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Farmers markets, auctions respond to COVID-19

By Matt Ernst, independent writer

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Coming up

May 28 - COVID-19 & Farmers Markets Update Webinar, 1 p.m. EDT. A multi-organization team including The Food Connection, the UK Center for Crop Diversification, Community Farm Alliance, and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture will give updates since their last webinar on policies and recommendations related to Farmers Markets in Kentucky. [Click here](#) to register.

May 31 - "Hands-on" Tomato Trellising with Pest and Disease Management Tips. This virtual "hands-on" workshop is designed for beginners learning how to trellis and care for tomatoes in high tunnels and/or out in the fields. Organized by Future Harvest. Free. For details and to register, [click here](#).

Produce growers selling direct to customers in Kentucky are keeping in step with new operation guidelines and changing customer buying patterns emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social distancing at farmers markets, with vendors selecting or pre-packing purchases, is now standard practice. Vendors have adopted different forms of pre-ordering and delivery to meet market guidelines and customer preferences.

Mark and Velvet Henkle launched an online store to offer pre-ordering for pickup at the Lexington Farmers Market or at their Nicholasville farm, Henkle's Herbs and Heirlooms. "I realized that people were going to want items, and they were going to want to limit contact," said Mark, who said nearly all the farm's 2019 sales came at the farmers market.

The Henkles use the Square platform to process orders for their store. Customers make the order online and select one of three pickup options. Mark said there are additional costs: Square transaction fees, and more time emailing and communicating with customers. But the change has helped maintain sales to existing market customers and even attracted new buyers. "I don't know if we'll offer some kind of CSA this season, but I don't see the pre-ordering going away. People like it," Mark said.

Near Lawrenceburg, Rough Draft Farmstead had planned to stop offering its CSA this season to focus on selling mainly through the Lexington Farmers Market. As the coronavirus pandemic unfolded in early March, Jesse Frost and his wife, Hannah Crabtree, decided

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Check out these COVID-19 resources related to farmers markets

A variety of resources are available for farmers markets as market managers and vendors continue to cope with guidelines and restrictions in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. A new webinar, COVID-19 and Farmers Market Update, is scheduled for May 28th at 1 p.m. EDT. The Food Connection, the UK Center for Crop Diversification, Community Farm Alliance, and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture will give updates since their last webinar on policies and recommendations related to Farmers Markets. Details and registration information are available at <https://www.uky.edu/ccd/COVIDFM2>. Also, social media resources (see example at right) from the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, outlining how to be a good farmers market citizen, are available [here](#). A fact sheet, Social Distancing at Farmers Markets: Practical Tips for Managers and Vendors (CCD-FS-16), is available on the CCD website at <https://www.uky.edu/ccd/FM-COVID-19-Tips>.



In addition, a recording of the initial COVID-19 and Farmers Markets webinar, along with additional resources, is available on the CCD website at <https://www.uky.edu/ccd/covidfm1>. And be sure to check out the many resources available from the Farmers Market Coalition at <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/>.

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to relaunch their CSA. “Shares sold out in less than a month, and we have a waitlist,” Jesse said. “I’ve never seen a CSA that I’ve been involved with sell out that fast.”

They distribute CSA shares at the farmers market, where they also sell grab-and-go veggie bags, which are pre-packaged to limit contact. “They’re like a mini CSA share,” Jesse said. “They have been wholly successful. They are salad-focused. We started out with an early-season \$10 bag and moved to offer more items in a \$15 bag.”

Both Frost and Henkle said customer preferences, as much if not more than new guidelines and requirements for market sales, are driving their farm’s changes. “The new customers we’re seeing are often immune-compromised,” said Frost. “They want a quick and easy option; they don’t want to hang out at the farmers market. The grab and go veggie bags seem to satisfy them. They come, I hand it to them with gloves on and a mask, and they leave.”

Mark Henkle said his new at-farm pickup is also meeting customer desires to limit group contact.



