



Southwest Marketing Network

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

Promoting Local Agricultural Marketing in the Southwest

May 2010

Know your farmer— Know your customer too!

The recent USDA initiative to “Know your Farmer” reflects a very important side of relationship marketing. No doubt, customers need to better understand where their food comes from, who grows it—and how—in order to make healthy food choices. Healthy for consumers, healthy for the land, and healthy for the producer’s bottom line.

Just as important, producers need to “Know their Customers” and what they are looking for as they make their choices. The localization movement has touched nearly every part of our lives, but nowhere more important or rewarding than in the case of food. We do believe, however, that embedded within the desire for “local” are a great many other sustainability values that customers care about—from nutrition to environmental stewardship, from fair prices for farmers to fair prices and access for low-income consumers, and more. Producers need to understand the sustainability values that customers are increasingly looking for in their food.

The SWMN is committed to helping customers know their producers, and producers to know their customers. A majority of the resources on our website are actually aimed at these two goals as are our conferences and workshops—it is the very essence of alternative marketing and food system development which is what the SWMN is all about. As you read this newsletter issue, we hope you will take advantage of SWMN resources, assistance, and activities to help you connect producers and customers in your own communities.

Jim Dyer

Southwest Marketing Network Project Director

Finding Personal Help: SWMN Directory of Expertise

While website resources are a foundation of the SWMN strategy to help producer-marketers and food system developers, we realize that personal assistance is critical to success in many cases. For this reason, we have initiated our SWMN Directory of Expertise. This is a searchable guide to experts who are willing to respond by phone and/or by e-mail to your questions on over 45 marketing and food systems topics.

Simply go to the SWMN website (www.swmarketingnetwork.org), select Directory of Expertise, and search by topic and/or location. We have 58 experts listed so far and are looking for more. So check it out to get some personal help. If you would like to be listed as an expert, contact Jim Dyer at jadyer@frontier.net.

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National news in Farm to School

Farm to school activities and awareness are increasing throughout the country. From federal legislation to federal agencies to the National Farm to School Network, and many points in between, we are looking at a real movement as more and more of us seek a clearer connection to our food and to the farmers that provide it.

So what is USDA up to with Farm to School?

Both Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan have been spending a lot of travel time recently, sharing their plans for oncoming changes that they see in their Department. USDA's 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiative emphasizes the need for a fundamental and critical reconnection between ag producers and food consumers. (Not "consumers" as Carlo Petrini of Slow Food International would say—but "co-producers".) This effort builds on the 2008 Farm Bill, which provides for increases and flexibility for USDA programs in an effort to revitalize rural economies through the promotion of local food. Aimed at strengthening the connection between growers and eaters, the initiative supports local and regional food systems, increases economic opportunities for local farmers, and expands access to healthy food for all Americans.

One example of how farmers can get involved is to participate in local farm to school programs that enable schools to feature healthy, locally-sourced products in their cafeterias. To this end, the USDA has formed a Farm to School Team, with dedicated staff from the Food and Nutrition Service and the Agricultural Marketing Service and led by Loren LaCorte.

"Strengthening the link between local farmers and school cafeterias is critical to addressing the nutrition issues facing our children," said Secretary Vilsack. "Supporting farm to school programs will increase the amount of produce available to cafeterias and help to support local farmers by establishing regular, institutional buyers. These programs are a win for farmers and ranchers and a win for our children."

With more than 100,000 public and non-profit private schools across the US, from elementary through high school, the farm to school movement offers new income opportunities for America's farmers and ranchers while giving children the opportunity to eat healthy, local fruits and vegetables and to learn to be healthy eaters. USDA is working to make sure that farm to school

programs are a key part of the upcoming reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act.

USDA has begun to deploy farm to school teams across the country to work with local and state authorities, school districts and community partners to gather and disseminate information on infrastructure and best practices for procuring local produce and implementing farm to school activities, all of this in an effort to help strengthen the link between consumers and farmers. Additionally, the Obama Administration has proposed a historic investment of an additional \$10 billion over ten years starting in 2011 that will allow for the improvement of the quality of the School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, increase the number of kids participating, and ensure schools have the resources they need to make program changes, including training for school food service workers, upgraded kitchen equipment, and additional funding for meal reimbursements for schools that are enhancing nutrition and food quality. This investment will allow additional fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products to be served in our school cafeterias and an additional one million students to be served healthy diets in school. The USDA Farm to School Team had its first introductory webinar on March 10th. More information about USDA's efforts to improve child nutrition can be found at www.usda.gov.

