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IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Final Report

Strategic Marketing Plan for the Florida
Peach Industry

Florida Specialty Crop Foundation

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For More Information

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Introduction

Peaches are grown commercially in 23 states with California, South Carolina, and Georgia as the top three producers, respectively (Brunke & Chan, 2015). In 2015, the United States utilized production of peaches totaled 1,650.8 million pounds, with 715.5 million pounds entering the fresh market (USDA, 2016). Florida recently joined the southeastern states in peach production following the introduction of varieties that can grow in the state's unique climate. The Florida peach industry is young compared to many other peach industries in other states and there is not much data currently available on production and acreage.

The Florida peach industry affords unique opportunities and challenges to growers in the state. Low-chill varieties allow for peaches to be harvested in Florida before any other state can enter the U.S. commercial peach market, allowing a unique market window from late March through May (Olmstead et al., 2014). Florida's peach varieties are highly susceptible to the state's variable weather patterns and require significant amounts of care throughout the growing and harvest seasons (Olmstead et al., 2014). According to interviews with Florida peach growers and marketers, Florida peaches are picked tree-ripe and are described as being sweeter than other peaches, but they are smaller by a quarter of an inch than other commercial peaches. The Florida peach's small size and unique marketing window present challenges to the marketing of Florida peaches and this document explores several marketing options for the Florida peach industry.

Much of the information contained in this document was obtained through research by the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center). The PIE Center exists to provide answers and information about several economic, environmental, and social challenges through research that is shared through educational outreach and training programs. These programs ultimately serve to "enable the public and policy makers to make informed decisions and to preserve Florida's agricultural and natural resource assets" (University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education, 2016, p. 2).

For the purposes of this marketing plan, the term "marketer" refers to the marketing groups that buy and sell peaches for contracted growers. These entities may also engage in promotional campaigns for the both the growers and the whole marketing group. These campaigns include social media outreach, media promotions, and all other communications tasks. The term "direct marketing" refers to individual growers selling their own peaches through farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture programs, U-pick operations, or direct sales to retailers or wholesalers. In-depth interviews with peach marketers and growers informed some of the research in this document. This is noted where appropriate.

Consumer Price Sensitivity

Nationwide, consumers indicate a strong preference to purchase peaches grown in Florida, even though consumers have little or no knowledge of the Florida peach season or that peaches are grown in Florida. In the 2016 PIE Center peach consumer survey, peach purchasers indicated a preference for Florida peaches based on their perceived freshness, flavor, and quality. In personal interviews with Florida peach growers and marketers, the need for Florida peaches to be priced higher than peaches grown in other regions was expressed due to the unique growing conditions in the state. This section explores the hypothesis that consumers are willing to a premium for Florida peaches based on the perceived quality advantages of Florida peaches and the low availability of peaches during the Florida market window.

The analysis was conducted using methods of the Van Westendorp Price Sensitivity Model. Respondents were asked to provide dollar amounts (per pound of peaches) at which they believe peaches would be too expensive



they would not consider buying them (too expensive); so inexpensive that they would doubt the quality and would not consider buying them (too inexpensive); starting to get expensive where the purchase is not out of the question, but they would have to give some thought to buying them (expensive); and a bargain that is a great buy for the money (inexpensive). Through analyzing the cumulative frequencies around the respondents' price preferences, the following results were found.

When consumers consider peaches grown in any state in the U.S., those that have not purchased peaches in the last year indicate that an acceptable price range for peaches is \$1.01 to \$2.56, with an optimal price of \$1.99. Similarly, respondents that have purchased peaches in the last year indicate an acceptable price range for peaches to be \$1.09 to \$2.99, with an optimal price of \$1.99.

When asked about Florida peaches specifically, respondents provided similar price ranges and optimal prices to those given for peaches grown in other areas. For respondents who had not purchased peaches in the last year, the price range they would be willing to pay for Florida peaches is \$1.01 to \$2.78, with an optimal price of \$1.99, which is close to the same as the range for the peaches grown in other areas. For respondents that had purchased peaches in the last year, the price range they would be willing to pay for Florida peaches is \$1.05 to \$2.99, with an optimal price of \$2.05, which is slightly higher than the optimal price of peaches grown in other areas.

