

A Preliminary Market Study of the **Chicago** Wholesale Food Market

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Executive Summary

This Preliminary Market Study identifies potential wholesale buyers in the Chicago food market

Chicago (five selected population centers with total population 7,077,935)

- 1,681 potential buyers were identified
- By Category

— Food Brokers.....	214
— Food Products.....	554
— Food Service Distributors.....	11
— Frozen Foods-Brokers/Wholesale...	42
— Frozen Foods-Processors.....	11
— Frozen Foods-WWW.....	74
— Fruits and Vegetables-Wholesale...	160
— Grocers-Wholesale.....	615

- There are seven steps to consider in the use of this information:
 - 1) information gathering
 - 2) surveying the identified buyers
 - 3) organizing the results
 - 4) analyzing the information
 - 5) establishing and cultivating prospective client pool relationships
 - 6) making the sales transaction
 - 7) monitoring and nurturing the working business relationship.
- Six possible market entry strategies were discussed:
 - 1) enterprise development
 - 2) acquisition
 - 3) strategic alliances
 - 4) licensing proprietary information/technology from others
 - 5) venture capital
 - 6) licensing information/technology to others.
- Alternative growth strategies were introduced to induce growth in existing markets, product development, market development, vertical integration and diversification. These strategy options could be used once entry into the market is gained.
- A glossary of marketing and sales terminology was presented defining frequently used terms.
- A sample marketing survey was exhibited to provide a prototype document for use in gathering market information.

Background

In the past few years, North Dakota farmers and ranchers have experienced shrinking profit margins at the farmgate marketing level. As this margin between prices received and costs incurred narrows and the food market is increasingly driven by consumer demand, producers are faced with a decision. Do we do more of the same? Do we differentiate our product at the farmgate? Do we get closer to the consumer? Or, do we do some of each? Any decision other than more of the same means the producer has selected a value-added marketing opportunity.

Value-added opportunities are one avenue available to producers for increasing profits and business solvency. It is a risk versus return decision. Some call it vertical integration. Some call it survival in a changing agri-cultural industry. In any case, it offers the chance for enhanced economic opportunity, more jobs, a larger tax revenue base, a higher quality of life and the hope for being a significant factor in North Dakota's global agricultural market presence (Hauck, Kraenzel, Rose 1997).

Purpose

Given this new emphasis on value-added agricultural products and services in North Dakota, this preliminary market study provides the first step in developing a **food market information system** that facilitates the collection and dissemination of timely and accurate market information for industry participants in the Red River Trade Corridor (RRTC)¹. The primary purpose of this study was to identify current wholesale market outlets in the Chicago region.

¹ Red River Trade Corridor is a strategic grouping of U.S. states and Canadian Provinces which includes the North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Manitoba agricultural production and marketing region. David G. Kraenzel is currently marketing chair of the RRTC's Regional Vegetable Industry Task Force.

The study focused on five counties in the Chicagoland area, namely Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, and Will. This database represents potential buyers of agricultural products in the processed or finished end form. The customer database provided by this study can be used to teach survey/interview skills and conduct in-depth market surveys. A secondary purpose of this publication was to provide a beginning glossary of strategic marketing management terms and definitions.

Procedures

The resulting list in this publication identifies the wholesale market outlets (buyers) currently operating in Chicago's major suburbs and can be found as Appendix A in this publication. The first step taken in conducting this survey was to search the Internet using Switchboard (<http://www.switchboard.com>). Switchboard is a personal and business directory located on the World Wide Web. The US West Internet Yellow Pages (<http://yp.uswest.com>) were used as an additional source for the Chicago food market. Category headings used in these sources for food wholesalers are utilized as submarket category headings. Those categories under the study's wholesale outlet heading include food brokers, food products, food service distributors, frozen foods-brokers/wholesale, frozen foods-processors, frozen foods-WWW, fruits and vegetables-wholesale, and grocers-wholesale.

The Chicago Wholesale Food Market

The wholesale food market consists of 1,681 identified potential wholesale buyers in the study area. [Appendix A](#) lists these specific companies by name, address, and phone number. This list is intended for reader use as a working list of potential market contacts. Table 1 presents a numerical summary of these identified buyers. The population for the greater Chicagoland area based on the 1990 census figure is 7,077,935².

