

DELIVERING THE **ULTIMATE** EXPERIENCE

*John Stanley will share tips and tricks during Great Lakes EXPO
and Michigan Greenhouse Growers EXPO.*

BY MADI JONES

Often described as being a GPS for horticulture and agricultural businesses, John Stanley offers a guidance system to lead farmers in the direction of success. Stanley is one of the world's leading horticultural consultants, interpreting global trends while providing farmers with practical, low-cost ideas to maximize current economic, customer service, and marketing trends to increase sales and grow profits.

The Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market EXPO and Michigan Greenhouse Growers EXPO are looking forward to welcoming Stanley to the event this year for several sessions, including a keynote address. The Great Lakes EXPO takes place Dec. 6-8 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Stanley and his wife own Chestnut Brae — a 1,000 tree sweet chestnut farm in Nanup, Australia. They focus on delivering the ultimate experience to their farm and learning more about their key consumers and how to market toward them.

"We believe in being 'price makers' rather than 'price takers.' As a result, we have created chestnut flour, chestnut ale, chestnut fed pork and more," Stanley says.

Moving forward since COVID-19, farm marketers have had to adapt to new techniques to implement in their businesses.

"Farm marketers are in the driving seat in the post-COVID world as we move from a global economy to a local economy," Stanley says. "This means that they have the opportunity to be proactive in promoting that they are local and are interested in helping the local economy. Consumers are looking for local initiatives — they want to know where their food comes from, how it is produced, who produced it and why it was produced that way."

Not only do farm retailers need to adapt to new techniques, but they also need to keep up with the latest trends.

JOHN STANLEY'S 'KEY CONSUMER TRENDS' DRIVING THE FARM MARKET BUSINESS

1. Locally sourcing produce and seasonal produce.
2. Creating the ultimate shopping experience that cannot be found in a supermarket.
3. Farmers networking with other local suppliers.
4. Experimenting in the kitchen and finding adequate resources and information.
5. Prioritizing health and well-being into farm retailers' practices.

Farm marketers should provide the "ultimate farm-market experience" by understanding what drives consumers to the farm. Develop an experience that will attract the targeted audience.

"The key to delivering the ultimate farm-market experience is interacting with the consumer rather than just serving them; it's not always just about the product," Stanley says.

JOHN STANLEY'S TOP FIVE PIECES OF ADVICE FOR A NEW FARM MARKETER

1. Identify who your customers are and understand what drives them when they shop.
2. Ensure you not only engage with your audience, but you enjoy and love to engage with them — otherwise you are making a business mistake.
3. What makes your business unique? Identify what makes you stand out and what you will be famous for.
4. Create a retail environment that works and tailors to your consumers' needs.
5. Compare other businesses outside of farming to provide a "guide" of what your consumers expect when shopping.

It is important that farm retailers improve their engagement with existing customers to further build their business. Stanley recommends improving engagement by training the team in its core values, enacting an engagement policy within the business, and knowing the average sale-per-customer and how to increase profit.

With success can also come challenges. Stanley notes that some challenges within the industry could include supply chain issues, lack of staff, food shortages and inflation worldwide, as well as climate change.

Looking to bring in the next generation into your business to keep their market thriving? Stanley suggests letting the next generation "make their own decisions, their own mistakes and their own success."

Learn about this — and more — at the 2022 Great Lakes EXPO. Visit www.glexpo.com to stay up to date as more details and speakers are announced. The popularity of agritourism continues to increase — check out additional agritourism updates in the redesigned Farm Market Hall. [gpn](#)

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