

Acknowledgements

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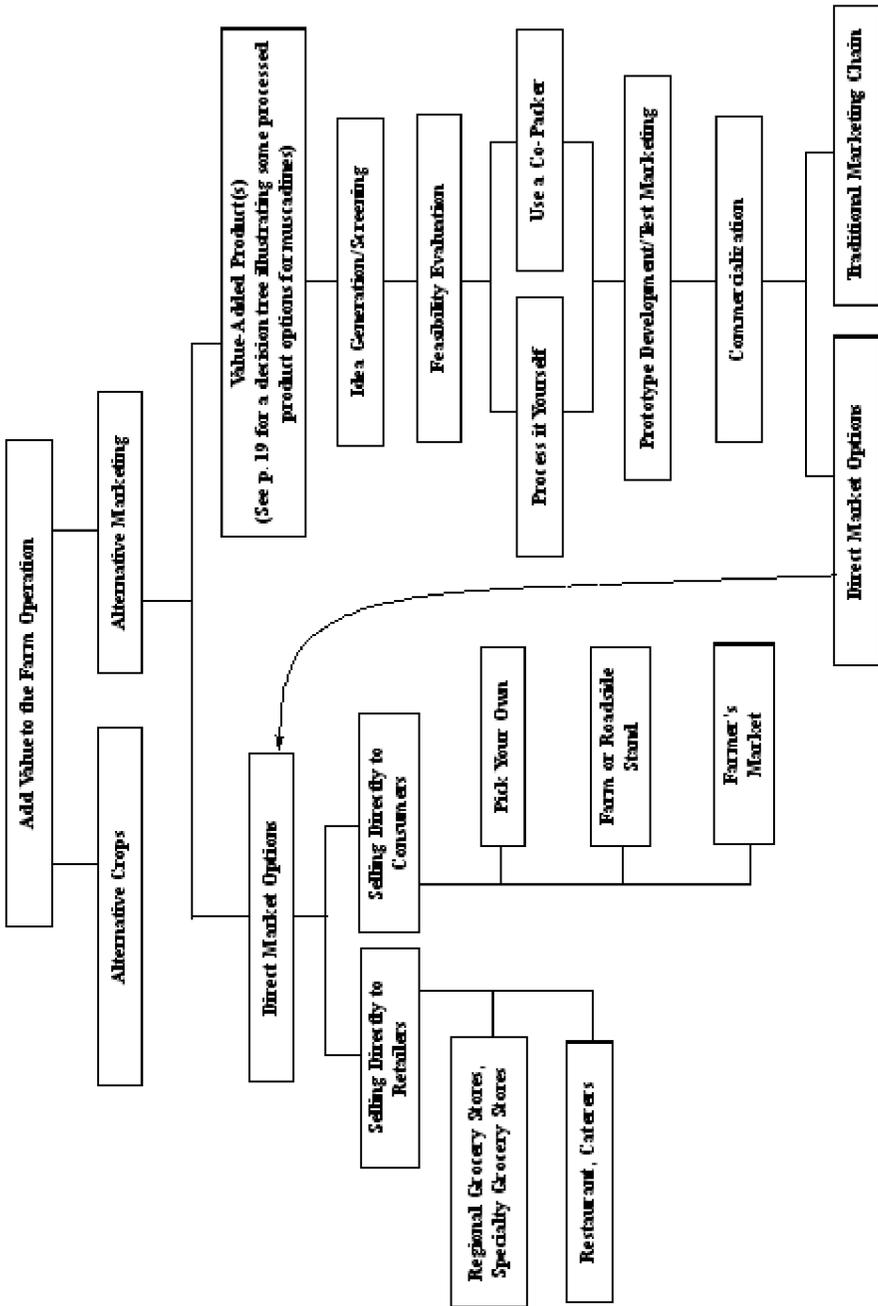
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Impact Statement

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture received a grant from the USDA's Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS) program. The purpose was to help small- and medium-sized farmers and entrepreneurs become more profitable and therefore add stability to the family farm. One approach to doing this is to investigate opportunities to enhance profits by adding value to traditional raw products.

This publication looks at efforts by the UA Grape and Wine Research Program to enhance the profitability of muscadine grapes, an alternative agricultural product. Included are discussions of research designed to develop the market potential of muscadines as fresh fruit and as value-added products such as juice, wine, sweet spreads, vinegar, and dried products. The skin and seeds of muscadines have traditionally been considered waste; however, recent research has shown that they contain nutraceutical components. Reports are included of research to quantify these nutraceuticals and to develop products containing them.

Figure 1. Decision Tree for Adding Value to a Farming Operation



Forward

Historically, agriculture has been a major contributor to the economy of the state of Arkansas. The state ranks eleventh in the nation in total value of agricultural products sold, but first in the nation in the production of rice, second in broilers, fourth in turkeys, and seventh in soybeans and grapes. Despite the agricultural success of the state, as a whole, many farmers with small- and medium-sized farms have found it very difficult to make a living from these farms and are looking for alternative agricultural activities to increase farm income.

For many small farmers, increasing profitability may result from the development of nontraditional agricultural enterprises. Although most farmers think mainly in terms of raising conventional crops like rice, soybeans, horticultural products, poultry, or cattle, and marketing these through established channels, nontraditional crops, markets, and/or adding value to products may be the key to success in today's agriculture.

The University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, was the recipient of a grant from the USDA's Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS) program. The purpose of the work funded by this grant was to provide research and training to assist small- and medium-sized farmers in the state in becoming more profitable and therefore to add stability to the family farm. One approach to doing this is to help identify alternatives to traditional farming operations. In the IFAFS publication entitled, "The Importance and Role of Value-Added in the Profitability of a Farming Operation," (Thomsen et al., 2004) a decision tree approach is used as a framework for discussing many of the factors involved in undertaking a new agricultural enterprise (Figure 1).

The concept of adding value to muscadine grapes, a nontraditional horticultural crop, is explored in this publication. The publication reviews research findings from University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture work on growing, marketing, and processing muscadine grapes. It is not intended as a "how-to" book on muscadines, but rather uses muscadines as an illustration of the kinds of information a farmer would need to collect to establish a nontraditional, value-added agricultural enterprise. Appendices contain more detailed information on the technology of muscadine grape processing, offer suggestions to help in developing value-added muscadine products, provide lists of helpful resources for those exploring alternative agricultural activities, and include a glossary of scientific and technical terms used in the text.