

# **Building Community-Based Food Systems to Enhance Food Security in Missouri**

***A Joint Project of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center and the University of Missouri***

## **Progress toward Goals:**

1. *What are the increases in the number of farmers, processors, and distributors serving farmers' markets, restaurants, schools, and groceries either individually or through cooperatives?*

We have established two new farmers' markets this year, one of which is already very successful, attracting 18 vendors. One long-established farmers' market doubled the number of vendors supplying it. We tripled the number of CSAs serving mid-Missouri from last year. We have also seen big increases in the number of producers, grocers, farmers' markets and processors listed in our guides in each regional area (e.g. 68 percent increase in restaurants and bakeries serving mid-Missouri since fall 2004). We have two broad line distributors who have started sourcing locally produced foods since our project started. One major natural foods retailer in St. Louis is sourcing product from eight local farmers.

2. *What is the increased income per farm for those farmers serving these food systems?*

We continue to struggle with documenting the increased incomes for farmers who are participating in community food systems. We do know that more and more farmers are expressing interest in these alternatives based on the requests for information that we get, and the attendance of farmers at conferences dealing with community food systems. We will continue to work with our evaluation team to figure out the best way to document this issue.

3. *What is the level of knowledge and skills on the part of farmers, processors, distributors, and retailers in producing, processing, and distributing locally-grown food products with consistent quality and quantity?*

In this past year, four farmers have diversified their operations into producing for community food systems. We have provided information to over 1,200 farmers seeking ideas on alternative production and marketing practices. We have had an increased number of requests for assistance with business planning and development from farmers and chefs interested in producing or featuring locally

produced foods. Four farmers' markets in the western part of the state have requested assistance with merchandizing their products and beefing up their marketing and outreach.

4. *What is the evidence of increased awareness from urban populations about food production?*

Our local foods events attract a greater number of people. This year 600 people stopped to sample local foods at the Columbia Twilight festival; 1,000 people dined on local foods at five events in St. Louis, Columbia and Kansas City; 1,000 Kansas City metro consumers sought out local foods at spring farmers' expos; 3,500 University of Missouri students ate Missouri produced foods during a special meal; and University of Missouri students consumed 1,800 locally produced, in-season applies per week for 2 months. University of Missouri students in hotel and restaurant management sought us out to source locally produced foods for a student-run dining series, and two non-profit groups and two churches used locally produced foods for major annual events because of our assistance. In addition, we discussed local foods with 75 dietetic students and registered dieticians who are now using that information in their further studies and training.

5. *Is there an increased consumption of locally grown food products within the community, region, and state?*

Clearly, organizations are seeking us out to source locally grown foods for special events. However, another indicator of the increased consumption (demand) for local food products is the lack of supply of locally grown food for the number of distributors, processors and restaurants who would like to use it. For instance, we were unable to fill the University of Missouri Dining Services' requests for cage-free eggs, and are having a difficult time getting enough wholesale vegetables and fruits for distributors and retailers. Moreover, sales of locally grown product at one Kansas City retailer (10 stores) have increased 35 percent in each of the last two years. Nearly 3,000 pounds of locally produced foods was prepared by chefs and caterers for local food events in St. Louis and mid-Missouri.

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