

New Jersey Department of Agriculture
FY 2006 Specialty Crop Block Grant (12-25-G-0537)
Final Report

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OUTLINE OF ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

The Garden State’s rich agricultural heritage is rooted in generations of family operated farms. New Jersey’s growers annually produce about one quarter of a billion dollars worth of the healthiest and freshest fruits and vegetables available anywhere.

The majority of these small farms are now almost exclusively supported through the production of specialty crops such as fruits, vegetables and horticultural products. Local access to the large affluent markets of New York City and Philadelphia has long been a major advantage for the marketing of those products. However over the past half century, due to the advances in the distribution, storage and retailing of produce and horticultural products, it is increasingly difficult for small family farms to compete as a seasonal supplier in today’s highly centralized 52 week a year produce and horticultural production and marketing cycle.

Access to grower training is required to ensure that small family farms can keep current with the advances and opportunities in the specialty crop industry. The grower training project which was a part of this grant was designed to provide entrepreneurial training and support services to enhance the business skills of business owners seeking to capitalize on emerging growth opportunities in and around the specialty crop sector. The project called for a combination of on-line support tools and traditional face-to-face instruction to help develop and build a growing community of “agripreneurs.”

APPROACH TO THE ISSUES OR PROBLEMS

While our traditional markets are still there, competition for those markets has become tougher. New Jersey's produce industry must continually work to rediscover its competitive advantages for continued access to our nearby markets to retain consumer loyalty. In response to this trend twenty-five years ago our department started a promotional and advertising program to assist growers to universally identify their products in our regional marketplace as locally grown products using the Jersey Fresh brand.

In the past few years our department has expanded the success of the Jersey Fresh brand with the introduction of the Jersey Grown brand for locally produced horticultural products. The Jersey Grown program helps retailers and consumers to recognize the local origins of the branded plants and demonstrate that they are accustomed to the State's growing conditions and have not been exposed to the possible rigors of long distance travel and protracted distribution processes.

A cornerstone to retaining access to our seasonal markets is consumer awareness of our specialty crops and retail utilization of our Jersey Fresh and Jersey Grown product branding materials. The Jersey Fresh Matched Funds program and Jersey Grown promotion projects conducted with Specialty Crop Block Grant funds were designed to increase the awareness of the seasonal availability of both produce and plants through promotional and educational activities.

The Jersey Fresh Matched Funds Program solicits grant applications from all specialty crop industry groups seeking to use the Jersey fresh brand to promote their fruit and vegetable products. To ensure that these funds are not used to support proprietary business interests only non-profit agricultural organizations seeking to use the Jersey Fresh brand are considered for funding. An internal NJDA review board considers the merits of the applications and decides on grant awards. The \$46,000 of SCBG funds utilized represented 36.8% of the total \$ 125,000 Jersey Fresh Matched Funds grants awarded in 2008.

This grower training project called for both web-based "online networking and knowledge management" tools and "expert advice and consultation" provided in a classroom setting in topics "determined by community member themselves." In response to unprecedented requests for advice and consultation from prospective entrepreneurs interested in the viability of starting full- or part-time beekeeping businesses, Rutgers provided both classroom instruction in the Basics of Beekeeping and created an on-line community around the topic of the "Business of Beekeeping."

HOW WERE THE GOALS ACHEIVED

Jersey Fresh Matched Funds

Sixty-four separate non-profit industry organizations received *Jersey Fresh* Matched Funds Grants through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Each grant recipient utilized their grant to promote the production of locally produced specialty crops using the Jersey Fresh brand for fruits and vegetables. All organizations that received grants were required to submit a notarized affidavit setting forth their grant expenditures and submit receipts, canceled checks or other proofs of performance in support of each expenditure.

Thirty-three of the recipients of the SCBG Jersey Fresh Matched Funds were community based farmers markets that used the grant funds to advertise the availability of locally produced specialty crops using the Jersey Fresh Brand name. Twenty-one of the grant recipients were 4-H, and other county based agricultural organizations that used the grant funds for promotional or educational programs supporting locally produced specialty crops. The remaining ten of the SCBG grant recipients were non-profit industry wide commodity promotion organizations that used their grants to promote locally produced specialty crops through the use of the generic Jersey Fresh brand name.

Each of the 64 recipient of the SCBG Jersey Fresh Matched Funds recipients received an average grant of \$718.75 effectively spreading the grants utilization across the greatest width of the specialty crop industry in New Jersey. Each recipient organization was required to provide an equal or greater amount, of their own funds for each Jersey Fresh Matched Funds program project. No in-kind expenses were accepted for the industry match.

Through this matching funds process the availability and impact of the SCBG funding was effectively doubled at the grass roots level of the specialty crop industry in New Jersey.

Jersey Grown Promotions

Through the use of television, radio and print advertising the availability, quality and utility of locally produced horticultural products were promoted directly to consumers. Television and radio shows and print publications that target the subject of gardening were selected to support consumer purchases of the state's important fall horticultural products produced for fall plantings.

