

## **FamilyFarmed and Illinois Farm Bureau Host Direct Food Marketing Workshops**

Fruit, vegetable, and specialty crops farmers looking to better understand opportunities and risks in direct marketing are invited to attend one of three, one-day workshops across the state hosted by the Illinois Farm Bureau® (IFB) and FamilyFarmed.

"We're extremely excited about these workshops and the opportunities they'll offer for specialty crops farmers across the state," said Raghela Scavuzzo, manager, Local Foods Program, IFB. "The workshops will cover a variety of topics, including best practices in direct marketing, postharvest handling, and legal and food safety risk management; crop insurance options; developing risk management plans and strategies; and implementing specific best management practices on farms."

Facilitated by Minnesota farmer Pam Benike, the full-day workshops will be held May 7 at Southern Illinois University, 3268 W. Pleasant Hill Road, Carbondale, 62901; May 10 at Henry County Farm Bureau, 128 N. Prospect St, Cambridge, 61238; and May 11 at the Champaign County Farm Bureau, 801 N. Country Fair Dr., Ste. A, Champaign, 61821. All workshops begin at 8:30 a.m. and will conclude by 4 p.m.

"Farmers who market their products directly to consumers have to be a jack of all trades," Scavuzzo said. "These workshops will help them answer questions and learn more about meeting customers' needs, seeking buyers and maintaining healthy relationships, and sorting and packing for wholesale markets, among other things."

In addition to the networking and information provided at each workshop, participants will:

- Receive two Risk Management news and resources e-blasts;
- Be introduced to the On-Farm Food Safety website where they can create a free food safety plan;
- Be invited to join an online discussion group where they can find technical assistance answer and participate in topic discussions; and
- Receive a copy of Direct Market Success: A Farmer's Guide to Farmers Market, CSA, Farmstand, Online and Restaurant Sales

"The information covered in these workshops is vital for any specialty crop farmer looking to expand his or her business," Scavuzzo said. "We're confident, using the information received at these workshops, farmers will be able to make changes to their own farms to really make a splash in their own local markets."

The workshops are free for interested participants, but registration is required by May 1. To register for any of the events, visit [www.ilfb.org/LiveLocal](http://www.ilfb.org/LiveLocal).

The Illinois Farm Bureau® is a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation®, a national organization of farmers and ranchers. Founded in 1916, IFB is a non-profit, membership organization directed by farmers who join through their county Farm Bureau. IFB has a total membership of 398,283 and a voting membership of more than 79,450. IFB represents three out of four Illinois farmers.