

Local Food Systems and Community Food Security in the Midwest

Final Report for ENC00-051

Project Type: Professional Development Program

Funds awarded in 2000: \$40,691.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2002

Matching Federal Funds: \$36,225.04

Matching Non-Federal Funds: \$4,465.96

Region: North Central

State: Missouri

Project Coordinator:

[Mary Hendrickson](#)

University of Missouri Columbia

Project Information

Abstract:

Three training workshops were conducted for agricultural professionals and community development specialists in Missouri, Ohio and Kansas. A total of 71 participants from Missouri, Kansas, Ohio, Colorado, Oklahoma, Illinois, Nebraska and Texas went through an intensive 1.5 day training that increased their knowledge of the concept, project design and implementation of community food security and community food systems in their own work. A training curriculum and resource manual were developed for each individual workshop. A web-based table of contents for the resource manual is now available at www.foodcircles.missouri.edu. Significant impacts of the training include: an increased awareness among resource providers and community members of community food systems and community food security; at least one significant grant (USDA Community Food Projects) awarded in Ohio based on skills developed in the workshop; new collaborations fostered between universities, farm and community groups, incorporation of workshop modules into state training for extension professionals; and excellent resource manuals available in three different states.

Project Objectives:

To increase the knowledge of the concept, project design and implementation of community food security and community food systems among Extension educators, NRCS officials, other locally-based USDA staff, school-based agriculture educators and growers in the Midwest.

To increase the understanding of above mentioned participants of funding, program and policy opportunities, as well as barriers for implementing food security/food systems projects in their service areas.

To develop a state-specific curriculum on community based food systems and

community food security for target audiences.

To compile and distribute to workshop participants a community food security/local food systems manual borrowing from existing Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), SARE, USDA and academic materials. This manual will include a special resource section with contact information for key CFS organizations in each workshop state.

Expected Outcomes:

Increase of knowledge of community food security and community food systems among key educators within Extension and USDA.

Incorporation and implementation of these concepts in sustainable agriculture education programming.

Development of local food systems and community food security as alternatives to on-going crisis situation in NCR SARE region agriculture.

Introduction:

In the past few years, farmers across the Midwest have been suffering from continued low prices for traditional commodities such as wheat, corn, soybeans and hogs. Economic and social damages extend to rural communities as farmers either leave agriculture, depleting the business base, or reduce their expenditures with other community businesses. This changing structure of the food system has also impacted consumers in urban and rural areas. New alternatives for food and agriculture are beginning to emerge in the Midwest, including local food systems that employ the concept of community food security. The workshops and training carried out through this grant helped extension educators, state agency staff, community-based non-profits and farmers develop a new vision of a food system that would enhance the wellbeing of farmers and their communities.

Education & Outreach Initiatives

Objective:

Description:

Methods

An intensive 1.5 day workshop training using interactive adult education techniques was developed by the project team. The training workshops developed both theory and practice components, and included tours of projects employing community food systems and community food security concepts (See Appendix 1 for Training Agendas). A core resource manual was developed that was divided into five component parts: Local Food Systems, Visions of a Different Food System; Community Food Systems, Tools for Making the Vision Reality; Community Food Systems, Real World Examples; State and Federal Resources for Building Community Food Systems; and Food System Data. An annotated table of contents for the Resource Manual has now been placed on the web at www.foodcircles.missouri.edu.

Outreach and Publications

Training Workshops in Missouri, Ohio and Kansas

Resource Manual: Community Food Systems in Missouri

Resource Manual: Local Food Systems Training: Ohio

Resource Manual: Using Food to Build Healthy Local Communities: The Community Food Systems Model (Kansas)

A Guide to Discovering Community Food Systems, posted online at <http://www.foodcircles.missouri.edu/altern.htm>.

Community Food Systems: Visions of a Different Food System, posted on line at <http://www.foodcircles.missouri.edu/altern.htm>

Outcomes and impacts:

A total of 71 participants were trained through three successful 1.5 day training workshops. The following is a breakdown of participants in each of the meetings.

