

**Evaluation Report and Summary for Replication**  
**Seminar on Local Food as an Economic Development Driver**  
**Held on April 27, 2016 in Elgin, Texas**  
**by Sue Beckwith, August 5, 2016**

Number of Participants: 32  
Number of Evaluations: 29

This document is intended as a summary of the outcomes from the seminar entitled “Local Food as an Economic Development Driver”, held in Elgin, Texas on April 27, 2016 and also as a guide for other communities seeking to educate civic and business leaders about the benefits of thinking about local food and agricultural enterprise as components of their economic development strategy. The presentations from this seminar are posted on the [Texas Center for Local Food website, under “Texas Resources”](#). For additional information, please contact Sue Beckwith at [SueB@TexasLocalFood.org](mailto:SueB@TexasLocalFood.org) or any of the presenters.

This seminar was funded by Southern SARE through the ‘Beyond Fresh’ project directed by the Texas office of the National Center for Appropriate Technology, the USDA Local Food Promotion Program project ‘Elgin Local Food Business Center Pilot’ directed by the City of Elgin Texas, and the Elgin Economic Development Corporation.

By all accounts this first central Texas regional seminar on local food as economic development was a huge success. We achieved our goals to: (i) raise awareness of the potential for local agriculture/food local food enterprise to positively impact our region’s economy, (ii) gauge interest in developing a regional approach to local food economic development, (iii) develop relationships among regional leaders, and (iv) identify the specific people and communities most interested in collaborating regionally.

The presentations were targeted to an audience of local civic leaders with interest and experience, but not necessarily a deep academic knowledge of economic development. The focus was on the economic impacts in terms of jobs and dollars of local food and agricultural enterprise.

The fast paced agenda included the following topics and speakers:

- Welcome and Introductions
  - Mayor of Elgin, Marc Holm
  - Elgin Economic Development Director, [Owen Rock](#)
  - National Center for Appropriate Technology, [Robert Maggiani](#)
  - Project Coordinator and Local Food Project Manager, [Sue Beckwith](#)
- What is a Sustainable Local Food System? - [Edwin Marty](#), Food Policy Manager, City of Austin
- Employment and Identity - [Chris Schrek](#), Economic Development Director, Capitol Area Council of Governments
- Family Farms Are Small Businesses - [Cameron Molberg](#), CEO and General Manager, Coyote Creek Organic Feed Mill
- Farm to School - [Michelle Esper-Martin](#), Texas Department of Agriculture
- Investment Opportunities - [Jarred Maxwell](#), Principal, Austin Foodshed Investors
- Community Economic Impact - [Dr. Rebekka Dudensing](#), Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension
- Closing discussion, Chris Schrek and Sue Beckwith

## Participant Response

What did participants learn and what did they find most informative? Participants really heard the message of economic opportunity from local food and agricultural enterprise. When asked “What was the most interesting thing you learned today?” responses included: “how powerful an impact creating food processors in our communities would have”, “the size of the opportunity and impact scale exponentially with each piece”, “the extent of economic impact on a small city and rural area”, and “huge economic impact of processing locally grown”. The level of data presented was perfectly aligned with the readiness of participants to receive the information. Since the planning team wasn’t certain who would attend, this positive outcome is a result of solid preparation with a little bit of luck.

Participants overall found all presentations useful and interesting. No single presentation really stands out as more useful than the others. Planners weren’t sure the participants would see how the farm-to-school presentation links to economic development, but indeed the farm-to-school was cited more than expected as most interesting.

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that they would (i) support a regional food study, (ii) participate in interviews as part of that study, and (iii) attend another seminar on local food in the fall of 2016. What is perhaps most important for the long-term is that 100% of participants felt their time was well spent, which is remarkable considering this was a 4-hour seminar mostly of lectures with little interactivity. Every presenter did a terrific job; the presentations were clear, engaging and brief keeping the pace quick and lively.

What should a fall 2016 seminar include? The responses to this question are quite broad ranging from how to start community gardens to examining distribution systems for local food. The responses are shown below and if there is a theme, it is that the next seminar should focus on the pragmatic, actionable aspects of local food economies. It seems participants are saying, “ok, we’re sold, let’s get started”.

