



Ohio MarketMaker Survey Report

Exploring impacts of improved marketing practices

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Report prepared by Julie M. Fox, The Ohio State University, October 2009

Bringing Knowledge to Life



OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective addressed in this study was to better understand the impacts of improved market practices and the level of awareness and involvement with the new Ohio MarketMaker program. This project was part of a three phase work plan that began with survey-based research to profile producers and identify their perceived marketing challenges and opportunities. The second phase included case study to further study marketing practices and priorities.

This report is one of three reports associated with the project, “Exploring and improving marketing practices and regional market access for Ohio’s food producing farmers”. Related research and Extension work continues through the Ohio Direct Marketing Team, a statewide team with representatives from numerous organizations committed to enhancing the growth of the agricultural industry through increased direct sales of products, services, and experiences.

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible through funding from the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program, Transportation and Marketing Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA. Special thanks to Kennetha L. Peebles, Marketing Strategist in the Program Development and Evaluation Unit of The Ohio State University Extension.

Project Partners

Ohio Department of Agriculture, Division of Markets
The Ohio State University, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
OSU Extension
College of Food, Agricultural & Environmental Sciences (CFAES)

Additional Contributors

The Ohio Farmers’ Market Managers Network
The Ohio Grape Industries Committee
The Center for Innovative Food Technology
The Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
The Ohio Direct Marketing Team

Contact Information

Julie Fox, Ph.D.
Specialist, Direct Marketing
College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
The Ohio State University South Centers
1864 Shyville Rd.; Piketon, OH 45661
Tel: 740-289-2071 or 614-292-4900, ext. 225
Fax: 740-289-4591 or 614-292-1953;
Email: fox.264@osu.edu
<http://directmarketing.osu.edu>



Project Overview & Findings

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Ohio MarketMaker Overview

To gain more from the food economy, the Ohio Direct Marketing Team supports Ohio MarketMaker, which improves connections between food producers, buyers and others in the food chain. This free web-based resource combines easy-to-use information that food businesses need, including demographic, food consumption and business profile data that can be mapped to show concentrated markets and strategic business partners.



Ohio Governor, Ted Strickland, helped launch Ohio MarketMaker in March 2008, as the 10th state in the growing MarketMaker national network. This electronic infrastructure combines easy-to-use information that food businesses need, including demographic, food consumption and business profile data that can be mapped to show concentrated markets and strategic business partners.

This web-based resource is supported through the leadership of OSU Extension in partnership with the Ohio Department of Agriculture/Ohio Proud, Ohio Farm Bureau/Our Ohio, the Center for Innovative Food Technology and other organizations. It is accessible to everyone in Ohio's food chain and links with other Ohio's food initiatives, such as food safety programs. The Ohio Food Policy Council and Market Connections Task Force are involved in continuous MarketMaker developments. More than 100 people attended the program launch. Initial comments from Ohio food business owners/managers included:



"Connecting producers and buyers means more unique, local, fresh Ohio products will be on our store shelves and on our restaurant plates."



"MarketMaker is a way to connect folks with each other...buyers, sellers and consumers." Michael Jones, Greener Grocer & Executive Director of Local Matters



"I think it will be a great tool for colleges and universities." Mark Newton, Executive Chef, The Ohio State University



"The Ohio MarketMaker website is addictive. I found new suppliers and new markets" Jeni Britton, Owner, Jeni's Ice Cream

FIELD PROCEDURES

Field Procedure for this Survey Research Project

Survey research represents one of the most common types of quantitative, social science research. The research questions under investigation focused on marketing priorities, changes in marketing practices, level of involvement with Ohio MarketMaker, and impacts of MarketMaker (<http://www.ohiomarketmaker.com>).

Population

Registered users with Ohio MarketMaker

- Producers
- Farmers' Markets
- Wineries
- A forth version on the questionnaire was sent to Ohio Direct Marketing Team Members.