The price ranges that respondents would be willing to pay for Florida peaches is not substantially higher for Florida peaches compared to peaches grown in other states, regardless of the respondents' reported desire to buy peaches from Florida. Figure 1 illustrates the price points for each group. While the optimal price given by purchasers for Florida peaches is slightly higher than the optimal price for peaches grown in other areas, it is important to note that for both purchasers and non-purchasers, the indifference price point (IPP) for Florida peaches is \$1.99. At this point, the number of respondents that believe Florida peaches are expensive is equal to the number that believe Florida peaches are inexpensive (Weiner, 2001). At any price higher than the IPP of \$1.99, the number of people that believe Florida peaches are expensive will be greater than the number of people who think Florida peaches are inexpensive and there will be the potential for profit loss (Weiner, 2001). The optimal price for non-purchasers for Florida peaches is the same as the IPP, while the optimal price of Florida peaches for purchasers is only four cents greater than the IPP. The optimal price point is the price at which consumers would be most willing to buy the product (Weiner, 2001). Growers and marketers of Florida peaches will have to make the decision of whether the potential loss of consumers and profits will be worth the potential monetary gains of pricing at the optimal price point if they decide to price peaches above the IPP of \$1.99. Growers and marketers may also have the chance to leverage the relationship with University of Florida researchers to discover how to make Florida peaches less expensive to grow and harvest, reducing the reliance of profits on consumers paying higher prices for Florida peaches.



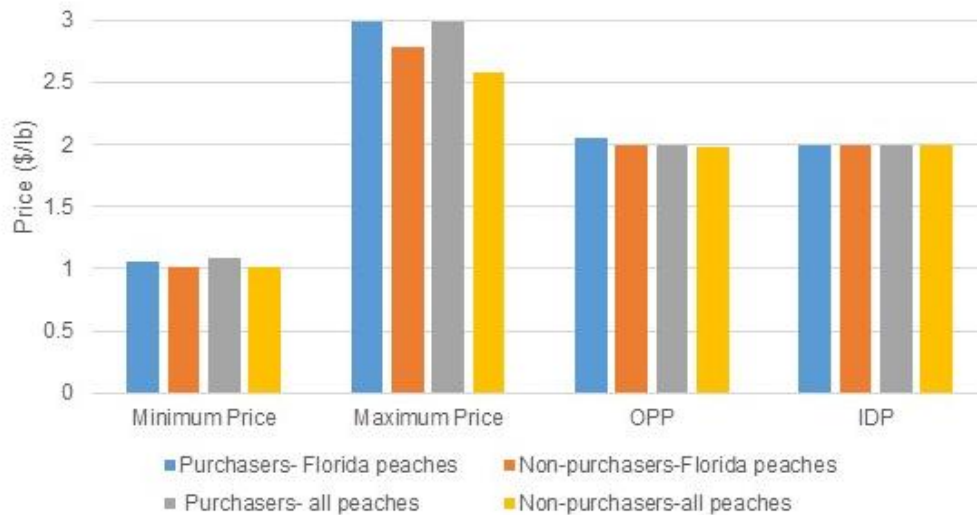


Figure 1. Consumer willingness to pay for Florida peaches

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Exclusive marketing window. Florida offers the only peaches available in the U.S. from late March through May. During this time, Florida peaches are fresher than Chilean peaches that may linger into mid-March. Additionally, Florida peach growers do not have to compete with other peach-producing states for six to eight weeks during this window and retailers must look to Florida producers as the sole source of peaches from late March through May.

Florida peach attributes. Florida peach varieties are different from peaches grown in other areas. The low-chill varieties that are available from the University of Florida allow peaches to be grown for harvest during the unique Florida marketing window. Florida peaches are believed to be sweeter than peaches from other states and the non-melting variety of Florida peaches allows for a cleaner eating experience. Florida peaches are also believed by growers to be more aromatic than peaches from other states when displayed in stores. Additionally, Florida peaches are tree-ripened, meaning that they are picked at the height of freshness and not ripened by any other artificial means.