² URL: <http://www.census.gov> U.S. Census Bureau. The Chicago population figure of 7,077,935 is a metropolitan population figure derived by aggregating the following reported county population estimates: Cook, 5,105,067; DuPage, 781,666; Kane, 317,471; Lake, 516,418; and Will, 357,313.

Table 1. The wholesale food market by submarkets for the Chicagoland area.

Wholesale Category Population Chicagoland Area 7,077,935³

Food brokers	214
Food products	554
Food service distributors	11
Frozen foods – brokers/wholesale	42
Frozen food processors	11
Frozen foods – WWW	74
Fruits and vegetables – wholesale	160
Grocers – wholesale	615
TOTAL	1,681

³ URL: <http://www.census.gov> U.S. Census Bureau

These potential wholesale product buyers were grouped into eight submarket categories as follows: food brokers, food products, food service distributors, frozen foods-brokers/wholesale, frozen foods-processors, frozen foods-WWW, fruits and vegetables-wholesale and grocers-wholesale. Definitions of these categories can be found in the glossary of this publication. Categories are based on information extracted from the Internet.

There are 214 food brokers listed. There are 554 buyers in the food products submarket category based on the information provided by Switchboard and the US West Internet Yellow Pages. There are 11 food service distributors listed. Frozen foods-brokers/wholesale has 42 buyers while frozen foods-processors has 11. For the frozen foods-WWW submarket category, there are 74 listings. There are 160 fruits and vegetables-wholesale buyers listed. There are 615 grocers-wholesale listed on Switchboard and the US West Internet Yellow Pages. Each of these sources are documented in [Appendix A](#).

Overview - Uses of Market Information

This database is intended to be a foundation document for immediate reader use, as a working list of potential buyer contacts and for long term information development. The long term uses include properly conducted market surveys and in-depth segment studies to include: a customer analysis, a competitor analysis, a market analysis, and an environmental analysis that address factors affecting this food market, such as technology, government's role, economic influences, cultural preferences, and demographics. These components are the basis of a strategic marketing management approach to food manufacturing. Other uses are to identify strategic opportunities, threats, trends and questions as well as facilitate market strategy development. One very important aspect is to discover in which areas of the greater Chicagoland region and in which submarket categories (market segments) **growth** is occurring. It is in growth markets or growth submarkets that a new firm entering the market will want to concentrate its efforts.

Step by Step Use of this Market Information

We now embark on the process of market information gathering, analysis and use. This is an overview of the process and is intended to provide the reader with a general introduction to the process. There are seven steps involved.

Market Information Use

1. Information gathering.
2. Survey the identified buyers.
3. Organize the results.
4. Analyzing the information.
5. Establish and cultivate prospective client pool relationships.
6. Making the sales transaction.
7. Monitoring and nurturing the working business relationship.

1. Information gathering.

Gather as much information as possible about the potential market in a given time period. The gathering process is ongoing and moves to higher levels of honing and refinement. Sources include primary data (directly from industry or original sources) and secondary data, which originates from documented sources such as the Agricultural Census, Dunn and Bradstreet Reports, libraries, news-papers, radio, periodicals, television, the Internet, and other public and private information sources.

In the early stages of enterprise development, secondary sources provide a low profile information source. Identifying potential customers is the first critical piece of information. In this paper the potential wholesale buyers in the Chicagoland area food market have been identified for reader use. We have chosen the wholesale market in this initial market study because of the high volume of potential new business development that can be generated. This list is available through the North Dakota State University Extension Service Agricultural Economics Department for a nominal fee and is updated annually in the spring (see [Appendix A](#)).

2. Survey the identified buyers.

Whether you, your organization, or an independent third party conduct this survey, various methods may be used.

