing & Promoting Berries,
Dean and Judy Henry, Berry Patch Farm, Nevada, Iowa
- 2:15-2:45 Table Grape Cultivars,
Patrick Byers, University of Missouri
- 2:45-3:00 Updates in the 2014 Small Fruit Pest Guide,
Patrick Byers, University of Missouri
- 3:00-3:45 Elderberry Cultivar Development,
Andrew Thomas, University of Missouri

Advanced Organics

- 9:00-9:45 Enhancing Farm Profitability Through the Use of Cover Crops,
Steven Groff, Holtwood, PA
- 9:45-10:30 Maximizing Profitability by Utilizing Labor Mgmt. Practices & Diversifying Markets,
Alicia Ellingsworth
- 10:30-11:20 Increasing Profits through Use of Trap Cropping to Manage Key Insect Pests of Cucurbits,

- Jacob Wilson, Lincoln University*
- 11:20-12:10 Role of Biochar in Vegetable Production,
Ajay, Nair, Iowa state University
- 1:10-2:00 Growing Organic Strawberries with Annual Plasticulture Systems in Great Plains,
Cary Rivard, Kansas State University
- 2:00-2:40 Enhancing Beneficial Insects for Biological Control & Pollination in Organic Systems,
Jaime Pinero, Lincoln University
- 2:40-3:20 Cost-share Programs to Enhance Pollination Habitat,
NRCS Staff (TBD)

Vegetable Production

- 9:00-9:45 Guide to Great Garlic Growing,
Chuck Marr, Kansas State University
- 9:45-10:30 What Do you Get When You Mix Pumpkins, Cowpeas and Mycorrhiza?,
Steven Kirk, Lincoln University
- 11:00-12:00 Weed Control Options for Sweet Corn,
Vince Lawson, Iowa State University
- 12:00-1:00 Dried Distiller's Grain as a Soil Amendment for Eggplant Production,
Ajay Nair, Iowa State University
- 2:00-3:00 Specialty Melon Cultivar Trials,
John Strang, University of Kentucky
- 3:30-4:15 Recommended Tomato Cultivars from K-State Trials,
Charlie Barden, Kansas State University

Beekeeping/ Agroforestr

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- 9:00-10:30 Beginning Beekeeping,
Raymond Heldenbrand
- 11:00-12:30 Overwintering Bees and Spring Management,
Ross Conrad, Vermont
- 1:30-2:00 Chestnuts,
Michael Gold, University of Missouri
- 2:00-2:30 Pawpaws,
Andrew Thomas, University of Missouri
- 2:30-3:00 Black Walnuts,
Mark Coggeshall, University of Missouri

Urban Horticulture & Gardens

- 8:45-9:00 Welcome,
James Quinn, University of Missouri
- 9:00-9:30 Get Growing Urban Water Project,
Teresa Kelly & Sherri Harvel, Cultivate KC, Kansas City, MO
- 9:30-10:00 Urban Access: Building Community through Intensive Cultivation,
Gabriel Hahn, Seeds of Hope Farm
- 10:00-10:30 The Kansas Community Garden Grant Program,

11:00-11:30	<i>Evelyn Neier, Kansas State University Research & Extension</i> School Garden Sustainability in a Public School District, <i>Jennifer Grabner, Southern Boone Learning Garden</i>
11:30-12:15	Developing A University Student Farm For All, <i>Kimberly James, Program Director for the SDSU Student Farm</i>
1:15-2:00	Community Orchards - Examples from Nebraska, <i>Vaughn Hammond, University of Nebraska-Lincoln</i>
2:00-2:30	Auburn Community Garden Project, <i>Craig Long, Auburn Community Garden</i>
2:30-3:00	Master Gardeners and Community Gardens, <i>Beth Rydberg, Iowa Master Gardener</i>
3:00-3:30	Growing Through the Winter for School, Community and Home Gardens, <i>Jennifer Grabner, Ashland, MO</i>

Food
Safety/GAPs

9:00-10:00	The Food Safety Modernization Act: Proposed Produce Safety Rule, <i>Gretchen Wall, Cornell University</i>
10:00-10:30	FSMA Preventive Controls Rule, Dr. <i>Jayne Stratton, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Food Science</i>
11:00-11:30	Harmonized and Basic GAP/GHP Audit, <i>Douglas Goodson, USDA</i>
11:30-12:30	Food Safety Plan Writing: Resources, Tips, & Tricks for Getting Started, <i>Gretchen Wall, Cornell University & Sarah Browning, University of Nebraska-Lincoln</i>
1:30-3:30	Postharvest Sanitation and Produce Wash Water Workshop, <i>Gretchen Wall, Cornell University</i>