What is the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act?

This Reauthorization Act contains increased funding for school meals that come from USDA as well as funding for a farm to school grant program and for improved nutrition requirements. Coalitions of groups have been working with Congress for some time now, showing that there is a lot of momentum right now to improve school lunch. See the 'One Tray' information on the NFTSN website (see below) for the details.

The Senate Agriculture Committee took the first step toward congressional reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act by unanimously passing the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids' Act introduced by committee chair Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) on March 24, 2010. The bill increases spending on child nutrition programs by \$4.5 billion over the next 10 years and includes several important expansion and program improvement measures, along with a modest increase in meal reimbursement rates. Calling her legislation "the most historic investment in child nutrition programs since their inception," Senator

Lincoln noted that the bill increases per meal reimbursement rates for school lunch for the first time in nearly 40 years. Other key components of the bill would: create national school nutrition standards for all foods sold on school campuses throughout the school day; expand the Afterschool Meal Program under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) from the current 13-state pilot effort to all 50 states; and, allocate \$40 million mandatory funding for the development of farm to school initiatives.

Included also was Senator Leahy's SB-3123, the "Farm to School Improvement Act." Similar to Congressman Holt's HR-4710 in the House, the bill would provide \$50 million over five years, to fund schools to procure local foods from small to medium-sized farms for school meals along with additional nutrition education, school garden, and infrastructure support. The bill was passed by the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee, but with funding modifications proposing \$40 million over ten years. It now goes to the Senate floor.

Wyoming starts a Farm to School program

Wyoming is just getting started with a Farm to School program, but the enthusiasm so far is tremendous. My personal involvement began about a year ago when the Wyoming State Legislature drafted a bill to set up a task force to identify how to get local, wholesome food into the schools and institutions. Though the legislation didn't pass because of budget constraints, the idea intrigued me and I began to investigate starting a Farm to School program in Wyoming. When I attended the Southwest Marketing Network meeting in Durango last spring, I really got excited about the great ideas that were being utilized in other areas and realized that it was possible to get locally grown food into the school system, even with a short growing season like we have in most of Wyoming.

We are building a database of schools, producers and others who are interested in farm to school programs, and are in the process of identifying producers who want to be part of the Wyoming program through a survey. We are gathering information from various

Updates from the National Farm to School Network

The NFTSN has been hard at work on strategic planning along with the planning for the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference. The conference is scheduled for May 17-19 in Detroit, Michigan. It is shaping up very well, please come if you can. To find out more, contact: www.farmtocafeteriaconference.org.

The Network has been working with the USDA team as they get their feet wet in farm to school. The NFTSN has been largely funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation and we thank them for their support. Keep in touch by visiting the national website: www.farmtoschool.org. In our region we are very happy to welcome the leadership of Penny and Cindy as they work to develop farm to school in Utah and Wyoming. Please see their articles in this newsletter.

Le Adams

*Farm to School Program Director, Farm to Table
Southwest Regional Lead for the
National Farm to School Network*

sources to be included in a reference and information handbook that will include a listing of schools/school districts and producers interested in participating in the program. Resources and suggestions to help schools and producers work together at the district level will also be provided.

Our team of interested parties is growing day by day. We have formed a great partnership with the Wyoming Department of Education and will be participating in their summer conference. The Department of Education has been very enthusiastic about the Farm to School program and will make a great partner.

A Farm to School program in Wyoming will be good for students and schools, farmers and ranchers, and local communities. We are excited to be a part of the movement to provide our young people with healthy, flavorful foods that are grown in Wyoming.

Cindy Garretson-Weibel

Agribusiness Director – Wyoming Business Council

Next conference in Utah

The Southwest Marketing Network is planning a conference for Summer 2010 in Utah. Subjects covered will include: loan and grant opportunities, organization capacity building, food safety, local purchasing, institutional sales, including to schools, policy, and distribution. Please keep in touch with www.swmarketingnetwork.org and www.wrdc.usu.edu for more information.

Sowing the seeds of a gardening movement—the Albuquerque Public Schools story

“Children learn best when knowledge has meaning for them. In working with young children, I am always looking for ways to show connections to what we are studying. Our garden has become the place where my students build conceptual understanding and practical knowledge while developing those connections. From planting the seed to nurturing the growth, monitoring weather to harvesting and preparing and eating what they have grown—all those connections are real and interdependent and my students are part of that in a way that they could not be by simply reading about it.”

