

A G U I D E T O

Community Food Projects

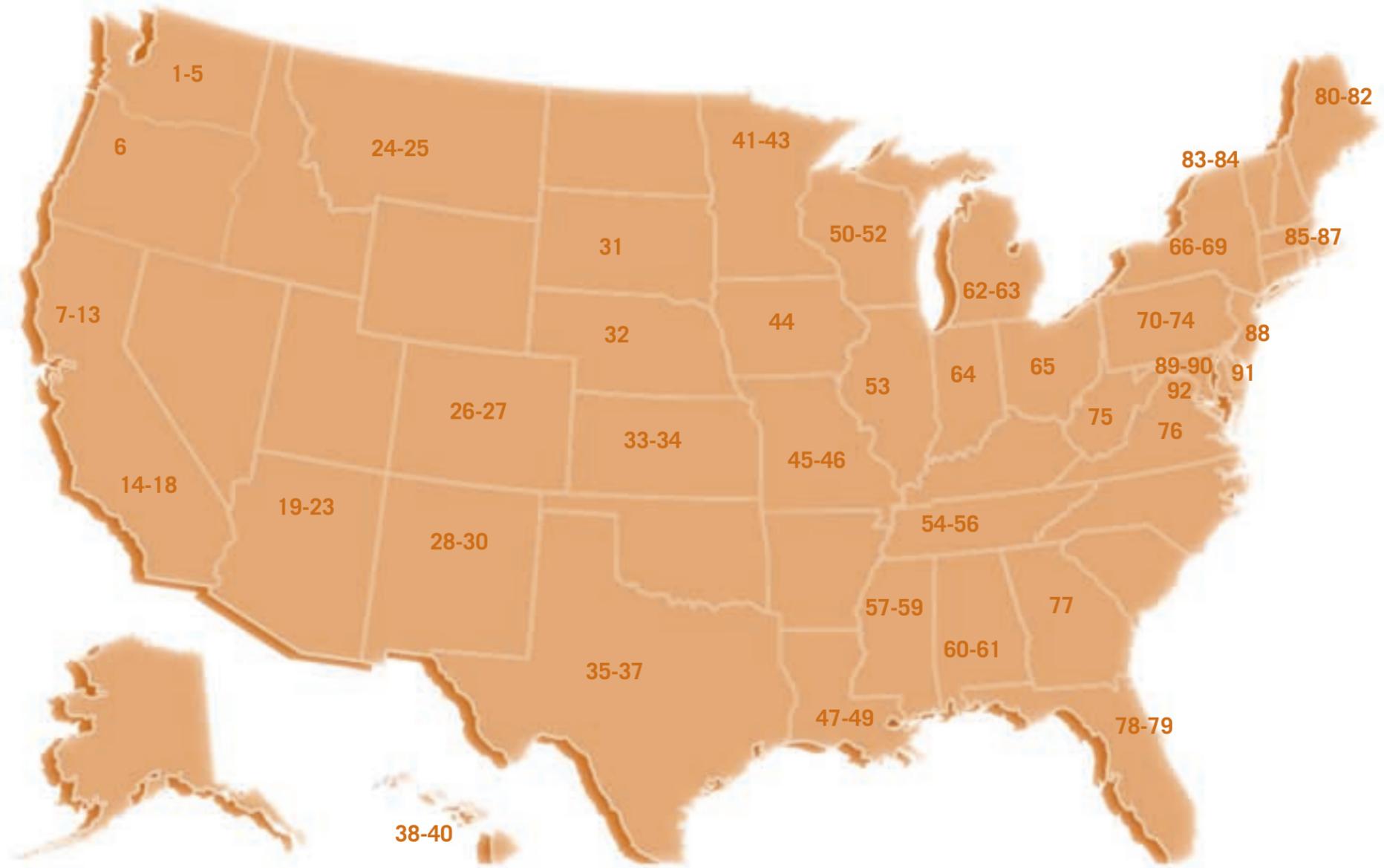
COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION

Maya Tauber and Andy Fisher



Community Food Projects Grantees- West

- Washington (#1-5):
 - Inst. for WA's Future, Seattle ('96)
 - Tahoma Food System, Tacoma ('97)
 - Church Council of Greater Seattle ('98)
 - Lopez Community Land Trust, Lopez ('99)
 - South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency, Sheldon ('00)
- Oregon (#6):
 - Janus Youth Program, Portland ('01)
- California (#7-18):
 - Com. Alliance with Family Farmers Foundation, Davis ('96)
 - San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, S.F. (98/01)
 - Center for Ecoliteracy, Berkeley ('98)
 - Rural CA Housing Corp, Sacramento ('98)
 - Boss Urban Gardening Inst., Berkeley ('00)
 - Mercy Foundation, CSUS, Sacramento ('00)
 - United Indian Health Services, Trinidad ('99)
 - Southland Farmers Market Asc., L.A. ('96)
 - Community Food Security Coalition, Venice (97/00)
 - Escondido Comm Health Center, Escondido ('98)
 - Occidental College, LA ('99)
 - Compton Comm College Dev. Fdn, Compton ('01)
- Arizona (#19-23):
 - Tohona O'odham Community Action, Sells (97/01)
 - Seba Dalkai School Board, Winslow ('98)
 - Tucson Audubon Society, Tucson ('98)
 - Arizona-Mexican Border Health Fdn, Tucson ('99)
 - Hopi Putavi Project, Second Mesa (01)
- Montana (#24-25):
 - Missoula Nutrition Resources, Missoula (96/97)
 - Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency ('98)
- Colorado (#26-27):
 - Denver Urban Gardens, Denver ('96)
 - Growing Gardens of Boulder, Boulder ('00)
- New Mexico (#28-30):
 - New Farms, Rociada ('99)
 - Rio Grande Comm Farms, Albuquerque ('00)
 - Friends of the Santa Fe Farmers Market, Santa Fe ('01)
- South Dakota (#31):
 - Center for Permaculture as Native Science, Mission ('00)
- Nebraska (#32):
 - City Sprouts, Omaha ('99)
- Kansas (#33-34):
 - Kansas Rural Center, Whiting (98/99)
 - Stardusters Crime Prevention, Topeka ('00)
- Texas (#35-37):
 - Urban Harvest, Houston ('97)
 - Sustainable Food Center, Austin ('97)
 - South Plains Food Bank, Lubbock ('00)
- Hawaii (#38-40):
 - Kauai Food Bank, Lihue ('96)
 - Zen Center of Hawaii, Kamuela ('99)
 - Waianae Comm Re-Dev Corp, Waianae Na Po Hoa Aina Paho ('01)
- Minnesota (#41-43):
 - Youth Farm and Market Project, Minneapolis (97/01)
 - Comm Design Center of Minnesota, St. Paul ('99)
 - East Side Neighborhood Dev. Co., St. Paul ('99)
- Iowa (#44):
 - Practical Farmers of Iowa, Boone ('97)
- Missouri (#45-46):
 - Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Columbia (98/00)
 - Putnam County Fdn, Unionvill (01)
- Louisiana (#47-49):
 - ECONomics Inst., Loyola Univ., New Orleans ('96)
 - Beauregard Community Action Assoc., DeRidder ('97)
 - Parkway Partners Program, New Orleans ('99)



