



# Southwest Marketing Network

## Expanding Markets for Southwest Small-Scale, Alternative, and Minority Producers

*Promoting Local Agricultural Marketing in the Southwest*

July 2007

## Eating and farming as if it mattered

In a 1990 essay, Wendell Berry put forward the proposition that “Eating is an agricultural act; eating ends the annual drama of the food economy that begins with planting and birth.” The role of food in each of our lives is without question a large one because everyone eats. However, most people rarely have any awareness about the drama taking place for food to end up on their table. I once asked a group of children at the Santa Fe Children’s Museum where peanut butter came from and they replied unanimously, “the grocery store.” Most adults can tell you that food is produced on farms, but probably not the difference between a large-scale production and a small-scale farm. How many of us are familiar with the perseverance, knowledge, skill, and ingenuity it takes to grow food where soil health is the main product or where water is ecologically insecure and scarce? Many people are concerned about the cost they pay for food, but don’t stop to think about the cost in price or quality of large-scale production—wasteful use of soil, water, and energy; processing, packaging, and advertising; the rising costs of transportation; and the health of people and all life on the planet. We must start being more conscious of our own consumption habits and of our responsibility within our own food system. I will argue that just as eating globally obscures the negative impacts of food production, eating locally can catalyze a sense of connection between food and farming and responsibility to how the way we eat affects the world.

To begin with, eating what’s grown locally reduces the cost of transporting food and fosters a connection with the land and the people who grow food. As author and environmentalist, Bill McKibben, points out in a recent article, “We’ve gotten used to eating across great distances. Because it’s always summer somewhere, we’ve accustomed ourselves to a food system that delivers us fresh produce 365 days a year. The energy cost is

incredible—growing and transporting a single calorie of iceberg lettuce from California to the eastern U.S. takes 36 calories of energy. What would it take to get us back to eating more locally, to accepting what the seasons and smaller scale local farmers provide?”

Although the majority of the food consumed in the United States flows to us from many places throughout the world, in our consciousness, it comes from no place in particular. I agree with Frances Moore Lappé that if our food supply comes from a nearby place rather than distant places where the production practices remain invisible to us as eaters, then there is a point of entry to the much larger issues of the global community. Food is still very much associated with family, ethnic, and community traditions that remind us of who we are, where we are, and what we value. Food is the source of the health and vitality of our bodies and it represents our most intimate link with the land. In the localized production, purchase, and preparation of food we have the potential to disengage from some of the most damaging components of the global economy. One of the principal

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# Healthy local foods and EBT: a win-win situation for farmers and low-income families

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## What is the EBT program and how does it apply to farmers markets?

Electronic Benefit Transfer, or EBT, is the technology used today for Food Stamp purchases. The term “food stamp” is being phased out throughout the US, but it will be used here for the purposes of illustration. Nearly 11.7 million households (or 27 million people) participated in the EBT program in FY 2006. In the Four Corners states 477,005 households participated. That is the potential of almost 500,000 households which could benefit from being able to purchase local healthy foods at community farmers markets.

While the national movement to transfer food stamp recipients from paper (or script) to a card swipe system (the EBT program) has helped to eliminate some of the stigma associated with food assistance, it automatically eliminated access to many of the facilities that feature local foods such as farmers’ markets and farm stands. Farmers’ markets, fruit stands and other similar businesses operate in environments where electric power and land-line telephones are not readily available (or are cost prohibitive) and this is a requirement of operating a Point of Service device for the food stamp EBT machines. These operations also have rapid and small dollar transactions, which can limit the practicality of the more traditional EBT Point of Service systems.

## Farmers’ market participation

Many farmers’ markets throughout the U.S. have discovered and piloted unique ways of surmounting these obstacles. Santa Fe, New Mexico originally developed a way to circumvent the EBT cards in 1997 through developing “Market Bucks.” Its initial objective was to develop a system that was not stigmatizing to food stamp recipients. It was funded through a grant and become quite successful for customers wanting to pay for larger purchases with their credit cards as well.

