



Finding Local Food With MarketMaker

There are several farms in Northeast Iowa where people can drive out and buy fresh, locally-grown produce. Or they can find locally grown food at the area farmers markets. But there is another option for finding out about and ordering local food — the Iowa MarketMaker Web site, www.marketmakeriowa.com.

Iowa State University Extension staff learned about MarketMaker at a value-added agriculture conference and soon became a partner in this interactive mapping system that links producers and consumers of Iowa agricultural products. Extension headed up a campaign to secure funds for implementing an Iowa MarketMaker site and simultaneously began assisting University of Illinois Extension to promote MarketMaker on a national level.

“By being involved in the forefront of this project and our continual encouragement to bring other states on board, the more economic activity we potentially raise for our producers in access to new markets,” says Ray Hansen, director of ISU Extension Value-Added Agriculture. The Iowa MarketMaker Web site provides a larger network — five states of producers and buyers — and a greater potential for growth.

An increasing number of Iowa farmers, producers, wholesalers, restaurants, processors and farmers’ markets are posting their information on Iowa MarketMaker. While it is still gaining momentum in the state, Iowa MarketMaker is a great option for people unable to get to farmers’ markets, but who want to purchase locally grown produce for their family, restaurant or store. Iowa MarketMaker also is useful when growers want to locate other growers of similar products. It has the potential to really benefit the locally raised food market by connecting growers to growers and growers to buyers.

For more information on listing your store or farm on Iowa MarketMaker, contact your local ISU Extension office.

The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm (NIFF) Coalition and the Food & Fitness Initiative are working together to create community environments that support access to fresh, locally grown, healthy, affordable food and safe environments for physical activity and play. More information about these programs can be found at www.niffcoalition.org.