Extension provides training on production of specialty crops, improving quality and volume of vegetable production, and developing markets for Kentucky agriculture. The economic development is seen in the increased number of vendors at markets and reported increase in sales.

When you support Extension, farmers apply production and marketing techniques to improve quality and quantity of produce and make local food more accessible to Kentucky families.
Kentucky has 2,500 farm market vendors and over $12 million in sales through the community farm markets. Over 50% of Kentucky produce growers sell at least some of their products at a farmers market. (Kentucky Department of Agriculture, 2014) Extension prepares smaller scale market vendors to build marketing skills, test market products that can be staged for other market channels, and capture direct market margins. Strong farm markets enhance opportunities in other direct market channels, including Community Supported Agriculture (subscription farming), U-pick, roadside farm markets, and sales to restaurants and grocery stores.

The Center for Crop Diversification (CCD) improves marketing opportunities for small and midsize producers through a combination of applied research and Extension activities. Extension CCD assists agriculture producers with diversifying their farm operations, trains vendors in best sampling practices, provides regional and national price reports for farm and auction markets (a model being adopted by other states), and moves the vendors from small scale production to specialty products suited for major markets.

County Extension agents develop community resources to acquire funding for improved market facilities. Permanent facilities are being constructed in Breathitt and Mercer counties. Some of the permanent market facilities include commercial kitchens such as those in Bath and Jackson counties. Extension provides oversight of the commercial kitchens and conducts required trainings for Home-based Processor and Microprocessor certification. The certifications allow farmers to add value to their farm products and to sell at the markets.

In addition, Extension agents increase accessibility and affordability for limited resource families through the Nutrition Education Programs (NEP). Agents and program assistants in Powell and Jackson counties work with local partners to achieve over 90% redemption of the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers. Agents in Rowan County have made it possible to redeem electronic benefit transfer (EBT) to purchase local produce at the local market. Lewis and Wolfe Extension and their local partners provide youth with “Veggie Bucks.” Veggie Bucks allow the youth to purchase fruits and vegetables at the market. Research shows that increasing access to fresh produce increases consumption. Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables reduces risk of chronic disease.

“The benefit of the high tunnels and greenhouses, in my opinion, is season extension of course, but ultimately, when you’re bringing the product to the market, there’s no loss. Everything is perfect.”

-Mark Henkle, Henkle’s Herbs and Heirlooms