

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

**Specialty Crop Block Grant
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Final Report**

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Project Title: Specialty Crop Food Safety Compliance Assistance Program for Potatoes

Project Summary

Food safety is not a new concept to fresh potato packers in Maine. Potato packers in Maine have been complying with an ever increasing demand for food safety requirements from their consumers. The SQF program is a comprehensive program that has a greater emphasis on traceability than has been experienced before.

The SQF Program is a leading, global food safety and quality certification program and management system, designed to meet the needs of buyers and suppliers worldwide. The Program provides independent certification that a supplier's food safety and quality management system complies with international and domestic food safety regulations.

Maine packers need to remain as competitive as packers in other parts of North America. Attaining SQF certification will help packers in Maine remain competitive in the marketplace. The certification process requires that packers assess their current compliance with the SQF standard and determine what actions are necessary if compliance is not currently attainable. Most packers will find it necessary to hire a consultant to provide this service. The cost of this consultation service can be as high as \$20,000. This cost can be a hardship on packers, who will also need to, in many cases, invest in structural changes to comply with the SQF standard.

Project Approach

The Maine Potato Board was awarded a contract in the amount of \$36,000 on November 12, 2010 to assist table stock potato growers and packers in Maine in developing food safety programs to comply with the SQF (Safe Quality Food) program.

The first task was to hire a qualified SQF consultant to conduct training to assist growers and packers to prepare for a SQF audit. This task took longer than expected due to a limited number of qualified candidates who are located in the State. One individual that was contacted lived in Washington State. The distance made the project impractical due to the expense and logistics involved in having the consultant available to perform tasks.

We ultimately were able to make a contact with Cynthia Fisher of CLF Consulting services, located in North Anson Maine. Ms Fisher and Tim Hobbs have had several telephone conversations and one meeting in Whiting Maine to discuss the project. The Maine Potato Board is currently reviewing a contract between Cynthia Fisher and the Maine Potato Board for services to accomplish the tasks outlined in the proposal.

Cynthia Fisher came to Presque Isle on December 14, 2011 to conduct an introductory meeting on SQF and what the expectations would be for growers who commit to training

we had 11 individuals in attendance. This meeting was an information meeting for potato growers and packers to inform them of the project and to begin the process of educating them on what SQF is and what is involved in becoming certified.

Cynthia Fisher again held a training meeting on February 13 2012 in Presque Isle to familiarize herself with the Maine potato industry. The meeting moved to StAgatha to tour a potato packing operation. This meeting was attended by 6 growers and packers.

In July of 2012 the Maine Potato Board contracted with Food and Safety and Quality systems of Illinois to conduct a basic HACCP training course in Presque Isle, Maine. This course was a two day course that was held on August 16-17 2012. This course was attended by thirteen growers and packers. All thirteen completed the course and received HACCP certification.

In October of 2012 the Maine Potato Board again contracted with Food Safety and Quality Systems to provide a four day SQF training to be held November 27, 28, 29 and 30 in Presque Isle, Maine. The first two days of this training Food Safety and Quality Systems conducted a Level 2 GAP Assessment of the facilities Food Safety and Quality Policies, Records and verification activities in comparison to the requirements in the SQF Code. The second two days the SQF Practitioner Training Course was conducted with 14 participants in attendance.

On March 18th 2013 Food Safety and Quality Systems conducted internal auditor training at the Maine Potato Board Conference room in Presque Isle. 8 individuals completed the training.

On March 19-20th 2013 Food Safety and Quality Systems provided professional consulting services in the field with 3 participants.

Goals and Outcome Achieved

One of the major outcomes of this project was the realization by the participants involved of how complex food safety certification can be. Whether or not SQF is the chosen program or another equivalent one, the process of documentation and record keeping can be overwhelming. Most participants determined if their organization were to become certified to a Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) standard, which SQF is, they were most likely going to have to commit a full time person to the endeavor. It is a very time consuming process to become certified, and once certified maintaining certification is a full time job. Most participants involved in this project discovered that food safety certification to a global standard is a much more involved process than they had once thought.

Some tangible results of this project were that 13 individuals earned HACCP certification. 14 individuals received certificates in SQF Practitioner Training and 8 individuals received certificates in SQF Internal Auditor Training. All three of these certifications are necessary to eventually pass an SQF audit. Of the 13 individuals that

attended the initial training 8 made it through to the end. Those 8 that completed the training now have the necessary information to pass an SQF audit, or another similar food safety audit if they so desire.

Beneficiaries

This project provided an enlightening opportunity for 14 potato growers/packers to understand and prepare for an SQF audit. This was a very intensive course that started with 13 initial participants rose to 14 and finished with 8 completing all of the certification required by SQF. These eight individuals have shared their experiences, both good and bad, with family and friends. The staff person from the Maine Potato Board, who provided project oversight, developed a greater understanding and appreciation of the whole global food safety certification process. As a result the Maine Potato Board has a person on staff that can better direct and advise potato growers and packers when questioned about food safety auditing and compliance. The Maine potato industry currently produces 55,000 acres of potatoes annually. The industry is made up of approximately 400 growers.

Lessons Learned

One of the biggest lessons learned was that we had no idea how involved this project was going to be as far as the learning curve for participants. We went into this thinking it was going to be similar to the USDA GAP program with a little added on. SQF is a much more intensive food safety program than any other that we have been involved in.

Another lesson learned is that we should have done more research in identifying an appropriate consultant to help us with this project. Being completely unfamiliar with the SQF program made it difficult to understand what we need for an consultant. After getting into the project we discovered that we needed to find additional expertise than what we first understood.

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Project Title: New Potato Varieties to Provide Marketing Opportunities and Improved Pest Resistance

Project Summary

The intent of this proposal was to steadily improve the Maine Potato Breeding Program to assure that it provides a high level of service to the industry over time

The Maine Potato Breeding Program uses traditional plant breeding techniques to create, select, and develop new potato varieties. Parents for our crosses come from diverse sources including our own breeding clones, other North American and European breeding programs, the International Potato Center, the USDA-ARS Potato Germplasm Collection in Sturgeon Bay (WI) and USDA potato germplasm improvement programs. Initial selection is conducted primarily in northern Maine; however, we cooperate with several other programs in the United States and elsewhere to select and evaluate our plant materials these programs include: NC, WI, ND, and USDA-ARS Idaho. Research collaborations with Dr. Benildo de los Reyes are adding a molecular component which we hope will help speed the selection process for new traits (e.g. pink rot resistance).

Crosses conducted in the University of Maine's Aroostook Research Farm greenhouse during winter/spring typically result in about 200 families and 250,000 true potato seed (TPS) annually. Seedlings from the prior-year TPS production are planted in the greenhouse during the spring and result in the production of up to 30,000 seedlings "A" tubers. The greenhouse seedling crop also produces up to 30,000 "B" and "C" tubers. The majority of the "B" and "C" tubers are sent to cooperating breeding programs (e.g. the USDA-ARS Aberdeen, ID and the University of Wisconsin). This exchange of seedling tubers allows our breeding materials to be evaluated and selected under diverse environmental conditions. In turn, our program receives seedling tubers from both of these programs. This coordinated potato germplasm exchange is one of several activities that we participate in to help improve the efficiency of potato germplasm utilization within the North American potato breeding programs.

The Maine Potato Breeding Program is now planting 45-50,000 single-hills at the Aroostook Research Farm each season. These single-hill plots were derived from greenhouse tubers grown during the previous year (by our program, the USDA-ARS Aberdeen, and U. of Wisconsin) and represent the first year of field selection to produce new potato varieties. At harvest, clones from the single hills (typically 1-2%) are selected for further evaluation based on their yield and appearance. The clones will be evaluated in our 8- and 12-hill plots during the next season and enter replicated yield trials in their fourth field season. Over the course of six years of field selection the clones are evaluated for yield, quality, disease resistance, bruise susceptibility, processing characteristics, and other attributes. It takes six to eight field seasons of selection and evaluation of the advanced materials at multiple trials sites to identify potato clones that show enough promise to warrant commercial-scale evaluation. Because each step of the process from crossing through initial field selection to multi-site testing of advanced

materials takes place each growing season, we anticipate that our program will generate a steady stream of promising candidate potato varieties that have the potential to benefit the potato industry.

For the past 18 months, we have made a series of improvements in the breeding program that should pay off in the future with a steady stream of strong candidate varieties to be considered for commercialization. These improvements have initially focused on improvement of the program's selection procedures; however, increasingly they will be shifted to upgrading the program's variety development efforts. Some of the improvements that have occurred over the past 18 months are as follows:

Breeding and Selection

- Doubled our single-hill selections to 45,000 to 50,000 annually.
- Expanded early-selection of our materials in NC and NJ to better identify promising clones for Maine's seed markets in the SE states.
- Set up germplasm exchange and evaluation programs with USDA-ARS Idaho, ND, and WI. In addition to bringing in russets to select under our growing conditions, this effort has brought an infusion of reds, chippers, and disease-resistant germplasm from these programs.
- Expanded our multi-site evaluation program to better select promising, widely adapted clones.
- Developed a database for managing information from the multi-site variety trials. This database is essential for decision-making and summarizing results over many trials.
- Strengthened protocols for determining processing quality bruise susceptibility, and boiled/baked quality.
- Improved our screening procedure for late blight resistance by collaborating with Penn State. Late blight resistant clones are now identified 3-4 years earlier than in the past.
- Re-established cooperative program of GN screening with USDA-ARS, Ithaca.
- Incorporated pink rot resistance screening into the program with the help of Dave Lambert.
- Initiated a study to develop molecular tools to screen for pink rot resistance with the help of David Lambert and Benildo de los Reyes.
- Reestablished an effective fusarium resistance screening protocol.

- Submitted AF clones to national late blight, scab, and verticillium resistance screening trials.
- Participated in the SolCap program, which is geared toward expanding the use molecular tools in potato and pepper breeding and selection.
- Participated in seven collaborative research proposals with other institutions including USDA-ARS, University of Minnesota, North Carolina State University, Cornell University, Michigan State, and Penn State. Only one proposal, the USDA CSREES Special Grant for Potato Research was funded.

Variety Development and Commercialization

- Improved our partnership with the Maine Seed Potato Board seed propagation facility and submitted eleven advanced clones to the facility for clean-up, tissue culturing, and initial seed propagation on a paid basis.
- Worked with Aroostook Research Farm to generate certified seed of advanced clones for entry into commercial-scale trials through the New Potato Variety Challenge Grant Program.
- Re-established variety development linkages and set up advanced clone evaluations with potato processors.
- Established an industry advisory panel (ad-hoc Variety Development Advisory Committee) to guide variety development and seed increase decisions.
- Entered a promising chipper into the USPB/SFA national variety trial.
- Publicized the program's efforts through presentations and a booth at the Maine Potato Conference, TV interviews, an industry-organized article in Spudman, and other press releases.

Project Approach

The Maine Potato Board was awarded a contract in the amount of \$54,000 on November 12, 2010 to provide marketing opportunities and help solve pest/disease problems through the development and selection of new potato varieties.

The University of Maine Potato Breeding Program used traditional plant breeding to create, select, and develop new potato varieties for Maine and elsewhere. The objective of this research was to develop and select new potato varieties which will provide those

opportunities to the Maine Potato Industry. During 2011 our research effort by market category was as follows: 60% russets and long-whites for processing and/or fresh market; 30% whites for chipping and/or fresh market; and 10% reds and specialty varieties. The Maine breeding program is the only eastern U.S. program with an emphasis on russets and long-whites with processing and fresh market potential. Priorities in the area of disease resistance were: late blight, scab, and pink rot. Because of increasing concerns about PVY in the U.S. potato industry, we dramatically increased our crossing and selection program for PVY resistance. Although these diseases were our top priorities, our work on disease and pest resistance also included efforts to develop varieties with resistance to: PLRV, verticillium wilt, fusarium dry rot, nematodes, bruising, internal defects, insects, etc.

