



COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY *news*

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Inside the Community Food Projects Program: An Interview with Liz Tuckermanty

Liz Tuckermanty, a nutritionist by training, has been Director of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program since it was established in 1996. Her strong support for the vision and values underlying the program, steady leadership, and responsiveness to its constituents all have been key factors in its success. CFSC staff member Kai Siedenburg interviewed her by phone on November 30, 2007.

Liz invites readers to offer ideas for taking the Community Food Projects Program into the next era by emailing a message to etuckermanty@csrees.usda.gov with subject line "Stakeholder Input."

CFSC: What do you love most about your job?

Liz: It's networking with people who are doing such remarkable things in communities. When I'm sitting in my office in Washington, it gives meaning to what I do. I get to see that wonderful things are happening. I think it's widely recognized that the community food security people are very special people.

(See INTERVIEW on pg. 11)



Enjoying cherry tomatoes at Healthy City Youth Farm, in the Intervale Center, Burlington, Vermont. Photo: Amy Chambers

National Farm to School Network Takes Root

By Marion Kalb

Farm to school programs are expanding rapidly, with over 1,100 active programs in 34 states. This makes it an excellent time to launch a network to coordinate, promote, and expand this movement. CFSC and the Center for Food & Justice at Occidental College have done just that, launching the National Farm to School Network in September of 2007.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has provided this National Network with a three-year, \$2.4 million grant. Eight Regional Lead Agencies (RLAs) have been selected to provide assistance to both beginning and existing programs throughout the country. (See the back page of this newsletter for a list).

After surveying farm to school advocates and gathering input through meetings around the country, the network decided to focus its efforts in the following five areas:

1. **Support state and national policy efforts** for developing regulations and legislation that address policy barriers and develop new opportunities for farm to school programs.
2. **Develop a coordinated marketing and media campaign** at the state, regional, and national levels. This effort will focus on creating a clear, consistent, and inspiring message to increase the visibility of these programs as a way to strengthen family farms and reduce childhood obesity.
3. **Develop informational resources** on farm to school issues that reflect the growth and complexity of programs and regional differences, and develop new resources to address existing gaps.

(See NETWORK on pg. 12)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Winter 2008

Community Food Security News is a publication of the Community Food Security Coalition. CFSC is a non-profit 501(c)(3), North American organization dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. The Coalition achieves its goals through a blend of training, networking, and advocacy to support the efforts of grassroots groups to create effective solutions from the ground up. We provide a variety of training and technical assistance programs; support the development of farm to cafeteria initiatives; advocate for federal policies to support community food security initiatives; organize an annual conference; and provide networking and educational resources.

Community food security can be defined as a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound diet through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system that promotes community self-reliance and social justice. (Based on a definition by Mike Hamm and Anne Bellows)

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Will Allen, *Growing Power*; Molly Anderson, *Food Systems Integrity*; Ben Burkett, *Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*; Ed Cooney, *Congressional Hunger Center*; Tera Couchman, *Janus Youth Programs*; Missy Hughes, *Organic Valley Coop*; James Johnson-Piett, *The Food Trust*; Young Kim, *Fondy Food Market*; Erika Lesser, *Slow Food USA*; Denise O'Brien, *Women, Food, and Agriculture Network*; Kathy Ozer, *National Family Farm Coalition*; Anne Palmer, *Center for a Livable Future*; Wayne Roberts, *Toronto Food Policy Council*; Chukou Thao, *National Hmong American Farmers, Inc*; Lydia Villanueva, *CASA del Llano*

CFS Coalition

PO Box 209, Venice, CA 90294

Phone: 310-822-5410

E-mail: natalie@foodsecurity.orgWeb: <http://www.foodsecurity.org>

Editor for this issue: Kai Siedenburgh

Letter from the President

First, I would like to welcome our new board members: **Missy Hughes** from Organic Valley/CROPP Coop in La Farge, WI; Young Kim of the Fondy Food Market in Milwaukee; **Erika Lesser** of Slow Food USA in Brooklyn; **James Johnson-Piett** of The Food Trust in Philadelphia; and **Anne Palmer** of the Center for a Livable Future in Baltimore. We are grateful to them for lending their talents and expertise to our growing organization.

On behalf of the CFSC Board, I would like to thank all of our members who attended our meeting in Jekyll Island, GA in November. About 75 people participated in the two-day event. We especially want to thank the planning committee and our facilitator Barbara Rusmore for helping to make the meeting very participatory and productive.

It was great to hear what our members had to say about progress in the food movement over the last five years and their ideas for a future vision and CFSC's role in the movement. In the area of diversity issues, the food movement has helped people transition from being farm workers to farm owners; supported a diversity of farmers (Hmong, African American, and Latino, to name a few); and increased respect and honor for culturally appropriate foods. It also has



Lydia Villanueva,
President of the Board
of CFSC

raised awareness that people who are living the problem are helping to name and solve the problem, with support from a broad range of organizations. People of color are in leadership roles and starting innovative initiatives to target the roots of racism and discrimination. We also have a growing number of Spanish-language publications and more stories about people of color

growing and selling healthy foods.

In recognizing the many accomplishments of the food movement, it is clear that CFSC must provide opportunities to hear from a broad range of voices in the movement. While not everyone could attend our meeting, we especially would have liked to include more voices of youth, people of color, and farmers. The meeting demonstrated the importance of working directly with our membership to create a vision for the future of the CFS movement—a shared vision in which everyone feels included, valued, and heard. CFSC continues to invite our members to share their ideas and concerns by visiting our webpage or by calling our office. As the new Board of Directors begins its work, we will be looking to our members and staff to help give the Coalition the guidance it needs to build an even stronger food movement.