Registration & Cost

Preconference Workshops-\$55 regular; \$25 student

Friday Conference-\$45 regular; \$25 student

Saturday-\$45 regular; \$25 student

For more information and to register go to <http://greatplainsgrowers.org/>

Farm Commons Webinars (Legal Topics)

Farm Commons is a non-profit organization based in Wisconsin that provides farmers with the legal services they need to become the stable, resilient foundation of a community based food system. We accomplish this mission in three ways.

1. Working one-on-one with farmer clients to produce sales agreements, contracts, leases, employee documents, and many other transactional legal matters.
2. Developing legal education resources such as workshops, articles, and guides that help farmers understand how the law affects their business.
3. Networking rural and agricultural attorneys to our resources and to each other to improve attorney-farmer relationships.

To register for each FREE webinar go to www.farmcommons.org/webinars

Webinars are offered through a platform that does not require any additional software or downloads. They will be simple to access. Those without an internet connection will be able to listen to the presentation over the phone.

Overview of Farm Legal Issues

December 2, 2013, 6pm

Learn about the most pressing legal issues encountered by direct-to-consumer and organic farm operations. Beginning farmers will learn how to set up a strong farm business and established farmers will learn ways to make their business more resilient. Attendees will be able to spot legal issues and understand the initial steps to resolve them.

Community Supported Agriculture Legal Issues

December 17, 2013, 6pm

CSA farms are developing a truly innovative business model that promises to change the way consumers think about food. But, this innovation comes with some interesting legal issues. We will discuss the complex employment law, insurance, zoning, and volunteer worker legal issues encountered through CSA. Farmers will learn how to move forward in addressing these concerns.

Hosting On-farm Events

January 13, 2014, 6pm

On-farm events are a great way to build support in the community. And, they're a lot of fun! But as the saying goes, it's always fun until someone loses an eye. Make sure your farm isn't left with the short end of the stick after a good-intentioned event goes bad. From zoning compliance to guest injuries and serving prepared food, we'll work through a checklist of things a farm should address before hosting an event.

Workers and Employees

January 28, 2014, 6pm

Farming is a lot of work, and help is often needed. Should a farm work with volunteers, trade labor for food, or hire employees? This webinar will explore the options and guide farmers through the legal considerations. Checklists, flowcharts, and model documents will help attendees move forward after they've decided on the best approach for their farm.

Selling Products to Larger Buyers

February 10, 2014, 6pm

Now that hospitals, food service operations, and grocery stores have caught on to the merits of local food, farmers are learning how to work with these operations. A good relationship between buyer and seller is key to making these sales worthwhile. Learn how the right sales agreement can help keep everyone happy. Also, learn how to protect the farm business if the relationship goes south.

Starting a Farm

February 25, 2014, 6pm

A beginning farmer has to find financing, lease or buy land, coordinate equipment, establish a website, and so much more, all while growing crops or raising livestock. The legal issues abound, but this webinar will help beginning farmers understand the fundamental issues that should demand attention while the farm gets started.

Adding Value to Farm Products

March 10, 2014, 6pm

Although starting a processing operation, improving packaging, and developing new products are great ways to make the farm more profitable, these activities have a huge legal impact. Employment laws, liability potential, state/federal regulations, and tax factors all change when a farm begins to process product. Farms relying on cottage food laws should make sure to attend- we'll talk about what these laws do not do to protect farms.

Food Safety Liability and Regulations

March 25, 6pm

We've been hearing all about the upcoming regulations under the Food Safety Modernization Act. But, as important as it is, farm liability for food safety goes beyond this new law. Learn all the latest on how farms can comply with the FSMA as it goes into effect and how they can protect their operations from liability in general.

Free Marketing Webinar Series

The Farmers Market Federation of NY and the NY Farm Viability Institute have partnered with USDA Northeast SARE to present a series of webinars on marketing: "[Marketing for Profit: Tools for Success.](#)" These webinars have been designed with the assistance of regional and national marketing experts to provide critical marketing insights for farmers and farm markets throughout the northeast. The webinars are free, approximately an hour and a half long, and easy to access with a basic internet connection. To register for any of these webinars go to <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/work-shop-programs/webinars/registration.html>

Market Assessment

Webinar 1: Learning to Look Around, or, Getting Your Head in the Game!