## Next Steps

1. Organize another seminar for fall 2016. Invite same group who participated in the April 2016 and ask them to bring one other person. (Build on existing group for continuity.)
2. This seminar mentioned the new [USDA toolkit for local food economic development \(link to PDF\)](#). Ask the presenters to review the toolkit and recommend how best to apply it to our work in central Texas.
3. For next seminar or event, include practical applications and cite examples of other communities who have included local food in their economic development plans. Highlight local success stories and have those folks present. Consider: panel discussion or presentations from farmers and local food businesses, remote presentation via Skype from a successful local food processing venture in another state ([Lake County EDC in Montana?](#)), and a presentation showing examples of other communities employing local food and agriculture as part of their economic development strategy.
4. In planning the next seminar, farm-to-school should be included with specific data on planning and implementation, perhaps with a Skype discussion with a school district or a representative from Austin school district. Consider a presentation on Farm-to-School in Texas perhaps with a Skype discussion with a school district or a representative from Austin school district.

## **If you do this in your community (or when we do this again)**

We started planning this seminar starting by developing the idea six (6) months before the event. The core planning team was Edwin Marty (Local Food Policy Manager, City of Austin), Chris Schrek (Economic Development Director, Capitol Area Council of Governments), and Sue Beckwith (Local Food Project Manager, City of Elgin and consulting project coordinator for NCAT Texas). This group met four times and communicated by email in spurts of a couple of times a month to every week as the date drew closer. We used a planning document to keep us all on the same page and about eight (8) weeks out, we shared the planning doc with all presenters to get feedback, check flow, and identify gaps.

Setting the Scene: This event was akin to our coming out party for local food as economic development and so it was critical that the first impression be positive, smart and relevant. Participants might feel uncomfortable in their lack of knowledge and made it clear that this is new thinking and all questions were welcome. Each of the presenters works with the public in their jobs and none were pure academic researchers, which contributed positively to the relevance of the presentations and set a tone of approachability and ease; each presenter has strong people skills. The seating was set up with groups of 5-6 at rectangular tables to make it easy to both see the presentations and face others at their table. Speakers were seated one at each table so they could mix and mingle with participants. Opening remarks stressed the desire that this event is a relaxed 4 hours and that each person should get up, wander, and generally make themselves comfortable.

A note about lecture versus interactive formats: Interactive formats can create bonds between people and they can also elevate stress when the topic is brand new (no one wants to feel ignorant) or the people in the room have existing relationships that are contentious. Seminar planners opted for a lecture format with short 15-20 minute presentations followed by Q&A. The topic of local food as economic development was new to most participants and the planners weren't sure about the nature of existing relationships between participants (did they know each other? Did they work together? Did they compete with each other? Were their relationships positive, negative, neutral?) To increase our chances of success, the less risky but possibly boring lecture format was chosen. It worked beautifully.

Food: After lunch no one dozed off. Lunch was free of gluten, corn and soy and only the tea and dessert contained sugar. All food was locally sourced and prepared just a mile from the event location. The meal was basic hearty food: meatloaf with a tomato sauce and greens, and a mouth watering flourless chocolate cake for dessert. The cost \$25/participant was perhaps high by conventional meeting standards, but considering that after lunch, participants had more energy for engagement, the price seems well worth the investment.

## APPENDIX A – Participant Evaluation Detailed Responses

**Q1 Would you write a letter of support for a grant application to fund the regional food study?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	26
No	0.0%	0

**Q2 Are you interested in participating in interviews for the regional food study?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	95.8%	23
No	4.2%	1

**Q3 Would you like to attend another seminar or workshop in the fall of 2016?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	96.3%	26
No	3.7%	1

Comments:

n (yes - only if additional info of actionable plan)

If so, what would you like that seminar/workshop to include:

- great presentations today - love the local grower presentations
- resource center referral status results of survey of ag assets and processing/distribution/marketing opportunities - how to move from here to sustainability!
- how to overcome some of the challenges that face local food production
- I am eager to learn everything.
- share their story of how farming works? maybe invite local farmers to share experience; VISTAS more about and food corps; maybe some future investors that are interested in helping locals to encourage them to invest once they see what impact they can have.
- 1-big ag vs. small farmers 2-connection to food and health/healthcare 3-education and training of young farmers
- It would be interesting to hear the experience of local food businesses in accessing funds/working through the process. What are the successes/failures pros and cons of the process.
- Workshops for farmers to collaborate and form cooperatives sound like a need within this group
- Farmers' markets
- Farmland preservation / farm starter
- More on to start up gardens for growing your own foods for farmers' market
- how Food Banks can benefit (I was on Hays Food Bank board 8 yrs)
- Accurate data on this topic is hard to get so more in depth data or study

- Community gardens for rural towns to help promote farming in small properties.
- implementation - how to get started
- co-ops and/or aggregation
- Co-op modeling formation
- Production and demand quantification. Opportunities/examples from outside our region.
- any
- Producer networking (how to); More introductions and how-tos: how to start school food program, how to get funding for projects, more.....

**Q4 Did you feel your time was well spent?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	96.4%	27
Yes, mostly	3.6%	1
Not so much	0.0%	0
Not at all	0.0%	0

**Q5 What was the most interesting thing you learned today?**

potential for increased eco dev  
 learned from each topic  
 How much potential exists to leverage our local ag resources for regional economic advantage.  
 stats  
 all the economic data  
 how powerful an impact creating food processors in our communities would have  
 there are several schools partnering with farmers. Very exciting/interesting  
 about current efforts in local foods in this region  
 use history and tradition of ag to seek future path  
 Every topic was of interest, however the Austin Foodshed Investor presentation gives the best information for small business funding for the industry.  
 The different markets already available. Networking with others.  
 Information on Austin Foodshed  
 Current happenings within the industry"  
 farm to school  
 I'm not an ag economist :)  
 There is a lot of unutilized farm land that is in great need of developing  
 multipliers - wide impact of agriculture

the size of the opportunity and impact scales exponentially with each piece  
The amount of money that is spent outside the state.  
loved all the stats!  
huge economic impact of local processing of locally grown  
The plan for developing the regional food study and the impact it has.  
I really appreciated all of the hard demographic info/industry info.  
The extent of economic impact on a small city and rural area.  
The regional interest from such a dynamic group of people.  
More about the aggregation-processing-distribution phases. The farm-to-School program. The prospective regional food study!  
farm to school details and Cameron's and Shrek's - CAPCOG

**Q6 Which presentation did you find the most informative and why?**

not a fair question - all seemed interested in sharing  
all were informative  
Edwin - great overview Michelle - Farm to School, and Jarred - capitalization opportunities  
stats "Local Food as Economic Development" = Chris  
I enjoyed all the presentations  
farm to school because it seems that is something we can tap into easily  
Each presentation offered so much information. They each were informative and blended well.  
they were all exceptional - good job!  
All presentations were informative. Because funding is very relevant to our office, the Austin Foodshed Investors was most informative to me.  
Community Economic Impact. and Employment and Identity(??) were both very informative.  
especially liked the drill down to local information and the detailed economic impact.  
They were all equally really good.  
City of Austin approach in local sustainable food  
Investor, Economics  
All were excellent - thanks!  
Rebekka!  
Edwin Marty and Jarred Maxwell  
all - Edwin Marty had more info I didn't already know  
Edwin's presentation identified the opportunity very well and Cameron illustrated the exponential impact of one piece of the opportunity.  
All of it.  
Dr. Dudensing - because of the numbers - the impact. Hit home.

Chris Shrek - thinking out the broad economic system pieces

I found the farm to school presentation very informative and find value in the (did not finish sentence)

TDA Farm to School and CAPCOG

Investment opportunities by Jarred Maxwell

Liked them all.

CAPCOG

**Q7 Which presentation did you find the least informative and why?**

none

NCAT - farthest removed from my interests.

Coyote Creek - same info/more about specific business. Less relevant to me

none

nothing - everything was fascinating

nothing was least everyone was informative!

all were fantastic

All were informative. I don't have one that is least informative.

They were all informative.

n/a

n/a

They were all good and very informative.

all was good

None - since this was first seminar all were informative.

n/a

They were all relevant to the conversation.

They were all great.

The value-add community econ impact

Demand and regional food study by Sue (only because I knew most of the info)

Nothing springs o mind. Well selected, overall.

