

ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

2008 SCBGP FINAL REPORT

Agreement Number 12-25-B-0860

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Arkansas Agriculture Department 2008 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Project 1: Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit Show

Completed October 2009

Summary:

For a second time, AAD recruited Arkansas Specialty Crop Producers to attend the *2009 Fresh Summit International Convention and Exposition* in Anaheim, California. Five producers agreed to attend. PMA reported that 19,000 attended the trade show, with 50 countries represented and 800 exhibiting companies having booths. There were a total of 2400 hundred booths. The 5 Arkansas producers reporting making over 15 sales leads and for entering into contracts that amount to over 3 times the amount spent to attend the show.

Approach:

A booth was purchased and used for the 2008 show however by 2009 Arkansas Producers had outgrown the booth so AAD rented a new booth and a 20'x30' space under the Arkansas State Procurement law. The winning bidder was Absolute Marketing. AAD worked with Absolute to develop new graphics and a new booth layout. Absolute provided the booth and installed the art work for the show. Once the show was concluded, Absolute dismantled the booth and stored the graphics for use at future shows.

For a second time, AAD recruited Arkansas Specialty Crop Producers to attend the *2009 Fresh Summit International Convention and Exposition* in Anaheim, California. Five producers agreed to attend and they were:

1. Post Wine – Muscatine grape juice
2. Gilliam Farms – Muscatine's & Blackberries
3. Matthews Ridgeview Farm – Sweet Potatoes
4. Clanton Farms - Tomatoes
5. Arkansas Delta Produce Marketing Association - Sweet Potatoes

PMA reported that 19,000 attended the trade show, with 50 countries represented, 3,633 retail and foodservice buyers and 800 exhibiting companies having booths. There were a total of 2400 hundred booths. The 5 Arkansas producers reported making sales leads and for entering into contracts that amounted to over 3 times the amount spent to attend the show.

A post-show meeting was held at AAD headquarters in early 2010 where a verbal survey was completed.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

1. *To facilitate at least 15 sales leads for Arkansas produce companies.*

The post show survey meeting revealed that all five participants had sales leads that were over the 15 lead goals and entered into contracts that amounted to over 3 times the

amount spent to attend the show. The new booth was contributed as helping to develop those leads.

2. *To construct a booth and display at the 2009 PMA Fresh Summit Show to promote Arkansas produce growers.*

A 20'x30' space was reserved for the October 2-5, 2009 show. AAD staff and three of the companies who participated last year have discussed booth design and participant recruiting. AAD staff recruited additional participants with 5 companies committed by June 1, 2009. Bids were released on booth construction with the winning bidder being Absolute Marketing. AAD requested display materials from participants with a deadline of August 15, 2009. AAD staff coordinated booth construction and installation as dictated by state purchasing regulations. Growers and AAD staffed the booth during the show.

Beneficiaries:

The whole produce and fruit industry of Arkansas benefited from this show as it helped to develop an Arkansas presence among the industry. PMA reported that 19,000 attended the trade show (with 50 countries represented) including 3,633 retail/foodservice buyers and 800 exhibiting companies having booths, which is an industry outlet for Arkansas producers that could of never been achieved when marketing within the confines of the state. At the after-show meeting the topic of Arkansas' presence at the *Fresh Summit* being a tool to open doors to potential buyers and develop sales leads was brought up numerous times during the debriefing. For months after the show, produce and fruit buyers contacted AAD requesting a list of Arkansas Producers.

As for the five producers that attended the show and used the booth, not only did they each develop over 15 sales leads which resulted in sales contracts that amounted to over 3 times the amount spent to attend the show, but they were also able to conduct market research by being able to gauge what their competitors were doing and by being able to collect ideas of how to expand their packaging and marketing tools.

Lessons Learned:

Produce marketing for southern states is a challenge as the Mississippi Delta region is more synonymous with row crops than it is with produce and as a result the large buyers of produce do not always look towards state's in this region to have the products necessary to supply their needs. State's like Arkansas have to be proactive and take their producers and their wares to centralized events that offer a great of potential buyers.

Final Financial Report:

	Funds	Expenses
Beginning Balance	\$35,000.00	

Convention	
Registration	\$16,600.00
Hotel Deposits	\$150.00
Booth Rental and Design	\$18,988.71
Remaining Funds	(\$738.71)*

*The negative balance is due to state sales tax being added to the Booth Rental and design by the Arkansas Department of Finance months after the project was complete. When the project was bid out the Department of Finance did not advise us that sales tax was going to be assessed on the purchase. Some items purchased by state departments in Arkansas require sales tax and some do not. Under the 20% budgeting rule, remaining funds from project #3 covered this discrepancy.

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Additional Information:



Arkansas’s Booth at 2009 PMA Fresh Summit



Arkansas's Booth at 2009 PMA Fresh Summit

Project 2: Arkansas Farmers' Market Association Annual Meeting

Summary:

For a second year a request was granted for \$5000.00 to provide funding for the resources necessary to expand the range of speakers at the Arkansas Farmers Market Association 2010 Annual Meeting and Conference.

Speakers spoke on a broad range of topics from growing market sales to the use of electronic tools for expanding market presence. SCBGP funds were used for Travel Expense, Speakers Fees and rental of the facility.

Approach:

On 01/12/2010 ADD issued a check to AFMA for \$5000.00 for the meeting and conference.

On February 26, 2010 the Arkansas Farmers Market Association held an Annual Meeting and Community Collaboration Conference for members, market managers, and vendors in Little Rock, Arkansas. AFMA had an attendance of over 200 members, managers and vendors.

Speakers spoke on a broad range of topics from growing market sales to the use of electronic tools for expanding market presence. SCBGP funds were used for Travel Expense, Speakers Fees and rental of the facility.

This meeting benefited specialty crops as the majority of specialty crops grown in Arkansas are sold directly to consumers at Farmers Markets, On-farm stands and U-pick operations. This meeting is not only attended by market managers, but is also attended by the producers who sell at the market. A strong and educated Farmers Market system is essential for our specialty crop producers so that they will have a top notch and fully functional venue for them to make sales at. The sessions on Maximizing Booth Sales and Increasing Total market Sales with New Tools informed specialty crops producers on way to increase and maximize sales which in turn help to increase the demand and sales of specialty crops.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

- 1. Survey participants to find the number who plan to use the educational materials learned in the workshop.*

The 64 out of 141 participates were surveyed based on the following questions:

The information presented in "Maximizing Booth Sales" was:

<i>not useful</i>		<i>no opinion</i>		<i>very useful</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

I will change my practices based on the information presented in this session. Yes No

engaged and have a goal to join when they can meet the membership requirements. They stay engaged because the association has become a recognized resource for information on starting, expanding and sustaining a market.

To maintain this momentum the association continually improves the services it provides to the markets and growers. The annual meeting is their opportunity to discuss common issues and to hear from experts in the field. At the 2010 Annual meeting 141 attendees gained vital knowledge from knowledgeable speakers. Attendees benefited from speakers talking about how to maximize booth sales of specialty crops, how to increase total markets sales, grant opportunities that exist to help markets, and the keynote speaker discussing how his market dealt with what Arkansas markets are dealing with.

Lessons Learned:

The main lesson that was learned is that when an event occurs during the time of transition with the department that the department needs to have plans for in place for making sure that the sub-grantee provides the agreed upon documentation.

Final Financial Report:

Funds Allocated: \$5,000.00
Funds Spent: (\$5,000.00)
Funds Remaining: \$0.00

Contact Person:

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Addition Information:



**ARKANSAS FARMER'S MARKET ASSOCIATION
(AFMA) ANNUAL MEETING
Cooperative Extension Service Headquarters
Little Rock, Arkansas
February 26, 2010**

AGENDA

<u>TIME</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
8:00 - 9:00	Registration (atrium) Breakfast pastries/coffee provided
9:00 - 9:20	Welcome/Introductions: Jean Jones, PRES AFMA Special recognitions and announcements
9:20 -9:50	2009 In-Market survey results: Consumer trends, habits, and preferences from ten Arkansas Farmers Markets
9:00 – 10:30	AFMA Business Meeting: Recognition of new members and vote
10:30 - 10:40	Break
10:40 - 12:10	Keynote Speaker: Richard McCarthy (Director <u>Umbrella Market NOLA</u>)
12:10 – 1:10	Lunch (classrooms) Local food buffet by Chef Jason Godwin (Simply the Best Catering)
1:10 - 2:10	Maximizing Booth Sales (booth layout, product presentation and pricing, customer connection) Extending your market season Panel Discussion: Peggy Maringer, Jill and Keith Forrester
2:10 - 2:40	Increase total market sales with new tools: FIS Regional Director to Arkansas (wireless EBT, debit, and credit card acceptance program)
2:40 – 2:50	Break
2:50 – 3:50	Grant opportunities for farmers markets: Janet Bachman, NCAT/ATTRA
3:50 – 4:10	Wrap-up/Closing: AFMA President

All events are in auditorium unless noted.