Community Food Security Coalition Staff

Jeanette Abi-Nader

Evaluation Program Manager
jeanette@foodsecurity.org

Jessica Bell

California Organizer
jessicabell@foodsecurity.org

Aleta Dunne

Office Manager
aleta@foodsecurity.org

Heather Fenney

California Organizer
heather@foodsecurity.org

Andy Fisher

Executive Director
andy@foodsecurity.org

Natalie Fryman

Office Administrator
natalie@foodsecurity.org

Marion Kalb

Farm to School Program Director
marion@foodsecurity.org

Steph Larsen

Acting Policy Director
steph@foodsecurity.org

Kristen Markley

Farm to College Program
Manager
kristen@foodsecurity.org

Kai Siedenburgh

T&TA Program Director
kai@foodsecurity.org

Mark Winne

Food Policy Council Director
mark@foodsecurity.org

Farm Bill Update: Changing Landscape Leads to Changing Legislation

By Steph Larsen

Note: As we go to press in mid-December, the Senate has just voted on their version of the Farm Bill. The House and Senate versions of the bill will be reconciled early in 2008.

If the Farm Bill comes up in conversation, chances are the first things that come to mind will be farm subsidies, agricultural conservation, and perhaps also food stamps. Yet the Farm Bill also includes many more components, and it has a profound impact on the structure of our farm and food system—who has access to food, who is able to farm, and what kind of food is available. It affects not only farmers, but also environmentalists, food banks, consumer advocates, and nutritionists, to name just a few. In short, because we all eat, we all are affected by the Farm Bill.

This year's Farm Bill process has been unusual and very exciting due to the unprecedented collaboration between organizations with interests in food and farming and the high level of participation from engaged citizens. The process started more than a year ago with field hearings conducted by legislators. Meanwhile, organizations from diverse issue areas were coming together to establish and advocate for common priorities. CFSC was part of a collaboration called the Farm and Food Policy Project, which brought together interests from anti-hunger, nutrition and public health, family farming, sustainable agriculture, and rural communities in a way that had not been done for many years.

Another unusual aspect of the process was the amount of media coverage of Farm Bill issues and its impact on public education. Beginning in the spring and summer, national media outlets started publicizing some of the problems associated with the agricultural structure that the current



Congressional briefing on healthy food access (see article on page 5). Photo: Marvin Jones

Farm Bill supports. Subsidies that farmers—and non-farmers—receive were deconstructed and debated in both traditional media and online communities. While there were many divergent opinions expressed that did not necessarily lead to a consensus, the media coverage enabled many more citizens to become educated about and engaged in the Farm Bill.

The Community Food Security Coalition's members and allies played a key role in this media coverage by working closely with CFSC staff to submit editorials and opinion pieces to local newspapers. A total of 32 op-eds were published in 28 publications, with an estimated readership of six million people. In addition, CFSC staff did over 30 radio interviews stressing the importance of the Farm Bill and our priorities. Not only did this help to educate constituents about the importance of programs like the Community Food Projects, it also gained attention from legislators.

In the spring, the House of Representatives began committee work in earnest, and the Farm Bill passed through the Agriculture Committee and onto the House floor in July. The Rules Committee pared down amendments to the bill, and the Representatives began debate that at times was quite heated. Attempts at

significant reform were not successful, and though the House leadership lauded the bill as the first step towards reform, many legislators later admitted that they could have done more, for example to limit huge payments to industrial-style mega farms.

Another unusual aspect of the 2007 Farm Bill debate was apparent in the final House of Representatives vote. Farm bills are usually very bipartisan, with votes falling more along regional lines. This year, however, some of the funding mechanisms were objectionable to House Republicans, so the vote went largely along party lines.

The Senate began their committee process in late summer with the continued engagement of constituents and organizations interested in agriculture and food issues. Agriculture Committee Chair Harkin (D-IA) worked closely with Ranking Member Chambliss (R-GA) to draft a bill that passed unanimously out of the committee in October. In mid-December, after lengthy delays and much debate about reform amendments, the Senate passed a bill that critics call largely status quo. The next step is to bring the two bills together to reconcile their differences.

Though the bill has not been finalized, the CFSC staff is optimistic

Healthy Food Access in Underserved Communities and the Farm Bill

By Thomas Forster

Behind partisan struggles and vested interests featured in media stories about the 2007 Farm Bill, a new issue came forward in the debate that will affect food and farm policy for years to come. The issue is what to do about the convergence of low-income neighborhoods, high chronic disease patterns, and the lack of access to fresh produce in urban and rural America. In public policy discussions, these areas are described as “underserved communities” or “food deserts.”

New political pull from urban and rural legislators, especially the Black, Hispanic and Asian-American Congressional Caucuses in the House of Representatives, has generated consensus that this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed now. Many of their constituents live in the nation’s highest risk communities for preventable chronic disease linked to a lack of access to healthy food. While Food Stamps and WIC help address food access issues in these communities, these federal programs are only beginning to address obesity and healthy food access.

In December of 2007, Representative Bobby Rush (D-IL) sponsored a Capitol Hill briefing for congressional staff to focus on Healthy Food Access in Underserved Communities. The purpose was to bring attention to four programs that the Congressional Black Caucus and other offices want to see receive mandatory funding in the Farm Bill:

- Community Food Projects, which support innovation across sectors to implement solutions to food access problems
- Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Program to provide technical assistance and grants to businesses and organizations in underserved communities;
- Rural Development Business and Industry Loans to scale up innovations that are successful;
- Study on Food Deserts in urban and rural America to better understand the causes and the most effective solutions to provide access to good food for all.

Sponsoring organizations, including the American Public Health Association, the Northeast Midwest Institute, Neighborhood Assistance Center, the National Urban League, and Policy Link, as well as the Community Food Security Coalition, will continue to work on these and other issues after the Farm Bill has passed Congress.