**Q8 Please share any other comments or observations.**

all A+

very good program

Excellent mix of speakers!

Nice job!

excellent presentations; delicious lunch

next meeting, I will invite others from Taylor and Williamson County to attend

I really enjoyed this seminar!!! Each presentation offered great information. The food was excellent! Thank you Sue!

perhaps have some time for networking between participants

Very good, Thanks for invitation.

All very good. Hope I can help.

Would it be helpful to post a list of Bastrop County farms on our tourism website? (explore bastrop county.com) Could include links to their website or facebook page.  
Great seminar - very enjoyable, thanks for inviting me.

all good - getting the USB with presentations is great. The lunch was good also

great lunch!!! Also the open format to ask questions and discuss was good.

Very interested in incubators that are easy to create in small towns.

People were/are engaged. There is an interest! :)

this was great

I would like to know more about how we reach all the farms that would be more than willing to participate but are unaware of these events.

Very good group of interests in the region.

Great group (this is important for future growth and development)

I'd love to talk to you more about my potentially-unique circumstances and needs.

Great program

**APPENDIX B – Sharing Our Messy and Useful Planning document: the working document we used to plan the seminar.**

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**Central Texas Local Food Economic Development Seminar – PLANNING DOCUMENT**

*Your thoughts welcome! Send to Sue Beckwith [sbeckwith@ci.elgin.tx.us](mailto:sbeckwith@ci.elgin.tx.us)*

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- Purpose:** Business and community leaders in select Central Texas counties will gain resources to explore local food and agriculture as components of our regional economic development strategy.
- When:** April 27, 2016, 10am-2pm
- Where:** Elgin, Texas, Fleming Community Center, 802 Avenue C, 78621
- Sponsors:** City of Elgin Economic Development Corporation, National Center for Appropriate Technology, City of Austin Office of Sustainability and the Capital Area Council of Governments.
- Audience:** Economic development and community leaders from the following counties: Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Lee and Travis, Williamson; Estimate 50 attendees.
- Outcomes:** Economic development directors and their cohort will learn:
- (i) What a sustainable local food system is (awareness),
  - (ii) What is happening now in our Central Texas food system, and
  - (iii) Why local food is a worthwhile component of economic development strategy
  - (iv) Gauge interest in regional food study
  - (v) Will leave with resources and contacts for collaboration and further development of the local food/ag sector.
- Format:** Fast paced and engaging with presentations by subject matter experts with opportunity for small group discussion. Exactly what the small groups will discuss needs to be worked out, but the point is to encourage collaboration. Attendees are familiar with agriculture as an industry mostly in the context of commodities and cattle, but are not likely to have thought about “local food” as an industry so will be important to create a setting where no one feels ignorant and all can learn.
- Focus:** Our focus is Texas sustainable agriculture: on sustainable/organic food that is Texas grown and Texas made and Texas owned. We will discuss economic benefits of food that does not use Texas grown or sustainable ingredients (but is Texas made and Texas owned) because these companies are viable parts of the economic picture. Our focus is to help the audience understand these differences and the value of Texas sustainable agriculture to their economic development.

## Agenda

10:00-10:15	Welcome	Elgin Mayor Marc Holm Elgin Economic Development Corp Director, Owen Rock
10:15-10:20	National Center for Appropriate Technology	Mike Morris, Project Director, NCAT
10:20-10:30	Audience Introductions [housekeeping, overview of schedule, evaluation, introductions]	Sue Beckwith, City of Elgin and NCAT
10:30-10:45	Demand, regional food study	Sue Beckwith, City of Elgin, NCAT
10:45-11:00	What is a local sustainable food system? [Food systems 101, Locally grown, made, owned; provide hand out graphic of food system]	Edwin Marty, City of Austin
11:00-11:20	Employment and identity [Demographic shifts, place-making, employment and revenue opportunities]	Chris Schreck, CAPCOG
11:20-11:45	Family Farms are Small Businesses	Video – Sue Beckwith Cameron Molberg, Coyote Creek Farm
11:45-12:30	LUNCH – Farm-to-School	Michelle Esper-Martin, TDA; video <a href="https://youtu.be/KzaCSN1cD3c">https://youtu.be/KzaCSN1cD3c</a>
12:30-12:45	Investment Opportunities	Jarred Maxwell, Austin Foodshed Investors
12:45-1:15	Community Economic Impact	Dr. Rebekka Dudensing, Texas A&M AgriLife
1:15-1:45	<a href="#">Regional Food Study Resources and Tools for Collaboration</a>	<a href="#">Sue Beckwith</a> , Chris Schrek
1:45-2:00	Evaluations and Adjourn	Sue Beckwith