Project 3: Integration of Heirloom and Contemporary Vine-Ripened Fresh Market Tomato Operations

Project Summary

A USDA sub-class for heirloom tomatoes has recently been established in response to increased consumer demand. Reviews of the terminal market prices for heirloom tomatoes revealed much higher and seasonally stable prices than conventional vine-ripe or mature green classes. The new markets for heirloom tomatoes appear to be expanding and a potentially profitable opportunity exists for Arkansas tomato producers. However, heirloom tomato production has many risks such as low yields, disease susceptibility, short shelf life, special packaging needs, and consumer cultivar preferences. Additionally, there is little information on profitable production and marketing methods for heirloom tomatoes under Arkansas conditions. This project was designed to identify successful heirloom tomato production and marketing strategies for Arkansas vegetable producers. A team of university, private, and public stakeholders was assembled to investigate and develop new market opportunities in heirloom tomatoes. The project consisted of three focus areas: 1) grower participation and assistance, 2) marketing and promotion, and 3) research. A diverse group of five Arkansas vegetable producers participated in the 2010 growing season. The producers were supplied with transplants of ‘Cherokee Purple’ and ‘Arkansas Traveler – the Original’ heirloom cultivars, technical production and marketing assistance, and custom designed marketing containers. ‘Cherokee Purple’ and ‘Arkansas Traveler’ were identified from previous studies as having marketing potential and favorable yields for the Arkansas regional markets.

All of the participants were able to sell their produce in on-farm, retail, and farmer markets. We were able to help one participant, Terry Donnelly, obtain registration as a Supplier with the nationwide retailer, Whole Foods Market, an outlet that caters to consumers most likely to purchase heirloom tomatoes at premium prices. The Donnelly’s sold twenty-one, 10 lb boxes of heirloom tomatoes to Whole Foods Market in Little Rock, AR. The retailer is interested in continuing this business relationship with the Donnelly farm in 2011 and possibly one other grower participant. Promotional activities conducted for this project included one poster presentation, three oral presentations, one booth display, one festival assistance, and one ‘Taste Test Party’. The ‘Taste Test Party’ was a promotional/educational activity promoting heirloom tomatoes in addition to collecting scientifically designed sensory and consumer information. Based on the results from field research and the sensory evaluations, two additional heirloom cultivars, ‘Abraham Lincoln’, and ‘Rutgers Select’ were identified as having potential for production in Arkansas conditions and marketing. The sensory evaluation revealed that the majority of participants were interested in purchasing heirloom tomatoes and were willing to pay premium prices. Overall, it was demonstrated that heirloom tomatoes can be successfully grown and integrated with modern commercial hybrid vine-ripe production systems in Arkansas and that viable markets with premium prices exist.

Project Approach

An increasing consumer demand for heirloom tomatoes and the observed heirloom market price premiums (Table 1) merited further investigations on a potentially profitable new venture for Arkansas vegetable producers. The increased popularity of heirloom tomatoes that began in the

late twentieth century has been attributed to structural changes, such as the return to organic, local, and ‘authentic’ foods, the promotion by popular chefs, and the portrayal by popular print as symbolic of elite status, but accessible by non-elites (Jordan, 2007). This project was designed to expand the economic opportunities of limited resource vegetable producers in Arkansas by identifying successful heirloom tomato production and marketing strategies under Arkansas conditions. The overall goal was to expand profitable income opportunities for new and existing vegetable crop producers. This goal was to be accomplished by the combined efforts in three general areas: 1) grower participation, 2) marketing and promotion, and 3) production research.

Table 1. Selected terminal market quotes, 2010 season.

date	market	class	size	\$ quote
28-May	Baltimore	Greenhouse (GH)	jmb, 10 lb	25
	Boston	FL mature gr	med, 10 lb	20
	Chicago	GH, Canada	good, 10 lb	18
	Chicago	GH, Canada	fair, 10 lb	14
3-Jun	Boston	GH, Canada	good, 10 lb	30
	Chicago	FL, vine ripe	5x6, 25 lb	7 to 8
	Chicago	GH, Canada	good, 10 lb	32
	Dallas	FL, mature gr	5x6, 25 lb	8.75
	Dallas	Heirloom, local	10 lb	40
	Detroit	GH, Canada	10 lb	18.5
10-Jun	Atlanta	FL, vine ripe	5x6, 25 lb	9 to 10
	Chicago	FL, vine ripe	5x6, 25 lb	7 to 8
	Chicago	AR, vine ripe	4x4, 20 lb	12 to 13
	Dallas	FL, vine ripe	5x6, 25 lb	11
	Dallas	Heirloom, local	10 lb	40
16-Jun	Atlanta	FL, vine ripe	5x6, 25 lb	7
	Chicago	FL, vine ripe	5x6, 25 lb	7.5
	Chicago	AR, vine ripe	4x4, 20 lb	4 to 6
	Chicago	Heirloom, GH, MX	10 lb	23
	Dallas	FL, vine ripe	5x6, 25 lb	10 to 12
	Dallas	Heirloom, GH, MX	10 lb	40
	Pittsburg	AR, vine ripe	4x4, 20 lb	10 to 16
	St. Louis	AR, vine ripe	jbo, 25 lb	8 to 11

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Previous research had determined the potential for conventional and organic heirloom tomato production under Arkansas conditions (Francis and Stark, 2011). There are literally hundreds of

‘heirloom’ tomato cultivars and currently no established USDA fruit quality standards due to the diversity of fruit color, size, and shape. Therefore, it was decided to identify potentially profitable heirloom cultivars based on three criteria: 1) consumer cultivar recognition, 2) yield and fruit uniformity, and 3) ability to grow and integrate with current tomato production practices in Arkansas. A cultivar-identifiable marketing scheme was chosen over a more generic ‘heirloom tomato’ theme. From previous studies we had identified the ‘Cherokee Purple’ and ‘Arkansas Traveler – the Original’ as meeting these criteria and so the decision was made to assist participating producers in the production and marketing of these exclusive cultivars. Additionally, when grown together, ‘Cherokee Purple’ has early season maturity and ‘Arkansas Traveler’ a later season maturity, allowing for a longer harvesting and marketing window.

We contracted with Temple-Inland company of Ft. Smith, AR to design and produce 10 lb boxes for marketing the cultivars (Fig. 1). Since the ‘Arkansas Traveler’ is a small to medium size fruit, we opted to market them in three-count plastic clam shell containers purchased from PDI company of Wolfson, CT. We designed and produced special labels for the clam shells and received verbal permission from the Arkansas Agriculture Department to apply the ‘Arkansas Grown’ label to the containers. We solicited the cooperation of Bradley County University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Staff Chair, John Gavin, to identify tomato producers who might be interested in participating in the first year project. We would supply them with seeds and/or transplants, technical assistance, boxes and clam shells, and marketing assistance in exchange for feedback on their experiences and advice. We received assistance from Dr. Ron Rainey, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Agriculture Economics, for help in identifying potential markets. Through Dr. Rainey’s advice, it was decided to pursue a test market at Whole Foods Market in Little Rock, AR (Fig. 2), a large retail produce outlet with stores in 48 states. Tomato grower Terry Donnelly was interested in the Whole Foods Market idea and we assisted Mr. Donnelly in preparing the Supplier status forms and purchase of a liability insurance policy. We also agreed to deliver his produce to the Little Rock store for the first two growing seasons. Providing delivery would give an incentive to the producer and enable us to better learn the most desirable marketing techniques for heirloom tomatoes.

Field cultivar evaluations were initiated for the ‘Cherokee Purple’ and ‘Arkansas Traveler’ and ten other selected heirloom tomato cultivars. In addition to yield, a ‘shelf life’ evaluation and a grafting demonstration were conducted. Methodology for a scientifically sound visual and taste sensory evaluation was designed with assistance from Dr. Rick Clubb, University of Arkansas at Monticello School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. A ‘Tomato Taste Test’ party was conducted (Figs. 3A-D) to collect the sensory data in addition to consumer preference data, and promote heirloom tomatoes via educational exhibits and samples of heirloom tomato recipes (Appendix A).



Figure 1. Custom boxes for marketing were developed.



Figure 2. A marketing contract between local grower Terry Donnelly and Whole Foods Market was established in 2010. His tomatoes sold very well at premium prices.



