

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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How Can Farmers and Consumers Use MarketMaker?

MarketMaker is a one stop shop for strategic marketing that farmers can use to identify where the market is for their products. Consumers can use MarketMaker to find producers of fresh and local foods, farmers' markets and wineries. It is an online tool connecting family shoppers with farmers and everyone in between – including restaurants and grocery stores. You can take a website tour by viewing recently released videos that highlight everything MarketMaker has available. The videos, which were created by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, make it easy to use MarketMaker – just visit www.agmrc.org and click the MarketMaker video link.

Family shoppers can use the MarketMaker website to search for restaurants or places to buy everything from freshly picked or pick-your-own produce, to maple syrup and wine. Farmers can search for farmers' markets, grocery stores and other outlets to sell their food products. The videos explain in detail how to conduct searches and use the website.

“MarketMaker began as an online database of Illinois businesses and was so successful that now other states have joined the effort,” said Craig Tordsen, Iowa State University Extension specialist. “University of Illinois developed and owns the tool but the multi-state partnership that is able to pool large amounts of food industry data and provide it to the public really adds value to the resource.”

The Iowa MarketMaker website is located at <http://ia.marketmaker.uiuc.edu>. From there, visitors can search for restaurants, grocery stores, farms and other production facilities across several states. “It's more than a directory of information because it has interactive features like mapping and search capabilities so users can really target and focus on the data that they need,” Tordsen said.

Each state has a unique site but all the data from other MarketMaker states can be accessed from any state MarketMaker location. The national MarketMaker link at www.agmrc.org, hosted by the national Agricultural Resource Center at Iowa State University, provides a clickable map of the entire United States. Participating states are highlighted, making it easy for users to navigate from state to state or to regionalize their data searches.

Iowa farms and businesses can sign up for a free listing by registering on the Iowa MarketMaker website. “Our goal is to make the site a resource for all farmers and businesses in the food supply chain,” said Tordsen. “We are as interested in helping a grocery store find farm-fresh eggs as we are in helping the farmer find a place to sell them, so it's important to include as many producers in our database as possible.”

For more information about MarketMaker, you can contact Craig Tordsen, ctordsen@iastate.edu, Raymond Hansen, hansenr@iastate.edu or Linda Naeve, lnaeve@iastate.edu who are members of the development team. For other questions, contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.