December 4, 10am – 11:30am or December 5, 7pm – 8:30pm

Speaker: Bob Buccieri

- Competition
- Product
- Channel
- Pricing

Simply stated, this is a realistic assessment of the conditions of the market.

How competitive is the field? Are ten people selling the product or 200? How reliable is the product in terms of being able to project your SUPPLY and estimate at the DEMAND?

How unique, well known, well established, entrenched, etc. is the product? (A tomato is better known than a kiwi, and can influence price, supply, perception, need for education, etc.)

What is the channel in which you are operating? Farm stand, market, CSA, direct sales, large scale commercial sales or what? Each channel influences the way in which you "go to market".

Pricing is affected by all of the above, and the "elasticity" of that price (or range) that can be asked must be determined. Even within each of these categories, there is "fine tuning". For instance the Ithaca Market is more \$\$\$ than the Seneca Falls Farmers Market for the same product, competition, and (obviously) the channel used.

Webinar 2: How smart ARE you, Really?

Speaker: Warren Abbott, Abbott Farms, Baldwinsville, NY

December 10, 10am – 11:30am or December 11, 6pm – 7:30pm

- Planning the Product
- Incorporating marketing data, sales data
- Extension possibilities

- Price modeling

Simply stated; what sells where and, to whatever extent you can determine, WHY does it sell?

A farmer MAY think “I have to devote the majority of my acreage to peppers and tomatoes because these are the two most popular, bestselling items.” A farmer COULD think “There’s no one selling white onions and there is an opportunity there (based on other research) so I am converting some of my acreage to white, red and yellow onions.” This is the essence of “how smart are you?”

Once you have all the information you can reasonably gather you must apply it. If things are only “good”, but not “great” how do you make it better? What are you selling and can you build on it. Offering three different kinds of lettuce is different than offering three different kinds of eggplant, but either (or, with seasonal offerings BOTH) can work in your channel, farm or marketing plan. This is a “diversity extension” of the same product.

You may also extend by adding radishes to your carrots and building a capacity and reputation for root crops. Or, you may find that herbs can work with your tomatoes and peppers. You can package a group of tomatoes and herbs under a title of “sauce package” and sell as individual or as a prepackaged group. These are examples of extensions through association in that the customer has a preconceived notion or can be easily educated to combine certain products or types of products.

All this (and everything else for that matter) leads to price modeling, and there’s a hundred ways to do this. While the GOAL may be to maximize profitability, the simple OBJECTIVE is to make certain you protect profitability. For instance, if you sell herbs for \$ 1.50 a bunch and tomatoes for \$ 5.00 a quart and feel you can package the herbs with the tomatoes for \$ 6.00. Well, maybe you can increase \$\$ by raising the prices on the INDIVIDUAL components which will make the package look even better.

Make certain you are looking at the right data, and seeking the best, most relevant information.

Webinar 3: Building the Marketing Plan

Speaker: Marty Broccoli, Agricultural Economic Development Specialist, CCE Oneida County
January 8, 11am – 12:30pm or January 9, 6pm – 7:30pm

- Detailed channel, communications and market analysis

Okay, here we go! You know who you are what you sell and to whom you are trying to sell it. You have an unbiased and reasonably accurate perception of competition, regulations and markets/avenues (or options) for how to sell it.

How do you make this pile of info into a reasonable and coherent “plan”?

It is a process of eliminating things that cannot (or simply should not) happen and reinforcing or “fleshing out” those ideas which should or could happen to move your business forward. As ridiculous as it may sound, you know certain media, methods or locations that will not work for your business. May not involve a lot of deep analysis, but there is value in going with “the gut” to some measure in doing this. To say “radio will not work to advertise my products” is fine, but if you are planning a “Maize Maze” or other specific event, radio can be an excellent promotional device. Television is “too expensive” or reaches “all over the place”, but if you are the only vendor in 50 miles offering Hanshu Beef Product (don’t Google it, it’s fictional) you may want to cast your net over a wide area. Also, the TV pros can come capture a BUNCH of video for you to use elsewhere (web, DVD, e-mails, etc.) and save you extra production costs, so they may have a place in certain situations.