Cooperative Extension Service
University of Arkansas,
United States Department of Agriculture
and County Governments Cooperating

Tomato Tasting Party

July 1, 2010
9 a.m. – 12 noon



Dr. Richard Clubb, Professor, Social & Behavioral Sciences
Dr. Robert Stark, Professor, Agriculture
Dr. Pau Francis, Professor, Agriculture
Donna B. Francis, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

A.

Dr. Richard Clubb, Professor, Social & Behavioral Sciences

B.



B.

C.



Figures 3A-C. Scenes from the 'Tomato Taste Test' outreach activity.

Beneficiaries – Grower Participants in 2010

We were able to assist and involve five vegetable producers in the 2010 season. These growers represented a very diverse group of farmers with different marketing goals. Summaries of each producer and the degrees of assistance provided are presented.

Terry Donnelly, Warren, AR. Mr. Donnelly is a commercial tomato producer with approximately 10 acres and also raises chickens for Tyson Foods. We provided him with 20 trays (24 ct) of ‘Cherokee Purple’ and ‘Arkansas Traveler’ tomato seedlings to grow and market. Terry markets his tomatoes on-farm, with a broker at the Warren Tomato Shed, and through a web-site he recently started for virtual marketing. We visited his farm several times in the season and provided him with custom boxes for marketing the heirlooms. We were also able to generate a contract with him and Whole Foods Market national in Austin, TX to market his heirlooms in their Little Rock store. Unfortunately, the approval process took longer than expected and he missed the first two-thirds of the season. However, we were able to deliver 21 boxes of ‘Arkansas Traveler’ heirloom tomatoes from Mr. Donnelly to the Whole Foods Market retail store in Little Rock and they sold very well. This at least opened up the door to a very large national retail outlet for our local producers who might be interested in growing heirloom tomatoes. Whole Foods Market has expressed an interest in continuing this relationship in 2011.

Jason Green, Warren, AR. Mr. Green and his father produce commercial vine-ripened tomatoes on over 20 acres. Jason was interested in marketing heirloom tomatoes and planted several hundred plants of the ‘Cherokee Purple’ variety that he produced on his own. We were able to provide Mr. Green with custom heirloom tomato boxes. Mr. Green was interested in marketing with outlets such as Whole Foods Market, but was able to market his entire heirloom crop on-farm and with a produce retailer in Pine Bluff. Mr. Green is interested in continuing to grow heirlooms in 2011 and to expand his marketing to include Whole Foods Market or other large retail markets.

Richard Cupp, Cleveland Co., AR. Mr. Cupp is a small-scale vegetable producer who markets his crop locally. We provided him with 8 trays of ‘Cherokee Purple’ and ‘Arkansas Traveler’ seedlings to grow in addition to custom heirloom tomato boxes. He did not need our assistance with marketing since he already had buyers for his produce. Mr. Cupp was very pleased with the results and is interested in growing heirloom tomatoes again in 2011.

Leroy Emerson, MeGehee, AR. Mr. Emerson has retired to a family farm outside of MeGehee, AR from a successful career in Memphis, TN. This was his first season of vegetable crop production and he did not have many resources to work with. We were able to lay plastic mulch and set up a drip irrigation system for vegetable production on a very productive soil (Rilla silt loam) where he is planning on building a house and growing vegetable crops for market in the future (Figs. 4 and 5). The field is located right off Hwy 35 and has great potential for a prosperous business. We supplied Mr. Emerson with 12 trays of heirloom tomatoes, custom boxes for marketing, and visited his farm several times during the season to inspect the plants. The biggest obstacle was the lack of a reliable water source. Water was supplied via a 200 gal tank that he had to fill in town and he was unable to keep up with the plant water needs due to the logistics and demands of another job he had. His crop did not produce the volume needed for selling outside his local community. However, he learned a lot in the first season and is in the

process of improving his operation in 2011. Once a well is constructed, he has great potential for a successful vegetable crop business and he has expressed interest in growing heirloom tomatoes, along with many other marketable vegetables, again in 2011. He has approximately 7 acres potential production area by the highway, and over 200 acres across the road currently in lease to row crop production.

Jeff Croswell, Petit Jean Mountain, AR. Mr. Croswell has a small farm on top of Petit Jean Mountain adjacent to the state park and Winrock Farms. We provided him with six trays of heirloom tomatoes and custom boxes for marketing. Jeff grows vegetables organically and markets them locally through word of mouth and the Conway virtual farmers market (Figs. 6A-B). His whole family is involved in the business and they also produce herbs, flowers, and eggs. Jeff has also expressed an interest in growing heirloom tomatoes again in 2011.



Figure 4. Establishing mulch beds at Mr. Emerson's farm, April 2011.



Figure 5. Justin Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Emerson, and Dr. Stark.



A.



B.

Figure 6A-B. Examples of raised beds of organic heirloom tomato culture at the Jeff Croswell farm, Petit Jean Mountain, AR.

Lessons Learned

Grower participation.

We were pleased with the grower interest and feedback. Those marketing on-farm and at local farmers markets did not have any difficulties selling their produce and reported good consumer demand for locally grown heirloom tomatoes. The ‘Cherokee Purple’ was especially popular with consumers and sold well. The smaller growers seemed pleased with their marketing strategies but the two larger acreage producers, Donnelly and Green, commented that a third party would be needed to broker and arrange marketing to more regional wholesale outlets. We have facilitated a meeting with a grant writer in May 2011 with these growers to investigate the possibility of obtaining a value added producers grant to wholesale market their heirloom tomatoes.

Marketing and Promotion.

The pilot test marketing program with Whole Foods Market in Little Rock was a success. Whole Foods Market is a national retail produce chain with headquarters in Austin, TX. The success of the pilot project, and getting one grower approved vendor status, opens the door for further marketing of Arkansas heirloom tomatoes to a national outlet. In order for us to establish a market with Whole Foods in Little Rock for Mr. Donnelly, we had to get him approved as a vendor through their headquarters in Austin, TX. A \$1 million liability insurance policy was required for registration as an approved vendor. This process took much longer than we had anticipated. We were finally able to complete the process in mid-July 2010. Unfortunately, the ‘Cherokee Purple’ crop was just nearing the end of production but Mr. Donnelly was able to sell 21 boxes of Arkansas Travelers to Whole Foods. Mr. Donnelly is now an approved vendor for Whole Foods and intends to market with them again in 2011. We have learned how to assist growers in the process of marketing to the larger retail chain outlets due to our experiences in the 2010 pilot project. Other national wholesale outlets, such as Walmart and Krogers, are potential markets for future growers.

Our custom boxes were supposed to hold 10 lbs of tomatoes, but actually held between 12 to 15 lbs depending on size and packaging distribution. Since wholesale markets prefer 10 lb unit prices for heirloom tomatoes, a grower may be undercut in price using these boxes. Growers desiring to market to the wholesale outlets may prefer to have their own boxes custom made. We can give them some guidance on box dimensions based on our mistakes of 2010. Another lesson learned from our work with Whole Foods is that not all companies utilize producer-customized boxes when displaying produce in the store. Whole Foods Market has a company policy that encourages signs and labels identifying the produce source, but does not allow the produce to be displayed in producer-customized boxes. Our packaging efforts were not totally wasted because the other producer participants successfully utilized them when marketing on-farm and through local markets.

There were several presentations and programs conducted through this grant in 2010 and Jan. 2011. We presented a poster entitled ‘Mainstreaming Heirloom Tomatoes to Consumers Through Profitable Production and Marketing Practices for Small Scale Producers’ at the Rural

Life Conference on Feb. 26, 2010 (Fig. 7). This annual conference is hosted by the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and attracts many limited resource farmers from the region. We conducted a 'Tomato Taste Testing Party' on July 1, 2010 in Drew Co., AR. This was promoted through the local newspaper, a local internet news site, local radio, fliers, and word of mouth. The event was designed around a scientifically based sensory evaluation of 12 heirloom varieties that we were testing and included activities such as cooking demonstrations, educational material related to growing heirloom tomatoes, historical background of the heirlooms, and free samples for participants. This was a very successful marketing, promotion, and research project and there is much popular support for another similar activity in 2011.

We had an educational booth at the 2010 'Bountiful Arkansas' event on July 16-17, 2010 at the Winrock Institute on Petit Jean Mountain, AR (Figs. 8A-D). A poster of the results from the 'Tomato Taste Test Party' on July 1, 2010 was presented along with educational material on cooking with heirloom tomatoes, growing heirloom tomatoes, and free samples of heirloom tomato seeds. We had many visitors to our booth despite the unusually hot and humid day. A supply of various heirloom cultivars from our research plots was also provided to Elizabeth Mattocks of the Winrock Institute for their evaluation activity where festival participants could both see and sample the differences in heirloom cultivars.

