



Ohio Department of Agriculture 2008 Specialty Crop Block Grant Final Report 12-25-B-0858

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CONTACT

Program Contact: Lori Panda, Senior Program Manager

Phone: 614.466.8798

E-mail: panda@agri.ohio.gov

CONTENTS

Center for Innovative Food Technology.....	pg. 1
Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council.....	pg. 2
Ohio Center for Farmland Policy Innovation.....	pg. 5
Ohio State University – Local Food Podcasts/Videocasts.....	pg. 8
Ohio State University – Ohio MarketMaker Outreach & Education.....	pg. 10

The following is the final reporting summary for five Ohio projects authorized under the above referenced agreement. The progress report for each project is outlined below.

PROJECT TITLE

Center for Innovative Food Technology – “Cryogenic Freezing for Local Fruits and Vegetables”

The purpose of this project is to acquire a mobile system to be utilized to freeze small fruits and vegetables for growers throughout Ohio, thereby adding to the market value of their products.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The purpose of the project was to acquire and operate a mobile system to be utilized to freeze small fruits and vegetables for growers throughout Ohio, thereby adding to the market value of their products. The work proposed for the project has been completed with minor variations from the original proposed work plan.

The project was initiated to evaluate and demonstrate under what conditions flash freezing could provide a tool for increasing the revenue of specialty crop producers. By extending the selling season, it was thought that growers could capitalize on the growing demand for local produce. Several vegetable purchasers who expressed a desire for local frozen fruits and vegetables were identified by CIFT.

All equipment, including a small scale vacuum blancher, a used berry washing system, a used “snipping” system for green beans, and a cryogenic freezing system have been received and installed. The blancher was purchased from the Henny-Penny Co. in Eaton, Ohio. The washer was purchased from the Berry Co-op in Wilmington, Ohio. The freezer was purchased from Cryogenic Systems in Blue Island, Illinois, and the green bean snipping system was purchased from Allard Equipment in Williamson, New York.

The equipment purchase allowed CIFT to establish a blanching and freezing center so that specialty crop growers were enabled to avoid selling portions of their output during the season when prices are low, and sell these portions frozen at higher prices. The premise of the project was that this could be economically accomplished.

CIFT helped to facilitate purchasing agreements between five local growers and Bon Appétit Management Company (BAMCO) for four commodities; green beans, strawberries, sweet peas, and raspberries for the 2010 harvest season. A total of more than 30,000# of product was frozen for BAMCO and several other organizations.

CIFT developed relationships with several other companies, specifically Root’s Poultry to assist with product transport, and Clover Leaf Refrigerated Storage to store product after freezing and prior to pick up. These relationships are being expanded as the program grows to form a “rural supply chain” though which larger volumes of products can be handled.

An open house was held for stakeholders, the media, and other interested individuals. This was held both to promote the activities of the operation, and to enlist growers and customers for the 2011 season. Commitments have been received for increased participation in the program.

PROJECT APPROACH

As described above, the project involved the purchase of a small scale cryogenic (nitrogen) freezer to extend the marketing season for small specialty growers by freezing their products for sale at a later time. To augment the freezer, CIFT acquired additional funding to acquire ancillary equipment, and utilized its own funding to operate the system. Small user fees were charged to produce suppliers and in some cases, to purchasers. Protocols for blanching, freezing, packaging, and storing various berries, green beans, peppers, sweet corn, and other products were developed, and more than 30,000 pounds of product was sold by growers to customers. Promotion for the coming season was held and an increased level of production is anticipated.

All fees that were charged to participants in the project were cost based. Estimates for the quantities of cryogenic agent (nitrogen), for preparation and handling labor, and for packaging materials that were used were prepared. The charges were used to partially offset these costs. CIFT contributed balances of unrecovered costs and supervisory labor. First, several grower meetings were held during the winter to publicize the program and its intentions. During these sessions, participants were solicited for their participation. Also, CIFT utilized electronic communications to promote the capability to interested participants. These included e-mail alerts and website based announcements.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

CIFT was able to successfully demonstrate that small scale freezing of local fruits and vegetables is both technically and economically feasible. It also was able to develop procedures for preservation through freezing, and identify those products with the highest potential return when frozen.