Method

For this non-experimental quantitative research, data was gathered through a single informant survey (Questionnaire instrument in Appendix). There are a number of advantages to using only a single informant (Lyons, Lumpkin, and Dess, 2000). Glick et al. (1990) noted there was a high likelihood that the CEO was the most knowledgeable individual in the organization to provide the information. Entrepreneurship studies have often used self-reports to gather performance data and they have been shown to be reliable (Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, and Buchholz, 2001).

An email invitation was sent to registered Ohio MarketMaker producers, farmers' markets and wineries, as well as Ohio Direct Marketing team members. Respondents completed a 5-question electronic questionnaire. A second email invitation was sent to non-respondents.

1 - Overall marketing performance improvement in the last year

2 - Specific marketing improvements during the last year
Become aware of new marketing opportunities
Reached new buyers
Sold new products
Tried new marketing strategies
Increased sales
Improved profitability

3 - Level of involvement with Ohio MarketMaker

4 - Ohio MarketMaker as a tool to keep more food dollars in the regional economy

5 - Significant marketing priority for the next year

Some modifications were made for each segment of the population surveyed. As the MarketMaker program continues to serve more Ohio businesses, this data will be used as baseline information. Future survey research will segment users based on level of involvement, further investigate economic impacts and explore marketing performance comparing registered with non-registered users.

FINDINGS

Respondents - There were 144 respondents, representing a 28% response rate.

Producers 87/312 (response rate 28%)

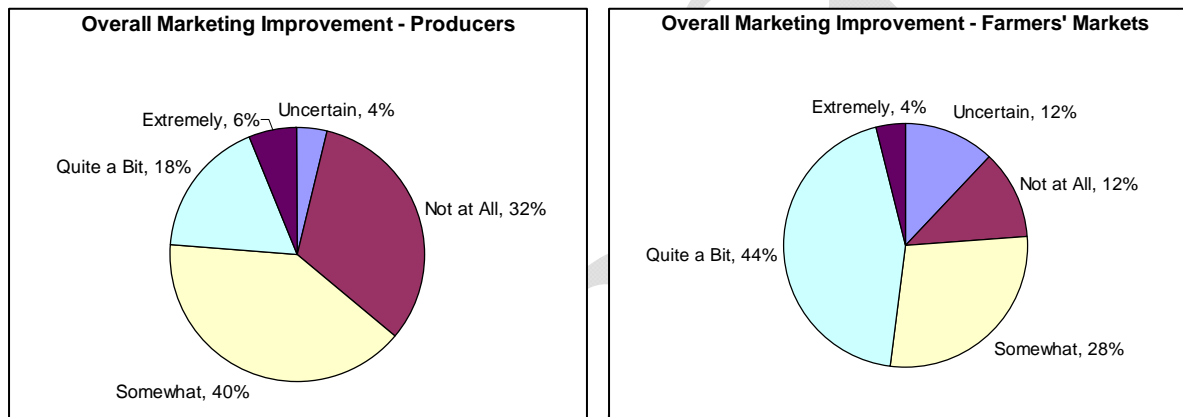
Farmers' Markets 25/93 (response rate 27%)

Wineries 6/44 (response rate 14%) Because of the low number, results are not reported.

Direct Marketing Team Members 26/60 (response rate 43%)