Community Food Projects Grantees- East

- Wisconsin (#50-52):
 - West Central WI Comm Action Agency, Glenwood City ('99)
 - Brown County Task Force on Hunger, Green Bay ('01)
 - Council for the Spanish Speaking/ Loyola Academy, Milwaukee (01)
- Illinois (#53):
 - Centro San Bonifacio, Chicago ('01)
- Tennessee (#54-56):
 - Knoxville-Knox County Comm Action Committee, Knoxville (96/98)
 - Narrow Ridge Center, Washburn (97/98)
 - Jubilee Project, Sneedville ('99)
- Mississippi (#57-59):
 - Mississippi Food Network, Jackson ('00)
 - Mid-Delta Comm Center, Cleveland (01)
 - Mississippi Asc. of Coops, Jackson (01)
- Alabama (#60-61):
 - Upper Sand Mtn. Methodist Larger Parish, Sylvania ('98)
 - Alabama Rural Heritage Fdn, Thomaston ('01)
- Michigan (#62-63):
 - Hunger Action Coal of MI, Detroit ('97)
 - Neighborhood Renewal Services of Saginaw ('99)
- Indiana (#64):
 - Comm Kitchen of Monroe County, Bloomington ('96)
- Ohio (#65):
 - Rural Action, Athens ('99)
- New York (#66-69):
 - Comm Food Resource Center, NYC ('97)
 - Just Food, NYC ('97)
 - North East Block Club Alliance, Rochester ('99)
 - Bounty of the County, Hudson ('00)
- Pennsylvania (#70-74):
 - Black United Fund of PA, Philadelphia ('98)
 - Farmers Market Trust, Philadelphia ('99)
 - West Philadelphia Partnership, Philadelphia ('99)
 - Southwest PA Food System Council, Homestead ('99)
 - Norris Square Civic Assoc., Philadelphia ('99)
- West Virginia (#75):
 - Lightstone Fdn, Moyers ('96)
- Virginia (#76):
 - WA Area Gleaning Network, Alexandria ('98)
- Georgia (#77):
 - Five Loaves and Two Fish Food Pantry, Griffin ('97)
- Florida (#78-79):
 - FL Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Gainesville ('00)
 - FL Ed. Dev. Corp, Gretna ('01)
- Maine (#80-82):
 - Costal Enterprises, Wiscasset (96/97)
 - Maine Coalition for Food Security, Portland ('98)
 - Friends of the Bowdoinham Public Library ('01)
- Vermont (#83-84):
 - VT Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, South Burlington ('97)
 - Northeast Organic Farming Assoc., Richmond ('00)
- Massachusetts (#85-87):
 - Nuestras Raices, Holyoke ('96)
 - The Food Project, Lincoln ('96/00)
 - Community Teamwork, Lowell ('00)
- New Jersey (#88):
 - Isles, Inc., Trenton ('97)
- Maryland (#89-90):
 - Center for Poverty Solutions, Baltimore ('98)
 - Civic Works, Baltimore ('99)
- Delaware (#91):
 - Food Bank of Delaware, Newark ('01)
- District of Columbia (#92):
 - Assoc. for Comm Based Ed. ('97)

What is the Community Food Projects Program?

The Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program is a federal grants program administered by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It was established through passage of the Community Food Security Act, as part of the 1996 Farm Bill, with mandatory funding of \$2.5 million per year. This amount was increased to \$5 million a year in 2003. Between 1996 and 2003, more than \$22 million in grants was distributed to 166 awardees.

The CFP program supports projects designed to: help meet the food needs of low-income people; increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. Additionally, projects are encouraged to: support the development of entrepreneurial projects; develop linkages between the for-profit and non-profit sectors, as well as between other sectors of the food system; and foster long-term food planning activities and multi-system, interagency approaches.

The types of projects funded through the Community Food Projects program are innovative and diverse. They have included nutrition education, food policy councils, community gardening, youth gardening, community supported agriculture, farm to school programs, farmers' markets, micro-enterprise development, gleaning, consumer education and marketing campaigns, business training, community kitchens, and training and technical assistance. Emergency food programs have generally not been funded, except as an integral component of a broader food system strategy.

Emergency food programs have generally not been funded, except as an integral component of a broader food system strategy.

These grants are intended to help eligible private non-profit entities that need a one-time infusion of federal assistance to establish and carry out multi-purpose community food projects. Projects are funded from \$10,000-\$300,000 with a one to three year duration. These are one-time grants that require a dollar for dollar match in resources.

