

## **The Somali Bantu Community Farm's Mobile Farm Stand and New EBT Project**

The **Somali Bantu Zigua Community** of Boise, Idaho received \$49,162 to implement a new EBT program that increased sales of fresh, local, seasonally and culturally appropriate foods to members of the Somali refugee community in Boise.

[Final Report FY09](#)

**Date:** February 22, 2012

**Recipient Name:** Somali Bantu Zigua Community

**Title of Project:** The Somali Bantu Community Farm's Mobile Farm Stand and New EBT Project

**Grant Number:** 12-25-G-0930

**Location:** Boise, ID

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**Project Summary:** The Somali Bantu Zigua Community received an FMPP grant for the 2009-2011 project period. Their proposal was entitled "The Somali Bantu Community Farm's Mobile Farm Stand and New EBT Project." The SBZ community had been farming cooperatively for several years at the beginning of the project, and had noticed that few marketing outlets in Boise accepted food stamps as payment. Therefore, members of their ethnic community and of the wider refugee community were not shopping at farmers' markets and CSAs. SBZ began participating in the development of a new EBT program at our local farmers market. In addition, this grant funding enabled them to accept EBT payments for farm CSA shares, and to offer a weekly farm stand at one of the apartment complexes where many of the SBZ families live. The program increased access to fresh, local food in low income areas of our community, and increased the SBZ farmers' annual revenue.

**Project Approach:**

Funds were spent on infrastructural improvements that allowed SBZ the freedom to market their products at a variety of venues and to accept EBT cards. These improvements included the purchase of an EBT machine and related fees, construction of a small walk-in storage unit, and the purchase of a pickup truck to ease the transportation of produce and market supplies. Two farmers were paid to coordinate and staff the CSA pickup, mobile farm stand, and management of the grant funds. A volunteer accountant assisted with financial management.

The EBT accessible CSA and weekly mobile farm stand were advertised through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, newspaper ads, and word of mouth.

**Goals and outcomes achieved:**

The SBZ farmers are now equipped to accept EBT cards for payment for purchases at any location.

Twelve EBT families were served through our CSA and received a weekly bag of produce paid through their EBT cards. CSA revenue for EBT families was about \$5000.

Weekly mobile farm stand was offered at the Latah Apartments, an 84-unit complex. Earnings averaged \$50 per week for about 12 weeks each year, for a total of about \$1200.

Total farm earnings reported for the SBZ farm were about \$10,000 in 2010 and \$15,500 in 2011.

Purchase of a pickup truck, market tents, tables, and supplies, and construction of a small walk in cold storage unit improved the SBZ's marketing capacity to both EBT and cash customers. Produce left from markets was able to be stored and re-sold. Farmers were able to transport goods easily between the farm, farmers' markets, and CSA pickup point. Farmers became more independent of the Global Gardens Refugee Farmer Training Program, and are now managing almost all of their own farm and marketing operations. 2011 was their 5<sup>th</sup> year of production and 4<sup>th</sup> year of marketing. We expect these lasting investments to continue to help their business grow in future years.

Farmers gained experience in managing grant funds and are now more prepared to apply for and manage future grants.

Two farmers were afforded part-time jobs and supplemental income through this opportunity. Both farmers gained new job skills including financial management, customer service, marketing, and community organizing.

Fourteen families and around 25 individuals within the SBZ community participated in farm operations, and consumed fresh, healthy produce from the farm, free of charge.

**Beneficiaries:**

Project beneficiaries included 12 CSA families using EBT cards, 84 families (as many as 500 individuals) residing in the Latah Apartments who received access to a weekly farm stand, 14 Somali Bantu families who received fresh produce and the opportunity to work on the community farm, and 2 farmers who had part-time paid jobs through this grant. We plan to continue offering EBT access in the future and hope that many more families will benefit from access to fresh, local produce through EBT purchases. Three new EBT families are already signed up for our 2012 CSA. Infrastructural improvements will also continue to benefit the Somali Bantu farmers in future years.

**Lessons Learned:**

We had hoped to serve more than one apartment complex site through the Mobile Farm Stand program. This was not achieved because most of the farmers also work at other jobs, and are only available in the evening for harvest and marketing. Three evenings of harvest and one evening of CSA pickup, plus a Saturday morning market, left only one additional evening for marketing at an apartment complex. Farmers found that revenues were higher at the mainstream farmers' market, which also accepts EBT but attracts a much larger crowd, and through the CSA, where shares are generally pre-paid, except for the EBT shares. Farmers also found that a larger variety of products were marketable through the CSA and mainstream farmers' market. Customers within the Somali Bantu community and other refugee community tended to shop for only a few varieties of vegetables, including particularly some of the ethnic foods that are difficult to find at grocery stores. Many other vegetables that the farmers produce are unfamiliar to new immigrants. This was particularly true of some of the spring greens and other early

season crops, so farmers ended up waiting until later in the season to market warmer weather crops, such as tomatoes and corn, at the mobile market. Perhaps some nutritional and cooking education geared toward the refugee community would help with this problem, though that was beyond the scope of this project.

**Additional Information:**

The Somali Bantu Zigua farmers are supported by Global Gardens, a training program for refugee farmers at the Idaho Office for Refugees. They have worked with Global Gardens since 2008, receiving classroom and field training, marketing and general technical support. They are now considered “graduates” of the program, largely because of the independence afforded to them by this grant and the infrastructural improvements it funded.

SBZ also collaborates with Camille Beckman, a local business who owns the farmland that they use.

SBZ has a website at [sbzcoise.org](http://sbzcoise.org). Global Gardens’ website is at [www.idahorefugees.org/globalgardens](http://www.idahorefugees.org/globalgardens). Click on “media” for links to media coverage.

This project was featured on an “Outdoor Idaho” special on Idaho Public Television, on local food and farmers in Idaho. Video is available at this link: <http://idahoptv.org/outdoors/shows/eatingLocal/>

**Contact People:**

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**Photos:**



**SBZ Pickup Truck**



**One week’s CSA share**



**SBZ Farm**



**Mobile Farm Stand**