

FY 2012 Food Market Expansion in Food Deserts

\$95,883 to Cornell Cooperative Association of Jefferson County, NY, to: 1) begin two farmers markets and two CSA's, 2) support the purchase of local food in Jefferson and Lewis Counties by Federal food benefit recipients and local institutions, 3) educate food service directors of local institutions in the use of local foods, 4) increase direct market opportunities to farmers through training, education, networking, and technical assistance, and 5) assist low-income consumers in the use of Federal food benefits at the markets, increasing the consumption of healthy foods in a food desert.

Final Report

**Farmers' Market Promotion Program
Final Performance Report
For the Period of October 1, 2012 – March 31, 2015**

Date: March 25, 2015

Recipient Name: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County, NY

Project Title: Food Market Expansion in Food Deserts

Grant Number: NY-123-2012-G-1610

Project Location: Watertown, NY (Jefferson & Lewis Counties)

Year of Grant Award: 2012

Amount Awarded: \$495,883

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Program Summary:

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County's Food Market Expansion in Food Deserts project increased farmers' revenues by increasing direct marketing opportunities and increased access to healthy foods in the food desert. The project provided training, education, networking, and technical assistance. The following goals were accomplished:

- Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and WIC Vegetable & Fruit check participation by farmers and redemption by consumers increased by 25%.
- Through the production and distribution of local food guides, over 50,000 consumers know the location of direct marketers in the area.
- Over 50 producers utilized local food guides to direct market healthy products.
- Over 100 farmers increased their knowledge of Direct Marketing Best Practices.
- 3 farmers' markets or roadside stands opened in the food desert area.
- 2 CSAs began operation.
- 5 institutions now purchase consistently from local producers.

Goals and Objectives:

Put very simply, there were farmers who wanted to direct market their local products and individual, as well as institutional, consumers who wanted to purchase those products. The two county region lacked a conduit or support system to align supply and demand and produce revenue. Additionally, the project area has a large low-income population and extensive food desert areas, both in need of expanded opportunities to utilize available food resources, such as FMNP and SNAP, to purchase healthy foods. The following goals and objectives were outlined and achieved to meet the area need.

- FMNP and WIC Vegetable and Fruit check participation by farmers will increase by 15%
- FMNP redemption rates will increase by 15%
- Through coordination and support provided by the Farmers' Market Federation, SNAP acceptance by farmers

will increase by 20%

- Through coordination and support provided by the Farmers' Market Federation, SNAP use at farmers' markets and roadside stands will increase by 20%
- 50,000 consumers will know the location of all local direct marketers in the two county area, highlighting those in the food desert area, those who accept SNAP, FMNP and WIC Vegetable and Fruit Checks, and those who provide access to foods following the 2010 Dietary Guidelines, as evidenced by local food guide distribution
- A minimum of 50 producers will utilize a local food guide to direct market products that follow the 2010 Dietary Guidelines
- 100 farmers will increase their knowledge of Direct Marketing Best Practices through discussion groups and workshops
- A minimum of 3 farmers' markets or roadside stands will open in the food desert area, thus increasing farmers' revenue and increasing consumer access to healthy foods
- A minimum of 2 CSAs will begin operation in the food desert area, thus increasing farmers' revenue and increasing consumer access to healthy local foods
- A minimum of 5 institutions will begin purchasing from local producers, thus increasing farmers' revenue and increasing consumer access to healthy local food options

Accomplishments:

- By the end of the project, FMNP and WIC Vegetable and Fruit check participation by farmers will increase by 15%. In 2012, there were 41 FMNP participants and 10 WIC Vegetable & Fruit participants. In 2013, there were 50 FMNP participants and 14 WIC Vegetable & Fruit participants. In 2014, there were 44 FMNP participants and 22 WIC Vegetable & Fruit participants. This is an overall increase of 28%.
- By the end of the project, FMNP redemption rates will increase by 15%. In 2012, Jefferson County's redemption rate was 48.6% and Lewis County's redemption rate was 54.33%. The redemption rates for 2013 were not available. In 2014, Jefferson County's redemption rate was 64.41% and Lewis County's redemption rate was 66.7%. This was an average increase of 15 percentage points across the region.
- By the end of the project, SNAP acceptance by farmers will increase by 20%. In 2012, there were 5 markets accepting SNAP through EBT. In 2013, there were 6 markets certified to accept snap. This is an increase of 20%. In 2014 there were 6 markets certified to accept SNAP. The 20% increase goal was met.
- By the end of the project, SNAP use by consumers at farmers' markets and farm stands will increase by 20%. In 2012, \$8127.55 was spent. In 2013, \$8215.70 was spent. In 2014, \$7,205 was spent. The goal of increased SNAP redemption was not met, but will continue to be worked on through other projects.
- 50 producers will use the local food guide to direct market their products. 50,000 consumers will know the location of all direct marketers. In 2012, 38 producers used the food guide and 25,000 were distributed to consumers. In 2013, 114 producers used the food guide and 52,900 were distributed to consumers. In 2014, 110 producers used the food guide and 52,000 were distributed.
- By the end of the project, 5,000 consumers will be provided education on buying local, effectively utilizing food resources, and following the 2010 Dietary Guidelines. In 2013 and 2014, 2,000 people have been provided

with direct education and 35,440 were provided indirect education.

- By the end of the project, 100 farmers will increase their knowledge of Direct Marketing Best Practices. 161 farmers have increased their knowledge.
- In Lewis County, 3 new farmers' markets or roadside stands will open. In 2012, there were 2 farmers' markets and 5 roadside stands. In 2013 and 2014, there were 3 farmers' markets and 2 additional roadside stands.

Beneficiaries:

While not meeting the "low-income communities" definition provided in the original grant guidelines, 16.2% of people are living in poverty and the median income is more than \$10,000 less than the median income for New York State. There are a significant number of individuals with limited incomes who need access to healthy food options. Some farmers themselves fall into this low-income population. There were multiple beneficiaries gaining multiple benefits as a result of this project.

1. 161 farmers and producers in Jefferson and Lewis counties receive group and individualized technical assistance and training resulting in the ability to expand their businesses.
2. As a result of expanded business opportunities, local communities in Jefferson and Lewis counties benefit from increased market opportunities, including farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, and roadside stands resulting in increased revenue.
3. Consumers benefit from increased opportunities to access fresh, local, healthy food sources, which results in improved health outcomes.
4. Consumers, especially low-income consumers in a food desert area, benefit from an increased ability to utilize supplemental food resources, such as Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons, WIC Vegetable and Fruit checks, and SNAP benefits, which results in individuals and families having adequate amounts of healthy foods.

Lessons Learned:

The funding from the Farmers Market Promotion Program provided the next steps forward in the local food movement. This project built on the work that had been done in Jefferson County and assisted growers in moving to the next level, thus increasing revenue and increasing access for consumers to healthy food options in multiple venues, including area institutions. Additionally, the project used the lessons learned through years of work in Jefferson County and applied them to Lewis County. Although also a strong agricultural community, Lewis County had not had the direct support necessary to assist farmers in growing their markets. One of the key components of success was the staff hired. Staff must understand the critical role they play in serving as a conduit between farmers and consumers. Their job is to connect the dots. Understanding both sides of the food equation is essential for success. One must know the needs and wants of the consumers as well as the needs and wants of the farmers. In many cases we were able to facilitate conversations between the two. Staff assisted farmers in understanding how to reach a variety of consumers from their next door neighbor to their local school cafeteria. Including all stakeholders and perspectives at the table is a must.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County continues to build on the successes of this project demonstrating continued sustainability. Strong community partners, successful collaborations and stakeholder buy-in developed as a result of quality work, commitment to goals, and demonstration of outcomes. As a result, the work is moving to new levels that include a meat cooperative, food hubs, and wide-spread farm to school efforts.