Photo by Kelly Jackson, Christian County horticulture extension agent

Fairview Produce Auction in Pembroke, KY, is displaying banners at its main entrance and on its auctioneer stand to provide information about COVID-19 safeguards.

“Our road dead ends in a circle, so it’s been ideal. Customers let me know they’re coming, I pull up in a golf cart, put their purchase in the back of their car and they can take off,” he explained. “Doing this, and the online purchases for farmers

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KY Hort Council survey will help state's small fruit growers

By Cindy Finneseth, Executive Director,
Kentucky Horticulture Council

The Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) is conducting an inventory of small fruits production in Kentucky. Small fruit crops are edible fruits produced on small perennial plants, including crops like blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries.

Producers responding to this survey are helping KHC advocate for the small fruits industry in Kentucky, influence programming and research decisions, and educate others about the importance of specialty crop production in Kentucky. The survey should take less than 20 minutes to finish and provides really valuable information. In addition, growers completing the survey will be entered into a quarterly \$50 gift card drawing.

**Kentucky
Small Fruits
Initiative**



KHC looking to hire Direct Marketing Program Manager

Do you know someone interested in direct marketing of horticulture products? Someone who is passionate about produce and ornamentals? The Kentucky Horticulture Council is hiring! The KHC is looking to quickly hire a full-time Direct Marketing Program Manager to work directly with specialty crop growers and business owners in Kentucky who sell directly to consumers through marketing channels like local farmers markets, CSAs, agritourism venues, and farm markets. This is a grant-funded multi-year position working from a home office and has state-wide responsibilities. The job announcement is available online at <https://kyhortcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DM-PM-Job-Description.pdf>.

This survey is part of a Kentucky Specialty Crop Block Grant project. In 2020, growers are being surveyed about farming operations and small fruit production practices. In 2021, buyers are being surveyed about purchasing needs and intentions. As often as possible, interested growers will be connected with interested buyers to expand market opportunities. In 2022, several reports will be issued detailing the small fruit industry in Kentucky.

All personal information from this survey will be

kept confidential and reports will be aggregated to ensure anonymity. [**Note:** if you give explicit permission, only your contact information and crops being produced will be shared with potential buyers.]

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KYSmallFruitsSurvey>

Note: If you completed a paper copy at a recent conference, you don't need to complete the electronic version – your responses have been recorded and you have been entered into the contest.

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market pickup have been very time consuming, but people have been very responsive.”

At the farmers markets that have selected to open, market managers and vendors are offering signage and other directions to remind customers to keep 6-foot spacing and follow other CDC guidelines and local requirements.

Kentucky's produce auctions have also added signage and made adjustments to meet social dis-

tancing requirements. “We changed the layout of the auction floor and move lots in and out more, to limit movement of the buyers as much as possible,” said Joseph Hoover, general manager at the Fairview Produce Auction.

Hoover noted strong demand for auction products, and he said the auction will continue to operate according to social distancing guidelines. “If there's a silver lining in all this, it almost seems like the buy local movement has really had a kick-start.”

Table 1. 2019 Ky Grower NAP Tree Fruit Retail Prices

Crop	Sales Unit	2019 Avg.	Highest	Lowest	Per lb highest	Per lb lowest
Apple	bu	66.00	168.00	27.00	4.00	.64
Pear	bu	90.00	100.00	60.00	2.00	1.20
Peach	bu	97.00	192.00	60.00	3.84	1.20
Pawpaw	lb	2.25	-	-	2.50	2.00
Plum	½ bu	50.60	72.00	29.00	2.49	1.00

Table 2. 2017-2019 Ky Grower NAP Tree Fruit Retail Prices

Crop	Sales Unit	2019 Avg.	2018 Avg.	2017 Avg.	2019 Per lb. Avg.	2018 Per lb. Avg.	2017 Per lb. Avg.
Apple	bu	66.00	56.70	64.30	1.57	1.35	1.55
Pear	bu	90.00	95.40	84.60	1.80	1.90	1.69
Peach	bu	97.00	88.50	97.75	1.94	1.75	1.95
Pawpaw	lb	2.25	2.65	2.00	2.25	2.65	2.00
Nectarine	bu	-	-	75.75	-	-	1.50
Plum	½ bu	50.60	58.00	66.70	1.75	2.00	2.30