Progress on Russets/Long Whites: We currently have 11 advanced russet/long-white clones (AF3000-1, AF3001-6, AF3008-3, AF3317-15, AF3362-1, AF4040-2, AF4113-2, AF4124-4, AF4124-7, AF4172-2, and AF4191-2) in processing trials with McCain Foods and more than a dozen promising candidate clones immediately behind these. McCain Foods provides key collaboration in the selection phase, through processing quality evaluations at their technology center, and to champion adoption of the most promising clones. More detailed information on three of these clones is provided later in the report. We are actively participating in U.S. Potato Board and USDA-NIFA SCRI projects designed to improve the quality of processed potato products. Nineteen russet clones from the program were tested in Idaho, Washington, and North Dakota as part of this effort during 2011.

Progress on Whites and Chippers: AF0338-17 is being tested as an alternative to Atlantic in the S.E. states. It combines high yields, good out-of-field chipping, and much less internal heat necrosis and hollow heart than Atlantic. AF4157-6 is a promising chipping clone that combines early maturity and good out-of-field chipping in the southern states with excellent storage chip color. Seed is being increased for expanded trials in 2012. AF4013-3 is a yellow-fleshed clone that did well in 2011 trials in the eastern U.S. AF2291-10 is a “northern chipper” and has high gravity, good early blight resistance, moderate scab resistance, and generally good yields. AF2574-1 finished its third year of commercial trials in northern Maine. It is a fresh-market white with very high yields, good internal quality, and late blight resistance. It has performed well in northern Maine, but does not have good tuber appearance in the south or mid-Atlantic. Additional promising clones are coming along behind these clones.

Progress on Reds and Specialty Types. Growers have expressed a strong interest in new red varieties that have smooth skin, attractive appearance when grown on our soils, and the ability to hold their color in storage. Reds are a critical component of the seed potato market and new, well-adapted reds will provide opportunities for our seed growers, especially in VA, NC, FL, and other southern states. Varieties in these classes provide an opportunity for market differentiation and new, higher-value markets for Maine potatoes. This is a new component of the breeding program which was established based on grower input. Red-skinned, greenhouse-grown seedling tubers brought in from WI,

ND, and ID have been screened in ME since 2008 and entered testing in FL, NC, and NJ during 2010. Several are showing excellent potential and seed of the most promising is being multiplied so that they can be tested on a larger scale during 2012.

Progress of Disease Resistance: Advanced clones in our program typically have resistance to several important potato pests. As examples, McCain Foods had three of our clones in 2011 commercial strip trials: AF3362-1 has resistance to scab as well as excellent bruise resistance; AF3001-6 has excellent verticillium resistance, while AF3317-15 has very good resistance to late blight, scab, and pink rot. AF2574-1, a round-white in commercial trials since 2009 has good late blight resistance and very high yields. Progress in breeding for late blight resistance has been dramatic. We currently have 84 late blight resistant, third-year or more advanced clones moving through the program and more coming behind them. The clones will be moved forward based on field performance and either developed for commercial release or used as breeding material to produce future commercially valuable cultivars with good field resistance to late blight. These cultivars would reduce the vulnerability of the crop to losses from late blight and would potentially allow growers to reduce their fungicide costs.

Scab resistance is a high priority for our program and for most growers that I talk with. We are working hard to select promising scab resistant varieties in each market class, as well as increasing the scab resistance in our parental material and improving our selection procedures. PVY has become a severe problem for the industry and our breeding program has responded to this problem by increasing the number of PVY resistant parents in our seedling families and crosses as well as by working to improve our selection criteria.

Breeding and Selection Approach: Crossing takes place at Aroostook Research Farm using parents from our program, Cornell University, Michigan State, North Dakota State University, University Wisconsin, and the USDA-ARS, as well as named varieties. We generate true potato seed from the crosses and use these seeds to produce greenhouse seedling tubers. Excess greenhouse tubers are exchanged with the USDA-ARS Idaho, North Dakota, and Wisconsin breeding programs to gain access to russets, reds, and chippers that will strengthen our program's ability to provide new varieties for the Maine industry.

Crosses conducted in the Aroostook Research Farm greenhouse during spring 2011 resulted in 61 families and 25,300 true potato seed (TPS). The top priorities represented in the 2011 crosses were improved russet, processing, and chipping clones, especially with late blight, scab, and or virus resistance. Seedling tubers (45,224) from prior ME crosses and from germplasm exchanges with other breeding programs (WI, USDA-ARS, and ND) were planted in the field and selected for performance under ME growing conditions. We selected 1174 (2.6%) for continued evaluation in 2012. By category the selections were as follows: 535 (46%) round to oblong white-skinned potatoes for fresh and/or chipping markets; 159 (13%) red- or purple-skinned potatoes for fresh market or

processing; and 480 (41%) long-tuber-type whites and russets for fresh and/or processing markets. The selection of 13% red- or purple-skinned potatoes is a marked change for the program and reflects grower interest in developing red-skinned varieties with excellent appearance under ME conditions.

A total of 367 second-year clones were selected during fall 2011 (367 out of 1423, 25.8%). Of these selections, 139 (38%) were russets or long whites. There were 179 round-white selections (49%) and 49 (13%) were red-skinned or specialty clones. Many of these clones were derived from parents with late blight and/or other key disease resistance traits. Chip/fry color was used as a selection criterion for the whites and russets. The 367 selected second-year clones will be advanced to 3rd year testing during 2012.

Nineteen of 33 (60%) advanced selections (6th year or older clones) were retained for further evaluation in ME and elsewhere during 2012. The advanced clones that have been selected to date are distributed as follows: 10 russets and long whites (53%), 7 round-whites (37%), and 2 yellow-fleshed (10%). Thirteen of 33 (39%) intermediate selections (5th year clones) were retained for further evaluation during 2012. These were distributed as follows: 10 russets and long whites (77%), 3 round-whites (23%), and 0 colored skin or specialty clones (0%). Forty-four of 84 (52%) 4th year clones were retained for further evaluation during 2012. These were distributed as follows: 14 russets and long whites (32%), 20 round-whites (45%), and 10 colored skin or specialty clone (23%). Sixty-nine of 215 (32%) 3rd year clones were retained for further evaluation during 2012. These were distributed as follows: 26 russets and long whites (38%), 28 round-whites (41%), and 15 colored skin or specialty clones (22%).

Minitubers, N1, or N2 seed of the following advanced clones are available from the Maine Seed Potato Board or will become available after the 2012 harvest: AF2291-10, AF2574-1, AF0338-17, AF3001-6, AF3317-15, and AF3362-1.

Current Top Advanced Prospects for Commercialization Seed of these clones is currently available from the Maine Seed Potato Board, Maine seed growers, and/or Aroostook Research Farm. Additional clones in each marketing class will become available over the coming years.

AF0338-17 (AF303-5 x SA8211-6), a widely-adapted, mid-season, high yielding, round white for out-of-field chipping and fresh market. It has performed well in the S.E. and Mid-Atlantic States with U.S. #1 yields averaging 96% of Atlantic. Specific gravity has averaged 4 points lower than Atlantic. AF0338-17 has chipped well from the field and has had much lower incidence of internal defects than Atlantic. It is moderately susceptible to scab, but has moderate verticillium resistance. Seed Availability: Maine certified seed (see ME seed book), Maine

Seed Potato Board N1 and N3 seed and disease-free plantlets or minitubers; ~40 cwt. of University of Maine seed.

AF2291-10 (SA8211-6 x EB8109-1), a chipping prospect for northern areas. AF2291-10 has high specific gravity, moderate scab resistance, and medium-late to late vine maturity. It has chipped from June storage in Ontario trials. It can be prone off shapes and has blackspot bruise susceptibility similar to Snowden. It is not well adapted to production in the S.E. states. Seed Availability: Maine certified seed (see ME seed book), Maine Seed Potato Board N2 seed tubers and disease-free plantlets or minitubers; ~65 cwt. of University of Maine seed.

AF2574-1 (AF2153-2 OP), a fresh-market white with moderate late blight resistance. AF2574-1 is late maturing and has good internal quality and high yields. U.S. #1 yields have averaged ~120% of standard round-white varieties (Atlantic and Katahdin) in Maine trials. Tuber sizing is good, but external appearance has been inconsistent. It is not well adapted to production in the S.E. and Mid-Atlantic States. AF2574-1 is moderately susceptible to scab. It has been commercially tested in Northern Maine for three years with good results. Seed Availability: Maine Seed Potato Board N2 seed and disease-free plantlets or minitubers; ~24 cwt. of University of Maine seed.

AF3001-6 (Silverton Russet x AF1668-60), a widely adapted, late maturing, long-white with netted skin, very good fry color, and high yields. AF3001-6 is very good baked, boiled, and mashed. U.S. #1 yields have averaged ~127% of standard russeted varieties (usually Russet Burbank) in Maine trials. Specific gravity is moderate (average of 1.086 in ME trials) and fry color from storage has been excellent. It is moderately susceptible to scab, but has good verticillium resistance. Seed Availability: Maine Seed Potato Board N1 and N2 seed and disease-free plantlets or minitubers; ~20 cwt. of University of Maine seed.

AF3317-15 (AWN86514-2 x Reeves Kingpin), a long russet with late blight resistance and potential for fresh market and processing. AF3317-15 is very good baked and mashed. AF3317-15 has very late vine maturity and long tubers with russeted skin. It can yield well when given a long growing season, but needs a lot of time to develop and mature tubers. Specific gravity is moderate (average of 1.085 in ME trials) and fry color from storage has been fair to good. It has resistance to late blight, common scab, and pink rot. Seed Availability: Maine Seed Potato Board disease-free plantlets, minitubers, or N1 seed; ~14 cwt. of University of Maine seed.

AF3362-1 (Reeves Kingpin x Silverton Russet), a mid-season, long russet with good yields, processing potential, and fair to good appearance. AF3362-1 is very good baked and mashed. U.S. #1 yields have averaged ~110% of standard russeted varieties (usually Russet Burbank) in Maine trials. Specific gravity is moderate (average of 1.084 in ME trials) and fry color from storage has been mostly good. It has moderate scab resistance. AF3362-1 is susceptible to internal heat necrosis and should not be grown in the S.E. states or other areas where this

defect is frequently observed. Seed Availability: Certified Maine Seed (see ME seed book), Maine Seed Potato Board disease-free plantlets, minitubers, or N1 seed; ~25 cwt. of University of Maine seed.

AF4013-3 (MonDak Gold x SA9704-1), a mid-season, oblong to round, yellow with pink eyes and good yields, moderately-high gravity, good chip color, and good appearance where scab is not a problem and tuber size is controlled. U.S. #1 yields have averaged ~93% of standard varieties (usually Atlantic; one site with severe scab was dropped from this calculation) in Maine trials. Specific gravity is moderate to high (average of 1.090 in ME trials) and fry color from storage has been mostly good. It is susceptible to scab. AF4013-3 has potential for specialty fresh market, chipping, and processing on fields where scab is not a concern. Seed Availability: ~15 cwt. of University of Maine seed.

AF4157-6 (Yankee Chipper x Dakota Pearl), an early to mid-season, round to oblong white with good yields, moderately-high gravity, very good chip color, and fair to good appearance. U.S. #1 yields have averaged ~110% of standard varieties (usually Atlantic) in Maine trials. Specific gravity is moderate to high (average of 1.091 in ME trials) and fry color from storage has been mostly good. It is susceptible to scab. AF4157-6 has potential as a chipper in southern states and in northern states on fields where scab is not a concern. Seed Availability: ~15 cwt. of University of Maine seed. AF4157-6 has been entered into tissue culture for future seed production.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Measurable outcomes of this project are the complete evaluation of all new varieties coming out of the Maine Potato Breeding Program. Each year all varieties are evaluated to determine if they have what it will take to find a place in the potato industry. Every year new varieties are entered into the program and old ones that don't meet the needs of the industry are taken out.