Missouri:

Number of Participants 17

Extension Educators and University Participants 5

State & Federal Agency Participants 2

Community-Based Organizations 9

Ohio:

Number of Participants 20

Extension Educators and University Participants 5

State & Federal Agency Participants 5

Community-Based Organizations 10

Kansas:

Number of Participants 34

Extension Educators and University Participants 3

State & Federal Agency Participants 2

Community-Based Organizations 29

Missouri, October 2001, Learning Outcomes

- By the end of the workshop, you will be able to describe three characteristics of a Community Food System
- By the end of the workshop you will be able to identify and access three CFS-related resources in your state.
- By the end of the workshop, you will be able to articulate three key steps in asset mapping and will be able to list X coalition partners.
- By the end of the workshop, you will be to describe at least one way that you can apply information or experiences from this workshop to your work.

Ohio, March 2003, Learning Outcomes of Workshop:

- To provide participants an opportunity for networking and learning from each other
- To help participants increase understanding of what a local food system is and how to build one: * By the end of the workshop, you will be able to describe three characteristics of a Local Food System; briefly illustrate three examples of local food system projects, and describe at least one way that you can apply information or experiences from this workshop to your work.
- To provide participants specific tools they can use to build local food systems: *

By the end of the workshop you will be able to identify and access three local food system-related resources in your state; to articulate three key steps in community food assessments; to name two new groups or individuals in your region you can contact to build local food systems.

- To assist participants in communicating between different interests in the food system.

Kansas, March 2005, Learning Outcomes

- Learn the innovative ways farmers and consumers are producing and distributing food today.
- See how your local food programs can assist farmers, local businesses, and consumers in revitalizing rural communities.
- Network and learn from each other.
- See how your help can create new coalitions to support creative farmer-consumer connections that build strong, healthy local economies and encourage healthy environments.

Additionally, resource manuals were developed that were state-specific and distributed to all workshop participants. In addition, 15 extra manuals were distributed in Kansas to interested professionals who could not attend the training, and an extra six were distributed in Missouri.

Impact of Training

Missouri:

Participants learned about a variety of aspects of community food systems they had no previous exposure to, such as community gardens and Chefs Collaborative.

*Short Answer Questions

Participants especially enjoyed networking with others involved in community food projects. When asked how the experiences of this training would influence their work, participants responded in short answer questions that it would: help them find new partners and new funding opportunities; help them focus on working with local food systems; prove useful in providing resources; and increase their confidence in doing this work.

Participants did not feel the nutrition aspects of the training were well-integrated, and would have preferred to have more follow-up steps to implementation. An additional benefit of the workshop was an appreciation of the interactive training techniques that were used.

Rating Scale 1 (not effective) to 5 (very effective) from finished participation: Mean Scores

Getting to Know Your Fellow Participants - 4

ABCs of Community Food Systems - 3.5

Case Study: Community Gardening (Gateway Greening) Tour - 4.5

Case Study: Chefs Collaborative Dinner - 4.6

Case Study: Clayton Farmers' Market - 3.8

Case Study: Patchwork Family Farms - 3.9

Community and Financial Resources - 4.0

Applying the Tools: Asset Mapping - 3.0

Applying the Tools: Coalition Building - 3.4

Applying the Tools: Community Economic Development - 3.4

Longer term outcomes include:

- * One state agency participant used the basic information gained through the workshop to refocus some of her efforts on community food systems and community gardens through her administration of the AgriMissouri program.
- * The reenergizing of Gateway Greening to focus on community food security, including the development of an effort to link community gardens, neighborhood food stores, and limited resource farmers in northeast Missouri.
- * Significant collaborations between MU Extension and St. Louis University's department of dietetics on community food systems issues in St. Louis.

Unanticipated outcomes of this workshop were:

- * The inclusion of a module on community food systems in MU Extension's Community Development Academy, Course #2 on local economic development. This module has been used in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 courses. The Community Development Academy is open to participants from across the country, but also includes a substantial number of MU Extension specialists in various disciplines.
- * The use of materials and information provided in this workshop to stimulate a local food systems project in Columbus, OH that was partially funded by the USDA's Community Food Projects program.
- * An invitation to provide a workshop on "Relationship Marketing and Management" to the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension northern region county program administrators, an audience that included 18 people. The examples used in this workshop were all community food based and opened up a wide range of possibilities for working on interdisciplinary approaches to community food systems.

Ohio:

The Ohio workshop was held in conjunction with the Innovative Farmers of Ohio. In Ohio, many of the folks were already working on some aspects of community food systems, but they were ready for more information.

* Short Answer Questions:

In general, participants ranked the networking and connections they made at the workshop as some of the most valuable parts of the workshop. In addition, learning examples of successful projects and stimulating ideas about the food system were also mentioned as very valuable.