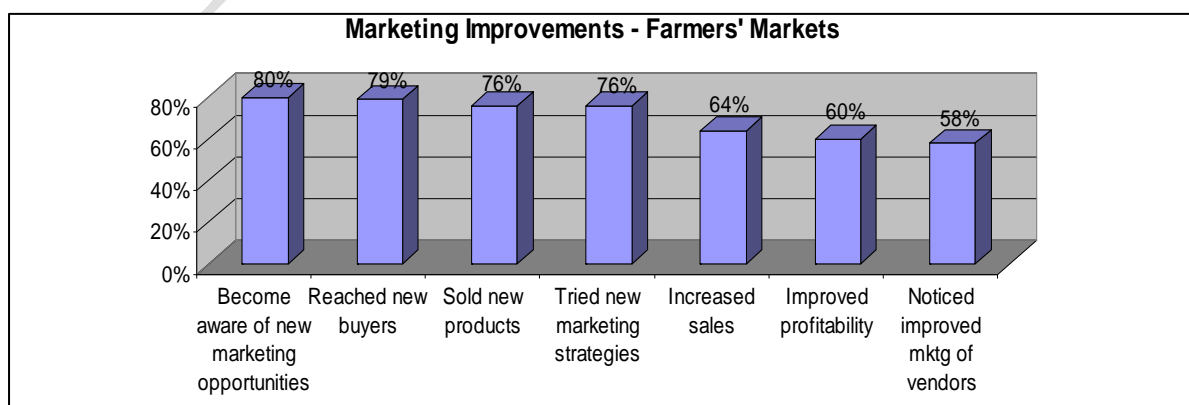
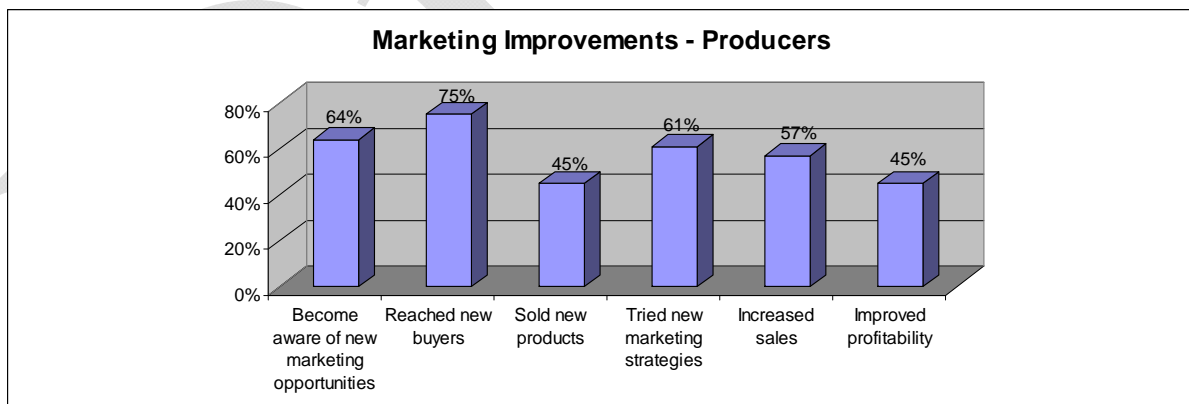
Overall marketing performance improvement in the last year – Producers & Farmers' Markets

More than 50 percent of Ohio MarketMaker registered producer respondents reported that their overall marketing performance improved somewhat or quite a bit during the past year. Nearly 50 percent (48%) of registered farmers' market reported that their overall marketing performance improved quite a bit or extremely during the past year.



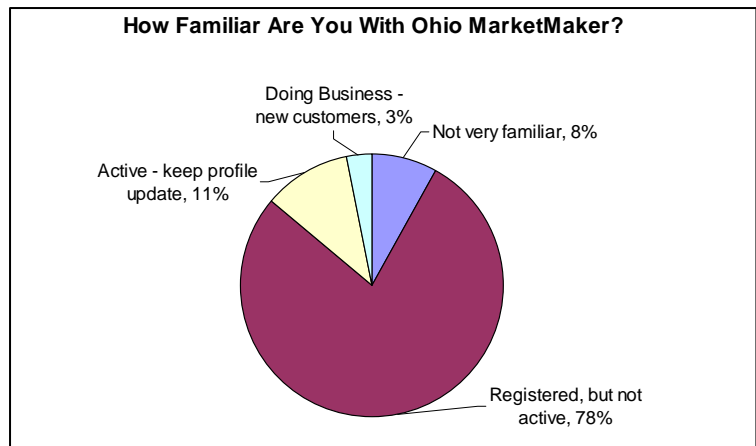
Specific marketing improvements during the last year – Producers & Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets also reported higher levels of improvements in specific areas.



