



# MarketReady Producer Training Program

Miranda Hileman<sup>1</sup> and Matt Ernst<sup>2</sup>

## What is MarketReady?

The MarketReady Producer Training Program instructs producers in the key business functions that small farmers and ranchers must manage as they seek to develop supplier relationships with restaurants, grocers, wholesalers, and foodservice buyers, including schools. While significant opportunity exists to build on the demand for local products in local markets, many farmers are hesitant or unprepared to meet the transactional requirements expected by these buyers to manage their own food safety, insurance, product quality, and traceability risks. MarketReady addresses these issues. After training, producers will be prepared for business transactions when selling a variety of products including dairy, fruits, meats and vegetables.

MarketReady also offers a Marketing Basics Training in three sessions. The three-hour sessions cover direct marketing principles for farmers markets; direct marketing principles for CSA, on-farm retail and agritourism; and bringing local products to local consumer markets.

## What Topics Are Covered?

The Producer Training Program is based around key business functions identified by buyers in these market channels that are actively seeking to engage local suppliers. The training discusses the differing needs of restaurants, schools and grocery/wholesale/retail businesses. While these marketing channels share similar issues, such as a basic business to business marketing framework, they also require some significant differences in approach. Through its commitment to understand the Kentucky consumer, the University of Kentucky has been able



to collect and qualify data useful to all of Kentucky's farm vendors. MarketReady helps farm vendors design a better business strategy to succeed. Business functions covered by the MarketReady Training include:

- Communication & Relationship Building
- Quality Assurance, Temperature Control & Satisfaction Guarantee
- Packaging and Labeling
- Pricing
- Supply
- Delivery
- Storage
- Invoicing
- Insurance
- Working Cooperatively
- Marketing
- Farm-to-School

## Restaurant Sales Unit

Local products are perennially among the top trends for restaurant menu items, according to surveys conducted by the National Restaurant Association since 2010. For example, hyper-local sourcing and local produce ranked among the



<sup>1</sup>Miranda Hileman is a former Extension Associate in the Department of Agricultural Economics.

<sup>2</sup>Matt Ernst is an independent contractor with the Center for Crop Diversification.



Top 5 restaurant concept trends for 2017, among the 1,298 American Culinary Association members surveyed.<sup>1</sup> This significant increase in demand for local foods indicates continued expansion potential for Kentucky's farmers. The MarketReady Producer Training program builds upon best business practices for producers, which were identified by chefs across Kentucky and the broader region.

### ***Grocery, Wholesale, Foodservice Sales Unit***

Demand for locally produced foods has reached beyond the farmers market to make its way to retail shelves and foodservice menus. Kentucky producers now are looking toward selling wholesale quantities of product(s) to grocery stores (independent, chain and cooperatives), and foodservice institutions such as hospitals, schools, prisons, casinos and corporate cafeterias. The MarketReady Producer Training Program typically includes a panel of buyers who provide insights for producers attending.

### **Who Should Attend?**

The MarketReady training is useful to producers who are considering or developing a new food business, and can also be helpful to those who are currently



selling product to a few local retailers or restaurants. Food producers and processors who are interested in selling to restaurants or foodservice institutions are also encouraged to attend the training. With the MarketReady Producer Training program, producers and entrepreneurs have a unique opportunity to explore ways to improve and expand their food businesses. The MarketReady program will provide individuals with a professional marketing education to improve sales relationships with restaurants and foodservice institutions.

### **Where, When and How Much?**

MarketReady Producer trainings are offered as 6-hour daylong sessions, generally at County Extension Offices. A \$25 registration fee is charged to cover lunch, refreshments and training materials. Dates of scheduled training sessions are posted on the MarketReady website. For more information or to register for training, please contact the MarketReady Training Coordinator.



### **Contact Information and Web Addresses**

- MarketReady  
*Website:* <http://uky.edu/fsic/marketready>  
*Facebook:* <http://www.facebook.com/pages/MarketReady-Producer-Training-Program/126501140742294>
- Training Coordinator  
 Alex Butler  
 UK Department of Agricultural Economics  
 407 C.E. Barnhart Building, Lexington KY 40546  
*Phone:* 218-4383  
*email:* [Alex.Butler@uky.edu](mailto:Alex.Butler@uky.edu)

### **Related Marketing Profiles from the CCD**

- Kentucky MarketMaker (2010)  
<http://www.uky.edu/ccd/sites/www.uky.edu.ccd/files/marketmaker.pdf>

- Kentucky Proud Buy Local Program (2017) <http://www.uky.edu/ccd/sites/www.uky.edu.ccd/files/buylocal.pdf>
- Marketing Crops to Schools and Institutions (2016) <http://www.uky.edu/ccd/sites/www.uky.edu.ccd/files/farmtoschool.pdf>
- Marketing Fresh Produce to Restaurants (2011) <http://www.uky.edu/ccd/sites/www.uky.edu.ccd/files/restaurants.pdf>
- Marketing Fresh Produce to Food Retailers (2012) <http://www.uky.edu/ccd/sites/www.uky.edu.ccd/files/grocers.pdf>

### **Additional Resources**

- Food Systems Innovation Center (University of Kentucky) <http://www.uky.edu/fsic>
- Kentucky Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (KCARD) <http://www.kcard.info>

- Kentucky MarketMaker website <https://ky.foodmarketmaker.com>
- Kentucky Proud (Kentucky Department of Agriculture) <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/kentucky-proud.html>

---

<sup>1</sup>Chef Survey: What's Hot in 2017 (National Restaurant Association) <http://www.restaurant.org/News-Research/Research/What-s-Hot>

### **Suggested Citation:**

Hileman, M. and M. Ernst. (2017). *MarketReady Producer Training Program*. CCD-MP-11. Lexington, KY: Center for Crop Diversification, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. Available: <http://www.uky.edu/ccd/sites/www.uky.edu.ccd/files/marketready.pdf>

---

*Reviewed by Tim Woods and Alex Butler, UK Department of Agricultural Economics  
Photos courtesy of Pixabay.com (pg. 1 grocery and pg. 2 restaurant) and Alex Butler  
(pg. 2 MarketReady training sessions). Logo courtesy of MarketReady (pg. 1).*

**December 2017**

For additional information, contact your local **County Extension** agent

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.