Guidebook Purpose

We hope that this booklet will help you, the reader, to better understand the purposes, activities, and impacts of projects funded through the Community Food Projects Program, and perhaps to apply this information in your own work. For those wishing to know more about the individual projects, contact information is included.

Acknowledgements:

This Guide has been funded by a Community Food Projects grant for training and technical assistance, as well as a grant from the California Department of Health Services (Nutrition Network). Thanks to Jeanette Abi-Nader and Kai Siedenbug for editing assistance, and to Val Echavarría for the graphic design. Many thanks to Tristan Reader, Paula Jones, Hank Herrera, Michelle Mascarenhas, Ruth Katz, Sanjay Kharod, Lindsay Howerton, Rick Hartman, Gary Huber, and Robert Karp for helping the writers to understand their projects and for providing photographs.



Tohono O’odham Community Action Sells, Arizona

Singing down the rain—a cultural tradition rooted in agriculture

Just as the sky began to brighten behind Baboquivari Peak in Southern Arizona, the sound of gourd rattles, desert fiber drums and singing could be heard coming from the bahidaj (saguaro fruit) camp. The voices of young and old joined together in a traditional Tohono O’odham harvest song, giving thanks for the blessings of the desert. By the time the sun rose above the mountains, small groups of people were scattered across the desert floor gathering fruit from the towering saguaro cactus. Using long poles made of the ribs of dead saguaro trees, they knocked the saguaro fruit to the ground, collected and then boiled it into a thick red syrup used to make the ceremonial wine to “sing down the rain” and bring the monsoon floods to dry desert fields. Events like this traditional bahidaj camp are not just a fun summer outing or a quaint cultural relic. Indeed, they may prove to be the hope for restoring indigenous food systems, physical health and cultural vitality to Native communities across the US.

Redeveloping traditional food systems

The Tohono O’odham tribe, formerly known as the Papago, lives in Southern Arizona on the second largest reservation in the U.S. In 1997, Tohono O’odham Community Action (TOCA) received an \$80,000 USDA grant for three years to help re-develop a comprehensive food system, including the production and distribution of healthier and more traditional staples along with nutritional and cultural education. In an effort to decrease food insecurity and increase self-reliance in this impoverished Indian nation, they have concentrated on redeveloping traditional flood based dryland farming, home gardening, and the gathering of wild foods.

Modern challenges

Traditionally, the O’odham lived a semi-nomadic life in the dry Sonoran Desert. They relied on dryland farming, gathering wild desert foods, and small amounts of hunting. These strategies served them well until relatively recently, when several policy developments drastically changed the structure of their community. During the 1940’s federal policy encouraged the O’odham to leave their fields and earn wages in nearby commercial cotton fields. At the same time World War II took many men away from their fields for years at a time. The children were forced to attend boarding schools, where they were discouraged from traditional foods and cultural practices. Shortly thereafter the O’odham endured the most severe drought in their history. New dams prevented the monsoons from flooding the plains, making traditional crop cultivation impossible. What had once been over 20,000 acres of cultivated dry land had dwindled to what is now less than 10 acres.

The challenges the Tohono O’odham face today are immense: 66% of the population live below poverty level and 63% are unemployed; 47% of households have no telephone, while 29% lack plumb-

In 1997, the Tohono O’odham Community Action received a USDA grant to redevelop a comprehensive food system, including the production and distribution of healthier and more traditional staples along with nutritional and cultural education.

ing and 47% have no vehicle. The homicide rate is nearly three times the national average, and fewer than half of O'odham adults have graduated from high school.

Many community members survive on government commodities and food stamps. Most people no longer participate in rain and harvest ceremonies, as they seem meaningless if no one is planting fields or gathering desert foods. The decrease in physical activity combined with an imported diet has wrought havoc on the O'odham. In the 1960's diabetes was unknown in this community, yet now more than 50% of the population is affected--the highest rate in the world.



The impact of CFP support

The 1997 USDA grant has helped TOCA reinstate the practice of gathering as well as cultivating traditional O'odham foods. Several scientific studies have confirmed that foods, such as tepary beans, mesquite beans, cholla (cactus) buds, bahidaj (saguaro) fruit, chia seeds and prickly pear, help regulate blood sugars and significantly reduce both the incidence and effects of diabetes.

Approximately every three years the O'odham harvest acorns in the fall. They also gather several different medicinal plants. In traditional flood based farming called "Ak Chin," the O'odham use plants that have adapted to the desert, such as tepary and mesquite beans, 60-day corn, squash, melons and caño (sugar sorghum). These are planted during the monsoons, which flood the plains with most of the 11 inches of annual rainfall. The demand for traditional foods has grown five fold over the past three years, from 100 to over 500 participants in various TOCA programs.

Through the CFP-supported program, TOCA has sponsored over 100 trips to collect wild foods, developed demonstration plots to grow traditional crops in the floodplain, and established a community garden. In addition, TOCA helped families start gardens at home to grow traditional foods by providing technical assistance and equipment. They worked with 37 families in the first year, 63 in the second year, and 78 in the third year. More than 1,000 packets of traditional seeds were distributed, as well as equipment such as rototillers and fencing material. Cultural and practical support was provided by the community elders to teach planting songs, rain ceremonies and appropriate planting and harvest times. Traditional foods education was also offered in workshops and community meetings, with more than 400 kids and adults participating over the past year.

The future of TOCA

When asked of the future direction for this program, Tristan Reader, co-director of TOCA, excitedly speaks of a new production farm, the establishment of a cooperative for food processing and farming equipment (such as tractors and rototillers, as well as food processors, grinders and bean cleaning machines). He also is excited about a new Tohono O'odham Community College, which offers a course in traditional food systems taught by Danny Lopez. Danny and Tristan are working on a book and video series on growing and harvesting traditional foods and associated cultural practices. Tristan believes this is a long-term investment of resources, that may lead to an effective solution to the prevention and treatment of diabetes. With the National Institute of Health predicting a nationwide doubling of type two (adult onset) diabetes over the next twenty years, the O'odham project holds significant potential as a model for other Native communities.