Rep. Bobby Rush and the hearing speakers, from left to right: Daniel Ross, Suzanne Bergeron, LaDonna Redmond, Rep. Rush, Edgardo Cortijo, Gina Villani, Angela Glover Blackwell. Photo: Marvin Jones

FARM BILL (continued)

about some of the changes that will positively affect local food systems. CFSC prioritized advocating for increased funding for Community Food Projects, flexibility for schools to purchase from local farmers, and renewing infrastructure used in local food systems. All of these priorities are present in the Farm Bill at this writing, and we will continue to advocate for them as the bill moves forward.

The biggest success of the last year related to the Farm Bill, however, was the level of media exposure and the effect it had on public involvement. Perhaps more than ever, citizens are becoming informed about the Farm

Bill and how it affects their lives. Moreover, people are coming to understand how family farms and rural communities are an integral part of the American landscape. It is exciting to see how this knowledge has motivated citizens to engage in the democratic process, and I look forward to this trend continuing. To stay on top of the Farm Bill progress, see our policy website at www.foodsecurity.org/policy, and for more about the work of the Farm and Food Policy Project, see www.farmandfoodproject.org.

Steph Larsen is the Acting Policy Director for CFSC.

Save the Date!

“Re/Storing Our Urban and Rural Communities with Healthy Food”

The Community Food Security Coalition’s 12th annual conference

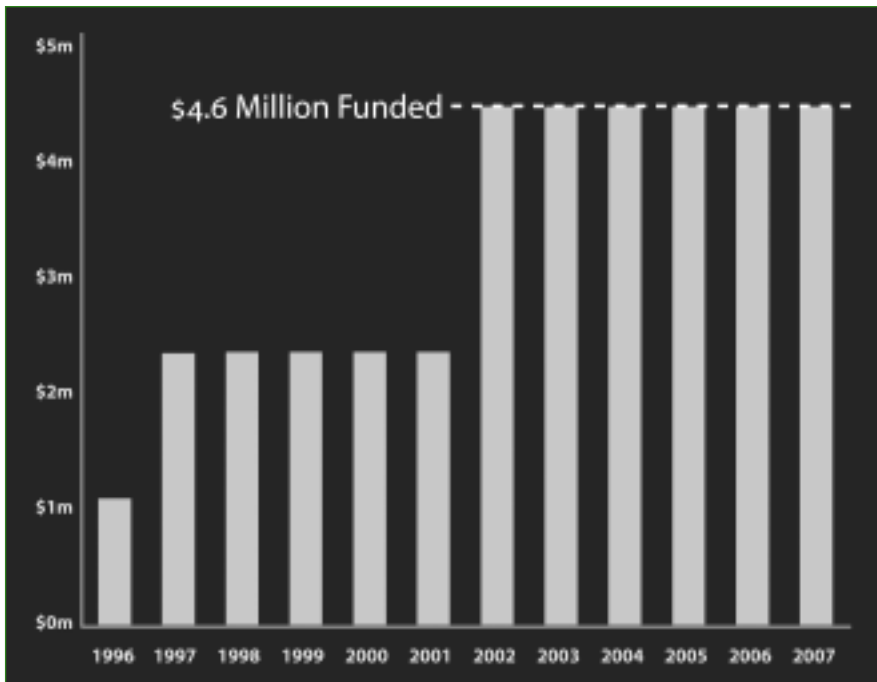
October 4-8, 2008
outside Philadelphia
(Cherry Hill, NJ)

Continuing CFP in the Farm Bill

By Steph Larsen

The Community Food Projects (CFP) Program has been an important vehicle for food insecure communities to develop innovative solutions to food and agriculture-related problems. The 2007 Farm Bill process has provided an important opportunity for the program's supporters to make recommendations for how it could be improved.

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) made CFP one of its top Farm Bill priorities, and so did many of our allies and partner organizations. Many of the nearly 250 organizations that have received CFP grants have contacted their legislators about the program. At the top of CFSC's list of desired changes were additional mandatory funding and some language changes that groups on the ground told us would help them have an even stronger impact.



CFP Program funding by year. Courtesy of theCoup.org

CFSC staff, along with many allies, collectively educated legislators on the importance of the CFP Program and the need for an increase in funding to meet growing demand. We worked with members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, particularly agriculture committee members. We organized groups on the ground to contact their legislators and communicate how important this program is to the communities it serves. Because of this constituent advocacy, the message got across and a number of key legislators began to push for an increase in CFP funding with more intensity.

In 1996, when CFP was first added to the Farm Bill, this small yet highly effective program was funded at \$2.5 million a year. In 2002, the funding was doubled to \$5 million. From the beginning, the funding has been mandatory. Unlike discretionary funds that must be fought for every year in the appropriations process, mandatory funding all but guarantees that the program continues.

This stability has been very important to the success of the program to date.

The House of Representatives passed their version of the Farm Bill in July. In it, they made many of the language changes we requested, but instead of increasing the mandatory funding for CFP, they authorized \$30 million in discretionary funding. At first glance that may seem like a funding increase, but because of the sheer number of discretionary programs, Congress does not fund all of them every year, which means that CFP could lose its funding.

Some of the language changes made in the House bill included an increase in the maximum length of the grant, an expansion of the preferences for certain types of projects, additional money for the CFP clearinghouse, and revisions in the matching funds requirement so that a larger percentage of project budgets can be funded with federal dollars. After careful evaluation of the political climate and the most important needs of grantees, CFSC staff decided to advocate hardest for extending the length of the grant, because it would not cost money or dilute the existing funds, and would help to get projects firmly underway before the funding ended.

None of the language changes mentioned above are included in the Senate bill. However, it does include \$10 million in mandatory funding, which would double the current funding.

As the process moves forward, the House and Senate will bring the two bills together in a conference committee to work out the differences. For CFP, the major difference is the mandatory funding in the Senate versus discretionary funding in the House. We believe that with enough encouragement from constituents, we can build the political will needed to find mandatory money for CFP. To stay informed as the process continues, you can sign up for our regular policy updates on CFSC's website at www.foodsecurity.org.