Two invited presentations were given at the Horticulture Industries Show, Jan. 14-15, 2011 in Ft. Smith, AR related to our outreach activities. The titles were 'Extracting Information From a Taste Testing Party' and 'Experiences in Developing a Fruit/Vegetable Niche Market'. These presentations were based on our 2010 experiences in this project and were attended by a standing room only crowd of well over 100 people from Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Another invited presentation on heirloom gardening will be presented at the Pine Bluff Garden Show on Feb. 12, 2011. This presentation will include some summaries of our project activities in 2010 and we plan to give out free seed samples and educational literature.

**RISK OF FORECLOSURE ANALYSIS:
PREVENTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD
DESTABILIZATION**

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As borrowers default on risky mortgage loans and as unemployment numbers rise, weak housing markets are more likely to experience higher than average risk for neighborhood destabilization. The primary goals of this study were to identify contributing factors to neighborhood destabilization and compile a list of publicly available foreclosure data sources. A secondary data source was selected and analyzed to determine the most vulnerable places in Arkansas for neighborhood destabilization, resulting from home foreclosures and other factors.

Arkansas locales were listed by zip code and ranked by three variables; the foreclosure needs score, sub-prime component score and the delinquency component scores calculated by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The strength of the local housing markets of the 25 places that ranked highest on the component scores was determined by the ratio of the local housing vacancy rate to the state vacancy rate. Profiles of 10 locales listed by zip code in Arkansas with higher than average risk of neighborhood destabilization, based on the study results, were created. The majority of the places were located in central and eastern Arkansas counties. Access to data, assessment frequency and the ability to respond to local housing conditions are critical to reducing the risk of neighborhood destabilization.

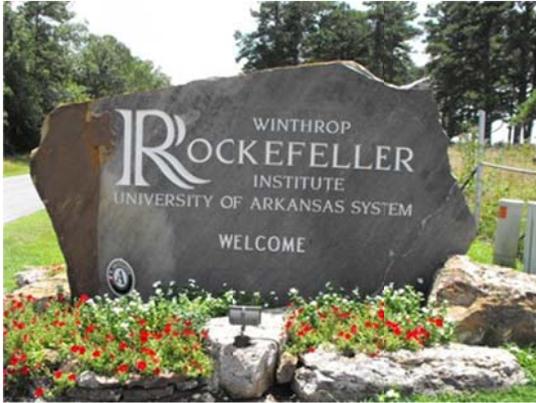
Additionally, maintaining local housing market strength to withstand economic downturns requires consistent and long-term planning and development resources.

**MAINSTREAMING HEIRLOOM TOMATOES
TO CONSUMERS THROUGH PROFITABLE
PRODUCTION AND MARKETING PRACTICES FOR SMALL SCALE PRODUCERS**

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A USDA market grade sub-class for heirloom tomatoes has recently been established in response to increased consumer demand. Terminal market prices for heirloom tomatoes in the U.S. for the 2007-2009 seasons were much higher and more seasonally stable compared to commercial hybrid cultivars. However, growing heirlooms has many risks due to low yields, disease susceptibility, short shelf life and lack of information on efficient production methods and marketing grades. Heirlooms are a 'new' crop with potentially high returns for limited resource farmers. A pilot project, funded by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program of the Arkansas Agriculture Department, has been designed to identify profitable production and marketing strategies and provide start up assistance for interested commercial vegetable producers. Heirloom tomato research and demonstration projects will be established in fields of commercial producers to identify successful strategies for integrating heirloom tomatoes into existing production systems and develop marketing protocols for heirlooms to expand the economical opportunities of limited resource farmers in the region. Previous research has identified two high yielding heirloom cultivars with good fruit quality, yield, uniformity, and resilience - 'Cherokee Purple' and 'Arkansas Traveler.' A cooperative effort involving public and private entities has begun to investigate potential markets, marketing logistics, market grade criteria for uniquely identifiable heirloom cultivars and promotional strategies. The primary goal is to produce a safe, quality, identifiable, profitable and market stable product that will expand income opportunities for new and existing vegetable crop producers.

Figure 7. Abstract of poster presented at the Rural Life Conference, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Feb. 26, 2010.



A.



B.



C.



D.



E.

Figures 8A-D. Scenes from the 2010 'Bountiful Arkansas' outreach activity at WinRock Institute, Petit Jean Mt., AR.

Research.

An evaluation of 12 heirloom cultivars was conducted at the UAM Horticulture research plot area in Monticello, AR. Total yield, marketable yield, fruit uniformity, and fruit shelf life were evaluated. ‘Abraham Lincoln’, ‘Arkansas Traveler’, ‘Rutgers Select’, and ‘Cherokee Purple’ were the top four producers (Table 2). ‘Mr. Stripey’ and ‘German Johnson Pink’ did not perform well, possibly due disease incidence. Average shelf life, based on weight loss and visual evaluation, was similar among cultivars and ranged from 7 to 10 days at room temperature (78°F). The sensory evaluation conducted during the ‘Taste Test Party’ asked respondents to rank the appearance and taste using a six-choice hedonic scale (Fig. 9). The evaluators were also asked to select their top three overall choices. A 5-3-1 scoring system for the top three choices determined overall preference. The top four preferences in the sensory evaluation were ‘Abraham Lincoln’, ‘Rutgers Select’, ‘Arkansas Traveler’, and ‘Cherokee Purple’ (Table 3). Taste rather than visual appearance was more related to consumer choice. The majority of the 41 evaluators were over age 40 and 59% were female (Table 4). All 41 evaluators would buy heirloom tomatoes if available locally and 82% would be willing to pay premium prices according to our survey (Fig. 10). Interestingly, the top four yielding varieties in the field trials were identical to the top four consumer choices and have growth characteristics that are compatible with commercial vine-ripened hybrids. We are excited about their potential marketing possibilities.

Table 2. 2010 heirloom tomato cultivar performance, Southeast Research and Extension Center, Monticello, AR. Yield in lbs per plot, four plants per plot.

Cultivar	yield [†]	Plant disease mortality (%)			
	lbs (plot) ⁻¹	total	S. blight	Tomato spotted wilt virus	Early Blight
Abraham Lincoln	41.2a	19	7	0	12
Arkansas Traveler	36.4ab	6	0	0	6
Rutgers Select	31.2bc	0	0	0	0
Cherokee Purple	30.4bc	0	0	0	0
Lillian’s Yellow	29.6bc	19	7	12	0
Ponderosa Red	29.6bc	13	13	0	0
Mortgage Lifter	29.2bc	19	12	0	7
Brandywine Red	26.4dc	0	0	0	0
Manulucie	24.8dc	19	0	0	19
Box Car Willie	24.4dc	19	19	0	0
German Johnson Pink	24.0dc	31	25	0	6
Mr. Stripey	20.8d	31	19	6	6

[†]Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different, alpha=0.05.

no _____

_____ male _____ female AGE: _____ less than 39 _____ 40 or over

Directions. Rate the visual appearance and flavor of the samples on display by placing an X in the appropriate box according to the following:

5

<u>Appearance</u>	<u>Flavor</u>
6 Very Attractive	6 Very Good
5 Attractive	5 Good
4 Somewhat Attractive	4 Somewhat Good
3 Somewhat Unattractive	3 Somewhat Poor
2 Unattractive	2 Poor
1 Very Unattractive	1 Very Poor

Variety	Appearance						Flavor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
GROUP 1												
A												
B												
C												
D												
E												
F												
GROUP 2												
G												
H												
I												
J												
K												
L												

Assuming these heirloom varieties were available in the produce section of your local grocery store, would you be interested in buying them?

_____ No
 _____ Yes, and my top three picks are:
 choice 1 _____ choice 2 _____ choice 3 _____

If Yes, how much would you be willing to pay?
 _____ the same as the commercial hybrid tomatoes
 _____ \$ 0.50/lb more _____ \$1.00/lb more _____ \$1.50/lb more _____ \$2.00/lb more
 _____ \$2.50/lb more _____ \$3.00/lb more

Figure 9. Scorecard used in the sensory evaluation.

Table 3. Heirloom tomato rank based on weighted scale of evaluator's top three picks and Hedonic scale of appearance and taste.

Rank	Cultivar Choice		Appearance [†]	Taste
1	Arkansas Traveler	56 pts	5.3a	4.3a
2	Abraham Lincoln	46 pts	5.1ab	4.4ab
3	Rutgers Select	43 pts	5.3a	4.6a
4	Cherokee Purple	43 pts	3.7e	4.4ab
5	Ponderosa Red	38 pts	4.1de	4.5ab
6	Mortgage Lifter	36 pts	3.9e	4.3ab
7	Brandywine Red	34 pts	4.4dc	4.5a
8	German Johnson Pink	20 pts	4.5dc	4.1abc
9	Lillian's Yellow	15 pts	4.0de	3.7c
10	Mr. Stripey	13 pts	3.0f	3.9bc
11	Manulucie	12 pts	5.2ab	4.2abc
12	Box Car Willie	11 pts	4.7bc	4.1abc

[†]Numbers followed by the same letter are not significantly different, alpha=0.05.

