



Southwest Marketing Network

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

Promoting Local Agricultural Marketing in the Southwest

August 2005

It's Our Government Too!

One of my favorite quotes about policy is by the modern French hero, General Charles deGaulle, who once said, "politics are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians." While I'm not suggesting that we leave politics to the generals, I take deGaulle to mean that none of us should forfeit our role as citizens, producers, or consumers to elected policymakers. Once *we* have elected them, *we* need to hold them accountable for their actions, whether its war, social security, or food and agriculture. That's what this issue of the Southwest Marketing Network newsletter is dedicated to: the proposition that we all have a stake in our food system and must pay attention to how government policies shape that food system.



those markets would have been as successful without publicly supported non-profit organizations, special promotional support by a local municipality, or the federally funded Farmers' Market Nutrition Program? Again, we can do a lot on our own, but we can do more and distribute the benefits more widely when we have adequate resources.

This issue of the SWMN Newsletter contains some great stories from our Four Corners states, Native American communities, and Washington, DC about how people are making their governments work for them. What's also abundantly clear is that there is no lack of opportunity for those

who want to join the action. Pick your own place to start—local, regional, state and/or national—but please *do* pick. The future of our food system depends on it.

Mark Winne
Guest Editor

Photo credit: Clay Ellis

When I talk to people about policy I like to talk about the "3 Ps"—*projects, partners, and policy*. Projects are the things we do on a daily basis to produce and deliver our goods and services. And partners are the people and organizations that we all need to achieve something bigger than we can achieve alone. But when it comes to *policy*, most of us aren't quite there yet, to use the vernacular. Either our eyes glaze over when the subject comes up or we get all agitated about government's inability to be helpful.

My favorite example of why policy matters relates to farmers' markets. Yes, citizens and farmers have started thousands of farmers' markets across the country because they recognized the value that markets bring to themselves and their communities. But how many of

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The role of policy in ending hunger in America

The first thing to know about hunger is that it is widespread across America: Food insecurity can be found in every city in the U.S. In 2002, 12.1 million U.S. households were food insecure. Hunger is on the rise—3.9 million more people were food insecure in 2002 than in 1999.

Women and children are the most likely victims of hunger—1 in 4 children do not eat regular meals each day because of a lack of food in their home. Hunger among the elderly is on the rise—in one year food insecurity rates jumped from 5.5% to 6.3% for households with elderly persons and 6.1% to 7.4% for elderly persons living alone.

When people can't afford to maintain healthy diets, they do not receive the proper nutrition needed to live healthy, productive lives. Hunger and poor nutrition have a negative impact on a child's ability to learn. Irregular access to food can also lead to higher incidence of obesity because low-income families must eat more at the beginning of the month and are forced to stretch food resources at the end of the month. This leads to the body becoming more efficient at storing calories. Food insecure families may rely on cheaper, higher calorie foods. Iron deficiency, infant mortality, and growth stunting are also related to hunger.

Anti-hunger groups engage in policy work at the federal level in order to maintain and improve a federal safety net to end hunger in America. There are five primary areas which advocates focus their efforts: Child Nutrition reauthorization, the Farm Bill reauthorization, the Appropriations process, the Federal Budget process, and by holding the USDA accountable in their publication of regulations and implementation of the laws. The key to influencing the policies is the knowledge of what programs fall under which process, i.e. the Food Stamp program is in the Farm Bill and the School Lunch program falls into Child Nutrition reauthorization. Also, it is critical to know who the key committee members in Congress are and which staff members at the USDA make the final decisions.

Anti-hunger policy work on the state and local level

Washington, D.C. has been described as 90 square miles surrounded by reality, meaning that no new ideas

come from Washington. New ideas arrive in Washington from the rest of the country who live with reality and the implementation of policies made in D.C. Successful program development at the state and local level can lead to good programs at the national level. For example, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program was first a successful state project before it became part of the Child Nutrition Act.

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Anytime a federal law is passed it has to be implemented on the state and local level and often requires decisions and matching funds from the state and local level. Anti-hunger advocates lobby their state governments to reduce the complexities in the Food Stamp application process. They may also ensure that local Food Stamp offices offer language services to applicants and conduct effective outreach programs to ensure that those who may be eligible for nutrition programs are aware of them.