Connection to University of Florida and Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS). UF/IFAS provides support to Florida peach growers in the form of new varieties and market research. The infrastructure of UF/IFAS is designed so that growers are able to easily receive advice from researchers and extension agents about marketing and growing issues. This also enables growers to offer suggestions to UF/IFAS researchers about possible attributes for new peach varieties.

Existing connection with Fresh from Florida. Consumers indicate that the Fresh from Florida logo motivates them to buy a Florida product over a product grown in other areas. Fresh from Florida is familiar with the marketing challenges of the Florida peach industry and, at the time of this project, marketing efforts were in the works for the 2017 peach season through Fresh from Florida.



Weaknesses

No organized peach group exists. Peach growers either market their peaches on their own or through large marketing groups. The marketing groups and individual growers do not currently have an organized forum for communicating about industry issues. Once a marketing plan is established for the peach industry, there is no group in place to implement the plan and very little interest exists from growers and industry leaders to establish a peach association. The absence of an organized grower group makes securing funding for marketing efforts difficult because funds from FDACS must be allocated to an industry group. They cannot provide funds to assist in marketing or market research for individual marketing groups or growers.

Inconsistent Florida peach size. Florida peaches are smaller than peaches available from other states and retailers generally do not want to offer small peaches in stores. Retailer demand for larger peaches results in many Florida growers being unable to compete in the traditional retail market. Retailers are not aware of the benefits of a smaller peach to certain segments of the population.

Growers are also faced with inconsistent peach size. The size of peaches relies heavily on weather patterns and the pruning of trees during the growing season. This means that peach size is inconsistent between years and between individual trees. The inconsistency of peach size makes it difficult for growers to predict volumes for pre-sales.

Inconsistent volume. Florida peach harvests are susceptible to volume fluctuations based on weather patterns. For example, an insufficient number of chill units during the peach growing season or a late freeze close to harvest can lead to low peach volumes. The inconsistency results in retailers not having a reliable prediction of Florida peach volumes each year, which makes it difficult for growers and marketers to pre-sell peaches to any retailer or plan any marketing campaigns.

Access to retail stores. Large retail stores purchase peaches from only a few prominent peach marketing groups. The opportunities for selling Florida peaches in retail stores exist mainly due to long-standing connections with produce buyers at large retail chains. New or small growers that do not market peaches under a larger group do not have the connections needed to sell to large retail stores, which requires small growers to look for other outlets to market their peaches. This may not necessarily be a weakness of the peach industry, but is viewed as a barrier to entry for small growers.

Opportunities

Educate consumers. Consumers need to be made aware that peaches are grown in Florida and of the Florida peach season. According to PIE Center research, the majority of surveyed consumers report buying peaches at least two or three times per month when peaches are in season, but most report buying them in June, July, and August when Florida peaches are not in season. Capturing consumer attention when Florida peaches are in season and prior to the season may lead to consumer anticipation of the Florida peach season and a greater demand for Florida peaches.

Consumers also need to be made aware of the attributes of Florida peaches. Florida peaches are smaller than other peaches and can be easily eaten as a snack, especially for children, which makes them an excellent option to be included in a work or school lunch. Florida peaches are picked tree-ripe, meaning they are picked at the optimum taste level and shipped immediately to ensure freshness. Florida peaches are also sweeter than peaches grown in other states and the non-melting varieties of Florida peaches allow for a cleaner eating experience. The opportunity exists to educate consumers about these attributes through marketing.



Educate retailers. Retailers and retail produce employees need to be informed of the correct handling of Florida peaches to ensure a quality product for consumers. Informative materials could be included with peach shipments to help educate all produce employees on how to correctly handle and display Florida peaches. Retailers could also benefit from informative advertisements that would ensure produce buyers know the correct time to start looking to buy Florida peaches.

Educate growers. Growers and marketers need to communicate about the quality requirements set by retailers. Some growers assume that marketers should be able to sell all sizes of Florida peaches because they have not been properly informed of the expectations of size and quality set forth by retail produce buyers. Informing growers of these expectations provides the opportunity for growers to adjust their growing practices, including optimal pruning practices, to ensure production of a quality size peach that will not be rejected by retailers.

Identify market channels for small peaches. Marketing channels exist for peaches, that retailers would normally reject because of small size, including school lunch programs, nursing homes, and food banks. Often, growers can receive payment for food that would have been rejected by retailers through these channels. There may also be the opportunity to target parents and their children with the message that Florida peaches are the perfect size for a child's lunch and are a less messy option for a snack.