Regardless of your decisions at this stage, be prepared for the day when those media outlets come calling. They will not (usually) accept “I just don’t like you” as an answer AND you may miss a great opportunity to have a

marketing pro (hopefully) come up with ideas and approaches (and maybe even some research) for your business! Have an idea for an event, new product extension or even a desire to partner with some other farm/business/event and set them on the trail. If you see the local Kiwanis Fest as a great place to sell but can't get in (for whatever reason) maybe your local TV/Radio/Newspaper has an idea or an "inside track to help you. NEVER PASS UP FREE HELP!!!

Finally, and most challenging to even seasoned marketing pros is producing an unbiased, comprehensive, insightful market analysis. After gathering census data, reviewing sales data, asking your friends and family members and (most importantly) your customers what they feel is going on; YOU must make the final judgment. But be careful, the last thing you want is a marketing plan that reaches only you and your employees; they (hopefully) know what a great operation you are, it's the rest of the world that needs to be clued in!

Customer Assessment

Webinar 1: People Sure Are STRANGE! Coming to understand the consumer

Speaker: Marty Butts, Small Potatoes Marketing

January 15, 11am – 12:30pm or January 16, 6pm – 7:30pm

- Customer service
- Employee training
- Religion/cultural difference/preference
- Geographic differences
- Demographics

North of the city of Albany, just across I-90 extension is the community of Loudonville, one of the more affluent suburbs in New York State. But the other side of I-90 is Arbor Hill which sounds really pretty, but has the lowest income, highest crime rate and is deep in the Urban Jungle. You can drive across the highway in under 30 seconds to bridge this gap, but unless you have a really well developed and diverse business in place, you probably do not want, nor expect to be speaking to both these populations because everything from pricing to product offering will be different in these two neighborhoods, although EACH of them may present opportunities to you.

You must understand these geographic differences. You must engage the customer and come to understand them. If they come to your stand and ask if your product is Kosher, you can be pretty certain they are Jewish. Is there a large Jewish population that you've overlooked? Where do they buy kosher items? Are they buying for themselves or friends and family members? It may seem silly, but there is no denying that EVERY CUSTOMER represents an opportunity to learn more about them all, and engaging them is a good way to learn.

Your employees must dispense with their natural "stereotypical" thinking and approach everyone the same. You may want to establish certain things to learn each week or month at the Market like

- Is your customer base employed? Point out "after a tough day of work, these tomatoes will taste really good!" and see what response you get.
- Do you have a lot of families in the area? Maybe you could say "My kids really enjoy these grape tomatoes, you sure one pint will be enough?"
- How about students? Shift workers? How about the timing of certain customers? If a customer comes to you at the end of every market day and always buys a quart of peppers, ask them if you can make it more convenient for them by putting aside tomatoes as well which sell out quickly, if they commit to buying the tomatoes. Ask if they may want a CSA membership (if you have one) so they can pick up everything they need at once. RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH
- In the immortal words of Henny Youngman (those of you under 40, Google him) "I got a million of 'em". You can come up with your own ways to learn more at each opportunity.

- How important is “customer service” in what you are doing? In a Farmers market it will be vastly different than for your CSA customers and even somewhat different than a stand set up at your Farm.

Understand what you can do and draw the line where you cannot go in the name of customer service. If your CSA client instructs you to just leave the dairy products on the south facing porch during the midday heat, you do not want to point out that they are IDIOTS, but you must explain that food safety guidelines prohibit that kind of behavior and we must reach other arrangements.

Webinar 2: BOGOs, Bounce Backs and the cost of freebies! Promoting the Product

Speaker: Lindsay Ott Wilcox

January 29, 11am – 12:30pm or January 30, 6pm – 7:30pm

- Regional branding
- Positioning (differentiating the product/farm)
- Competitors vs partners

You may grow the best darn Hungarian Wax Peppers in the nation, but you will never be able to broadcast that message to a national audience. Remember the market assessment you’ve completed? Well looking around markets and farms in the area has taught you what you are going to offer and how you may be able to price it. You can “own” a brand image within your own county, town or region and work to establish, and build from that.