Kentucky average retail fruit prices help growers with NAP

By Chris Smigell, UK Extension Associate for Small Fruits & Vegetables, and John Strang, UK Extension Fruit Specialist

Kentucky growers that participate in the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) are required to provide their crop prices and yields from prior years to their Farm Service Agency office (FSA) to calculate the assistance funding that they receive. If a grower does not supply these prices, national wholesale prices are used, which are substantially lower than what Kentucky growers typically receive in the retail market. The Kentucky State FSA office accepts average Kentucky fruit prices provided by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service if a Kentucky grower does not have historical price records. Below are the results of Kentucky grower on-farm market and farmers market prices for 2019.

The prices shown in tables 1 and 4 are retail market fruit prices combining grower on-farm market and farmers market prices.* These tables list average tree and small fruit prices, as well as the highest and lowest prices reported as prices per-unit and per-pound. Tables 2 and 5 show average tree and small fruit prices per-unit and per-pound, allowing comparisons between 2019, 2018 and 2017. Table 3 shows average, low and high apple cider prices for 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016. Generally, the highest prices were obtained from Lexington, Louisville and Bowling Green area farmers market reports. The 2019 average prices increased

Table 3. Ky NAP Apple Cider Prices - 2016-19

Cider	2019	2018	2017	2016
Avg./Gal	8.10	8.55	10.10	7.70
Highest Price	8.50	12.00	16.00	9.00
Lowest Price	7.50	6.85	6.85	6.00

Table 4. 2019 Ky Grower NAP Small Fruit Retail Prices

Crop	2019 Per Qt Avg.	Highest	Lowest	2019 Per lb. Avg.	Per lb highest	Per lb lowest
Blackberry	8.81	12.00	5.00	5.88	8.00	3.33
Blueberry	9.36	12.50	6.00	4.93	6.58	3.16
Raspberry (red/black)	12.00	16.00	10.00	8.00	10.67	6.67
Strawberry Matted Row	5.80	12.00	5.00	3.86	8.00	3.33
Strawberry Platiculture	4.95	7.00	3.50	3.30	4.67	2.33

Table 5. Ky Grower NAP Small Fruit Retail Prices from 2017 - 2019

Crop	2019 Per Qt Avg.	2018 Per Qt Avg.	2017 Per Qt Avg.	2019 Per lb. Avg.	2018 Per lb. Avg.	2017 Per lb. Avg.
Blackberry	8.81	7.30	7.55	5.88	4.85	4.80
Blueberry	9.36	8.95	8.70	4.93	4.70	4.70
Raspberry (red/black)	12.00	10.45	8.35	8.00	6.95	5.55
Strawberry Matted Row	5.80	5.40	5.20	3.86	3.60	3.45
Strawberry Platiculture	4.95	6.15	4.25	3.30	4.10	2.80

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UK welcomes floriculture and greenhouse specialist Owen

The University of Kentucky Department of Horticulture welcomes Dr. W. Garrett Owen as our new Floriculture, Greenhouse, and Controlled Environment Specialist. He began work May 1st and is based in Lexington. Garrett, who grew up in Mt. Ulla, N.C., received his B.S. and M.S. degrees at North Carolina State University, and his Ph.D. at Purdue University.



Garrett's floriculture and greenhouse crop production background began in his high school's horticulture class. Between the agriculture classes and the FFA, he was inspired to start his own greenhouse business and eventually won the National FFA Floriculture entrepreneurship award. Garrett also has a commercial production background from working on a 1,000-acre produce farm and as an assistant grower for a 32-acre top 100 commercial floriculture greenhouse operation. While at Purdue, separate from his dissertation work, Garrett was the floriculture lab research technician where he conducted experiments with horticultural substrates (media) and alternatives; light (intensity, quality, and photoperiod); end-of-production, supplemental, and sole-source light-emitting diode (LED) lighting; root-zone heating; plant nutrition; plant growth regulation (PGR) and management; plant pathology; young plant

propagation and production; and plant problem diagnostics. Garrett's doctoral research examined the influence of daily light integral (DLI) and root-zone temperature on herbaceous perennial stem tip cutting physiology, morphology, callusing, and rooting.