Produce show presence. Produce shows are high-profile forums where peach growers or industry representatives could demonstrate the value of Florida peaches to retailers in the U.S. and throughout the world. A booth for Florida peaches could provide retailers the chance to learn about the unique Florida peach attributes through sampling opportunities. For produce shows that occur outside of the Florida peach season, sampling opportunities could be mimicked through an explanation of the difference in BRIX between peach varieties and reinforced through the consumer taste test research. Informational materials could be provided to aid in increasing retailer knowledge of Florida peaches and their special handling considerations.

Taste test data. UF/IFAS has a program in place to collect taste test data. Collecting the data based on university-backed research could be used to substantiate claims to consumers and retailers that Florida peaches are sweeter than peaches grown in other states.

Identify and target consumers that are willing to pay a premium price. National surveys of peach consumers indicate that consumers are not willing to pay a premium price for peaches grown in Florida. Retailers with a customer base that is already accustomed to paying a premium for produce or other grocery items might be able to fetch a higher price for Florida growers than traditional retail stores.

Motivate retailers to differentiate Florida peaches. Consumers indicate that they would like to purchase peaches grown in Florida, if available. The opportunity exists for growers or the Florida peach industry to assist retailers with differentiating Florida peaches in stores and in advertisements. Retailers may be motivated to differentiate Florida peaches as part of an incentive program in retail advertisements, or through FFF, or the industry providing signage to accompany Florida peaches in retail stores or farmers' markets.

Consumer desire to purchase Florida products. The majority of peach purchasers, for both the national and Florida samples of the PIE Center consumer survey, indicated that they would like to buy peaches grown in Florida. Current peach purchasers desire Florida peaches because they consider peaches from Florida to be fresh, flavorful, and of a high quality. The opportunity exists to develop targeted marketing messages that reinforce the positive consumer views of Florida peaches. Additionally, the industry could make the most out of the consumer desire to buy Florida peaches by developing tactics that allow consumers to find Florida peaches easily in retail stores and at



farmers' markets. PIE Center research also suggests that consumers are very interested in produce that is touted as being grown in the USA. The Florida peach is the first domestic peach to enter the market, so the opportunity exists to leverage consumer desire to buy USA grown produce as well as Florida grown produce through labeling and point of sale marketing.

Threats

Low consumer knowledge. Consumers in the PIE Center consumer survey indicated that they generally do not know that peaches are grown in Florida. A lack of consumer knowledge about the existence of Florida peaches results in little or no consumer demand for Florida peaches. While Georgia is referred to as the Peach State, the Florida peach industry must find a way to break into the conversation about quality peach production.

Additional threats related to low consumer knowledge include the PIE Center findings that most consumers report purchasing peaches in summer months when Florida peaches are not available and that consumers are unaware of the differences between Florida peaches and peaches grown in other states. The Florida peach industry runs the risk of not meeting consumer expectations of peach flavor and texture if consumers are unaware of the unique Florida peach characteristics, such as firmness.

Low retailer knowledge. Retailers are unaware of the special care that needs to be taken when handling Florida peaches. Because some varieties of Florida peaches have softer flesh than peaches grown in other states and are susceptible to bruising, they cannot simply be dumped or stacked in a display case. Florida peaches must also be chilled from the point of picking to the time they are displayed in stores because warm temperatures will cause the flesh of the peaches to decay quickly.

Growers have observed that produce buyers and employees at retail stores do not have best-handling practices with Florida peaches, which may be due to the lack of education from peach industry experts. Growers assure that ensuring best-handling practices throughout the peach marketing process results in higher quality fruit.

Increasing volumes from other states. Florida's peach production and harvest schedule is heavily dependent on weather patterns, which makes Florida's crop timing difficult to forecast. The perceived unreliability of Florida's peach availability results in retailers being timid in contracting Florida peaches each year.

However, California, Georgia, and South Carolina have experienced steadily increasing peach volumes each year and little variability in harvest schedules. Because of the high volumes and reliable output timing, retailers are able to buy more peaches at one time from these states than they can from Florida. This greater sense of reliability from other peach-producing states may be more attractive to retailers than taking a chance on Florida peaches.