In the process, you also will be differentiating yourself from others. Let’s say that there are six farms raising tomatoes in the market. All different tomatoes, each farm going to various farmers markets and selling to regional markets. Al and Bernice decide (along with their son, Cliff) that they are going to build a brand called the “ABC Farms”. They will all wear blue shirts with an “ABC” logo and all their signs will feature a large first letter to help support the alphabet idea as in Tomatoes, or Carrots. They will call their tomatoes “Tom Thumb Tomatoes” for no other reason than they want to carry out the alphabet idea throughout their business. Well they may be selling Early Girl or Beefsteak or Jet Star like everyone else, but their tomatoes have some extra “spin” to them and people will remember and, if they like the product, come looking for it. This is both branding (ABC) and differentiation (Tom Thumb) in one!

In the course of assessing your market you have come into contact with many local farms and food producers. As your business becomes more established and you gain a better understanding of their business and approach to business, you may come to partner with some of these farms. Adding meat, cheese, eggs, baked goods or even fresh pressed oils to your CSA may require partnerships and you should look to work with those you consider equals. You don’t want to partner with a huge conglomerate to whom you mean little or nothing, nor do you want to help someone get started by being their only sales outlet! Find partners that suit you, everyone else is a potential partner and some are outright competition.

You treat each of these differently.

Webinar 3: Every Silver Lining has a Cloud! - Market assessment & Analysis

Speaker: Marty Butts, Small Potatoes Marketing

February 12, 11am – 12:30pm or February 13, 6pm – 7:30pm

- SWOT analysis/updates
- Demographic trends
- Product trends

Ever notice how every five to six years cars get bigger, or smaller? They seem to change just like the width of men’s ties or the hemline of women’s skirts! Product change is constant and affects all products including food.

Margarine and high fructose corn syrup were supposed to save us from the problems associated with butter and sugar, but now we're wondering if they really are a solution!

Change occurs in communities too as families age, kids move out, move back and there is a constant flow of people in and out of any given area. This also affects business and should influence the products you offer and the strategy you employ in going to market. You don't need to wait for the US Census to come out (although there's plenty of good info there!), you can check class sizes in schools around you. What's being built in your community? Senior centers or health clubs? Patio Homes or new Cul De Sac construction? These things (and many more) tell you a lot about your community.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, the classic S.W.O.T analysis. Sounds silly, may even prove easy to do for you, but to implement and act upon what you learn can be tricky. Can you keep an "even minded" perspective when assessing your own Strengths and Weaknesses? How open are you to really learn what others may think? What is a real "opportunity" and how can you tell when it has "played out"? These are among the critical questions to explore and better understand moving forward.

Last winter the first series of marketing webinars "Self-Assessment" occurred. They are archived and can be viewed by clicking on the link.

"Self-Assessment Webinars"

- Assessing Your Identity Resources
- Marketing Channels Assessment
- Future Trends

USDA Announces Notice of Funding Availability for Value-Added Producer Grants

(Note: This Value Added Grant is the USDA grant. Last month the Value Added Grant was the MO Dept of Ag grant. See Grants and Financial Assistance Section of this newsletter to read the MO Dept of Ag Value Added grant.)

Grants extend production season and income opportunities for America's Farmers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the availability of nearly \$10.5 million in U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants to help agricultural producers enter into value-added activities designed to give them a competitive business edge.

"U.S. agriculture is connected to one in 12 American jobs, and value-added products from homegrown sources are one important way that agriculture generates economic growth," Vilsack said. "Supporting producers and businesses to create value-added products strengthens rural economies, helps fuel innovation, and strengthens marketing opportunities for producers - especially at the local and regional level."

The funding is being made available through the [Value-Added Producer Grant](#) program. Grants are available to help agricultural producers create new products, expand marketing opportunities, support further processing of existing products or goods, or to develop specialty and niche products. They may be used for working capital and planning activities. The maximum working capital grant is \$200,000; the maximum planning grant is \$75,000.

Eligible applicants include independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, and agricultural producer groups. Funding priority is given to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers, and to small- to medium-size family farms, or farmer/rancher cooperatives. The Value-Added Producer Grant program is one of many USDA programs that support the development of strong local and regional food systems as part of the *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* initiative. Launched in 2009, the initiative strengthens ties between agricultural producers and their local communities, helping meet growing consumer demand and creating opportunities for small business development. Initiatives like this create new income opportunities for farmers, generate wealth that will stay in rural communities, and increase access to healthy, local foods in underserved communities. All of these actions boost local economies.

Rural Development is encouraging applications from Tribal organizations as well as applications that support regional food hubs. Applications supporting value-added activities related to bio-based products are also encouraged.

