

**ABSTRACT**

Food and agriculture is Ohio's number one industry, accounting for nearly \$77.5 billion, and the state's specialty crop production plays a critical role in that ranking. To improve the competitiveness of Ohio produce, the Ohio Department of Agriculture requests \$122,689.29 in program funds under the Fiscal Year 2006 and \$122,689.29 in program funds under the Fiscal Year 2007 for six projects covering two key areas: increasing consumption and consumer awareness of Ohio-grown produce through retail and direct market outlet promotions, and creating new opportunities for producers of Ohio produce through wholesale buyer promotions.

**PROJECT PURPOSE**

Ohio's specialty crop industry plays an important role in the state's economy. Ohio ranks in the top 10 nationally for production of tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet corn, apples, and strawberries. In the past year the value of Ohio vegetables has grown 33 percent. Due to the increased cost of gasoline used in production, producers have cut back on marketing expenses. Each proposed project will increase the value of specialty crops through promotional and educational activities.

**POTENTIAL IMPACT**

Quality, accessibility, and variety play an important role in Ohio's expanding produce industry. Ohio is home to nearly 35,000 acres of fresh market vegetables and its commercial vegetable growers grow more than 35 different commodities. Ohio's geographic location makes the state an ideal source for produce. More than 60 percent of the U.S. and 50 percent of the Canadian populations are within 625 miles of Ohio, and in most cases Ohio producers can ensure quality, fresh produce delivered within 24 hours of harvest. The proposed promotions will assist Ohio's specialty crop producers to improve their competitive advantage in the marketplace, while increasing the value of the crops they produce.

# Final Report

## Retail and direct market outlet promotions

*Mobile Kitchen Promotion -- \$124,000 budgeted – project complete*

### Project Outline

There is a need to increase consumption and consumer awareness of Ohio-grown produce through retail and direct market outlet promotions. Educating consumers about the importance of purchasing local foods and incorporating them in their daily lives was thought of when creating the Ohio Proud mobile kitchen.

### Project Approach

The Ohio Proud kitchen is a 24' long mobile unit that began travelling around the state July 2009 promoting Ohio made and grown products through cooking demonstrations featuring Ohio's specialty crops. The kitchen is a great promotional tool that educates consumers on the availability of Ohio's bountiful agriculture industry as well as teaches them a variety of ways to prepare product. The project was delayed in the beginning due to the difficulty of locating a company to construct this type of unit. Since its construction, we have not had any problems or delays. A college intern was hired to manage the 2010 Ohio Proud kitchen schedule as well as travel to the events and work with the local chefs and commodities.

### Goals Achieved

The kitchen attended 31 events for 57 days during 2010 and reached 978,579 consumers. One of our major events is the 12 day Ohio State Fair. Please see the Ohio Proud kitchen schedule below.



## 2010 Ohio Proud Kitchen Schedule



[OhioProud.org](http://OhioProud.org)

### **January**

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27-29 Ohio Power Show, Columbus

### **May**

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15 Country Side Conservancy Farmers' Market  
22 Clintonville Farmers' Market  
29-31 Velvet Ice Cream Festival, Utica

### **June**

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10 Eat Local for the Globe, Cincinnati  
12 Faire la Cuisine, Granville  
16 Tuscarawas County Farm Bureau Business After Hours  
26 Union County Farmers' Market  
29 Pearl Market, Columbus  
30 Dublin Farmers' Market, Marysville

## **July**

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- 8 Reynoldsburg Farmers Market
- 8-12 Ohio Wine Festival @ North Market, Columbus
- 16 Guernsey County/Cambridge Farmers' Market
- 28-31 Ohio State Fair, Columbus

## **August**

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- 1-8 Ohio State Fair, Columbus
- 10 Lewis Center Kroger, Columbus
- 11 Crop Hop, Upper Arlington Farmers' Market
- 13-15 Blast Festival, West Chester
- 28 Clintonville Farmers' Market
- 31 Pearl Market, Columbus