Most participants believed the workshop would have an impact on their own work, including providing resources from which to build projects and educate others, gaining energy for work on food system issues, new ideas on strategies to employ in existing food system work, and the opportunity to use Community Food Assessments as a tool in their work.

Some participants enjoyed the interactive nature of the workshop, while others felt it detracted. Also, some folks felt that the more conceptual aspects of material presented was not as valuable as hands-on strategies, which may reflect the preponderance of community-based organizations attending. There seemed to be a very high appreciation of the materials that were used, and participants very much appreciated the setting (Stratford Ecological Center) and the use of locally produced foods throughout the workshop.

Evaluation Questions:

Rating Scale 1 (not effective) to 5 (very effective) from finished participation: Mean Scores

Getting to Know Your Fellow Participants - 4.18

ABCs of Community Food Systems - 4.17

Mapping the Elements of the Local Food System - 4.14

Case Study: NE Ohio Foodshed - 4.0
Case Study: Heritage Acres Pork - 4.14
Moving the Local Food System Ahead in Ohio - 4.31
Applying the Tools: Community Food Assessment - 4.64
Applying the Tools: Food Councils - 4.29
Applying the Tools: Communications - 4.46
Resources for Local Food Systems - 4.46

Kansas:

The Kansas workshop was attempted in Salina, KS in the fall of 2003. However, the workshop was cancelled because of lack of interest, mostly caused by scheduling conflicts with other conferences and workshops. The workshop was reattempted in 2005 and held successfully. This workshop followed a slightly different format because it included a number of different partners. The Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops, Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Farmers Union, the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the Ogallala Commons project were all substantially involved in putting together a 2-day workshop, in addition to our project team. Thus the first day of the workshop was focused on issues related to new marketing alternatives for farmers, including food cooperatives, as well as tours of alternative operations. The second day focused on the community food system development. About half the participants stayed for both days, but more extension and state agency personnel attended on the second day.

* Short Answer Questions:

The most valuable aspects of the workshop for participants were: networking and interaction with others, stimulation of new ideas; and useful information provided as the most valuable aspects of the workshop for them.

Participants also mentioned the motivation for working on local food systems, and better focus as useful aspects of the workshop.

Participants planned to include food system ideas in their work, and to disseminate the information to their communities, using the resources provided in the workshop. Additionally, one subset of participants planned to form a food cooperative in the Wichita area and welcomed the information.

Overall, the entire workshop was a very stimulating and exciting experience, and the project team felt a great deal of energy in the room for stimulating community food systems.

The facilities chosen for the workshop site were not as conducive for learning as was anticipated, since some participants had difficulties hearing presenters; needed fewer, less lengthy breaks; and felt the lack of handy restrooms. Some participants felt that more representation from the region, and across the food system, was needed. An additional difficulty was the hostility of one participant, a farmer required to attend by his landlord, toward alternative and sustainable agriculture.

* Evaluation Questions:

Rating Scale 1 (not effective) to 5 (very effective): Mean Scores

Projects for Sustaining Farms and Communities: Ogallala Commons - 4.47
Wholesome Food and Direct Relationships: OK Food Cooperative - 4.59
Benefits and Challenges of Direct Marketing: Kim Barker - 4.31
Come to the Country and See What We're Doing!: Agri-tourism - 4.23
Resource Panel on Technical Assistance - 4.10
Tours: Smoky Hill Bison Company - 4.8
Tours: Lindsborg Historical Tour - 4.83

Day 2: Community Food Systems

Interactive Introductions: - 4.21

Food System Mapping Exercise - 4.26

The ABCs of Community Food Systems: Visions - 4.20

Kansas Examples of Community Food Systems - 4.20

Tools for Community Food Systems - 4.25

Kansas Tools and Resources for Community Food Systems - 4.29

One unanticipated outcome of this workshop was the wide-ranging dissemination of ideas raised in the workshop through a number of different internet-based resources. Bob Waldrop, a presenter and participant in the whole 2-day workshop wrote a glowing, unsolicited, review of the workshop, (available at <http://www.oklahomafood.coop/bobsblog/?postid=37>) which has been posted on at least six different listservs concerned with faith, environment, food or farming.

Project Outcomes

Recommendations:

Future Recommendations

Over the course of this project, community food systems have significantly developed nationwide. While providing the very basic knowledge of community food systems for community resource providers, it may be that we now need to provide very practical hands-on learning tools and steps toward developing community-food systems.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



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