Food is big business in the United States, with more than $850 billion spent on food in 2004. By the year 2020 it is projected there will be an additional 50 to 80 million people in the United States, adding another $200 billion to the food expenditures.

As a producer group or farmer looking into the food business, where can you find information that will guide you to the market niche or new product that will allow you to capture some of the food dollar?

In the quest for answers to conducting a feasibility study or doing a market study, start with the easy to collect and readily available information. Often times that will be the only information you will need to help you make a decision. This briefing will provide basic information on where you can go to begin your search.

However, there are times when public information is not enough and you will have to either go to private sources for assistance or purchase information. For a listing of consultants who can provide specific information go to http://www.agmrc.org/. In this directory, there are numerous consultants who have worked with value-added agriculture ventures. Sometimes the information is not available. Then you will have to do the research yourself (or purchase that information) necessary to guide you to an answer in order to proceed with a project or create and find a new market opportunity.

In all research, remember to think creatively. Anything that is taxed is reported somewhere; anything that is inspected is reported; anything that leaves the country is reported, and anything that makes money is reported.

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**Public processing and manufacturing information**

All exported and imported products are monitored by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Commerce monitors the U.S. manufacturing industry through its Census of Manufacturers and other data monitoring. Information is classified through the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). In this system, the numbers for food are 31 through 33.

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)
http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html

U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20230
http://www.commerce.gov/

**Public agricultural and production information**

Agriculture production is monitored and reported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), along with the Economic Research Service (ERS) which provide in-depth analyses of agricultural crops. Additionally, the Foreign Ag Service (FAS) provides detailed information on both production and market trends in manufactured food products.

Census of Agriculture
http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/

Economic Research Service (ERS)
http://www.ers.usda.gov/

National Agricultural Statistics Service
(Ag. Statistics Hotline, 800-727-9540 or 202-720-3878)

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome/

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Semi-public information
Commodity boards funded by check-off dollars and producer members provide significant resources on their specific products such as rice, dairy, catfish, etc. Groups such as the United Soybean Board, the National Pork Board and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Board are excellent resources for commodity specific information.

National Cattlemen’s Beef Board
http://www.beef.org/


Trade associations
When looking at the trade associations specific to processing, one will find the American Meat Institute (AMI), the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), the North American Meat Processors (NAMP), the National Frozen and Refrigerated Foods’ Association (NFFA) and the Refrigerated Food Association to be excellent resources.

Such entities as the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), the National Restaurant Association, the Grocer Manufacturers of America and Natural Products Association are also valuable resources for information.

American Meat Institute (AMI)
http://www.meatami.org/

Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA)
http://www.gmaonline.org/

National Frozen and Refrigerated Foods’ Association
http://www.nfraweb.org/

North American Meat Processors (NAMP)
http://www.namp.com/

Refrigerated Food Association (CRFA)
http://www.refrigeratedfoods.org/

Private firms
Soyatech and Spence Information Services (SPINS) are examples of private firms that collect data or have inside industry sources that can supply them with proprietary information. To make contact with these sources, talk to other groups, read studies and look at citations, as well as doing Web-based searches to ferret out these individuals.

Soyatech, www.soyatech.com/

Spence Information Services (SPINS)
http://www.spins.com/

Trade publications
Trade Publications include Stagnito Communications, publisher of Refrigerated and Frozen Foods, Dairy Field, Industria Alimenticia, The National Provisioner, Beverage Industry, Snack Food and Wholesale Bakery, Candy Industry, Confectioner, Private Label Buyer, Food and Beverage Packaging, Flexible Packaging, and Brand Packaging. International Trade Shows are excellent ways to get updated information from the trade.


Brand Packaging, http://www.brandpackaging.com/


Food and Beverage Packaging,
http://www.foodandbeveragepackaging.com/

Industria Alimenticia
http://www.industriaalimenticia.com/ (Spanish Language publication)


The National Provisioner
http://www.provisioneronline.com/

Private Label Buyer
http://www.privatelabelbuyer.com/

Refrigerated Frozen Food
http://www.refrigeratedfrozenfood.com/

Refrigerated Frozen Food Retailer
http://www.rffretailer.com/

Snack Food and Wholesale Bakery
http://www.snackandbakery.com/
Trade shows
Finally take time to attend the relevant trade association shows. Some of these include the Food Technologists (IFT), Anuga, Fancy Food Shows, National Restaurant Show, Food Marketing Institute. The Web sites are given below:

Anuga, http://www.anuga.com/
Food Marketing Institute (FMI), http://www.fmi.org/
Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) http://www.ift.org/cms/
National Restaurant Association http://www.restaurant.org/
Natural Products Association http://www.npicenter.com/
National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (Fancy Food Shows) http://www.fancyfoodshows.com/

As definitions become more precise, in terms of micro levels of analysis, specific companies will emerge with information regarding websites, annual reports, Security and Exchange Commission filings and directories with appropriate person to call for specific information.

Original research will reveal analysis of company or product being researched.

For an outside and independent analysis of specific industries or companies you can contact agencies such as Dunn and Bradstreet, the Risk Management Association (RMA), any number of firms which track stock keeping units (SKU) along with numerous private firms, such as the Hale Group, SJH Group. See the list of AgMRC consultants for a larger list of consultants (http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc/).

The Hale Group, http://www.halegroup.com/
Risk Management Association (RMA) http://www.rmahq.org/RMA/
SJH Group, http://www.sjh.co.jp/grup.html

Trend monitoring
For information on trend monitoring, the United States Department of Agriculture is a good resource, as is American Demographics and Woods and Poole.

American Demographics http://www.americandemographics.com/
Woods and Poole http://www.woodsandpoole.com/

For the lazy researcher, try http://www.AgMRC.org.

Research quotes
“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?”
Albert Einstein

“Basic research is what I am doing when I don’t know what I am doing.”
Werner von Braun