Steph Larsen is the Acting Policy Director for CFSC.

The Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program— 10 Years of Progress

By Mark Winne

Note: This is a slightly edited excerpted from the report, *Healthy Food Healthy Communities: A Decade of Community Food Projects in Action*, published by CFSC in 2007. The report, which includes profiles of eight projects, is available for free download at <http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html#cfpdecade>.

From the Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona to the densely populated neighborhoods of East New York, Community Food Projects (CFP) grantees are reaching back into the past and ahead into the future to develop new ways to produce and distribute healthy food. On the Tohono O'odham Reservation, along the Mexico and Arizona border, tribal members are battling the devastating effects of a diabetes epidemic by restoring the cultivation of traditional drought-resistant crops. New farming operations devoted to traditional foods, such as tepary beans, are developing new jobs, increasing the tribe's food security and self-sufficiency, and leading the way to healthier diets.

Facing similar concerns caused by the limited availability of healthy food, East New York's 200,000 residents are using CFP funds to grow vegetables on small urban farms and to distribute fresh fruits and vegetables through new farmers' markets. The community's young people are learning important gardening skills, and the region's farmers and neighborhood vendors have new markets for their goods. Best of all, residents are taking charge of their local food economies and their physical health.

CFPs grow from the ethic of community self-reliance, which has always been a prominent cornerstone of the American tradition. The principles of helping one's neighbor and of mutual aid are among the time-honored values that communities have drawn upon to maintain control over their own destinies.



Number of CFP projects funded by state, 1996-2006. Courtesy of theCoup.org

Since it was enacted as part of the 1996 farm bill, the CFP has provided 243 grants to private nonprofit organizations in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and one U.S. territory. Those grants, which have ranged in size from \$10,400 to \$300,000, have fostered innovative responses to the challenges facing local and state food systems. They have been essential in bringing together many diverse partners who, by sharing their knowledge, skills, and resources, have created local networks of enterprising solutions to some of the nation's most intransigent food and hunger problems.

In July 1995, Texas Representative Eligio "Kika" de la Garza introduced the Community Food Security Act of 1995, the bill that would later become the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program. He was

joined at the time by a bipartisan group of 17 Congressional co-sponsors. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Agriculture and to its Subcommittee on Department Operations, Nutrition and Foreign Agriculture, whose chairman, Bill Emerson, of Missouri, was also one of the bill's sponsors. An additional 15 House members joined their colleagues to bring the number of co-sponsors to 33.

At the time of the bill's introduction, Congressman de la Garza said, "The concept of community food security is a comprehensive strategy for feeding hungry people, one that incorporates the participation of the community and encourages a greater role for the entire food system." Indeed, the CFP is founded on the principle of community food security, a condition in which all community

(See *CFP PROGRESS REPORT* on pg. 13)

CFP and CFSC: Working Together for Stronger Communities

By Mark Winne

Start with a manifesto-like document provocatively titled *The Community Food Security Empowerment Act*, then boldly march it down the corridors of Congress with enough chutzpah to convince policymakers that you know what you're talking about, and you just might get a law passed in this country. To claim that the co-founders of the Community Food Security Coalition had a strategy even close to that sophisticated for passage of their Act would be a stretch. But as Mark Twain once said, "All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence—success is sure to follow."

In all fairness, the creation of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFP) in the 1996 Farm Bill did require some skill, organization, and most important, experience. And it was this last ingredient, experience, which gave CFP its underlying authenticity. Working from almost 20 years of community-based food work—including farmers' markets, community gardens, anti-hunger advocacy, and food banking—activists intuitively understood the need for some kind of coalescing force that could unite these many disparate initiatives. They shared a roughly common vision for food security, and they had a sense, at least at an individual project level, of how to achieve it. Yet they lacked a means by which to coordinate their efforts and to expand their effectiveness within their respective communities.

The incipient coalition of community food security activists realized this underlying need, and it can be said with all due modesty that the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) gave that need a voice. Looking to the Farm Bill process that was unfolding in 1994, CFSC saw an opportunity to give community-based food activists new resources that would allow them to address that need. *The Community Food Security Empowerment Act*, the first formal declaration of the new Coalition, framed the argument for community-based solutions to the country's food, nutrition, and agriculture problems. Of the dozen or so proposals for national action set forth in the Act, the one that gained the most traction in Congress was the proposal for a federal grant program to promote community food security. With the support of dozens of new Coalition members and critical work by then agriculture committee staff person Julie Paradis and Congressmembers Bill Emerson and Kika de la Garza, the new grant program became law.

While it is fair to say that the CFSC helped make the CFP what it is today, it is equally true that the CFP has helped make CFSC what it is. Not that the organization's work has been limited to the purposes of CFP—it has certainly branched out into many other arenas over the past 12 years—but as the signature achievement of CFSC, the grant program has forged this organization's identity while also giving its many members a flag around which to rally. Not only has the \$40 million dollars distributed by CFP since 1996 benefited hundreds of communities, it also has mobilized a constituency that supports both CFP and CFSC.

Kurt Vonnegut once said, "everyone loves to do development, but nobody wants to do maintenance." Fortunately for CFP and the thousands who have been well served by it, CFSC has worked hard to sustain, enhance, and expand this small, but beautiful program. Once Congress authorized it and appropriated the necessary funds, the U.S. Department of Agriculture had to implement it. To that end, CFSC has enjoyed a long and collaborative relationship with staff at the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), CFP's administering agency, to address and develop an infinite number of operational details. Working with two of the shining lights of the federal bureaucracy, Elizabeth Tuckermanty and Zy Weinberg, CFSC has played a vital role in shaping the direction of CFP.