Contact Information for TOCA: (520) 383 – 4966 wynread@earthlink.net



San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners San Francisco, California

Too often, organizations don't make use of community resources to meet the community's needs. The San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) seeks to "develop home-grown skills and resources to address community challenges." according to Mohammed Nuru, the former Director. "Job training and creation is a positive first step towards building local self-reliance."

With a \$145,000, three year, Community Food Project grant awarded in 1999, SLUG helps develop city gardens that produce not only fresh fruits and vegetables, but also economic development, personal growth, and community pride. USDA funds support SLUG's urban agriculture projects, including the development and maintenance of four youth gardens around San Francisco, the Youth Garden Internship (YGI) at St. Mary's Urban Youth Farm, and the sales and marketing of their local enterprise, Urban Herbals. SLUG's projects are an excellent example of how seed money from the federal government can be used to build capacity and expand opportunities for low-income communities, contributing to urban renewal, food security, and grassroots economic development.

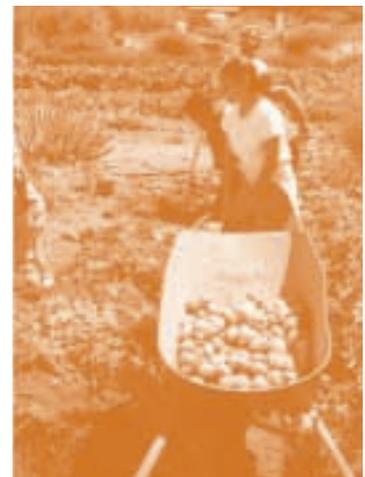
Their focus is to increase food security as well as job and life skills, and to improve the overall security and future potential of its residents.

Youth gardens yield produce and learning

SLUG's Urban Agriculture and Marketing Department oversees four gardens run by at-risk teenagers and located in low-income communities. The largest site, St. Mary's Urban Youth Farm, is a 4.5 acre plot between St. Mary's Park and the Alemany housing development site, located near a freeway. The area surrounding the garden has an unemployment rate as high as 84%. Two more gardens can be found in the Double Rock and Sunnydale housing projects. The fourth garden is at the Log Cabin Ranch, a juvenile detention facility for boys. SLUG reports that over 10,000 pounds of produce were harvested at these four urban agriculture sites in 2000.

St. Mary's Urban Youth Farm is the oldest of these four gardens, cleared from garbage and construction debris in 1995. It started with a few raised beds of vegetables for the housing project and surrounding community. Since then, it has expanded to include an orchard with over one hundred apple, peach, pear, avocado, olive, and loquat trees surrounding a large plot of organic vegetables, a flower production garden, beehives, a greenhouse, and garden plots for the nearby residents. In addition, St. Mary's Youth Farm has a recycling/compost education area with an amphitheater, a wetland restoration project with a windmill, and a green waste-chipping program for San Francisco residents.

SLUG's Youth Garden Internship (YGI) trains and employs over one hundred teens every year to work after school and during the summer in the orchards and organic vegetable gardens. The youth plant, harvest, and deliver the produce to the local community, especially to senior citizens and disabled residents. Nearly ninety percent of Alemany residents eat produce grown on the St. Mary's Youth Farm.



SLUG not only uses the farm as an educational site for community workshops, school field trips and internships in gardening, but also provides mentoring services to the youth and the community. Their focus is to increase food security as well as job and life skills, and to improve the overall security and future potential of its residents. The YGI program teaches teens about wetland and native plant restoration, landscaping, and horticulture, and conducts workshops in leadership, violence prevention and health promotion. In addition, the program has also offered classes at nearby South East Community College in diverse topics including conflict resolution, sex education, substance abuse, and African American history.

Urban Herbs provide job-training and economic development

Those who have graduated from the YGI program may choose to continue working for SLUG, in their organic food business called Urban Herbs. These 18 to 22-year-olds learn skills in production, marketing, and business management. This program uses fruits, vegetables, flowers, and beehives from St. Mary's as well as from family-run, organic Bay Area farms to make "Jammin' Jam," "Bee Real Honey," herbal vinegars, "Slammin' Salsa," unfiltered virgin olive oil, flower arrangements and gift baskets. They rent kitchen space from a San Francisco Naval Shipyard, and market to 23 retail sites and several farmers' markets. Urban Herbal products are also available through mail order and the Internet. SLUG provides employees with a 12-week business-training course, a kitchen health and safety course, and opportunities to travel and participate in gift shows and conferences (like the American Community Gardening Association conferences). Sales in 2000 reached \$48,000.



Multifaceted approach keeps SLUG thriving and proud

SLUG relies on a mix of local and national resources, including many volunteers, strong city support, and grants from Community Food Projects, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other entities. SLUG's success can be attributed in part to its commitment to hiring from within the community, with over one hundred youth and a supervisor coming from the nearby neighborhood. By doing so, local residents have gained a stake in the success of SLUG's projects, and have more readily accepted SLUG as a positive force in the community. According to Paula Jones, Urban Agriculture Program Manager, another crucial ingredient that ties the project together is "pride." SLUG is immensely proud of having trained hundreds of people in

organic gardening and community service. The community members are proud of the skills they have learned, the produce they have grown, the areas they have beautified, and the sense of community spirit the project has brought them. With this pride has come a sense of ownership over the projects by the workers and the community that has enhanced their chances of success.

