

Selling Farm Products During the Pandemic and Beyond

Local farm products that might normally be sold through distributors, brokers, wholesalers, cooperatives, or other marketing channels may not reach consumers who are following social distancing practices and avoiding grocery stores and other markets during this COVID-19 pandemic. Producers may need to explore other marketing channels and sales platforms to avoid income loss as social distancing restrictions remain in place. As the 2020 growing season gets underway, farmers can help prepare for the possibility that consumers will continue to avoid traditional markets by incorporating these channels and platforms into their plans.

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) is helping farmers and producers navigate this challenging period in a variety of ways. CCE staff across the state are linking farms with continually updated agriculture resources available through Cornell University and other trusted sources, including guidance on safe product handling and shipping, and best practices for in-person and online sales. CCE Erie's in-person marketing workshop, originally scheduled for April 2nd, will now be offered virtually with a date or dates to be announced soon (to be posted on the CCE Erie website, erie.cce.cornell.edu) and with an additional focus on navigating online sales and reaching potential customers through social marketing and other channels.

CCE St. Lawrence is offering three webinars in April: Social Media for Farmers and Food Entrepreneurs; E-Commerce 101; and Get Seen On-line: Ten Tips for Your Business. Participation is open to anyone state-wide with dates to be announced soon which will be posted on the CCE Erie website, erie.cce.cornell.edu.

Farmers considering or expanding direct marketing and on-line sales may be interested in checking into a variety of direct-to-market and sales platforms. These will be explored further during the CCE Marketing workshop:

- [Meat Suite](#)
- [Produce Peddlers](#)
- [Barn2Door](#)
- [FarmDrop](#)
- [GrazeCart](#)
- [Harvie](#)

- [Local Food Marketplace](#)
- [Open Food Network](#)
- [WhatsGood](#)
- & Others

This is not a complete list of available online platforms, and CCE Erie does not endorse any of the sites listed.

The TasteNY Market at the Western New York Welcome Center and other TasteNY venues across the state are working with local farms to expand marketing options. As part of one strategy this growing season, area farms will be able to sell agricultural products through a farmers market stand staffed by the CCE Erie Taste NY Market team at the WNY Welcome Center, without having to commit their own limited time and staff to another farmers market. Interested farmers may contact Renee Day, Taste NY Market Manager, at the TasteNY Market at 716-773-0970.

In addition to visiting the TasteNY Market at the WNY Welcome Center, consumers interested in locally grown food may wish to join one or more of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations in the region. Many CSAs are using this pause period to connect with their current members and expand their member base. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service provides a [searchable CSA directory](#). Area CSA farms should check to be sure they are listed.

Cornell Cooperative Extension offices across New York State, are helping farms participate in online farmers' markets, curbside produce pickup venues, local public markets, marketing directories, and grocery store partnerships as drop sites for farmers. CCE Erie staff can also help with the technology side of the process for farms that would like remote assistance with setting up web pages or social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram. Farmers or others interested in local food availability and alternative marketing strategies can visit the [CCE Erie web page](#), or contact John Whitney at jrw44@cornell.edu. Messages may also be sent through the [CCE Erie Facebook page](#).

About Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County (CCE Erie): CCE Erie helps residents and communities put knowledge to work to solve real-life problems with research based solutions in Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Nutrition, and Consumer Horticulture.

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