Community Food Connections in Phoenix, Arizona has been facilitating the implementation of EBT machines statewide since 2003. In 2003 they started with 9 markets and \$2017 in EBT sales. By 2005 there was a 117% increase in EBT sales. With the start of the 2007 growing season 11 farmers’ markets in Arizona are now accepting EBT cards and all but one are also accepting debit and credit cards.

Cindy Gentry, who has been with this effort since the beginning, commented that the state has been very supportive and has been a great partner in this effort. She added that the state now looks to them as a resource to help EBT recipients get access to local fresh foods and they do quite a bit of outreach to their clientele.

Other southwest states have followed suit and by the end of 2007 all four of the 4-corner states will have at least two farmers’ markets accepting EBT benefits. The approaches and support vary from state to state, but as the movement continues to grow and evolve, so do the number of farmers’ markets participating in EBT programs in the Southwest. This year, Colorado and New Mexico received funding to implement wireless EBT swipe machines that also accept debit and credit transactions at farmers’ markets through Agriculture Marketing Service, but they have had varied results from state to state.

## Challenges

Initially the challenge of accepting EBT benefits at a farmers’ market was getting the farmers’ market authorized as a retail business by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to accept food stamps. This seems to vary from state to state according to the willingness and receptiveness of the state and regional offices to conform somewhat rigid requirements for retailers to the unique situation of a farmers’ market. Sally Haines, Director of the Colorado Farmers’ Market Association, said that there has been exceptional support from the regional FNS office located in Denver. They have expedited the process and been willing to accommodate a business model that does not necessarily fit with their application process.

Ms. Haines also stressed the importance of the commitment of farmers market managers throughout the state. She commented that “they have had to work extra hours, hire extra personnel to man the terminals, as well as dealing with resistance on the part of vendors. They have demonstrated courage and commitment to this process.” Currently 18 farmers’ markets across Colorado are signed on to the program. They have funding for additional EBT machines and would like to sign up more markets in the coming year.

New Mexico has experienced more bureaucratic hurdles than its Colorado counterpart in the authorization process. They are currently set to have 6 farmers' markets throughout 5 counties in the state to accept food stamp benefits, but they are waiting on the authorization from a regional office in Dallas. Denise Miller, Director of the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association, commented, "I was not anticipating problems so early on." The process of authorization can take up to 3 months, depending on the abilities of the regional FNS office and the farmers' market's application.

### **Growth in EBT use at Four Corners farmers' markets:**

The Salt Lake City Peoples Market and the Moab Farmers Market are currently the farmers' markets within Utah that are accepting EBT cards. The Peoples Market is a volunteer group of neighbors that initiated the farmers' market around a new development. They received some grant money from the mayor to implement the market and put some of that money towards the purchase and implementation of an EBT machine. Kyle Lamalfa, who coordinates the market, commented that the authorization process has gone smoothly and that the state FNS office has been strongly in favor and very supportive. He also mentioned that several other farmers' markets are planning to accept EBT cards within the next few years including the downtown Salt Lake City Market and the Ogden Farmers' Market. Food stamp recipients need to know that they are able

to use their cards at farmers markets. In Arizona, Community Food Connections held focus groups to identify why people were not using their benefits at area farmers' markets. They found that many of them were not aware that they could use them there. They also found that recipients thought that purchasing food at farmers' markets was too expensive. This was an impetus for food security organizations and farmers' markets to partner to address these barriers. They have since developed gift certificates to be handed out at area food banks near the markets; stepped up the publicity; and, developed joint informational materials. Also they have worked for over 2 years with the Arizona Nutrition Network to invest in food demonstration kits to be used through County Cooperative Extension offices. With all of these measures, they have seen success. Thus far this year there has been an increase in use by 20% from last year.

With the commitment and strength of these Four Corners farmers' markets, the Southwest is on its way to helping EBT recipients access healthy, fresh and local foods from farmers' markets throughout the region. The key to success is developing a system to get authorized by the state or regional Food and Nutrition Service office; having a committed person to champion the project within each farmers' market; and having a supportive and flexible regional authorizing office.

