



Global Growers' Farmer Training Project

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Project Introduction

Expended Amount: \$47,081

The Global Growers' Farmer Training Project will ensure that beginning, immigrant and socially disadvantaged farmers, including many women, increase financial stability and solvency in Georgia's local, sustainable farm systems, through linguistically and culturally competent:

- Producer-to-producer mentoring that includes production risk management workshops and hands-on implementation of tools at our eight acres of urban farm training and market sites.
- Risk management for market enterprise systems that includes workshops, business planning and implementation of tools through participation in our emerging market aggregator, designed to stabilize and streamline marketing and sales opportunities for new and small-scale, sustainable producers.
- Food safety training that focuses on harvest-to-market tools for small-scale, sustainable producers.

Project Participants

This farmer-training project targets beginning producers who are legal refugees and/or socially disadvantaged, sustainable small-scale farmers in and around metro-Atlanta. Based in large part on a 2009-11 pilot training program with refugee women from Burundi, funded by SRRMEC, the RFS Global Growers program was developed to respond to a high demand for agricultural training among the many newly arrived refugees in metro-Atlanta. This project served refugees from Burundi, Burma, Bhutan, Cameroon, Iran and Somalia. All are actively in production in the metro-Atlanta area

on land that is managed by Global Growers Network, as well as private land. These farmers, with extensive agricultural experience in their home countries, have requested training to minimize risk in production, marketing and business – recognizing that production conditions (climate, soil, amendments, pests) as well as market and business conditions differ in the U.S. They are eager to grow effectively, and to build new market opportunities in the traditional American market and meet cultural/ethnic food demands with specialty crops.

Project Area

The majority of our training activities take place on our training farm in Stone Mountain, Georgia, which is a 14-acre site that hosts ten farmers on their own plots of land. Global Growers also managed three additional smaller sites in DeKalb County. Two additional farmers with privately held land are participants in our program, also located in DeKalb County. We are working to expand our efforts into Gwinnett and Rockdale Counties and to the West Georgia Farmers Cooperative region.

Project Outcomes

GGN's risk management workshops and consultations reached 76 project participants.

- 29 producers developed and implemented risk management plans.
- 29 producers developed and implemented crop plans.
- 27 producers developed food safety plans.
- 16 producers implemented food safety plans.
- 7 producers implemented seasonal market contracts.

Advanced growers developed crop plans, developed farm risk management plans and entered into production contracts for spring, summer and fall

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growing seasons. Their crop plans, risk management plans and contract obligations were used as training and evaluation tools throughout the 2013 growing season. GGN's market operations generated \$45,000 in supplemental income through the GGN CSA, farmers markets and growing restaurant sales. In addition, almost 100,000 lbs of fresh, healthy produce (valued at approximately \$160,000) that did not go to commercial markets reached food-insecure refugee families at low or no cost through grower's informal distribution networks and more formal community collaborations.

Quotes

"If we can continue farming here, things will get better. We are still getting used to living here. Maybe one day there will be more land. We want to keep our culture because that is what we know best, but we are starting to feel more American as well. We are still refugees until we can have our American citizenship. We are refugees."

Halieth Hatungimana, Umurima Wa Burundi
(**"The Burundi Women's Farm"**)

"In America, if you want to be successful, you need to make dollars. If we cannot sell our food, there will be no dollars! Here we can be successful farmers."

Nestor Ngongang, Bamboo Creek Farm
(**farmer from Cameroon**)

"Working with Global Growers Network, we can grow special vegetables that our Burmese community members want to buy and also grow food that Americans want to buy. We've learned about American vegetables we are good at growing, like arugula. We also learn that Americans like to buy our sweet snow pea leaves for their salads, which we also sell to Burmese friends. At Global Growers, we can learn to grow for different kinds of customers, and we know that we will be given a good price for our products."

Noela Men, Bamboo Creek Farm
(**farmer from Burma**)

Project Success Story

The SRMEC funding gave Global Growers the opportunity to pilot the development and implementation of production contracts for our market co-op. These contracts were used as a tool in order to address development and implementation of risk management plans, crop plans and food safety plans, as well as create a program of production and marketing workshops and consultations. During our pilot contract season, we issued contracts worth a total of \$24,609 to seven producers. As many farmers will attest, there is some discomfort around signing onto production contracts. This sentiment is generally attributed to the history of large buyers taking advantage of small farmers. With this in mind, the most successful aspect of our pilot program involved developing trust among our producer network. Much of this credit goes to the farming families we work with who took the risk of trying something that we had never done before. This success is highlighted further by the fact that going into the 2014 season, GGN nearly doubled the number of producers implementing production contracts, while increasing the total value of our contracts to \$53,200.

Noela Men and Ignatius Thang, a husband-wife farmer team, are two of these contract producers. Originally farmers in Burma, their lives were disrupted due to war and ethnic persecution in their home country, and after surviving the war, they are building new lives in the United States. They are skilled agricultural producers, but they are still learning what it means to have a viable farm in a new food and economic system. For a number of years, they explored different methods of food distribution, ranging from informal community-based food distribution systems to selling wholesale to grocery stores. Working with the Global Growers market co-op, they have found a way to stabilize their sales by using GGN production contracts. In addition, they have leveraged the resources of our training program (production/marketing workshops and consultations) in order to strengthen their product offerings and sales in their existing ethnic markets.

***Sandra Martini, H. L. Goodwin and Ronald L. Rainey**, Grant Coordinator and Co-Directors, respectively, of the Southern Risk Management Education Center, serve as editors of this report series. To learn more about risk management education programs and resources, visit the Southern Center web site (<http://srmec.uark.edu>) or the Extension Risk Management Education Program link (www.extensionrme.org).

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