Table 4. Overall evaluation as influenced by gender and age.

Class Num	ber	Appearance ^{a/}	Taste
Male 17		4.6a	4.3a
Female 24		4.2b	4.2a
Under 40 years	6	4.9a	4.8a
Over 40 years	35	4.4b	4.2b

^{a/}Column means within a category followed by the same letter are not significantly different, alpha = 0.05.



Figure 10. Survey results on willingness to pay premiums in order to purchase heirloom tomatoes.

Summary of project activities.

Overall, we were encouraged by the consumer relish for heirloom tomatoes and locally grown produce and willingness of Arkansas vegetable producers to grow them. We have successfully shown that selected heirloom tomato varieties can be integrated within existing commercial tomato operations and marketed, increasing the profit margins of producers while reducing risk exposure through diversification. Four heirloom cultivars have been identified with profit potential under Arkansas conditions and consumer relish and recognition: ‘Arkansas Traveler – the Original’ - a medium size pink fruit; ‘Cherokee Purple’ – an extra-large purple fruit, ‘Abraham Lincoln’ – an extra-large red fruit, and ‘Rutgers Select’ – an extra-large red fruit. Other cultivars with potential include ‘Ponderosa Red’, ‘Mortgage Lifter’, and ‘Brandywine Red’. We have discovered that small-scale local marketing of heirloom tomatoes in Arkansas is a viable and attractive market, but that greater volume wholesale marketing remains a challenge. Larger producers and/or cooperatives of growers will need outside, trustworthy, third-party marketing assistance to be successful in the regional and national wholesale markets, but the opportunities definitely exist at this time. The marketing potential of heirloom tomatoes for an individual grower will be dependent upon their desire to tap into the various market outlets.

References Cited.

Francis, P. B., and C. R. Stark, Jr. 2011. Heirloom production in conventional and organic systems. Paper soon to be submitted to HortScience, currently in internal review.

Jordan, J. 2007. The heirloom tomato as cultural object: investigating taste and space. *Sociologia Ruralis* 47(1):20-41.

Final Financial Report

1. Stipends for undergraduate student assistant (Justin Jones, Plant and Soil Science major): \$5181.
2. Travel to grower's fields, presentations, and marketing planning: \$2221.
3. Contractual expenses with Temple-Island, Ft. Smith, AR for design and construction of 10 lb tomato boxes, and PDI Packaging, Wolfson, CT for clam shell containers: \$3384.
4. Fringe: \$58.

TOTAL: \$10844

Summary of project expenditures:

Stipends:	\$5181.00
Travel:	\$2221.00
Packaging:	\$3384.00
Fringe:	\$58.00
Total Spent:	\$10,844.00
Balance Remaining	\$19,156.00

Additional Information:

Appendix A
Educational Handout Distributed at the 'Tomato Taste Test Party',
July 1, 2010

Heirloom Tomatoes



What does an heirloom tomato offer that the new hybrids lack? They offer more taste, color, and variety in their shape.

Tomatoes receive the heirloom status when the variety's seeds have been passed along for generations, at least since the early 1940's; many have been around for many more years.

Heirloom tomatoes are becoming more popular in many areas of the country and have become a niche market. Farmers, seed companies, and seed-saving groups have gathered the seeds of these old fashioned tomatoes. *Heirloom* is a term used to

describe any tomato plant which is openly pollinated (by wind and bees) and has been cultivated for more than 50 years.

Supermarket tomatoes or hybrids are man-made crosses of different varieties which are bred to achieve certain characteristics such as a standard size or hardiness. Heirloom tomatoes do not grow in uniform shapes or sizes. Heirloom fruit ripens sporadically; they are also not as disease resistant or as hardy for transport. Heirlooms are not as practical for large-scale production.

Several local producers are testing the heirloom market. Eating locally grown produce is good for the local economy. Here are the sustainable size reasons you should eat locally.

#1 Quality: Locally grown produce is usually picked at peak ripeness and available within 24 to 48 hours of harvest. This means fresher, tastier and nutritionally better fruits and vegetables.



#2 Health: Chronic disease such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers are related to poor diet and lack of physical activity. Eating locally grown fruits and vegetables fights chronic disease.

#3 Safety: Food safety that is...Foods brought in from other countries as well as foods here at home are at risk for food borne pathogens and deliberate contamination. Many foods are never inspected. Knowing where your food is grown can mean a safer food supply.

#4 Environmental: Our ability to bring food from around the world and grow bigger and better crops contributes to air, water and land pollution. Sustainable agriculture operations take measures to protect the environment with the future in mind.

#5 Economy: Buying from the local farmers' market, CSA or produce stand puts money back into the local economy. Local farmers selling direct keep full retail value for the food...a dollar for a dollar.

#6 Trust: There is comfort in knowing where and from who your food originates.

Two Tomato, Corn and Bean Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 big red tomato, diced
- 1 big yellow tomato, diced (or any large red and yellow colored heirloom tomato)
- 1 cup whole kernel corn
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and patted dry
- ½ cup red onion, sliced into thin strips



1 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves, chopped

For the dressing:

2 cloves garlic, chopped

Pinch of salt and pepper

Red wine vinegar

Extra virgin olive oil (2-3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar)

Preparation:

Combine salad ingredients. Mix salad dressing ingredients together. Toss dressing into salad and serve.

Mortgage Lifer Tomato Pizza

Crust: 1 store-bought crust or prepare your own

1 package active dry yeast (about 2 ¼ teaspoons)

1/3 cup warm water (100° to 110°)

½ cup whole wheat flour (about 2 ½ ounces)

1/2 cup all-purpose flour (about 2 ¼ ounces)

1 tablespoon vital wheat gluten

1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

½ teaspoon kosher salt



1. Dissolve yeast in 1/3 cup warm water in a large bowl; let stand 5 minutes. Lightly spoon flours into dry measuring cups, and level with a knife. Add flours, wheat gluten, oil, and ½ teaspoon kosher salt; stir until a soft dough forms.
2. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead until smooth and elastic (about 3 minutes). Place dough in a bowl coated with cooking spray, turning to coat top. Cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, 1 hour or until doubled in size. (Press two fingers into dough. If indentations remain, dough has risen enough.)
3. Preheat oven to 450°.
4. Punch dough down. Roll dough into a 10 x 14-inch rectangle on a lightly floured surface. Place dough on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray and sprinkled with cornmeal. Cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, 20 minutes.

Topping:

¾ cup (3 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

½ cup (2 ounces) crumbled Feta or Gorgonzola cheese

2 Mortgage Lifer tomatoes, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices (about 1 pound)

2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

1 garlic clove, minced

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper

5. Sprinkle cheeses evenly over dough. Arrange tomato slices in a single layer over cheese. Combine basil and remaining ingredients in a bowl; sprinkle mixture evenly over tomatoes.
6. Bake at 450° for 12 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cut pizza into 8 (5x3 ½-inch) rectangles. Yield: 4 servings (serving size: 2 rectangles).

CALORIES 261 (32% from fat); FAT 9.2g (sat 5.4g, mono 1.9g, poly 0.5g); PROTEIN 16.3g; CARB 29.5g; FIBER 4.5g; CHOL 25 mg; IRON 2.2mg; SODIUM 680 mg; CALC 237mg

Heirloom Tomato Salad with Herbs and Capers

- 2 cups assorted heirloom cherry tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup (2 ounces) crumbled reduced fat feta cheese
- ¼ cup thinly sliced fresh basil
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leafed parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 1 tablespoon drained capers, chopped
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 2 pounds assorted beefsteak heirloom tomatoes, each cut into 6 wedges
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper



1. Combine first 9 ingredients in a bowl. Sprinkle tomato mixture with salt and pepper; toss gently. Serve with bread. Yield: 6 servings (serving size: about 1 cup tomato mixture and 1 bread slice)

Project 4: Local Grower Consignment Shop and Micro-Enterprise Development Program at the Lake Village Farmers' Market

Completed December 2010

Summary:

The Delta Sprouts is a southeast Arkansas cooperative established to serve the people of Chicot, Desha and Drew counties. These counties struggle with poverty, poor nutrition, unemployment, decreased population from economic flight and limited jobs due to lack of education. Over seventy five percent of the population of Chicot County is at or below poverty. However, this is an area with a rich agriculture history, skilled farmers and many residents with access to fertile land. This county has the potential for small growers to tap into the resources they have to provide much needed income for themselves and nutritious food for the community.