Exit of Florida peach growers due to uncertainty. Florida peach growers have had a few years of extreme crop uncertainty due mainly to low-chill hours and late freezes that have decimated the peach crop. For this reason, many Florida peach growers are uncertain of the viability of growing peaches and some have threatened to leave the industry following any more unpredictable harvest seasons.

A decrease in Florida peach volumes would make implementing the tactics for marketing of Florida peaches as a cohesive industry even more challenging. Since a few large groups control the majority of the peach volume and supply stream, small peach producers may not have an incentive to participate in industry-wide marketing efforts. Without the small Florida growers, an integral part of the industry would be missing from having a voice in marketing efforts or industry decisions.



Absence of premium price. The willingness-to-pay study for Florida peaches showed that consumers are not willing to pay more for Florida peaches than for peaches grown in other states. On average, consumers are willing to pay about \$2.00 per pound for peaches grown in any state. Peach growers in Florida have come to expect higher prices during the Florida season because of the exclusivity of the market window. However, with consumers not willing to pay a premium price for Florida peaches, Florida growers will have to adapt to receiving lower prices for peaches possibly by finding ways to lower production costs.

Damaged reputation of Florida peaches. Some retailers that previously bought Florida peaches are weary of continuing to trust the industry's supply because of exceptionally small peach sizes seen in the past. Growers can combat this issue by following pruning guidelines that lead to optimal fruit size. A lack of pruning often leads to a greater volume of peaches being harvested, but the individual peaches are often much smaller than the typical Florida peach. Ensuring that all industry players adhere to best practices will help instill retailer trust in the Florida peach supply.

Changing personnel at UF. The main point of contact for peach growers is no longer employed at UF/IFAS. This person was the main driver for establishing a peach association and had developed a rapport with many Florida growers. The role had not been filled prior to the 2017 peach season and this case study. The next person who enters this role must gain the trust of growers in order to help advance the industry and retain the industry's valuable relationship with UF/IFAS.

SWOT Implications

Competitive advantages exist for the Florida peach industry by utilizing the industry's strengths to capitalize on identified opportunities. Connections to the University of Florida and Fresh from Florida provide the Florida peach industry with valuable resources for marketing and research. The University of Florida can conduct consumer taste testing research to substantiate claims about Florida peach sweetness and quality differences from peaches grown in other states. University experts are available to growers for questions regarding marketing and growing of peaches. Fresh from Florida has the expertise and connections available to implement an effective marketing campaign for the peach industry, especially if an association is established to provide a platform for securing more funding.

Florida peach attributes offer a strong competitive advantage when combined with opportunities to educate consumers and retailers. The advantage is increased if retailers can differentiate Florida peaches from other peaches based on their unique attributes. Informing consumers and retailers that Florida peaches are sweeter than other peaches and are in season when no other peaches are available may lead to a strong demand that was not formerly realized. Additionally, once consumers and retailers have been educated on the distinguishing attributes of Florida peaches, marketing tactics will be in place to differentiate Florida peaches in retail stores and farmers' markets. This allows consumers to satiate their demand for Florida peaches without being inhibited by imperfect information.

Florida's low-chill peach varieties provide a competitive advantage to the peach industry for all growers through the development of the unique peach marketing window. During this time, Florida growers compete only with other growers in the state for supplying peaches to retailers throughout the United States. Marketing efforts that promote the entire industry to retailers and consumers during this window will serve to strengthen this competitive advantage.

Where competitive advantages exist, so do competitive disadvantages. Many specialty crops in Florida and other states have established industry associations that help promote the respective industries for marketing purposes



and ensuring a quality product from all growers in the state. Florida peaches do not have a grower or marketer association for the entire industry. This makes it difficult to secure funding for marketing assistance and research resources. As it is currently, individual growers or marketing groups must take the initiative to seek out assistance from Fresh from Florida or the University of Florida. This makes for a difficult situation when attempting to offer an industry-wide message to consumers and retailers. It also means there is no entity charged with promoting Florida peaches for the industry beyond Fresh from Florida.