Hunger, the federal budget, and what you can do now

Grover Nordquist, conservative activist and advisor to the Administration on tax and budget issues, has said, "I want to make the government so small, you could drown it in the bath tub." The large tax cuts in the early years of this Administration have dramatically cut revenues and put us in a position where we are now facing an explosion of the federal deficit and a budget crisis. The proposed solution to this problem is to make hefty cuts to Federal programs. More specifically, the Agriculture Committees in Congress are now mandated to cut \$3 billion in spending from the programs under their jurisdiction by September 16, 2005. These programs include the Food Stamp program, which is the primary safety net against hunger in the U.S. This debate is **critical** to the fight against hunger in America.

Excerpted from the presentation at the 2005 SWMN Conference by *John Kelly*, Associate Director of the Congressional Hunger Center, Washington, DC.

Colorado policy: starting at home

It begins at home—at the local level. That's what the Colorado Food and Ag Policy Working Group believes is the best way to build a solid and sustainable statewide policy initiative. Concerted efforts to establish local policy groups throughout Colorado have been the focus for the past year, and we now have groups in the San Luis Valley, Southwest Colorado, the West Slope, Larimer & Weld Counties, and Boulder & Adams Counties. These groups are just a start—we are seeking people interested in organizing groups in the rest of the state.

Organizing first in the various regions of Colorado not only grounds the state effort, but also helps ensure that the whole state—metro and remote areas alike—are involved on a more even footing. Likewise, we are linked by the Southwest Marketing Network to policy groups in the rest of the Southwest, so that we can—collectively and with greater weight—bring common issues to the federal level.

Curiously, the issues that have been raised in these regional groups have been so engaging that movement toward a statewide effort has been slower than expected. That should all change, however, when we hold our statewide meeting on 11 August in Brighton, Colorado (just north of Denver). This event will bring in people from all over the state to network and look for common policy issues to tackle.

The big four: Our belief is that sustainable policy work needs to look at food and agriculture from several angles in order to bring about meaningful change and also to bring in the requisite diversity of ideas. Our intent has been to make sure we have representatives from at least four major sectors: Agriculture, Economic Development, Environment, and Food/Hunger/Nutrition. This should ensure a meaningful and comprehensive approach.

The opportunity for positive change: One strategy that resonates with the policy groups is the need to focus initially on a few issues of great importance but little controversy. This will enable us to develop trust with each other and credibility with others in the state. We see this as the most effective mechanism for change. Addressing issues of common interest first should increase our ability to tackle more contentious issues later.

We also could earn a reputation for positive change that could appeal to even more citizens in our communities. Rather than picketing Walmart Superstore Food Centers, we could work toward city codes friendly to farmers' markets. Instead of suing Monsanto over GMOs, we could help young organic producers feed us with non-GMO foods. As an alternative to more complex regulations over endangered species, we could help members of environmental organizations buy from those local farmers and ranchers who are encouraging bio-diversity. And, instead of competing with other states for a bigger share of "empty calorie" commodity foods for our local food banks, we could help our local producers provide fresh, healthy produce for them. Maybe later we will need to picket, sue, regulate and compete—but perhaps less of that will be needed if we are successful in promoting alternative approaches.

Some common issues

In this manner, the Colorado Working Group has identified many issues of concern that should have widespread support and many beneficiaries. Some of these common-ground issues include:

- Local and state policies and land use codes that encourage, rather than discourage, small-scale farms and ranches, alternative products and practices, direct marketing, and increased community food self-sufficiency.
- Buy-local preference provisions for state and local governments and institutions.
- Farm to School programs and state policies that would support them.
- State and federal support for farmers' market nutrition and similar programs.
- Recognition of the role that vibrant community-based agriculture can have in addressing issues of urban sprawl, community economic development, and food security/hunger issues.

More background on the Colorado Policy Working Group can be found on our draft webpage: www.oakhavenpc.org/FoodAgPolicy

The documents on that website are a work in progress, and we welcome additional suggestions. For more on the 11 August statewide meeting or to form a regional group, please contact *Jim Dyer* at jadyer@frontier.net or 970-588-2292.

New Mexico's Food and Agriculture Policy Council

The NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council is a broad based coalition made up of state agencies, large and small agriculture organizations, non-profit organizations, faith based groups, food related businesses and individuals.