Television

Channel 12 News, The Backyard Gardener, :30 and :10 second spots. 84 spots were purchased in July 2008 and the same number again in August 2008. A media buy for a total of 168 Jersey Grown television ads were purchased using SCBG funds.

Radio

WOR-AM, The Ralph Snodsmith Show, and 2 x :60 and a:10 second spot per week were purchased for three weeks in July 2008 and the same for two weeks in August. A media buy for a total of 15 Jersey Grown radio ads were purchased using SCBG funds.

Print

The Gardener News, The Born to Bloom, Jersey Grown Ad appeared in one half page ad and four ¼ page ads during the months of June, July, August and September. A media buy for a total of 20 Jersey Grown print ads were purchased using SCBG funds.

Promotion of the Jersey Grown brand has helped to substantially increase grower participation in the program. In the calendar 2007, prior to the expenditure of SCBG funds, 26 growers were certified by the NJDA to be eligible to utilize the Jersey Grown logo on their wholesale packing materials and on individual products. Throughout the course of the calendar year 2008, following the expenditure of SCBG funds an additional seven growers registered to use the Jersey Grown logo to help promote and sell their products.

That list of additional growers includes; Quinton Nursery in Salem, NJ, Cicconi Farms in Jackson, NJ, Mark Kirby Farms in Hillsborough, NJ, Laine Farms in Hillsborough, NJ, Thomas Zeng Farms in Ringoes, NJ, Copper Creek Landscape Mgt. Inc., in Frenchtown NJ, and Madden's Greenhouse & Nursery in Princeton, NJ. This represents a 26.9% increase in grower participation in the Jersey Grown program from the 12 month calendar year before the following the expenditure of funds.

So far in 2009 an additional five more growers are now participating that did not participate in either 2007 or 2008. Those growers are; Barlow Flower Farm in Sea Girt, NJ, Denny Wiggers Landscaping Co. Inc., in Paramus, Kuperus Farmside Gardens in Sussex, NJ, and Pittsgrove LLC in Pittstown, NJ.

Grower Training

Classroom presentations were delivered on core business topics required of beekeeping businesses, including: hive management, purchasing queen bees, assembling hives, opening and examining colonies, honey production, candle-making and other consumer products. The Bee-ginner's Beekeeping course was presented on the following dates and locations:

- April 10, 11 & 12, 2008 to 98 participants at the EcoComplex in Columbus, New Jersey
- May 15, 16 & 17, 2008 to 107 participants at Loree Building in New Brunswick, New Jersey

Although we do not have the figures for those that participated in the SCBG funding educational training a similar program, was offered by the Department in 2006, generating a large amount of interest. In 2006, 91 people attended the two Rutgers "Bee-ginner's Beekeeping" courses that were offered in that year. Out of those who took the course that year, 72 percent reported that they started keeping bees; 74 percent said they

intended to add more colonies; and, 78 percent joined the New Jersey Beekeepers Association (NJBA).

Assuming that the 2008 SCBG funded training yielded similar results; Of those who took the course funded by SCBG expenditures, 65 people have started keeping bees for the first time; 67 beekeepers intend to add more colonies; and, 71 new persons will join the New Jersey Beekeepers Association (NJBA).

Curtis Crowell, Secretary-Treasurer of the NJBA reported that, “Our numbers showed a definite improvement stemming from the year of the first Beginning Beekeeper program, which occurred at the same time that a groundswell of media attention focused on the plight of honeybees’ world-wide.” said Crowell. “The increase in beekeepers can only help farmers in New Jersey by adding to the pool of available pollinators so necessary for much of the food grown here, from blueberries and cranberries to vine crops and fruit trees.”

In addition, a one-day Growing Smart: Building Your Business training session was presented on February 11, 2008 to 10 participants at the Cook Campus Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey to help nursery owners, managers and landscape business owners improve profitability and develop business strategies to increase their value of their business and each customer.

A total of 215 growers received business development training through as a result of the expenditure of Specialty Crop Block funding.

Based upon the overwhelming demand for training related to business of beekeeping, Rutgers created an on-line community around the topic of the “Business 4 Beekeeper” using the Sakai distance learning platform. The site contains tools that include synchronous chat, asynchronous threaded discussion, and an electronic drop box to serve as a clearinghouse of high-value documents, such as tools and techniques for conducting affordable, highly targeted market research. Here is a screen shot from the Sakai site, which shows two of those market research guidance documents: “Customer Profile Development Worksheet” and “Determining Your Market Size.”

