

The Marketing and Development Division

The primary goals of the Marketing and Development Division are to provide West Virginia agribusinesses* with opportunities to market their products on a competitive basis, to assist with growth opportunities, and to explore and develop new market opportunities for various agriproducts produced in the state. Staff of this division serve as the primary liaison for the WVDA with many commodity groups, including beef cattle, dairy, poultry, produce, small fruits, honey, processed foods, sheep, swine, horses, aquaculture, apples, peaches and many others. This constant contact with these commodity groups allows Division staff to maintain the relationship with producers and buyers of these commodities, and to identify and develop marketing opportunities as they arise.

An area that continues to receive significant attention from the Marketing and Development Division is the assistance of the growth and expansion of small agribusiness in the state. West Virginia has seen phenomenal growth of these businesses due in part to the efforts of Division staff to assist these companies in establishing and growing their business.

A recent survey of West Virginia agribusinesses, conducted by the WVDA, showed that there are more than 400 West Virginia agri-businesses in operation. These businesses employ 1,500 people and have a revenue impact on West Virginia's economy of over \$70,000,000. In addition, the survey showed a 250 percent growth rate in the number of West Virginia agribusinesses in the last decade.

This division operates the **West Virginia Grown** program, a statewide, voluntary enrollment, product recognition program, and has 350 participants. The companies in this program consist of food, dried flower producers, bath and body care products, candles and herbal products. Agribusinesses involved in this program have product lines, that range from one product to more than 60 products, resulting in thousands of consumer goods in local markets.

During the past year, 93 new and existing agribusinesses have been assisted in developing products, labels, packaging, and making their products available for West Virginia consumers.

The WVDA, through this division, plan and execute the West Virginia Pavilion at the NASDA Food Export Showcase each year. Four West Virginia companies participated in the May 2001 event. In addition, training sessions through the Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA) organization were held twice for the purpose of training specialists in company recruitment for export readiness and for reverse trade missions. Two West Virginia agribusinesses participated in a reverse trade mission held in Nashville where buyers came from the Caribbean. Currently, one West Virginia agribusiness is participating in export readiness training in cooperation with SUSTA and the University of Alabama.