

# Expanding Farm-Fresh Direct-Marketing Opportunities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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Direct-marketing and agri-tourism businesses have recently begun to promote their businesses using stand-alone websites allowing them to tap into a larger customer base. This has created a need for direct farm markets to identify the products and services consumers are demanding from online sources. This project proposes to conduct an online survey of consumer preferences in buying direct from the farmer vs. the types of products consumers are seeking on the Internet. Our hypothesis is that the use of stand-alone web sites limit the number of consumers that farm marketers are reaching due to the time and expense involved in keeping them updated. This online survey will collect information useful in describing how farm marketers can use the Internet to increase their customer base and individual profits.

## Objectives

1. To conduct an online fresh-market consumer-preferences survey.
2. To identify the types of farm-fresh product offerings preferred by consumers.
3. To identify specific market niches that may be available to farm-fresh marketers including on-line product offerings.
4. To demonstrate the value of [www.agriculturehealth.com](http://www.agriculturehealth.com) to potential users, including fresh-market growers, farm markets, and consumers.

## Work Plan

The survey is to be conducted via an online survey service using the [www.agriculturehealth.com](http://www.agriculturehealth.com) website. The site specifically targets fresh-market growers, farm markets, consumers, and the Agri-tourism industry and is currently averaging over 4,100 visits with more than 10,000 pages viewed from 68,000 hits per month. Type of markets to be considered are U-Pick, tailgate market, farm stand, roadside market, farmers market, direct Internet sales, mail order, Community Supported Agriculture, and entertainment farming. The target market area for this project consists of Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Within the Mid-Atlantic Region area there are approximately 3,000 farm-fresh direct marketers and agri-tourism businesses currently representing a multi-million dollar industry. This project has the potential to create a large economic benefit to the farm-fresh direct-marketing industry in this region and beyond by expanding the customer base for individual marketers, resulting in increased sales and profits. The survey service will allow us to create and post the survey, invite participants, and assist in analyzing the results. The [www.agriculturehealth.com](http://www.agriculturehealth.com) website will be used to identify and target consumer respondents. Survey results will be posted and made available to the farm-fresh direct-marketing and agri-tourism industries.

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