

*I am very excited to write my first article addressed to FMO members. Whether you are a market manager or vendor, I hope you will find these monthly submissions helpful and informative.*

I have had the privilege of working with FMO as your OMAFRA representative (non-voting member on the FMO board of directors) as well as handling the Memorandum of Agreement our Ministry has with FMO for the past 8 years. Having visited several markets and met some of you at meetings and conferences I am pleased to work with such a vibrant organization who believes in bringing the 'best to market' for the Ontario consumer.

My role as marketing and customer service program lead with

the Business Management Unit of OMAFRA, primarily involves working with stakeholders to provide leading edge marketing and customer services resources and skills. I am also very active in working with farmers who are interested in farm diversification and value-added projects.

It is my goal to provide, through my articles, information and links to resources that I hope you find helpful as you build your farmers' market as either a manager or vendor.

## Growing Your Opportunities - Value Plus Workshops

Winter is here and as a market manager or vendor it's time to recharge your batteries and take advantage of some of the learning opportunities offered across the province. In this article I want to highlight some interesting things happening this winter that you may want to attend:

Want to take your business or business idea to the next level? OMAFRA in partnership with the Canadian Farm Business Management Council are excited to offer 6 *Growing Your Opportunities - Value Plus Workshops* this

winter. Over 2 days the participant will identify their specific value-added idea how to: put their idea into action, find the right market channels, build a business plan, finance the stages of the



business, price the product properly and manage risk.

Led by one of Canada's key value-added trainers, Gary Morton of Morton Horticultural Associates, participants will learn from Gary's enthusiasm and years of experience helping farmers evaluate new market ideas and bringing them to reality. Registration is limited to 25 people per location – this is an opportunity you will not want to miss!

For locations and dates visit [www.ontario.ca/agbusiness](http://www.ontario.ca/agbusiness) or call 1-877-424-1300.

## The Workshop Experience

If you plan to attend a workshop or conference this winter – here are some pointers to get the most out of your experience:

Talk to another FMO member and ask what learning events they have found most helpful and applicable.

Visit websites of those events you are interested in and drill down to what sessions are offered and the speaker profiles.

If you plan to take family or employees with you, don't all go to the same session if several are offered. This will ensure maximum benefit of your time and money – have coffee with them the next day and share your experiences.

If the event offers a trade show – visit it – network – get what you need.

If the event is a full day workshop in one room with constant sitting – bring water, snacks and appropriate dress in case the room gets too hot or too cold.

Bring paper and pens and your BUSINESS CARDS – a great way to network

Have a plan that you will implement at least 3 ideas that you received at the event and stick to it – Write them down in a visible place in your office for all to see – set a time line to achieve them.

Share what you learned with others in your business – don't just give them copies of the presentations to read – tell it in your own words and how you are seeing it apply to your business.

### Save These Dates...

Well known demographer and trend guru, Dr. David Foot, will deliver the keynote address at the 27<sup>th</sup> Guelph Organic Conference and Expo on **Saturday, January, 26<sup>th</sup>** at the University of Guelph. Author of "Boom, Bust & Echo: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", Dr. Foot will provide insight into the growing interest in organic and local food via his message titled: "Organics, Demographics & Lifestyle – Driven Markets". Seating is limited for this particular session. Details <http://www.guelphorganicconf.ca/>

And of course you do not want to miss the Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO) sessions at the Horticultural Crops Conference **Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>** at Brock University. Details: <http://www.ofvc.ca>

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