Inconsistent harvest volumes and small peach sizes have led to retailer distrust of the Florida peach industry. Retailers are weary of purchasing Florida peaches because of past instances of poor crops being brought to market and will consider waiting to buy peaches from Georgia or South Carolina if the Florida peach crop looks late or light. The Florida peach industry must overcome this damaged reputation by educating retailers of the positive qualities of Florida peaches and by working to ensure quality fruit is entering the market each year. Some of the uncertainty surrounding the peach crop is due to weather inconsistencies and the delicate process of growing peaches in Florida. Improved growing practices, such as attention to frost protection, or the development of more-hardy peach varieties may lessen some of the impact of weather on the Florida peach crop.

The Plan

Target markets

Consumers

The following marketing tactics seek to increase consumer awareness that peaches are grown in Florida and that the Florida peach season runs from late March through May. Consumers should also be informed of the unique attributes of Florida peaches and of how peaches can be used in different ways than consumers already use them. The goal of the consumer messaging is to increase consumer recognition and knowledge of the Florida peach season, which may lead to increased demand for Florida peaches.

Retailers

Retailers need to be informed of the Florida peach season and of the unique attributes of Florida peaches. Retailers also benefit from receiving messages about the correct storage and handling of Florida peaches. The messaging targeting retailers also applies to independent grocers and other groups that sell Florida peaches.

Growers

Growers need to be informed of how to improve growing practices to compensate for consumers not being willing to pay premium prices for Florida peaches. Growers also need to be informed of retailer size and quality expectations in order to produce a crop that can be sold for the retail market.

The Tactics

This section details potential marketing tactics for the Florida peach industry based on consumer, producer, and marketer research. Each tactic has nuances that must be addressed depending on the group implementing the tactic.

Establish a Florida peach marketing arm or dedicated association. This group of people exists to implement the peach marketing plan tactics. The focus of the marketing arm or association would be to promote Florida peaches as a unified industry, as opposed to individual grower associations promoting separately. This would ensure that all resources are being used effectively to increase consumer recognition of Florida peach availability and season. A



dedicated association also increases the likelihood of receiving funding for research and marketing efforts through Fresh from Florida.

An alternative to establishing an organized association of growers is developing a strong brand for Florida peaches. Similar to the Cuties citrus branding, a Florida peach brand would take advantage of the smaller peach size and position the Florida peach as a snack or lunch item, causing consumers to rethink how they typically eat peaches. Opportunities for alternative packaging to promote the Florida peach as a snack may exist and should be further explored.

Continued partnership with UF/IFAS. Growers should engage with UF/IFAS researchers to develop peach cultivars or peach production practices that are less expensive than current practices. A partnership with UF/IFAS is integral for finding solutions to the issue of consumers not being willing to pay a premium for Florida peaches. Part of the partnership with UF/IFAS is the possibility to offer internship credit to a UF student for coordinating marketing activities prior to and during the Florida peach marketing season. The UF/IFAS partnership could also be leveraged in utilizing the taste testing facilities at UF to validate claims about Florida peach sweetness compared to the taste of peaches grown in other areas.

Reapply for FDACS grants. The Florida peach industry could work with UF/IFAS and other industry associations to secure another FDACS Specialty Crop Block Grant to begin in 2019. The funding from this grant could be used to establish a Florida peach informational website to better inform consumers and retailers of the Florida peach season.

Education through marketing. The main issue facing the Florida peach industry is a lack of knowledge and communication about the unique characteristics of the fruit. In order to educate retailers on Florida peach size advantages and crop timing, the following tactics are recommended.

Produce show attendance at large produce shows, such as PMA Fresh Summit, offer international market exposure for Florida peaches. Produce shows allow members of the peach industry to make connections with and inform the large produce market players about why Florida peaches are superior to other peaches. Additionally, retail communications allow the Florida peach industry to gain access to large retailers through advertising or editorial exposure. For this tactic, the industry could submit articles written by Florida peach industry experts to inform retailers about the Florida peach season and why Florida peaches are unique. Suggested retail communication outlets include The Packer, Progressive Grocer, and Produce News.