During the first year of production, approximately 30,000 of green beans, strawberries, sweet corn, and blueberries were processed. Additionally, a number of other products were frozen on a test basis to evaluate their appeal and usefulness to various customers.

BENEFICIARIES

The beneficiaries of the project in the short term are those growers who utilized the freezing system, as well as the brokers who were able to purchase frozen product for sale at increased revenues due to its local source. In the longer term, the industry in total will benefit from the successful commercial demonstration of a small scale cryogenic system and its economic benefits.

LESSONS LEARNED

The primary lesson that is taken from the project is that freezing can be successfully applied to specialty fruits and vegetables, increasing their marketability. However, several initial assumptions that were part of the original proposal were proven to be incorrect. Specifically, the original concept of a mobile system was shown to be impractical, due to the ancillary sorting, washing, trimming, and (in some cases) blanching operations that are required. Also, the type of freezing employed in this project was demonstrated to be fairly expensive, limiting its use to certain high value applications, precluding some of those that were originally thought to be feasible.

CONTACT PERSON

Paula Ray, Manager
Northwest Ohio Cooperative Kitchen
pray@ciftinnovation.org

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information.

PROJECT TITLE

Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council

Increased consumption of specialty crops through the identification and dissemination of marketing and distribution systems innovations.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The impetus/issue was to address the lack of distribution infrastructure that was a barrier to local specialty crop consumption/sales. This project was timely and important as it addressed a pressing need identified by the Ohio Food Policy Council that was a very real barrier at a time when the demand for locally grown specialty crops was increasing exponentially.

Market Connections Task Force

In an effort to better connect local producers and consumers and implement new best practices the Council's Market Connections task force identified an opportunity to host an Ohio Local Food Summit: featuring Trade Talks. A sub-committee was established to plan for an event that would connect Ohio producers with regional category buyers from the retail industry as well as representatives from the Ohio restaurant industry. The event was held on June 23rd, 2010 and brought together retailers, restaurateurs, distributors and institutional food service providers with producers and Ohio food companies. More than 100 attendees participated in this event. Producers met one-one-one with buyers similar to a speed dating process.

A technical assistance need was identified as a barrier to connecting local producers and consumers in the state is a lack of information on the producer side related to the requirements for marketing at the retail level. Kentucky extension developed a "Retail Ready" curriculum for producers. The Ohio Food Policy Council partners implemented this type of program within Ohio. Ohio Department of Agriculture staff and their partners were trained as retail ready educators and piloted the "Retail Ready" curriculum throughout Ohio to specialty crop producers. These trainings were a prerequisite to attend the Ohio Food Summit. *Retail Ready has been identified as an important innovation in educating specialty crop producers about the steps that need to be put in place to effectively prepare and market their products to restaurateurs, retailers and at the wholesale level.*

An additional best practice created by the Market Connections task force was coordinating messaging to advance more effective marketing of Ohio produce. It was felt that with many efforts to promote local food in general and specialty crops in particular, all of these efforts would be more successful if there was some synergy in their messaging. The committee focused on inventory existing efforts, identify stories/target groups and effective messages, identify new promotional opportunities, look at ways to tie in with the Know your Farmer, Know your Food initiative and identify opportunities for joint funding collaboration. A sub-committee was also formed and looked at collaborative funding opportunities for those entities that conduct local food education, promotion and marketing in the state. This Food Policy Council task force formed two additional sub-committees. The first is the institutional purchasing sub-committee who did some outreach and conducted surveys to determine further possibility for sourcing Ohio specialty crops.

The task force forwarded a goal to the full Council which was accepted recommended an increase of local food in the Ohio distribution system of 10% by 2015. A study of local specialty crops in the distribution system was conducted in to provide a baseline for measuring progress. One goal set by the task force/full Council was to identify regional distribution (aggregation) center locations in the state. The distribution study will help identify the existing aggregation and distribution locations. This group will coordinate these efforts with the Agricultural Viability task force.

