

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

SARE program for farmers market managers and local food producers

AT A GLANCE

SARE funded day-long workshop provides improved skills for farmers market managers and local food producers.

The Situation

The upper Clearwater River valley in north central Idaho is remote from centers of local vegetable production in the Lewis Clark Valley, the Palouse and eastern Washington. In addition, the topography of the area is not conducive to local food production due to short growing seasons on the ridges and limited space in the narrow, steep valley bottoms.

This situation means that choices among local residents for locally produced plant and animal products is limited. However, some landowners are looking to help alleviate this deficit while at the same time creating economic opportunities for their land by raising food crops for local consumption. In addition, several small, community-oriented farmers markets exist in the area, but they struggle with maintaining and growing their markets.

Our Response

In collaboration with Clearwater County Economic Development we applied for a SARE grant in 2017 for hosting a local food systems workshop in Orofino for farmers market managers and growers in the upper Clearwater valley area. The \$5,000 grant was awarded in 2018, and the day-long workshop was delivered in



Fresh vegetables for sale.

February of 2019. Half of the day was devoted to topics for local farmers market managers, and included presentations on essential strategies for a successful farmers market (Amanda Argona, Moscow Farmers Market), the role of a good farmers market manager (Amanda Argona) and working with farmers market boards and business outreach (Colette DePhelps, UI Extension). The other half-day included topics for beginning local food producers with presentations on marketing, branding and other promotion concerns (Marci Miller, Rural Roots), public health rules for food producers (Jacob Davis, Public Health), how to make a small-scale ag venture profitable (Kate Painter, UI Extension), principles of good customer service (Jennifer Jensen, UI Extension) and achieving greater

efficiencies and profits through integrated farming strategies (January Spencer, Thor's Forge Farms).

Program Outcomes

Twenty-one people attended the day-long program, representing local farmers market managers and local food producers. Attendees reported a 73 percent gain in knowledge in the farmers market managers portion of the workshop, with 100 percent stating that they would, or probably would, implement the knowledge gained. Ninety-four percent also stated that the workshop was a good way for them to learn the content.

Attendees reported a 50 percent gain in knowledge for the local food producer's portion of the workshop, with 86 percent stating that they would, or probably would, implement the knowledge gained. One hundred percent of attendees reported that the workshop was a good way for them to learn the content.

A telephone survey was conducted six months after the workshop to see how many attendees applied, or benefited from, the knowledge gained at the workshop during that season's production or farmers market. One hundred percent of the farmers market managers contacted stated that the knowledge gained at the workshop improved their farmers market that year, while 71 percent of local food producers stating that it improved their business.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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