A. in person one on one interviews (cold calls, knocking on doors)

B. telephone interview (cold call by experienced people)

C. direct mailing (expect 10% response)

D. Internet (new and exciting answer)

e-mail (low cost contact with companies, universities and others)

- i. online discussion groups (i.e. *Successful Farming* magazine, <http://www.agriculture.com>)
- ii. online organizations and associations (i.e. agonline@www.agriculture.com)

Develop a questionnaire that asks pertinent price, volume, and delivery information. An example is provided in [Appendix B](#). This basic prototype questionnaire is provided as a working paper to be customized to your commodity or product. The person conducting the surveys becomes a key person in the marketing/sales effort. There are two basic approaches: (1) conduct the surveys in house or (2) contract the work to be done. In most cases, confidentiality and implementation time are key issues and success factors to consider.

3. Organize the results.

Guidelines in data organization include developing both a numerical summary and a narrative description of the information. Areas to be quantified and described include prices (high, low, average), volumes, size (i.e. number of buyers), projected growth, profitability, delivery dates,

entry barriers, cost structures, trends, distribution requirements and systems, key success factors, marketing/sales personnel, buying procedures, and identifying key decision makers.

4. Analyzing the information.

In this step, study the information and look for different market indicators. For example, the market size (number of buyers), the relative size of the individual buyers (\$100 million gross revenue or \$1 million), number of outlets each buyer represents, or strategic groups of buyers based on size of company, volume, or proximity. The ultimate purpose of this analysis is to identify a "prospective client pool." This pool of possible buyers represents those most likely to use and ultimately buy the commodity, product, or service that you are offering for sale.

5. Establish and cultivate prospective client pool relationships.

The ultimate aim of this step is to initiate and develop a working business relationship that will lead to step six, making the sales transaction. Among the elements to be considered are establishing a working business dialogue, listening, understanding and responding to the customer's interests, using legitimate means to conduct business, making a commitment, communicating, and developing a solid working relationship. Methods of approaching the prospective customer include in person sales calls, telephone contact, letters, Internet features such as e-mail, product discussion groups, and interacting with various organizations.

6. Making the sales transaction.

Volumes of literature have been written on this crucial element of business. The single most important aspect of making the sale is the negotiation. An entire companion publication entitled "Negotiating in a Value-Added Marketplace" is devoted to the subject of negotiation and will be published in the spring of 1998.

7. Monitoring and nurturing the working business relationship.

This step is a continuous effort to maintain and build upon established sales. A consistent sales base or customer base maintained over time becomes what is termed "equity in the market" – in other words, an established market share. This equity base creates profits, a percentage of which may then be earmarked for an ongoing marketing effort to maintain current sales and build new ones. This is accomplished by focusing on the prospective client pool.

Market Entry Strategies

When an individual or firm makes a decision to enter a market, the entry strategy becomes critical (Roberts and Berry, 1985). There are several general alternative strategies:

1. Enterprise development within a new or existing business entity.

This alternative allows development without limitations when compared to others. Decisions such as size, structure, capitalization, and timing are at the discretion of the initiator. A disadvantage is the development time required to establish the entity.

2. Acquisition of another entity.

This can save calendar time. It is possible for a firm to become established in the market in a matter of weeks, and many entry barriers are avoided. The downside is that the structure is normally taken as is and may result in duplicate resources.

3. Strategic alliances (joint ventures, pure alliances).

Alliances offer the chief advantage of exploiting small firm/large firm synergies that exist. Risk is also distributed. A decrease in individual firm value may be experienced over time. Another drawback is the potential for conflict in operations.

4. Licensing proprietary information/technology.

This strategy allows quick access to technology and reduced financial liability risk. Disadvantages include dependence on the licensor and a lack of technology and technology skills.

5. Venture capital.

This strategy allows an influx of adequate available capital while diluting ownership percentage. In periods of rapid business growth this becomes a viable market entry strategy. This strategy alternative gives the original owner(s) the capital infusion needed to meet the inevitable increases in cash requirements that arise and are needed to support increasing sales.

6. Licensing to others.

This allows quick access to the market at low cost and risk. The trade off becomes a lack of knowledge, control of the market, and dependence on the licensee.

The choice of which entry strategy or combination to use requires careful consideration. Once a strategy is selected, commitment becomes the key factor in success.