The Ag Viability and Market Connection task forces worked together to determine what resources could be brought to in support of Ohio's specialty crop businesses. Many of the programs and resources available are geared toward specific job creation numbers and larger scale businesses. An ad-hoc committee was put together to develop recommendations to the Ohio Department of Development on how they can modify some program parameters to provide business support to mid-tier producers. The two task forces also examined the state tax structure as it relates to food processing to be sure there were no disincentives for local food processing. The determination was that there are no clear disincentives. There may be more detailed look at a proactive incentive approach to the processing of Ohio food for Ohio consumption in the future.

It was brought to the attention of both task forces that although Ohio has done a good job of accessing resources for beginning farmers we were the only state in the top ten that did not have a state program to support beginning farmers. A motion was made and accepted that Ohio "Establish a financial assistance program for beginning farmers". The motion was sent to the full Food Policy Council and accepted as a formal recommendation on February 2, 2010. The Agricultural Viability task force will develop more detailed suggestions for what type of incentives and resources should be made available in this program.

Agricultural Viability Task Force

This task force developed a goal to develop at least one new food business incubator within the state to advance local food entrepreneurship. This task force deliberated the potential impact of a national leafy greens marketing agreement (NLGMA) on specialty crop sales in Ohio. In thinking about regional centers for aggregation and distribution the group looked at the location of wholesale produce auctions in the state.

It was decided to visit the Columbus Food Terminal and speak to some of the distributors there to get a better idea of how much local food they distribute and some challenges/opportunities. The group met at the food terminal and identified items including: Federal regulations- more discussion on the proposed NLGMA, the need for aggregation points and cooling/flash freezing facilities at those locations and more outreach and education to farmers on what is need to sell into these markets. The visit also raised awareness about the need to do more education with Ohio consumers so that they understand the difference between Ohio apple varieties and the iconic Washington Red Delicious for example.

Healthy Food Access Task Force

The work this task force has conducted related to better connecting local specialty crop producers and consumers and local food distribution is in the area of Farm to School procurement. Partnerships between the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Department of Education and local non-profits working on farm to school in the state have been established. Contacts were identified with the Department of Defense to look at the possibility for advancing institutional purchasing connections between Ohio schools and producers. A first step in local procurement was identified and discussed is connection with the summer food programs. These programs do not have the onerous procurement requirements of the traditional school food programs. Connections have been made with summer food program staff and community action agencies. Additionally, local food resources have been shared to help them plan for the 2010 program.

Food System Assessment Task Force

This task force had previously advanced two local food briefs illustrating the current consumption of food commodities and production potential in Ohio. This information will be used to plan for what can be done to connect demand with current production in the state. An area of need was identified is research on food processing capacity in the state. This is critical as we look at innovations in institutional purchasing and meeting year round demand. These innovations will require that local producers have access to thermal and flash freezing processors.

The Ohio Food Policy Council's August 2009 report "Bringing Everyone to the Table" was developed and disseminated. This report details information about Ohio agriculture and highlights the research completed to date related to local food, barriers and recommendations. Approximately 475 reports have been distributed across the state resulting in several state level media stories and spurring interest from local and regional food policy council groups forming.

Two Ohio tools were developed to shed light on local food potential in Ohio.

- a.) Local Foods: Estimating Capacity for Ohio- provides information on what current consumption of Ohio products could be met with local production.
- b.) Local Foods Estimating Ohio Consumption- reveals opportunity for producers to meet demand for product – including Ohio Specialty Crops.

This task force also focused on Urban Food Deserts, demonstrating the economic impact of local food system development and the state level assessment of the food system. The Urban Food Desert work is largely focused on how we assess where these deserts exist. This addressed the barriers to increase consumption and improve distribution outlined in the project proposal. This task force partnered with another task force – Healthy Food Access, to look at innovative and efficient ways to identify areas of need. Subsequent steps will include initiatives such as corner store improvement. The mitigation of the problem deals largely with making specialty crops more available in urban locations. This will ultimately increase the consumption of Ohio specialty crops.

