



MICHIGAN FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

Michiganders learn from New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference

By Chris Reisinger

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MSU/MIFMA provided financial assistance to help several Michigan farmers' market folks participate in the New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference with the idea that they could bring back information and training to Michigan. Dan Keane, Gary Briggs and Chris Reisinger attended the meeting with our support.

Many small farmers met in a little town called Owego, New York for the Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference, January 18-20, 2006. The New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Association represents New York farmers who sell their products directly to the consumer. The Association is dedicated to helping farmers improve their direct-marketing skills through education and networking.

This year's conference had a diverse range of topics. The overall theme for the conference was educating our consumers on the economic and health benefits of local food. The conference speakers gave lots of information on how farmers can improve their marketing and how farmers' markets can improve attendance. Topics for the workshops included: food safety, economic health for farmers and communities, professional farmers' market training (organized by the Farmers' Market Federation of New York), and building healthy farm families.

The keynote speaker for the event



Many consumers view farmers' markets as a great source of local food but also a great resource for information on healthy eating.

was MSU's own Michael Hamm, C. S. Mott Professor of Sustainable Agriculture and head of the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems. Dr. Hamm's address focused on the interconnections between the health and well-being of farms, communities, the environment, and of people.

The conference was a great opportunity to see what farmers' markets are doing in other states and to be able to network with other farmers. It was also valuable to see what other organizations and Extension were doing for the small farmers in those communities. It was rewarding to see the different perspectives on local agriculture.

Some of the trends that have been observed in New York are: local has become the new organic, there is an increasing demand for local meats and cheeses, and there is increasing desire on healthy eating and using local farmers' markets as a source of information on healthy eating.

I felt the conference was very rewarding and enlightening. It offered me new perspectives to help me in both my extension career and farming practices. I have found that being able to talk to other farmers to hear what they are doing and going through always gives me more information and encouragement for local agriculture.

Save the Date: April 20, 2007

On Friday, April 20th 2007, MIFMA will hold its kick-off celebration in the greater-Lansing area. Please plan on joining us to learn more about becoming a MIFMA member and supporting Michigan farmers' markets!

For more information contact Dru Montri, MIFMA project manager, at (517) 432-3381 or dnmontri@msu.edu.

What's Happening?

• **January - March, 2007:**
CRAFT Sustainable Farmer Training Program, Thursdays from 6-9 pm, Grand Rapids, MI. (616) 451-3051 or www.sustainableag-wm.org/craft/farming-course.htm

• **February 8, 2007:**
Seeds of Prosperity: A Policy-Making Event, Lansing, MI. (231) 941-6584 ext. 21 or www.mlui.org/sop

• **February 26, 2007:**
Retail Marketing and Sales, Traverse City, MI. (517-432-4608) or product@msu.edu

• **February 28, 2007:**
Retail Marketing and Sales, Frankenmuth, MI. (517) 432-4608 or product@msu.edu

• **March 1, 2007:**
Retail Marketing and Sales, Royal Oak, MI. (517) 432-4608 or product@msu.edu

• **March 2, 2007:**
Retail Marketing and Sales, Kalamazoo, MI. (517-432-4608) or product@msu.edu

• **April 20, 2007:**
Michigan Farmers' Market Association (MIFMA) Membership Kick-Off Meeting. (517) 432-3381 or dnmontri@msu.edu

For more information regarding any of these listings, call the MIFMA office at 517-432-0712.

The Michigan Farmers' Market Association advances farmers' markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products. Visit www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu to learn more about MIFMA.

Michigan Food & Farming Systems received a grant from the Project for Public Spaces to start MIFMA. Learn more at www.mifffs.org.



Michigan Food & Farming Systems-MIFFS
Bringing Farmers & Communities Together