

PROJECT TITLE

FINAL REPORT

Meet Me at the Market

PROJECT IMPACT AND FINDINGS

The Alaska Division of Agriculture increased communication, assisted with market visibility, and worked to build consumer awareness for locating Alaska Grown specialty crops through a marketing promotion program at farmer's markets across the state. Staff advertised that they would be attending various markets around the state with promotional giveaways. At each participating market, the Division of Agriculture set up a booth under our Alaska Grown tent, where we handed out marketing materials in return for the completion of a survey. According to the results of the surveys from the markets, almost 50% of consumers heard about the existence of the market through word of mouth. This indicates that the markets have the potential to increase advertising impact. Additionally, nearly everyone surveyed stated that they came to the farmers market for Alaska Grown produce, and over half of the people that indicated they also shopped at the grocery store said that it was because they couldn't find their desired local produce. Through staff trips to retail outlets, we found that hosting a large produce manager meeting was very effective in brainstorming more ideas. We were unsuccessful at determining either baseline sales data or increased sales data for farmers markets, because none of the market managers received that information from their vendors.

2018 Season Two update:

The Alaska Division of Agriculture continued to build increased communication, assist, with market visibility, and worked to build consumer awareness for locating Alaska Grown specialty crop through this marketing promotion program at farmers markets all around the state. Staff continued to visit farmers markets all around the state with promotional giveaways and set up a booth with the Alaska grown tent to give out marketing materials in return for a completed survey, that we had revised based on the results of the previous year. We also created an average time and money spent board for people to mark so we could get baseline data on the money spent on Alaska Grown products. According to the results of the surveys taken this summer, almost 70% of consumers heard about farmers markets by word of mouth, which continues to show that markets can continue to increase advertising impact with other forms of advertisement. We did not ask about shopping in grocery stores this year. We received base line data for sales with our survey board, but no specific numbers on sales data from the vendors because they do not collect this data.

BENEFICIARIES

With eleven markets signed up in the Meet Me at the Market promotion we estimated 68 (~70%) to be specialty crop vendors. At least 438 customers benefited through increased awareness of Alaska Grown specialty crops. Market managers indicated that the promotional bags we gave out increased customer loyalty and hence return rate. We expect the remaining 34 markets that did not participate were also beneficiaries to a lesser degree since some advertising was about visiting farmer's markets in general. We

also estimate that our retail specialty crop sales were positively impacted with increased attention to Alaska Grown specialty crops during the summer.

2018 Season Update:

Thirteen markets were attended over the summer season. At least 874 customers benefited through increased awareness of Alaska Grown specialty crops. Market managers indicated that our presence, in addition to promotional bags handed out, increased customer awareness and loyalty, as well as encouraged customers to return more frequently.

ACTIVITIES PERFORMED

OBJECTIVES:

#	Objective	Completed?	
		Yes	No*
1	To increase the communication of specialty crop producers who are part of our Alaska Grown marketing program	X	
2	To assist with market visibility in farmers market sectors	X	
3	To build consumer awareness for locating Alaska Grown specialty crops in the market place	X	

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Accomplishment	Relevance to Objective, Outcome, and/or Indicator
Delivered produce marketing supplies to market managers and individual producers at farmers markets.	Objectives 1, 2 and 3 – helped to increase the visibility of Alaska Grown produce and communicate with producers.
Made twenty Facebook posts about farmers markets in the Meet Me at the Market promotion, and 31 promoting Farmers Markets in general, with an average view of 2,120 per post (the Alaska Grown page has 57,577 followers)	Objective 2 and 3 – the information released always included the date and times of the market.
Conducted 874 individual surveys with market-goers at thirteen different markets about why they go to the farmers’ market. This information was given back to the market managers.	Objective 1 and 3 – this information will help farmers markets be more attuned to their consumer base, as well as wider trends.

CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENTS:

Challenge	Corrective Actions
Not all the markets responded to our attempts to both update their information and to include as many markets as possible. This created several scheduling issues.	We made multiple phone calls to each market, leaving detailed phone messages whenever possible.
We were unable to collect sales data from any of the participating markets because this in not information that any of the market managers collected from their vendors	We instead collected alternative sales data directly from consumers with our survey board. We asked market managers how much time and money they would spend there total, and conducted customer counts, to get an average \$/person spending amount.
Smaller amount of Staff and the geographical issues of attending every market in the state were still a challenge faced by the division in the 2018 market season.	We went ahead and scheduled as many markets as we could, taking advantage of other staff in remote communities to assist us when possible.
We also didn't have the staff capacity and skills that we expected to handle the advertising component. As such, we were unable to utilize the advertising channels we wrote into the project.	We took advantage of the advertising we had time for which was social media, Edible Alaska, and the website.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Based on our results from the 2016 Meet Me at the Market promotion, we found that market managers were unreliable at returning the data that we needed. We found that the Division needed to play a much more integral role to the promotion to get the most feedback. Sending Division staff to the market allowed us to collect more information. We also provided an incentive to get more people to participate in our survey.

We found from the 2016 promotion that state-wide advertising for the promotion was ineffective. In the post-promotion survey for 2017, many managers stated that advertising mostly through Facebook was also ineffective. In the future, we will incorporate Facebook Live and Instagram as possible advertising strategies, as well as adding to our pre-survey outreach to find out from managers where they think the best local advertising for their area would be.

2018 Season Update: Based on our results from the 2018 Meet Me at the Market promotion, we found that market managers have greatly improved their delivery methods for returning the data we needed. We found that the Division still needed to play an integral role in promotion to get the most feedback, but we could also rely on the larger, long establish markets to have the customer base already in place. We provided an incentive to encourage more people to participate in the survey and found that it worked very well.

CONTINUATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Market managers communicated that they'd like to take ownership of this promotion even after the grant ended. The survey responses for each market and an average of all the markets were returned to market managers for them to learn from.

OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS/ SUB-INDICATORS

OUTCOME MEASURES

- Outcome 1:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales

OUTCOME INDICATORS

Outcome 1, Indicator 1.

Sales increased from \$TBD to \$TBD and by 5 percent, as result of marketing and/or promotion activities
Unable to determine sales increase.

DATA COLLECTION

At each participating market, the Division of Agriculture set up a booth under our Alaska Grown tent, where we handed out marketing materials. All of the marketing materials were supplied by the Division of Agriculture. Between 50 to 100 Alaska Grown/Alaska Farmers Market bags were brought to each market event depending on predicted attendance given to us by market managers, as well as observed attendance at the previous season by Alaska Grown representatives for Meet Me at the Market. The bags were only handed out to those who completed the consumer survey. Additionally, we handed out Alaska Grown Stickers, pens, temporary tattoos, and pencils, as well as copies of multiple issues of Edible Alaska. The Meet Me at the Market promotion ran from June through September.

2017 Report: Independently, the Division also created a new, user-friendly and easier to find Alaska Grown webpage, "buyalaskagrown.com", which had up-to-date information on all Alaskan farmers' markets. Additionally, the Division updated our publicly available online map detailing the location and contact information for all the farmers markets in the state.

To assist with the market visibility in the retail sector, the Division delivered marketing supplies to all retail store in the state known to carry Alaska Grown produce. When marketing supplies were delivered, staff talked to all the produce managers, asking what specific Alaska Grown produce they carry, were there any issue of quality, and how could the Division assist them in getting more Alaska Grown produce into their stores. The consensus from the produce managers was that there were no issues with the quality of incoming produce, but that any advice on how to expand the market for Alaska Grown produce would have to come from higher up with the companies. We also found that hosting a large produce manager meeting was an effective way to collect information about the retail market and brainstorm ways to make Alaska Grown produce more visible state-wide.

Which describes you best?

- Local Visitor

What are you buying today?

Is there a specific item you come to this market for?

How did you learn about this farmers market?

- Social media Word of mouth Radio Drove by 2018 Alaska Farmers Market Guide

Why do you come to the farmers market?

- Alaska Grown products Fun Live music Food vendors Made in Alaska products
 Support local economy Chef/Food Demonstrations Other: _____

How often do you shop at the farmers market?

- Rarely Monthly Weekly

What would encourage you to visit the farmers market more often?

- More frequent market days Lower prices More variety More convenient locations