A major point of work has been how we can not only identify areas where we increase access to Ohio specialty crops but also what innovations can be implemented, how to engage local communities and how to track progress. The state has committed resources from our Department of Health to conduct state level mapping of retail locations and the underlying socio economic information. A tool has been developed for local communities to input state and federal data as well as local resources such as farmers' markets, Community Supported Agricultural operations, community gardens and more. Additionally this web platform allows local community groups to input data from USDA's thrifty meal plan. This has been identified as the best standardized measurement that will allow us track change.

PROJECT APPROACH

Market Connections task force assisted with the coordination of the first-ever Ohio Food Summit which brought together Ohio suppliers and buyers together. Prescheduled meetings were set like "speed dating" and sales were made of the following types of products: jams, wine, salsa and fruit butters. A survey indicated for many buyers this was their first introduction to many Ohio specialty crop products.

Ag Viability task force determine there was a great need to educate consumers about the difference between Ohio's specialty crops from other states as well as the important healthy aspect of fresh local produce. Through a visit to the Columbus food terminal, the need for an aggregate food distribution center was determined.

Healthy Food Access task force developed a working relationship with the Ohio Departments of Agriculture and Education which focused on a Farm to School program which made connections between Ohio specialty crop growers and the Ohio education system.

Food Systems Assessment task force developed two tools to shed light on local food potential in Ohio.

- a.) Local Foods: Estimating Capacity for Ohio- provides information on what current consumption of Ohio products could be met with local production.
- b.) Local Foods Estimating Ohio Consumption- reveals opportunity for producers to meet demand for product – including Ohio Specialty Crops.

The need for research of Ohio's food processing capacity was determined and looking at innovations in institutional purchasing and meeting year round demand would require access to thermal and flash freezing for Ohio's specialty crop producers.

GOALS & OUTCOMES

The development of the tools to estimate the capacity to produce food for local consumption along with estimating the current level of consumption do highlight the unrealized potential for local food system development that we were looking to illustrate. The progress has clarified some of the business assistance needed as well as the barriers in getting to the next stages of development. The analysis and opportunity detailed in “Bringing Everyone to the Table” was distributed to approximately 500 groups and individuals. Additionally an electronic version was posted to the department’s website and has been viewed widely and is currently available at :

<http://www.agri.ohio.gov/divs/FoodCouncil/docs/OFPC%20Final%20June%2030%202009.pdf>

At least 500 reports were printed and distributed. It was also available on ODA’s website at www.ohio.agri.gov. Food Policy Council members presented this report throughout Ohio at rural development conferences, farm to school conferences, Ohio Produce Growers Association’s annual conference, and the Small Fruit and Vegetable Growers annual conference. The director of ODA assisted with an infrastructure investment in NE Ohio implementing flash freezing for produce growers to extend the season of Ohio produce.

BENEFICIARIES

The task forces have provided a networking opportunity for committees statewide to assess the needs of the state’s specialty crop industry. Creating opportunities for Ohio’s specialty crop industry through education, marketing, and distribution were a focus.

LESSONS LEARNED

Connections have been made with the specialty crops distribution sector and the related conversations have highlighted issues that will aid in connecting the dots from local production through consumption. More retailers are seeking out ways to integrate this product into their offerings and the demand for local produce continues to grow creating new opportunities for Ohio producers. Many systemic issues still need to be resolved and are being addressed by a diversity of programmatic areas.

CONTACT PERSON

Lori Panda
Ohio Department of Agriculture
614.466.8798
panda@agri.ohio.gov

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information.

PROJECT TITLE

Ohio Center for Farmland Policy Innovation

Scaling up connections between regional Ohio specialty crop producers and local markets: Distribution as the missing link

PROJECT SUMMARY

Many local food systems advocates focus on increasing the number of farmers selling their products directly to consumers, but this type of direct marketing is only one strategy for increasing the consumption of local foods. Over 90 percent of all food for home consumption is acquired from retail venues (such as grocery stores) (USDA, ERS, 2010), suggesting an important strategy to increase the consumption of Ohio grown foods by Ohioans, is to focus on increasing

the flow of these foods through the state's distribution and retail market systems. This research is the first attempt at inventorying the existing produce retail-distribution structure to identify opportunities, barriers and the development needs associated with increasing the flow of Ohio grown fruits and vegetables to existing retailers and ultimately Ohio consumers. The research we report draws on our review of previous food system studies, as well as interviews we conducted with Ohio retailers, and a survey of produce distributors in the state. The goal of this work is to generate useful information and recommendations that can identify next steps in scaling-up the connections between Ohio specialty crop producers and Ohio retail markets.

