

**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?*

One new cooperative, year-round CSA was established in the Kansas City area. We increased the number of Mid-Missouri farmers producing for coops to 23, and brought 12 new farmers into producing food for the City Seeds project. Almost 200 farmers were contacted about producing vegetables for the St. Louis and mid-Missouri markets based on the completion of our Fresh Harvest feasibility study, with 20 showing some interest, and four committing to serve on a steering committee. Nine new farmers listed in the *To Market, To Market* guide (an 18% increase). One new all local grocery opened in St. Louis, and three small groceries/gourmet food stores started to feature locally produced food in Kansas City. Five caterers in Mid-Missouri started using locally produced food. Two farmers' markets in the West Central region (area around Kansas City) are actively seeking more farmer vendors, a common problem that indicates a need for more farmer vendors to meet growing demand.

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?*

Project staff assisted two farmers with business plans and provided one-on-one information to 22 farmers while 199 farmers attended workshops and field days and additional 35 farmers requested information on farm diversification. The Feeding Kansas City conference attracted 263 farmers, grocers, chefs and other advocates who learned about marketing techniques and built connections to move locally produced food in the Kansas City area. Upon completion of our feasibility study, we know that 21 supermarkets (representing 156 individual grocery stores), 12 large St. Louis based

wholesales/brokers, 35 chefs (representing 50% of the fine-dining restaurants located in St. Louis and mid-Missouri) and 10 foodservice distributors (representing 69% of all foodservice distributors located in St. Louis and mid-Missouri) expressed significant interest in purchasing local produce.

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

Two policy forums were held in Kansas City that attracted 217 participants from healthcare, schools, sustainable agriculture organizations, farms and the faith community and linked agriculture, food and nutrition issues, particularly as they relate to farm policy. In Kansas City 2,000 metro area consumers sought out local foods at the spring farmers' expo. Project staff mailed 6,000 citizens and emailed 3,000 about important potential policy changes in food production methods and 780 people attended food policy events at the State Capitol. We discussed local foods with 18 graduate students in the St. Louis University dietetics program. One private day school in Kansas City is starting a farm-to-school program.

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

Five new farmers' markets have opened in the Kansas City and St. Louis metro areas. This year, 883 people ate local foods at seven different workshops or community events. University of Missouri students consumed 3,200 locally produced, in-season apples a week. Project staff worked with allies to incorporate local food into 10 annual events in Columbia and Jefferson City, an increase of 6 from last year. The Culinary Arts program at Columbia's Rock Bridge high school used a number of local products (including Patchwork Foods) in their weekly lunches during the spring semester. The students also visited area farms. 38,121 pounds of local family-farm raised produce, meat and eggs was distributed to 900 low-income rural families through the food cooperatives. In the Kansas City area, demand continues to grow among retailers (e.g. Constantios and Hy-Vees) for locally grown food. We are now in a position where we have to ramp farmers up quickly to meet the supply, which can create its own set of challenges. Frankly, ramping up too quickly may compromise food quality, farmer capacity and infrastructure capacity thereby thwarting the goals of mainstreaming local food systems.