Imagine a roadside stand that offers abundant fresh produce, consumer information, crop-management consultations, and a cornucopia of agricultural supplies and equipment. That’s the idea behind AgMap—a free, on-line directory of Pennsylvania agricultural businesses. From alpacas to zinnias, AgMap brings a world of products and services to your doorstep.

**A boon to business**

Often, businesses suffer because of lack of time and resources for effective marketing and advertising. In addition, many quality, rural businesses are in remote, hard-to-find locations. AgMap is a virtual storefront for agricultural businesses; currently thousands are listed. With access to a computer and the Internet, consumers can meet their agricultural needs, and agricultural businesses, producers, and organizations can get the word out about their products and services. Businesses without Web access can visit their local cooperative extension office for assistance.

AgMap is also an effective tool for marketplace analysis, helping businesses find their niche in a location where they can prosper. Besides serving individuals, the Website also bolsters visibility—and profitability—for Pennsylvania’s agricultural industry, which is ranked second in the nation in direct-marketing sales.

http://agmap.psu.edu
AgMap features

Easy search for consumers
To use AgMap, simply enter a name or product in the search box. The search yields a list of businesses. Because AgMap utilizes geospatial technology, you can narrow the search by location, including proximity to zip code or county. For example, users can search for fresh-market strawberries within 30 miles of their home, or find live-cut Christmas-tree vendors within a selected county. The identified businesses each have their own link, providing descriptions and pictures of the business. Products and services are described and interactive locator maps, contact information, business hours, and more are provided.

Consumers can also receive email updates about the businesses that interest them; these emails are sent out whenever a business they subscribe to updates its listing or posts something new.

Facilitates business growth
Business users are finding AgMap to be more than a great marketing tool; it is also a great facilitator. If you’re a grower, finding pest-control or nutrient-management specialists in your area is just a click away. Landscapers can find local supplies of mulch and native plant stock. AgMap facilitates communication among businesses.

Where a business is located often can mean success or failure. AgMap facilitates market analysis by identifying the spatial distribution of a business’s competitors, and it helps them find support industries in the selected area. A furniture maker, for example, can identify a “gap” in the furniture market in a particular area, and locate wood supplies and finishing materials nearby.

Classified ads
Businesses can list classified ads on AgMap in three different categories: For sale, Wanted to buy, and Help wanted. Businesses can quickly post help-wanted advertisements—as many as they wish—to find employees. Job-seekers can tap into a wealth of agriculture-industry related job opportunities. For anyone interested in a job listing, it’s easy to contact the potential employer directly. And unlike the tedium of scrolling through a newspaper’s classified ads, users can scan AgMap classifieds based on keywords and location.

A bounty of information
AgMap provides a portal to a world of educational and agriculture-related news and ideas. Many Websites post new information every day. However, searching individual Websites is a ponderous process that is too time-consuming for most people. AgMap automatically scans other sites for cutting-edge, relevant news postings. Users can search the organized results by keyword and find desired articles. AgMap does not store the articles; it simply redirects the user to the proper Website.

Sharing ideas
AgMap hosts a community forum that allows consumers and business people to post questions, problems, challenges, and other topics for discussion. Topics are grouped by category, and users can search for past discussions by keyword. Many commonly asked questions regarding products, management, or other issues are addressed by experts who provide information that is instantly available to whomever logs on. AgMap regularly solicits commodity and discipline experts from industry, academia, and cooperative extension to provide reliable information to consumers and business owners.

Getting started
Listing a business on AgMap is free to all Pennsylvania businesses, and it’s easy. Business owners can set up their AgMap account by visiting the Website (http://agmap.psu.edu) and acquiring a secure user

“We’ve had over a thousand referrals from AgMap in the last year. AgMap is working for us, even when we’re not!”
Tom Haas, Cherry Hill Orchards in Lancaster County, sells retail, wholesale, and “pick-your-own” fruit and vegetables.
The benefits of AgMap

... for producers, service providers, organizations

- **Increase your visibility**
  Even the smallest business, service provider, or organization can be listed on AgMap for free. In many cases, it’s their only Web presence.

- **Get comprehensive access**
  Any business, whether listed on AgMap or not, can search for other businesses, services, and products.

- **Analyze markets**
  Helps businesses find competitors and locate voids in services where new businesses might be successful.

- **Evaluate your Website**
  AgMap provides individual business statistics that tracks visitors to your site.

- **Post classified ads**
  Advertise jobs and services.

- **Find expert advice**
  Discuss issues and find expert advice on the community forum.

- **Get current information**
  Access the latest agriculture news from around the state.

- **Communicate directly**
  Producers and agriculture-service industries can communicate directly.

... for consumers

- **Instantly locate products and services**
  Products and expertise may be “right next door,” yet difficult to find unless you know where to look.

- **Search classified ads**
  Find your next job or search for a product.

- **Receive updates**
  “Subscribe” to business sites that interest you and receive email updates about new products or services.

- **Monitor land-use trends**
  People who work in state and local government and the private sector who are interested in land-use issues can tap into the AgMap database to track changes in the agricultural industry over time.

name and password. Once logged in, they can add and edit their business information as often as they wish, and even add other businesses they operate. The entry and editing process is user-friendly, consisting of a seven-step, wizard-style interface that collects pertinent information such as location, contact information, type of business, hours, and detailed descriptions of available products and services. Once the information is entered, AgMap automatically builds a custom Web page. Businesses can include an email link and Website address (URL), allowing consumers and other businesses to contact them by clicking on the links.

Business owners can evaluate the effectiveness of their listing by accessing advanced user statistics available on AgMap. They can see how many people have viewed their site each month, search keywords that have led people to their site, and more.

Getting the word out

As more people go online to shop, search for information, and find like-minded people, AgMap is becoming a stronger direct-marketing force in Pennsylvania’s burgeoning agricultural industry. To fully exploit the power of AgMap, however, people need to know about it. AgMap’s developers are actively promoting it, getting the word out via radio, press releases, and conferences. Trade shows have been particularly effective. With their topical, field-related themes, these events allow for audience-specific promotions of particular features of the site. Many event attendees sign up for AgMap on the spot, and the AgMap presence at shows encourages direct feedback about the site.

“Alpacas are a relatively new product and AgMap gets our message out to people. It was very easy to sign up. It takes just a few minutes and already we are seeing results.”

Ed Friedman,
Mountain Edge Alpacas in Centre County
Internet search engines, such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN direct many people to AgMap. Once at the site, consumers and businesses can quickly find products, services, and information they need. And business owners enrolled in AgMap reap the rewards of increased site traffic, getting broad exposure—free of charge—for their business.

Future growth

In the near future, AgMap will add an events calendar, allowing users to search for events by date and location. Soon, a new users’ community will allow site visitors and business owners to communicate with AgMap staff, Penn State extension agents, and each other. Saved searches will alert users to new businesses matching their search criteria. A publications section will connect the AgMap database to PSU’s extensive library of cooperative extension publications. Other states have expressed interest in AgMap, so it may be extended to include areas outside of Pennsylvania.

AgMap is unlike any other existing agricultural service. Farmers, business owners, and consumers all reap the rewards from this innovative use of the Web. It’s free, it’s convenient, and in the words of Russell Redding, deputy secretary of administration for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, “The simple thing to do is sign up. Put yourself on the map and make yourself available to the world.”