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MarketMaker innovation awards go to South Carolina and Ohio

URBANA – The first recipients of the National Food MarketMaker Innovation Awards are Ohio and South Carolina. The awards, sponsored by Farm Credit, were presented June 27 in Pittsburgh, PA at the National Value Added Agriculture Conference.

MarketMaker, an online marketing resource that connects food producers with markets, invited all of the participating states to submit proposals which highlighted their innovative efforts. Farm Credit Council led a committee that included food and agricultural stakeholder groups to select the winning states. Ohio and South Carolina each received \$7,000 from Farm Credit.

“Ohio’s program ‘Get Connected with Ohio MarketMaker’ demonstrated strong food industry partnerships and doubled the number of registered MarketMaker business profiles in Ohio by uniting seven organizations,” said University of Illinois marketing specialist Darlene Knipe.

“The creation of ‘Get Connected’ artwork and marketing resources will benefit the entire National MarketMaker network of states.”

The National website is located at: www.foodmarketmaker.com. The site currently includes 16 participating states plus Washington, D.C., with Texas and Alabama in the development stage.

“South Carolina’s program ‘Helping MarketMaker “Float” in U.S. Coastal States and Beyond’ won the award for the unique partnership between Clemson University and the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium Extension program to develop a pilot seafood component,” Knipe said. “It evolved into a national component. This effort diversified MarketMaker product offerings, engaged new producers and consumers in the MarketMaker network, and contributed to the expansion of MarketMaker into several new coastal states.”

Representing Farm credit Council at the awards ceremony was Gary Matteson, vice president of Farm Credit’s Young, Beginning, Small Farmer Programs and Outreach.

“It’s impressive to see how resourceful each MarketMaker program is, and understand the potential for these great ideas to be put to good use in other states,” Matteson said.

MarketMaker is hosted and maintained by University of Illinois Extension and is guided by an advisory board made up of representatives from among participating partner states. There is no charge associated with having a business listed on the site or to search the site for information.

For more information about MarketMaker, contact Darlene Knipe (309-792-2500; dknipe@illinois.edu).