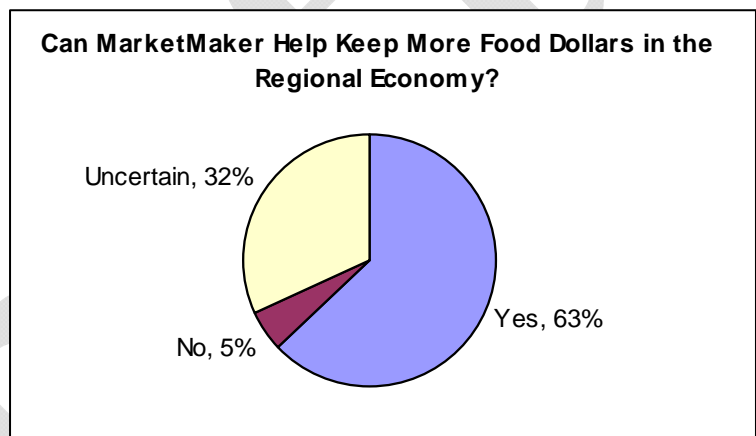
Level of involvement with Ohio MarketMaker – Producers & Farmers’ Markets

This survey research was conducted about 1-1/2 years after Ohio MarketMaker was launched. While some businesses are reaching new customers through MarketMaker, there is still tremendous opportunity to educate and guide registered businesses to use MarketMaker as a more marketing tool.



Can Ohio MarketMaker help keep more food dollars in the regional economy?

The majority (63%) of producers (53%), farmers’ markets (72%) and direct marketing team member (65%) respondents shared a positive perception of MarketMaker’s benefit of helping keeping more food dollars in the regional economy.



Significant marketing priority for the next year

More than 100 respondents provided comments about their most significant marketing priority during the next year. Comments were categorized into improvements in people (customers), products, places, promotions and planning. There were many comments about improving overall profitability.

Of particular interest were comments from all groups surveyed about growing awareness of local food. Many of the following comments could fit in all of the marketing categories:

- Be more proactive in emphasizing locally, Ohio grown products.
- Educate consumers about locally grown products and their producers.
- Get customers to realize the importance of buying locally and help them understand the economic impact of local shopping.
- Encourage local markets to feature or include only vendors selling products that they raised, grew, processed, ...
- Increase producer awareness of no-cost, low-cost tools to assist them in capturing a greater share of the market for local foods.

People

Retaining current customers and obtaining new customers was a priority expressed by numerous producers and farmers' markets. Comments to reach new customers included:

- more consumer education
- broaden our marketing area and expand our customer base
- secure a particular customer
- increase the number of buyers I sell to manage the risk of relying too heavily on a few big buyers
- attract visitors as well as local residents
- develop multi-channel marketing opportunities to reach both consumer and business buyers
- reach institutional buyers by working with other small farmers

Farmers' markets also commented on the priority of attracting more customers, more vendors and balancing the increase of customers and vendors to meet the needs of both groups.

Product

Producers commented on a number of product developments, including:

- exploring new product lines
- becoming more diverse and offering other agricultural related products
- focusing on superior markets and eliminating underperforming ones
- continuing vertical integration of product line
- supplying good quality products
- expanding product line and production methods for an extended season to meet early and late demand
- developing specific products that overcome several of the hurdles in selling farm fresh-freezer ready beef

Other specific products such as agri-tourism; flowers; free ranged eggs and poultry; goats; grapes; honey and other bee products; hydroponic lettuce; micro-greens; spring salad mix; strawberries; various value added products; wine

Place

Many producers wanted to find new or additional places to sell. Some wanted to find new places to reach local customers, while others wanted to find new places in more lucrative markets. Places included:

- increase sales at farm markets
- participate in farmer's markets
- sell through Community Supported Agriculture
- sell through Local Crop, Farm to Fork and other online outlets
- increase mail order sales
- explore alternate distribution systems such as CSAs in grocery stores

Some producers and farmers' markets commented on improving the location by extending hours of operation and increasing traffic during certain hours. Some producers wanted to find a new direct market because of limitations they experienced at other markets.