Purpose

The Council was formed three years ago to broaden the discussion about our state's food and agriculture systems and, in particular, how federal, state and local governments influence those systems. To that end, the Council has served as a forum for the state's food system stakeholders to learn more about what each one does and to consider how their actions impact other parts of the system. It has taken as its credo the need to provide a safe, nutritious, affordable and adequate food supply for all New Mexicans. This includes support for the economic, cultural, environmental, and social needs of producers, a focus on food access, production, distribution, and consumption issues; and, advocacy for selected food and agricultural policy issues in various forums and venues, including the New Mexico State Legislature.

Goals

The Council's goals are to develop, coordinate and implement a food system policy linking economic development, social and environmental impacts with farming, ranching and urban issues; review and comment on proposed legislation and regulations that have an impact on food and agricultural systems; and, make recommendations to the executive and legislative branches of government on food and agriculture policy.

Education

The Council uses a variety of means to inform both the public and policymakers about the opportunities and challenges within the state's food system. To educate policymakers and the broader public about New Mexico's food and agriculture system, the Council embarked on an assessment that resulted in the publication of *Growing a Healthy Food System—Food and Agriculture in New Mexico* that describes the broad range of issues and their policy implications. Each of the assessment's sections, which are different

stories about the food system—suggests ways that government can work with the private sector to achieve positive outcomes for agriculture producers, consumers, communities, and the natural resource base. The Council made presentations about its work at the Southwest Marketing Network conference and also conducted a two-day workshop in April on land, natural resources, and agriculture issues.

Legislation

The Council chose several priorities for this now past 2005 legislative session which included the expansion of the Specialty Crop Grant Program for farm and ranch projects (funding was increased by 33 percent to \$100,000) and the statewide farmers' market development program (funding increased from \$48,000 to \$123,000). The Council also supported the creation of a universal school breakfast program (first year funding is \$475,000; the full program will be phased in over five years as funding increases to \$3 million annually) and the re-establishment of New Mexico State University extension programs in the state's tribal communities (the measure failed to gain passage). The most challenging effort of the Council turned out to be a bill to establish nutrition standards for food sold in public schools outside of the national school lunch program (so-called "competitive foods"), which did gain passage after many changes. The Policy Council also succeeded in securing \$25,000 from the state legislature to fund its operating costs.



photo by Clay Ellis

Passage of the nutrition standards bill, known as House Bill 61, was a result of a collaboration between New Mexico Action for Healthy Kids, the New Mexico Nutrition Service Directors Association, NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council and other groups working with our legislators. The bill requires that nutritional standards be established for competitive foods in New Mexico schools by the end of 2005. Agriculture advocates, dairy producers, school food service directors, parents, school principals, the beverage industry, and the Health and Public Education Departments will work together to put the standards in place. The hope is that unhealthy food will be removed from school vending machines and replaced with nutritious juices, water, milk, yogurt and New Mexico farm products.

Current priorities

Legislative priorities will continue to focus on health, nutrition and agriculture programs. Specifics include an expansion of New Mexico's "Farm to School" program through the School Nutrition Commodities Program, funding to purchase New Mexico produce and products for emergency food programs, funding for expanded nutrition education efforts; and funding for the NMSU/Tribal extension initiative. And it is expected that the Council will continue to educate its members, policymakers, and the broader public about the many facets of the state's food system.

For more information contact:

Pam Roy, NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council,
3900 Paseo del Sol, Santa Fe, NM 87507, 505-473-1004



Fred Martinez sells apples to the Santa Fe Public Schools through New Mexico's Farm to School Program.

photo by Clay Ellis

Policy Resources

The Community Food Security Coalition has several helpful guides and manuals that address policy. They include:

Tips for Meeting with Elected Officials

Linking Farms with Schools

Farmer Resource Guide: Managing Risk Through Sales to Educational Institutions

What's Cooking in Your Food System: Guide to Community Food Assessment

The Healthy Farms, Food, and Communities Act: Policy Initiatives for the 2002 Farm Bill

Getting Food on the Table: An Action Guide to Local Food Policy

These publications can be found at

www.foodsecurity.org

The Drake University State Food Policy Project has the best database available on food policy councils around the country. It contains information about the "who," "what," and "where" of these councils plus many good examples of projects and policy issues. Of particular note is "Putting a Face on Our Food: How State and Local Food Policies Can Promote the New Agriculture" by Neil Hamilton.

This information can be found at

www.statefoodpolicy.org

Another good resource for community food security, anti-hunger, and policy work can be found at World Hunger Year. Check out their excellent and comprehensive Food Security Learning Center at www.worldhungeryear.org/FSLC/FoodPolicyCouncil.