Once the evaluations are complete new varieties are put into commercial trails where the final determination will be made if there is a viable commercial market for the variety. Success is determined by how many varieties are actually accepted by the commercial market.

All information gathered from the research undertaken as part of the Potato Breeding Program is published annually and made available to growers and processors in Maine. The information provided allowed them to determine if a new variety from the program has the ability to become viable in commercial production.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of this research are our 350 potato growers in Maine. Successful development of a new potato variety can provide many economic benefits to the Maine potato industry including over 350 growers, potato processors and potato dealers as well as the ultimate beneficiary, the potato consumer. New varieties enhance marketing opportunities (e.g. high quality varieties for processing, fresh market, or seed use) or they can improve profits by providing improved yields for an existing market. They can also improve profits by reducing losses to disease (e.g. better scab, fusarium, or blight resistance) or by decreasing the costs required to control a disease (e.g. blight resistance reduces the number of sprays required to control the pest).

Lessons Learned

Potato breeding is a long term commitment. The University of Maine breeding program has many years of potato breeding experience, and is committed to providing potato breeding research into the future. There are some promising varieties that a currently in the program we are excited to see what the future holds for opportunities to commercialize these varieties.

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Project Title: Precision Agriculture

Project Summary

Precision agricultural technology has been proven around the world to assist growers in maximizing acreage efficiencies, and decreasing environmental impacts. Current guidance systems not only provide accurate mobile guidance to maximize acreage utilization, but also allow a producer the ability to map and document pest and disease impacts, soil data, as well as chemical and nutrient applications. Precision agricultural equipment can also be utilized to map topographic terrain for conservation practices as well as irrigation planning and utilization. The goal of this project was to educate potato producers on current precision agricultural technology and practices. Currently there are approximately 1/5 of Maine producers who utilize such technology and we believe Maine growers needed the opportunity to receive such education to be competitive and sustainable in today's economic times.

Project Approach

The Maine Potato Board was awarded a Precision Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant to provide education to Maine growers and students. The contract was awarded on November 12, 2010 for the amount of \$48,960.00.

The Maine Potato Board purchased the necessary software and equipment to conduct the education program in accordance with the approved work plan. The Maine Potato Board Ag Engineer and staff have compiled the necessary education work plan for the training sessions.

During the fall of 2011 the program provided training to 9 agricultural students at the RSU 29 High School. The program provided 3 classroom sessions and 3 field sessions where students conducted hands on training. The individuals were allowed to setup, map and export a field area for their spring crop.

In March and April of 2012 four additional training classes were held in Presque Isle Maine with a total of 46 individuals in attendance.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The Maine Potato Board has historically provided Maine potato producer's information and educational resources. This program assisted the Board in continuing with that goal thereby making Maine growers be more efficient and competitive. Although it may be difficult to access the total impact of such a project, the Maine Potato Board feels that every improvement in potato production efficiency can be a benefit to the producers. Therefore we believe this to be a worthy project to continue.

The Maine Potato Board will compile a list of participants and contact them annually to follow up on if the program has been beneficial to their operational production. It is the programs intent to document and publish its educational materials for all growers.

Beneficiaries

The proposed project helped provide educational opportunities for all regional potato producers who were interested in a precision agricultural program. Currently Maine has approximately 380 potato producers that plant and manage approximately 55,000 acres of potatoes. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service Maine Potato producers generated approximately \$151,104,000.00 in revenue for fiscal year 2009. Maine also has a strong agricultural youth base, which can benefit from such crop production education. This type of education and equipment can ultimately benefit not only the potato producers by increasing efficiencies, but ultimately minimize or reduce potential impacts to the environment as well.

Lessons Learned

One challenge for the training has been scheduling the program to work within a student's daily class schedule. Not all students who have an interest in the training have classroom time available during their regular school day. If considering working with high School students it would be beneficial to work scheduling out with an agricultural teacher or science teacher so that the training could be done during class time as part of the curriculum. Working with growers during the growing season is always a challenge when it comes to conducting training. The growing season can be unpredictable and grower's priorities are with their crops. If possible training should be scheduled during the off season to get most participation from growers.

Scheduling for growers has also been difficult during the fall as Maine's growers where faced with unexpected weather and harvest challenges. The program was continued beyond the original time frame, which allowed 46 individuals to participate.

In order to help facilitate the scheduling issue, the Maine Potato Board staff offered the Precision Ag training in the spring of 2012 for those growers and students who have an interest.

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Project Title: Maine Potato Board Specialty Crop Post Harvest Test Pilot Project

Project Summary

The purpose of this proposed project was to provide the Maine potato industry with information to help determine the feasibility of replacing the post-harvest winter grow-out test with a post-harvest lab test.

The current post harvest testing scheme is time consuming and laborious. The testing process begins at harvest with the selection of tubers to be tested and continues through the end of February of the following year, resulting in a document that contains the results of the post-harvest test. As part of this process, employees of the Maine Department of Agriculture travel to Florida in November to plant the seed plots, these employees then return to Maine. Employees of the Maine Department of Agriculture again travel to Florida in January to do the inspections. The results of these inspections are then published in the month of February and distributed to the industry.

An alternative to this process may be to conduct all of the post-harvest testing using diagnostic techniques in a laboratory environment. Under this alternative the tubers do not have to leave Maine and do not have to be planted. Tissue can be taken directly from the tuber and analyzed in a lab setting. This alternative may eliminate post-harvest testing in Florida thereby providing the same, if not more accurate, service at less cost to the seed grower.

Some of the unknown questions that need to be answered for Maine are:

- How do the results of a lab test compare with the visual inspection results of the current post harvest test procedure?
- What is the protocol required for a post-harvest lab test?
- What is the cost to growers for a post-harvest lab test compared to the current procedure?
- What should the sample size be for a post-harvest lab test?
- What method of testing is most appropriate?

This proposed project specifically addresses pest and disease control, an issue identified by USDA as an issue affecting the specialty crop industry.

Project Approach

The Maine Potato Board was awarded a contract in the amount of \$18,750 on November 12, 2010 to provide information to help determine the feasibility of transitioning from a post-harvest winter grow-out (Florida Test), to a lab testing protocol to determine virus levels in seed lots entered for certification.

In the summer of 2010 the Maine Potato Board worked with the Maine Potato Board Executive council to develop a protocol to evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of replacing the post-harvest winter test with a post-harvest lab test. This protocol was developed with input from the seed council, lab personnel, board staff, as well as the Maine Department of Agriculture.

Ten seed growers were selected to participate in this project. The growers provided 2 samples of 12 different potato varieties. These varieties included Russet Burbank, Atlantic, Superior, Beacon Chipper, Yukon Gold and others. Each variety was sampled at a 400 tuber level per sample. One sample was sent to Florida for the standard post-harvest test and the second sample was tested in the Maine Department of Agriculture's Potato Disease Testing Laboratory. The results of the testing are in the following chart.

Gen	ELISA						PHT / FL		
	#Pos in Bag	%	# Pos in Tray	%	#/400	%/400	Plants	# Pos	%
N3	2	1	2	1	4	1	325	3	0.92
N4	12	6	12	6	24	6	565	2	0.35
G1	8	4	12	6	20	5	400	49	12.2
N4	3	1.5	4	2	7	1.75	1189	28	2.35
G1	9	4.5	13	6.5	21	5.5	800	37	4.6
G1	1	0.5	1	0.5	2	0.5	3338	98	2.93
N4	1	0.5	1	0.5	2	0.5	400	1	0.25
G1	0	0	4	2	4	1	390	1	0.25
G2	9	4.5	5	2.5	14	3.5	375	25	6.6
N2	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	5	1.25
N4	10	5	13	6.5	23	5.75	774	52	6.7
N3	9	4.5	11	5.5	20	5	380	3	0.78

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The outcome of this project will be a discussion within the industry as to whether it is feasible to replace the current post harvest testing protocol for Maine certified seed potatoes with a lab protocol. We expect to discuss information on the following:

- What type of lab test that is most appropriate
- Cost of various lab tests.
- Protocol for processing seed sample, including size of sample, acreage size represented by sample, timing of processing sample.
- Comparison data on how lab test results compare with Florida test results.
- Recommendation on how to proceed with results.

It was decided after the results of this project that one or two year's worth of data is insufficient to determine whether or not to eliminate the Florida test and replace it with a lab test. We need to continue with running a comparison test for at least two more years to establish a pattern in the results. After we gather enough data, it will be the decision of the seed industry as to whether we should move to lab testing for the post-harvest test.

The most important consideration in moving forward with this assessment is the level of acceptance within the regulated/seed grower community. Historically seed growers have resisted replacing the Florida test with lab testing because of the fear of higher levels of virus being detected in a lab test versus a visual test that is conducted in Florida. Potato seed in Maine will be removed from the program if the virus levels exceed 5%. IF seed potatoes exceed 5% they cannot legally be sold as seed in Maine. Seed potatoes that meet the standard receive a premium price in the market place. It is not hard to understand why growers are resistant to the change. The other issue that has been identified during this process is that the differences in detectable virus levels revealed by the lab test, compared to the Florida test is minimal. It will take further comparisons to build the support of growers who will ultimately decide whether or not to replace the Florida test with a lab test. Finally, the costs of maintaining and operating a farm in Florida solely for the purpose of testing seed virus levels continue to climb. We anticipate at some point in time it will be more feasible to move to a lab test rather than continue with the Florida test. Until that time we will continue to work with the Maine seed industry in determining the appropriate timing and circumstances for making the change.

Beneficiaries

Those that will be directly impacted by this project are potato growers who grow certified seed in Maine. As of the 2009 growing season ninety-three potato growers in Maine had seed that met the requirements for certification in Maine. Included in the seed that met certification requirements were ninety-nine different varieties. This seed was sold to potato growers in thirty-three states. Indirectly, all those growers who purchased Maine certified seed would be affected by this proposed project. This number is difficult to determine accurately.

The intended beneficiaries of this proposed project would be certified seed growers in Maine. Customers who buy certified Maine seed would also be a beneficiary of this proposed project, although not to the same extent.

The potential economic impact of this proposed project will depend on what the outcome of the project is. The direct impact of these funds will ensure over 400 individual farmers, and organizations including Growers, Dealers and Researchers will benefit from this project. Maine potato growers will be able to continue to provide a high quality product to their customers and thereby help increase the demand for Maine seed and processing potatoes.

Lessons Learned

As a result of the 2010 testing the primary issues identified was the need for more research. Sample size needs to be researched further to determine if 400 tubers is representative of what is actual present in a seed lot. Can the amount of tubers for testing be less than 400, or should it be more? Also further work needs to be done to determine how to reduce cost of lab testing.

The testing in 2010 did show that there is the potential for a discrepancy in results between a visual post-harvest test, such as is the industry standard, and the results of a lab test. Two of the major concerns facing the industry as a result of this project are; There are false positives showing using an ELISA test and second, the potential exists for some diseases and viruses that do not express themselves visually may be missed in a visual test. A third and lesser concern is the process used to condition the tubers for the ELISA test. Some tubers sprout earlier than others and the size of the sprout may have some impact on the accuracy of the test.

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Project Title: Get Your Veggies

Project Summary

Down East Business Alliance's Get Your Veggies project is designed to increase child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops by encouraging use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at farmers' markets in Maine. DBA conducted an outreach effort aimed at low-income consumers to increase their awareness of the value and availability of specialty crops at local farmers' markets. DBA also assisted farmers' markets that accept SNAP in marketing this service to low-income consumers.

