



PENNSYLVANIA VEGETABLE MARKETING & RESEARCH PROGRAM

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Fresh Ideas

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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 VEGETABLES HIGHLIGHTED IN 2021

For the 16th year, the Vegetable Marketing and Research Program celebrated August as Pennsylvania Produce Month. While Produce Month focuses attention on August, the peak of the season, the Program used social media, the website, consumer emails and press releases to promote PA Veggies throughout the season. Actually, the social media campaign and website are promoting PA Veggies year around.

This year the Program kicked off the season's promotion with an interview on June 25 with Debra Pinkerton on the Good Day PA program on Harrisburg's WHTM abc27 television. Representing PA Veggies were Bill Troxell, the Program Executive Secretary, and Shannon Powers, press secretary for the PA Department of Agriculture. They referenced the upcoming PA Produce Month promotion in August, but emphasized that the local produce season was already well underway even then. The Program in turn shared the link to this television segment on the PA Veggies Facebook page to gain further exposure.

continued on page 2



Photo: abc 27 WHTM



PA VEGETABLES HIGHLIGHTED *(continued from page 1)*

The campaign in 2021 focused on the versatility of Pennsylvania vegetables and the numerous ways to support local farmers by promoting recipes full of in-season food and food storage tips to support local all year long. In collaboration with Taste Profit, we developed new ways to engage the Pennsylvania public and support farmers and growers in their marketing efforts. Through frequent emails to consumers highlighting what produce was coming into season and how to prepare it we increased consumer knowledge of the product to drive sales for local farmers and their markets. Emails were also sent to growers to highlight existing or new resources that they could use in their markets to boost sales and create more consumer loyalty. Our social media focused on highlighting grower's crops, their trials and successes and recommended recipes. Bringing consumers a constant stream of storage techniques, cooking tips and tried and true recipes from local chefs brought new followers and thousands of new interactions. This content based technique provided insightful blogs on cooking techniques, simple and fun recipes, a master salad guide for all seasons and more content focused marketing to provide real value to followers both growers and consumers alike.

Marketing Plan

In 2021 our plan covered a week by week analysis of what's in season and the best ways for consumers to get the most out of their local produce. Using recipes from the PA Vegetable cookbook which proved a successful lead magnet to the website, social content was easily created in a shareable format for easy distribution. From May through September—with a heavy focus in August for PA Vegetable month, our marketing team highlighted the farmers and their produce to encourage sales and loyalty to local farms and producers. Creating a public loyal to local will benefit farmers for years to come. Each year we plan to add to our planning to add new methods of outreach and more partners in PA that will aid in the goal of increasing sales of Pennsylvania vegetables.

Videos

The Taste Profit team developed 5 quick videos of practical recipes to use throughout the season to encourage the consumption of local vegetables though a master salad guide, a simple DIY dressing, *continued on page 3*

Key 2021 Campaign Highlights

Email Marketing

Grew email audience by 54% from 1,583 to 2,441 people
Sent 55 emails, which were opened by 9,000 people
These people clicked (engaged) with emails 1,849 times
On average, emails were opened by 26% of list, beating the industry average of 21%
On average, emails were clicked on by 23% of the list, beating the industry average of 2.6%

Social Media

Instagram reached 4,664 accounts that created nearly 2,000 interactions
Instagram audience grew by 5% to 1,767 people
Facebook audience grew by 2% to 1954
More social audience growth would be achieved with an ad budget added to campaign

Website

Between April and August, we had 26,624 web visitors, increasing each month
After making the cookbook a "lead magnet" to help build email list, we received 436 cookbook downloads
Average web visitor spent 67 seconds on the site

PR/Media Outreach

Landed 23 press placements
Estimated print circulation was nearly 160,000
Estimated reach (unique visitors) on digital was an astounding 2.9 billion, mostly fueled by a placement on Yahoo
Total number of people reached through earned media (excluding Yahoo) was still 862,000

Overall

Overall audience reached via all campaign efforts nearly 3 billion, and without Yahoo, 904,000
Direct audience (email and social) grew by 19% from 5,180 to 6,162

PA VEGETABLES HIGHLIGHTED *(continued from page 2)*

pickling recipes, how to use greens for wraps and a way to make the most of PA tomatoes year-round. The videos were embedded on the website for easy navigation, added to YouTube and shared through social media. The video for the best ways to save corn through freezing techniques received the most views and shares proving to be the most relevant content for mid-late summer while everyone is enjoying summer corn. The best distribution was on Facebook and YouTube with more shares than any other video. These videos are website content that can be used annually to add on to marketing efforts for next year and the years to come.