In Fiscal year 2012, for example, the Mississippi Delta Southern Rural Black Women in Agriculture Association received a \$44,000 working capital grant to provide a variety of services in the Delta region. The cooperative delivered oven-bakeable sweet potato fries to local Head Start programs and schools; cut, washed and bagged greens for local restaurants; and delivered sustainably grown and heirloom sweet potatoes to local and specialty grocers regionally and nationwide. The sweet potatoes are processed at the vegetable facility at Alcorn State University, in Lorman, Miss.

The project is supplying emerging markets with locally grown produce to enhance production, marketing and distribution infrastructure among women and minority landowners in persistently poor rural communities.

Additional examples of how VAPGs assist local and regional food producers are available on the USDA *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* [Compass](#), which is searchable by zip code and key word.

Grant applications are due by Feb. 24, 2014. More information about how to apply is available on page 70260 of the [November 25 Federal Register](#), or by contacting any USDA Rural Development state office.

Farmers Market of the Ozarks and CRAFT Educational Courses

These workshops are being offered by the Farmers' Market of the Ozarks and CRAFT. They are open to anyone.

Dec 18: Farm Safety on the Farm

Jan 15: Facebook: Advanced Learning

Feb 14: Pruning Workshop

Feb 19: Soil Management Advanced

March 5: Market Booth Set-up = Improved Sales

March 19: Pest Management

April 9: Beginning Farmer Class (Class, Lunch & Tour) There is a \$8 fee for lunch for this session.

All classes will be held at the Bond Learning Center off Kansas Expressway, south of Sunshine Street, at 5:30 p.m. Classes are free, unless noted above. Please register by calling 417.766.8711 or sending an email to Lane@LoveYourFarmer.com

Small Farms Winter Webinar Series

The University of Illinois Extension presents a weekly educational series for the small farm community, providing practical knowledge on emerging topics which advance local food production in Illinois. This series of online events is aimed at providing small farm producers with a look at how leading practices in production, management, and marketing enable operations to improve profitability and sustainability. This year's series include the addition of two tracts on small orchard management and organic pest control. Webinars will be held from 1:00 - 2:30 pm on Thursdays and are free.

Choose any number of the following webinars to attend when you register.

Topics include:

Jan 9 - *Managing Layers on Pastures* - Kyle Cecil, University of Illinois Extension Small Farms/Local Foods Educator

Jan 16 - *An Overview of the Philosophy and History of Organic Agriculture* - Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, University of Illinois Extension Small Farms/Local Foods Educator

Jan 23 - *Pumpkins and Gourdes* - Nathan Johanning, University of Illinois Extension Small Farms/Local Foods Educator

Jan 30 - *Approaches to Small Scale Farm Composting* - Ellen Phillips, University of Illinois Extension Small Farms/Local Foods Educator

Feb 6 - *Organic Pest Management: Insects* - Rick Weinzierl, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, Entomology, Dept. of Crop Sciences

Feb 13 - *Organic Pest Management: Disease* - Darin Eastburn, University of Illinois Associate Professor of the Dept. of Crop Sciences, Plant Pathology

Feb. 20 - *Organic Pest Management: Weeds* - Adam Davis, University of Illinois Associate Professor of the Dept. of Crop Sciences, Weed Science and Crop Management

Feb. 27 - *Asparagus Production* - Mike Roegge, University of Illinois Extension Small Farms/Local Foods Educator

Mar. 6 - *Small Orchard: Insects* - Rick Weinzierl, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, Entomology, Dept. of Crop Sciences

Mar. 13 - *Small Orchard: Orchard Management* - Elizabeth Wahle, University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator

Mar. 20 - *Small Orchard: Disease* - Mohammad Babadoost, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, Plant Pathology, Dept. of Crop Sciences

Mar. 27 - *Growing for Ethnic Markets* - James Theuri, University of Illinois Extension Local Foods/Small Farms Extension Educator

The webinars can be accessed on-line from your personal computer. In case you cannot attend these dates, register anyway! An archived version of the webinars will be provided via email (the Monday after airing) for viewing at your convenience.

To register for the webinars, click [here](#).

