



## SUCCESS STORY

# A Farmers' Market — On the Internet

### **An online market brings together small farmers and large buyers**



Photo: Dmytro Chernyak

Volodymyr Zaitsev, the owner of Chipolino in Odessa, checks the Web site three times a day.

***Within six months, the Web site had become the number one food and agricultural information source in Ukraine, attracting 350–400 companies a day.***

In 2004, Yaroslav Mayovets, a farmer from western Ukraine, faced a difficult marketing dilemma. He had a great carrot harvest, but so had many of the farmers in his region. Rather than selling it for a very low price, he looked for an alternative strategy and found the USAID-supported online marketing system.

Though skeptical, Yaroslav called the system's Lviv regional office and offered his carrots for sale. To his surprise, in a few days he got a few phone calls, including one from Mohyliv-Podilsky cannery, which signed a contract with Yaroslav after sampling his product. While other area farmers had to throw away their crops or used them as cattle feed, Yaroslav's 65 tons of carrots brought him 32,500 hryvina (\$6,526) in revenue.

The system is simple: a farmer places a bid by phone with a regional operator, who enters the size and price of the bid and the farmer's contact information on the Web site ([www.lol.org.ua](http://www.lol.org.ua)). There, processors and wholesalers can seek out the produce they need and contact the farmers directly to agree on price and quality issues and sign a contract.

This process has been extremely effective for both farmers, many of whom don't have access to the Internet, and buyers, many of whom do. Eighty-five percent of the farmers who placed bids on the site received phone calls from interested buyers, and more than half of them sold their produce. During one six-month crop season, the system logged produce sales of more than \$5.7 million — a real boost to farmer income.

The Web site that started out with only 10 visitors a day became, within six months, the number one food and agricultural information source in Ukraine, attracting 350–400 companies a day. Today, the site's exclusive and frequently updated information has made it well-known to fruit and vegetable businesses throughout Ukraine, generating about 35,000 visits and 170,000 hits per month.

#### **Telling Our Story**

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