Mary Erwin, 3rd grade teacher/ Growing Gardens Team member, Albuquerque Public Schools

In Summer 2009 a group of dedicated Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) school gardeners and community supporters began to meet and share ideas. Shortly thereafter they formed the *Growing Gardens Team* (GGT). GGT members knew that APS school staff have, one by one, been planting their own gardens but no one knew how many gardens there were or how the staff were making these gardens a reality. Jennie McCary, APS Wellness Manager and Growing Gardens Team member, expressed a common feeling among GGT members—“I’ve had the dream of supporting school gardens since I started working with APS 8 years ago. It just never seemed to be something I could dedicate much time to.”

When the Growing Gardens Team formed, the overwhelming task of supporting gardening district-wide became a reality as the team members shared duties, supported each other and came up with a plan. The GGT identified the following goals for school year 2009-10: develop a directory of APS gardens, find out some basic information about existing and planned gardens, and determine the training/networking needs of the staff working in these gardens.

As a result, one of the first steps the GGT took was to administer a district-wide survey and conduct case studies that provided a more in-depth look at school gardening successes, barriers and potential strategies. Based on these activities a report was written, which included the survey and case study findings and recommendations for the future. In April 2010 this report was disseminated widely within the district and the response has been overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic.

Based on the survey results it was discovered that APS has a significant number of school gardens in various stages of operation including 13 schools reporting they have a garden that is currently in use, 10 are in the dreaming stages (wanting a garden), 3 schools are revitalizing a garden that has been used in the past, and 3 schools are in the planning stages. Since the completion of the report several more schools have contacted GGT members to report they either have or are planning gardens.

The majority of school gardens are in elementary schools. Respondents indicate that school gardens provide an opportunity to engage a variety of staff, parents, volunteers and community agencies in the education of students. The staff facilitating the school garden expresses a strong desire for on-going networking and professional development opportunities, as well as district-level support for school gardening. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made in the report:

Networking and training

Create professional development and networking opportunities for teachers that help them institute successful, sustained and high-quality gardening programs.

Needed resources

Seek funding for school gardens, both existing and planned, through state, local or grant funds. • Move away from teacher funded gardens. • Develop NM specific curricular materials to support teachers in integrating school gardening into standards based teaching.

At the district level

Develop a district wide school gardening plan that includes short and long term goals. • Produce an “APS Gardening Handbook” that clearly outlines district gardening resources, garden planning tools, linkages with education standards and benchmarks, contacts within M & O, safety guidelines, food handling guidelines, food sampling guidelines, and other essential information. • Institute a centralized and organized district-wide school gardening program to support the development of school gardens/outdoor classrooms and the professional development of staff working in these gardens. • Develop an institutional mechanism for school gardens to easily apply for and access grant funds. • Develop contacts at APS Maintenance & Operations (M & O) to serve as central point person for facility related gardening questions, including water access. • Develop a commitment at M & O to support

school gardening infrastructure needs. • Develop contact people at APS Food Service to serve as the central point person for school food-related gardening questions. • Develop a commitment at Food Services to support school gardening. • Investigate the feasibility of increasing school gardening programming into the middle and high schools.

During this school year the Growing Gardens Team has hosted 4 workshops / garden tours including a meet and greet, a worm bin building workshop, compost workshop and curriculum share fair. The team plans to re-group in June to plan events for next year. The report results will help guide the planning.

GGT members passionately believe that school gardens provide an opportunity for students to learn and practice many academic skills such as science, math and environmental awareness in an outdoor classroom setting. Gardening also has the potential to improve nutrition education. “As a dietitian, I love school gardens for the fun, hands on approach to teach kids about whole, healthy foods and where they come from. Gardens can



Colorado Farm to School goes statewide

The last few months have seen a number of statewide developments that should help support Farm to School efforts here. We actually have two bills pending in the Colorado legislature. Senate Bill 10-106, ‘Creation of the Food Advisory Council’, is designed to bring state agencies, producer groups, anti-hunger/nutrition advocates, and others together to recommend state policy improvements. Senate Bill 10-081 aims to set up a Farm to School Interagency Task Force made up of State Departments of Education and Agriculture and the producer groups to help develop an official statewide program.

Our own Healthy Community Food Systems group partnered with the Center for Systems Integration and WPM Consulting on a successful proposal to the Colorado Specialty Crops Program to connect Colorado producers to their local schools. Work began in February to ensure all schools and all producers know about Farm to School and how to connect with each other. We are beginning to assemble the best resources for Colorado on our website (www.coloradofarmtoschool.org), and will be interviewing communities to identify obstacles and opportunities to increase healthy local food and information about local foods and producers in the schools.