Growth Strategies for the Chicago Wholesale Food Market

Once we have successfully entered a market and find growth occurring in the sub-markets selected, we can then focus on a number of "alternative growth strategies" as presented in Figure 1. This figure provides a way to structure these alternatives.

Figure 1. Alternative growth strategies.⁴

	Present Products	New Products
Present markets	I. Growth in existing product markets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase market share • Increase product share <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase the frequency used -Increase the quantity used -Find new application for current users 	II. Product development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add product features, product refinement • Expand the product line • Develop a new generation product • Develop new products for the same market
New markets	III. Market development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand geographically • Target new segments 	V. Diversification involving new products and new markets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related • Unrelated
Vertical integration	IV. Vertical integration strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward integration • Backward integration 	

⁴ Aaker, David A. "Strategic Market Management." Fourth Edition. University of California, Berkeley. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995. pp. 238.

Square I, growth in existing product markets, can be very appealing to a firm. In the case of the established operation, essential business success factors such as available resources, knowledge and expertise are already on hand. These factors form a base to build on with lesser risk than for a startup business. Growth can be achieved by capturing sales (market share) from competitors as well as attracting new first time buyers. This square is also attractive to newly forming companies attempting to become established in the market. This new company has the advantage of initially being removed from ongoing competition and can therefore be more objective about where an opportunity to enter and capture sales might exist. These opportunities are places where one might increase market share (capture sales) or increase product usage by offering additional volume or frequency of use or quantity and finding new applications for both current and new users. A disadvantage in this position is the cost of the learning curve in expended time, money, and resources.

Square II, product development for present markets, assumes the existence of a current product as well as entirely new products. This effort requires research and development (R&D) funds usually generated from current sales, debt equity collateralized by plant and facility (fixed assets), or government grant money such as available in the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program. Therefore, Square II as an area of potential market entry becomes less desirable than Square I for firms desiring rapid movement into the market. On a positive note, universities that interact with industry provide an extremely valuable resource base for research and development.

Square III, market development in new markets, can be a long term, high cost endeavor. The most logical move would be for an existing business to duplicate a profitable operation in a new area (town, county, state, or country). Many industry market development efforts are subsidized by local, state, and federal government with ongoing economic development initiatives. Market development as an initial focus for the newly establishing firm is costly in terms of time spent and money expended when more immediate cash flow is required. In many cases government economic development initiatives are successful, but this success must be weighed against the time involved as well as confidentiality issues involved with utilizing public money.

Square IV, vertical integration strategies, assumes the existence of an established firm already operating in the marketplace. Forward or backward integration requires additional resources, especially management, capital and manpower.

Square V, diversification involving new products and new markets, is the basis for the High Value Irrigated Crop Task Force initiatives in the North Dakota/Minnesota market study region. These strategies are very closely related to integration strategies. Various local, state, regional, and federal agricultural economic development efforts center on value-added commodity, specialty crop, and high value crop and industry development. Vertical integration as a value-added alternative for producers is well established in the market study area. Cooperatives for input purchasing on a high volume/low cost basis are a classic example.

Summary

This report identifies current potential wholesale buyers (firms) in the Chicago food market for use by readers in marketing and selling their commodities, products, and services. Readers may perform this function themselves or be prepared to effectively evaluate others who perform the function for them. The resulting database is presented in [Appendix A](#).

Information sources provided major category headings which were converted to submarket category and segment headings in this report. These include food brokers, food products, food service distributors, frozen foods-brokers/wholesale, frozen foods-processors, frozen foods-WWW, fruits and vegetables-wholesale, and

grocers-wholesale.

The Uses of Market Information section emphasizes the immediate and long term use of the compiled database. The immediate reader use is as a working list of wholesale buyer contacts. The longer term uses include properly conducted market surveys, in-depth segment studies and other strategic marketing management components including a customer analysis, competitor analysis, market analysis, and an environmental analysis that addresses factors affecting these food markets.

