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## Press Release

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### **Farmers Markets Should Target Afternoon Commuters**

Recent surveys indicate that direct marketing has resulted in marked increases for value-added agriculture. Farmers may benefit further by targeting consumers looking for produce on their commute home.

Farmers markets and farm stands generally have operating hours that appeal to early risers, said Rob Holland, University of Tennessee Extension specialist with the *Center for Profitable Agriculture*.

“These hours appeal to some consumers. They are ideal for products that are fresh-picked during cool mornings rather than the heat of the day, and they are well-suited for traditional Saturday morning markets,” said Holland. “However, during the work week, most commuters do not want to buy fresh produce in the morning, which they will then have to store at work during the day.”

That means there could be a niche-market potential in some locations for farm-fresh produce targeting afternoon commuters heading home. “Farmers selling direct to consumers should remember to target specific consumers based on their desires and buying preferences,” said Holland.

Holland adds that the latest Agricultural Census shows that the number of Tennessee farmers participating in direct farm sales, including farmers markets and farm stands, increased by 698 between 1997 and 2002. “This was a 25.9 percent increase in the number of Tennessee farmers involved in value-added agriculture. This rise was paralleled by a 34 percent increase in the total value of agricultural products sold directly to consumers,” he said.

In 1997, the value of agricultural products sold by Tennessee farmers direct to consumers was \$8.3 million, while in 2002, that amount climbed to \$11.2 million.

For more information on direct farm sales or value-added agriculture, contact your county’s UT Extension agent.

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