PROJECT APPROACH

We took a three-prong approach conducting a literature review, retailer interviews and fruit and vegetable distributor surveys. To understand the challenges associated with linking more Ohio produce to Ohio retail outlets via the distribution system, it is necessary to examine the challenges different groups of farmers, distributors and retailers face. We did this through a literature review of twenty four related studies and journal articles.

To understand the relationship retailers have with fresh fruit and vegetable distributors in Ohio we conducted in-depth interviews with six retail outlets. Retail respondents represented a variety of store outlets ranging from a small co-op, independent stores, and regional chains to large national chains. At each retail outlet, semi-structured interviews were conducted with either the produce buyer or store manager. Interview questions were designed to understand fruit and vegetable distribution from the end user, understand different models of distribution and relationships between the retailers, distributors and Ohio farmers, identify and characterize current local food distribution streams. Finally, these interviews helped to inform later survey work with distributors.

Working from a different point in the fresh fruit and vegetable commodity chain, we surveyed fresh fruit and vegetable distributors that have distribution centers in Ohio. The distributor survey was developed in consultation with the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Office of Sustainable Agriculture and a review committee with knowledge of distribution systems. The overall survey design was guided by The Ohio Food Policy Council's objectives outlined in Section 1.0. The survey included questions on: type and locations of retail outlets distributed to; size and location of firm; types of products distributed; ways distributors identify, purchase and work with growers; volume of Ohio grown fresh fruits and vegetables carried; challenges associated with purchasing Ohio grown fresh fruits and vegetables; motivations for purchasing local, standards and certification; and, interest in working further with Ohio growers and the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Respondents were identified through a purchased list of distributors operating in Ohio identified by the NAICS codes and through the Blue Book, a directory of produce sellers, buyers, transportation and supply firms operating in the United States. Verification of this list was conducted via internet and phone. Two hundred and fifteen distributors were on the original list. Forty-five were no longer in business or did not have current contact info, resulting in a list of 169 distributors. Fifty-seven responded, resulting in a 34 percent response rate for fruit and vegetable distributors. It appears we had a response bias towards those fresh fruit and vegetable distributors that distribute to Ohio retailers (versus non-Ohio retailers, or Ohio non-retailers).

Our approach to analyzing the survey data focused on four main objectives:

1. Create a baseline understanding of the Ohio fruit and vegetable distribution industry.
2. Investigate any differences between distributor firm size and opportunities to for Ohio farmers to build relationships. What previous studies have failed to do is distinguish between size and scale of distributor and retailer. Barriers for market access may very well be different between size and scale.
3. Identify opportunities for Ohio fruit and vegetable growers to enter into relationships with fruit and vegetable distributors.

4. Identify any regions of the Ohio that may be ripe to address the need to build aggregation infrastructure for Ohio fruit and vegetable farmers.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Our main goals included mapping Ohio fruit and vegetable distribution in to Ohio retailers, increasing the amount of Ohio fruit and vegetables distributed to Ohio retailers, increased access to Ohio fruit and vegetables for Ohio consumers, expanding the state fruit and vegetable economy, and increasing market opportunities for Ohio fruit and vegetable growers. We addressed each of these goals, by the following outcomes:

- Development of a database of Ohio fruit and vegetable distributors, including creating a database of distributors particularly interested in working further with Ohio Department of Agriculture to move more Ohio produce in to Ohio retail locations.
- Describing, in detail, the fruit and vegetable distribution system as it pertains to Ohio retailers and Ohio growers.
- Cases of both increased Ohio produce being distributed to Ohio retailers as a result of this study and increased availability of Ohio produce in food deserts:
 - Six corner store owners and four gas station owners located in food deserts in Akron, Columbus and Chauncey are now utilizing new distribution relationships to purchase Ohio produce.
 - The Cleveland-Cuyahoga food policy coalition is using the findings of this study and relationships we created with distributors to establish a Cleveland food terminal to act as a hub to help small producers to scale-up.
 - Chesterhill auction is utilizing this study to provide for more distribution opportunities.
- Communicating results:
 - Submittal to stakeholder publications, such as the Vegetable Growers News
 - Publicize the report to the beneficiaries (listed below)
 - Presentations
- Our outputs include:
 - final report
 - fruit and vegetable distributor database, including those distributors who would like to work further with the Ohio Department of Agriculture
 - web page
 - article to share with stakeholder groups such as the Fruit Growers News and Vegetable Growers News (July 2011 issue)
 - three presentations
 - survey

This proposed outcome is not complete. My bulleted items below will be complete by the end of the year. However, concrete measures have moved action toward this outcome.

- *Distributors in the Akron area, which have never purchased Ohio grown products are being matched with suppliers by the Summit Food Policy Coalition for the purpose of distributing to three corner stores.*
- *Distributors in the Columbus area, which already sold Ohio products, are purchasing a greater amount to supply corners stores in the area.*
- *Distributors in Athens County are now linked with the Chesterhill produce auction to supply gas stations in a three county area.*
- *We have 6 corner stores and 4 gas stations. The estimate is 2080 lbs per corner store per year with a minimum of 35% of this being Ohio produce.*

BENEFICIARIES

- Ohio fruit and vegetable growers
- Retailers, including urban corner store owners
- The 13 new or emerging local food policy councils in Ohio.
- Ohio Grocers Association
- Ohio Department of Agriculture
- Ohio State University Extension
- Ohio Produce Growers and Marketers Association
- Ohio fruit and vegetable distributors

LESSONS LEARNED

- We learned that there is no one distributor association, making it difficult to find distributors in Ohio. We had to cobble together a contact list from many sources. A distributor organization would have made our task of contact distributors easier by providing contact information and partnering with us to generate support for the survey.
- We learned that time and resources may be better spent fostering relationships with fruit and vegetable growers, distributors and retailers that are likely to want to enter in to value chain relationships than trying to map all aspects of the distribution system.

CONTACT PERSON

Jill Clark, PhD
Director, Center for Farmland Policy Innovation
Dept. of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics
The Ohio State University
Agricultural Administration Bldg., 337
2120 Fyffe Rd.
Columbus, OH 43210
clark.1099@osu.edu
<http://cffpi.osu.edu>
614.247.6479 (p)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Attached to final report:

- Web page
- Article
- Presentation
- Report and Survey (at the end of the report)

Project web site: <http://cffpi.osu.edu/distribution.htm>

PROJECT TITLE

Ohio State University

Food Promotion Podcasts/Video Series

PROJECT SUMMARY

To help specialty crop producers link to and learn from the growing interest and activity of local foods, key educators gathered and shared stories of what's working in Ohio's food system. These stories were shared through a podcast series offered through the Ohio Direct Marketing Team website, YouTube and viewings at

producer conferences and local food events. These stories helped spread the word about Ohio's specialty crops and local food connections. It also demonstrated to new and existing specialty crop producers how they could be a part of local/regional food systems.

There are many valuable specialty crop producer stories throughout the state, yet many new producers were not benefiting from the experiences shared through these stories. Technology allows us to share these stories in a way to inspire and educate specialty crop producers at a time and location that is convenient for them. As one Ohio farm remarked, "no one person has all of the answers. It's helpful to hear from many perspectives."

The equipment helped us capture/edit and share stories at key industry events, as well as during 1:1 visits with specialty crop producers. The equipment was important in helping us share these stories, even when there was no electricity. It also allowed us to share the stories at key events and continue to share stories after the project was complete -- which keeps the investment working. The timing of implementation was important because many new specialty crop producers are entering the market and can learn from others with relevant experience.

PROJECT APPROACH

Ohio Direct Marketing Team members captured and edited more than 30 stories for podcasts, videos and printed cases. The format included interviews with producers, consumers and wholesale buyers. Some team members prepared instructional podcasts and videos to help specialty crop producers improve their marketing.