There are 1,681 identified potential buyers in the Chicago food market serving an estimated population of 7,077,935. This food market was categorized as follows: food brokers, 214; food products, 554; food service distributors, 11; frozen foods-brokers/wholesale, 42; frozen foods-processors, 11; frozen foods-WWW, 74; fruits and vegetables-wholesale, 160; and grocers-wholesale, 615.

The seven steps for market information use were presented. These are information gathering, surveying the identified buyers, organizing the results, analyzing the information, establishing and cultivating the prospective client pool relationships, making the sales transaction, and monitoring the working business relationship.

Various market entry strategies were discussed. These included enterprise development within a new or existing business entity, acquisition of another entity, strategic alliances, licensing, and venture capital. Growth strategies to be considered once you are established in the market were presented within the context of a matrix displaying growth in present markets, market development in new markets, vertical integration, and diversification.

Market identification, selection, and implementation are an ongoing process in business. Matching the pace of the market one enters is a vital key to success.

Glossary of Strategic Marketing Terms

1. Allowance

A grant made by a manufacturer to a wholesaler or by a wholesaler to a retailer for rendering services such as advertising and promotion.

2. Attributes

The characteristics by which products are identified and differentiated.

3. Benefit (product)

The value provided to a customer by a product feature.

4. Brand

A label, trademark, name, term, design, symbol, or other feature that identifies one seller's commodity or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The Trademark Act defines a trademark as "any work, symbol or device or any combination thereof adopted and used by manufacturer or merchant to identify their goods and distinguish them from those manufactured or sold by others."

5. Brand image

The perception of a brand in the minds of persons.

6. Cannibalization

Loss of sales in established products experienced by a firm resulting from its own introduction of new products that are partial or complete substitutes.

7. Channel leader

A channel member who influences the decisions and behavior of other channel members.

8. Channel of distribution

An organized network of agencies and institutions which, in combination, perform all the activities required to link producers with users to accomplish the marketing task.

9. Closing

The culmination of a sales presentation in which a sales person attempts to get a customer to commit to buying a product or service.

10. Comparative advantage

Economic concept where each area, county, state, region, or country will specialize in the producing and marketing of those goods in which it is most efficient.

11. Competition

Refers to rivalry among sellers trying to achieve such goals as increasing profits, market share, and sales volume by varying the elements of the marketing mix.

12. Competitive advantage

Exists where there is a match between the distinctive competencies of a firm and the factors critical for success within the industry that permits the firm to outperform its competitors.

13. Concentration

A measure of dominance of a market exercised by the top few firms in an industry.

14. Corporate culture

The patterns and norms that govern the behavior of a corporation and its employees, particularly the shared values, beliefs, and customs.

15. Cost plus

Method of determining the selling price of goods or services whereby cost is increased in an amount equal to an agreed increment to cost.

16. Dumping

The practice of selling a product at a lower price in a distant market other than at a home market.

17. F.O.B. (Free On Board)

Indicates that the seller agrees to pay the cost of placing the goods on board a carrier at a certain point. F.O.B. destination indicates that the seller pays the freight.

18. Food broker

Any person engaged in the business of negotiating sales and purchases of food products in commerce for or on behalf of the vendor or the purchaser. Someone who, for a fixed or percentage fee, arranges a sale but does not take title to the product. In negotiating a contract, a broker usually acts as an agent of the buyer or seller but not as an agent of both parties. Frequently, brokers never see or take title of the product they are quoting for sale or negotiating for purchase by the buyer. They carry out their duties by relaying offers and counter-offers between the buyer and seller until a contract is done.

19. Food product

Any product offered for sale for human consumption and nourishment. These products must meet the Food and Drug Administration's quality, packaging, storing, distribution and consumption standards to protect human health.

20. Food service

The dispensing of prepared meals and snacks intended for on premise or immediate consumption, except for the following products when other solid foods are not available: candies, popcorn, pretzels, nuts, and drinks. Further, vended foods qualify as food service only when tables or counters are available in the immediate area and a person with records of food receipts is present at the establishment.

21. Food service distributor

A food product merchant who bulk purchases food and food items for distribution to the food service

establishment market. Examples of types of food service establishments are restaurants, cafeterias, hotels and motels, retail store delis, local, state and federal building environments, the military, hospitals and other institutional users.