This project was developed to expand the facilities at the farmers' market in Lake Village to allow local producers to make daily sales utilizing a consignment shop model. Also To establish demonstration and outreach programs to encourage entrepreneurship within the grower community.

Approach:

In 2009 the market opening was delayed due to lack of produce because of excessive rain in the area (over 28 inches in May). Unseasonable rain, hail, etc. caused wide spread crop failure that part time gardeners were not able to overcome. During this time, Delta Sprouts developed the store front for Mel's Market as a way to provide a place for vendors to reach consumer. A part time person was provided at the market during market hours. In addition, Accounting and vendor procedures were put in place as a way to control the consignment process.

In 2010 the market opened June 19, 2010, and was a huge success and we experienced a large vendor and communities turn out. We saw an increase in vendors from 2009 to 2010. In addition we also saw an increase in people using EBT cards at the market. We hosted a children's event every Saturday that taught local food system concepts. However, in 2010 our vendors had issues with the drought and it caused a decrease in food selection and quality.

Over the last two years we increased the number of people providing products and saw an increase in food diversity. Members were utilized to help establish more vendors. Consumers are now verbalizing needs and which we are passing on to patch farmers and thus we are able to pick up produce to increase availability. We spoke to civic organizations, the chamber of commerce, held a series of public interest meetings, and advertised in paper about the Living Learning Center and Farmers Market. Delta sprouts set up a booth at local fairs and civic events, as well as attending civic, nonprofit, and public meetings to reach out to the community about the project. We utilized research and tips to contact people known to have products that the consumer wanted.

The educating of groups and the outreach in the community also has had an impact on church groups, civil groups, and individuals who have begun to catch on to the concept of using the shed/market to set up swaps and sales.

As a community, we have had several patch farmers that sit on the side of the highway on the back of pick-ups. The farmers have been firm if we want their cooperation the farmers market needed to be on highway. The consistency and quality cannot currently be met by "part time gardeners". There is enough interest and frustration from customers who don't want to make four or five stops and want the market to be centrally located that the economic development commission is moving the market space to Highway 65 and 82 in a high traffic area. The new location is located in front of our community complex that contains: a rodeo rink, soccer fields, playground, softball/baseball fields, tennis courts, and basketball courts. This concept will be easily transferred and will fit in with the community complex and reap the benefits of the two highways.

The Living learning center was staffed by 3 volunteers and helped to educated people on how to grow fresh fruit, nuts, and vegetables. However, there was a delay in development of the Living Learning Center as the city requested a change in location. The garden plan needed to be reworked as the proposed site is much larger than original. The lease was obtained and garden construction began in the spring of 2010. We were able to complete twelve raised beds and develop ground plots for the late spring and early summer planting. There was a large community volunteer base. The garden hosted twelve families and excess was delivered to forty families who are elderly, shut ins, and/or handicapped. Saturday morning work days were scheduled and used as a time for learning about growing in addition to building and planting the following:

- Twelve raised beds that are wheel chair accessible were built allowing twelve families to be able to have fresh vegetables as a way to supplement the family groceries. Additional pavers have been put down to allow more accessibility
- A grape arbor was built and grapes planted.
- Blueberry and blackberries were planted.
- Strawberry beds and asparagus beds were built.
- Over 15 fruit trees were planted.
- Brick borders were built in order to hold mulch as many plants were lost last summer as the soil's ability to hold water was not ideal.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

1. Recruit five small specialty crop farmers to supply product to the consignment shop.

At end of market October 30, 2010, five individuals were consigning fresh produce to Mel's Market consignment shop, four individuals that were providing specialty value added items, and two individuals providing non edible agricultural items. One patch farmer utilized the shed during Mel's Market consignment shop hours, and we noted seven other vendors who utilized the covered shed more than once during this year's season, and we had increase in community yard sales on the designated first Saturdays.

2. *Generate \$25,000 in sales during 2009.*

In 2009 the market opening was delayed due to lack of produce because of excessive rain in the area (over 28 inches in May). Unseasonable rain, hail, etc. caused wide spread crop failure that part time gardeners were not able to overcome. We had market season sales generated from consignment crop project of \$2286.33, of which \$1100 was from the market opening. The remaining \$1186.33 was from fresh or value added food products.

In 2010 the market opened June 19, 2010, and was a huge success and we experienced a large vendor and communities turn out. Sales for the market season were \$1479.83 only a slight increase from 2009. We did have an increase in people using EBT cards at the market. We hosted a children's event every Saturday that taught local food system concepts. Our vendors had issues with the drought and it caused a decrease in food selection and quality.

The sales from both years above are not income towards the project as they were the amount of sales made by the market on the behalf of the farmer and all income from the sales went back to the farmers whose product was sold on consignment.

3. *Create an easy market entry for growers and producers of agricultural product(s) to meet consumer demands that will promote entrepreneurship efforts that will lead to increased food diversity and security.*

Over the last two years we did increase the number of people providing products and saw an increase in food diversity.

4. *Alter consumer habits on health and nutrition for themselves and the " health and nutrition " of their community by educating the public on how using the local farmers market helps them reduce overall food cost, how purchasing local foods reduces carbon foot print, how fresh in season foods are the most nutritious, and how buying locally helps their community.*

We saw increase interest in local foods, but the consignment market system did not provide enough consistency and quality to hold consumer interest. The potential vendors stated location as there number one reason for not placing items, and consumers stated location and not knowing if we would have what they wanted as the reasons they did not come to the market.

Beneficiaries:

At end of market October 30, 2010, five individuals were consigning fresh produce to Mel's Market consignment shop, four individuals that were providing specialty value added items, and two individuals providing non edible agricultural items. One patch farmer utilized the shed during Mel's Market consignment shop hours, and we noted seven other vendors who utilized the covered shed more than once during this year's season, and we had an increase in community yard sales on the designated first Saturdays.

We have had an increase of local people using EBT cards at the market.

We hosted children's moment every Saturday that taught local food system concepts.

The education and outreach in the community also had an impact on church groups, civil groups, and individuals who began to catch on to the concept of using the shed to set up swaps and sells.

The new location is located in front of our community complex that contains: rodeo, soccer fields, playground, softball/baseball fields, tennis courts, and basketball courts. This concept will be easily transferred and will fit in with the community complex and reap the benefits of the two highways.

With the living learning center We were able to complete twelve raised beds and develop ground plots for the late spring early summer planting. There was a large community volunteer base. The garden hosted twelve families and excess was delivered to forty families who are elderly, shut ins, and/or handicapped. The living learning center hosts Saturday as community garden morning where we work together to learn gardening techniques. Ground plots will be available starting Spring 2011

Lessons Learned:

We do feel like the two years we have engaged in the consignment shop project helped force our community flush out real issues with idealism of revitalizing Main St. with a traffic driven business. As a community, we have several patch farmers that sit on the side of the highway on the back of pick-ups. The farmers have been firm if we want their cooperation the farmers market needs to be on highway. The consistency and quality cannot currently be met by "part time gardeners". There is enough interest and frustration from customers who don't want to make four or five stops and want the market to be centrally located that the economic development commission is moving the market space to Highway 65 and 82 in a high traffic area. The new location is located in front of our community complex that contains: rodeo, soccer fields, playground, softball/baseball fields, tennis courts, and basketball courts. This concept will be easily transferred and will fit in with the community complex and reap the benefits of the two highways

The feedback that we received during the two years we implemented the consignment shop project was that the established patch farmers were unwilling to place food at the market because they sold more sitting on the highway and they did not get enough in return for utilizing our services. The inconsistency with part time gardeners made having a selection large enough and constant enough to get people to make a point and shop at the consignment shop a unreachable goal. They only dropped by if they were already in the area where we are located which is an area that most potential customers are not often in. Advertisements seemed to draw in customers that are not local or that are in town visiting relatives and are used to shopping farmers' markets.

The education and outreach in the community also had an impact on church groups, civil groups, and individuals who began to catch on to the concept of using the shed to set up swaps and sells.

We met resistance in area due to tax reporting measures taken by The Delta Sprouts and Mel's Market. The people we had spoken to about advocating for the market or utilizing the market stepped away when they understood that legal requirements would not allow them to be paid in cash and that they would of had to report earnings.

Final Financial Report:

Software/Hardware Purchases	\$7385.01
Living Learning Center	\$4424.56
Educational Outreach	\$4422.94
<u>Market Experience</u>	<u>\$3863.49</u>
Total Spent	\$20096.00
Balance Remaining	\$0

Contact Person:

Ms. Amber Bunker
President
The Delta Sprouts
3768 Hwy 65/82S
Lake Village, AR 71653
501-951-0420

Additional Information:



Raised Garden Beds at Delta Sprouts Learning Center

Project 5: East Arkansas Enterprise Community, Inc. Specialty Crop Marketing Project

Completed November 2009.