And don't forget USDA! Both the National Agricultural Statistical Service and the Economic Research Service are a wealth of useful information. They can be reached at www.nass.usda.gov and www.ers.usda.gov. To get data about food security go to www.ers.usda.gov/foodsecurity.

Utahns Against Hunger is working to reduce food insecurity

For the last four years Utah has been among the five states with the highest incidence of hunger and food insecurity. The reasons become clear when you understand the dynamics of most Utah communities. In the past five years Utah's poverty rate has increased to 10.6 percent. This is due in large part to the state's median wage, which was \$1.47 lower than the national average in 2003, and the high cost of housing, which excludes 43 percent of Utah's renters from fair market rents.

Because of these conditions, Utahns Against Hunger (UAH) and the Utah Food Council are working on state policy to improve the programs that serve lower income households. To that end, UAH has collaborated with other advocacy groups to work with the Department of Workforce Services, the state agency which administers the food stamp program, to implement simplified reporting procedures. For several years DWS has committed to instituting more client-friendly options, but in spite of the best of intentions, there continue to be delays. UAH will continue to push on these matters as well as the implementation of transitional food stamp benefits for families leaving cash assistance.

UAH is also working with the Utah Department of Health to find a policy solution to the problem of lost WIC vouchers. UAH has worked closely with the state WIC director to persuade the department to develop a campaign to educate participants.

In recent years child nutrition programs have come under scrutiny for being a contributor to the problem of overweight and obesity. While access to programs is a crucial part of helping decrease food insecurity, traditional anti-hunger advocates are now considering the importance of nutrition and the benefits of eating a healthy diet. The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires every school district that participates in the federal school meals programs to enact a wellness policy by the first day of the 2006-07 school year. UAH has recently joined Utah Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) to work on their efforts to craft model policies. UAH will be hosting two Emerson Hunger Fellows from the Congressional Hunger Center who will be working with UAH and AFHK to identify barriers to the implementation of these policies. This

fellow will also be conducting research on district level vending policies.

UAH has also come to realize that federal nutrition programs are not the only way to make households self-sufficient. Recently, UAH joined with Wasatch Community Gardens and the State Office of Child Nutrition to develop a plan that will promote a Farm to Cafeteria program. In October 2005 these organizations will host a joint information meeting on Farm to Cafeteria; stakeholders from across the state will be invited, including producers, food service workers, principals and superintendents.

UAH's participation on the Utah Food Council gives the organization opportunities to work more broadly in the state. This fall UAH will be working with at least three communities to conduct food assessments. Utahns Against Hunger and the Utah Food Council will use this information to develop a community food security policy agenda.

Gina Cornia is the Executive Director of Utahns Against Hunger. She can be reached at cornia@uah.org
Richard Sparks, Utah Department of Food and Agriculture, can be reached at rsparks@utah.gov

Calendar of Events

August 25-27, 2005 • 1st Annual Conference of the National Association of Latino/Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers, Las Cruces, New Mexico. Contact: Rudy Arredondo, 202-628-8833 or email LatinoFarmersandRanchersDC@yahoo.com

September 8-9, 2005 • The 2005 National Workshop on State & Local Food Policy, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: www.statefoodpolicy.org

October 6-9, 2005 • The 9th Annual Community Food Security Conference, "It's Home Grown: Cultivating the Roots of Real Change",

Arizona's Food Policy Coalition

In 2002, thanks to a strong partnership among Community Food Connections, the Association of Arizona Food Banks and the State Department of Economic Security, a small group of community gardeners, food bank representatives, state agency staff and food security advocates began meeting. Our objective was to expand the work being done in our state to find solutions to hunger and its debilitating impact on one in seven Arizona adults, and one in four children. Our goal is to link and assess an entire range of strategies, programs and policies—from the emergency assistance level to long-term self-sufficiency activities—to ensure community food security.

Because of the diverse work and life experiences of the meeting participants, we first had to develop a common understanding of food security and the important role that policy development plays in social change. In 2003 we were invited to participate in the Southwest Community Food and Agriculture Outpost (SCFAO), a regional food system project spearheaded by New Mexico's Farm to Table and the Southwest Marketing Network. SCFAO provided us with models, best practices and technical assistance. In addition they facilitated organizational meetings, provided printed materials and the opportunity to participate in a range of regional and national conferences and training workshops.

