

# How To Utilize MarketMaker

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Darlene Knipe, Speaker 3, Olivia Hanlon

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-  Olivia Hanlon 00:15  
Hello, and welcome to the Small Farms Podcast, a production of the Small Farms Program at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Our podcast covers the opportunities and challenges associated with rural life. In this episode, I interviewed Darlene Knipe, Co-Founder of MarketMaker, and talk about how to best utilize the MarketMaker platform. I'm Olivia Hanlon, Farm Food and Enterprise Development Extension Education specialist, and welcome to the show. Darlene, welcome to the show. Thanks for being on.
-  Darlene Knipe 00:46  
Thanks, Olivia. Thanks for having me on.
-  Olivia Hanlon 00:48  
Could you give our listeners a little bit of background into what the MarketMaker platform does exactly?
-  Darlene Knipe 00:54  
Well, MarketMaker has actually been around for about 15 years and and we've sort of evolved and developed the functions and features of it, but actually, simply stated, it's the

digital information network. And we crowd sourced information from farms and food-related businesses. And the information is actually compiled in the form of profiles. And those individual profiles identify things like the name of the farm, the farm type, provides a lot of additional information about the characteristics of the farmer, the business. And then we place all that into a database that can be accessed through a searchable mappable directory. And we share it across multiple websites. It's one centralized database, but we provide information across a diverse array of platforms. It's really kind of a networked community of users across the food supply chain, and it helps identify potential customers and food sources, processors and distributors from farm to fork.



Olivia Hanlon 01:55

Great. How many states is MarketMaker in?



Darlene Knipe 01:58

So MarketMaker has actually 21 state sponsored sites, but anyone in the US can have a profile or access the information in MarketMaker, there's no restriction to who can get on and search all the different MarketMaker sites. We also have another feature that's called Powered by MarketMaker. So in addition to the state sponsored sites, we in a national platform, we provide information and data and tools and resources to other domains. So the MarketMaker Network actually provides technical support to domains, over 50 domains around the country.



Olivia Hanlon 02:39

What all can we find on the MarketMaker website when we're looking through it?



Darlene Knipe 02:42

So MarketMaker has a broad assortment of features. Besides being able to search for farms, food related businesses and markets, that information can be searched from any number of parameters, you can search by location, by product, by characteristic. For instance, if you were looking for an organic farm, in the upper Midwest, you could do a search like that, if you're looking for farmers that sell wholesale as opposed to sell direct, that's something that can be done. There's also a buy sell forum where people that are registered in MarketMaker can post product availability or product needs. It's a great resource, especially with COVID-19, where we find a lot of farmers that have had supply chain disruptions, it provides the opportunity to post that product that you have available right now in real time and share it with other people. In addition to being listed on the the

MarketMaker sites in the form of something like a Craigslist, we also take those buy sell posts and routinely send them out electronically to everybody that's in the MarketMaker distribution lists. So anybody that's registered in MarketMaker can get that information. And then in addition to that, we take those posts, and we push them out through social media. Another feature we have if you're into data and data visualization is that we have an advanced mapping tool. And this is where you can actually map the different farms and businesses that you select or query over heat maps. And those heat maps include data such as census data and consumer preferences. So for example, if you were interested in identifying farmers markets that were located in Hispanic neighborhoods in Chicago, that's something that's a query that can be conducted. And that's sometimes useful for farms and businesses that are developing business plans and marketing plans. But it's also good for research and for policymakers as well.



Olivia Hanlon 04:43

So from a consumer standpoint, how can users best find the food that's local to them? Is it better to start out on that national database or go on to the state pages? How do you recommend doing that?