*Tammy Hinman, National Center for Appropriate Technology*

## Calendar of events

**August 9, 2007** • Field Day at the Sustainable Agriculture Science Center at Alcalde, Alcalde, NM  
Contact: Steve Guldán, 505-852-4241, [sguldán@nmsu.edu](mailto:sguldán@nmsu.edu)

**September 8, 2007** • CSU Ag Day. Colorado State University, Ft Collins, CO  
Contact: Ag Day Ticket Office at 970-491-6497

**November 2, 3 + 4, 2007** • New Mexico Small Farm Conference, Moriarty Conference Center, Moriarty, NM  
Contact: Del Jimenez, 505-852-2668, [djimenez@nmsu.edu](mailto:djimenez@nmsu.edu)

**Go to [www.swmarketingnetwork.org](http://www.swmarketingnetwork.org) to find updated information on the Southwest Marketing Network and other activities in our region.  
For more events outside our region, visit the ATTRA calendar at [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org)**

# Flagstaff does it right—again:

## Highlights of the 5th Annual SWMN Conference in Flagstaff

Flagstaff lived up to its reputation as a great spot for the SWMN to gather—as we did in 2004 as well. Over 180 participants attended from 17 states bringing diverse viewpoints, but over 80% were from the Four Corners states reflecting a truly regional conference. Of the 108 respondents to the conference evaluation, over half were farmers and ranchers, 43% were American Indian, and about one-quarter attended last year's conference. We were very pleased with the turnout and the diversity of participants.

Opening keynoter, Anthony Flaccavento from Appalachian Sustainable Development in Virginia provided the group with a grower-oriented produce distribution model that we can aspire to in this region as our food systems develop. End keynoter Gary

Nabhan of the Center for Sustainable Environments at Northern Arizona University outlined the challenges facing us as we try to preserve the ability of our region to provide food and fiber.

Workshops ranged from selling to schools and natural food stores to Native foods for health and nutrition, from climate change and food systems to farm and farmland preservation. The full conference schedule of 29 workshops and networking meetings can be found on our website [www.swmarketingnetwork.org](http://www.swmarketingnetwork.org), and we hope to get resources from many of these up on our website this summer as we add a Marketing Topics section and a Directory of Expertise.

We must thank our funders, USDA Risk Management Agency Outreach

(RMA) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) as well as Western Sustainable Agriculture and Research and Education (WSARE), USDA Community Food Project Program, and Project for Public Spaces for support—over 80% of the participants received some scholarship support ensuring a broad cross-section of participants. The producers and preparers of the local food for the delicious Southwest Reception and conference meals deserve our thanks as well as the those growers who hosted the tour participants. Finally, thanks to all the speakers and volunteers, to the Center for Sustainable Environments, and to all those who participated. We trust the connections, inspiration, and information gained will serve them well.

*Jim Dyer, SW Marketing Network*

“I want you to know that I really enjoyed the conference. I found it to be one of the best organized conferences. The workshops had speakers and presentations that were enjoyable and informative and allowed those who attended to learn from the presentations, exchange ideas, get questions answered, and take back useful information. The conference also allowed plenty of opportunity to network with others.”