The future of SLUG

Staff ideas for enhancing revenues in the future include increasing garden output for Urban Herbs, producing compost and other soil amendments for sale, and marketing to local restaurants. SLUG's future plans also include expanding the counseling and support aspects of St. Mary's Youth Farm to include job and college placement, career development, and health and nutrition education. They have received another CFP grant to start a farmers' market in the Bayview Hunters' Point area, which would include a youth run market stand.

Contact Information for SLUG: (415) 285 - 7584 slug@slugsf.org



Missouri Rural Crisis Center Patchwork Family Farms Project Columbus, Missouri

In 1992, a handful of Missouri hog farmers formed an “economic development committee” in response to the tremendous obstacles that independent family farmers faced in trying to earn a living. Most of the small hog farmers in the state were threatened with bankruptcy, due to a lack of access to markets and extremely low hog prices. In 1998, prices dropped to an all time low of 7.5 cents per pound, well below the production costs.

By 1994, a group of farmers founded the Patchwork Family Farms cooperative to provide independent producers with a viable alternative to the corporate-controlled livestock system, which was not providing them with fair prices. Patchwork seeks to “recapture the middle” by doing their own processing, marketing and selling of pork products rather than just selling whole hog. This strategy of adding value to the raw commodity is increasingly common among farmers striving to make a living-but it is only viable if farmers can get access to markets, which is often difficult in today’s highly consolidated agricultural economy.

Patchwork provides a quality product and better income

Patchwork started small, using a family-owned processing plant in Hale, Missouri, and an old pick-up truck with an icebox. The storage site doubled as their office. In 1998, the Missouri Rural Crisis Center received a USDA Community Food Project grant for \$195,000 for three years to help expand Patchwork Family Farms. The CFP grant enabled Patchwork to increase annual sales by allowing them to purchase more equipment and hire several additional employees.

Today, Patchwork buys 20 to 30 hogs per week from fifteen independently operated Missouri family farmers for 43 cents per pound (or 15% above the market price, whichever is higher). Patchwork increases the farmers’ incomes from their hog operations by 25-50% above what they would receive from average market prices. The proximity and reliability of Patchwork eliminates the farmers’ worry about long transports to auction houses or processing plants and the fluctuating prices these places offer.

Patchwork farmers adhere to strict standards that result in clean, high quality meat products: no continuous use of antibiotics, no growth hormones, and no complete confinement. Patchwork also seeks

to increase food security for communities that do not have access to quality meat by marketing and selling their products to local and low-income areas.



Local markets benefit farmers and low-income communities

As Patchwork Family Farms was getting established, three churches in economically depressed African American communities in Kansas City were particularly helpful in marketing their products. Connections had been established between the farmers and the churches during the 1980’s, when the churches joined forces with the Missouri Rural Crisis Center to help fight against record



low farm prices and unfair farm foreclosures. So the organization once again turned to these communities for support.

On Sundays the farmers took turns driving to church to attend the service, socialize, sell their products, and ask for advice on the cuts and labels. The church trips provided the farmers with income and a test market for their products, while supplying access to quality meat for the Kansas City customers. In addition, these Sunday visits offered an opportunity for cultural exchanges between rural and urban communities.

In 2001, Patchwork farmers continue to sell at church events, as well as to food co-ops that sell locally grown products and restaurants that feature

free-range meat and local produce. According to Rhonda Perry, Executive Director of Missouri Rural Crisis Center, more than 60% of the retail sales come from limited-resource populations, primarily in the neighborhood surrounding the Columbia office. She notes that Patchwork is special because it is based on personal ties to their consumer market, which foster communication and caring between local farmers and low-income consumers. According to Perry food is a tool for building community.

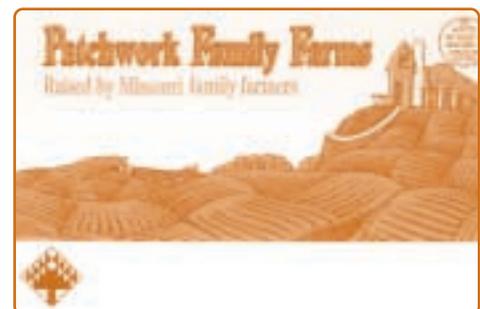
The impact of USDA support

The CFP grant funds have enabled Patchwork to expand and to move toward financial viability much more quickly, by hiring a full-time marketing project coordinator and purchasing additional processing equipment. Originally, Patchwork had one processor that created main cuts, bacon, pork chops and loins. The shoulder and other parts were made into ground pork, a low-demand and inexpensive product. To decrease waste, two additional processing plants have been added: one to make specialty products, and a second that can do either basic or specialty cuts. Patchwork also has purchased another freezer truck that transports meat from the lockers to the warehouse, which contains freezers and coolers for storage.

The future

For 2001, Patchwork's sales goal is \$300,000. Their future plans include further expansion of the storage area and freezer space, and influencing government policies that would encourage schools to go outside of the procurement program and buy local products like Patchwork Family Farms pork.

In other states and other livestock sectors, farmers are examining the viability of replicating the Patchwork model. It has created an important example of a successful marketing cooperative program that provides farmers with a good price, community support, and more control over their livelihoods. Reproduced across the country, such marketing cooperatives may enable many more family farmers to stay on the land and continuing farming, as it has done for the 15 Patchwork members.



Contact Information: (573) 449-1336 morural@coin.org



Just Food The City Farms Project New York, New York

Bobby Watson, from the Taqua Community Farm in the Bronx, notes his garden is a place of peace. “Some days when I get frustrated at work I can stop by the garden and get my frustrations out by digging. It is a place of relief, a refuge before going home.” He notices many other volunteers feel the same way. Abu Talib, also from Taqua Community Farm, believes that “we are not just raising food, we are raising people. It is not right that a handful of people control the whole food industry, because he who controls your breadbasket controls your destiny. We live in the most fabulous country in the world, with the best land. Why are some of us still hungry?”