Project Approach

With the assistance of a graphic designer, in the fall of 2010, DBA created a marketing toolkit for use by farmers, farm stands and farmers' markets to get the word out that they accept SNAP benefits and promote their use. This included a marketing plan, sample press releases, sample ads, flyers and brochures, as well as lists of contacts in the media and at social services agencies where SNAP clients would be likely to go. It included display items for their markets, such as "SNAP accepted here" signs to provide consistency at markets throughout the state. This tool kit was made available in several formats, including hardcopy, on CD, and as a download from DBA's website.

Promotional materials to be mailed to low-income clients and posted and distributed at DHHS offices also were created and distributed in 2010 and 2011. As a division of Washington Hancock Community Agency, DBA has close collaborative relationships with other Community Action Programs throughout the state. These contacts were used to share the information with their clients as well. WHCA and other CAP agencies included information about SNAP use at farmers' markets in their mailings to low-income clients. For example, WHCA corresponds with up to 7,000 Low Income Home Energy Assistance clients each year. We also worked with the Department of Health and Human Services in Augusta to reach SNAP clients directly through their offices across the state, distributing and posting information and promotional material about how to purchase produce and other specialty crops at farmers' markets.

DBA provided SNAP marketing support reimbursement to 18 farmers markets and farm stands to help them produce the materials and seek services outlined in the toolkit to promote availability of SNAP at their venues. To ensure that SCBG funds are used solely to enhance the sale of specialty crops, we reimbursed only 75% of the cost of advertising, printing or signage expenses, up to \$500 for farmers who accept SNAP benefits. The additional 25% was provided by the farmers to support marketing of any non-specialty crops they might sell. The farmers and markets had something invested in the success of this effort through the match. With many years of experience working with micro-enterprises and farmers' markets, DBA had a clear methodology for application

and follow-up in this type of funding activity that ensures proper use of funds provided. Toolkits and stipends were promoted through the state DHHS office, Maine Federation of Farmers Markets, and Western Mountains Alliance in conjunction with other grant offerings to support equipment and incentive programing.

DBA joined with the Eat Local Foods Coalition of Maine to develop an online forum for discussion of SNAP by farmers and farmers' markets around the state. The discussion forum was on the Eat Local Foods website for the duration of our contract with them, 12 months. The video and much of the material from that site is now made available by the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets on their website.

During Farmers' Market Week in August 2011 and 2012, information about farmers, farm stands and farmers' markets that accept SNAP was distributed in different regions across the state. This was done via newspaper, radio and other media outlets and also through use of online marketing outlets such as social networking sites. An online forum for discussion of SNAP and farmers' markets was used to facilitate sharing of ideas, problem solving and general networking.

Each year, the Maine Farmers' Market Convention draws together farmers and farmers' market managers from around the state for workshops and networking opportunities. As part of the convention in 2011, 2012 and 2013, SNAP workshops were presented with information on how to get signed up, how to operate, and how to market the service, etc. The marketing toolkit created as part of this project was distributed at the convention in 2011 and 2012. In 2012, a full day pre-conference SNAP workshop was held for farmer's market manager and vendors.

DBA also manned a booth at the Maine Agricultural Trade Show in January 2011 to offer information and materials on SNAP, and shared a booth with the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets for the same purpose in 2012 and 2013.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

In planning this project, we expected the following outcomes:

As a result of our outreach efforts, more low-income consumers and SNAP recipients would make purchases from farmers' markets in the state. In addition:

- Low-income consumers and SNAP recipients would become aware of the value and availability of specialty crops.
- Sales of specialty crops to low-income consumers and SNAP recipients would increase.

Awareness of availability of specialty crops at farmers' markets can be measured by the number of materials distributed to low-income consumers by DHHS offices and other

social service outlets. An increase in the number of farmers and farmers markets accepting SNAP benefits should correspond to an increase in sales to SNAP recipients.

When we began this work, there were six markets statewide accepting SNAP/EBT? Since doing this promotion and education work with farmers markets, the number accepting SNAP has increased to 40, with over 50 farms and farm stands accepting SNAP.

Promotional materials were distributed to all SNAP recipients through mailings coordinated with DHHS and LIHEAP recipients throughout the state.

Our expectations were met at the end of the first year, when participating markets reported to us an increase in SNAP sales from approximately \$6,900 to nearly \$21,500. Most reporting markets experienced an increase in sales.

Beneficiaries

As outlined above, it is clear that both farmers and SNAP recipients benefitted from the increased awareness of SNAP acceptance at markets. Farmers experienced a three-fold increase in SNAP sales, and this directly corresponds to an increase in the consumption of local farm products and specialty crops by SNAP recipients.

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned here are many, but the primary one we learned is that it takes years to convince a large majority of the local farmers that the effort required in accepting SNAP, in effectively marketing that acceptance, in identifying effective marketing strategies, is energy well spent. A lesson the farmers have learned is that this effort will take years to reach fruition, and the steps are slow, but in the end, acceptance of SNAP will increase their sales, and more important to many of them, will help to feed their neighbors safe, healthy food.

In the beginning, we reached out to the farmers in every way we could, and saw limited results. But as the years went by, and our outreach was consistent, the markets and vendors offering SNAP snowballed. It now is seen as almost a standard feature of farmers markets in many areas. While this is due in a large part to the project we started, the efforts of the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets (MFFM) should not be discounted.

DBA has always known that the farmers with whom we work would rather hear something from another farmer than from us, and so we were pleased to be involved in the resurrection of the MFFM as a grassroots farmer-run organization working to promote and support farmers markets. Farmers now hear the SNAP message from two directions, and this has made a world of difference in the acceptance of SNAP at local markets.

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Project Title: Cost-share Arrangements for Funding GAP/GHP Audits/Visits for Maine Specialty Crop Growers

Project Summary

The purpose of this grant has been to aid Maine Specialty Crop farmers to maintain and expand their markets by participating in a cost share process for funding their GAP/GHP audits. GAP certification is not mandated by the government, it is mandated by the Specialty Crop market. It is highly encouraged by specialty crop consumers.

Project Approach

AgMatters LLC spoke at many grower meetings throughout the year. In January we spoke at the Maine Agricultural Trade Show, the Maine Vegetable & Small Fruit Growers meeting, the Maine Pomological Society Annual Meeting, and Maine Sustainable Agriculture meeting to share information about this and several other Specialty Crop Grants that might benefit growers.

Maine USDA Auditors agreed to give every successful audit recipient an application form for reimbursement of up to \$300.00 for 2011 audits from this Specialty Crop Grant.

Additionally, the auditors emailed AgMatters LLC a list of successful audits and their cost on a bi-weekly basis, throughout the year, which gave AgMatters LLC the proof needed to send applicants up to \$300.00 in reimbursement for their audit.

AgMatters LLC used Excel to keep track of grower's names, business names, addresses, contact information, and transactions. We set up a special checking account at Maine Savings Bank to hold all reimbursement funds and track all transactions.

AgMatters LLC also used the auditor's list of successful audits to contact any growers who did not send in applications for reimbursement to make sure they realized the program existed.

Significant Role of Project Partners in the Project

The Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association, the Maine Department of Agriculture, and Maine's USDA Auditors very successfully coordinated efforts to benefit the specialty crop growers of Maine. All three entities helped spread the word about the program by allowing AgMatters LLC time to present at various meetings about the grant.

Maine's USDA Auditors went out of their way to give out applications for the reimbursement at every GAP/GHP audit they performed, as well as by sending

AgMatters LLC biweekly lists of successful audits that included which parts of the audit were taken and the costs for the audit. Information about the grant and an application were included on AgMatters LLC web site.

Additionally, each reimbursement check included a letter making growers aware of other Specialty Crop Grants that might benefit their farming.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The grant met its goal of encouraging small farmers to achieve their GAP/GHP certification. All \$30,200.00 of reimbursement funds were distributed. Many growers expressed their appreciation for this reimbursement. In total, 103 growers applied for and received their checks for reimbursement. On the last day of the grant, (12/20/11) two more applications arrived but there was only \$26.00 left in the account, so each was mailed a check for \$13.00. Most growers applied for the reimbursement. In the latter part of November an effort to remind growers who had not applied for this reimbursement was made. AgMatters LLC sent letters, emails, and phone messages to farms who had not requested funds. The results of this effort were successful.

In comparing farms who have received audits in 2010 versus 2011 we find that there are 12 new certifications.

We also found that 5 farms that had audits in 2010 did not renew them. In speaking to some of those farms, we have found that one changed his crop so that the audit was no longer necessary; one waited too late to call and his crop was all harvested when he thought about it, and several changed to other third party audits (i.e. Global Gap) as required by their major market.

Goals were that:

- Small Maine farms will choose to become GAP/GHP certified and participate in the “big” market because of this funding opportunity.
- At least 100 growers will respond to this reimbursement opportunity.

Outcomes:

It should be stated that all GAP/GHP audits were performed on farms whose major markets demanded this certification in order to sell to them.

AgMatters LLC responded to reimbursement requests from 103 growers. The busiest months were August, September, and October. Audits began in May and continued through December. The entire \$30,200.00 appropriated was dispersed. We were not able to give the last two applicants the full \$300.00 they earned because the funding was used up.

The total grant allocation was for \$36,443.00. Costs to administer the grant were \$6243.00

Many growers expressed verbal appreciation for this monetary support of their efforts. In comparing 2010 to 2011 audit results, numerically, there are 12 new farms who have earned GAP/GHP certification in 2011.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of this grant are all the specialty crop growers of Maine and all those who purchased food grown under GAP/GHP conditions. This grant allowed growers to reduce the financial risk of being audited and thus take a risk in their market expansion.

This partial funding opportunity allowed growers to test market waters. “Will I make enough money with this new market to make paying for and maintaining a GAP/GHP audit worthwhile?” was the big question. The answer to that question will be answered when we look at next year’s audit results and compare how many growers repeated their audits, and if they did not, why.

One can only conjecture in providing an economic impact for this project. We know that we put \$30,200.00 directly back in the pockets of growers. We know that potato growers made up the bulk of the audits, and presume that their production numbers have not changed because of this grant.

Lessons Learned

We do know from our discussions with large regional wholesale buyers in Maine, that in their attempt to push “Buy Local”, they needed quality assurance and that GAP/GHP provided that assurance. Our discussions also show that they are buying more and more produce locally than ever before, hence we can infer that this directly benefits certified Maine growers as it sets an expectation that Maine growers can fill produce orders that have previously been imported into the State.

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Additional Information

Funding Summary:

		Used by 12/31/11
Personnel	\$5,000.00	\$5000.00
Travel	\$50.00	50.00
Supplies	\$1,193.00	1193.00
Grower Reimbursement	\$30,200.00	\$30,200.00
Total Grant	\$36,443.00	\$36,443.00

Project Title: Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries Final Report

Project Summary

The purpose of ***Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries*** project is to have a positive impact on consumer consumption and health by conveying the nutritional value of increasing fruits and vegetables in the diet. ***Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries*** Satellite Media Tours are intended to educate children and adults about the importance of; eating fruits and vegetables to help us get the full range of vitamins and minerals a healthy body needs; including colorful fruit servings in their diet; information that increases people's knowledge about wild blueberries' nutritional benefits. The project goal is to translate consumer knowledge into action by encouraging consumer choices to buy and eat more fruits and vegetables, particularly Wild Blueberries.

Though Maine is one of the largest producers of blueberries in this country, competition from worldwide production has doubled over the last decade and the increase in worldwide acreage in production has grown by over 150%. U.S. imports of blueberries have also skyrocketed adding to a supply surplus and a precipitous drop in prices for growers, and processors of frozen wild blueberries in Maine. Communicating the nutrition and health story is intended to build and increase demand and consumption and enhance competitiveness of wild blueberry products.