*Rick Lopez,*  
Regional Director  
USDA Farm Service Agency

### Images from the conference farm tour



photo by Neil Hannum



photo by Neil Hannum

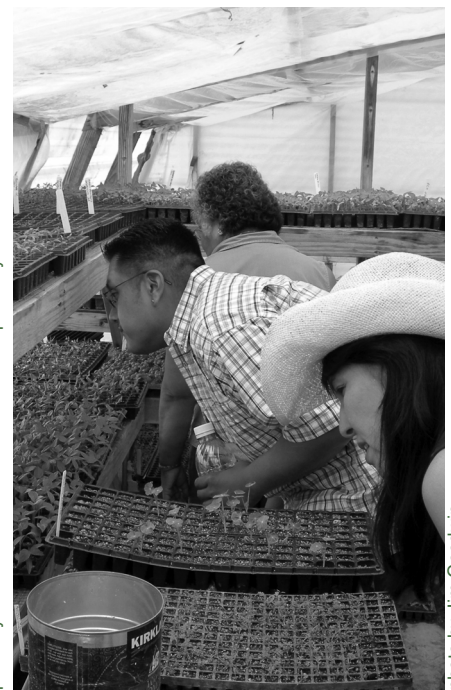


photo by Jim Goodwin

# Networking at the SWMN Conference—Native American initiatives take root

Spontaneous meetings and inspiring encounters are hallmarks of the SWMN conference. This year was no exception as participants self-organized 2 open invitation meetings and one planning meeting at the end of regularly scheduled programming. Laurie Monti of Christensen Foundation and Andrew Lewis from Natwani Coalition facilitated an impromptu gathering at the end of conference festivities to discuss the priority needs of native communities in the region, promising projects and programs, and how to work with funders.

Robert Redsteer and his colleagues at DINE Inc also networked with groups and individuals to discuss the possibility of producing a Native American Conference in the Nation, conducted in Navajo, prioritizing intergenerational relations, and featuring successes and challenges related to agriculture and community health. DINE Inc recently submitted a grant proposal to turn this idea into a reality, with letters of support from partners, including SWMN. We look forward to this seed of an idea blossoming into a reality.



photo by Jim Goodwin

At the Indian Farm Caucus it was standing room only and long past the dinner hour as Linda Yardley from Taos Pueblo and National Tribal Development Association facilitated discussion about the 2007 Farm Bill and how to “be a voice, not just a vote.”

Representatives from USDA programs also attended to hear from a predominantly Navajo audience how services, trainings and education could be improved if conducted in the people’s native language and were inclusive of native scholars, traditional wisdom, and relationship building. “We learn from people more than papers and websites,” affirmed Gilbert Yazzie from Dine Agriculture. Participants also acknowledged the need for “living models” who could be examples in their own communities when it comes to learning risk management strategies and innovations from peers.

Several barriers were identified that keep Navajo and Pueblo farmers and ranchers from participating in programs offered by Natural Resource Conservation Service’s EQIP and Farm Service Agency’s Crop Insurance programs. Questions came up about how the tribes find it difficult to fulfill “cost-share” requirements of grants; meet “fencing” requirements for conservation programs; how traditional crops are ineligible for coverage through insurance programs; and, traditional crops (foods) are ineligible items in federal nutrition programs like Women Infant Children (WIC) and Food Stamps (EBT).

“Where’s my agent?” jested one participant as the caucus wrapped up. Even though Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture, University of Arizona, Shiprock Extension, Dine Agriculture and NM State University provide extension services in the Navajo Nation, these agencies and organizations find it very challenging to cover the variety of needs in such a vast territory given their limited number of personnel and resources. Limitations did not deter Gerald Moore from Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture who took the question very seriously. Gerald recently announced the hiring of a new extension agent in Tuba City at the NM Tribal Extension Task Force meeting June 25th.

To follow up on each of these grassroots initiatives generated by participants at the Flagstaff SWMN Conference, the next issue of Southwest Marketing Network’s newsletter will feature Native American issues in agriculture, including information from the NM Tribal Extension Task Force as their 3 years of perseverance bear fruit with the establishment of 2 new Tribal Extension Centers in Shiprock and Crownpoint.

If you have news from Indian Country that you would like to share in this special September issue of the SWMN newsletter, please contact Farm to Table, 505-473-1004.

*Tawnya Laveta, Farm to Table*

# Farm bill or food bill?

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It's tempting to take for granted the spring's first rush of peas and strawberries. But if you're a conscientious eater and are concerned about how those sweet and delicious foods got to your table, you might want to delve into the "farm bill."

Like certain comets, farm bills only come around once every five or six years. But make no mistake about it, they are the most important food and farm legislation that Congress enacts because they set the direction of the American food system for years to come. And for the first time in the history of farm bills, the 2007 version could be as good for consumers as farmers—that is if eaters also speak up as food citizens.