For more information, contact: Miki White, University of Illinois Extension Small Farms Program Coordinator at 309-342-5108 or miki7047@illinois.edu

Grants and Financial Assistance

Missouri Value-Added Grant Program Now Accepting Applications

The Missouri Value-Added Grant Program provides grants for projects that add value to Missouri agricultural products and aid the economy of a rural community. Grant applications will be considered for value-added agricultural business concepts that:

- Lead to and result in development, processing and marketing of new or expanded uses or technologies for agricultural products; and
- Foster agricultural economic development in Missouri's rural communities.

Applications will be considered for expenses related to the creation, development and operation of a value-added agricultural business including:

- Feasibility studies,
- Marketing studies,
- Legal assistance,
- Marketing plans,
- Business plans,
- Prospectus development for cooperatives, and
- Operational consulting

How Does the Program Work?

Proposals will be selected on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be evaluated and rated using the following criteria:

- Economic development potential for the agricultural industry,
- Credibility and merit,
- Probability of near-term commercialization and practical application of project results,
- Presence, source and level of matching funds, and
- Where the project will have an economic impact

Who is Eligible?

- Applicant must be at least 18 years old,
- Missouri resident, and

- Applicant may be groups of individuals, businesses, and organizations related to agriculture whose proposed value-added agricultural business concept is based in Missouri

Grant Amount and Terms

The maximum grant to any person, groups of individuals, businesses or organizations related to a value-added rural agricultural business concept is \$200,000.

Restrictions

The grants cannot be used for:

- Business start-up except as detailed in program guidelines,
- Business expansion, unless qualified on the basis of program criteria,
- Paying off existing debts,
- Substituting existing efforts or research already underway,
- Covering institutional overhead costs,
- Production costs,
- Operational costs such as payroll, utilities, inventory, insurance, and advertising,
- Buying land, buildings, or equipment,
- Implementing feasibility studies, marketing studies, marketing plans, or business plans except as detailed in the program guidelines, and
- Application fee or grant writing expenses

Fees

A nonrefundable fee will be due with each application. The fee will be \$150 for grant application requests of \$25,000 or less and \$300 for requests over \$25,000. The application fee may be part of the applicant's matching funds.

For funded grant requests, a MASBDA grant administration fee is due equal to ten (10) percent of the total grant awarded. The fee is due when the Grant Agreement is signed. The MASBDA grant administration fee may be included as part of the applicant's grant request, or if paid by the applicant, may be shown as part of the applicant's internal matching expenditures.

Application Information

Applications are now being accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. December 20, 2013. Download the application [here](#).

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

While most people think of this program for grain storage, horticulture crops are also included. The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL) allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The maximum principal amount of a loan through the FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with USDA providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of seven, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for FSFL loans for September are between 2% to 2.875% depending on the length of the loan.

Loans are available for constructing bunkers, pads, flat storage buildings, bins, cribs, silo's, fruit storage, biomass storage, honey storage, other structures and to remodel existing facilities.

An FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction can begin, so please apply at least 4-6 weeks before any planned construction. For more information, please contact your local [FSA office](#).

Bridge Loan Program

The Bridge Loan Program builds on 2012's High Tunnel Loan Program, which allowed producers to combine the loan with their participation in the USDA-NRCS program, reducing producers' out of pocket costs. Reimbursement funds issued after producers completed their projects were used to fulfill the short-term loan notes. Approximately one-third of Missouri producers approved for USDA high tunnel reimbursements in 2012 also participated in the loan program.

To be eligible for assistance through the Bridge Loan Program, producers must be approved for cost-share reimbursements through USDA-NRCS, EQIP and/or SWCP and show proof of financial ability to cover any gaps between reimbursement amounts and project costs, should a gap arise. Applicants must be materially participating in the farming operation and at risk for price or production costs and must commit reimbursement payments from NRCS or SWCP to fulfill the loan note.

Loans offered through the Bridge Loan Program will include monthly interest payments of 5.9 percent interest rate and a \$25 closing costs. Funds may be withdrawn only when practices are being implemented, and loan terms may be up to the duration of USDA-NRCS, EQIP and SWCP programs.

Loan applications are available online, or by contacting the Missouri Agricultural and Small Business Development Authority at masbda@mda.mo.gov. For cost-share assistance, producers may also contact their local USDA-NRCS or Soil and Water Conservation District office for application information and forms. For more information on the Missouri Department of Agriculture and its programs, visit the Department online at mda.mo.gov.

