

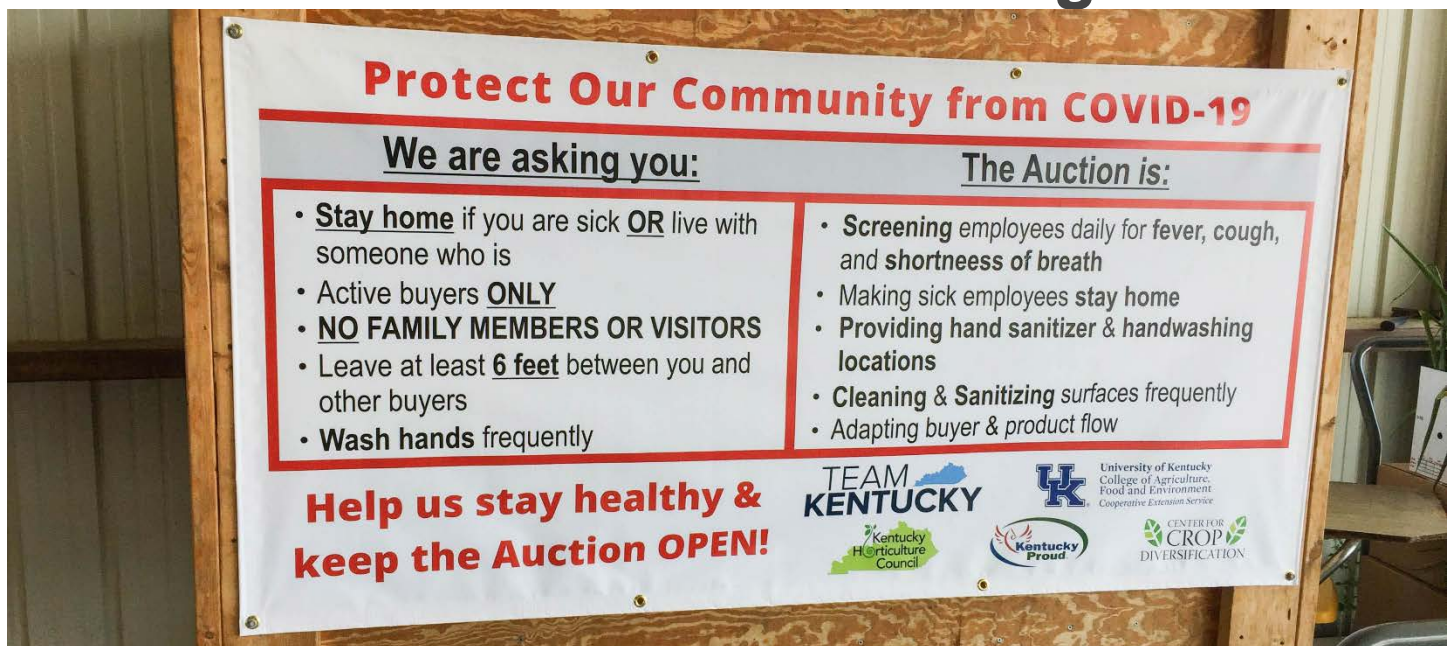
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Produce Auctions Have Seen Higher Prices Amid COVID-19 Challenges



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Like all agricultural businesses operating in the midst of the challenges posed by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, produce auctions have had to make some adaptations to comply with social distancing and other recommendations and mandates. The auction activity typically involves large crowds and business as usual has been a challenge. Auctions have countered with expanded order buying, drive through auction formats similar to the Dutch flower auctions, and even exploring added delivery services from the auction.

Despite some of the challenges, and the shifting market landscape (including decreases in restaurant and farm-to-school purchasing), auctions are generally seeing considerably higher prices and overall sales volume in 2020 so far. Most of the auctions operating in Kentucky report their prices, which

are then posted to the UK Center for Crop Diversification Website. Below you'll find a comparison of prices in 2020 as compared to last year for Tomatoes, Strawberries, and Green Beans sold through the two largest auctions in Kentucky.

Fairview Produce Auction Monthly Average Prices

		2020	2019	% Difference
Tomatoes (per lb)	April	\$3.14	\$3.07	2.3%
	May	\$2.76	\$1.84	50.0%
	June	\$1.92	\$1.10	74.5%
Strawberries (per pt)	April	\$3.54	\$2.53	39.9%
	May	\$2.60	\$1.74	49.4%
	June	\$2.62	\$1.92	36.5%
Green Beans (per bushel)	May	\$47.28	\$50.88	-7.1%
	June	\$41.22	\$30.27	36.2%

Lincoln County Produce Auction Monthly Average Prices

		2020	2019	% Difference
Tomatoes (per lb)	May	\$2.52	\$1.66	51.8%
	June	\$2.16	\$1.47	46.9%
Strawberries (per pt)	April	\$2.46	ND	-
	May	\$2.55	\$2.07	23.2%
	June	\$1.92	\$2.05	-6.3%
Green Beans (per bushel)	May	ND	\$40.75	-
	June	\$70.65	\$38.32	84.4%

These considerably higher prices for almost all commodities have offset a slight dip in the number of units sold, but have resulted in overall much higher total sales for the auctions. This may be attributable to an overall increased interest in local product or an increase in the number of small buyers looking for extra income through roadside resale stands. One major potential challenge in the second half of 2020 are the possible impacts of the ongoing pandemic on fall agritourism operations. These businesses buy large volumes of the pumpkins and fall décor items sold at produce auctions. Auctions from New York to Missouri have steadily expanded in number and scale, including the now 6 auctions in Kentucky.

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