This project was follow up to the Specialty Crop Block Grant ***The Power of Blue – Communicating the Nutritional Benefits of Wild Blueberries*** promotional project that successfully implemented the first Satellite Media Tour in 2010.

Project Approach

Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries 2011 Specialty Crop Block Grant project includes two Satellite Media Tours, one in 2011 and one in 2012. Our goal for the entire project was to reach 12 million consumers nationwide with the message about the health and nutritional benefits of wild blueberries and by doing so increase overall adult and child consumption of wild blueberries.

To date each Satellite Media Tour has been executed. An Annual report submitted in 2011 describes the success of the first tour that took place in 2011 with Alison Fishman as spokesperson for the Wild Blueberry Association. Performance data for the second tour in the spring of 2012 featuring the author Keri Glassman's presentation, did not meet

the expectation of 6 million consumer impressions/views. Due to the news cycle in local markets only about 1.7 million viewers had access to the media tour presentation and subsequent interviews. A second pick up of the interview and presentations is expected to accumulate a total of 3 million viewers though our current data total is 1.7 million. The timeline established for the project took advantage of potential opportunities with Keri Glassman during the first 4 to 5 months of 2012. The nature of the Satellite Media Tour makes the project a onetime event whereby viewership or readership occurs over a discrete timeframe. A second pick up by stations that showed the material or interviewed Glassman has potential for rebroadcast at a later time and date. Fortunately media material continues to be available through the wildblueberries.com website.

The local market audiences that picked up the media tour are a diverse regional representation from cities such as, Richmond, VA and Raleigh, NC in the east, to St. Louis, MO and Detroit, MI in the Midwest, and as far west as Bakersfield, CA and Albuquerque, NM. Keri Glassman's presentation about her book, eating plan and wild blueberry recipes from the *Slim Calm Sexy Diet* is available at the Wild Blueberry Association website at; <http://wildblueberries.com/news/video-keriglassman.php>. The 2012 tour with Keri Glassman was shown in 13 local markets and had 1 National market showing and 1 Regional showing in the NJ/PA market. There is potential for additional views or pick up from the wildblueberries.com website however, though this Tour did not come up to our expectations for views and interviews, it delivered good if not spectacular results for the \$20,000 block grant investment. See attached Audience Report.

Food & Wellness Marketing Group worked on behalf of the Wild Blueberry Association on message development and attended the taping for the Satellite Media Tour in New York City in April to manage set design and on-camera message delivery. During the Satellite Media Tour, Glassman highlights the health benefits of wild blueberries and demonstrate how to incorporate the berries in tasty recipes.

Food & Wellness Marketing Group worked with Auritt Communications of New York, NY to manage the project, coordinate the partners, and complete set up. Media strategy, and station distribution lists were developed as well as a script for the interview. Auritt Communications also coordinated e-distribution, media outreach and follow up and provided tracking reports for this component of the project.

During the Satellite Media Tour, interviews were conducted with stations across the country via a satellite uplink from a New York City studio location. The Satellite Media Tour interviews were aired live in some markets and taped for airing in additional markets at a later date. See one of the interviews aired in Albuquerque at http://www.kasa.com/dpp/nm_style/features/the-slim-calm-sexy-diet Wild Blueberries are featured as the star of the healthy diet and the author suggests using frozen berries available in the supermarket. In *The Slim Calm Sexy Diet* book, the author talks about the types of food you should eat, when you should eat, how much and why. She is a big proponent of incorporating Wild Blueberries and foods high in antioxidants into a healthy diet. Keri Glassman also talks about the fiber content in blueberries, as well as antioxidants. See more at her website www.nutritiouslife.com

All three of the Wild Blueberry Commission's satellite media tours have been good promotional vehicles to communicate the health and nutritional benefits of wild blueberries to consumers. The events themselves lead consumers to the Wild Blueberry website where we have additional educational video options that focus on the unique qualities of wild blueberries. The tours take place within a discrete timeframe and if media is focused on other significant breaking news this adds competition for consumer attention during the time slot. Because we do not have control of what news media focuses on, we rely on making videos available, the distribution of books, and conveying new blog content to bring viewers and consumers to the wildblueberries.com website.

Role of project partners in the project

Though Swardlick Marketing Group was lined up to execute this project, the group dissolved at the end of 2010 into the beginning of 2011. Swardlick transformed into the smaller Food & Wellness group in the beginning of 2011, both are based in Portland, Maine. The Wild Blueberry Commission agreed to utilize Food & Wellness group marketing services for 2011 and 2012, and asked them to execute the Satellite Media Tour project as planned.

Wild Blueberry Commission and Wild Blueberry Association partner Food & Wellness Marketing Group did an excellent job of developing and executing the concepts to educate consumers about the health benefits of wild blueberries through the Specialty Crop Block Grant project. The authors Alison Fishman and Keri Glassman, who were featured during the 2011 and 2012 Satellite Media Tours made the health and nutrition benefits a prime focus of their presentation and their interviews. The authors are well known in the dietary field by their books and their contribution to television shows and magazines such as Women's Health. The authors made the color connection, and recommended that consumers increase fruits and vegetables in the diet. The information presented about health benefits was well received and made for beneficial nutrition education promotions.

Food & Wellness Marketing Group Marketing Director, Mike Collins provided the Wild Blueberry Association marketing committee with tracking and reporting information. Association members were able to link to Keri Glassman's presentation on their wildblueberries.com website. Mike Collins also provided additional materials in website links, and tracking spreadsheets to assist with reporting on the project through 2011-12.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

To date the Wild Blueberry Commission Specialty Crop Block Grant **Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries** has been executed and performance data goals met the overall performance result of TV and radio airings and pick up by national syndicated shows. However, the number of national airings that occurred during the first satellite media tour did not occur during the second tour. Overall

we did not meet the expectation of 12 million of readers/viewers/listeners for both tours combined. We separated out the proposal project data by each tour and the first tour was a great success in pickup of the presentation airing and the interviews with 27 airings and 5 million readers/viewers/listeners. The 2012 tour results were not as robust as the first tour with a limited 1.7 million readers/viewers/listeners and 15 airings. When we combine the project results for the two tours our outcome exceeded our goal of 15 to 25 airings totaling 42 airings via television and radio over the course of the two year project. However, the expected 12 million readers/listeners /viewers of these nutrition messages was not realized as our total for both tours was 6.7 million. Our expectation of pick up by specific networks and national syndicators was down in 2012 compared to the 2011 showing.

Because the Satellite Media Tour occurred in conjunction with major renovation and update of the wildblueberries.com website, we cannot attribute the 70% increase in traffic from 2011 to 2012, to an increase in site visitors to specifically view the Glassman presentation.

Performance data baseline and goals met are listed below for the project and additional information about the performance results is included in summary form.

Satellite Media Tours– Goal 6 million Viewers, 15-25 TV and Radio interviews for each tour with bookings at major affiliates, national cable and far-reaching syndicated programs, 3 targeted placements with top FOX affiliates, *Newswatch* placement, 60 second radio spot on two syndicated networks, and advertorial news minute for distribution on the internet.

Outcomes:

- Final audience over 6.7 million viewers/listeners
- 42 TV and Radio interviews
- 5 Targeted placement FOX Affiliates and placement on 2 networks, the latter occurred for both 2011 and 2012 tour
- Newswatch (TV Show) placement and results totaling over 3 million viewers
- Two syndicated radio shows (see below) included radio spots
- Advertorial news minute is available at the Wild Blueberries website where Alison Fisheman and Keri Glassman show a wild blueberry recipe

The Satellite Media Tour did not meet all of our expected goals in each of the categories. The Wild Blueberry Commission with Food & Wellness Marketing, set a goal of six million viewers/listeners and 15 to 25 TV and radio interviews for 2011 and 2012. The final audience total for the Tours was approximately 6.7 million listeners/viewers. The Satellite Media Tour reached the goal of airing the interview nationally in 15 to 25 TV and radio markets in 2011 by airing in 26 markets. The 2012 Satellite Media Tour aired

in 13 TV interviews in markets and 2 radio interviews were also aired on syndicated station for *It's Your Health* and the *Morning Show* in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Satellite Media Tour targeted airings on three FOX TV affiliates and that goal was not met for the 2012 tour. The 2011 Satellite Media Tour aired in the FOX TV affiliates and aired on ABC, and CBS affiliate stations. The *Newswatch* airing was not picked up for the Fishman or Glassman tours, though the Fishman interview took place on the NBC Today Show which may have garnered a larger audience than the expected *Newswatch* airing. The 2012 Tour did air in radio spots on syndicated shows *It's Your Health* and on the *Morning Show*.

Food & Wellness Group captured an advertorial minute with a wild blueberry recipe demonstration video by Alison Fishman that is posted on the wildblueberries.com website. Keri Glassman's presentation about her book is also available on the website. A spreadsheet with the market data is included with this report.

Beneficiaries

Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries project was intended to benefit both consumers and producers of Maine wild blueberries. The Wild Blueberry Commission's intent is to increase consumption of the fruit to improve the health and well-being of children and adults and to educate them about the value of including wild blueberries in their daily diet. Growers and suppliers benefit from the promotion of wild blueberries' and their nutritional benefits by seeing an increase in their sales and competitiveness in the market.

In **Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries** proposal the Wild Blueberry Commission focused on tailoring messages to educate consumers about the importance of including fruit and colors in their daily diet, provide useful health information about food and nutrition, and increase awareness about the nutritional benefits of fruit, especially retail frozen wild blueberries. Our method of educating consumers was to make the greatest number of impressions as possible in various types of media to the most consumers in national urban, mid-size and smaller markets. We attained our goals for this project by communicating educational information about wild blueberries to many millions of people. Our performance results indicate that distribution of this information to over 6.7 million people did not meet our goal for the project. We wanted to meet our performance measures for the project, but though the local markets that picked up the messages were widespread, they did not represent some of the larger more populated domestic markets. In conjunction with the Wild Blueberry Association's annual promotional campaign, we intend to consistently keep wild blueberry nutrition benefit information in front of consumers. As a long term goal we expect consumers to increase their consumption of fruit, particularly wild blueberries.

The Wild Blueberry Commission's goal is promote the wild blueberry industry in the state of Maine and benefit 575 grower/producers and processors in the most cost effective way. By executing the Specialty Crop Block Grant project **Promoting the Nutritional**

Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries in conjunction with our annual promotion and communication campaign we expect an increase in demand for the fruit over the long term.

The economic impact of increasing demand is to increase the sustainability of growers and producers of this Maine agricultural industry. By implementing this project in a cost effective way the Commission continues to keep these important health and nutritional messages in front of consumers. Maine's wild blueberry growers and processors invested \$40,000 in grant dollars for two Satellite Media Tours in 2011 and 2012. These were effective components of a multimedia consumer advertising program that will build the level of consumer awareness by being tied into our Wild Blueberry Association annual promotion and communications campaign. **Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries** was kept on budget and consumer impressions added value to the Wild Blueberry Association's annual campaign at a cost of a little more than a ½ a penny per person (6.7 million divided by \$40,000). The investment of the grant dollars for the Satellite Media Tours project if calculated per grower was about \$35 per year (\$20,000 divided by 575 growers).

