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## Impact Assessment of Direct Marketing of Small- and Mid-sized Producers through Food Industry Electronic Infrastructure MarketMaker

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### Abstract

MarketMaker is a free in-depth marketing tool to help small and mid-sized producers get sophisticated data to help them reach thousands of potential buyers. NY MarketMaker is one avenue farmers across New York can utilise to make connections with their customers. This powerhouse database which contains over 3,000 food producers and over 84,000 New York food-related references, connects buyers, sellers and transportation services and is easily searchable, even for the ‘technologically’ challenged. Cornell University Cooperative Extension in New York City began this project with the University of Illinois in 2007. The main purpose of MarketMaker is to level the playing field. With this tool, small and mid-sized producers have similar market intelligence as the bigger producers.

In order to measure farm-level impact of MarketMaker usage by producers registered with the site, the producer evaluation survey was conducted in August 2009. The structured questionnaire forms were sent to 700 selected producers who actively visit and use the site. The level of producers’ interests is shown by the high response rate of 53.4% (374). Questions were focused on “how many percentage of producers’ farm-level income increased from direct and niche marketing activities”, “how many marketing contact did they get through MarketMaker”, what market channels do they use or plan to use in the near future, how would they use MarketMaker site effectively and many other questions. Producers estimated the dollar value of their business sales helped/started by MarketMaker in seven groups ranged from under \$100 to \$25,000 or more. The majority of the total respondents described that 10–25% of their farm-level income increased from direct and niche marketing activities. The survey results show that MarketMaker helps small and mid-sized producers in many different ways by getting marketing contacts; using the MarketMaker Directory to contact others; connecting direct to individual consumers, restaurants, farmers markets, and institutional buyers; finding producers and their farm products; and finding food industry business partner. NY MarketMaker helps increase availability of regional grown foods for the urban market and improve diet and health of NYC residents by providing a free access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables: <http://nymarketmaker.cornell.edu>

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