Upon earning his doctorate degree, Garrett joined the Department of Horticulture at Michigan State University as the Eastern Michigan Greenhouse and Controlled-Environment Outreach Specialist. During his three-year service, he worked with over 300 retail and wholesale greenhouse growers producing annual and perennial bedding plants, vegetable transplants and produce, and specialty cut flowers. Garrett's area of expertise is plant nutrition and nutritional monitoring of substrate, fertility, and water quality during greenhouse container production, PGRs, greenhouse crop production, and crop diagnostics. Garrett is a member and leader of e-GRO (Electronic Grower Resources Online), a collaborative effort of floriculture specialists, that provides a clearinghouse for alerts about disease, insect, environmental, physiological and nutritional disorders being observed in commercial greenhouses. He is also the leader of e-GRO's Fert, Dirt, & Squirt: Nutritional Monitoring of Greenhouse Crops. Garrett was recently named to [Greenhouse Product News 40 Under 40](#) for his current and ongoing efforts pioneering the greenhouse industry.

Garrett can be reached at wgowen@uky.edu, or (859) 257-4721.

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from 2018 (Tables 2 and 5) for apples, peaches, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and matted row strawberries, but decreased for pears, plums, plasticulture strawberries and apple cider.

The NAP program provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops that have signed up for the program when low yields/grazing loss, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including drought, freeze, hail, ports. The 2019 average prices increased from 2018 (Tables 2 and 5) for apples, peaches, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and matted row strawber-

ries, but decreased for pears, plums, plasticulture strawberries and apple cider.

The [NAP program](#) provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops that have signed up for the program when low yields/grazing loss, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes. More information can be found at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Kentucky/index>.

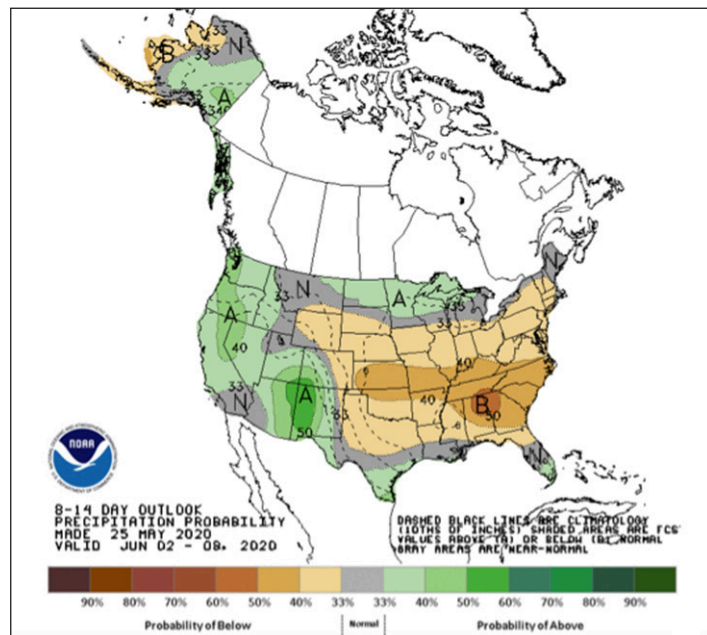
*Farmers market price reports can be found on the UK Center for Crop Diversification website at <http://www.uky.edu/ccd/pricereports/KYFM>.

Drier than average start to June

By Joshua Knight, Senior Extension Associate, Horticulture

While the first week of June is predicted to be drier than average across the Commonwealth and the greater region, this pattern should shift to higher than average precipitation rates in the second half of June. Current long-range forecasts from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center for the summer show an overall higher than average rate of precipitation for Kentucky as well as the south-eastern U.S. overall.