### Thoughts on Approach:

- (i) What a food system is: Use the visual model included at the end of this document "Food System Elements" with examples from CenTex and other places.
- (ii) What is happening now in our Central Texas food system: short videos of farmers and ranchers sharing their economic impact on Central Texas; short videos of others working in food system such as farm-to-school, food access (SFC), compost, policy makers, advocates, investors, educators, etc.
- (iii) Why local food is a worthwhile component of economic development strategy: (not necessarily in this order; subject matter experts for each and data where we have it.)
  - Local revenue - As with any industry, food production can employ people, create earnings for workers and tax revenues for communities. (?Jan Tusek?)
  - Food security - In addition to economic benefits, developing the local food system helps to build disaster resiliency in a community. (DoD?)
  - Equity - Food produced locally expands access to healthy foods throughout the community, a particularly important point for a community's vulnerable populations. (Ronda?)
  - Career opportunities - Food production is an important generator of middle-skill and middle-wage jobs. Moreover, there are typically clear occupational pathways in the food production industry, giving low-skill workers the opportunity for advancement.
  - Positive community health benefits.
  - Place-making - Food is a powerful mechanism for creating attachment to place. Supporting the development of the local food system helps craft the identity and sense of place that economic developers can market to businesses they want to recruit.
- (iv) Resources and contacts for collaboration and further development of the local food/ag sector.

**Budget:** \$2,000 from Elgin Economic Development Corporation; requires the summit be held in Elgin. Staff time funded by S-SARE Beyond Fresh NCAT, and USDA LFPP City of Elgin.

### Open questions:

- ~~1. Are we focused on sustainable and organic (our funder is so might be required)~~
- ~~2. Important to keep geographic scope narrow for this first summit.~~
- ~~3. Keep # attendees to 50 or fewer without anyone feeling excluded. Include people who can affect change.~~
- ~~4. Is this about local food or local agriculture or both? Define scope.~~
- ~~5. How can this summit lead to a regional initiative to conduct a food study to collect useful data?~~
6. Do we expect or desire any particular follow up? NO
- ~~7. Duration TBD once we know more about how we'll get to our desired outcomes.~~
8. Need ideas for making this event culturally diverse. Who are the attendees?

**Potential people and/or groups to be involved as attendee, presenters or in videos:**

[NOTE: This is an excerpt from our working list of those to be invited. The bulk of the list has been deleted from this example. Note that we specifically did not invite farmers or food advocates. We wanted the community leaders to feel they were in a group of their peers from other parts of our region. There was concern that if farmers and food policy advocates were in the room, that they would be perceived as knowing more about local food thereby inadvertently deterring others from asking questions.]