Jim Dyer

also help boost kids vegetable intake. When they have a hand in growing their own food they are more likely to eat it and in some cases kids may be introduced to a particular vegetable for the first time,” says Jennie McCary.

Another area that gardening has the potential to impact is overall student well-being. For example Whitney Kane, APS social worker at GGT notes, “I primarily utilize our school garden as a place to focus on emotional health and wellbeing. The garden is a wonderful setting to practice social skills; care for self and others; deal with disappointments and loss; and celebrate successes. Students often use the garden as a place to get calm or talk about their feelings. The garden also fosters community and a sense of belonging; students work together on common goals and feel proud of their accomplishments.”

From its humble beginning in summer 2009 the team approach that GGT has taken has sown the beginning of a new movement within APS and has already reaped many benefits. Perhaps Le Adams of Farm to Table sums it up best: “The Growing Gardens Team is a great example of a grassroots group formed to fulfill a real need. The dedicated volunteers of this group are collaborating to strengthen the ties between children and the natural world that are often broken with urban kids. As children experience the wonder and magic of ‘growing their own’, their attitudes toward eating fresh fruits and vegetables inevitably shift toward a healthier future for them, their families, and our community.”

If you would like a copy of the GGT report on APS gardens please email nissapatterson@gmail.com.

*Nissa Patterson
for the Growing Gardens Team*

Many thanks to Julie Hudak for the past years of work on the SWMN newsletter and website, and her tireless and creative local food work in Southwest Colorado. Best of luck Julie with your organic ice cream business plans in Oregon!



Farm to School in Utah

Farm to School is just becoming known as an organization here in Utah. While there are many MANY great projects underway around our state focusing on getting good, fresh, local, food to our schools and into our kids, there hasn't been a network or structure to link all of these projects together. We have designed the first collaborative, linking, website to do just that. It is not quite "public ready" but it will be before April is over, come visit www.utahfarmtoschool.org very soon.

We have met twice as a group here in Utah and have a lot of fun events coming up that we hope you can join in and help build this program. Our steering group has been invited to make a presentation to the state SNA (School Nutrition Association) meeting in Layton on June 13-15. We hope to both share Utah FTS information and to learn what the school nutrition staff and administrators think the potential benefits and barriers are.

We are planning to send two representatives to the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, daylong organizing meeting, and regional get-togethers in Detroit this year in mid May. The delegates hope to bring tons of great information back to our state to help us move forward. Additionally, we are planning with our regional staff to come have an intensive "workshop" with our members in early summer.

Our initial tasks:

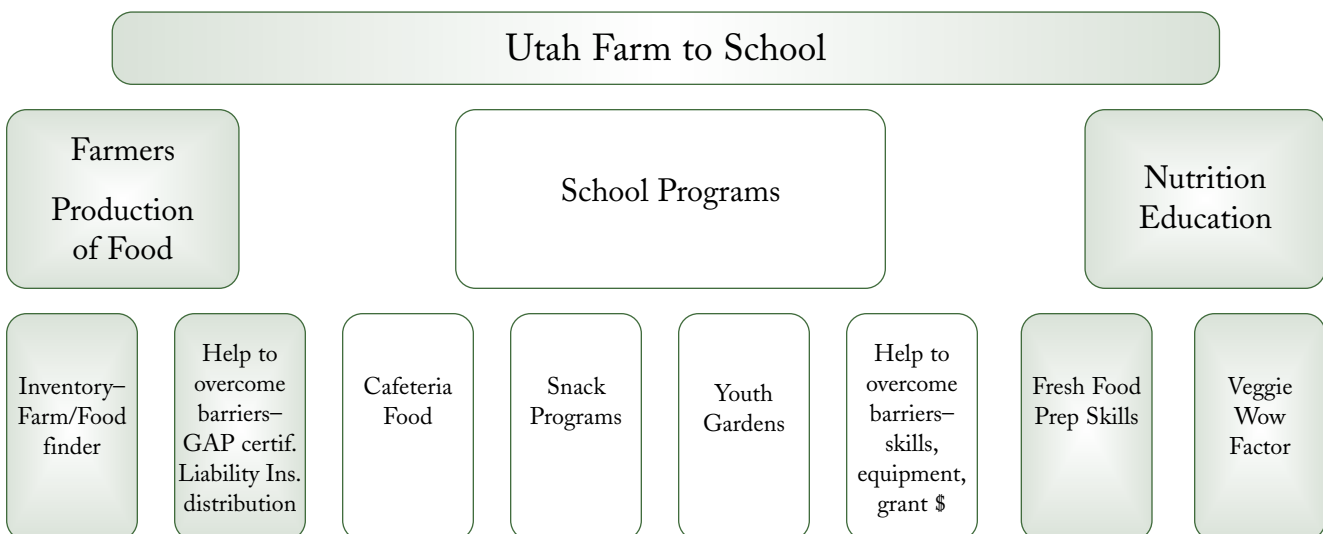
- Get the website up so we can localize information, advice, upcoming events, and success stories.
- Collect success stories to share with others.
- Host workshop with regional staff.
- Identify funding opportunities for our group and for individual efforts.
- Develop ways to locate local food – inventory of farmers/foods.
- Build relationships with the state departments of agriculture, health, and education. Be a part of discussions regarding food safety, Good Agricultural Practices, etc.
- Meet with food distributors to assess access to local foods and ways to improve this. These are United Fresh, Muir Copper Canyon, Veggie Express, SYSCO, and others.