The need for a new food system

Preventing hunger through building self-reliance and by helping community members gain control over their own destiny are two of the key benefits that Community Food Projects such as Just Food’s The City Farms Project provide. In 1997, Just Food, Inc. received a Community Food Project award of \$198,000 over three years to improve the availability of fresh food in low-income neighborhoods by establishing a network of urban farms that contribute to a self-sustaining local food system.



The lack of community food self-reliance is evident in many New York neighborhoods, where poverty levels run high and few outlets with healthful, affordable food exist. Steep housing costs in New York City present additional challenges to people in low-wage jobs and those trying to transition out of welfare and into paid employment. These conditions are increasing pressure on emergency food providers, which have grown to serve 3.9 million meals per month to over 500,000 individuals. These food pantries and soup kitchens are important in providing immediate hunger relief, but are not a long-term solution to hunger.

Gardens offer food and community

Community gardens can provide an important measure of self-reliance for low-income urbanites. Karen Washington, a leading community activist and gardener with the Garden of Happiness in the Bronx, notes: “we are proud of the vegetables we grow. We know where they come from and they don’t contain chemicals. We don’t have to depend on supermarkets to decide on what they want to distribute to us. The produce in our neighborhood grocery stores is second class anyway.”

The USDA CFP grant helped Just Food to coordinate and provide technical assistance in production and marketing to community gardeners in low-income NYC neighborhoods. Just Food organized workshops on such topics as organic gardening, composting, irrigation, food preservation, harvest record



keeping, soil testing, organic pest management, and open space preservation. During the grant period, The City Farms also organized conferences, developed written resources, and worked to link emergency food providers with sources of garden produce.

Through The City Farms, Just Food built a network of 15 demonstration gardens located in all five boroughs. Gardeners have been able to increase their skills through workshops and by learning from each other. In 1999, demonstration gardens produced close to 8,000 pounds of produce for the gardeners' families and neighbors, soup kitchens and food pantries, and to sell at farm stands. Perhaps even more importantly,

many participating gardeners now see themselves as active participants working to build a more just and sustainable food system.

The City Farms is now expanding its reach to the 700-plus community gardens around NYC, and offering opportunities for resources and workshops citywide. The City Farms also hopes to expand its organizational connections to assist with this broader reach. It has formed partnerships with the Green Guerillas, Green Thumb, City Harvest, Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Heifer Project International to expand public awareness of gardening, enhance food growing skills, develop market opportunities, and increase donations of fresh produce to soup kitchens.

The future

In recent years, the City's decision to bulldoze or auction off hundreds of gardens galvanized support for community gardening. Just Food and its partner Green Guerillas hope to further increase support for community gardening through public education about its role in improving the quality of life, in part through a planned 2002 Urban Agriculture Summit that Just Food will co-host with CFSC among other groups.

Just Food leaders also wisely recognize that the sustainability of community gardens over the long term will benefit from leadership development. To this end, they are working with community residents to build their capacity to organize and develop urban gardening projects independently within their neighborhoods. The sustainability of The City Farms, as intended in the Community Food Projects legislation, will depend in some measure on their ability to meet their goals fostering community leadership and building public support for urban gardening.

We are proud of the vegetables we grow. We know where they come from and they don't contain chemicals.

Contact Information for Just Food: (212) 645 – 9880 info@justfood.org



NorthEast Neighborhood Alliance Market Gardens and Regional Farm Stand Rochester, New York

“It’s great doing something good for the community. I get to meet lots of new people that feel like family now,” said Cortez Jones, age 15, a youth employee of the NorthEast Neighborhood Alliance (NENA) urban farm in Rochester, NY. “It’s a way to stay out of trouble but not have to stay at home and do nothing all day.” The youth who work with NENA say they like the leadership opportunities, the responsibility, the collaborative decision making skills, and the farming and marketing education they acquire.

Community building, job training, and violence prevention are a few of the benefits that Community Food Projects like NENA’s market gardens provide. NENA’s three-year CFP grant for \$140,000 is intended primarily to strengthen its efforts to build food self-reliance and wealth for the low-income residents of three neighborhoods in Rochester. Additionally, the City of Rochester provides \$49,500 each year for the *Summer on the City Farm* Youth Entrepreneurship Program.

Empowerment through community ownership

These efforts emerged from a six-year campaign to gain a new supermarket for the community after the last one burned down in 1992. Despite their eventual success in convincing the Tops Supermarket chain to locate there, community activists, such as NENA Planner Hank Herrera, realized that while the supermarket brought jobs and easy food access, Tops took their profits out of the community. NENA wanted to help residents to regain power through ownership of their community’s food production and distribution resources. In accordance with this model of community ownership, NENA has formed a land trust and now owns a three-acre farm site, a warehouse and a restaurant—all in the neighborhood.

NENA works in three northeast Rochester neighborhoods with a total population of 17,143. Fifty-eight percent are African American, 35% Hispanic and 7% White or other. The median household income is below the poverty threshold for a family of five (\$16,500) and the communities receive over \$20 million annually in food stamps.

Urban bounty

Working with local residents to grow and sell produce is a key strategy for NENA’s vision of recapturing their share of the community’s food dollar. NENA established two community gardens in 1999: First Street and Clifford-Joseph. In 2000, they bought a three-acre site that had historically been a farm. The gardens produce organically grown vegetables and fruits, including tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, summer squash, okra, collard greens, cabbage, garlic, onions, grapes, pears, peaches and apples. The non-profit group *Politics of Food* provides technical assistance, and nearly 200 people have volunteered in the gardens.



NENA employs a farm stand manager, a garden manager, and 12 neighborhood youths (such as Cortez) who work eight hours per week after school and 30 hours per week during the summer. The teens are involved with all phases of production, including tilling, planting, weeding, operating the watering system, and harvesting.