In December 2003, we established the Arizona Food Policy Coalition. Its mission is to create a mechanism

for food and hunger issues to be addressed in a coordinated fashion by government agencies, non-profits, faith-based organizations, businesses, educational institutions, growers and ranchers, individuals and others.

As of July 2005, Representative Pete Hershberger (District 26, Tucson) has submitted a request to the Governor of Arizona to formally establish a Food Policy Council for the state. We have drafted an Executive Order and submitted a list of potential members that await the Governor's approval.

The Coalition wants to develop stable funding for our state's Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and to establish a Farm to Cafeteria Program. To accomplish the first objective, we must convince the state legislature as well as the Department of Health Services (DHS), which administers AZ FMNP, that the program has potential to improve nutrition while supporting small-scale local agriculture and rural economies. Unfortunately, DHS will not apply for federal Senior FMNP dollars until it can be guaranteed some state administrative dollars. We must also address a glitch caused by Arizona's strong winter crop production, which means that the program operates optimally when federal FMNP grants have not yet been awarded.

Several school districts and the Arizona Department of Education want to get more locally produced foods in school meal programs. To that end, the Coalition is developing a list of farmers, ranchers and products to coordinate supply and demand, and develop a thriving Farm to Cafeteria program. We will also request state funding for a Farm to Cafeteria Coordinator.

In addition to the statewide Coalition, the Pima County Food Policy Council has formed in southern Arizona, as has a Food and Agriculture Council in northern Arizona, along with a budding Council on the Hopi Reservation. Members of these groups communicate and interact regularly, and are able to support local, state, regional and national food system issues.

For more information, please contact Varga Garland, Pima County Food Policy Council, 520-622-0525

Catherine Freeman,
Northern AZ Food and Ag Council, 928-523-0664
or *Cindy Gentry*, statewide Coalition, 602-493-5231.

Calendar continued

Atlanta, Georgia.

Contact: Dawn Lovelace, 310-822-5410,
dawn@foodsecurity.org, www.foodsecurity.org

October 7-9, 2005 • American Livestock Breeds Conservancy Annual Conference "Green Genes: Saving Breeds Created for Grass", Greeley, Colorado. Contact: 919-542-5704, email albc@albc-usa.org, www.albc-usa.org

October 16-19, 2005 • The 4th National Small Farm Conference, "Enhancing Opportunities for Small Farmers and Ranchers", Greensboro, North Carolina. Contact: www.ag.ncat.edu

Why care about federal food and farm policy?

Federal food and farm policy has lasting and profound impacts at every local and state level. The most important legislation in this regard is the Farm Bill, which is re-authorized every five years. The last Farm Bill, with a price tag of nearly \$180 billion, was enacted in 2002.

The next Farm Bill is expected in 2007. Already, national and state groups with issues and constituencies have begun to prepare their priorities. Farm commodity subsidies, food stamps and most nutrition programs, specialty crops, rural energy and telecommunication, rural infrastructure and much more can be found in the Farm Bill.

Nearly all the issues that matter to readers of this newsletter are at stake. Will there be more funding for procurement of local foods for institutions like schools and hospitals? Will subsidies for large industrial production continue at their very high levels? Will

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Southwest Marketing Network welcomes Emerson National Hunger Fellows!

New Mexico and Utah will be host states for four Congressional Hunger Center Fellows. The Congressional Hunger Center is a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC that works on national and international hunger issues. Bright young college graduates interested in hunger and policy issues are chosen from around the country to do field work for six months with local organizations and another six months in Washington, DC with national organizations. They focus on hunger and related issues at the grassroots/local level. In New Mexico, they will be hosted by *Farm to Table* and the *NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council* and will be working on a "rural food gap" project. The Utah Fellows will be hosted by the *Utahns Against Hunger*. More news about them and their progress in issues to come.

extension and research benefit diversified farming systems? Will farms **of all sizes** that use sound conservation practices be rewarded? Will access to new markets or access to healthy fresh fruits and vegetables be given adequate support? These and many other issues will be decided in the next Farm Bill.

Not all regions benefit equally from federal programs. Regions with high urban populations benefit more from food and nutrition programs. Wheat, soybean, corn and other federally subsidized commodity producing states, especially in the Midwest, benefit more from farm programs. This imbalance creates division between regions, but it also gives the Farm Bill the momentum it needs to pass each time.