Darlene Knipe 04:54

Well, there's a lot of different ways that you can search and get to the information. There's many ways to access the data. But I would say, especially if you have, if you're in a state where there's a state sponsored site, that's the ideal way to begin. And then you can narrow down your search or, or by state, by county, by town. There's even a feature in market maker that allows you to actually do a customized search where you can simply draw a box on a map for a region that you're interested in and do a search or query within that box. We also have another feature that's consumer facing, it's an app, it's it's called the What's In Season app. And that's for seasonal products. And what's unique about this app is that not only does it identify the products that happened to be in season, locally for you on that particular date and time, but it then links to the farmers that produce those products in your area, as well as farmers markets where those products might be available.



Olivia Hanlon 06:00

Perfect. I know you guys list affiliations on there. So say I was looking for someone particularly involved in Practical Farmers of Iowa, how would I go about finding who is registered through MarketMaker with them?

D

Darlene Knipe 06:13

So the affiliations, are actually partnership organizations with the MarketMaker network. And we have a pretty broad assortment of affiliations. So Buy Fresh, Buy Local as an example. And the Farmer Veteran Coalition, we have a number of affiliations with them in different states. So if you're interested specifically in finding those farms, or businesses that are part of that affiliation, you can simply go into MarketMaker and that's one of the filters, you can filter out by affiliation.

O

Olivia Hanlon 06:44

Perfect. So you talked a little bit about the mapping feature earlier, and how that helps producers get their stuff listed so that consumers can find it. Are there any other advantages, really for the consumer base that that mapping feature helps with?

D

Darlene Knipe 06:59

Well, depends on on what your interest is when you're conducting a query. You know, if you're looking at a farmer that may be using the site, this isn't just for consumers. But if there's a farmer, he may be interested in knowing where a particular processor is where the nearest processor is, or strategically located, retailers can search for product along a route. For instance, you know, if you're interested in knowing where farmers have a certain product, or they're located across an interstate, you know, there's ways to query that sort of thing. So sometimes it's good to know who's close by but sometimes it's also good to know just where the clusters of particular farms and businesses are located. So all of the information in MarketMaker is geocoded. So that you have the choice to be there searching and getting a list of results, or simply knowing on a map where they're all located.

O

Olivia Hanlon 07:54

Right. So like you mentioned, the farmers that use this, too, how can they go about getting listed on the MarketMaker site and kind of go through that process and who all can be listed on MarketMaker?

D

Darlene Knipe 08:05

So that's one of the nice things about market makers that we make this available to anyone and everyone, and there's no charge to create a profile. So if you were interested in having your profile listed in MarketMaker, you can get on one of the market maker state

supported sites. And you can register and it's a fairly painless process. Once you set up your password, your login and your password, you just click through boxes that best describe your farm or your business or your operation. There's also an opportunity to provide additional information in the form of a description, you can upload pictures, there's all kinds of ways that you can enhance your profile. And we don't, you know, we don't charge at all for any of that. The other option is to get on one of the many supported domains that MarketMaker has available. So for instance, the Ag Marketing Resource Center out of Iowa State, they have a tool called Food Searcher, that's actually something that's powered by MarketMaker. And there's an option with those food searcher sites to actually get on and register your particular farmer business. So there's lots of different ways to register. If you can find one of the many MarketMaker sites or go into one of the state supported sites, you just click on register and click through the process. And if you have any problems, there's a contact available that's ready to help you out through the process.



Olivia Hanlon 09:31

Great. Is there anything that we didn't cover today that you'd like to add to tell our listeners?



Darlene Knipe 09:36

I just want to say that MarketMaker, which was started at the University of Illinois, 15 years ago was very much a mission driven effort. What our goal is with the MarketMaker platform and the network of domains that we support is to better connect food with consumers. And by having a centralized system where we can share that information in many ways we're also increasing the opportunities for farmers. But we're also helping consumers find a unique product or higher quality product or product that is growing nearby.



Olivia Hanlon 10:13

Awesome. Well thank you for being on today Darlene. We appreciate having you share a little bit about MarketMaker with us.



Darlene Knipe 10:21

Thank you for having me on.



**Speaker 3 10:23**

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