



PENNSYLVANIA VEGETABLE MARKETING & RESEARCH PROGRAM

2301 NORTH CAMERON STREET, HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17110-9405

717.694.3596

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Executive Secretary
William Troxell
815 Middle Road
Richfield, PA 17086
717-694-3596
pvmrp@embarqmail.com

Fresh Ideas

Volume 28 Number 2

September 2018

The Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program is a state-wide marketing order established by a grower referendum, governed by a grower board and funded by grower assessments.

The Program's sole purpose is to serve the vegetable growers of Pennsylvania by promoting Pennsylvania-grown vegetables and funding practical vegetable production research.

PA Veggies Plans for Growth with New Branding, Website, & Content

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Program conducted its 13th annual celebration of August as Pennsylvania Produce Month this season. The campaign is designed to focus extra attention on Pennsylvania vegetables at the height of your season, equipping farmers with promotional tools and resources, while educating the consumer about PA produce and encouraging them to support their local farmers.

This year, we again collaborated with Kitchen Table Consultants to help direct our promotions and build upon our past successes. The 2018 campaign was built with future growth in mind. It focused on refreshing foundational elements of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing & Research Program, such as the website, to remain relevant in an evolving marketing landscape and improve future campaign potential.

Rebranding

In an effort to make the Program more identifiable, as well as unify and improve recognition of all its working parts, a rebrand was completed. This involved the creative development and finalization of a logo, tagline, brand colors, brand fonts, and a website. Once the new branding was established, the look and feel was transferred to The Program's marketing channels, such as new POP materials, social media channels, new videos, and email campaigns. A brand identity acts as the core to all marketing outreach so the consistency and focus of the brand identity is critical. As the Program moves forward with promotions throughout the year using the new relevant and consistent branding, consumer awareness of the Program's efforts and messaging should increase.

Website

The new website was structured to be more user friendly, educational, engaging, and responsive to multiple devices. The latter point proved to be critical since 42% of user sessions happened with a mobile device from July 18 to September 18 (49% were by desktop; 9% were by tablet). It also aimed to improve search engine optimization, user tracking and content management. In relation to those 2018 goals, website performance was a success. We found that, in comparing 2017 to 2018, visitors were visiting far more pages (up 34.7%), remaining on paveggies.org for longer periods of time (up 27%), and the bounce rate, or percentage of visitors navigating away from the site after viewing only one page, decreased (down 6.8%).

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Growth with Rebranding, Website & Content *continued from page 1*

Videos

The Program's custom content inventory was developed beyond editorials and graphics this year to include 12 videos. Dish LLC, a culinary content agency, was contracted to compile 7 of those videos, which featured custom recipes using Pennsylvania vegetables. These simple and engaging videos were intended to inspire consumers to purchase seasonal vegetables and try suggested recipes. Kitchen Table Consultants created 5 videos, which featured Pennsylvania farmers, and aimed to educate the consumer about Pennsylvania produce, highlighting a variety of stages through the vegetables' life cycle. The videos received over 5,000 views in under 60 days.

Public Relations

The Program sent out a series of weekly press releases to mass media on specific topics inspired by the custom content (blogs, recipes, videos, etc.) created for the website. Between mid-July and mid-September, a total of 25 articles were published throughout the state on PA Produce Month. The total estimated impressions, or number of times content was displayed to the public eye, for this time period was 595,337. With over 19 different publication sources, the estimated media value is \$50,217. This data is important, but not the only metric we use to judge the success of a promotion. We also want to focus on **engagement**, which is where the newly branded marketing channels and new content comes into play.

New Website Content

Custom content was developed for the PA Veggies website in celebration of PA Produce month. This included:

- 5 Unique Editorial Features
- 12 Video Posts
- 6 Press Releases
- Farmers Toolkit
- Point of Purchase Materials
- Vegetable Guide

Farmer Resources (The Toolkit)

The resources made available to Pennsylvania farmers through the PA Veggies website and weekly email campaigns included:

- An Instructional Video Demonstrating How to Make the Most of the 2018 Toolkit
- Marketing Lesson (Marketing 101)
- PA Produce Month Marketing Checklist
- Campaign Themes & Checklist
- Promotional Prompts & Content Inspiration
- Press Release Templates
- Graphics
- Facebook Cover Photos & Facebook Profile Frame

- An Instructional Video Demonstrating How To Engage on Facebook as Your Business Page
- Four Infographics

Additional content on the Farmer Resources page includes:

- Point of Purchase Materials & Ordering Form
- Newsletters & Research Reports
- Assessment Forms & Guidelines

Much of the content will remain on the website as an evergreen marketing resource throughout the year, with the intent to add updated resources in 2019.

