Identifying marketing targets is important for successful marketing. There are several new and emerging potential marketing targets for value-added groups to consider.

**Food with a Face (relationship marketing)**

There seems to be a growing need among consumers to “get back to their roots” on food buying. Although most folks have not been on a farm, many of them are vaguely aware of where their food comes from. They have fuzzy memories of a farm or a corner grocery where everyone knew where their food came from and where their money went. Deep down, they long for that connection, and there is value in tapping that longing. If you can create a sustainable product image that connects your consumer to you or your group, then you can develop a relationship that fosters brand loyalty and repeat business.

As baby boomers age, the need for this relationship has grown. This is a special area of demand that is under-served in the food market.

**Prestige Marketing**

In certain markets there are intangible responses from consumers that can be tapped to realize added value in products. As an example, most people find it desirable to buy something “different” or in some way special. It is the idea of bragging rights or being able to turn their friends on to something new. There is an element of discovery that can be tapped here. Certainly, the feeling that your product is not just everyday mainstream fare has an appeal. In part, this comes from the need of many people to underscore the idea that they have the means to make choices and that they are making great choices.

**Serving the Server**

One growing segment of the food service sector is a phenomenon called “personal chefs.” The service caters (literally) to the people who are busy and don’t want the hassle of fixing a meal after a busy day of work. Increasingly, there is no one in the household who likes to cook or feels competent to do it well. Hence, we see the service springing up that helps these people create special menus, then comes into the home at scheduled times to prepare the dishes.

An example of where this fits is the small pork marketer who is hooking your products and services to the personal chef. It could be as simple as being a quick call, quick response delivery of your always fresh, always tender products, thereby saving a trip to a market. Customers would know you and the quality of your goods. An added benefit to the chef is the possibility of marketing to prestige levels and perhaps using “food with a face” as well. This approach offers benefit to the pork producer’s company by having the personal chef doing the actual consumer marketing for you.

The whole concept of “serving the server” is built on the idea of how to utilize marketing people and organizations that already exist. This allows your company to get many more “feet on the street” that are not on your own payroll. In fact, you are selling them product and also possibly working an additional service fee into the transaction. This type of approach allows you to expand your product volume more quickly than if you tried to develop a direct marketing sales approach in-house. It also keeps your costs lower, providing you with added flexibility.

**Solution Marketing**

The traditional view of solution marketing in food includes the home meal replacement (HMR). With the surge in households having all adult members working outside the home, there is more emphasis on time management, particularly by the female member of the household. Studies show that the female is the primary decision maker on food purchasing. This decision leans towards convenience, including fast heat-and-serve entrees and complete meals.
Two options for the value-added marketer are obvious. First, you could become a specialty supplier to a company that has a brand and market place slotting already going for it. This is the high volume, low margin approach to moving products in the short run. Keep in mind, if the target companies already have suppliers, the challenge is to somehow replace them through service, price or quality.

The second option is to create a product and a brand and then enter the retail market directly. This approach brings much higher margins but will certainly be slower in building volume. There are substantial costs involved in creating brand identity. There are costs to overcome in packaging and labeling that will be high in the early stages because volume is low. You will also need to compete for shelf space at retail. There are considerable costs for slotting fees paid to the store, but fees are negotiable to some extent.

Personal chefs and standard catering are also forms of solution marketing. Here you are providing more than just food. The service you provide is the large value item in the price equation. Many agricultural products are not traditional items in this format, a fact that signals opportunity for growth.

In a similar vein, the old idea of the lunch wagon at a factory parking lot or office complex is still quite viable. In fact, the idea of offering ready-to-heat-and-eat meals to workers as they exit the parking lot for home could be very well received. Most workers do not think about the evening meal until late in the day. The idea of stopping at the grocery or getting home to face the evening meal-fixing chore is not always a favorable one, so the opportunity is to provide them the solution through their car window as they leave.

**Ethnic Marketing**

As you look for ways to sell the “whole set” of products coming from the crops or livestock you produce, it is important to take a really hard look at other cultures and countries for market outlets. Eating habits and tastes are closely tied to family upbringing and local/regional norms. This is known as marketing to the learned responses of your consumer.

For example, the demographics favor marketing pork into black and Hispanic markets. These groups eat more meat and poultry than whites and others, with Latinos being the highest.