

## **Skill Development and Expansion for Farmers' Market Managers**

**Waukesha County University of Wisconsin Extension** of Waukesha, WI received \$69,729 to create a short course to train Wisconsin market managers in marketing and promotion practices, and develop a self-study booklet for managers unable to attend the course. Funds were used to study successful innovative markets in Northern California, develop a short course to train Wisconsin market managers, and publish *Market and Promotion Tools for Farmers Market Managers*.

### **Final Report**

# **Skill Development and Expansion for Farmers' Market Managers**

(WI-220-2008-G-0766)

## **Final Report**

### **Background Statement:**

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension educators conducted a multi-year survey from 2005-2007 of farmers' market managers, vendors and customers in Southeast Wisconsin about what makes a good market. Although the markets differ greatly in their history, attributes and personality, there was one defining characteristic of a good market. Every successful market had a committed and proactive manager. Few are paid, but they are all passionate. Farmers' market managers make farmers' markets in Wisconsin possible. They organize, manage, resolve conflicts, track finances and commit their time often for little or no compensation. As accomplished as many managers are in running a farmers' market, farmers need more to survive rapid urbanization and financial pressures. They need someone who can bring more people to the market and keep them coming back. During our surveys of managers at over 30 farmers' markets in Southeast Wisconsin, managers agreed. One educational need surface more than any other and that was marketing and promotion skills. Many managers indicated that they simply lack the marketing and promotion skills needed to realize their markets full potential.

With many farmers dependent on these markets for their livelihood, it is essential to assist market managers in improving their marketing and promotion skills. Helping managers without marketing backgrounds through this process and giving them easy to use tools will allow market managers to be more effective and efficient, increasing their customer base without significantly increasing their workload.

### **How the Issue was Addressed/Results/Accomplishments:**

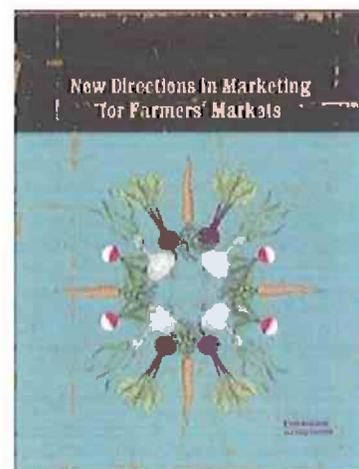
To address the need for marketing and promotion education, UW Cooperative Extension educators conducted a three part program:

- Sixteen market managers representing diverse farmers' markets from throughout Wisconsin (map attached) participated in a five day educational study tour focused on observing successful marketing and promotion programs at a wide range of successful farmers' markets in Northern California. In addition to visiting 15 markets, reflection sessions were held to review the marketing and promotion strategies we had seen during the day and how they might be applied to participant's farmers' markets. Participating market managers rated to overall study tour experience and a 4.4 (averages based on a 1-5 scale). Different aspects of the study tour had ratings ranging form 3.86 (evening reflection sessions) to 4.68 (tour organization). At the conclusion of the study tour, all managers set three marketing and promotion goals for the 2009 season. Goals that were set included such tasks as improved vendor displays, market bags and other print material, setting up market information booths and greater attention to websites (list attached) These goals were reviewed at the conclusion of the season. Market managers

accomplished 61% of the goals that they listed, made progress toward accomplishing 30% and intend to address the remaining 9% in the future.



- A self study manual entitled “New Direction in Marketing for farmers’ Markets was written and published for distribution. This 45 page guides includes a review of basic marketing concepts, active, passive direct and indirect marketing strategies, developing, implementing and evaluating formal marketing plans and how to communicate and gain support for the marketing plan. Nearly 100 print copies have been distributed to farmers market managers throughout the state since it’s release two months ago. It is also available at no cost through the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension’s publications website as a PDF (<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/New-Directions-in-Marketing-for-Farmers-Markets-P1369.aspx>). This publication has been reviewed and evaluated by market managers throughout the state. Ninety-six percent of managers surveyed indicated that the guide had helped to improve their marketing and promotion skills. The also said that it was easy to use (92%) and that they could apply the strategies in the guide to their farmers’ market (92%).