More than 250 people listened to these podcasts and watched these videos online or at events throughout the state. At some events, videos were shown to large audiences and at other events, a small iPad display was used to show the story to people and get their individual feedback.

To help specialty crop producers understand the local food opportunity, various resources were developed and distributed at specialty crop producer events.

A local food presentation was recorded in a studio and is distributed via DVD and the Internet.

A simple postcard and a poster display helped create awareness of the stories.

A comprehensive local food fact sheet was published to help producers understand the many opportunities available in their local food systems. This was especially useful for producers who were interviewed as well as those promoting or watching the videos.

Local food leaders in Ohio and various other states were consulted and provided guidance for development of these educational resources. These resources were also shared with leaders in other states to help their work with specialty crop producers and local food systems.

All resources can be found on the Ohio Direct Marketing Team website, <http://directmarketing.osu.edu/content/localfoods.htm>. Videos are also being added to a new YouTube channel, created for this project.

The stories are shared throughout the website, <http://directmarketing.osu.edu> based on the local food topic addressed. Some are on the news/podcast page, <http://directmarketing.osu.edu/content/podcast.htm>; local foods, <http://directmarketing.osu.edu/content/localfoods.htm>; farmers' markets, <http://directmarketing.osu.edu/content/farmersmarkets.htm>, community supported agriculture, <http://directmarketing.osu.edu/content/csa.htm>, etc. The website is currently being updated and videos are being placed based on our new MarketReady curriculum structure. We are also developing a blog and video clips will be incorporated. The focus of the podcasts/vodcasts was on fruit and vegetable growers.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Through website reports, we tracked the number of online visits. In addition, team members reported the number of viewers at various events where the videos were played.

To evaluate the benefit to specialty crop producers, an evaluation is being built into the Direct Marketing Team's plan of work for 2011. Two online surveys will gather feedback from 1) specialty crop producers and 2) other viewers. Questions will include: a) do they better understand the local food opportunity; b) what action will they take based on what they viewed; c) overall impression of the video/podcast/case; d) how/where did they find the story.

Direct marketing sales, media coverage of local food and local food system development are at an all-time high in Ohio. While we did not gather before and after statistics on sales and media coverage specifically related to these stories, evaluation questions are being incorporated into our next statewide direct marketing study. The data collection is as follows: 1,790 producers reached at events – 2 statewide conferences (OPGMA – Ohio Produce Growers & Marketers, OEFFA – Ohio Ecological Food & Farm); 2 regional and local events conferences (Small Farm Conference, Small Farm College) ; 2 Local Food Tours 1,250 Online visits (google analytics) and visits with individual producers (team member reports).

BENEFICIARIES

Ohio specialty crop producers, buyers and consumers.

Community leaders and local food networks that work with specialty crop producers, programs and markets.

LESSONS LEARNED

Local food stories continue to emerge and are captured through various types of media. With growth of social media, the opportunities to share stories expand. The challenges include capturing and editing quality content to tell the story; sharing stories through networks to reach target audiences; delivering concise meaningful messages when there are so many key points of interest in the growing local food industry in Ohio.

CONTACT PERSON

Julie Fox

The Ohio State University South Centers

fox.264@osu.edu

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The program is being incorporated into the work of the Ohio Direct Marketing Team. With guidance from the Ohio Food Policy Council, Market Connections Task Force, team members will evaluate the program and decide on next steps, including:

- exploring additional social media opportunities to share these stories.
 - identifying additional stories to provide more perspectives and cover more in-depth topics.
 - investigating a more comprehensive approach to connect these stories with the many other local food stories shared by Ohio organizations, markets, producers, and media.
 - developing easy ways for people to find the stories that best fit their interests/needs.
 - refining podcast, video and case protocol for greater consistency in capturing, editing, sharing and evaluating stories.
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PROJECT TITLE

Ohio State University

Ohio MarketMaker Outreach & Education

PROJECT SUMMARY

Specialty crop producers reached new buyers through the Ohio MarketMaker Program. Ohio MarketMaker, a web-based resource to “make connections that work” in the food industry, is part of a growing national network committed to improving the economy through more efficient connections throughout the food web.

