MARKETING LOCAL: COMMUNICATING THE PRODUCTION STORY

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11 regional distributors, aggregators, & food entrepreneurs from across the U.S.

Subject selection was based on three criteria:

1) diversity of geography, scale & business models;
2) emphasis on wholesale transactions; and
3) models characteristic of values-based supply chains.
Marketing Challenges

- **Logistical compatibility with the wholesale market**
  - Matching supply & demand
  - Food safety & post-harvest handling practices
  - Pack-size, grading, volume, consistency & delivery
  - Pricing

- **Communicating the production story & values through an extended supply chain**
Matching supply & demand

- Pre-season planning
- Aggregation of product from small & mid-scale growers
- Consistency & volume of supply
- Fluctuation of grocery prices
- Discrepancies between real & stated demand
Food safety

- Few on-farm food safety regulations for fresh produce.

- **However**, wholesale buyers are increasingly seeking food safety certification & traceability, the result:
  - Emergence of many buyer-driven production & post-harvest handling standards
  - Use of national certification, GAP/GHP (Good Agricultural/Handling Practices)
  - Alternatives being developed by CAFF, Family Farmed, University of Minnesota, International Food Safety Institute & others

- Inability/reluctance of small growers to become certified.
Pack-size, grading, volume & deliveries

- Pack-size trainings help growers ensure product is compatible with wholesale markets.

- Centralized pack houses help:
  - ensure more consistent grading & quality
  - better utilize whole harvest
  - aggregate small farm product for wholesale volumes
  - Facilitate efficient hauling & timely deliveries
Communicating the production story

- Outreach
  Small growers conduct outreach to consumers through farmers’ markets and in-store demonstrations.

- Packaging & Branding
  Communicate the production story through packaging, online farmer profiles & point of sale merchandising.
Recap on marketing barriers & innovations

- Achieving compatibility with the wholesale market
  - Pre-season planning among growers & with buyers
  - Adoption of Food safety & handling practices
  - Centralized pack-houses for better tracking & standardization

- Communicating the production story & values through an extended supply chain
  - Grower outreach & visibility
  - Packaging & branding
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