The Community Food Security Coalition and its sustainable agriculture, anti-hunger, nutrition and environmental partners are working for a more balanced and rational approach to federal food and farm policy. Policies are needed that unite urban and rural regions, farmers, consumers and environmentalists. There are good models, such as the Community Food Projects, Conservation Security, WIC and Senior Farmers Market, and Farm to Cafeteria programs. But they represent a very small portion of the total federal food and farm budget. That could change.

Together these partners are preparing a blueprint for food and farm policy reform. The blueprint will address new markets for small, medium and family scale farming, farmer and rancher viability, stewardship and conservation of natural resources, and healthy foods for healthy communities. Every region will have opportunities to unite urban and rural communities around regional policy priorities.

The Southwest Marketing Network is participating directly in this process and will play an important role in shaping policy priorities for the Farm Bill. By the Fall of 2005 a blueprint draft will circulate to all regions for refinement. Your feedback at that time will be necessary and useful. Stay tuned.

For more information about the Community Food Security Coalition's policy and farm bill, contact *Thomas Forster* by email at thomas@foodsecurity.org

New Mexico's Tribal Extension Task Force: working to bring leadership and program initiatives to Pueblo Indian and Tribal Nations

Within New Mexico there are 22 Pueblo Indian and Tribal Nations that are home to about 150,000 Native Americans. These are land-based communities that have their own unique identities through their cultures, languages, and spiritual rituals, which is what gives them their strength and vitality.

Most of these Native American communities are located in rural areas of the state. And like rural communities across the Southwest, they lack necessary resources such as those that are often provided by the Cooperative Extension Service. In the past, Native American cultures have served as the foundation for family and traditions, but current trends point to a deterioration of these historic values. Without an effort to preserve their native cultures, Native Americans are more likely to experience disillusionment and cultural abandonment.

The NM Tribal Extension Task Force was established more than a year ago to strengthen and revitalize traditional agricultural and natural resource restoration practices, develop 4-H youth and youth leadership programs, and provide momentum for family health and wellness within tribal communities, schools and cultural centers. This would be done by developing and funding Cooperative Extension Services for all the 22 Pueblo Indian and Tribal Nations in New Mexico. Currently there are only six Extension Agents assigned to work with some of the Tribal communities, which means that most of the state's 22 Tribes and Pueblos do not receive any extension assistance.

In 1990, Congress appropriated a small amount of funds through the "Extension Indian Reservation Program (EIRP)." These funds are made available as grants and are only temporary. Currently, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service has one agent in Zuni, one in Jicarilla, and two on the Navajo reservation. There are two additional agents assigned to work with the other 18 Pueblo Indian communities, one agent to the Northern Pueblos and the other to the Southern Pueblos. Congress has flat funded this program every year since it started and actually cut funding in prior federal appropriations. The Tribal communities are

challenged with how to keep these offices open with decreasing revenues. It is for this very reason that the NM Tribal Extension Task Force was formed to help plan and implement the Tribal Extension initiative. There is no other initiative of this type in the nation. New Mexico is taking the lead by addressing this problem on a statewide basis.

The project team, comprised of the Tribal Extension Task Force and representatives from all 22 Tribes and Pueblos, has gained support from the 1862 and 1994 land grant institutions, as well as other state and federal agencies and organizations. Additional support from other groups to help get state legislative funding is needed. This team wants to assure that the seeds of cultural preservation will continue to be nurtured so that Indian leaders and mentors will exist for future generations, cultural practices will be maintained, and economic wellbeing from traditional practices will continue. To do so, the Task Force introduced a legislative bill in 2005 to help fund this endeavor. There was a great deal of support from the legislators and other groups like the NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council and the NM Cattle Growers. Unfortunately, funding was not allocated.

The Tribal Extension Task Force and its supporters, however, learned from their initial legislative experience. They are currently working on a strategy to further develop support. The Task Force will advocate for it at Legislative Committee hearings; is requesting that it be considered for priority program status by the Governor; and, recently received word that New Mexico State University has chosen it as a priority program.

The New Mexico Tribal Extension Task Force initiative could become a model of how a grass roots Native American effort can remain sensitive to the needs of tribal elders, families, and communities to sustain traditional culture within the larger western world.

Sam Suina, Tribal Extension Task Force Project Director
and *Pam Roy*
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or samuelsuina@msn.com

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