Retail information pieces are another way for the Florida peach industry to connect with produce retailers. Growers and marketers express a desire for an increase in retailer knowledge about the correct handling of Florida peaches. The industry could include handouts with peach shipments intended for large retailers that detail the correct handling practices. It may be difficult to ensure the information reaches the correct members of the retail produce teams, but growers and marketers could encourage the buyers to share the information with all members of the retail team that display or handle Florida peaches. These informational pieces are also useful for personnel at other peach-selling outlets such as farmers markets. The handling information could also be offered in the form of an article for retail communication outlets to reach produce buyers even further.

In order to educate growers on retailer expectations, industry leaders could encourage marketers to explain rejection criteria to each grower before the harvest season begins. Many marketers express that growers make the incorrect assumption that any peach that is produced should be able to be sold, regardless of the size. Increasing



grower understanding of retailer expectations may encourage growers to use the best growing practices to ensure quality peach size.

Social media. Consumers indicate that they want to know more about Florida peach attributes and more about the Florida peach season. Social media that promotes the Florida peach industry could be in the form of grower accounts, marketing group accounts, or a peach growers' association account, which does not currently exist. The goal of all social media posts through these accounts should be to inform consumers of the Florida peach season and the attributes of Florida peaches. Social media is also a very responsive way to inform consumers about crop timing and locations of Florida peach shipments, and is also a way to engage consumers in conversations about their experiences with Florida peaches that other consumers will see. Social media is a powerful tool that could serve to reach a diverse group of potential peach buyers. Appendix 1 offers information on how to begin a social media account and how to utilize social media platforms.

Utilize the consumer-preferred education tactics. Consumers indicate a desire to learn more about the Florida peach season and attributes of Florida peaches through several means. The first is through sampling opportunities. Fresh from Florida offers assistance with setting up sampling opportunities at retail stores. Allowing consumers the chance to try Florida peaches at the point of purchase offers the opportunity for more potential consumers to make an impulse purchase of peaches during their shopping trip. Sampling opportunities may also help to increase the number of people being exposed to Florida peaches and their unique attributes.

Consumers also report that they desire to learn more about Florida peaches by visiting informational websites. The Florida peach industry could develop a website dedicated to informing consumers of the Florida peach season and Florida peach attributes, as well as providing information regarding U-picks and farmers' markets. The website could be promoted through individual grower and peach association social media accounts and could be managed either by a peach growers' association or an UF/IFAS student intern.

Displays and printed fact sheets could be used to connect with consumers at community events. Representatives from a peach grower association marketing arm or an UF/IFAS student intern could set up a display at community events that include races, community spring festivals, farmers' markets, or even displays at retail stores. The event displays and fact sheets could offer information about the Florida season and Florida peach attributes, as well as health benefit information.

TV coverage is another consumer-preferred tactic for gaining knowledge about the Florida peach season. The peach industry could utilize earned media opportunities to secure coverage on local and national news channels. Earned media entails offering an incentive, such as a peach cobbler or peach wine gift, to media outlet editors and reporters in order to gain access to media outlets without paying for advertising. TV coverage could begin before the Florida season to increase recognition of the Florida season and continue until close to the end of the season to remind consumers to add Florida peaches to their shopping lists. Ideas for the TV segments include peach grower spotlights, fun and informational segments about peach health benefits and the Florida peach season, and U-pick information from local farms.

School lunch programs. The small size of the Florida peach makes it an ideal addition to children's lunches, which opens the opportunity for growers or marketing groups to sell peaches directly to school lunch programs. This option could be especially attractive in harvest years when there is an abundance of peaches that are too small for retail markets. The Fresh from Florida Farm-to-School program exists to connect produce growers with local school districts and the Florida peach industry could utilize this existing resource to ensure more peaches are sold each year.



Demonstrate unconventional ways to use peaches. Consumers in the PIE Center survey indicated that they mostly eat peaches whole and very few of them use peaches in lunches, smoothies, or as an ingredient in other dishes. A secondary messaging strategy, beyond communicating about the Florida peach season and availability, could include providing information for consumers about different ways to use Florida peaches in their diets. This messaging could be a part of a Rethink your Peach campaign that could encourage consumers to include a snack-sized Florida peach in lunches, offer new recipes using peaches in smoothies, salads, drinks, and desserts, while continuing to reinforce the message that Florida grows sweet peaches. The campaign could be promoted through grower and industry social media sites and through TV coverage, displays and printed fact sheets at community events, and on the peach industry website.

