

The example is, again, from Ohio, and reported in an article in the *Journal of Extension*. In 1987, the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service initiated a program called "It's Fresher From Ohio" (Drake, et al., 1990). The main focus of a pilot project in six counties was to increase the marketing of fresh northeast Ohio agricultural products such as fruits and vegetables, maple syrup, meats, herbs, wine, and dairy products in the Cleveland area.

By 1989, nearly 40 buyers had been matched up with over 50 producers. Most of the interest came from gourmet restaurants, specialty stores, and independent grocers and supermarket chains with 20 or less stores. Later, interviews conducted as part of project evaluation showed that of 75 project participants (40 percent were producers, 39 percent were buyers and 21 percent were both), 88 percent of the buyers indicated an increased awareness of Ohio agricultural products, and what is more important, 65 percent had increased their purchases of these products.

The Ohio project continues to provide a unique opportunity for producers, and wholesale and retail buyers to get to know each other. Conferences and trade shows allow the producers to exhibit their products and Cleveland's best known chefs to prepare them. During product tastings, chefs and specialty foods buyers learn more about how the products are grown, processed, and marketed. Producer meetings cover topics such as post-harvest handling and packaging. The project is promoted through a monthly newsletter, and news releases are used to reach consumers with product information. A copyrighted logo identifies and helps to promote fresh Ohio products.

Other states are working on similar programs to match producers with buyers. The Texas Department of Agriculture's Direct Marketing Program has identified nearly two dozen buyers for restaurants, supermarkets, and specialty stores that will purchase directly from farmers (Deterling, 1989). The current "Fresh from Florida" marketing campaign which now promotes Florida-grown fruits and vegetables has plans to expand.

ADVERTISE TO CREATE THE DEMAND

When members of the Florida Meat Goat Association decided to expand marketing efforts, they started by "going local." The first annual Meat Goat Cook-Off was held in the fall of 1989. Invited guests

included food writers, other members of the media, chefs, and university meat goat research project personnel. Dishes featuring chevon (goat meat) were prepared by members of the association and judged by a panel. The *Gainesville Sun* newspaper featured a story about the event and included the winning recipes.

The above example testifies that food editors for local and regional newspapers are interested in presenting new products and ideas to their readers, and welcome contact. Many like to follow the progress of local products and may do several articles over time. Media coverage takes product information to a wide audience. It also provides third party endorsement to add to a promotional materials packet. Certainly television coverage is excellent, but the printed word in the food section or business section of the newspaper can adequately serve the purpose.

Cook-offs and tastings are both good public forums for introducing goat meat. They provide excellent visibility and an opportunity to generate product interest. Both, however, require good organization and planning and are really a group effort. The Florida example shows that cook-offs can be sponsored by a producer organization and be open to the public. They are generally more informal and can be held in conjunction with a public event such as a fair or an arts festival with great success.

Tastings are slightly more formal because they focus on getting the attention of chefs, restaurateurs, purveyors and specialty foods retailers. Local area restaurants are often willing to support events that allow fellow food professionals to sample a new product in a familiar setting and interact with producers. Producers in turn have an opportunity to meet and talk with future clients in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Benefits from a tasting held by the Florida Meat Goat Association included development of a mailing list of potential clients, two articles in *The Tampa Tribune*, and valuable feedback from chefs and restaurant managers that included quality ratings of the dishes featured and preferences for specific cuts of meat.

THE PRODUCER/PROCESSOR/DISTRIBUTOR CONNECTION

Processors are the key to connecting producers with distributors. Producers and processors must be able to work together to build and maintain a