One problem with the farm bill has been its historical lack of balance. Only 39 percent of all U.S. farmers and ranchers typically receive crop subsidies, very few of which are fruit and vegetable farmers. Also left out of the picture have been African-American, Hispanic and Native American farmers whose mistreatment by federal programs over the years has prevented them from obtaining financial credit and conservation assistance. This has led to the loss of 97 percent of the farms owned by black farmers since 1920.

These extraordinary imbalances have consequences for eaters as well. Between 1985 and 2000 the real price of fruits and vegetables increased by 40 percent while the price of soft drinks and other sugary and high-fat foods declined by as much as 20 percent. If our *farm bills* had been *healthy food bills*, we would have distributed government support more equitably to make nutritious food more affordable. Due in part to this imbalance we are paying over \$100 billion a year in obesity-related medical costs.

And in what may be the most severe imbalance of all, over 35 million Americans are hungry or food insecure, which means they don't know where their next meal will come from. For these people—most of whom are children, elderly, and single mothers—the Food Stamp Program, which is part of the farm bill, is all that stands between them and hunger. Yet food stamps only provide on average \$3.15 per person per day for food, barely enough for one meal let alone three.

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How do we put "food" into the farm bill? There are several good ideas that could make our food system healthier such as the one that would supplement school meal programs with hundreds of millions of dollars of additional fresh fruit and vegetables. This would encourage children to eat better, and open up large new markets for local and regional farmers. The stumbling block is the USDA, which has told local school districts that they cannot give a preference for food purchases to local farmers. For example, in New Mexico this restriction is making it difficult for over 300,000 school children to eat food grown by hundreds of eager New Mexico farmers. **Call your Congressman and request "geographic preference" for school purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables.**

Innovative ideas like local preference are also being spawned through a small program known as Community Food Projects. **Over 25 grants have been awarded to non-profit organizations in Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico which have, among other things, helped to build the Farm to School program and enabled citizens to remove junk food from New Mexico's public schools.** Community Food Projects promote up-by-the-bootstraps community problem solving, but it only receives \$5 million a year. **With \$30 million, which advocates are requesting, this program could make a positive impact on thousands of communities.**

As even eaters know, if there are no farms, there is no food. Federal policy must be used to stem the annual loss of over 1 million acres of prime farmland and thousands of farm businesses. Federal funds must be directed to rebuilding the capacity of regions to store, process and transport food. In Arizona and New Mexico, the

loss of small livestock slaughter facilities are forcing ranchers to drive hundreds of miles for these services, which also frustrates consumers who want to buy “local” beef and lamb. This situation is even more predominant on the Navajo Nation. The less distance food must travel, the less impact our food system will have on climate change, and the stronger our local food economies will be.

The 2007 Farm Bill can take us down the road to healthy food and farms, or it can perpetuate the imbalance that has existed for too long. It will be up to the eaters to decide. **To make a difference just pick up the phone and call your Senators and Congressmen and women and remind them of the issues that are most important to us in the Southwest.** The Capitol Switchboard number is 202-224-2131.

*Mark Winne*, Policy Communications Director,  
Community Food Security Coalition,  
mark@foodsecurity.org  
and *Pam Roy*, Co-Director of Farm to Table, Santa Fe,  
NM, 505-473-1004, pamelaroy@aol.com

## Risk Management Strategies for Small Farms and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Conference

September 12–15, 2007  
Hilton Milwaukee City Center  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

sponsored by USDA Risk Management  
Agency Outreach Program

full scholarships available at *Farm to Table*  
contact Tawnya Laveta or Pam Roy  
505-473-1004

for more information about the conference  
contact Lisa M. Mason  
USDA/ASCR/OR, 202-720-6350,  
lisam.mason@usda.gov

## Boulder County Farmer to Chef program

Boulder, Colorado is home to many high-end restaurants. Currently demand from these restaurants for local produce is outpacing supply. With clientele willing to pay more for local produce, the timing is excellent for increasing local supply to restaurants in the City of Boulder.