## **September**

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- 11 Conservation Expo, Mechanicstown
- 13 Nationwide Children's Hospital Farmers' Market, Columbus
- 15 OSU Health Plan Rally for Wellness Health Fair
- 16 Reynoldsburg Farmers Market
- 19 Lunch on the Land, Cincinnati
- 24-26 Country Living Fair, Columbus
- 28 Pearl Market, Columbus

## **October**

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- 2 Alliance Farmers' Market Sustainability Event
- 8-10 Bob Evans Farm Festival, Bidwell
- 26 Pearl Market, Columbus
- 29 Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Bank, Columbus

## **November**

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- 12-14 Fabulous Food Show, Cleveland

### *Results, Conclusions & Lessons Learned*

The kitchen reached 978,579 consumers as it traveled 8,051 miles to 31 events in Ohio for a total of 57 days. The state plan indicated the kitchen would visit 100 events during the year. A goal of 100 days is a more reasonable target than 100 events. One reason is our participation at the 12 day Ohio State Fair which happens during prime time for county fairs and farmers' markets. Another reason is the kitchen schedule is limited during the fall and winter months due to weather and lack of produce availability. The kitchen visited several farmers' markets which are one day events usually on a Saturday and a few consumer selling trade shows which are two and three days. The kitchen will participate at more events during 2011 because we've had many requests already. As more people become aware of the kitchen, the requests increase each year. The number of events increased from 14 in 2009 to 31 in 2010.

We learned that consumers are interested in purchasing local products and want to incorporate them in daily dishes. They are very interested in learning how to cook certain

produce as many will not purchase the product if they do not know how to prepare it. This is why recipes are so important to distribute with the cooking demonstrations – especially at farmers’ markets. Consumers are getting back into their kitchens and cooking again!

Long Term Outcome

The kitchen will continue to travel the state promoting products that are made in Ohio and grown in Ohio. We plan to add new county fairs and farmers’ markets to our schedule each year. We have updated the “kitchen request form” to include more details about the events and what our expectations are with local foods and numbers of consumers we want to reach. Social media continues to be a tool used to market the Ohio Proud kitchen and its location along with our website.

Additional Information

Attached are photos, 2011 kitchen request form and kitchen instructions.

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***Ohio Proud Branded Campaign -- \$50,000 budgeted – Project completed.***

Project Outline

The Ohio Proud program was created in 1993 to create awareness of Ohio products. This program lacked resources which it needed to be successful. The Ohio Proud program did not have the opportunity to change with consumer trends. ODA staff met with over 200 industry stakeholders to identify the needs for a statewide marketing program. Results of these meetings are what created the re-branding of the Ohio Proud Program. The 2007 SCBG funds allowed us to re-launch the Ohio Proud program with a brand new logo and interactive website. As a part of the re-launch, ODA focused on recruiting farm and farmers’ markets by reducing the membership fee and offering banners and signs to showcase Ohio’s specialty crops. Thirty-two farmers’ markets are now members of Ohio Proud because of this effort. Funds were spent on point-of-sale items such as stickers, window decals, price cards, and banners which are available for retailers, restaurants, and farm and farmers’ markets. The following projects were completed under the umbrella of the Ohio Proud Branded Campaign.

### Project Approach

#### *New Ohio Proud Logo*

A brand new logo was created to meet the demands and requests of Ohio consumers and the agriculture industry. Consumer intercepts were conducted at 22 sites across the state of Ohio – 13 grocery stores and 9 farmers' and farm markets to determine consumer preference on an appealing logo.

#### *Ohio Proud Unveiling, April 2, 2008*

Governor Strickland and Director Boggs unveiled the new Ohio Proud logo and website at the statehouse. Nearly 200 attendees were able to sample Ohio Proud products at this event. Thirty Ohio retailers were in attendance to show their support of this program. The unveiling of the new and improved program allowed ODA to educate consumers and retailers about locally made and grown products. ODA staff also participated in store promotions at the retail level by building a large tossed salad with all Ohio produce topped with Ohio salad dressing which was served to the public.

#### *Website Redesign & Registration -- [www.ohioproud.org](http://www.ohioproud.org)*

A brand new interactive website with a new look allows Ohio Proud partners to do everything online from registering for events to editing their information and downloading the logo and special signage or order promotional items. The site also allows consumers to search for products/companies/farmers' markets through an online directory. ODA staff has an administration tool which allows them to showcase an Ohio Proud partner of the month, add feature stories, and recruit for programs.