Provide a marketing toolkit for growers with U-picks. Florida has a growing agritourism industry that appeals to both Florida residents and visitors to the state. According to the Florida Agritourism Association, additions to laws regarding the Florida agritourism industry in 2013 resulted in less regulations and more legal protection for Florida agritourism businesses. This means that less legal liability exists for risks associated with a U-pick operation if the correct steps are taken prior to operation. More information on these legislative changes can be found at <http://operator.visitfloridafarms.com/>. For this reason, Visit Florida and the Florida Agritourism Association established a full resource toolkit to aide in the development of agritourism efforts at individual farms. View more information on the toolkit at https://issuu.com/destincom/docs/fata_tourism_guide_2015.

U-picks are an important part of Florida agriculture because they provide the opportunity for consumers to have personal experiences with Florida crops, which may lead to higher demand for produce grown specifically in Florida. U-picks may also serve as a way to reinforce consumer knowledge of timing for the Florida produce seasons. In order to assist Florida peach growers in marketing their U-picks, the marketing arm of the potential Florida peach growers' association or an UF/IFAS marketing intern could develop a marketing toolkit for growers to use as soon as they are able to open for U-pick operations. The toolkit would serve to ensure an easy transition from harvest operations to opening for U-pick time. The toolkit could include pre-made social media posts announcing the opening of the U-pick, examples of farm signs that meet the standards set for U-pick operations, and any other information that growers would deem necessary to decrease the amount of time they would spend in marketing their U-picks.



Definitions of Commonly-Used Words

- **Grower:** Any person who produces blueberries as a part of a peach operation in Florida.
- **Retailer:** The entity that sells peaches to the end-consumer in stores. Includes big-box retailers, such as Walmart, or grocery stores, such as Publix.
- **Marketer:** Refers to the person or company that works as an intermediary between the grower and the retailer or wholesaler. The marketer buys peaches from the grower with the intent to sell them to the retail or wholesale market. Another role of the marketer is often to manage marketing and public relations tasks including all communications with consumers through social media and traditional media.
- **Consumer:** The end-buyer of peaches. May be a consumer at a retail store, U-pick, or farmers' market. This person does not have the intent to resell peaches to another consumer.
- **Competitive advantage:** Any condition that puts the company or industry in a favorable position compared to other industry players.
- **Competitive disadvantage:** Any condition that puts the business at risk of losing customers or market share to another player in the industry.
- **Utilized production:** Crops that were harvested and then marketed both domestically and internationally.
- **Wholesaler:** Person or company that buys peaches to sell to food service companies, restaurants, or other big-volume buyers.



Appendix 1: Information on suggested social media

The UF/IFAS Electronic Data Information source provides a full series for agriculturalists seeking to market through social media. This “Getting the Most out of Social Media” series can be found at https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_series_getting_the_most_out_of_social_media

The series of publications includes the following topics:

- What is Social Media?
- Creating a Social Media Plan
- Successfully Using Social Media
- Good Practices When Using Social Media

Using the publications together as a guide to beginning a social media marketing campaign is helpful for those unfamiliar with the nuances of using social media for business. The following section discusses several social media platforms and their benefits. The social media site an individual grower decides to use will depend on his or her business goals.

Facebook Business page:

<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/set-up-facebook-page>

- Step-by-step instructions to set up and run a Facebook business page
- Includes how to add people as administrators, build your followers, create posts and boost posts to reach more people

Twitter Business Page:

<https://business.twitter.com/en/basics/create-a-twitter-business-profile.html>

- Overview of creating a Twitter business profile
- Includes specific instructions on how to advertise on Twitter, if desired

Instagram Business Page:

<https://business.instagram.com/>

- Includes a how-to video for beginning an Instagram page
- Also offers information on advertising through Instagram and inspiration for posts

Pinterest Business Page:

<https://business.pinterest.com/en>

- Provides information for joining as a business
- Users can convert existing Pinterest accounts into a business account through this page
- Business pages on Instagram can promote their Pins to relevant audiences, much like advertising
- The business information page also features the Pinterest blog with useful information on using Pinterest successfully



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