Promotion

Producers found a number of ways to express their interest in improving their promotions. Some simply wanted to increase visibility, awareness and brand recognition, while others made specific comments, including:

- do more advertising and traditional promotion through billboards, signage, displays and direct mail
- find more marketing opportunities to replace print and, to some extent, radio
- develop relationship marketing through networking, partnering with others, increasing good will with the local community and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with buyers
- talk with potential customers one-on-one

The most common comments from producers and farmers' markets were based on improving promotions through the Internet. Comments included wanting to:

- improve their business website
- improve their email list and add an email newsletter
- keep various Internet listings up-to-date
- develop word of mouth and viral marketing
- generate alternative press coverage via blogs
- use social media such as Twitter and other social networking tools
- integrate website with Facebook, educational video on YouTube

Planning

When it came to priorities related to marketing planning, a few of the comments included:

- having more time for implementing marketing ideas
- surveying customers now to find out what's bringing them to the market, will capitalize on that
- improving pricing strategies
- addressing food safety concerns and compliance with health regulations

Summary of priorities

Comments about priorities seemed to be based on the level of experience and goals of the respondent. Some respondents were general about their priorities and others were very specific. In addition to the priorities mentioned, respondents also made suggestions to improve Ohio MarketMaker and direct marketing throughout Ohio.

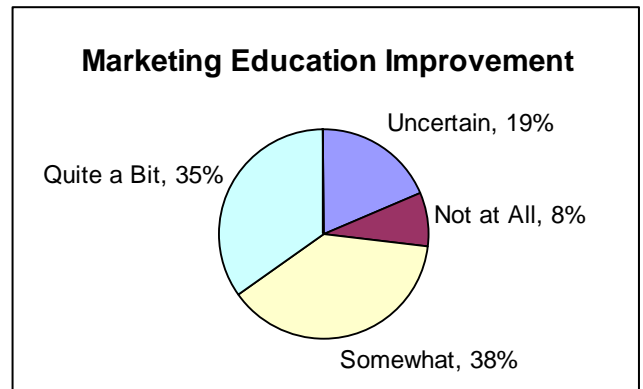
Priorities were categorized in people (customers), products, places, promotions and planning in alignment with the work of the Ohio Direct Marketing Team and the other research studies conducted as part of the project "Exploring and improving marketing practices and regional market access for Ohio's food producing farmers".

Direct Marketing Team Members

The Ohio Direct Marketing Team includes 60 core, affiliate and informational team members, with representatives from universities, state agencies, industry associations, non-profit organizations and other groups. Core members are active in most team activities, Affiliate members join for specific working group projects. Informational members want to receive or contribute information on direct marketing. Because of their influence on direct marketing and MarketMaker adoption in Ohio, a version of the survey was sent to all members. This questionnaire explored the following:

Changes in their marketing education

During the past year, how much has your marketing education improved? Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents reported that their marketing education improved somewhat or quite a bit. No respondents indicated that their education had improved extremely.