#### *Ohio Proud Member Services*

Point-Of-Purchase materials were created for partners to use on their products and in their advertising to help identify their product as locally made/grown. Recipe cards, price cards and banners were created and are available for retailers, restaurants, farm markets and farmers' markets. This menu of services allows partners to choose those services that will be most beneficial for their company. The Ohio Proud Program acts as a marketing arm for our partners – especially the small to medium size companies who do not have the resources for a marketing department.

### Goals Achieved

Currently, we have 435 Ohio Proud partner companies which is the most partner companies since the inception of the program. The majority of the new partners are small specialty food companies with thirty-two of them being farmers' markets. This is an overall increase in membership of 133%.

### Results, Conclusions & Lessons Learned

We learned consumers wanted a logo that was visually appealing and represented Ohio agriculture. Following the Ohio Proud logo unveiling, many retailers highlighted locally grown produce in weekly circulars as well as promoted Ohio produce with in-store signage featuring the new Ohio Proud logo. The online registration has also made it easier for companies to join the program which has contributed to the 133% increase in membership since April 2008. A survey conducted by The Ohio State University showed that 56% of those consumers surveyed make their buying decisions at the point of purchase which is why signage at the retail level is so important.

### Long Term Outcome

The Ohio Proud website promotes all of our activities to our companies as well as Ohio consumers. Companies continue to download the marketing materials from our website to use in their marketing efforts. All printed marketing materials are sent to new companies as they join the program. Not only do we have the most Ohio Proud Partners since the inception of the program but the Ohio Proud logo is becoming used more widely with our Ohio Proud Partners because of this project.

### Additional Information

Point-of-sale items are attached.

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### ***Passport Program -- \$24,000 budgeted (\$499 balance)***

### Project Outline

The passport program was offered during the 2009 Summer/Fall tourism season. The goal of this project was to increase awareness and visits to Ohio's agritourism sites through a passport program conducted with The Ohio Magazine.

### Project Approach

The Ohio Department of Agriculture requested to create and operate a passport program with The Ohio Magazine. The Ohio Magazine developed, designed and printed materials for this project beginning April/May 2009. In addition to the passport, The Ohio Magazine also issued a special Farm and Farmers' Market section in their July 2009 issue which promoted Ohio's specialty crops in conjunction with the program. The Passport Program along with the Markets was also featured on Ohio Proud and the magazine's websites. Consumers began visiting and using their passports at Ohio farm/farmers' markets at the end of June which is when they received their July issue of the magazine. Signage and stickers were provided to the participating markets by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Participating consumers had the opportunity to forward their completed passport to ODA for a gift of Ohio products made from specialty crops. All passports had to be postmarked by December 15, 2009 in order to receive their gift of Ohio products. Items such as popcorn, jam, fruit butter, honey, maple syrup, candy and nuts were purchased from Ohio Proud partners with the 2007 SCBG funds along with a reusable grocery bag. This allowed ODA to promote the fall crops and agritourism sites who rely on Fall visits.

### Goals Achieved

We believe this project was successful because of our partnership with The Ohio Magazine as their 378,000 readers are between the ages of 35 – 54 and have an annual household income of \$100,000. This is exactly the demographic we wanted to target. As of December 31, 2009 we received 184 completed passports.

### Results, Conclusions & Lessons Learned

The passport program allowed us to promote Ohio farm and farmers' markets throughout the state to Ohio consumers. We learned the markets were very interested in participating in this program; however we need to explain the program to them earlier in the year. We are planning to conduct this project again during the 2011 season and will introduce it at the annual Farmers' Market Managers Network annual meeting in March. This project also educated consumers about the importance of purchasing local products. There is no way to determine if visits to the markets were increased because of this project. The measurable is how many passports were returned to ODA. We believe more markets will participate in 2011.

### Long Term Outcome

The Ohio Proud passport project is complete. We continue to recruit farmers' markets to the Ohio Proud program and distribute signage and banners to assist them with their marketing efforts. Social media is a marketing tool used to drive consumers to Ohio's agritourism sites. This project was such a success that many farmers' markets are interested in participating in a project like this again.