Project Summary

An outline of the issue, problem, interest or need for the assistance.

The program's purpose is to aid the EAEC in giving specialty crop producers and their families an opportunity to supplement household income through the use of small scale farming. In this portion of eastern Arkansas, we have some of the lowest per capita income in the state. Through this effort, the EAEC provided small scale farmers (along with the additional seven farmers recruited for the Initiative) access to provide supplementary income through technical assistance and marketing of specialty crops. With the assistance of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and USDA agencies, the EAEC has continuously promoted and taught good agriculture practices to farmers across eastern Arkansas. The EAEC has also used this as an opportunity to forge a relationship between these small scale and agencies such as Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and Rural Development. Outreach and technical assistance to Small Scale and Limited Resource Farmers is currently not being addressed at the level needed by USDA and their subsidiaries. These farmers have small tracts of land (one to ten acres). Many of them have a lack of knowledge about USDA programs, therefore, causing a void in avenues to contribute or provide family farm income.

Project Approach:

How the issue or problem was approached via the project

During the past 10 years, the East Arkansas Enterprise Community (EAEC), Inc. and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff has worked together with small farmers assisting them in supplementing income through alternative crop production. During this process, both the EAEC and UAPB recognized that coupled with the need for technical assistance in alternative crop production, there was a greater need for marketing venues of the specialty crops grown by the farmers. Also local farmers had insufficient outlets for their produce.

The average specialty crop producer's, who participated in this initiative, farm averaged from one-fourth (%) an acre to ten (10) acres. Southern Peas, Sweet Potatoes and Horticulture Beans are very labor intensive and small farmers could not afford the costs of hand harvesting labor (do not have large families as they did in the past). To address this issue - the EAEC/UAPB purchased some specialized equipment to plant and harvest specialty crops. The farmers who participated in this initiative had access to the equipment. These seven new specialty crop producers along with others also

used the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluffs Agriculture Demonstration and Outreach Center as marketing outlet for sales of specialty crops.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

How the performance goals and measurable outcomes were achieved.

<i>Goals to achieve during the AAD Grant period</i>	<i>Outcome during the Grant period</i>
Recruit additional Specialty Crop producers to participate in the Specialty Crop Production	7 new specialty crop producers have participated in AADIEAEC specialty crop initiative
Help to establish a steady and stable market venue for specialty crop producers	Specialty crops were sold wholesale and through other markets/outlets across eastern Arkansas
Select specialty crops that are profitable to the Farmers	Specialty crop producers grew and marketed Southern Peas, Snap Beans, Butter Beans, Squash, Watermelons and different varieties of peppers and greens this season
EAECJUAPB-ADOC will provide workshops on cultural and management practices for specialty crop producers	3 workshops were held for specialty crop producers during the 2009 season (see attached agendas)
EAECNAPB will provide some access to specialized equipment for production and harvesting of specialty crops	All participants had access to the specialized equipment (but all specialty crops were hand harvested during the 2009 season)
Producers will have access to the ADOC facility where training will be provided to enhance farm operation and crop yield	Workshops and trainings were given to specialty crop producers at the ADOC facility on planting, herbicide and pesticide application, record keeping, irrigation practices, harvesting, value added procedures and marketing
EAECNAPB will provide educational assistance to Specialty Crop Producers in marketing	The EAEC hired a marketing specialist to work with the program coordinator to aid in finding and selecting specialty crop markets across the delta. Such as local farmers markets, wholesale clients and the ADOC facility
Coordinate group activities between specialty crop producers and State/Federal agencies	All specialty crop producers were given an opportunity to be aware of Federal and State programs that were administered to sustain their farm/landownership operations. Representatives from the various agencies were in attendance.
Work with farmers to develop an appropriate planting schedule	The EAEC, with the assistance of UAPB, had an initial meeting to set up the planting schedule at the beginning of season.
Provide training to low income families	The EAEC facilitated workshops on Individual Development Accounts, Stamp Out Smoking and the Youth Entrepreneurship Programs for all specialty crop producers and their families. These particular workshops were geared toward low income families.
Employ youth in summer jobs programs,	Ten summer interns were hired to work at the ADOC facility during the 2009 season.
Provide an Agriculture Youth Field's Day	An Agriculture Youths Field's Day was held at the UAPB Lonoke Farm at the end of the Youth Internship Program
Document how many dollars will be generated	The Final Financial Report will address this issue
Make sure that after each workshop ask the participants will they adopt the methods they learned at the workshop in their crop production and maintenance practices	Specialty Crop Producers were pleased and said they would apply TA to their prospective small farm operation

Beneficiaries:

Those who benefited from the project's accomplishment, and/or the potential economic impact of the project.

The EAEC has purchased specialty crops from at least seven new specialty crop producers this season with the assistance of the AAD Grant. The EAEC used the specialty crop initiative as an avenue to supplement small scale farming/ranching. Specialty crop producers marketed Southern Peas, Snap Beans, Summer Squash, Tomatoes, Peppers, Sweet Potatoes and many varieties of Greens across eastern Arkansas Farmers' Markets in the various communities and to other entities (Southern Peas primarily at the ADOC Facility).

Over the period of the season, the EAECIUAPB has facilitated three **(3)** workshops that have been instrumental in the operation of specialty crop production. Some specialty crop producers were able to get submergible wells through the NRCSIEQIP program and others were participants in the NRCS Conservation Innovative Grant program, which was able to assist specialty crop producers with drip irrigation and other programs offered through federal and state agencies. Workshops were held on record keeping, herbicide and pesticide application, marketing strategies and proper management of small farm operations. The program coordinator did onsite visits with individual producers at least once a week during the peak of growing and harvesting of specialty crops. The specialty crop producers have always had access to the ADOC facility, equipment and its staff.

The EAECIUAPB also conducted a workshop for specialty crop producers on the Conservation Innovative Grant (CIG) Program explaining the importance of drip irrigation as it pertains to specialty crop production. The CIG Program also emphasizes prudent and economical water usage for farming operations.

During the 2009 season the weather was not favorable for specialty crop producers across eastern Arkansas (although sales did exceed at least \$10,000). Many producers (along with row crop operations) were not able to produce crops on a large scale due to a lack of reasonably priced seeds and excessive rains in the area. But, some specialty crop producers did market a substantial amount of Southern Peas and Butter Beans for this initiative (due to early planting). The Southern Peas and Butter Beans that were marketed through the ADOC facility were of very high quality and consumers across Arkansas purchased accordingly. Other vegetables that were grown but not sold in excessive amounts were squash, tomatoes, corn, watermelons, peppers and greens (some growers are marketing winter greens presently).

Lessons Learned:

Lessons learned, results, conclusions. for the project. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help expedite problem solving.

During the season, the EAEC collaborated with the producers of eastern Arkansas to establish venues to help sustain local Farmer's Market sites. The EAEC has realized to make locally grown specialty crops easily accessible to the community there has to be a by-in to this project by local leaders and city officials. Through an collaboration between local leaders, city officials and specialty crop producers this project can become a reality across the delta. St. Francis, Phillips and Lee counties have established farmers market sites that can possibly be a landmark for vegetables, arts and crafts along with other articles produced in eastern Arkansas that could be for sale.

- The wholesale market system favors those who can deliver the same problem-free product every day.
- Product problems cause interruption in the smooth flow of product disruption in the marketplace, and eventually losses.
- Growers manage risks by knowing the product and what it takes to consistently deliver it to the market.
- Some specialty crops can be sold year round if properly maintained after harvesting.
- The loss of community by-in and demands has led to the rise of brokers who can access markets outside the immediate community and in some cases other geographical regions.

Moreover, to improve profit or minimize risk, growers take advantage of expanded market in the following ways:

- Multiple locations
- Strategic alliances with other growers or marketers(cooperatives) Preparation of early and late production
- Taking product through the value -added process can increased sales and crop appeal to the consumer.
- Good farming practices and record keeping is a vital part of running a good specialty crop operation
- Cooperatives increase yields for wholesale production
- Some consumers would rather purchase fresh locally grown vegetables
- Memphis, TN and Little Rock, AR can provide an good outlet for specialty crops grown in surplus

Conclusion

Weather conditions had a large adverse impact on crop yields and the quality of specialty crops during the season but, through workshops and technical assistance specialty crop producers will be more prepared for future seasonal farm management operations and more USDA programs will be accessible to these small specialty crop producers.

Final Financial Report:

Detailed outline of expenditures of grant funds. A report of any interest earned on grant funds and if the project had income, a detailed accounting of the amount and how it was utilized in the project. Reports are to be signed by the project manager.