22. Forecasting

Estimating future magnitudes and trends of elements of business activity on the basis of historical data and/or predictions of coming environmental conditions.

23. Franchise

The privilege, often exclusive, granted to a distributor or dealer by a manufacturer to sell the manufacturer's products within a specified territory.

24. Frozen food processor

An industry participant who converts raw, fresh agricultural products to a different form and then freezes and packs the new product for resale.

25. Frozen foods-WWW

A World Wide Web classification category that includes intermediate processors, further processors, and distributors of frozen foods. [See definition for wholesale frozen food product handler (frozen food-brokers/wholesale) and frozen food processor.]

26. Generic brands

Products which are named only by their generic class.

27. Image

Consumer perception of a product, institution, brand, business, or person which may or may not correspond with reality or actuality.

28. Life cycle of product

The pattern of the sales volume of a product as competition and natural processes bring the product through maturity to decline, and eventually, extinction.

29. Market coverage

The number of available outlets in a given line of retail or wholesale trade, relative to a saturation level, that are marketing a manufacturer's brand in a given market area.

30. Market penetration strategy

The move by management to increase its market share held by current products in currently serviced markets.

31. Market potential

An estimate of the maximum possible sales of a commodity, a group of commodities, or a service for an entire industry in a market during a stated period.

32. Market segmentation

The process of subdividing a market into distinct subsets of customers that behave in the same way or have similar needs.

33. Market share

The proportion of the total quantity or dollars sales in a market that is held by each of the competitors.

34. Marketing information system

A set of activities for collecting and disseminating data about the present or prospective outlook for sales of a product.

35. Marketing mix

The mix of controllable marketing variables that the firm uses to pursue the desired level of sales in the target market. Four Ps – price, product, promotion, and place.

36. Markup

The amount of an increase in price over total unit costs.

37. Merchant

A person whose business is buying and selling goods for profit; trader; especially one in the wholesale trade who deals with foreign countries.

38. Opportunity cost

The cost attributable to doing a thing caused by foregone opportunities that are sacrificed in order to do this one thing.

39. Pioneering stage

A non-specific period early in the life cycle of a new type of product, during which the pioneers are trying to build primary demand for the product type more than secondary demand for their particular brands.

40. Primary advertising

Advertising whose purpose is to promote generic demand for products or services.

41. Product positioning

How consumers, users, buyers, and others, view competitive brands or types of products.

42. Psychographic analysis

Technique that investigates how people live, what interests them and what they like.

43. Pull strategy

Communications and promotional activities by the marketer to persuade consumers to request specific products or brands from retail channel members.

44. Push strategy

Communications and promotional activities by the marketer to persuade wholesale and retail channel members to stock and promote specific products.

45. Reach

The number of different persons or households exposed to a particular advertising media vehicle or media schedule at least once during a specified period of time.

46. Receiver

Anyone, whether a retail chain, a co-op, voluntary, wholesaler or terminal market operator, who receives product shipments from production areas for further distribution.

47. Retailer

Merchant middleman who is engaged primarily in selling to ultimate consumers.

48. Selective distribution

A form of market coverage in which a product is distributed through a limited number of wholesalers or retailers in a given market area.

49. UPC (Universal Product Code)

A national coordinated system of product identification by which a 10-digit number is assigned to products.

50. Wholesale frozen food product handler (frozen food-brokers/wholesale)

A wholesale merchant who specializes in buying manufactured frozen food products from a processor for resale to retail consumer outlets.

51. Wholesale fruits and vegetables handler (fruits and vegetables-wholesale)

A wholesale merchant who specializes in fresh or packaged fresh cut fruits and vegetables for resale to retail consumer outlets.

52. Wholesale grocer (grocers-wholesale)

A merchant who buys products from producers, processors, or other marketing intermediaries for resale to retail outlets.

[[CONTINUE](#)]

[[Appendices](#)]

[[Appendix A — Chicago Wholesale Food Market](#)]

[[Appendix B — Sample Survey](#)]

[[Bibliography](#)] [[Acknowledgment](#)]

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