Blogs

The age of content driven marketing is here and we met this age with a focus on well researched blogs to establish the PA Veggies site as a source of reliable and interesting content related to agriculture. From a deep dive into the family of brassicas which gained the attention of Table Magazine to the basics of fermentation, these blogs drove site visits and shares on the website and social media. Our PR relations landed 23 press placements and our estimated reach was 2.9 billion through our placements including the placement on Yahoo.

Additional Resources for 2022:

In 2022 we plan to expand our efforts through additional focus on social media engagement and partnering with various Pennsylvania associations like the PA Restaurant and Lodging Association to encourage the consumption of PA Produce in establishments. Hoping that the COVID-19 crisis will subside by then, we have plans to engage in culinary events with local chefs and producers and have a live panel for consumer engagement. More funds will be allotted to graphic design purposes for content that can be shared and printed at home.

Social Media:

As the world of social media grows with over 3 billion annual users of Facebook and Instagram, PA Veggies increased the amount of original content this year to drive new follows and over 2,000 interactions. The social media platforms were used to share and engage with growers and consumers

by providing support, encouragement and recipes. Cross posting was used for re-shares and original content. Individual time was given to both platforms as many growers had one type of social media but not the other. More time and budget will be allotted in 2022 to increase social media efforts as the platforms continue to grow and as more consumers begin to explore these platforms for sales and marketing.

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 enclosed Annual Grower Survey.

Please fill out the enclosed survey to help the Program's Board meet your marketing and research needs for 2022. We especially need your response for the first question for our Specialty Crop Block Grant to help evaluate the effects of our grant activities.

Each comment submitted by growers is typed up for the Board members to review. The November 8 meeting will be devoted to the annual election of officers, review of the research pre-proposals for 2022, promotion plans for 2022 and general business. All meetings of the Board are public meetings in which growers are welcome to participate. Any questions about the meetings or about the Program should be referred to William Troxell at 717-694-3596 or pvmrp@embarqmail.com.

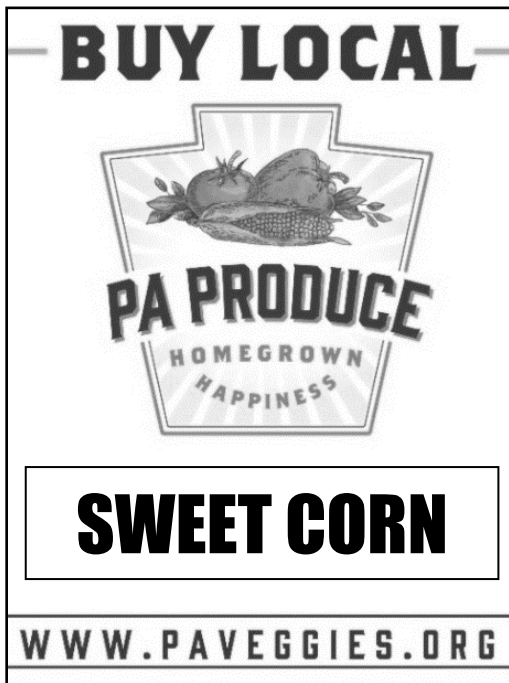
DIRECTORIES MAINTAINED

The four searchable Directories launched two years ago on the Program's PAVeggies.org website – Farms & Markets, CSAs, Wholesale Growers and Produce Auctions – are up and running and being updated as we receive requests for updates. Let us know if you are not listed and want to be listed.

PLENTY OF POINT OF PURCHASE MATERIALS AVAILABLE

With the aid of a matching grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, this year the Program was able to purchase new supplies of several of its point-of-purchase items – including roadside signs, crop stickers for the roadside signs, dry-erase price cards, clip-on price cards, and price stickers. With the purchase of dry-erase price paddles, Fun-and-Healthy-Facts student activity cards and How-to-Use information cards with a similar matching grant last year, the Program has a good supply of point-of-purchase materials – all updated to use the Program’s PA Produce logo/branding image.

at no additional cost. Order forms are available on the PAVeggies.org website or by calling 717-694-3596.



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 January 31, 2022.

Supplies of banners, roadside signs, price cards, price paddles, 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 about 220 growers across the state so far this year.