FSA Microloan Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and the smallest of family farm operations by modifying its Operating Loan (OL) application, eligibility and security requirements. The program will offer more flexible access to credit and will serve as an attractive loan alternative for smaller farming operations like specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA). These smaller farms, including non-traditional farm operations, often face limited financing options.

Use of Microloans

Microloans can be used for all approved operating expenses as authorized by the FSA Operating Loan Program, including but not limited to:

- Initial start-up expenses;
- Annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents;
- Marketing and distribution expenses;
- Family living expenses;
- Purchase of livestock, equipment, and other materials essential to farm operations;
- Minor farm improvements such as wells and coolers;
- Hoop houses to extend the growing season;
- Essential tools;
- Irrigation;
- Delivery vehicles.

Simplified Application Process

The application process for microloans will be simpler, requiring less paperwork to fill out, to coincide with the smaller loan amount that will be associated with microloans. Requirements for managerial experience and loan security have been modified to accommodate smaller farm operations, beginning farmers and those with no farm management experience. FSA understands that there will be applicants for the ML program who want to farm but do not have traditional farm experience or have not been raised on a farm or within a rural community

with agriculture-affiliated organizations. ML program applicants will need to have some farm experience; however, FSA will consider an applicant's small business experience as well as any experience with a self-guided apprenticeship as a means to meet the farm management requirement. This will assist applicants who have limited farm skills by providing them with an opportunity to gain farm management experience while working with a mentor during the first production and marketing cycle.

Security Requirements

For annual operating purposes, microloans must be secured by a first lien on a farm property or agricultural products having a security value of at least 100 percent of the microloan amount, and up to 150 percent, when available. Microloans made for purposes other than annual operating expenses must be secured by a first lien on a farm property or agricultural products purchased with loan funds and having a security value of at least 100 percent of the microloan amount.

Rates and Terms

Eligible applicants may obtain a microloan for up to \$35,000. The repayment term may vary and will not exceed seven years. Annual operating loans are repaid within 12 months or when the agricultural commodities produced are sold. Interest rates are based on the regular OL rates that are in effect at the time of the microloan approval or microloan closing, whichever is less.

More Information and Eligibility Criteria

Additional information on the FSA microloan program may be obtained at [local FSA offices](#).

IN PRINT/ON-LINE/IN THE NEWS

New publications from University of Missouri Extension:

[*Switchgrass and Miscanthus: Economics of Perennial Grasses Grown for Bioenergy*](#)

And

Agroforestry Practices DVD - <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/AF1008>

ON THE CALENDAR

Be sure to check out the listings of FREE webinars on legal issues and marketing issues.

2013

Dec 2 - On-Farm Crop Storage: Planning, Design and Management with Scott Sanford, Michigan State University -

7-8:30 pm. Log in under guest with your own name at univmissouri.adobeconnect.com/debikelly

Dec 6 - How to Write a Food Safety Plan Workshop, Springfield, MO. Contact (417) 846-3948 or bishop@lincolnu.edu

Dec 6-7 - Livestock Symposium, Kirksville, MO. For more info go to <http://www.missourilivestock.com/>

Dec 13 - How to Write a Food Safety Plan Workshop, Webb City, MO. Contact (417) 846-3948 or bishop@lincolnu.edu

2014

Jan 4-6 - **Midwest Grape Growers Conference**, St. Charles, MO. <http://midwestgrapeandwineconference.com/>

Jan 9-11 - **Great Plains Growers Conference**, St. Joseph, MO. <http://greatplainsgrowers.org/>

Jan 10-11 - **Horticulture Industries Show Conference**, Tulsa, OK. <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/his/>

Jan 11 - **From Recipe to Reality**, Lincoln, NE. <http://fpc.unl.edu/web/food-processing-center/recipe-to-reality>

Jan 15-18 - **Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Annual Conference**, Mobile, AL.
<http://ssawg.org/january-2013-conference/>

Jan 31 - Feb 5 - **North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association Annual Conference**, Kansas City, MO. <http://www.nafdma.com/MW2014/>

Jan 28 - **Beekeeping Workshop**, Chillicothe. georges@chbeekeeping.com or 660-214-0132.

Feb 3 - Webinar - **Farm Equipment - Tractor and Implement Sizing**,
7-8:30 pm. Log in under guest with your own name at univmissouri.adobeconnect.com/debikelly

Feb 6-8 - **Missouri Organic Association's Annual Conference**, Springfield, MO.