Social Media

Kitchen Table Consultants drove consumer reach this year by continuing to build an audience for PA Veggies through social media engagement on Facebook and Instagram, our two most active social media channels. A YouTube channel was added to the lineup of PA Veggies' social media presence due to the addition of new video content produced for the 2018 campaign. The August is PA Produce Month (PA Veggies) Facebook page continues to be steadily maintained throughout the year and serves as the Program's most active social media presence for the time being. The team uploaded all videos to the Facebook and YouTube platforms and shared a variety of engaging posts throughout the month. All new blogs from the PA Veggies website were shared, as well as new graphics, tips, good cheer and enthusiasm for Pennsylvania produce. From mid-July to mid-September, we observed the following Facebook page statistics:

- 30,435 reached
- 2,306 engaged
- 204 new likes
- 5,037 videos viewed
- 47,535 impressions
- 834 Facebook discussions that mentioned "PA Veggies"

Website Directories Updated

Using information submitted by growers this summer, the Program updated the directory of retail Farm Markets, Farmers' Markets and CSA's that is posted on the Program's website. The directory lists the markets in ZIP code order allowing consumers to search for markets near them. The Program also updated its directory of wholesale growers that lists growers by the crops they produce at the wholesale level. In this directory, the growers are divided into three or four groups based on the acreages they produce. The website also features a directory of the state's produce auctions.

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Your Input is Needed

As stated in the Program’s Mission Statement (top of page 1), the Program’s sole purpose is to serve Pennsylvania vegetable growers. To do that effectively, we need your input on a regular basis. While growers are welcome to communicate their needs at anytime to the Program by phone (717-694-3596), email (pvmrp@embarqmail.com) or regular mail (2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110), each fall we conduct our **Annual Grower Survey**

Please fill out the enclosed green sheet to help the Program’s Board meet your marketing and research needs for 2019. We especially need your response for the first question for our Specialty Crop Block Grant to help evaluate the effects of our grant activities.

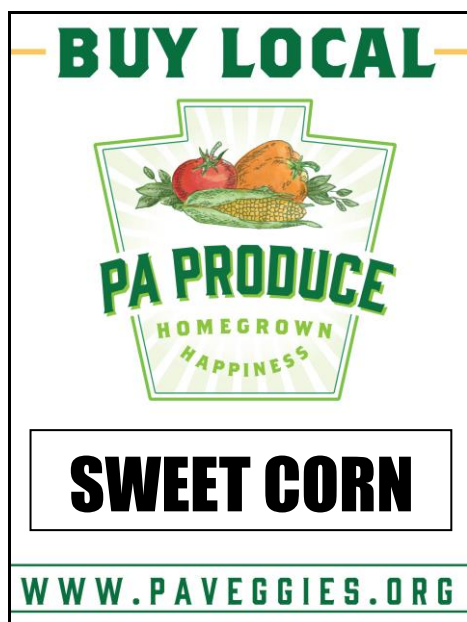
While your response anytime this fall is welcome, if you can return your survey by November 1, 2018, your responses can be compiled for review by the Board at its meeting scheduled for November 14, 2018, in Room 309 of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Building in Harrisburg starting at 12:00 noon.

Each comment submitted by growers is typed up for the Board members to review. The November meeting will be devoted to the annual election of officers, promotion plans for 2019, review of the research pre-proposals for 2019 and general business.

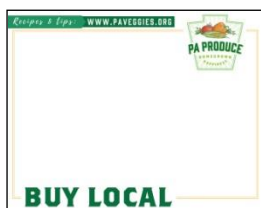
All meetings of the Board are public meetings that growers are welcome to attend. Any questions about the meeting or the Program should be referred to William Troxell at 717-694-3596 or pvmrp@embarqmail.com.

Point of Purchase Materials Still Available

The Program will continue to ship point-of-purchase items to growers through the fall although we do ask that all orders be submitted by November 30, 2018.