Although CFP has been one of the most sensitive and people-friendly government programs possible, few distributions of public funds escape the murky depths of the federal grant making system. To help prospective CFP applicants navigate this oftentimes confusing labyrinth, CFSC has published written CFP Planning guides for each of the past eight years and provided free advice and coaching in preparing the CFP grant application for as many as 100 applicants a year. CFSC has also provided a wide range of practical workshops and publications that have helped both CFP applicants and grantees develop more robust projects, as well as tools to help them conduct effective program evaluations. This kind of one-stop shopping approach has enabled hundreds of non-profit organizations to put together stronger grant applications and, better yet, more successful community projects.

All of these services have been carefully tailored to the needs of those who are trying to improve the food security of their communities. The same experience and knowledge of community-based food work that influenced the original Community Food Security Empowerment Act back in 1995 continues to inform the on-going reinvention and operation of the Community Food Projects Grant Program today.

Mark Winne is Food Policy Council Director for CFSC.

Current Training and Technical Assistance Programs Offered by CFSC for CFP Applicants and Grantees

Note: Most of the following programs are open to non-CFP grantees also. CFSC's website includes information about many additional resources and publications available to CFP grantees and others: <http://www.foodsecurity.org>.

National Learning Communities

CFSC is organizing learning communities to enable practitioners to share information, learn about best practices and effective models, and support each others' work. Each learning community meets primarily by conference call and once in person at the 2008 CFSC annual meeting. They focus on the following topics*:

- Food Retail: the Healthy Corner Stores Network. See article on page 14 and <http://www.healthycornerstores.org>
- Program Evaluation: see Evaluation Training below
- Farm to School: for organizations seeking to expand their projects (this group is full)
- Local and Regional Food System Development: for groups working on these initiatives

A Field Guide to Evaluation Training

This year's CFSC evaluation training will be offered in five modules through a series of conference calls from January 2008 through August 2009. It will be part of the Evaluation Learning Community. Participants will have the opportunity to join the calls relevant to their evaluation needs, and to share their own insights and learning in program evaluation.*

Whole Measures Working Group

CFSC is launching a new program to help develop a tool for values-based evaluation and planning. Collaboratively with a group of CFP grantees, we will develop a Community Food Security version of the *Whole Measures* document by revising the principles, values, outcomes, and indicators to reflect CFS concepts.* Check out Whole Measures at <http://www.measuresofhealth.net>

* For more information on these programs, contact Jeanette Abi-Nader at jeanette@foodsecurity.org.

Assistance to CFP Grant Applicants

CFSC provides a free 'hotline' that provides individualized assistance to CFP applicants to help them develop effective projects and proposals. We also offer a CFP Planning Guide with a wealth of information about the CFP program guidelines and how to develop a strong proposal, and briefer written guides to other aspects of the grant process. The CFSC website also includes examples of proposals and other information helpful to applicants. See http://www.foodsecurity.org/cfp_help.html

Important: for the 2008 grant cycle, Letters of Intent are due by January 10.

New Publications from CFSC

All available for free download at <http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html#books>

Food and Agriculture Related Policies and Practices to Benefit Limited Resource Farmers

By Martin Bailkey. CFSC, October 2007, 24 pages.

This report highlights a variety of approaches for supporting the success of limited resource farmers and ranchers. It features examples from 14 organizations and summaries of 36 relevant state and local government policies and practices.

Building Community Food Security: Lessons Learned from Community Food Projects, 1999-2003

By Kami Pothukuchi. CFSC, October 2007, 60 pages.

Based on an analysis of CFP project narrative reports, this document provides an overview of CFP activities, factors for success, challenges, and lessons learned (see article on page 10).

Nuevos Mercados Para Su Cosecha (New Ways to Sell What You Grow)

By Rex Dufour and Kristen Markley. National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and CFSC, July 2007, 8 pages.

This illustrated Spanish-language publication details strategies for farmers interested in marketing their products to local institutions such as schools, colleges, and hospitals.

Farm to Hospital: Supporting Local Agriculture and Improving Health Care

By Moira Beery and Kristen Markley. Center for Food & Justice and CFSC, July 2007, 6 pages.

This brochure introduces interested farmers and hospital food service departments to the ins and outs of developing partnerships to supply food to hospitals.

Building Community Food Security: Lessons from Community Food Projects, 1999-2003

By Kami Potbukuchi, Ph.D.

In its first ten years, the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program provided grants to 243 projects nationwide. Readers may know of one or more Community Food Projects (or CFPs) in their region. But how much do readers know about the types of activities devised by the many diverse projects funded by the CFP Program? The kinds of organizations that lead activities? What CFP project representatives consider to be the key factors that contributed to the successful implementation of their projects, and challenges they experienced? About lessons that were learned from project experiences on the ground?

These questions are taken up—albeit in a limited way—in a recent study, *Building Community Food Security: Lessons from Community Food Projects, 1999-2003*. Based on an analysis of five years of CFP grantee report summaries and a focus group conducted over two sessions, this study provides basic information on Community Food Projects, their activities, and key factors that explain their successes and challenges. CFP Program objectives overlap with broad community food security goals, which seek to develop food systems that promote health, sustainability, local self-reliance, and social justice. Hence, this report also looks at ways in which CFPs are able to deliver community food security and the constraints they face. Finally, the report outlines steps that might be taken to improve the quality of Community Food Project applications and the implementation of projects.

The following paragraphs include a sample of the study's findings and conclusions, which are developed more fully in the report.

Selected Characteristics of Successful Community Food Projects

Successful projects...

...show progress in meeting particular community food needs.

They are able to articulate, through stories, images, and statistics, how their project helped increase their community's capacity to meet food needs of low-income populations.

...are able to "hit the ground running."

They have built the requisite base to prepare them for implementing proposed activities soon after the grant award is made.

...gain community buy-in and support of activities.

They develop ongoing community processes in which the needs the project will address, its approaches and strategies, and the specific roles of partners are deliberated, often with direct input from those who will benefit from the project.