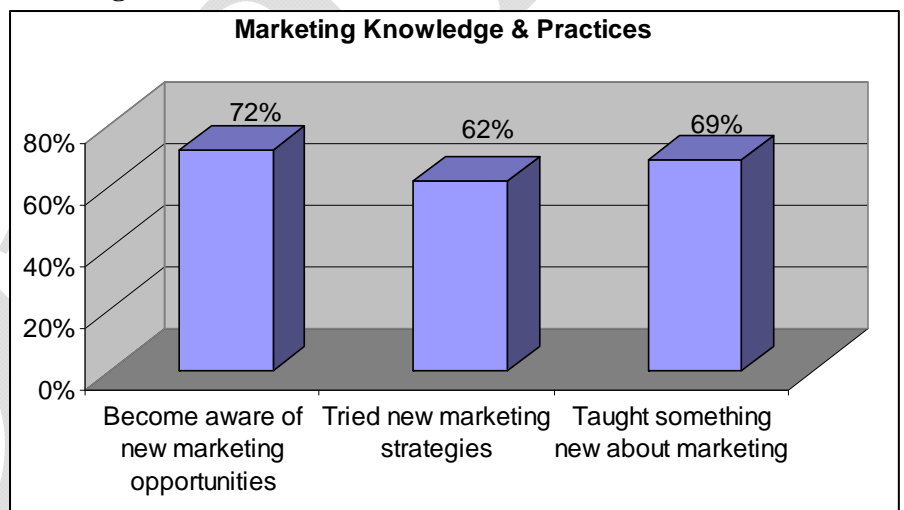


Improvements in their marketing knowledge

Team members reported increases in:

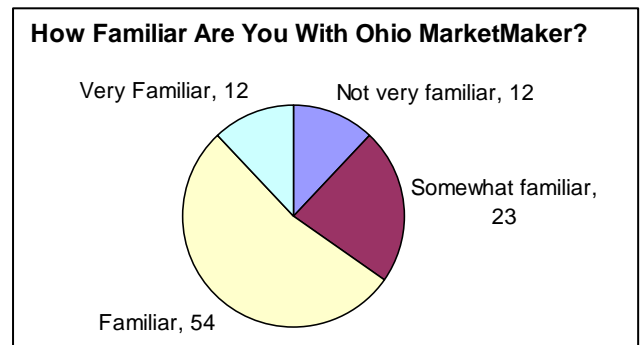
- awareness of new marketing opportunities.
- trying new marketing strategies.
- teaching something new about marketing.

Team members are quite diverse in the number of years and the roles they serve in their organizations.



Level of familiarity with Ohio MarketMaker

Sixty-six percent (66%) of Ohio Direct Marketing Team members reported being familiar or very familiar with Ohio MarketMaker.



Significant marketing priority for producers during the next year

When asked about significant marketing priorities for producers during the next year, team members provided comments similar to those made by producers.

Project Summary & Next Steps

Summary

As an initial survey of the Ohio MarketMaker program, this study provided good baseline information and indicated opportunities for further program development. The electronic delivery and length of this survey presented some limitations. Additional information was gathered through Ohio case studies, the Ohio direct marketing survey and focus groups conducted through the national MarketMaker network evaluation committee.

While the perspective was different in each version of the questionnaire, consistent content included perceptions on overall marketing performance improvement in the last year, specific marketing improvements during the last year, the level of involvement with Ohio MarketMaker, the perception of MarketMaker as a tool to keep more food dollars in the regional economy, and significant marketing priorities for the next year.

Next Steps

To continue improving the MarketMaker program, this instrument will be further developed and shared with the national MarketMaker network. The electronic method of questionnaire delivery could be combined with printed and mailed questionnaires according to Dillman's Tailored Design Method. The survey research will investigate activity, impacts and improvements. Future questionnaires will begin by segmenting users based on level of activity and can include any of the following:

MarketMaker Activity.

How have you used Ohio MarketMaker to improve marketing practices & performance?

- Initial involvement – profile listing,...
- Intermediate – market analysis tool, made contacts – clients, suppliers, or partners...
- Advanced (transactions) increase revenue, reduce marketing expenses, change risk...

What marketing goals does MarketMaker help you achieve? (benefits)

- Improved visibility
- Improved ability to find markets (based on demographic or food consumption data)
- Improved ability to find buyers
- Improved access to industry resources
- Acquire new customers
- Find new partners
- Increased revenue
- Reduced marketing expense
- Managed risk

What feature/s of Ohio MarketMaker that you especially like.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Free business profile | Private activity report |
| • Contact management | Identification of Groups |
| • Demographic data | Food consumption data |
| • Buy/Sell Forum | Industry news |

Improvements

- How can the Ohio MarketMaker program become even better in the future?
- Describe what you would like to see developed or further developed. (existing feature improved or new feature added).
- If you had more time, what are some additional things you would like to do with Ohio MarketMaker?

