

# Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine



Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine

Search...



Quicklinks

## Partnering Institutions, Agencies & Organizations:

Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Cultivating Community

Farm Credit East

Land For Good

Legal Food Hub

Maine AgrAbility

Maine Agricultural Mediation Program

Maine Aquaculture Association

Maine Association of Conservation Districts

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Bureau of Agriculture

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Bureau of Forestry

Maine Farm Bureau

Maine Farmland Trust

Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners (MOFGA)

Maine Risk Management and Crop Insurance Education Program

Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society

Sea Grant -- Maine

USDA Farm Service Agency

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA Rural Development

UMaine Extension

United Farmer Veterans

Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment

If you represent an agency or institution that works with Maine farmers and are interested in presenting to the **Beginning Farmers Resource Network**, please contact Tori Jackson, Chair, at [tori.jackson@maine.edu](mailto:tori.jackson@maine.edu).



## Results from COVID-19 Farmer Survey

March 18-27, 2020: 179 Farms

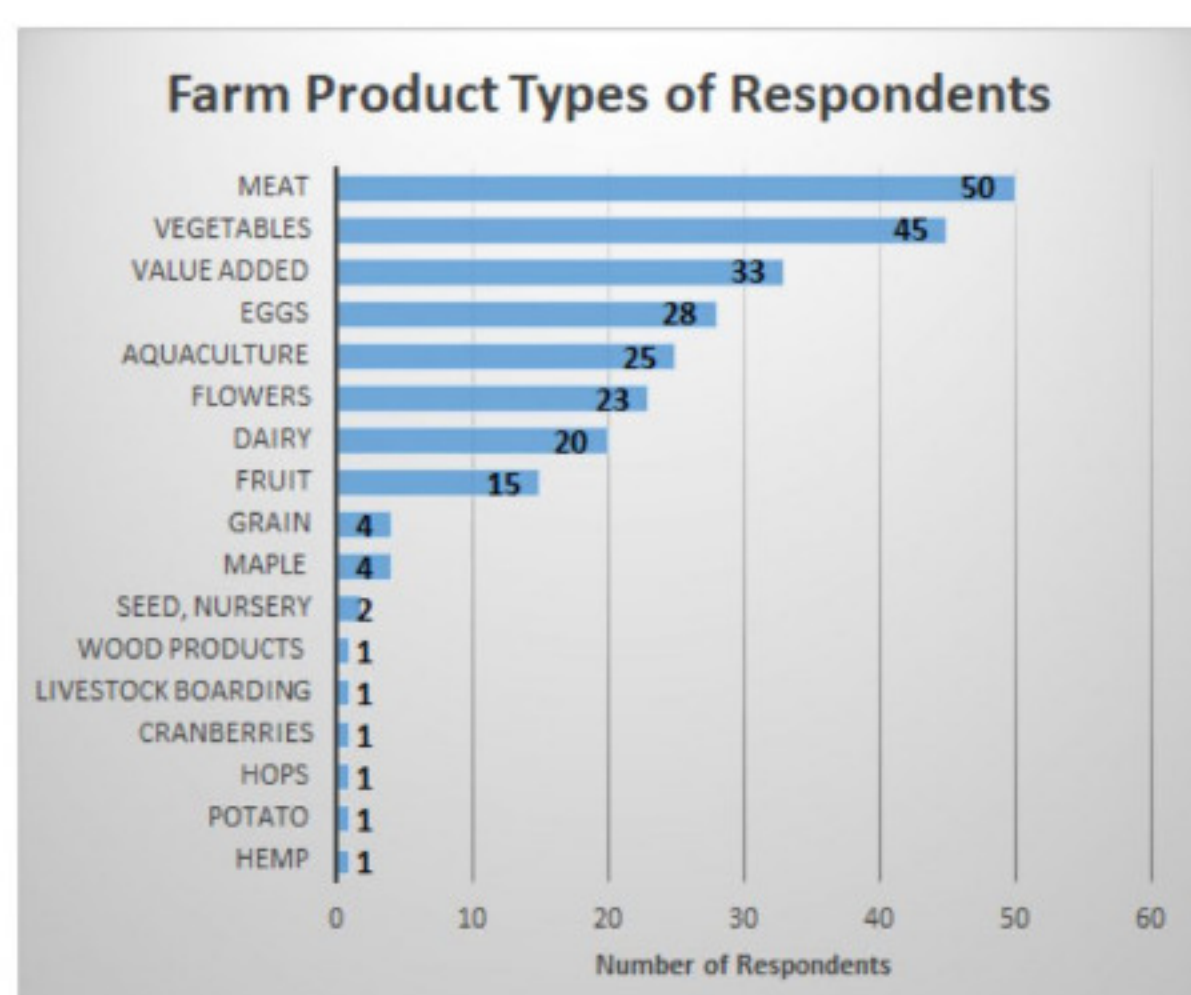
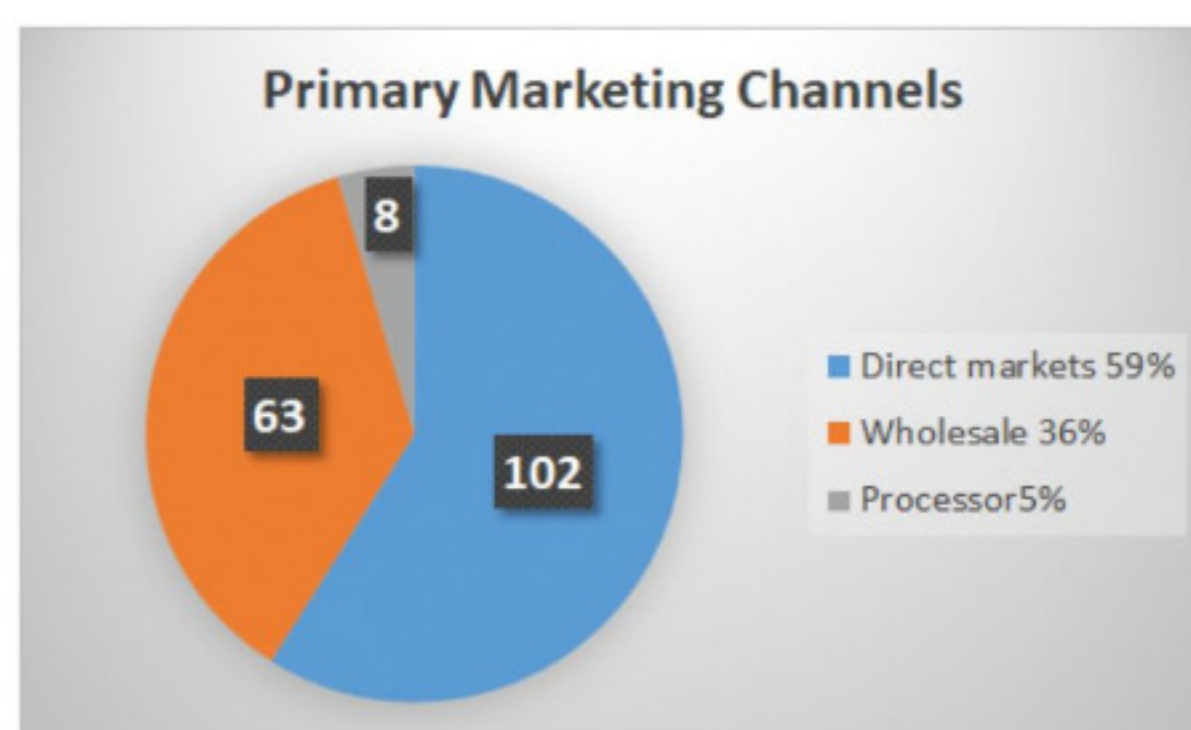
The following is a data analysis from the [Covid-19 Maine Farmer Survey](#), hosted by the Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine, which received 179 responses from 3/18-3/27.