...build community food leadership.

Successful projects help cultivate individual and organizational leaders, as well as community leadership capacity around food issues and activities.

...are able to sustain selected activities after the grant ends.

Mechanisms to continue key activities may include income generation, volunteers, the integration of project activities into organizational activities, and internal cross-subsidies.

The report's conclusions include the following:

- More Community Food Projects need to be supported for project planning.
- Community Food Projects need to be supported in geographic areas

that haven't yet been funded.

- Community Food Projects could benefit from greater connection to other federal programs that meet low-income needs, especially in relation to nutrition and obesity prevention.
- Other community services to meet the food and other needs of low-income populations should be encouraged to integrate CFS principles.
- As a key activity of CFPs, education needs more support.
- More rigorous research is needed on innovative community food strategies.

Initiated under a CFP Training and Technical Assistance grant, this study is a first attempt at summarizing Community Food Project activities and results across programs. Jeanette Abi-Nader of the Community Food Security Coalition served as project manager for the study, Kai Siedenburg provided valuable editorial assistance, and Tammy Morales helped with coding project summaries. I am grateful for their participation, and that of the many project representatives and reviewers of an early draft. We are grateful to the CFP Program for making this study possible.

This report may be downloaded for free from the publications page of the CFSC website, or requested in hard copy format from the CFSC office (supplies are limited).

Kami Potbukuchi is an Associate Professor of Geography and Urban Planning at Wayne State University in Detroit and a long-time participant in the CFS movement.

INTERVIEW (continued from page 1)

CFSC: What is most inspiring to you about the Community Food Projects (CFP) Program and the projects it supports?

Liz: The projects create an atmosphere of self-discovery that leads to lighting a spark in someone who has felt defeated. Projects help people learn what they can do, that little “aha!” that gives them forward movement. And the natural leadership that bubbles up in community is helped by a food focus. It’s such a universal thing that everybody both needs and loves.

CFSC: At CFP’s Decade Celebration this March, Chuck Conner [who is now the Acting Secretary of Agriculture] called CFP “one of the most exciting and unique programs operated by USDA.” While CFP is a tiny program by federal government standards, it is also very visible and highly regarded. Why is that?

Liz: There are several reasons. One is that the program is transparent in what it’s doing—building capacity and self-sufficiency around a very important need in the community. Also, it has supporters, and it doesn’t seem to have detractors. Often administrators and legislators only hear from people when they don’t like what’s going on. But the community food advocates have been so good at saying ‘thank you.’ Hearing ‘thank you’ all the time does wonders for visibility and reputation. And the fact that for every dollar we invest there is a dollar from the community—the co-investment adds to its positive image.

CFSC: What is it about the CFP Program that makes it so appealing to legislators and others across a broad political spectrum?

Liz: The entrepreneurial aspect of it; the fact that it engenders capacity in communities. They get good, positive feedback about it. Even the failures are treated as lessons learned. The

leadership of the Coalition and all the partners has a lot to do with that positive attitude about the work; a cooperative rather than competitive attitude. There is diversity in the work, not only in color but also in age and walk of life and focus. It’s a very rich mix of people.

CFSC: How important has the public-private partnership with the Coalition and other non-profits been for the functioning of CFP Program? How has it shaped the program?

Liz: I would say really essential. I’ve only been able to handle the bureaucratic interface, and you all have been there ready to help train people and help them succeed... creating venues for grant writing workshops, doing the T&TA, developing the workbooks, and being welcoming to all sorts of people. It gets back to lack of competitiveness that seems to be a rule in the community food security movement; it’s more of a ‘we and’ rather than an ‘us and them’ kind of thing. The beauty of building projects from the grassroots is that there is abundance there. You’re using the skills and the assets of the community. You have a lot of resources to work with from the start. Then groups are looking to add to the abundance with grant money.

CFSC: Do you think that the CFP grant program and the process of applying for that help people recognize the abundance they already have?

Liz: I hope so. We intended our questions in the RFA to lead communities to assess their strengths. I do think that people who develop proposals, even when they are declined, are farther along toward having a project.

CFSC: What do you think are some of the most important accomplishments of the CFP Program?



Liz Tuckermanty, Director of the CFP Program

Liz: Developing food enterprises in some communities. And helping break down the barriers of isolation in a lot of low-income communities, so people have a positive reason to come out, whether it’s to buy at a farmers’ market or grow in a community garden, or support the youth farm stand. The

New CFP PowerPoint and CFP-Related Publications

CFSC has created a brief PowerPoint slide show highlighting the types of projects supported by the CFP Program and their impacts on communities. It is an accessible and engaging introduction to community food work, and can be modified to include a local project. The presenters’ guide includes tips on how to use the slide show to inspire local action.

CFSC also has published several reports profiling successful CFP projects, and a *CFP Evaluation Handbook & Toolkit*.

See the Publications page on CFSC’s website for more information: <http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html>

INTERVIEW (continued from page 11)

most important thing is that very basic level of getting the community to have access to good food. But more than that, the movement has created the energy that is allowing everyone to look at the problems in the food system, and people have recognized the importance of local food.

CFSC: Do you think it is possible for these relatively modest grants to make a lasting difference in a community's food system? If so, how?

Liz: I think they can start the process. Three years and \$300,000 is probably not enough to make the total change, but they certainly can put the partnerships and connections in place and get things started. Thomas Forster has a vision of the CFP Program being the jump start, and that other funding sources would be needed to take projects to scale, for instance to help set up the infrastructure for food processing and distribution.

CFSC: What's most challenging about running the CFP Program?

Liz: The most disheartening part is having to say no to so many good projects, and having people be disappointed and disillusioned. The second hardest is getting everything through the bureaucracy. With the unique nature of our program, we have to keep up the mantra that this is a program for small non-profits; this is not a university-based program. It's been especially tough as we move toward electronic submission, because they have to have one size for all. "One size" doesn't always fit well. The sheer volume of responses has been really tough. I'm in this quandary of whether to limit the number of proposals. Do we look at the letters of intent with a more critical eye? But when someone does a proposal, it helps move their project along, so we don't want to limit people too much by turning them down.

