



We see possibilities.

News for our partners and friends

March 2009

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Rural Enterprise Center: **Agripreneur Training Model** update

We've been sharing the Agripreneur Training Model with hundreds of potential funders, supporters and partners across the region. The response has been enthusiastic as more and more individuals and organizations step forward to offer many different kinds of support needed to help rural Latin@ agripreneurs succeed.

In fact, there's so much happening that we felt the need to share this brief update with our friends and allies. Regardless of how you are involved, we hope you'll find this information helpful. Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions, feedback and encouragement!

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Free-range poultry operation expands

- Invitations have been extended to last year's buyers; responses so far are up 50 percent from spring 2008. Pick-up sites are being added in Red Wing, Faribault and South Minneapolis. Teens from the Northfield Union of Youth are working on a delivery system using bicycles during the summer!
- An 80-acre farm in Cannon Falls just committed to becoming the first fully integrated, operational production unit, complete with grain production and processing, and poultry production and processing.
- Two local Latino agripreneurs are working together on creating a mobile processing system for farmers who raise poultry for their own consumption or for on-farm sales.
- In 2009, plans are to grow at least two kinds of small grains (beyond the winter wheat growing



now) and test a new feeding system that reduces carbon emissions from farm machinery, processing equipment and transportation, by 50 percent.

- Two donated and three purchased silos, plus mixing/grinding equipment have been secured to create a feed processing center needed bring down the high cost of feed, reduce shipping and handling, and support more farmers around the poultry production. In addition, this new approach will convert land currently used for conventional agriculture into non-chemical and eventually certified-organic small grain production units.
- Economist Ken Meter of the Crossroads Resource Center has done an economic impact analysis and Blake Adbela of the Northfield Enterprise Center is working on a full business plan for large-scale deployment of the agripreneur model (with up to 20 Latino poultry farmers and over 2,500 acres of small grain production and processing facilities). When complete, we'll be better able to demonstrate this model's potential to help low-income families break out of the cycle of poverty and transform the local food system.

Community & market gardens grow

- Community leaders are spending March recruiting Latin@ and Anglo gardeners for the expanded Northfield community gardens (growing from 48 to 100 plots). Plot distribution begins March 29.
- Two new farmers are expanding their family size market garden production. They will become the main supplier of vegetables and black turtle beans to several restaurants south of Northfield.



- A commercial kitchen operation is being developed in cooperation with a local private elementary school. The kitchen will support value added processing for market gardener's products and will support the launch of Maria's Salsa, by Maria and Rafael Estrada, owners of Taco Hut, a catering business in Northfield.
- The Dodge County U of M extension service is on deck to provide nutrition and canning training classes in partnership with the kitchen in August/September, during the height of the vegetable season.
- More than 100 community members attended last month's meeting in Red Wing, as organizers move forward with creating community gardens of their own.
- Plans are underway for a youth greenhouse project, in collaboration with ARTECH charter school, which will supply community gardens with transplants, and build leadership and agripreneurial skills.

Business training continues

- Core Four business training focused on restaurant ownership and management will be offered in Spanish this spring (every Monday at 6 p.m. starting on March 30). The training will support a growing regional association of ethnic restaurant owners and provide a platform for planning a regional network of mobile food units to market our free-range poultry at special events.

Momentum is building

Helping create a vibrant Latin@ agripreneurial community is both complex - with all the layers and trappings of any economic production system, and simple - building on the agrarian experience and entrepreneurial spirit of rural immigrants.

This project continues to be a journey of discovery and rediscovery. Special thanks to Northwest Area Foundation and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) for their generous support. As more doors open and as more supporters join us, we continue to focus on the tremendous power of a simple idea: reconnecting rural immigrants with land in ways that ensure their success and build community.

Stay tuned.

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