Arkansas Agriculture Department Specialty Crop Block Grant Financial Report: Final Report December 01, 2009

<u>Budget Item</u>	<u>Beginning Balances</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Ending Balances</u>
Personnel	\$ 6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$ -0-
Supplies	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Specialty Crop Dev.	\$ 6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$ -0-
Workshops	\$ 1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$ -0-
Travel	\$ 1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$ -0-
Totals:	\$15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ -0-

Contact Person:

Dr. Robert L. Cole
Consulting Coordinator
East Arkansas Enterprise Community (EAEC), Inc.
1000 Airport Road
Post Office Box 2212
Forrest City, Arkansas 72336-2212
(8 70) 630-2005 / (8 70) 630-2035 wax
eaec@sbcglobal.net

Additional Information:

The primary sites for specialty crop sales were at the local Farmers' Markets across eastern Arkansas (here is a list of them).

- The ADOC Facility in Brown's Addition which is located in rural Marianna, AR
- The St. Francis County Farmer's in Forrest, AR located in the downtown area (preliminary site)
- The Cross County Farmer's Market in Wynne, AR located in the downtown area (preliminary site)
- The Phillips County Farmer's Market in Helena West Helena, AR Farmers' Market located downtown area.

Copies of 2 sales invoices used during the 2009 season, pictures, and agendas:

Owner	Total Bags Processed	Percentage of Ownership	Net Bags	Processing Cost per bag	Total Processing Cost
100	0.00	100%	0	\$ -	\$ -
100	0.00	100%	0	\$ -	\$ -
100	0.00	100%	0	\$ -	\$ -

Owner	Shelled Out lbs.	Yield %	Graded QTY	Percentage of Ownership	Net lbs	Selling Price per lb	Gross Sales	Less Processing Cost	Net Proceeds
100	415	51.08%	812.5	100%	813	\$ 0.70	\$ 568.75		\$ 568.75
0		#DIV/0!		100%	0	\$ 0.60	\$ -		\$ -
0		#DIV/0!		100%	0	\$ 0.40	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

Check Amount \$ 568.75

This is an example of the sale invoice received by the specialty crop product ducer on a large shipment of alternative crops

Owner	Total Bags Processed	Percentage of Ownership	Net Bags	Processing Cost per bag	Total Processing Cost
100	0.00	100%	0	\$ -	\$ -
100	0.00	100%	0	\$ -	\$ -
100	0.00	100%	0	\$ -	\$ -

Owner	Shipped Out lbs.	Yield %	Graded QTY	Percentage of Ownership	Net lbs	Selling price per lb	Gross Sales	Less Processing Cost	Net Proceeds
100	56	56.28%	99.5	100%	100	\$ 0.70	\$ 69.65		\$ 69.65
0		#DIV/0!		100%	0	\$ 0.60	\$ -		\$ -
0		#DIV/0!		100%	0	\$ 0.40	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Check Amount									\$ 69.65

This is an example of the sale invoice received by the specialty crop producer on a small shipment of alternative crops



NRCS –National Water Management staff member (T. Bunch) specialty crop producers tours site with EAEC project coordinator



Specialty Crop Producer (R. Thorn) shows off onion harvest for 2009 season



Specialty Crop Producer puts down drip irrigation to plant vegetables for the 2009 season. This grower also raised wheat adjacent to his vegetable crop.



Some specialty crop producer also grew an assortment of berries for the market.



Some specialty crop producer also received submergible wells for specialty crop production.



Local landowners attend NRCS workshop facilitated by the EAEC



The AAD was also used as an educational tool to promote agriculture amongst teenagers in eastern Arkansas



Many seniors citizens used specialty crop production to supplement household income and hobbies



Mung Beans were considered a marketable specialty crop for the diversely growing ethnic groups across the delta



AGENDA

**Small-Scale Farmers Vegetable Production Meeting
UAPB / ADOC
330 Lee 407 Road, Marianna, AR 72360**

**Saturday, March 21, 2009
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

- I. Welcome and Introduction **Alexis Cole**
Outreach Technician, UAPB
- II. Opening Remarks **Dr. Leslie Clover**
Associate Dean of Outreach & Technology Transfer, UAPB
- III. Land Preparation and Weed Control **Mr. Earnest Bradley**
Multi-County Extension Horticulture Agent, UAPB
- IV. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) & Good Handling
Practices (GHP) **Dr. Obadiah Njue**
Cooperative Extension Horticulture Specialist, UAPB
- V. Southern Peas Variety Selection **Dr. Shadrach Okiror**
Associate Professor / Plant Breeder, UAPB
- VI. Record Keeping **Mr. Arlanda Jacobs**
Extension Associate, UAPB
- VII. Natural Resources Conservation Service..... **John Wheeler**
District Conservationist, NRCS
- VIII. Farm Service Agency **Theodore Eldridge, Jr.**
County Office Trainee, FSA
- IX. Closing Remarks **Mr. Theodore Eldridge**
ADOC Coordinator, UAPB

Lunch



*University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) / East Arkansas Enterprise Community (EAEC)
Agriculture Demonstration and Outreach Center (ADOC)*

Agriculture Field Day
Theme: "Lett-uce Plant the Seeds of Knowledge"
Thursday-July 31,2009

9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

ADOC Vegetable Processing Facility
330 Lee 407
Marianna, AR 72360

FACILITATORS: MICHELLE PENDLETON and KYLE HOUSTON

9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

- Welcome/Opening Remarks**.....Dr . Leslie Glover, UAPB
Associate Dean for Outreach and Technology Transfer
School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences
- Introductions & Overview**..... Mr. Theodore Eldridge
ADOC Facility Manager
- Summer Intern Program**.....Fredric Smith
Summex Youth Internship Coordinator
- Pesticide Recordkeeping**.....Carolyn **Prowell**, UAPB
Farm Advisor
- Conservation Innovative Grant (CIG) Presentation**.....Alexis Cole
UAPB Outreach Technician &
Brently Washington, Summer Youth Intern

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

LUNCH

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

- Youth Presentation**.....**Swvilla Lowe**, Summer Youth Intern &
Brently Washington, Summer Youth Intern
- Tour of Facility**.....AWOC Site Supervisors & ADOC Interns
Leon Ellis & Wilburn & Associates
Shelby Houston, Allen Barrett, Christopher Jacobs, Tyrone Neal
- Closeout Ceremony Update & Closing**Fredric Smith

JUST A REMINDER

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE
SUMMER INTERNSHIP CLOSEOUT PROGRAM**

FRIDAY-AUGUST 01,2008 - EAEC CONFERENCE CENTER
10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Youth to be at EAEC at 8:00 a.m.

Conservation Stewardship Program Sign – Up

TOM CATLETT

Maize County
Chair

BETTY COLE
Election of Eastern AR
Vice Chair

MARGARET STAUB
Wild Earth CM
Secretary

JAMES KEASLER
Lee County Judge

EPHRON LEWIS
Leeds & Son

CHARLENE SYKES
Madison, DC

LARRY NASH
Mayor City of Wheatley

JANIS WADDY
ICSP

BECKY DUNN
Mayor City of Palestine

PAUL NICHOLS
Mayor City of Wayne

ABRON PITTS
Mayor City of Walden

JOHN G. SMITH
Mayor, Menard County

DONNIE MOONEY
Mayor, City of Hughes

GARY HUGHES
Judge, St. Francis County

HARRY GRUGGS
City of Brinkley

LOUISE DOBSON
Mayor, Town of Turley

Small Scale Farmers/Landowners:

On Saturday - September 12, 2009 we anticipate your attendance and sign up for Natural Resources Conservation Services Program. This is an opportunity to showcase small scale farmers/landowners and what can be done on small scale farms across eastern Arkansas with the assistance of USDA agencies.

The following agencies will be on the agenda and are willing to answer any questions that you may have pertaining to this project:

1. East Arkansas Enterprise Community, Inc.
2. Natural Resources Conservation Service
3. University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

We would like to encourage you to take the next step and participate in some of these programs. So let's take advantage of the programs that may be accessible to you as a landowner. These organizations are available to assist you in determining which program(s) your farm is best suited for, and will continue with assistance throughout the application process.

The main topic on the agenda is as follows:

- A. **Conservation Stewardship Program (Sign Up for the upcoming year ends September 31,2009 but, you can still sign -up for 2010)**

If you have any additional questions, please contact Kevin Cochran (NRCS) at 1.870.633.0355 or Alexis Cole (UAPB/EAEC) at 1.870.630.2005.

Sincerely,

Robert Cole

Robert Cole, EAEC Coordinator

"...Serving The People OF Eastern Arkansas..."