CFSC: What would you like to see change about the CFP Program?

Liz: I would like to see the projects extended to five years, if people want them that long. I think that if we were to get more funding, that would be a good thing for the whole movement. That would allow for a broader variety of projects... we might support a few larger projects, maybe regional food systems, and include the small projects as well. I would also like to see more training and technical assistance in more places. I'd like to create more flexibility to make the whole application process easier.

CFSC: What are your hopes or goals for the future of the CFP Program?

Liz: I'd like to have a community food security project in every community, big and little; and have food systems on the agenda of 4-H, Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, as well as every local organization.

CFSC: What is the most important advice you can give to organizations that want to apply for a CFP grant?

Liz: Know your community and your collaborators. Develop projects from the grassroots. Know the assets and the desires of the community, and look within the community to get the answers to build a project. Read the RFA [Request for Applications]. Look for projects that have been funded. Talk to as many people as you can. Get your best detail person to figure out what's required. Get all your ducks in a row. Call and ask questions. Read the RFA. Read the RFA. Read the RFA!

NETWORK (continued from page 1)

4. **Develop networking systems** among existing farm to school programs to foster communication and collaboration and to share lessons learned, and hold networking meetings at the regional and national levels.
5. **Provide training and technical assistance** to school administrators, food service staff, parents, farmers, community members, and others interested at the state, regional, and national levels.

For more information on farm to school programs in your state or the National Network, or to order an information packet, go to www.farmtoschool.org.

Marion Kalb is the Farm to School Program Director for CFSC.

The CFSC Grapevine: New Member E-Newsletter

CFSC has created a new quarterly e-newsletter to provide our members with timely information about CFSC's programs and resources, and to invite their input and participation. Each issue includes information on new publications, upcoming events, training and technical assistance opportunities, and profiles of member organizations. The first issue can be viewed at <http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html#grapevine>.

If you're not a member, see CFSC's website to join: <http://www.foodsecurity.org/memberinfo.html>. If you are a member but didn't receive the first issue of the Grapevine (sent November 2), contact Natalie Fryman: natalie@foodsecurity.org.

CFP PROGRESS REPORT (continued from page 7)

residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

This kind of systems thinking guides the 10-year-old program and is evident in the projects that have received funds. In places as different as Lubbock, TX, and Green Bay, WI, the CFP has played a key role in building comprehensive approaches to multiple problems. The South Plains Food Bank of Lubbock uses its 5 1/2 acre farm to produce food for the food bank. But that's not all; the farm also serves as a demonstration site for sustainable farming practices, a youth training and job site, and a community-supported agriculture facility. In Green Bay, the Brown County Task Force on Hunger identified the region's large Hmong population as the group most at risk for food insecurity. The Hmong benefit from small business and enterprise mentoring that allows them to develop farm- and food-related microbusinesses. Again, self-sufficiency and self-help are putting people on the road to food security.

Goals and Objectives of Community Food Projects

Congress established CFP as a program to help nonprofit, community-based organizations develop projects that require a one-time infusion of federal assistance to become self-sustaining. The programs:

- Meet the food needs of low-income people;
- Increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and
- Promote comprehensive responses to food, farm, and nutrition issues.

It is interesting to note, however, that the CFP's broad mandate in terms of food issues and its careful focus on low-income and community concerns enable the program to use its limited resources to maximum effect. By allowing the projects and the



Participants in the Lower East Side Girls Club of New York project

communities they represent to determine their priority food needs, grant funding generally has flowed to the areas where it is needed the most. For instance, at the time of CFP's initial authorization, the awareness of diet-related health problems had not reached the level that it has today. However, a significant number of grants made over the past 5 years have allowed communities to address issues such as access to healthy food, community nutrition programs, and nutrition education.

A good example of how health and diet awareness, local innovation, and CFP funding can make a difference is the Lower East Side Girls Club of New York. Building on relationships among the Girls Club, a family farm, and a community health center, a 2002 CFP grant enabled the Girls Club to set up "Juice Joints," after-school venues for healthy food. When coupled with food purchased from regional farms, job training, and business management classes, this entrepreneurial approach enabled youth participants not only to eat better, but also to earn money. In

the words of Adrianna Pezzuli, the project director, "The 2002 CFP grant enabled us to expand the highly replicable Juice and Muffin Bars to reach 2,000 teens per week. [They have] increased girls' energy, resulting in increased class participation and enthusiasm in school, positively affected girls' eating habits, and enabled better self-esteem through a sense of personal bodily health."

Since its inception in 1996, the CFP Program has earned a reputation as a dynamic and adaptable force within the changing circumstances of community food needs. This was especially apparent in 2002 when Congress re-authorized the program as part of the 2002 farm bill. This legislation not only doubled the funding for the program, it added some important new revisions that allowed grants for food system infrastructure development and food policy councils. By making these amendments to the program, Congress acknowledged CFP's expanding role as a supporter of community food system innovation and recognized the need

Healthy Corner Stores Network Launched

Advocates across the country utilize a wide variety of creative strategies to improve access to healthy foods in low-income and underserved communities. In recent years, many groups have become interested in the idea of bringing healthier foods into existing small-scale stores. In both sparsely populated rural areas and low-income urban areas, such stores are often the only accessible food outlet for many people. And all too often, they offer mostly junk food, liquor, and tobacco. While bringing in fresh produce and other healthier food into small-scale stores can pose significant challenges, it can be done successfully, especially when advocates understand the perspectives of both store owners and community members and partner effectively with both groups. For advocates who are new to this work, it's very valuable to learn from the experiences of those who have gone before.