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### **Wholesale and distributor promotions**

***Buyers Tours/Local Food Trade Talks -- \$6,000 budgeted – project complete***

### Project Outline

The proposed activity will assist Ohio's specialty crop producers to improve their competitive advantage in the marketplace, through educating and creating awareness to wholesalers and distributors while increasing the value of the crops they produce.

### Project Approach

Through meetings with industry representatives, we learned that buyers are interested in procuring locally made and grown products for their establishments but do not have the time to spend days away from the office touring farms. The **Ohio Food Summit**

**featuring “Local Food Trade Talks”** program offered Ohio producers the opportunity to spend one-on-one time in one location with specific buyers. These local food trade talks allowed the producer to introduce their products as well as offer time for the buyer to explain their expectations. Governor Ted Strickland kicked-off the day to welcome attendees and thank the retail buyers for their commitment to the State of Ohio. Following the Governor’s welcome, Executive Director of the Ohio Grocer’s Association encouraged the buyers to spend time with each producer by visiting the table top displays and sampling product. Each Ohio producer had pre-scheduled meetings with buyers. In addition to the table top displays, meetings were organized between the buyers and producers similar to “speed dating.” Networking was also done during the lunch hour which featured local foods. Bobby Moser, Dean of The Ohio State University’s College of Agriculture talked about the importance of agriculture in the State of Ohio.

#### Goals Achieved

The Ohio Food Summit included 39 buyers representing 20 companies and 42 Ohio producers. The producers (20) represented products from the specialty crop industry such as jam, hot pepper relish, pasta sauce, wine, potatoes, cabbage, green beans, fruit butter, greens, radishes, cucumbers, zucchini, squash and tomatoes. Each company had prescheduled meetings with at least three different buyers. Many of the buyers scheduled additional meetings with companies once they saw the products. We had more retail buyers than food service buyers at this event. We believe sales will increase for those companies who participated in this event. Follow-up surveys will determine the 15% increase on restaurant menus as well as in retail stores.

#### Results, Conclusions & Lessons Learned

We learned that retail buyers want local products and are willing to help local companies get their products to market. It is possible that regional meetings may increase attendance on the buyer side.

The following success stories have developed from this event.

- The Statehouse Museum Shop (Columbus) developed three new business contacts at this event and began purchasing products made from specialty crops such as popcorn, homemade jams and fruit dips, and spicy nuts.
- Bon Appétit, an Ohio foodservice company, is considering a private label wine from Wyandotte Winery (Columbus). This wine will be served at special events and banquets catered by the foodservice company.

#### Long Term Outcome

This event was so successful and beneficial to our Ohio producers we are implementing it into our budget for next year. We hope to schedule two regional meetings in hopes of attracting more buyers and producers. Follow-up calls to the producers every six months will determine additional sales and successes.

#### Additional Information

An exit survey was conducted with the attendees. Please see the overall results attached.

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### **Industry Vignettes for Media Distribution -- \$6,000 budgeted – Project Complete**

#### Project Outline

The proposed activity will assist Ohio's specialty crop producers to promote themselves and market the diversity of Ohio's specialty crop industry through a series of video vignettes which will be distributed to the media throughout the various growing seasons.

#### Project Approach

The Ohio Department of Agriculture contracted with the "In Ohio Country Today" television program to produce and develop 14 video vignettes highlighting various Ohio specialty crop operations. The 14 specialty crop operations were located across the state and highlighted specific products such as nursery and garden centers, farmers' markets, wineries and vineyards, Christmas trees, pumpkins, hydroponics, orchards, as well as small and large-scale produce growers.

The videos aired on the "In Ohio Country Today" television program and were edited down to 3-5 minute vignettes and shared with 66 television media outlets across the state via DVDs. The videos will also be placed on the Ohio Proud web site – [www.ohioproud.org](http://www.ohioproud.org) and media advisories were sent to all print media outlets promoting the availability of these videos on the Ohio Proud web site.