The farm and garden produce is sold at the Regional Food Stand in the Rochester Public Market, where NENA owns a 9,000 square foot warehouse and office building, with a large commercial cooler for fruits and vegetables. The Regional Farm Stand has evolved into a



produce and food distribution business called “GRUB” for Greater Rochester Urban Bounty. GRUB sells products made by small-scale food processors in the 15-county Genesee/Finger Lakes region, and markets to some of Rochester’s finest restaurants. Cornell Cooperative Extension conducts nutrition education and cooking demonstrations next to the farm stand to help promote sales.

They recognize the importance of value-added products, and the need to create micro-enterprises to help process, store, transport, and retail farm fresh produce.

The vision of NENA’s leadership extends beyond the boundaries of the community. They focus on regional economic development, supporting local family farmers who can provide the city with affordable and reliable supplies of many food products. They recognize the importance of value-added products, and the need to create micro-enterprises to help process, store, transport, and retail farm fresh produce.

The future of NENA

NENA seeks to expand its production and sales substantially in the future. Core elements of their strategy include creating a community supported agriculture (CSA) program and developing specialty markets, such as ethnic food processors and restaurants for products such as their habañero peppers, herbs and flowers. They would like to assist “mom and pop” corner stores to get refrigeration equipment so they can once again carry fruits and vegetables in addition to the expensive processed foods, they now offer. NENA also sees the potential to gain a share of the food purchases for institutional markets, such as schools, where local children could also benefit from healthier meals. NENA’s comprehensive market-based strategy is ambitious and unique, and many eyes will be on it as it seeks to scale up its production and distribution resources.

Contact Information for NENA: (716) 342 – 3230 nena@nena10.com



Occidental College Farmers Market Fruit and Salad Bar Los Angeles, California

“The salad bar is the greatest thing that could happen to the 59th Street School’s cafeteria,” starts a letter from student Diana Garcia to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). “It helps me stay healthy and have a better life. Going on the field trip to Farmer Phil’s, I learned to tell the difference between seeds, flowers, stems, leaves, and roots.” Diana is referring to the Farmers’ Market Fruit and Salad Bar, started by Occidental College’s Center for Food and Justice in conjunction with LAUSD. This project was funded in 1999 by a Community Food Project grant of \$104,000 over a two-year period. It has led to the development of dozens of fruit and salad bars in the second-largest school district in the nation, which serves 722,000 students.

Promoting good food and education to face health issues

The primary goals of the Fruit and Salad Bar program are to increase the availability and consumption of fruits and vegetables for school-age children, and to provide education on food production and healthy food choices. School gardening activities and field trips to farmers’ markets and local farms provide rich opportunities for hands-on nutrition education. Supporting regional family farms was also an initial goal of the program, although that component proved difficult to maintain because LAUSD did not have the infrastructure to handle small specialty orders and deliveries, nor the policy that would commit them to order from local farmers.

The Fruit and Salad Bar has the potential to be an important tool to help schools address growing health problems among children. Numerous studies have documented exponential increases in obesity and diabetes among children, especially Mexican American and African Americans. A 1998 UCLA study found that 40% of children in 14 low-income elementary schools in LAUSD were obese. Studies show 40% of overweight 7-year olds and 80% of overweight teens remain so into adulthood.

The Fruit and Salad Bar has the potential to be an important tool to help schools address growing health problems among children.



Implementing salad bars as a school lunch choice

Pilot programs, with food sourced from local farmers’ markets, were launched at Castelar Elementary School in the Chinatown neighborhood, which is predominantly low-income Asian, and at 59th Street School, which is mainly low-income African-American and Latino. As a control for the farmers’ market model, a third pilot program was launched at 42nd Street School, with a student body of primarily low-income African American, using a conventional salad bar that purchases produce through traditional wholesale channels. All schools have a universal free lunch policy. The schools marketed the program with an all-school assembly on salad bar food choices and etiquette, presented by 5th-grade students.

Classroom curriculum was also developed to promote healthy food choices.

The program is based on a model piloted in the Santa Monica schools. While buying from local farmers worked well in Santa Monica, it proved very challenging to translate this model to LAUSD. Problems cited include lack of quality control when buying directly from farmers, transportation and logistics difficulties, increased labor for food service staff, and a lack of priority on the part of the produce buyer and food service to buy from farmers directly. In addition, the conventional control salad bar did just as well as the farmers' market salad bars. So after the



first year, Food Services decided to discontinue the pilot farmers' market purchasing program, and instead purchase produce through conventional channels with already prepared and ready to serve food.

Positive outcomes

The Fruit and Salad Bar has been very effective in meeting its primary goals. Conventional salad bars are now offered at more than 30 schools, and will be added at another 25 schools in 2001-2002. They are very popular, and have improved the nutritional value of student meals by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption an average of one serving per day, according to a public health research team from UCLA. The team conducted a follow-up study to document the impact of this project and found the students' daily caloric intake decreased by 200 calories, and their daily fat intake by 2%. Furthermore, parents are now allowed to volunteer in school cafeterias, strengthening links between the schools and the community and increasing parental understanding and involvement in issues related to student meals. While purchasing directly from local farmers was discontinued, nutrition education and outreach activities are continuing, with growing interest from students, teachers and parents in school gardening and trips to local farms and farmers' markets.

The future

Participants in the Fruit and Salad Bar program have seen how their input has made a difference, and are now voicing their opinions for future improvements. The Center for Food and Justice is organizing parents, teachers, concerned citizens and student advocate groups into a "Healthy School Food Committee" to work with the school district to improve school nutrition, and lobby for district-wide policy changes. In addition, Occidental College, Community Alliance of Family Farmers (CAFF) and other interested parties are researching produce delivery models that would work better for large school districts like LAUSD, including the development of a non-profit based delivery, quality control, and processing cooperative. The Salad Bar program has demonstrated the importance and power of building support for farm to school projects from all quarters: students, parents, teachers, farmers, school boards, and food service officials and staff working together.