Appendix

Example of Email Invitation – Electronic Cover letter

Dear MarketMaker® Registered [Producer]:

I know it's a busy time of year for you, but we are asking for five minutes of your time to complete a five-question survey to help improve direct marketing opportunities in Ohio.

Ohio ranks in the top 10 states for direct farm sales, but we're not one of the fastest growing states – we have plenty of room for improvement. Your responses will help direct marketing educators make improvements here in Ohio for you to implement in your business.

The online questionnaire is simple and very worthwhile. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me or Julie Strawser, 740-289-2071, ext. 223; strawser.35@osu.edu.

[link to survey]

On behalf of the MarketMaker® team, thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,
Julie Fox, Ph.D., Direct Marketing Specialist, The OSU South Centers

Producer Questionnaire



Quick Marketing Questionnaire- Producers

Thank you for taking a few moments to respond to these five questions about your marketing. Your responses will help direct marketing educators make improvements here in Ohio. We know you are busy, so thanks again.

START SURVEY!



Quick Marketing Questionnaire- Producers

1 During the past year, how much has your marketing performance improved? (check one)

Uncertain	Not at all	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Extremely
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

2 During the past year, have you? (check yes, no or uncertain for each of the following statements)

1 Yes	2 No	Uncertain
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>

3 How active are you with the Ohio MarketMaker, <http://www.ohiomarketmaker.com>? (check one)

- Not very familiar- I didn't realize my business was registered.
- Registered, but not active- I registered my business but I don't visit the site often.
- Use it for Ongoing Communications- In addition to my profile, I post information on the Buy/Sell Forum.
- Doing Business- I have made or received new customers because of MarketMaker.

4 Do you think Ohio MarketMaker can help keep more food dollars in the regional economy? (check one)

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

5 What is your most significant marketing priority for next year?

SUBMIT

Farmers' Market Questionnaire



Quick Marketing Questionnaire-
Farmers' Markets

Thank you for taking a few moments to respond to these five questions about your marketing. Your responses will help direct marketing educators make improvements here in Ohio. We know you are busy, so thanks again.

START SURVEY!



Quick Marketing
Questionnaire-
Farmers' Markets

1 During the past year, how much has your marketing performance improved? (check one)

Uncertain	Not at all	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Extremely
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

2 During the past year, have you? (check yes, no or uncertain for each of the following statements)

	1 Yes	2 No	Uncertain
Become aware of new marketing opportunities?	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Attracted new buyers?	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Added new vendors?	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Tried new marketing strategies?	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Increased sales at the market?	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Improved profitability as a market?	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Noticed improved marketing success of your vendors?	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>

3 How active are you with the Ohio MarketMaker, <http://www.ohiomarketmaker.com>? (check one)

- Not very familiar- I didn't realize the Farmers' Market was registered.
- Registered, but not active- I registered the market but I don't visit the site often.
- Active- I keep the market's profile/registration updated as the business changes.
- Doing Business- The market has received new customers because of MarketMaker.

4 Do you think Ohio MarketMaker can help keep more food dollars in the regional economy? (check one)

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

5 What is your most significant marketing priority for next year?

SUBMIT

Winery Questionnaire



Quick Marketing Questionnaire- Wineries

Thank you for taking a few moments to respond to these five questions about your marketing. Your responses will help direct marketing educators make improvements here in Ohio. We know you are busy, so thanks again.

START SURVEY!



Quick Marketing Questionnaire- Wineries

1 During the past year, how much has your marketing performance improved? (check one)

Uncertain	Not at all	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Extremely
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

2 During the past year, have you? (check yes, no or uncertain for each of the following statements)

1 Yes	2 No	Uncertain
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Become aware of new marketing opportunities?		
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Reached new buyers?		
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Sold new products?		
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Tried new marketing strategies?		
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Increased sales?		
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>
Improved profitability?		
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>

3 How active are you with the Ohio MarketMaker, <http://www.ohiomarketmaker.com>? (check one)

- Not very familiar- I didn't realize my winery was registered.
- Registered, but not active- I registered my winery but I don't visit the site often.
- Active- I keep the winery's profile/registration updated as the business changes.
- Use it for Ongoing Communications- In addition to my profile, I post information on the Buy/Sell Forum.
- Doing Business- I have made or received new customers because of MarketMaker.