On February 5 of this year, 10 chefs and 12 producers attended a program sponsored by Elizabeth Perrault from Boulder Slow Food and Adrian Card from the Boulder County Extension office. The intent of the program was to facilitate business transactions.

The program started off with John Platt from Q's restaurant in Boulder explaining how buying from local farmers works for him. Anne Cure from Cure Organic Farm followed and described how selling to local restaurants worked for her. Both had ample questions from the audience on the specifics of how the logistics work.

Primed from this discussion, the program then turned to a “speed dating” format. Chefs remained seated while

growers spent about 5 minutes with each chef. These face-to-face discussions generally detailed what products were wanted/available, delivery schedule, quantities, and an overview of potential pricing.

The noise level was high and exuberance was contagious in the room as Adrian shouted out “one minute left”, “wrap up your discussions” and then “time’s up, rotate to the next chef”.

Comments from both chefs and growers as the program concluded showed a great level of satisfaction in the outcome with many thanks for the organizing.

This group will be evaluated in the fall to determine how many restaurants and producers established buying/selling relationships and an estimated dollar figure in transactions.

*Adrian Card*, CSU Boulder County Extension

## Farm to School update

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What's happening with Farm to School in our region? This is where you will find out what's up. We will continue to report here about increased opportunities for farmers to sell to schools as well as school gardens and other farm-related educational projects that are popping up in the Four Corners states.

**In Arizona** • A collaboration between Community Food Connections (CFC), the Community Food Security Center of the Community Food Bank, Tucson, and the Arizona Department of Education led to a statewide survey of school district food service directors with regard to food purchasing practices and the feasibility of establishing a farm to school program in Arizona. Building on similar work that has been done in other states, Terry Marsh, a graduate student at the University of Arizona conducted the survey online starting in February and running through early May.

The 38 question survey investigated how food for school meals is purchased and served as well as the types of foods served. The information gathered by this effort can be used to guide the formulation of a farm to school program here in our state. Responses to the survey suggest that there is significant interest in this program idea. Also, motivations for involvement closely parallel the reasons for creating such a program: increasing access to fresher food products and supporting the local community and Arizona farmers. At the same time, not all schools have access to nearby local farms or know where the farms are or what produce they might have. Thus, as indicated by survey responses, a list of Arizona farmers and their products will be very helpful going forward. A further survey to assess the interest of producers and supply is underway and expected to be completed in August 2007.

CFC has been involved in promoting this idea in the past and important groundwork has been laid for the farm to school concept. Now this collaboration between multiple organizations is an important step forward. Combining this information with other related endeavors will provide a comprehensive look at what is needed to make farm to school work in Arizona.

*Terry Marsh, Community Food Security Center,  
Community Food Bank*

**In Colorado** • In Colorado, we are fortunate to have a state-wide farm to school survey recently completed by the Colorado State University Public Policy Institute to support ongoing networking and needs identification. Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Denver Urban Gardens, and others have been working hard to connect schools and producers especially in the Front Range area of Colorado.

The SW Colorado Farm to School program is progressing very well. We have fresh local micro-greens going year-round to salad bars at 10 area schools—small quantities but loaded with nutrition and information about where they came from. The schools have even had to order short salad bars since salad is so popular with the very early grades. As the program becomes more well-known and the schools want more products, additional growers are stepping up—but we have a ways to go to have enough local products for the schools and all the other local outlets as demand continues to rise in this area. Another new development is that the Durango School District has set up a fund at each of their 10 schools set aside for the purchase of local products. These fund accounts have been arranged so that they can accept donations from the community to add to the local buying power for each school. We are gratified by the response from the food service, administration, growers, and community members who support this forward-looking and vital program.