Contact Information for the Center for Food and Justice: (323) 341-5095 cfj@oxy.edu



Practical Farmers of Iowa Field to Family Project Boone, Iowa

Denise O'Brien has a small, sustainable farm in southwest Iowa where she raises organic chickens and turkeys, as well as fruit that she sells fresh or makes into cider or pies. Denise sells her products to people from the local community who visit her farm, and participates in several of the marketing programs run by Practical Farmers of Iowa. She believes that "supporting the local economy is essential for building small farm infrastructure."

Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) received a 1997 USDA CFP grant of \$135,600 for three years to help develop a food system that focuses on supporting local farmers and low-income households. Their Field to Family Community Food Project (FTF CFP) is notable for its success in creating new programs that become self-sustaining, locally run businesses.

PFI's goals are to help farmers access local markets, help low-income families establish linkages with churches and organizations that offer support, and inform the general public about the benefits of good nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and supporting the local economy. Whereas many community food project grantees focus on one core program, FTF integrates a number of smaller projects under a common food system framework. In doing so FTF hopes to create synergies between the various programs, and catalyze new relationships between producers, processors, and consumers. These projects, some outlined in more detail below, include a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), a farmers' market, hands on nutrition education through cooking and gardening classes, a catering service that offers "All Iowa Grown Meals", and supporting events such as the Harvest Festival, a summer camp and the annual Food, Farm and Nutrition conference.

Their Field to Family Community Food Project (FTF CFP) is notable for its success in creating new programs that become self-sustaining, locally run businesses.



Increasing access to fresh produce

USDA grant funds were used to help establish the first CSA program in Iowa, an operation run by five farmers and called the Magic Beanstalk. Community members who purchase CSA "shares" at the beginning of the season later receive weekly deliveries of fresh produce during the summer harvest. This system provides farmers with much-needed funds during planting and harvesting, and consumers with high-quality produce and a personal relationship with local farmers. The Field to Family project helped purchase a large refrigerator in the first year to increase storage capacity for produce. The Magic Beanstalk CSA remains self-sustaining

and is a model example of a multi-producer CSA. They provide technical assistance to farmers from other areas who want to set up similar programs.

In order for low-income families and shelters to participate in the Magic Beanstalk CSA, PFI secured funds from local religious organizations and businesses to subsidize shares. The number of families supported ranged from 12-23 per year, depending on funding received. In addition, nearly 3,000 pounds of fresh produce from the CSA were distributed to local food pantries. The Healthy Food Voucher Program (HFVP), also started with CFP funds, distributed over \$6,000 in food vouchers redeemable for fresh produce from CSAs, farmers' markets, grocery stores, or for cooking classes.

Ted and Amy Chen participated in the Magic Beanstalk CSA last year through the HFVP, after being referred by a WIC dietitian. They came to Iowa two years ago from Taiwan and now have two babies. Every Sunday for four summer months they went to church to pick up their share of produce, meet the farmers and to learn about the different types of produce grown in Iowa. "It was the highlight of the week to find out what we would get and to go visit with the people there."

Hands-on nutrition education through cooking, gardening and eating

Low-resource families are also offered a series of classes in cooking, nutrition education and money management skills called Family Basics, which PFI initially co-sponsored but now is managed by Iowa State University (ISU) Extension. Over 60 people participated in 2000. In addition, CFP funds started a garden and nutrition program at the local Boys and Girls Club in Ames. Kids were provided with a 15 x 90 foot vegetable and flower garden, field trips to farms and nutrition classes. This project ended with the CFP grant in 2000, but may be revived by ISU's Agriculture and Education Department.



One of PFI's most exciting and successful projects is their "All Iowa Grown Meals". PFI acts as a broker for organic and locally grown foods served by conference centers, restaurants and caterers. They work with 46 producers from across the state that practice sustainable agriculture. In the year 2000, they served approximately 6,000 people and generated \$16,000 in revenue for the farmers. Each event features a special menu listing all producers and a few words about sustainable agriculture and buying local to support small family farming. To help sustain this program, PFI created a fee system and organized annual fundraising dinners.

The future

In the future, PFI plans to apply for another CFP grant that would expand the 1997-2000 projects by increasing their capacity for storage, transportation, distribution and light processing of farm products. They have in mind an apparently never ending supply of projects, which together will further build the web of connections between farmers and consumers in Iowa.

Contact information for PFI - Food Systems Program: (515) 232 – 5661 rick@isunet.net

What is the Community Food Security Coalition?

The Community Food Security Coalition is a North American organization dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. We seek to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, making available, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability. Coalition members include social and economic justice, environmental, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, community development, labor, anti-poverty, anti-hunger, and other groups.

The Coalition achieves its goals through a comprehensive blend of training, networking, and advocacy to further the efforts of grassroots groups to create effective solutions from the ground up. We operate a training and technical assistance program with numerous services targeted to Community Food Projects grantees and applicants; as well as programs to connect school and college food services with local farmers. Our networking and educational initiatives include an annual conference, listserv, and quarterly newsletter; and an emerging effort to develop regional organizing initiatives in collaboration with partner groups.

How to Apply for Community Food Projects Grants

Requests for Applications (RFAs) for the CFP program typically are available in January or February of each year. Please check the websites listed below or contact the CFP project administrator for updates.

For more information on the Community Food Projects Program

Contact: Liz Tuckermanty, Administrator

USDA/CSREES

202-205-0241

etuckermanty@csrees.usda.gov

<http://www.reeusda.gov/crgam/cfp/community.htm>

For Technical Assistance on applying to the Community Food Projects Program

Contact: Hugh Joseph

CFSC

hughjoseph@comcast.net

<http://www.foodsecurity.org/cfp-help.html>

For information about the Community Food Security Coalition

PO Box 209

Venice CA 90294

cfsc@foodsecurity.org

<http://www.foodsecurity.org>