The cooler days are quickly becoming less frequent than the warmer days moving into June. Temperatures in the eastern part of Kentucky may trend below average for the first few days of June, but the overall trend for the first two weeks of June is predicted to be warmer than average. The latter



half of the month calls for average temperatures in the western half of the state, with warmer than average temperatures in the east.

New KCARD initiative to expand farmer-buyer connections in KY

From the KCARD website

The Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (KCARD) is launching the Kentucky Local Food System Expansion Initiative to expand the work of multiple organizations that have laid a foundation in Kentucky for local food purchasing. Organizations involved in the project include the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Horticulture Council, Feeding Kentucky, Bluegrass Farm to Table, the University of Kentucky, and Community Farm Alliance.



"KCARD has helped connect farmers and buyers for years, but this new initiative is going to allow us to expand this work dramatically," said Aleta Botts, Executive Director of KCARD.

The Kentucky Local Food System Expansion Initiative will 1) establish a statewide local food coordinator and network to connect producers with buyers, facilitate strong institutional buying relationships, and serve as a key hub for partners; 2) increase local food sales for producers by developing sales connections; and 3) increase likelihood of continued local food business success by develop-

ing maps of distribution channels, clusters of local food economic growth, and local value chains, and disseminating that information among partners, farmers, and buyers.

Olivia Vogel, a current KCARD employee, has been named to the coordinator role for this project.

Connecting farmers and buyers has changed dramatically since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As many local food sales through institutions, schools, and restaurants have been disrupted, farmers have turned to direct sales to consumers, and consumers have responded with increased demand for fresh products produced locally. If you are a local food farmer and have experienced losing a market for your products during the COVID-19 pandemic, please reach out to Olivia at ovogel@kcard.info or 859-813-0658 to begin finding alternative markets.

KCARD received over \$480,000 in grant funds from the USDA Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) to launch the Kentucky Local Food System Expansion Initiative and pilot the program over the next three years. This work is also supported by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund.

Register soon for PSA-FSMA online grower training

A Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Grower Training Course is being offered online by the Food Systems Innovation Center in the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture Food and Environment.

The training will be offered from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. EDT on July 16th and July 30th. Registration deadlines for the classes are **5 p.m.** on **June 16th** and **June 30th**, respectively. A Zoom link to attend will be shared with all participants.

Fruit and vegetable growers and others interested in learning about produce safety, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), co-management, and the proposed FDA's FSMA Produce Safety Rule should attend, as should any growers who would like to meet the proposed Produce Safety Rule requirement stating that *at least one supervisor from the farm must complete food safety training at least equivalent to the standardized curriculum recognized by the FDA.*

The trainers will spend approximately seven hours covering the content contained in these seven modules:

- Introduction to Produce Safety
- Worker Health, Hygiene, and Training
- Soil Amendments
- Wildlife, Domestic Animals, and Land Use
- Agricultural Water
- Postharvest Handling and Sanitation
- How to Develop a Farm Food Safety Plan

The training is FREE for Kentucky growers (cost is covered by the FSMA University of Kentucky Food Systems Innovation Center/Kentucky Department of Agriculture cooperative agreement grant). Cost for out of state participants is \$100.

For details and registration information for both trainings, [click here](#). Please direct questions to Badrinath Jagannathan (badrivj@uky.edu) or Paul Priyesh Vijayakumar (paul.v@uky.edu).

Specialty crops producers can apply for coronavirus funds

From the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Specialty crops producers can now apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. The application and a payment calculator are now available online and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff members are available via phone, fax and online tools to help producers complete applications. Applications will be accepted through August 28th, 2020.

Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion for financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

The program is structured to ensure the availability of funding for all eligible producers who apply. In order to do this, producers will receive

80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date nationwide, as funds remain available.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap>. Producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee.

Thanks for reading!

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