Supplies of banners, roadside signs, price cards, clip-on price cards, price stickers, brochures, “Fun and Healthy Facts” activity cards and how-to-use information cards are all in stock and ready to ship. Point-of-purchase materials were shipped to over 270 growers across the state so far this year.



The banner which contains the “PA Preferred” logo can only be distributed to growers who are licensed by the Department of Agriculture to use the “PA Preferred” logo.



Growers receive a credit equal to half of their assessment payment (up to a maximum of \$25) to order point-of-purchase items from the Program at no additional cost. Orders for point-of-purchase items for 2018 will be accepted until November 30. If you have misplaced your order form, contact the Program at 717-694-3596 or pvmrp@embarqmail.com

The Program is also offering tee-shirt grocery bags. A few cases imprinted with a “Fresh Local Vegetables” imprint on one side and the “PA Preferred” logo on other side are still available but the Program will be ordering a fresh supply of bags with the new PA Produce logo printed in green on the one side. These white, disposable (but recyclable) plastic grocery shopping bags are 12” x 7” x 23” and 18 microns thick. These are standard grocery bag size and heavier than the cheapest grocery bags. With care they can be used for corn, putting the silk end in first, but they are NOT heavy-duty bags designed specifically for corn. While not as cheap as generic “Thank You” bags, they focus attention on the Pennsylvania produce you are selling. The price for the bags in stock now is \$28 per 1,000 PLUS SHIPPING. Shipping is \$18 per case. They are also available at Harvest View Farm in Butler, and Laverne’s Produce Supplies in Martinsburg although they are \$30 per case at these locations. We expect the price of the new supply to be slightly more. Call the Program at 717-694-3596 if you are interested in purchasing the bags.

Growth with Rebranding

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Growers are encouraged to check out these directories to make sure their markets are listed and are listed correctly. Please note that the directories only contain information which you as a grower submitted to the Program this summer or in previous years. We would like to list all growers and their markets, so let us know if you were not listed. To obtain the forms to be listed in the directories, call the Program at 717-694-3596 or email us at pvmrp@embarqmail.com.

Other Produce Month Efforts

Over 200 Produce Month kits were shipped to the various produce auctions across the state where they were available to growers and to the non-grower marketers who purchase produce at the auctions while 66 kits were ordered from the Program by growers.

The Program again offered PA Produce Month point-of-purchase materials to supermarket chains in the state. Posters and price cards were requested for about 230 stores by Acme, Supervalu, Four Seasons Produce, Redner's Markets, and Lancaster Family-Owned Markets.

Mid-Atlantic Convention Opens January 29

The 2019 Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention will be held January 29 to 31 at the Hershey Lodge in Hershey. This three-day educational meeting also includes a large industry trade show. Many of the researchers whose projects are funded by the Program will be speaking in the educational sessions so it is a good opportunity for growers to hear them speak in person. All growers should plan to attend. Information is available at www.mafvc.org or 717-694-3596.

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Growers who want to accept the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks from senior citizens and WIC program recipients **MUST** be registered with the Farmers' Marketing Nutrition Program first. If you are not registered, prepare for next season by calling the FMNP office at 717-787-2940.

PA Preferred™ Point-of-Purchase Materials

Growers who are part of the PA Preferred program are eligible to receive free point-of-purchase materials from the Department of Agriculture – including small and large price paddles, plant

stakes, plant tags, stickers, seasonal calendars, roadside signs, banners posters, and more. For information on ordering these materials, call 717-705-9511 or go to www.papreferred.com.

The PA Preferred program is the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's branding program for all agricultural products produced in the state. The brand has been established permanently by the General Assembly so it will remain the same from administration to administration.

The Department continues to work at building recognition for the PA Preferred logo and brand with advertising, social media and other public relations efforts as funding allows.

Individual growers play a very important part in that process by being licensed to use the PA Preferred logo on their products and in their markets. In order to better protect the integrity of the PA Preferred brand, the Department does require individual producers to be licensed to use the PA Preferred logo on their products and in their markets. There is no cost for the license; it simply requires growers to certify that the products they use the logo on are actually produced in Pennsylvania.

Growers who are interested in ordering PA Preferred point-of-purchase materials like price paddles or who have any questions about becoming a member should contact Ashlee Dugan at 717-705-9511 or asdugan@pa.gov.



Grown in PA. It makes a difference.