#### Goals Achieved

Several media outlets have informed us that they will utilize the footage of various specialty crop operations throughout the specific growing seasons, such as the Devine Farms video being highlighted during the fall pumpkin harvest season and the Kaleidoscope Farms video being highlighted during the winter holiday season.

#### Results, Conclusions & Lessons Learned

We learned that media, due to staff downsizing, don't have the time to collect this type of b-roll or conduct grower interviews, so they have found this information to be helpful when promoting the "buy local" concept to their viewers and readers.

We also learned that it might be more beneficial in the future to send out a new video each month versus sending all of the videos at once with a monthly reminder. This way they will be receiving something new to watch instead of just a monthly reminder referring them back to the original dvd, which could get misplaced over time.

#### Long Term Outcome

We hope to experience increased consumer awareness of Ohio's diverse specialty crop industry through the media sharing these videos with their viewers.

The videos will also be utilized in the Ohio Proud kitchen that travels the state going to various consumer trade shows, such as the Fabulous Food Show and the Ohio State Fair. We hope to reach more than 1 million consumers through electronic media promoting the diversity of Ohio's specialty crop industry.

Additional Information

The dvd is available upon request.

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***Ohio Farm to School -- \$10,000 budgeted – Project completed.***

Project Outline

The basic mission of farm to school is to increase the supply of fresh, local, nutritious foods in schools around the state. With that mission, however, come much broader goals that involve developing smarter food decision-making among students, supporting and connecting with local farmers, developing community ties, and reinvesting in local economies. Farm to school initiatives connect schools with local farms by bringing fresh, nutritious foods from local farms into school cafeterias and by offering students experiential learning opportunities through farm visits, and food and nutrition education activities. Such initiatives support local farmers, keep food dollars in local economies, and nurture a generation of informed food consumers.

Project Approach

Interviews with school procurement personnel and background research were conducted to determine the level of local procurement currently being done in Ohio. These findings were documented and reported with policy recommendations for the Ohio Food Policy Council. Stakeholders for school procurement were also identified and placed on the websites of the Ohio Departments of Agriculture and Education. Ohio schools participating in the national Fruit and Vegetable program have been contacted regarding local procurement possibilities.

Goals Achieved

Farmers can benefit from increased sales opportunities that school lunch programs can offer. Once a relationship is established, schools offer steady and reliable demand for their product. Farm to school programs are also more likely to expand local food purchasing in the household, as students bring home lessons to their parents.

- According to a UCLA study: Average fruit and vegetable consumption by children increased by one serving a day when a Farmers' Market Salad Bar was created in the School Cafeteria.
- A Farmers' Market Salad Bar also led to a reduction in average caloric intake by 200 calories a day, and fat intake by 11 grams a day.
- One study reported that 75% of students receiving the farm to school salad bar chose a balanced meal without adult intervention as compared to 46% of control students.

### Results, Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Farm to school initiatives are gaining momentum across the country in light of two recent phenomena – rising obesity, in particular among youth, and the declining family farm. While one quarter of Americans over 19 are overweight or obese, only 1 in 10 children eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables. Rising obesity rates and the growing awareness of negative health consequences of poor nutritional choices have expanded interest in the nutritional quality of food served in school cafeterias. Our nation's commercialized agricultural system, which favors large-scale and high-input farming, has made it increasingly difficult for small and medium size farms to remain competitive. Family farming, which plays a key role in sustaining rural landscapes as well as the economic prospects and social well-being of American communities, is no longer listed on the national census as a profession. The industrial food system model has also contributed to declining farm income: the farmer share of every dollar spent on food has dropped from 41 cents in 1950 to 20 cents in 1999.

### Long Term Outcome

An agency workgroup has been created to continue to work on this project. Events have been identified for the fall to increase outreach such as partnering with the Ohio Department of Education to survey school food service personnel. Programs are being coordinate between the Ohio Departments of Agriculture and Education to engage students in eating local healthy foods.

### Additional Information

Revised report for this project can be found at  
[http://www.agri.ohio.gov/divs/FoodCouncil/FarmToSchool/docs/F2S\\_Final\\_Primer.pdf](http://www.agri.ohio.gov/divs/FoodCouncil/FarmToSchool/docs/F2S_Final_Primer.pdf)

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