The 201-12 project proved to be a very cost effective method for the wild blueberry specialty crop business to develop and distribute a positive message on nutrition to children and adults nationwide. By combining this project with WBANA's comprehensive marketing campaign we expect to increase competitiveness, and consumer demand for and consumption of frozen wild blueberries

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from this project include;

1. It is critical that agricultural groups utilize experienced contractor/teams with marketing and communication expertise to implement a national media project.
2. Specialty Crop Block Grant funds allowed the Wild Blueberry Association to execute a promotional project that educates millions of consumers about the health and nutritional benefits of fruit and in particular wild blueberries.
3. We encountered the unforeseen challenge of competing with the news cycle and multiple media options during the discrete timeframe of the final 2012 Satellite Media Tour project.
4. We overestimated the reach that a consumer promotion program could have by 5 million and though results are good we had higher expectations after the success of the 2010 and 2011 Satellite Media Tours.

5. This project was cost effective way to communicate and educate about the health and nutritional benefits of fruits in general and wild blueberries specifically to a broad swath of the consumers nationally using multiple media outlets.

Contact

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Additional Information

More information is available at the online at www.wildblueberries.com

Specialty Crop Block Grant **Promoting the Nutritional Benefits of Antioxidant Rich Wild Blueberries** concluded on budget. For the total project \$40,000 was budgeted. The attached spreadsheet shows budget amount, and expenses. Any additional funds over the budgeted amount were committed by the Wild Blueberry Commission to the 2012 project budget for online communications at the Wild Blueberry website www.wildblueberries.com. The 2011-12 project proved to be a very cost effective method to develop and distribute a positive message on nutrition to children and adults nationwide.

Project Title: Specialty Crops Promotion: Increasing Sales of Specialty Crops at Farmers' Markets in Lewiston, Skowhegan, and Portland via Redemption of Federal Nutrition Benefits

Project Summary

The goal of the project was to support economically vibrant farmers' markets at which Mainers were able to purchase specialty crops grown in the state. We sought to enhance the revenue and competitiveness of specialty crop producers through the sales of specialty crops at more than ten farmers' markets. The project increased sales by establishing and enhancing redemption of federal nutrition benefits for specialty crops sold to SNAP, WIC, and Senior Farm Share clients.

This project was motivated by the fact that Maine specialty crops producers increasingly include direct markets (farmers' markets, farm stands, and CSA) as part of their marketing strategies. At the same time, Maine—as the most food insecure state in New England—has a very high percentage of consumers (more than 20%) using Federal nutrition benefits. To improve the nutrition of these families and to improve incomes for specialty crops producers, we were seeking to make it easier for Maine families to use nutrition benefits at direct market outlets. Simultaneously, through our immigrant farmer training program, we have a particular relationship with many low-resource immigrant farmers. By training them in the use and acceptance of Federal nutrition benefits, and by incentivizing low-income consumers to shop at farmers' markets, we helped establish a new farmers' market customer base among Maine's low income families and especially within Maine's burgeoning immigrant and refugee communities.

Project Approach

Key project components:

- Training for low-resource farmers and other specialty crop producers in use and acceptance of Federal nutrition benefits: 66 hours for 30 producers.
- On-site technical assistance to producers and market managers in acceptance of Federal nutrition benefits for specialty crop purchases: 689 hours benefiting more than 60 specialty crops producers.
- 6,000+ pieces of outreach literature produced and distributed.
- Outreach and marketing for farmers' markets and farm stands: 1,227 hours at 30 locations reaching more than 5,243 low-income consumers.

Roles of project partners:

- Healthy Portland (Portland Public Health) supported mailings and other outreach activities to SNAP-eligible families in Cumberland County.
- St. Mary's Nutrition Center managed Lewiston farmers' markets and provided incentives to consumers in Androscoggin County.

- Skowhegan Farmers' Market operated farmers' markets and provided incentives to customers in Somerset County.

All the fruits and vegetables eligible under SFMNP, WIC FMNP, and WIC FVV are also categorized as Specialty Crops, so linking SCBG-funded activities to these benefits is the first way we ensure we are only eligible crops are supported by the project. (Please note that, though WIC and SNAP actually provide a much higher value of nutrition benefit to Maine families, we expressly did not include them in SCBG-funded activities because we could not have the same level of certainty since those benefits can also be used to purchase non-Specialty Crop items including meat, cheese, eggs, and dairy.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Proposal Outcome #1:

Increase farmers' understanding of and participation in federal nutrition programs

Cultivating Community has supported 30 new American farmers in understanding and participating in federal nutrition benefits redemption. These low-resource growers operating farm stands that accept and double SNAP and WIC benefits, and are able to communicate these food access opportunities to fellow low-income immigrant and refugee community members. This has provided us with a unique gateway to linguistically and culturally diverse federal nutrition clients.

Cultivating Community had a partnership with the Portland Farmers' Market Association, maintaining the market's SNAP Program and guiding the Association toward program independence in October 2012. After establishing SNAP access in July 2011, we staffed and managed EBT acceptance for 21 indoor market vendors and 45 outdoor market vendors, and also introduced the Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) through Wholesome Wave Foundation funds to incentivize the use of SNAP dollars to purchase specialty crops.

With Specialty Crop Block Grant funds, the Skowhegan Farmers' Market was able to hire a consultant to process EBT transactions and compensate elected farmers to manage the market and conduct marketing and educational outreach. Farmers have been thrilled with the results of this program, citing a doubling of healthy food sales at the Skowhegan Farmer's Market in several cases.

We improved economic opportunities for 75+ specialty crops producers (compared to our original goal of 50 specialty crops producers).

Proposal Outcome #2:

Increase specialty crop purchases and consumption by federal nutrition clients

Cultivating Community's food access initiatives include farm stands, a low-income CSA program, a Senior Farm Share delivery program, our farmers' market SNAP program,

and the DVCP incentive program. This diverse set of strategies has allowed us to reach federal nutrition clients in a variety of settings with distinct needs. Our farm stands are situated in predominantly low-income neighborhoods in order reach the highest percentage of federal nutrition benefits recipients; our low-income CSA program encourages SNAP recipients to commit to an entire harvest season, increasing the effectiveness of specialty crop consumption on client health; our Senior Farm Share program enables elders with low-mobility to access fresh produce; our farmers' market SNAP program provides wide community visibility for SNAP recipients; and our incentive program increases the amount and affordability of specialty crops for low-income populations to comfortably integrate healthy produce into their diets. We advertise federal nutrition benefit acceptance and incentives through radio and newspapers, at social service organizations, community clinics and support agencies, at food pantries and shelters, and at local businesses. Cultivating Community's Portland- and Lewiston-based initiatives resulted in an additional \$145,964 spent on Maine-grown specialty crops from August 2010 to September 2013 (compared to our original goal of \$124,000 in specialty crops purchases).

SCBG funding has supported Skowhegan Farmers' Market's outreach and education to targeted low-income customers to increase their purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables grown in Maine. This market experienced an incredible surge in its SNAP program. Thanks to SCBG, it was able to implement a double voucher coupon program and specialty crops promotion, and offer local food samples.

Proposal Outcome #3:

Analyze the opportunities and challenges related to accepting federal nutrition benefits for specialty crop purchases at farmers' markets.

Low-income advocates identified a zoning barrier within Portland's City Ordinance that was prohibiting the sale of specialty crops in low-income neighborhoods. The Code did not allow for farm stands in residential zones (e.g. schools, hospitals, faith centers, non-profit organizations), which are primary sites for low-income residents to congregate. The City Council, with support from the Mayor, amended the ordinance to be more closely aligned with the City priority of increasing access to healthy foods. This zone expansion created an opportunity for us to establish more farm stands with convenient access for people using federal nutrition benefits.

We participate in policy and project initiatives that include the [Portland] Mayor's Initiative for a Healthy and Sustainable Food System, the Cumberland County Food Security Coalition, the Maine Food Strategy, and the New England Food Vision. Our participation is supporting efforts to:

- Provide continued and increased public engagement in food related initiatives.
- Identify and implement positive changes in the community's food system.
- Prioritize and respond to city, county, and state needs in food system improvement
- Increase access to healthier food choices.

Beneficiaries

Food access programs have provided 365 hours of one-on-one market training and technical assistance to nine New American growers. We used a weekly curriculum and standardized marketing tools aimed at improving farmer skills in vegetable quality, display creation, pricing consistency, customer service, record-keeping, English language, EBT and WIC transactions, and incentive program outreach.

In addition to the 5,000+ individual community members (including SNAP, WIC, and Senior Farm Share recipients), Cultivating Community engaged a network of 27 primary stakeholders to inform, support, and benefit from our food access programs. Those organizations, health centers, and markets include the following: Opportunity Alliance, Redbank/Brickhill Community Hub, SNAP Education, Healthy Portland, Whole Foods Market, West End Neighborhood Association, Riverton School and Community Center, Preble Street, Maine College of Art, St. Mary's Nutrition Center, Maine Medical Center Family Medicine, Lobsters on the Fly, Salt + Sea, City of Portland, Mercy Hospital, Western Maine Community Action, Portland Farmers' Market Association, Reiche Community School, St. Luke's Cathedral, Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Portland Housing Authority, Avesta Housing, Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets, Skowhegan Farmers' Market, Portland Public Library, University of Southern Maine, Bates College, and Lewiston's B Street Community Center.

Our partnership with Maine Medical Center Family Medicine advanced significantly to incorporate food access opportunities as a regular component of clinic appointments. This component has become part of a healthy eating campaign for patients with or at risk of developing diet-related health conditions such as obesity or diabetes.

Lessons Learned

Over the course of the project, we explored establishing relationships with other farmers' markets interested in better serving low-income consumers through acceptance of nutrition benefits. Low market capacity (little or no paid staff, no formal market management) presented a barrier to these efforts.

We also recognized that our stationary farm stand model (designed to accomplish learning objectives for new marketers in our immigrant and refugee farmer training program) may present some challenges to reaching specialty crops consumers as effectively and efficiently as possible. Therefore, we designed and constructed a tricycle-powered mobile farm stand that will offer us several advantages: increasing the number of potential market sites we can visit in a similar time frame, refining the hours of operation to accommodate each neighborhood's activity patterns, and decreasing the amount of time spent setting up and breaking down market displays. We plan to launch this project in 2014.

Contact Person

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Project Title: Providing Food Safety Training and Verification to Organic and Specialty Crop Farmers

Project Summary

As Congress nears the end of its session, there is still little certainty around how the Federal government will approach food safety at the farm level. There are at least three pathways/possibilities now moving forward. USDA is encouraging use of its Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification system. Some of the country's largest produce distributors and growers petitioned USDA to implement a nationwide Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement. USDA held hearings last winter to consider whether and how to implement this proposal. Finally, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is the leader on policy discussions around food safety, and is increasingly asserting their authority over the entire range of the food system outside of meat production and processing. In 2009, FDA released draft food safety guidances (precursors to rules) for Leafy Greens, Tomatoes, and Melons.

The Food Safety Modernization Act has passed, and FDA was slated to issue produce safety rules in 2012. (The rules were issued January 4, 2013). The legislation puts some bounds around the rules, but FDA's current package includes: registration, a food safety plan, a food traceability plan, and a food defense plan. The food safety plan, and food traceability plan, are both based on HACCP principles, which separate them from USDA's approach with the GAP system. Our work, since we initiated it in 2008, has been based on two basic concepts:

- USDA-GAP doesn't provide much flexibility for diversified farms, and often doesn't address critical questions (e.g., pesticide use) that MOFGA considers to be important,
- and, more importantly,
- USDA-GAP doesn't cover the full range of issues likely to be required under any FDA produce safety standard (whether in rule or statute.)

We have developed a farm food safety approach, based in HACCP principles, that results in an approach that is workable for family farms, where most of the labor is provided by the family itself, yet still gets farmers to focus on some of the critical issues that FDA has identified as at the root of produce safety issues.

Attendees at these workshops become familiar with USDA-GAP concepts, FDA's HACCP approach, and are given guidance on how to prepare a farm food safety plan that is compatible with these approaches and works within their existing organic farm plan.