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

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR EMAIL

If you use email, PLEASE include your email address on your Assessment Statement Form or email us at pvmrp@embarqmail.com. The Program is planning to do more of its communications to growers by email which saves the Program greatly in postage and printing costs.

CONSIDER JOINING THE PA PREFERRED PROGRAM

Growers who are part of the PA Preferred program are eligible to receive point-of-purchase materials from the Department of Agriculture. For information on becoming a member of the PA

Preferred program, contact Sherry Smith, PA Preferred Program Coordinator, at 717-787-6901 or go to www.papreferred.com.



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’ Market Nutrition Program first. If you are not registered, prepare for next season by calling the FMNP office at 717-787-2940.



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2021 Annual Grower Survey

Please return by December 31, 2021.

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Board needs your input in order to meet your needs. The Program's sole reason for existence is to serve the Pennsylvania vegetable industry and its growers. Each comment received is typed up for all the Board members to review. Use additional sheets if necessary. We very much appreciate your responses. If you would rather fill this survey out online, visit the Program's website at www.paveggies.org under Farmer Resources.

GENERAL

For our Specialty Crop Block Grants, we have been asked to document the effect of the Program's promotion's efforts. While we can count newspaper articles printed, participating markets, etc., the ultimate goal of all our efforts is to increase your sales. Therefore we are asking you to indicate whether your sales (fresh market retail and wholesale sales) have increased or decreased. This information will be kept confidential and we do not want dollar figures. If you have actual sales figures on which to base your answer, please use those but your best estimate is fine also. We will be asking this question again over the coming years so we can compare the results from year to year for our grant reports and future grant applications. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

1. Compared to 2020 has your sales volume this year:

- decreased
- remained about the same
- increased 1 to 5%
- increased 5% or more

2. While we expect you are constantly making minor changes in your operation to increase sales, did you make major improvements or changes to your operation this year that you believe significantly increased your sales (built new market facilities, attended an additional farmers' market, started a CSA, etc.)?

- yes no

FOOD SAFETY

We have been asking several questions for the past several years in an effort to gauge what percentage of our growers are being asked by their buyers to implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and how those percentages are changing. We are also asking questions relative to the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

3. Have any of your buyers told you that they will require a third-party audit for Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) or other food safety standards?

- yes no

4. Have you completed a third-party audit for Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) or other food safety standards?

- yes no

5. For the 2022 growing season, do you plan to pursue a third-party audit for Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) or other food safety standards?

- yes no

6. Have any of your buyers told you that they will require a certificate of compliance with FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) rules and regulations?

- yes no

7. Is your operation exempt from the FSMA Produce Rule requirements?

- yes no not sure

8. Please indicate the range of your produce (vegetable and fruit) sales:

- less than \$25,000 \$25,000 to \$250,000 \$250,000 to \$500,000 over \$500,000

9. Please list your top five produce (vegetable and fruit) crops and indicate whether they are fresh or processing.

PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE BACK SIDE OF THIS SURVEY ALSO.

RESEARCH

10. Are there any significant research needs that you noticed this season that you feel the Program should address?

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

11. What are your biggest marketing struggles? What could the Program do to help you most in the area of marketing and promotion?

12. Do you have suggestions for new point-of-purchase items the Program could offer?

13. Did your retail market participate in the 2021 PA Produce Month promotion?

yes no do not operate a retail market

14. If you did participate in the PA Produce Month promotion, how did your market participate?

15. Check all the Produce Month "Toolkit" website resources you have used?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> "PA Veggies Cookbook" | <input type="checkbox"/> "How to" content |
| <input type="checkbox"/> graphics | <input type="checkbox"/> social reposts (sharing your content on our platform) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> videos | <input type="checkbox"/> emails |
| <input type="checkbox"/> blogs | <input type="checkbox"/> press release templates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recipes | <input type="checkbox"/> marketing how-tos and checklists |

16. Do you use social media to advertise your market?

yes no

17. Do you use email to advertise your market?

yes no

18. Have you used any graphics or other resources from the Program's website in your social media and/or email campaigns?

yes no

20. If someone other than yourself handles your marketing, social media, merchandising or graphic design, please provide their name and email address below so we can communicate with them about the Program's resources for these marketing activities.

Your Name _____ Your Farm _____

Additional Person(s) to Add to Marketing Contact List

Name _____ Email _____

Name _____ Email _____

21. If you have any additional questions or comments about marketing, please include them here:

22. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for the Board?

Please include your name and address if you would like a response.