

UMES Extension facilitates marketing opportunities for urban growers of ethnic vegetables



Farmers, primarily Bhutanese Americans living in Baltimore City and Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties, collaborated to sell their produce during the Towson Spring Festival in Towson last year as part of a UMES Extension project funded through a partnership grant from Northeast SARE.

Project Director Lila Karki, an assistant professor of agricultural economics and UMES Extension specialist, is working with the group of 22 urban gardeners under the grant "Increasing Efficiency and Decision-Making Capability of Small, Socially Disadvantaged and Minority Farmers." The aim is to connect the growers of ethnic vegetables to possible market opportunities to enable them to sustain their urban gardening efforts. According to Karki, the small farmers were able to connect with niche markets, retail stores, farmers markets and community events to sell their products, along with setting up roadside stands and U-Picks at their farms. Grant-funded activities also included assistance with product labeling and help with disseminating product information.

The major vegetables grown and marketed were mustard greens, tomatoes, okra, eggplant, colocasia, chayote, amaranth, green beans, cucumber, pumpkin, pumpkin tendrils, bitter melon, squash, red hot chili peppers and long chili.