August 21, 2023

Cornell to hold 2-Part Webinar Series:

Research on Customer Spending at NY Farmers Markets: Early Results and Farmer Recruitment

Electronic Point-of-Sale (POS) systems, such as the commonly used Square app, present farmers market vendors with an opportunity to gather data and learn from customer shopping habits. In turn, this data can be analyzed to reveal growth opportunities. POS provides a quick and easy means for farms to assess their marketing performance, make changes, and test for results. Matt LeRoux and Todd Schmit at Cornell's Agricultural Marketing Research Program are working with NY's farms to collect data using POS in direct-to-consumer channels and continue to recruit more farms for the project.

The project seeks farms that sell their own fruit & vegetable crops, fresh cut flowers, mushrooms, dairy, or meat products at farmers markets and/or their own farm store/stands (eligible stores/stands are staffed, not honor-system). Farm participation requires collecting all sales transactions at markets in real time with the Point-of-Sale (POS) software Square. In return, participating farms receive personalized reports with suggested marketing techniques aimed at increasing farm revenue. Project participants also receive one-on-one consultation and technical assistance from the research team.

New for 2023, the Agricultural Marketing Research Program will create weekly USDA Market News Price Reports for farmers markets. The Cornell team will use the data to create weekly price reports showing prices on selected fruit and vegetable crops, dairy products, and meat cuts from farmers markets around the state. For participation, farms will be paid $25 for each week of sales data that they submit on time. Full details will be discussed during the Week 1 webinar.

To orient farmers to the project, a 2-part webinar series is planned for **Thursdays, October 5 & 12 from 6:30-8:00 PM**. The webinars are appropriate for any farmers market or farm stand/store vendor interested in or currently using the Square POS system.

Week 1: Research on Customer Spending at NY Farmers Markets:
Early Results and Farmer Recruitment
Grocery stores have long used scanner data to inform marketing techniques. Now farmer-friendly point-of-sale software gives farmers similar potential to collect detailed sales data. Learn how Cornell researchers are using this technology to study consumer spending and inform marketing opportunities for farms to increase daily sales. Then hear how farmer Becca Rimmel of Bottom Land Farm in Berkshire, NY uses Square to help inform market and production decisions. Leave this workshop with specific takeaways and tips for your own sales methods.

Week 2: How to Set Up and Use Square, A Practical Guide
We'll walk you through, click-by-click, the basic functions to set up Square so that the data it collects is useful to your farm and the Cornell research team. We'll cover how to set up locations, product categories, items, and pricing for products sold by weight or unit. This webinar will be recorded so attendees can play it back (and pause as needed) when setting up their own Square.

Registration: Any farm is welcome to attend one, or both, of these webinars using a single registration. Farms that would like to participate in the POS research are encouraged to attend. Register for one or both of the webinars here: http://bit.ly/farmmarketresearch

Instructors: Matt LeRoux, Extension Associate, Cornell University and Becca Rimmel, farmer at Bottom Land Farm will present.

Speaker bios:
Matt LeRoux, Extension Associate, Cornell University
Matt has over 20 years' experience serving farms through Cornell Cooperative Extension, non-profits, and consulting. Specializing in market strategy, Matt works with a diverse mix of produce and livestock farmers and food businesses. Career highlights include developing the Marketing Channel Assessment Tool for produce growers and the Cornell Meat Price Calculator.

Becca Rimmel is owner of Bottomland Farm in Berkshire, NY, a diversified livestock farm raising broiler chickens, egg-laying hens, pigs, ducks, geese, rabbits, turkeys, and sheep for wool. They also manage a new orchard growing chestnut, hazelnut, apple and peach trees. The farm sells meat at four area farmers' markets. Becca is also the former manager of the Ithaca Farmers Market and supported Cornell Cooperative Extension's 2018 POS research with participating farmers.

More details about the research
The hypothesis is that a large volume of data (transactions) will reveal trends in consumer behavior that inform marketing techniques and pricing strategies to increase daily gross sales. The project examines the data on market-specific and farm-specific levels but also aggregated. Daily gross sales can be increased by 3 primary means: increasing customers, increasing customer spending, and increasing prices. The data will inform the best methods for each farm and market. A short article about the team's similar research with produce vendors can be found HERE. (https://dyson.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/01/Electronic-POS-Bring-New-Opportunities.pdf)

Questions about the project can be directed to Matt LeRoux, Extension Associate at mnl28@cornell.edu