

The **Coalition of Florida Farmworker Organizations, Inc.** of Florida City, FL received \$54,674 to establish a centralized, open-air farmers market that will serve citizens of southern Miami-Dade County; train farmers/vendors; and promote greater consumption of locally grown products among low-income residents.

[Final Report FY10](#)

FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

DATE: 12/5/12

RECIPIENT NAME: Coalition of Florida Farmworker Organizations, Inc.

TITLE OF PROJECT: COFFO'S Harvest Farmers' Market

GRANT NUMBER: FL. 155-2010-G-1141

LOCATION (City/State) Florida City, Florida 33033

Project Summary

For over thirty years, small farmers have been steadily displaced with full scale efforts to “industrialize” U.S. food production. This trend has resulted in extreme competitive advantages enjoyed by only the larger food producers and packing houses. As a consequence, the produce of small farmers and growers are the last to be sold at prices way below what they invested and in many cases have to pay the packing house for storage for produce that was not sold. Additionally, there are some vegetables (tomatoes) that are picked green are stored and gassed until they are ready for distribution. This system degrades the freshness and adds to the retail price that is absorbed by the consumer.

Project Approach

COFFO organized a centralized scalable open air farmers market that economically assisted small farmers and promoted a greater consumption of locally grown agricultural produce in South Miami Dade County.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

From February 5, 2011 thru May 31, 2012 we had 93 farmers markets. Although we operated on all Saturdays, there were a few months when we opened on Sundays as well. That is why the number is higher than the actual number of Saturdays.

The total number of small farmers involved were 31, but the average participation at the farmers market was 12. This was due to the type of crops that were available due to the growing season and the type of crops that the growers were planting.

We had access to a wireless EBT machine and all the vendors were oriented on the process and trained on how to use it. Most of the consumers that took advantage of the EBT machine were food stamp recipients. About 85% of the consumers that visited the farmers market were low income consumers.

Originally weekly meetings were held the Monday after the farmers market day to discuss the pro’s and con’s of the event and plan for the next event. During those meeting discussions were around promoting and advertising the event and suggesting activities that would draw consumers to the market.

Beneficiaries

Consumers

- Fresher and healthier low-priced produce.
- Greater variety of food commodities than would otherwise be available at public food distribution markets.
- In some cases a choice in purchasing organically grown produce at a reasonable price.
- Supporting the local economic structure.

- The benefit of being able to use their food stamps to purchase produce at a reduced price.
- Learning about fruits and vegetables. Attachment A.

Vendors

- Selling directly to consumers at prices that will supplement their income.
- Involving the family in the business.
- Acquiring producer to consumer marketing skills.
- Knowledge on the use of EBT machine to increase their sales.
- Exposure to the consumer and other businesses involved in the produce arena.
- Being competitive in marketing their produce. See Attachment B.

Lessons Learned

In order for a farmers' market to be successful it has to include vendors that sell other products that will draw consumers. If other vendors are going to sell food for consumption at the site, they have strict rules on what can be sold, how it had to be processed and maintained. There are also restrictions on how a vendor can display their produce. They may not cut any fruit or offer samples.

The location of the farmers' market must be easily to locate and one must consider the consumers that it is going to target. Advertising and promotion is key. There should be funds available to promote the market regularly.

Competition can be a problem within the market and outside. In the case of South Florida, there are numerous stands along Krome Avenue that sell not only the one or two produce that they grow but also produce that they get from brokers. This is a problem for a true farmers' market that sells only what is grown locally.

Additional Information

One should look to work with Farm Bureaus, the County and local organizations that celebrate events where farmers can set up their booths and sell their produce. One should also think about having events for children at the farmers markets so that it draws consumers. Consumers are also looking for values so one should offer discounts or other ways of drawing them in. See Attachment C.

Contact Person

Arturo Lopez, Executive Director
Coalition of Florida Farmworker Organizations
(305) 246-0357
Arturo.lopez@coffo.org

~~May~~
FMPP Activities for the Month of ^{JUNE} ~~May~~, 2012

This month we had three (4) farmers market Saturdays at the 38 NW 7th Avenue, Homestead site. The Community Outreach Program continues to support the effort of the vendors and is still allowing the use of the property at no cost.

Although the season is coming to an end, vendors are still producing some vegetables and working with fruit growers who are not vendors, to sell their vegetables. This will continue until October or November when the growing season starts.

We also experienced less purchases with food stamps and have temporarily cancel our EBT program to avoid penalty charges. When the growing season starts up again we will renew the use of the EBT machine.

We are still considering having an event at the Florida City site to see if we can generate participation from other parts of the County. We are also considering bringing other vendors (not growers) to see if we can entice other community persons to attend. We feel that once they are there they will purchase their fresh vegetables. Most Farmers Markets in the area are not real farmers markets. They have more none ag vendors and that seem to help attract persons.

To date we have operated a farmers' market 93 days.