- Thirty-four farmers' market managers participated in a marketing and promotion short course on January 29 and 30, 2010. The short course was based on the "New Direction in Marketing for Farmers Markets" guide. The goal was to build and expand on the information introduced in the guide to give market managers a deeper understanding of how to apply these methods to their market successfully. The topics where managers indicated the greatest increase in their knowledge included plan-o-grams (86% increase), techniques of collecting market data (58%) and creating a focused and meaningful mission statement (48%). In all topics, managers showed twenty-eight percent to eighty-six percent increases in their level of knowledge and comfort level applying marketing and promotion tools. As a result of the course, 88% of market managers indicated that they would either be writing or updating their farmers' market marketing plan for the 2010 season. The educational event was rated overall as a 6.1 on a 7 point scale.

### **Conclusions and Lessons Learned:**

Farmers' markets in Wisconsin are very diverse not only in their location and structure, but also in their maturity and needs. Each participating market had a different perspective on their experience and how to apply what they had learned to their market given it's unique set of circumstances. What unifies these market managers is their need for assistance. All of the market managers had something to offer and something to learn. The exchange of information during both the study tour and the short course between managers was inspiring. Since few markets are geographically close enough to create competition, managers continue to serve as a valuable resources for each other. These relationships combined with the education around marketing and promotion has created the opportunity for us to move forward, into the future, together as farmers' market managers.

### **Beneficiaries:**

The following farmers markets participated in the farmers' market study tour and or marketing and promotion short course. Many others have received the "New Directions in Marketing for Farmers' Markets" marketing and promotion guide. See map for geographical distribution.

#### Short course and study tour:

City of Green Bay Farmers' Market, Green Bay, WI  
 Fondy Farmers' Market, Milwaukee, WI  
 South Madison Farmers' Market, Madison, WI  
 Waukesha Farmers' Market, Waukesha, WI  
 Oneida Farmers Market, Oneida, WI  
 Viroqua Partners Farmers' Market, Viroqua, WI  
 Lake Mills Farmers' Market, Lake Mills, WI  
 Black River Falls Community Farmers Market, Black River Falls, WI  
 Rusk County Farmers' Market, Conrath, WI  
 Farmers' Market of Wausau, Inc., Wausau, WI  
 Downtown Beloit Association Farmers' Market, Beloit, WI  
 Menomonee Farmers Market, Menomonee, WI  
 Boyceville Farmers' Market, Boyceville, WI

Janesville Farmers' Market, Janesville, WI  
Ashland Area Farmers' Market, Ashland, WI  
Burlington Farmers' Market, Burlington, WI  
River Falls Farmers' Market, River Falls, WI

Short course only:

Menomonee Falls Farmers Market, Menomonee Falls, WI  
South Milwaukee Downtown Farmers' Market, Milwaukee, WI  
Rice Lake Farmers' Market, Rice Lake, WI  
Medford Farmers' Market, Medford, WI  
Brookfield Farmers Market, Brookfield, WI  
Butler Farmers' Market, Butler, WI  
Oconomowoc Farmers Market, Oconomowoc, WI  
North Madison Farmers' Market, Madison, WI  
Rivewest Farmers' Market, Milwaukee, WI  
Fort Atkinson Farmers Market, Fort Atkinson, WI  
Country Lane Farmers Market, Barron, WI  
Milwaukee County Winter Farmers Market, Milwaukee WI

**Additional Information Available:**

A marketing and promotion guide for farmers' market was written and published as a result of this grant. The guide entitles "New Directions in Marketing for Farmers' Markets" was published through the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extensions publishing unit in January 2010. This publication is available through the unit website free of charge as a PDF. Print copies are also available for a purchase price of \$5.00 at the following web address.

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/New-Directions-in-Marketing-for-Farmers-Markets-P1369.aspx>

**Project Partner Participation:**

Market managers who wrote letters of support and offered input into the creation of this grant proposal, continued to be involved in the educational study tour and Marketing and Promotion Short Course. These managers were able to take part in these sessions and utilize the marketing and promotion skills that they learned to improve the strategies being used at their markets.

**Contact Info:**

Kristin Krokowski, Commercial Horticulture Educator  
University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Waukesha County  
515 W. Moreland Blvd. AC G-22  
Waukesha, WI 53119

Email: [kristin.krokowski@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:kristin.krokowski@ces.uwex.edu)  
Phone: 262-548-7768