That's why CFSC and several partners launched a national learning community in May of 2007 to support information sharing and networking between people working on these issues. The Healthy Corner Stores Network (HCSN) offers quarterly conference calls, in-person meetings, a listserv, and a website with over 60 project profiles, dozens of resources, and information on HCSN activities. Response to this timely network has been very strong, with 150 people joining within a few months and large groups on the conference calls. The network is co-convened by CFSC, The Food Trust, and Public Health Law & Policy (which created the website). It is part of a broader food retail project funded by the UPS Foundation, which also will include a workshop track at the 2008 CFSC conference.

For more information or to join the network, go to <http://www.healthycornerstores.org> or contact Kai Siedenburt at kai@foodsecurity.org.

CFP PROGRESS REPORT (continued from page 13)

for civil society to participate in the shaping of food and agriculture policies.

One of the first groups to receive a CFP grant under the new language was San Francisco Food Systems (SFFS), a public-private partnership that works closely with the city's Department of Public Health. Like many cities across the country, San Francisco city government recognized that it could do more to promote waste recycling, urban agriculture, the purchase of locally grown food, and better use of the Food Stamp Program. However, without the right people and skills, it was unlikely that these ideas would succeed. The CFP grant enabled SFFS to work within the structure of city government to attract more grocery stores to under-served neighborhoods, increase the use of food stamps at farmers' markets, and increase the use of regionally grown food in the city's schools. As it has done countless times across the nation, the CFP brought together stakeholders and forged partnerships to promote a healthier and more responsive food system.

As you read project profiles and

review other materials in this decade report, place in your mind's eye a familiar community, organization, or local setting where people have worked together to improve the quality of their lives. At the outset the challenges may have been large and complex, the resources few, and the organizational capacity weak. But, when a spirit of innovation was encouraged, when uncommon connections between seemingly disparate elements were forged, and when a modest amount of outside support was secured, things began to change. One small success led to another and, with patience and persistence, big problems became manageable.

This has been the story of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program over the past 10 years. Modest grants for communities across the nation have given people the incentive they need to join arms, put their noses to the grindstone, and start the difficult task of change. It may start with a community garden on vacant land or a farmers' market in a church parking lot. These projects may lead to a youth farming business, a new food

store, or a food policy council. As one success points the way to the next, more people will have access to affordable and healthy food, fewer children will go to bed hungry, and farms and farmland will stop their spiral downward. This is the goal of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program, to build the capacity of communities across America, in partnership with the federal government, to achieve food security for all citizens.

Mark Winne is Food Policy Council Director for CFSC.

Database of CFP Projects

WHY's Food Security Learning Center, created in partnership with CFSC, features a searchable database of all Community Food Projects grantees from 2000 onward. The database contains over 130 profiles, searchable by project name, year, location, focus area, and key words. Check it out at <http://www.worldhungeryear.org/cfp>

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION?

The CFSC is a national network of organizations forging new ground in developing innovative approaches to food and farm needs for communities across America. Started in 1994, it is at the forefront of building a national movement around community food security.

WHY SHOULD I BECOME A MEMBER?

Becoming a member is a way to strengthen your connection to the Coalition and other related organizations and individuals across the country. Your membership helps build a dynamic national movement, and provides important support for innovative CFS initiatives. Membership also comes with certain benefits: a subscription to the quarterly CFS News newsletter, voting privileges (for organizations), and discounts on Coalition publications.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

Please join at the organization member level. By doing so, it demonstrates your organization's commitment and lends us greater political strength.

- \$35 Individuals
- \$50 Small organizations, with less than \$100,000 budget
- \$100 Large organizations, with more than \$100,000 budget
- \$500 Individual life time membership
- \$_____ Low income individuals, students, or seniors (sliding scale—\$1-\$25)

PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER MERCHANDISE:

- \$12 Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids: Evaluating the Barriers and Opportunities, for Farm to School Programs. 2001.
- \$15 Full Color, original artwork, T-shirts. (100% organic cotton shirt) – Circle one: S, M, L, XL
- \$10 Feeding Young Minds, 2005.
- \$30 Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security for the Inner City. 1993.
- \$18 What's Cooking: A Guide to Community Food Assessments. 2002.
- \$40 Evaluation Toolkit and Handbook. 2006.
- \$10 Linking Farms with Schools. 2004.

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NORTHEAST (Co-Leads)

(ME, NH, VT, NY, CT, MA, RI)
 Amy Winston, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
 207-882-7564, arw@ceimaine.org
 Dana Hudson, Vermont FEED
 802-985-8686 x25, dhudson@shelburnefarms.org

MID-ATLANTIC

(VA, WV, MD, PA, DE, NJ)
 Tegan Hagy, The Food Trust
 215-575-0444, thagy@thefoodtrust.org

SOUTHEAST

(FL, GA, TN, NC, SC, KY)
 Emily Jackson, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture
 Project
 828-236-1282, emily@asapconnections.org

SOUTH

(TX, AR, LA, MS, AL)
 Glyen Holmes and Vonda Richardson, New North Florida
 Cooperative
 850-352-2400, NNCF1995@yahoo.com

GREAT LAKES

(MI, OH, IN, IL, WI, MN)
 TBA—University of Wisconsin (Center for Integrated
 Agricultural Systems) will hire this position
 608-263-6064

MIDWEST

(IA, ND, SD, KS, MO, NE, OK)
 Anita Poole, Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Inc.
 918-647-9123, apoole@kerrcenter.com

SOUTHWEST

(AZ, NM, CO, UT, WY)
 Le Adams, Farm to Table
 505-473-1004, ladams@cybermesa.com

WESTERN

(HI, CA, NV, WA, OR, ID, MT, AK)
 Michelle Markesteyn Ratcliffe, Ecotrust
 503-476-6080, mratcliffe@ecotrust.org

For more information, see article on page 1 or visit
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