Data was analyzed for themes by Bo Dennis and Ryan Dennett of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Jason Lilley of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and Catherine Durkin of Maine Farmland Trust.

### Who Responded

#### Survey results from March 18- March 26, 2020

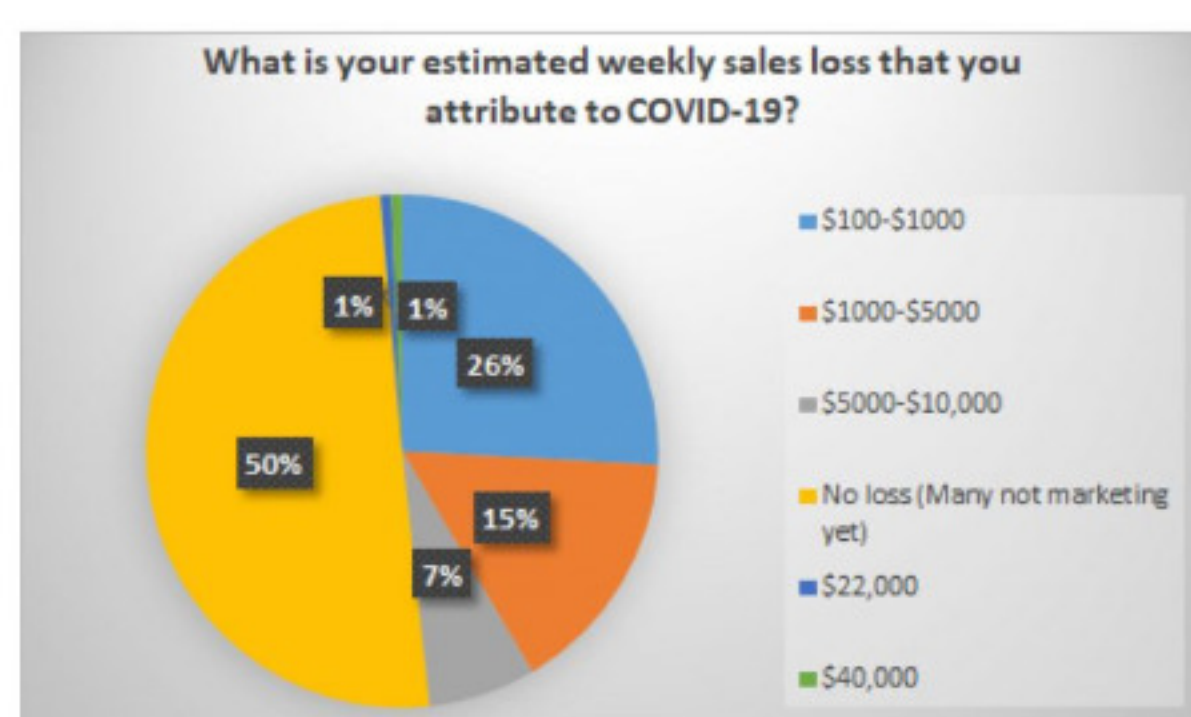
| County       | Number of Responses per County | Number of responses by Region |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| York         | 14                             | S. Maine                      |
| Cumberland   | 19                             | 60                            |
| Androscoggin | 10                             |                               |
| Sagadahoc    | 17                             |                               |
| Oxford       | 12                             | W. Mountains                  |
| Franklin     | 5                              | 24                            |
| Somerset     | 7                              |                               |
| Kennebec     | 13                             | Central / Mid-Coast           |
| Knox         | 9                              | 51                            |
| Lincoln      | 13                             |                               |
| Waldo        | 16                             |                               |
| Hancock      | 12                             | Down East                     |
| Washington   | 5                              | 17                            |
| Aroostook    | 12                             | Northern / Central            |
| Penobscot    | 7                              | 23                            |
| Piscataquis  | 4                              |                               |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>175</b>                     |                               |



### Financial

- Strong need for financial support to help with cash flow
  - Both anticipated cash flow challenges and current cash flow issues
- Desire for reimbursement for sales loss and donations
- Loan repayment deferment and 0% loans
- Some want grants, not loans, given the fear of unpredictable markets and unstable economy

Of the entries who commented on their change in sales since the outbreak started, 57% have noted decreases, 18% have noted increases, and 25% have not had changes to sales. NOTE: It has only been 2 weeks. Also, many respondents do not have marketable products at this point in the season. Those farms were left out of the above analysis.



Survey results from March 18- March 26, 2020. Note that most in the "No Loss" category are not marketing at this point in the season. Of the respondents who are currently marketing, 57% have noted decreases, 18% have noted increases, and 25% have not had changes to sales.

### Market channels and customer demand

#### Direct vs. Wholesale trends, product

- Beginnings and overall desire for farmer based aggregation with some desire for help organizing these aggregation efforts
- There is a shift in marketing channels to include more CSA, food delivery, no touch farm stands
- Questions around how the tourist economy will be impacted and how this will affect sales
- Anticipating weddings, events, on-farm workshops, on-farm dinners etc. being postponed or cancelled

### Marketing

- Farmers want information on how to market if markets close and advertising in the time of COVID-19 (How to get produce to customers with little interaction?)
- There is a need to increase marketing to reach new customers if consumers aren't coming to market and need for more "how to market" support
- Ecommerce and increasing digital based marketing, online stores. Need for training here
- Those who noted an increase in sales are primarily meat, egg, and dairy producers.
- Traditionally, 59% of respondents direct market their products, 36% primarily sell wholesale, and 5% are processors.

### Labor management

#### Cash flow, workplace safety, unemployment

- There is a need for labor but a fear of not being able to pay them as well as health concerns (worry about employees staying healthy and how this will affect the workforce)
- Support needed for paying for employees
- Letting people go, un-hiring, reducing hours
- Starting employees later to help with cash flow, matching production and workforce
- Increase labor/time to design and implement new systems and find new sales channels

### Mental health

- Mental health support needed
- Strong fears of business closure and financial stresses across majority of farm responses
- A lot, a lot of uncertainty

### General needs

- Farmers request updates on health practices and how to safely conduct sales
- It is still very uncertain how this will affect the summer sales, supply chain and labor. Many suggest to resend out survey in a few weeks and a few months
- Challenges finding sanitizers for the farm (mostly hand sanitizer to have at farmers' markets etc.)

### Examples of changes farmers have made

- Over fear of supply chain issues, farmers are prebuying supplies
- Farmers are increasing hand washing and sanitizing protocols on farms, social distancing employees at work
- Not a positive one but multiple farms mentioned putting larger capital investments/equipment upgrades on hold

Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine

Tel: 207.353.5550 or 800.287.1458  
(in Maine)  
[tori.jackson@maine.edu](mailto:tori.jackson@maine.edu)

