Virginia Market Maker – Your FREE Online Marketspace
How to Register your Agribusiness(es)

By Kimberly L. Morgan, Associate Professor and Kohl Junior Faculty Fellow, Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech; and E. French Price, Value-Chain Coordinator, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

There are many factors to consider when marketing and advertising your farm and farm products directly to end users, such as individuals, restaurant owners and chefs, public institutions, retailers, and wholesalers. An online marketing presence is an important component in accessing markets for new and beginning producers interested in direct sales. The purpose of this series of publications is to inform Virginia producers about the Virginia MarketMaker portal and supporting resources, and, to introduce the use of databases and other information technologies to increase direct sales of agricultural products and tourism venues that may increase grower profitability.

History of Virginia MarketMaker
The National Food MarketMaker portal was developed at University of Illinois in 2004 by Extension specialists in response to agribusinesses’ needs to establish an online presence to reach direct market customers searching for food products and tourism venues. Provided at no cost to users, the portal is currently hosted by partnerships in 20 states and D.C. In 2015, Virginia MarketMaker was launched with educational and financial support from Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services, and Farm Credit of the Virginias. In 2018, the Piedmont Environmental Council connected with Virginia MarketMaker team, allowing agribusinesses to indicate their affiliation with Buy Fresh Buy Local chapters across eight counties. This allows Buy Fresh Buy Local members to simultaneously update their Buy Fresh Buy Local listing and their MarketMaker profile. MarketMaker will continue to integrate with other Buy Fresh Buy Local chapters and various branding programs across the state. Through these affiliate linkages, agribusinesses with Virginia MarketMaker listings may utilize a one-stop, one-step process to keep their information current across multiple databases.
What tools are offered on Virginia MarketMaker?
Registration is completely FREE for Virginia agribusinesses and, FREELY available for the public to use in their search for fresh farm products and agritourism venues. Agribusinesses may sign up for multiple business types in one step, update using a single sign-on and password, and trust their listing is secure and Simple search features help to facilitate connections along the food supply chain, from farm input suppliers to wholesalers, from pumpkin patches to public institutions, and allow agribusinesses to indicate affiliations such as Virginia Grown, Virginia’s Finest, and Buy Fresh Buy Local, to name a few. The market research feature aids in developing marketing plans, local food system mapping capabilities, and buyer sourcing of seasonal product offerings.

How do I register by Virginia agribusiness(es)?
Follow these easy step-by-step instructions to register your Virginia agribusiness(es):

STEP ONE: Go to https://va.foodmarketmaker.com/signup/
**STEP TWO:** Choose your Business Type by clicking on each image. Hover over each image for a brief description of Business Type (see Farmer/Rancher example below). You may choose as many that apply to your agribusiness. You may add additional business types after you complete your initial registration.

**STEP THREE:** After you select your Business Type, select any and all Profile Categories for Selected Business Type applicable to your business. Each category has a dropdown box, which opens a curtain of check boxes available under each category, or, you may add your own product type under "Other". Under the Markets Served heading, add your days and hours of operation. Under Business Details. Click SAVE when you have completed your Profile Categories for Selected Business Type.
STEP FOUR: Scroll down to Enter Your Business Information and complete each box. Under Account Preferences, you may select how often you receive communications from Virginia Market Maker. These communications include Buy & Sell Forum Alerts, Trade Alerts, and a Market Newsletter. Click CONTINUE when you are finished with this page.

STEP FIVE: As noted, Virginia Market Maker is partnered with multiple organizations to provide this one-stop online portal for our registrants. During your registration process, this page offers you the opportunity to indicate any relevant affiliations. Affiliate descriptions and external web links are provided for each partner. Click any and all that might apply to your agribusiness, then click the SUBMIT button.
STEP SIX: Your new Virginia Market Maker profile is now complete! The pop-up screen will offer you an opportunity to Fill Out Farmer/Rancher Profile and/or, Add Another Business. You may also do this at a later time, as you learn more about your new profile.

CONGRATULATIONS! Your new Virginia Market Maker online profile is now complete! Please add any of your social media networks, edit your current information, or, continue to build your profile by adding additional business profiles, products, payment options, days/hours of operation, and customer communication options.
Join the 1,200+ Virginia agribusinesses on Virginia Market Maker today, go to https://va.foodmarketmaker.com. For more information about direct marketing of your farm products in Virginia, please contact Kim Morgan at KLMorgan@vt.edu or 540-231-3132, or, visit the Virginia Cooperative Extension's Market Maker portal to find news, publications, videos, webinars, and related resources (https://ext.vt.edu/agriculture-market-maker.html).

Acknowledgements
The Food MarketMaker portal is the largest and most in-depth national database for the agricultural industry. The portal provides a FREE, searchable, online marketing tool to connect buyers, farmers/ranchers, fisheries, farmers markets, processors/packers, wineries, restaurants and more. With the generous support of our partners and stakeholders, Virginia Market Maker is available at NO COST to Virginia producers, processors and consumers. The program is housed in Virginia Tech’s Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics and is supported by Virginia Cooperative Extension.