*Jim Dyer, Southwest Marketing Network*

**In New Mexico** • With the stellar work of Jimmy Purvis, a Congressional Hunger Center Policy Fellow, Farm to Table conducted a survey of farmers to see if they want to sell to school food service and a survey of food service directors to see if they want to buy from local growers. “Local” was defined as from within the state. From that survey information, we developed a Directory aimed at helping all parties be in contact with each other and have knowledge of where food is being produced and what is available when. Through this survey we found out that the food service directors of over 50% of NM's schoolchildren want to buy fresh local foods for their kids. The Directory and a report about farm to school in New Mexico are available upon request.

The Healthy Kids - Healthy Economy legislation which asked for \$1.44 Million to add 10 cents more per plate

for fresh fruits and vegetables, New Mexico-grown when possible, was partially successful this Spring. That money is coming to the North Valley in Albuquerque to develop a pilot fruit and vegetables program. The Food Service team will start with one snack per week, on Friday early afternoon for each of the 12 schools in the cluster (approximately 6000 students.) We are making contacts with the growers of fruit and vegetables in this area and are having pre-bid discussions on price, quantity, and quality required to get ready for sales starting in the Fall.

Farm to Table, the NM Department of Agriculture, Action for Healthy Kids, and others are designing a program which will assist schools in starting fundraising campaigns which will engage kids, uses New Mexico-grown agricultural products, and builds awareness about our agricultural heritage. This project will start in the Fall with 3 pilot schools and will go statewide for the Spring semester. Stay tuned. We will report on this project's success right here.

*Lē Adams, Farm to Table*

## Eating and farming as if it mattered—*continued from page 1*

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dynamics in the globalizing world market has been the subordination of agriculture production in one place to the needs and demands of another. This has meant the displacement of local food production by commercial production geared to distant markets and the impoverishment, poisoning, and even destruction of local communities of farmers and indigenous peoples.

The Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development report, 1987) concluded that the best way to achieve food security is through food locally produced by local people with local control.

As our population increases, we have to use less of our ecosystem resources to restore and regenerate the health of the ecological neighborhoods we live in. To do this, and have any hope of keeping the world fed, it's necessary to have an ecologically oriented agriculture that mirrors and maintains natural ecosystems. There is substantial evidence now to suggest that the best way to achieve a balance between people, food, and land is through local community-based agriculture that is tied to ecologically responsible land use, rooted in local culture. Of course, the capacity of a people in a local ecological neighborhood to feed themselves will vary greatly depending on local climate, land and water based resources, and food crops. Exporting surpluses from one place to another could continue to be part of a new food system, but the first priority would be food self-sufficiency in each ecological neighborhood. The idea of local 'foodsheds' is catching on gradually. The USDA's Community Food Projects program has revealed that throughout the U.S. hundreds of communities are creating new food and farming markets. In many communities farmers are linking with community organizations to exchange food for labor; non-profit organizations and farmers are working together to help preserve farmland

by bringing new and beginning farmers onto the land in new tenure arrangements; farms and community gardens are linked with local school systems to provide food and teach children how to practice organic gardening; and, local businesses work with non-profit organizations to make locally produced food available in communities that have limited access. These initiatives, together with the growing number of farmers markets, direct marketing arrangements, and Community Supported Agriculture, are all indications that the global industrial food system is not working for more and more people.

The concept of the 'foodshed' is a useful way to think about these possibilities. It was derived from the concept of a watershed as early as 1929 to describe the flow of food from the place where it was grown into the place where it's consumed. In the sense of creating a local, community-based, and ecological food and farming system the concept of a foodshed emphasizes a respect for the importance of place. It also provides a framework for looking at other ecological concepts and systems such as climate and weather, trends over time, geography, and cultural and biological diversity. This movement towards local is not intended as a retreat from the global realities of the world we live in, but as a means to respond more sanely to its challenges by providing a place to take a stand for action and from which to work toward a more sustainable, just, and equitable way of farming and eating.

We tend to forget that food comes from the land and that not only does the land need the skillful care of people, but people need the land. If we remove people from closeness to the land and all of its wonderfully complex cycles, its myriad creatures, earth and sky, then we will all suffer.

*Lynda Prim, The Farm Connection*

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