To help specialty crop producers make the most of this marketing tool, a communications and educational campaign connected producers and buyers.

With the increased demand for local food, the purpose was to efficiently connect specialty crop producers with buyers. The equipment helped with data collection, use of new software for tutorials and onsite program promotion/demonstration. The project was timely because specialty crop buyers were promoting local food and needed a system to help them make efficient connections. As a result of the promotional campaign conducted as part of this project, we recently received an Innovation Award from Farm Credit Services.

PROJECT APPROACH

More than 1,000 flyers and 100 DVDs were distributed at events. In addition, these resources were also downloaded by producers and buyers through a MarketMaker page on the Ohio Direct Marketing Team website.

An Ohio MarketMaker flyer was developed and used at various events. Audience-specific versions were also distributed to specialty crop producers and buyers (grocery stores/food retailers & restaurants).

Tutorials for specific audiences were developed and distributed through CDs, printed versions and the Ohio Direct Marketing Team website. As part of the development, feedback was provided by specialty crop producers, buyers and partners throughout the national MarketMaker network.

Tutorials for specialty crop producers included:

Ohio MarketMaker Tutorials		
Registering as a Producer	Online with Voice	PDF
Requesting a User Name and Password	Online with Voice	PDF
Changing Your User Name and Password	Online with Voice	PDF
Finding a Business for My Product	Online with Voice	PDF
Making Connections for Producers	Online with Voice	PDF
Using the MarketPlace Buy/Sell Forum	Online with Voice	PDF
Placing an Ad to Sell on the MarketPlace Buy/Sell Forum	Online with Voice	PDF

Interactive tutorials online and pdf guides – available online & via CD/DVD

A similar set of tutorials was also created for various buyer and stakeholder groups, including grocers/retailers, restaurants, farmers markets, and wineries.

Presentations were customized for various groups. In addition, a MarketMaker presentation was recorded in a studio and is distributed via DVD and the Internet, including a short presentation on YouTube.

All resources can be found on the Ohio MarketMaker website which links to the MarketMaker educational page on the Ohio Direct Marketing Team website, http://directmarketing.osu.edu/content/mm_marketmaker.htm.

The program is being incorporated in the work of the Ohio Direct Marketing Team. MarketMaker recently upgraded the program nationally. As a result, we will modify the educational resources and MarketMaker display developed through this program and work with partners to continue the momentum of outreach to specialty crop producers.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

More than 200 specialty crop producers registered to use Ohio MarketMaker.

(documented through monthly reports from the national MarketMaker program – University of Illinois)

Through website reports, (using Google Analytics), we track the number of Ohio MarketMaker website visits and registrations.

Registered specialty crop producers: June, 2010 (278 vegetable & 239 fruit & nut)

MarketMaker Visitors: Jan. – June, 2010 (44,670 – average 7,445 per month)

BENEFICIARIES

More than 1,000 people attended presentations on Ohio MarketMaker, including:

- Ohio Produce Growers & Marketers Association Annual Congress
- Producers & Buyers (Grocers, Restaurants) at the Local Food Summit
- Ohio Farmers Market Management Network
- Retail Ready workshops – 5 locations
- Central Ohio Restaurant Group
- Food Policy Council & Task Forces
- OSU Extension – various groups throughout the state

LESSONS LEARNED

Working with both producers and buyers helped create connections.

Marketing performance improvements and economic impacts will be evaluated through an online survey. A baseline survey was conducted by the Ohio Direct Marketing Team in 2009 and will be conducted again in 2011. (complete baseline report -

<http://directmarketing.osu.edu/content/pdf/OhioMarketMakerSurveyReport2009.pdf>

CONTACT PERSON

Julie Fox

The Ohio State University South Centers

fox.264@osu.edu

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The resources developed through this project have been provided to partners in the national MarketMaker network to provide communication resources that can be customized for other participating states. These network partners and the Ohio Food Policy Council, Market Connections Task Force, provided guidance throughout all stages of this project and will continue to serve as advisors as we serve specialty crop producers.