Potential participant	Contact, notes	Invited attendee	Presenter	Possible in short video
<b>NCAT</b>	<b>Mike Morris</b>	x	x	
<b>City of Austin Office of Sustainability</b>	<b>Edwin Marty</b>	x	x	
<b>City of Elgin Econ Dev</b>	<b>Owen Rock</b>	x	x	
<b>City of Elgin - Mayor</b>	<b>Marc Holm</b>	x	x	
<b>Slow money</b>	<b>Jared Maxwell</b>	x	x	
<b>Coyote Creek</b>	<b>Cameron Molberg</b>	x	x	x
<b>Texas A&amp;M</b>	<b>Dr. Rebekka Dudensing</b>	x	x	
<b>CAPCOG</b>	<b>Chris Schrek</b>	X	X	
<b>TX Dept of Ag</b>	<b>F2S</b>	x	x	
Sustainable Food Center	Ronda Rutledge	x		
City of Austin Econ Dev	Margaret Shaw	x		
<b>Bastrop County Economic Dev</b>	<b>Adena Lewis</b> <a href="mailto:Adena.lewis@co.bastrop.tx.us">Adena.lewis@co.bastrop.tx.us</a>	X		
<u>Lockhart EDC</u>	Sandra Mauldin <a href="mailto:smauldin@lockhart-tx.org">smauldin@lockhart-tx.org</a>	x		x
<b>Giddings EDC</b>	<b>Tonya Britton</b> <a href="mailto:tbritton@giddings.net">tbritton@giddings.net</a>	X		
<u>Luling EDC</u>	Trey Bailey <a href="mailto:ledc@austin.rr.com">ledc@austin.rr.com</a>	x		
<b>Hutto EDC</b>	<b>Tim Chase</b>	x		
<b>Smithville Chamber</b>	<b>April Daniels</b> <a href="mailto:chamber@smithvilletx.org">chamber@smithvilletx.org</a>	x		
<b>Taylor Chamber</b>	<b>Tia Stone</b> <a href="mailto:tstone@taylorchamber.org">tstone@taylorchamber.org</a>	x		
<b>Elgin Chamber</b>	<b>Gina Carter</b>	x		
<u>Taylor EDC</u>	Mark Thomas <a href="mailto:mark.thomas@tayloredc.com">mark.thomas@tayloredc.com</a>	X		
<u>Lee County Commissioner</u>	Maurice Pitts <a href="mailto:mpitts@gkg.net">mpitts@gkg.net</a>	X		
<u>Bastrop County Judge</u>	Paul Pape <a href="mailto:ppape@austin.rr.com">ppape@austin.rr.com</a>	X		
<u>Caldwell County Judge</u>	Ken Schawe <a href="mailto:k.schawe@co.caldwell.tx.us">k.schawe@co.caldwell.tx.us</a>	x		
<u>Hays County Judge</u>	Bert Cobb, M.D.; Lon Shell, Chief of Staff <a href="mailto:lon.shell@co.hays.tx.us">lon.shell@co.hays.tx.us</a>	x		

## List of Handouts

- Glossary of local food terms
- Local Food System diagram (color)
- NCAT/ATTRA info sheet
- Screen is too small so (dang) we'll need printouts from presenter if small font used

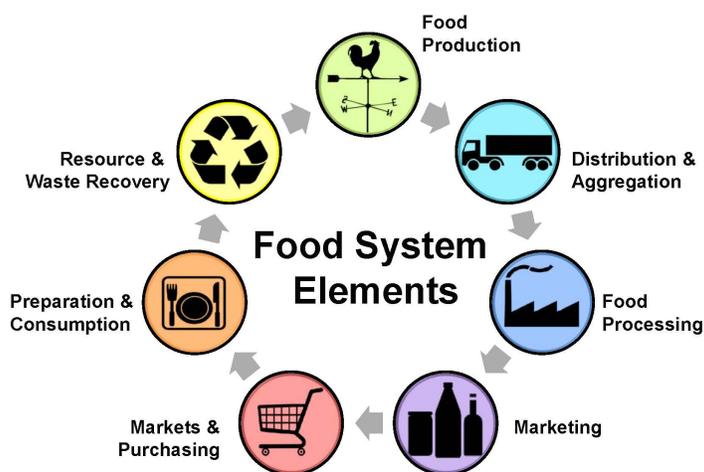
## Evaluation:

- Are you interested in participating in the regional food study?
- Was this seminar worth your time?
- Would you like to convene again in Fall 2016?
- What topics would you like to learn more about?

## Tasks To Do:

**All speakers – please send your handouts & Sue a bio (100 words) by April 15, 2016.**

What is local food? System diagram	Edwin
Demographic data	Chris
Econ Impact	Rebekka
Demand (18M people within 200 miles)	Sue, Cameron
Resources, contacts	Chris, Sue, Edwin
Farm-to-School	TDA
Bios of speakers – collect and print	Sue
Agenda and packet of handouts	Sue, Ava
Food	Sue, Ava, Grace
Name tags and sign in	Ava



*Adapted by Christy Shi, Center for Environmental Farming Systems.*

*From: Wilkins, J. and Eames-Sheavly, M. Discovering the Food System: An experiential learning program for young and inquiring minds. Cornell University, Departments of Nutritional Science and Horticulture. <http://www.discoverfoodsys.cornell.edu>*