

“Increasing Direct Market Access, Communication and Nutrition by Connecting Producers to Consumers and Producers to Producers”

Final Narrative Report
12-25-G-0340 – Harvest Connection (Phase II)

- **Outline of the issue or problem.**

Communication is one of the main barriers of farmers marketing their products to consumers, particularly chefs. This grant allowed the Missouri Department of Agriculture and the University of Missouri-Columbia Food Circles Networking Project to partner in developing a farmer-chef program.

- **How the issue or problem was approached via the project.**

The two partnering agencies identified a need for a communication network between farmers and chefs, piloting in the Kansas City area. The partners developed the Harvest Connection Program.

Harvest Connection, with funds from USDA, contracted an employee to work part-time at the University Outreach and Extension Office in Warrensburg, MO. One of the networkers for the Food Circles Networking Project is also housed at the same office.

Each week, Harvest Connection compiles supply lists from farmers into one document then faxes or e-mails that information to chefs in the Kansas City area, who are demanding local products.

Through Harvest Connection, other services were begun for the farmer-chef program. Regional farmer workshops were held throughout Missouri to encourage the awareness of chefs who want to buy from local producers. Chefs were invited to give presentations to farmers. The chefs spoke about why they are interested in buying from local producers, the logistics of working with chefs, and products they are interested in.

Harvest Connection also started offering farmer-chef meetings. Farmers and chefs were invited to meetings to communicate one-on-one about what farmers could supply and what the chefs needed. These meetings are held at restaurants where farmers bring seed catalogs and chefs bring their wish lists.

- **Contribution of public or private agency cooperators.**

The Missouri Department of Agriculture partnered with the University of Missouri Food Circles Networking Project and University Outreach and Extension to serve farmer and chef clients. The cooperating agencies continue to communicate by sharing farmer-chef program demand and data.

- **Results and conclusions.**

Because of the efforts of the cooperating agencies, there is an increased demand of local products from chefs. However, farmers who are direct marketing to chefs, can not meet that demand. Therefore, cooperating agencies are identifying means of communicating the needs for farmers to sell to chefs.

Another result of Harvest Connection has been increased media attention of farmers and chefs. Numerous articles about Harvest Connection have been printed in newspapers throughout the state.

Lastly, the pilot area for Harvest Connection, Kansas City, has increased demand and awareness of the farmer-chef program to other areas of Missouri. St. Louis, Springfield, Columbia, Joplin, the Lake of the Ozarks, Branson, and other areas have been added to the Harvest Connection communications fax. A farmer-chef meeting was held in Springfield, and one is currently being planned for St. Louis.

- **Current or future benefits to be derived from the project.**

Harvest Connection has increased the demand of local products from chefs. This demand has opened markets for current farmers who are direct marketing to chefs and to other farmers who are looking for markets.

By nurturing relationships between farmers and chefs more consumer dollars are kept in Missouri.

- **Additional information available (publications, speeches, or other documents).**

Harvest Connection compiled a listing of restaurants in Missouri that sell local products, because of the current budget situation the publication has not been printed. The cooperating agencies are identifying alternate means of printing or communicating the listing.

Contact for further information about Harvest Connection, please contact:

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