Project Approach

MOFGA's work under this specialty crops grant included:

*Six workshops for farmers who are primarily direct marketers to expose them to key food safety concepts and help them move towards food safety plans and three workshops also were for people considering a value-added processing business. The locations of the workshops were in: Lincolnton, Augusta, Freeport, Unity, Ellsworth, and Presque Isle. Value-added: Freeport, Unity (twice).

*Intensive work with a smaller group of farmers who are creating food safety plans to meet the needs of their markets. A model food safety plan was created, based on visits by a former FDA policymaker and trainer. That model plan was tested with farmers, both in the workshops and in one-to-one visits at farms. It has since been revised into another model plan, which is used as the basis for the most recent round of workshops. Individual farmers then take the plan and adapt it for use on their own farms.

During the technical assistance phase of the project, 36 farms received varying degrees of technical assistance from farm visits (20) to telephone conversations and e-mail exchanges. Sixteen farms revised their processes after analyzing their systems for improved methodologies in regard to farm food safety. Ten farms have identified critical control points, seven farms have Farm Food Safety Plans, and three farms are in the process of developing Farm Food Safety Plans.

In June of 2012, preliminary details were released about the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). As anticipated by MOFGA, this act will require food facilities to develop and implement HARPC (Hazard Analysis and Risk-Based Preventive Control) plans. An analysis of the proposed HARPC plan indicates that it is similar to a HACCP plan, the management system that MOFGA used in developing the sample Farm Food Safety Plan, and the foundation of the educational materials. HACCP plans address food safety through analysis and control of biological, chemical and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement, and handling to manufacturing, distribution, and consumption of the finished product. HACCP is designed for use in all segments of the food industry. Traditionally, on the farm, food safety control has been accomplished through the application of Good Manufacturing Practices. Under FSMA, these conditions and practices are now considered to be prerequisites to the development and implementation of effective HACCP plans.

Farms are considered to be a food facility and under FSMA will be required to develop a HARPC plan if they direct market less than 50% of their product. Of the ten farms with Farm Food Safety Plans in operation or under development, seven farms would be categorized as a food facility.

Hospitals, institutions, schools and value-added producers are markets that often require one-up, one-down tractability. A major component of this project was to assist certified organic farms in their record-keeping and tractability. During this project, a significant number of producers increased their understanding and knowledge of these markets, how food safety protocols play an important role, and how the record keeping of the National

Organic Program provides a good foundation for the record keeping of Farm Food Safety Plans.

In 2012, as a direct result of this project, three farms transitioned and became certified organic farms. All farms receiving technical assistance increased their markets to include a value-added food processor. Eight farms that participated in the educational program have increased their markets to include a hospital. The products sold to these markets are fruits and vegetables.

MOFGA staff worked quite closely with Maine General Hospital to create a check-list for the hospital to use in farm visits. This was the staff's only piece developed to verify on-site plans. Before implementing food safety plans as part of the organic farm plan inspection, MOFGA certification is waiting for the FDA rules to be adopted.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

This year we offered food safety workshops and discussions at the following locations (with estimated attendance included):

Farmer-to-Farmer Conference, Lincolnville: 45

Agricultural Trades Show, Augusta: 60

Freeport: 35

Unity: 15

Presque Isle: 18

Ellsworth: 20

The value-added processing workshops were held in:

Freeport: 40

Unity (twice): 25, 25 (full each time we offer)

Intensive workshops:

Bangor: 6 farms

Waterville (2 times): 4, & 3

At the workshops, we spent 3 hours, with the first half hour overviewing current policy discussions/regulatory directions and how USDA and FDA regulations were integrated. We also discussed forthcoming rules (particularly produce guidances from FDA) and discussion of relevant Maine laws and regulations, and how to address them.

In the second hour we took people through the model plan. Our model food safety plan uses HACCP principles (identifying areas where systemic failures can create a high risk of food safety problems), but we are not billing them as HACCP plans, which imply certain record-keeping requirements. We walk people through the model farm (based on a composite of several MOFA farms) and discuss how they can apply the issues identified to their own farm.

In the final hour and a half we took questions. We also identified resources, public and private, to resolve issues identified for particular farms. We worked the farmers through

worksheets to identify critical issues for their farms. This led to farmers starting to outline their plans.

A draft plan, integrating crops, livestock, and value-added processing, was created during the year and is being shared with individual farmers. At the Bangor and Waterville workshops, 13 farms have moved to detailed farm food safety plans that meet our understanding of FDA's current direction/intent. Other farms have informed us that they have prepared plans, but do not intend to share them or have them verified. They are using them as both internal controls and as a reference point if there is ever a food safety issue that potentially is linked to their farms.

A nominal registration fee is charged (\$25) for the food processing workshops. Four of the farm food safety workshops were offered at no cost, two were offered at \$25. All funds go to support the program offerings. MOFGA spent approximately \$25,000 on food safety work/workshops last year (\$18,000, Cheryl Wixson for this specific work; \$4,000 Russell Libby, *ibid*; \$2,000 other staff and contract work—plan development; \$1000 travel to workshops.)

Beneficiaries

We had approximately 193 attendees at farm food safety workshops, plus an additional 90 at value-added processing workshops. Farmers and processors have been actively engaged at all of the workshops. Some are driven by a sense of uncertainty about where the entire Federal policy discussion is headed. Others have decided that they just need to step forward to put together a plan so that they can build or maintain access to particular markets, or that they want to be ready when markets demand certification.

Fifteen (15) farms have completed food safety plans. Six were verified through visits from outside agencies. Those farms supplying Hannaford's, a major retail chain, have generally opted for USDA-GAP certification, supported by another specialty crop grant in Maine, particularly because Hannaford's has been underwriting the cost. MOFGA Certification Services, LLC, a USDA-accredited organic certifier, started working to add this verification to its offerings for the 2013 growing season. The usefulness of that will depend on whether the market switches to a HACCP-style plan, as envisioned in HR2741 (S510) just passed by Congress in December, or stays with USDA-GAP. We think that eventually most produce farmers selling to larger markets will have to do a HACCP-style food plan, and that is why we continue to provide training that we think meets the standards of the just-passed legislation.

Lessons Learned

MOFGA's Certification Services has put the verification plan/strategy on hold, waiting for the FDA to issue rules and the final version of FSMA. Once these rules have been established, the project will continue. MOFGA will initiate a regional discussion of food safety verifications as an add-on feature for certified organic farmers. We expect the client base, driven by wholesale markets, will need to be educated about a science approach to farm food safety that includes a farm food safety plan that is HACCP based, not GAP.

Contact Persons

Workshops are coordinated by Cheryl Wixson, MOFGA's organic marketing consultant. Cheryl has extensive training in food safety as a former chef/restaurant owner, and she applies this experience to the farm situation. Jim Ostergard, former FDA inspector/trainer, has helped develop MOFGA's approach to these issues. Russell Libby, MOFGA's Executive Director, is in charge of policy and oversight for the project. Kate Newkirk & Mary Yurlina of MOFGA Certification Services, LLC, coordinate for certification/verification purposes.

Cheryl Wixson

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Project Title: Multi-State Project - Increasing the Competitiveness of New England Specialty Crops through the Harvest New England Association.

Project Summary

New Englanders seldom think of their region as being plentiful and offering a diverse selection of agricultural specialty crops. Through increased use of the Harvest New England (HNE) logo by producers, wholesalers, and grocery stores, residents of New England will have an increased awareness and greater knowledge of the availability of regional produce.

As a result of activities conducted by HNE the following was accomplished:

1. Increased marketing of New England specialty crops.
2. Increased awareness of the HNE logo and New England specialty crops.

This was accomplished by:

1. Hosting two New England-wide marketing conferences
2. Redesigning the HNE website into a more user-friendly, information-filled website.
3. Developing the HNE logo brand guidelines to inform users how to properly use the logo to keep the standards of the logo consistent
4. Producing banners to line the Avenue of States on the Eastern States Fairgrounds during the annual Big E and year round.

The HNE logo was promoted to potential users, which include all specialty crop producers and distributors, and consumers at a variety of venues and opportunities. These venues will included the 2011 and 2013 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show, a complete redesign of the Harvest New England website, developing specification sheets for using the HNE logo, and installing light post banners on the Avenue of States during the Big E.

Project Approach

- 2011 and 2013 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show.
 - In 2011, 392 specialty crop producers and 483 in 2013 were educated on how use the HNE logo and better market their agricultural specialty crop products to New England consumers. In 2011, 54 scholarships were awarded to specialty crop producers from around New England who

- expressed hardships and could not have attended the conference otherwise.
 - The conference received great responses and feedback. The conference evaluation in 2013 asked attendees that participated in both 2011 and 2013 conferences if they had an increase in sales of specialty crops as a result of marketing techniques learned at the conference. 78% of respondents said they did increase sales of specialty crops thereby solely enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops in New England.
- Harvest New England website.
 - The website was made more user-friendly for both for the consumers as well as producer, wholesalers, etc. The logo can now be easily downloaded by specialty crop producers, wholesalers, and grocery stores. On the homepage, an overview of the program and drop down menus leading both consumers and producers to information has been added. New “Consumer Pages” providing information on locating New England specialty crop products, seasonality guide, and links to pertinent information such as the New England departments of agriculture websites have been added.
 - A “Producers Page” was also added and includes information on using the Harvest New England logo, logo brand manual, links to other webpages including the New England departments of agriculture websites, extension, among others. This is also the area where HNE can post timely information for the various specialty crop industries.
 - An events page was established. This is where the Harvest New England biennial conference can be highlighted along with any other relevant events.
- Spec sheets for the HNE logo.
 - The original specification ‘spec’ sheets for the HNE logo has been expanded to a more comprehensive logo brand manual. The manual outlines not only specifics of colors and logo graphic design components, but how the logo should be used on promotion materials, in sponsorship opportunities, electronically, etc. This more detailed manual is available for download prior to and after someone requests the download of the HNE logo. This manual will encourage a consistent use of the logo by specialty crop producers, wholesalers, and grocery stores.
- 28 light post banners on the Avenue of States at the Eastern States Exposition during the Big E were installed in 2011. They remained up for the 2012 fair and are anticipated to be up for the 2013 fair as well.
 - This increased the visibility of the logo by 1,201,428 New England consumers in 2011; 1,365,896 in 2012; and 1,481,917 in 2013 during the height of the harvest season in the region. Attendance in 2013 was reported to be the highest ever since the exposition started in 1917.

HNE ensured these funds solely enhanced the competitiveness of New England specialty crops through the following procedures:

- *2011 and 2013 HNE Conference:* Only specialty crop producers were given access to the HNE logo and only speakers pertaining to specialty crops received honorarium and other associated fees from these funds. Only specialty crop

- producers were awarded scholarships which was determined by an application process. Additional, non-SCBG funds were available to cover any expenses where non-specialty crop producers benefited or had the potential to benefit.
- *Harvest New England website update:* A disclaimer on the website specifying only specialty crop producers can utilize the HNE logo when marketing their product(s) regionally. Prior to downloading the HNE logo, producers are required to fill out an online form asking them their basic contact info and to list the general products for which the HNE logo will be used on.
 - *Spec sheets for HNE logo:* A disclaimer prior to downloading the manual reminds producers that only specialty crop producers can utilize the HNE logo when marketing their product(s) regionally.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

GOAL 1	To educate producers on how to use the HNE logo and better market their agricultural specialty crop products through the 2011 and 2013 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show.
Performance measure:	Specific questions on the evaluation form asked if specialty crop producers were better aware of how to use the HNE logo and market their specialty crop products as a result of attending the conference.
Benchmark:	Approximately 550 of the 800 attendees at the 2009 conference were specialty crop producers.
Summary of activities	A committee of representatives from around New England, in addition to all of the HNE board members, participated in brainstorming, planning, promoting, and executing the conference.
Original target:	At least 550 specialty crop producers will attend the conference in 2011 and 2013. A minimum of 10 scholarships will be awarded to specialty crop producers at the 2011 conference.
Actual target achieved:	In 2011, 392 specialty crop producers and 483 in 2013 attended the conference. 875 specialty crop producers in the end benefited from attending the HNE Conference. A total of 54 scholarships were awarded to specialty crop producers over the two years. At the 2013 conference 78% of respondents said they had an increase in sales as a result of marketing techniques learned at the 2011 and 2013 conference.