4 Do you think Ohio MarketMaker can help keep more food dollars in the regional economy? (check one)

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

5 What is your most significant marketing priority for next year?

SUBMIT

Direct Marketing Team Member Questionnaire



Quick Marketing Questionnaire- Ohio Direct Marketing Team Members

Thank you for taking a few moments to respond to these five questions about your marketing. Your responses will help direct marketing educators make improvements here in Ohio. We know you are busy, so thanks again.

START SURVEY!



Quick Marketing Questionnaire- Ohio Direct Marketing Team Members

1 During the past year, how much has your marketing education improved? (check one)

Uncertain	Not at all	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Extremely
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1	2	3	4	5

2 During the past year, have you? (check yes, no or uncertain for each of the following statements)

1 Yes	2 No	Uncertain
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Become aware of new marketing opportunities?		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tried new marketing and communications strategies?		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taught something new about marketing?		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3 How familiar are you with the Ohio MarketMaker, <http://www.ohiomarketmaker.com>? (check one)

- Not very familiar- I didn't realize MarketMaker was available at no cost to producers.
- Somewhat familiar- I know MarketMaker is available in Ohio, but have not been on the website.
- Familiar- I know about Market Maker and have marketed the resources to producers and in education sessions.
- Very Familiar- I am very familiar with MarketMaker and have assisted producers in registering and updating their profiles.

4 Do you think Ohio MarketMaker can help keep more food dollars in the regional economy? (check one)

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

5 What is your most significant marketing priority for producers during the next year?

SUBMIT

Done

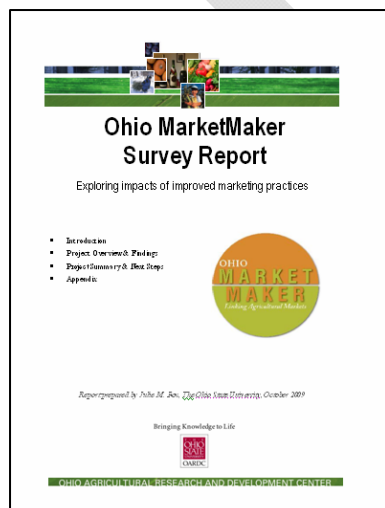
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The project included a three phase work plan that began with survey-based research to profile producers and identify their perceived marketing challenges and opportunities.



The second phase included case study research. Individual case studies are presented to explore, explain, describe, and illustrate real-life marketing situations in Ohio’s food chain.



The third phase included web-based survey research to further study the impacts of improved market access.



Julie M. Fox, Ph.D.
The OSU South Centers



1864 Shyville Rd.
 Piketon, OH 45661

Phone: +740-289-2071, ext. 225
 Fax: + 740-289-4591
 fox.264@osu.edu

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Ohio
 MARKETING CONNECTIONS
<http://directmarketing.osu.edu>

Direct Marketing – Important to Ohio’s Economy



The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences focuses on direct marketing in the current Strategic Plan. Goals include increasing the number of producers and counties receiving direct marketing education.


The Ohio Direct Marketing Team

The Ohio Direct Marketing Team works collaboratively to improve Ohio’s economy through direct marketing research and education. Team members include representatives from colleges and universities, state agencies, industry associations, nonprofit businesses, community groups and other organizations.

Ohio MarketMaker

Improving connections in Ohio’s food system

To gain more from the food economy, the Ohio Direct Marketing Team supports Ohio MarketMaker, which improves connections between food producers, buyers and others in the food chain. This free web-based resource combines easy-to-use information that food businesses need, including demographic, food consumption and business profile data that can be mapped to show concentrated markets and strategic business partners. Ohio MarketMaker is supported through the leadership of OSU Extension in partnership with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio Farm Bureau, the Center for Innovative Food Technology and other organizations.



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