And that is just what we came up with from two meetings, Whew!!!

We are going to have a busy year and can't wait to hear your good ideas. Please come visit our collaborative web site (very soon) and help us grow this "good food project" together.

*Penny Trinca
First Frost Farm*

Our steering group developed the following graphic to help us get a visualization of all the parts of Farm to School that we want to work on here in Utah. To accompany each component, we are developing resource guides to help those new to Farm to School get a starting point to build from.



SWMN Spreads Its Wings: An Urban Farming Conference in '09

The Southwest Marketing Network (SWMN) broke new ground last November when it convened its first ever Urban Farming Conference in West Valley City, Utah on November 16th. It was also the first urban farming conference in Utah. More than 130 farmers, ranchers and ag agency people attended the successful daylong session.

The SWMN conference planning committee determined that an urban farming conference would be an excellent first SWMN Conference to hold in Utah. Salt Lake County, Utah's most populous, still has 580 family farms located on 107,000 acres in the county. Nonetheless, there are still many acres lying fallow in the county. Salt Lake County Councilman Jim Bradley sensed the interest in this unused asset by local growers and envisioned a win-win solution. He and his colleagues got a county initiative passed that will allow farmers to lease some of these unused lands to produce food. It received immediate praise from virtually all stakeholders. Salt Lake County leaders were keenly aware of the loss of many small family farms in their area. This progressive county strongly supports the sustainability of buying local, certainly one of the SWMN's important initiatives.

The conference segments included: *Seeing Yourself as Part of a Community Food System: Creating Partnerships in Your Marketing* • *Farm to School/Institutional Marketing* • *Utah State University's Cooperative Extension Programs for Small Growers* • *Scaling Up, Is It Right For You?* • *The Face of Urban Farming* • *Resources for the New Urban farmer* • *Tying It All Together*. Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon opened the conference. Salt Lake Councilman Jim Bradley gave the keynote address.

The attendees gave the conference high marks, appreciating, among other things: the diversity of the presenters and the audience – a program that featured something for everyone – hearing from local farmers and ranchers and CSA leaders from the podium – the clear purpose and focus of the conference – successful farmers and ranchers with real-world, informative stories to tell – how many people attended who were interested in urban farming – learning about the Farm to School program and other “buy local” initiatives – the opportunity to network with other area producers – good exhibit booths with lots of helpful information available – an excellent lunch prepared with locally grown food – and not the least, the leading edge work being done by Salt Lake County on urban farming issues.



Participants listen intently at the Urban Farming Conference held in West Valley City, Utah on November 16, 2009.

Without a doubt this conference created a lot of buzz before and especially after. Councilman Bradley said it best during a break at the conference. “I’m flabbergasted to see the number of people here. This movement has roots.” Press and television coverage was good.

There is no doubt this conference increased the urban farming momentum already underway and led by Councilman Bradley and Julie Peck-Dabling, Salt Lake County Open Space Manager.

The Western Rural Development Center (Logan, UT), the National Center for Appropriate Technology (Butte, MT), and the SWMN, organized the conference. Conference sponsors and partners included: Salt Lake County, Utah State Cooperative Extension, USDA Risk Management Agency, USDA Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, “Utah’s Own”, Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development, the Great Salt Lake RC&D, and the Utah Association of Conservation Districts.

If you have had any experience with conferences or meetings dealing with urban farming in your region, please be sure to contact the SWMN to tell us what is happening in your area, how it works and what you think the SWMN team could do to support that local effort.

*Jim Goodwin
Western Rural Development Center*

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