GOAL 2	To make the HNE website more user friendly and have a place where the logo can easily be downloaded by specialty crop producers as a result of updating and redesigning the site.
Performance Measure:	The number of logo downloads from the redesigned HNE website.
Benchmark:	There is no benchmark to compare to at this time.

Summary of activities:	A subcommittee of the HNE board of directors solicited three website firms and selected the most appropriate bidder. Website redesign and content was discussed and developed by the subcommittee and a firm was hired.
Original target:	A total of 50 downloads of the HNE logo per year will happen from the website.
Actual target achieved:	The information is still being collected at this time. However, it doesn't appear we'll meet the target of 50 downloads per year.

GOAL 3	To develop a specifications sheet which will give users guidelines on how to properly use the HNE logo.
Performance Measure:	The number of requests or downloads of the spec sheet from the HNE website.
Benchmark:	There is no benchmark to compare to at this time.
Summary of activities:	A subcommittee of the HNE board of directors updated the existing specifications sheets to a more comprehensive 15 page brand manual for the logo.
Original target:	A total of 50 downloads or requests of the spec sheet for the HNE logo per year.
Actual target achieved:	The information is still being collected at this time. However, it doesn't appear we'll meet the target of 50 downloads per year.

GOAL 4	To increase visibility of the logo to New England consumers during the height of the harvest season in New England as a result of producing light post banners to be on display during the Eastern States Exposition's, Big E.
Performance measure:	The number of attendees during the Big E.
Benchmark:	In 2009, 1.26 million people attended the Big E.
Summary of activities:	A New Hampshire company was hired to design and print the light post banners. Eastern States Exposition staff installed the banners prior to the 2011 Big E.
Original target:	To have at least five, up to 12, light posts banners developed with the HNE logo, promoting the purchase of specialty crops.
Actual target achieved:	28 light post banners were installed for the 2011 Big E. They were also on display for the 2012 and 2013 Big E. This allowed a total of 4,049,241 people to view the banners over the three years. The intension is for them to remain on the light banners for an undetermined amount of time.

The 2011 New England Agricultural Statistics (most recent available) reported that specialty crop sales increased by 97% since 2009. While this cannot be attributed solely to this project, it can be said this project is a contributing factor.

Beneficiaries

Specialty crop producers throughout New England had and still have the opportunity to benefit from using the logo to promote their New England Grown products. A total of 875 specialty crop producers benefited from attending the HNE Conference in 2011 and 2013.

Over 4 million people were exposed to the HNE logo at the 2011, 2012, and 2013 Big E combined. This raised awareness of the logo and availability of New England grown specialty crops.

Lessons Learned

- 2011 and 2013 Harvest New England Conference:
- Conference planning and execution went quite smoothly both years with no serious problems or delays occurring.

- Harvest New England Website:
- The HNE website has been completed. The project was more substantial than originally anticipated and the project timeline was drastically off from the original project narrative submission. The website has been live since July 16, 2013.

- Specification Sheets for the HNE Logo:
- The 'spec' sheet project was also seriously underestimated however turned out to be more economical to produce a 17 page brand guidelines than just a one page spec sheet. The brand manual is available on HNE's website.

- Light Post Banners at the Big E
- This project was completed without and problems or delays.

Contact Person

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Additional Information

[2011 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show](#)
[2013 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show](#)

Harvest New England Website: www.harvestnewengland.org

Harvest New England Brand Manual: <http://www.harvestnewengland.org/hne-logo/>

Light post banners on the Avenue of States:



Project Title: Maine Potato Board Specialty Crop Marketing and Promotion Campaign – Final Report

Project Summary

The purpose of this proposed project was to build awareness of, and promote the purchase of, Maine potatoes.

The MPB marketing and promotional campaign contained four components. They are as follows:

- 2010 Fall Promotion
- 2010 Produce Marketing Association Show
- 2010 New York Produce Show
- 2011 National Potato Council Potato Expo

The Maine Potato Board worked with Mosher Multimedia, a marketing firm in Presque Isle Maine, to develop a television advertising campaign with the goal of increasing sales of Maine table-stock potatoes during the Holiday season. The fall and early winter Holiday season provides one of the greatest opportunities for the sale of table-stock potatoes during the entire year. Funding for this component was used for costs associated with ad development and the purchase of airtime. Often our growers are faced with competition in the Market from other potato producing states, as well as Canada. We expect this component to improve our competitiveness in the marketplace during this crucial time of the year. The objective of this marketing component addresses the issue identified by the USDA in that it will increase the consumption of specialty crops.

The Maine Potato Board prepared for our participation in the Produce Marketing Association show that took place in Orlando, Florida on October 16, 17, 18, 2010. The 2010 Fresh Summit, as the show is called, is one of the premier produce shows in the world. It takes place annually and draws a crowd of over 17,000 attendees, representing over 70 countries. The Maine Potato Board was one of 720 exhibitors. This show put Maine potatoes in a setting that includes companies such as Dole, Chiquita, Sunkist, and Del Monte. There were several countries that exhibited produce as well, including the countries of Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico. Maine potatoes compete in a global marketplace. Fresh Summit 2010 enabled us to be in front of our buyers at a show where the competition for those buyers' attention was great. Funding for this marketing component will be used to promote Maine table-stock potatoes, which addresses the issue identified by the USDA as increasing consumption of specialty crops.

Maine has one of the toughest potato seed certification laws in North America. We believe as an industry that strong seed certification standards result in fewer disease and pest issues during the growing season. The Maine Potato Board Participated in the National Potato Council's Potato Expo 2011. This event took place in Las Vegas, Nevada the first week in January 2011. The National Potato Council Seed Expo draws

potato growers from all of the potato production areas in North America. The Expo highlights potato seed producing states and provinces. The goal of our participation in the expo was to place our potato seed industry in a national marketplace and provide potato growers with an alternative seed source that has the highest standards in the industry. We believe that this marketing component addresses the USDA identified issue of pest and disease control, as planting Maine certified seed will reduce pest and disease levels to a greater extent than non-Maine seed.

Project Approach

The Maine Potato Board was awarded a contract in the amount of \$30,523 on November 12, 2010 to build awareness of, and promote the purchase of, Maine potatoes. This project consisted of four components.

Component 1. 2010 Fall Promotion

The Maine Potato Board working with Mosher Multimedia developed a broadcast schedule using two television stations. WCSH 6 in Portland Maine and WLBZ 2 in Bangor Maine were the two stations chosen for this component due to their market coverage. Mosher Multimedia used existing 30 second advertisements previously developed by the Maine Potato Board for this component. Mosher Multimedia negotiated rates, scheduled runs, and placed all advertisements on behalf of the Maine potato Board. This activity began on September 2010 and concluded on December 26th 2010.

120, 30 second television spots aired on WCSH 6 in Portland Maine between November 15, 2010 and December 26, 2010.

79, 30 second television spots aired on WLBZ 2 in Bangor Maine between November 14, 2010 and December 25, 2010.

In total 199, 30 second spots were aired as part of this component reaching approximately 200,000 people.

Component 2. 2010 PMA Show

The Maine Potato Board began in August of 2010 coordinating their attendance at the Produce Marketing Association Show in Orlando Florida. This show was held at the Orange County Convention Center on October 15 thru October 18 2010. The show was attended by approximately 19,000 people from 58 different countries. The coordination activities included arranging booth rental, utility rental, furniture rental, promotional material delivery to the show site and travel arrangements. 500 recipe brochures were distributed as well as over 350 industry reviews. Many contacts were made with produce buyers from the United States as well as several other countries.

Component 3. 2010 New York Produce Show

We did not participate in the 2010 New York Produce Show.

Component 4. National Potato Council Potato Expo

The National Potato Council held the 2011 Potato Expo at the Rio all-Suites Hotel in Las Vegas Nevada January 5,6,7 2011. This show was attended by staff and board member from the Maine Potato Board. Starting in October 2010 the Maine Potato Board staff coordinated all activities related to the show including coordinating booth and material shipment, and travel arrangements. There was a total of 205 industry reviews as well as 250 seed promotional pieces distributed at the trade show. The expo was attended by 1,400 individuals related to the potato industry in North America.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The purpose of this proposed project was to build awareness of, and promote the purchase of, Maine potatoes. The question then becomes how you determine whether or not this purpose has been achieved. As with any marketing campaign, determining what the measurable outcomes are may be interpreted in several ways. One way to measure outcome is to assume that the goals of the campaign will be met if the project is completed. This is a bit subjective but, nevertheless, is one way to measure results of marketing. Another way is to conduct market analysis or market research. We have spoken with a firm that does market research regarding this type of activity. Their observations were that a continuous marketing program that is consistent from year to year justifies market research to determine if the program is effective. A larger investment, coupled with a longer length of commitment, requires research to determine if goals are being met. Any conclusions derived from sources other than market research in this situation may be considered anecdotal. A low cost, short duration campaign with a specific goal is justified by the fact that the campaign was completed. There is an assumption that the campaign, if implemented, will have the intended effect. The key is to have attainable goals that are realistic.

We believe that we had an attainable goal given the small amount of investment in each of the three components of this proposal. It is our belief that a greater awareness of the Maine potato industry exists and sales of Maine potatoes was positively affected as a result of this project.

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Beneficiaries

The impact of this proposal is as broad as the audience is diverse. We targeted consumers of Maine potatoes in state, as well as growers and buyers in areas outside of the state. The potential impact of a marketing campaign is difficult to measure. One way to measure the impact of marketing is to stop marketing and see what happens to your business. Another way to measure is to do market research. With the limited amount of Specialty Crop Grant Funds that are available we did not submit a proposal to research the impact in the market place of our promotional campaign. We expect that the combined marketing efforts of this proposal will have a beneficial effect on all growers of Maine potatoes. Currently the Maine Potato Board represents approximately 380 individual growers throughout Maine. These individuals represent approximately 240 operations. The total economic impact that the potato industry has on the State of Maine is \$540 million in sales and 6,100 jobs.

The intended beneficiaries of this proposal are first and foremost the potato growers of Maine, secondarily are the consumers of Maine potatoes. Finally, citizens of Maine will benefit, as they have in the past, from a strong and stable potato industry.

Again, the potential economic impact of this proposal is difficult to determine. A marketing investment of \$59,000 will certainly help to maintain existing sales. Marketing is a long term investment activity that must be continued.

Lessons Learned

The Maine Potato Board did not participate or attend the 2010 New York Produce Show as proposed. Due to increased cost associated with the other three components, limited match funds, and the relatively small impact potential of the New York Show we decided not to participate.

In the initial proposal submitted by the Maine Potato Board to the Maine Department of Agriculture for Specialty Crop Block Grants, the Maine Potato Board requested \$59,000 to fund the four components of this campaign. The Maine Department of Agriculture awarded \$28,513.36 less than the original request of \$59,000. The Maine Potato Board has invested \$15,333.13 in additional funds over and above the funds received from the Maine Department of Agriculture, to cover components 1 and 2 of this campaign. The total cost of component 4 has been covered with funds from the Maine Potato Board. The Maine Potato Board did not use any funds from the Specialty Crop Block Grant award to complete component 4 of this campaign.

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