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Sakai portal. The address bar shows a URL from sakai.rutgers.edu. The page title is 'Resources'. Below the title, there are navigation tabs: 'Site Resources', 'Upload-Download Multiple Resources', 'Permissions', and 'Options'. The current location is 'Business 4 B keepers Resources'. A table lists various resources with columns for Title, Access, Created By, Modified, and Size. The resources include 'Business 4 B keepers Resources', '_Customer Profile Development Worksheet', 'Determining your Market Size', 'General Agri-business Planning', 'How to Post a Discussion Board Question.pdf', 'Introductory Sakai Presentation', and 'New Jersey Beekeepers Association Home Page'.

Title	Access	Created By	Modified	Size
Business 4 B keepers Resources				
_Customer Profile Development Worksheet	Entire site	David Breeding	Dec 3, 2008 1:21 pm	86 bytes
Determining your Market Size	Entire site	David Breeding	Dec 3, 2008 10:33 am	57 bytes
General Agri-business Planning	Entire site	David Breeding	Dec 4, 2008 1:16 pm	60 bytes
How to Post a Discussion Board Question.pdf	Entire site	James Morris	Dec 5, 2008 3:18 pm	385.7 KB
Introductory Sakai Presentation	Entire site	James Morris	Dec 5, 2008 3:19 pm	0.9 MB
New Jersey Beekeepers Association Home Page	Entire site	James Morris	Dec 5, 2008 2:45 pm	24 bytes
	Entire		Dec 5, 2008	48

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Results, Conclusions, Lessons Learned

Jersey Fresh Matched Funds Program

The Jersey Fresh Matched Funds program remains one of the most effective and wide spread programs in place to assist the specialty crop industry in New Jersey. Because the Jersey Fresh Matched Funds program funds non-profit industry organizations it is an important way to work at the broadest industry levels to ensure that the specialty crop industry grower organizations receive support at the grass roots level.

Jersey Grown Promotion

As horticultural products continue to be the largest agricultural sector in New Jersey it is important that we continue to develop the Jersey Grown brand name. The use of specialty crop funding for this purpose should yield significant benefits as this program continues to increase consumer brand awareness and industry utilization.

Grower Training

Based upon the grower feedback that was received there is a great deal of interest in entrepreneurial training for growers producing specialty crops. This is the kind of training that can really make a difference in the diversification of on farm income.

Progress for Long-Term Success

Jersey Grown

Since the late 1800's product branding has been recognized as one of the most cost effective tools for the long term success of the marketing of any product or service. Following the twenty year-one success of the Jersey Fresh brand, which enjoys high consumer recognition and industry utilization, the Jersey Grown brand was established four years ago. The goal of the Jersey Grown program is to establish another marketable brand name for use to identify the locally produced nature, and thereby added value, to any of the state's small family produced horticultural products meeting the program's quality standards.

An essential component of establishing brand recognition is consumer advertising. Jersey Grown is a relatively new brand; however as an easily recognizable extension to another widely recognized consumer brand, advertising of the Jersey Grown brand is both essential and highly effective. Through the use of SCBG funds a total of 203 advertisements were placed targeted at television viewers of, radio listeners to, and readers of media all directed at Gardeners. This SCBG project has helped to expand consumer recognition of the Jersey Grown brand extension, and has contributed significantly to the vital first step our department is taking to expand from industry brand awareness, with early adopters, toward achieving an early majority of industry brand utilization,

Jersey Fresh

New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country and also has the highest per capita income. Both of those factors contribute to very high land values, above average labor rates, higher taxes and higher insurance rates than perhaps anywhere else in the nation. Those factors contribute to making New Jersey one of the most expensive places to farm anywhere and therefore an increasing number of the remaining specialty crop farmers are looking for ways out of the traditional lowest cost producer volume pack commodity marketplace. In order to survive the transition to direct or niche marketing it is essential that New Jersey's specialty crop producers be able to develop and maintain access to local markets and the support of grass roots agricultural promotion and education organizations.

The Jersey Fresh Matched Funds grants awarded with SCBG funds were made available to the widest possible spectrum non-profit agricultural industry organization. Those eligible organizations then used the state's Jersey Fresh branding program for the generic promotion of locally produced specialty crops. The specialty crop industry support provided by the sixty-four grass roots agricultural organizations including ten local 4-H clubs and twenty-four community farmers markets, such as the one in Collingswood Borough, that received SCBG funds are essential to the current and future strength of the specialty crop industry in New Jersey

The number of community based farmers markets continues to grow each year in New Jersey in both urban and suburban areas. The SCBG funds that were used to support the promotion of those markets to the citizens of those communities can make the difference in their success or failure.

Grower Training

Participants in the grower training identified several new areas where future agriprenurial would be useful. Those areas included; Integrated Pest Management (IPM), intermediate bee keeping, local landscaping, small acreage organic farming.

Additional Information

See the attached `Agriprenurial' Training course evaluation summary

Financial Report

<i>Jersey Grown</i> Horticulture Promotion_	\$45,090.41
<i>Jersey Fresh</i> Matched Funds Program	47,000.00
Grower Training	14,301.57
Administrative	<u>10,644.99</u>
Total	\$117,036.97 =====

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