



Western SARE

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- Sustainable Farm Tours

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DEVELOPING RURAL MARKETS

Situation

In the Sandpoint area of northern Idaho – characteristic of many Northwest communities – consumers typically buy out-of-state, out-of-season produce during the local growing season. Still, demand for locally grown, fresh organic produce is increasing in Bonner County, Idaho, and other communities of the Pacific Northwest.

Developing consumer knowledge about how and when to shop for locally grown produce is a first step in mar-



Diane and Thom at Greentree Naturals in Sandpoint, Idaho.

Farmer/Rancher Grant

Title: Developing a Sustainable Market for Small Farms in a Rural Community

Project Number: FW01-025

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Cooperators:
Pat VanVolkinberg, Bountiful Organics Farm
Mikki Clark, Almost Eden Farm
Vicki Benner, Rivendell Farm
Linda Watt, Wattcliff Farm

ket development. Educating the public to support the marketing and distribution of local produce could, in turn, help create sustainable income for small farms and market gardeners.

Documenting the process for market development could serve as a model for other communities in similar circumstances.

Objectives

1. Promote grassroots community support for small farms by developing a model for "growing" a local food system
2. Develop information pamphlets, publications, growers surveys and workshops for sharing information in northern Idaho
3. Develop a local website for sharing information with other regional communities beyond northern Idaho

Actions

Greentree Naturals works with an established group of certified organic producers known as the Growers' Collective, part- and full-time farmers organized to meet increased demands of the marketplace. They grow primarily specialty vegetables, herbs, salad greens and cut flowers, selling at local the local farmers market, local restaurants and through a small community supported agriculture project.

Grower Survey

A grower survey was conducted to establish the needs

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Western SARE, a USDA organization, funds grants for research and education that develop or promote some aspect of agricultural sustainability, which embraces

- *profitable farms and ranches*
- *a healthy environment*
- *strong families and communities.*

The Western Region, one of four SARE regions nationwide, is administered through Utah State University.

Western SARE:
<http://wsare.usu.edu>

National SARE
www.sare.org

DEVELOPING RURAL MARKETS

of small acreage and market garden producers, which would help in determining types of brochures to produce.

Brochures

Three brochures were developed.

1. "Buy Locally Grown Food and Help Sustain Local Farms." This describes the impacts of transporting produce long distances and how locally grown food:

- Typically tastes better
- Has higher levels of nutrition
- Supports local farm families
- Builds community
- Preserves open space
- Preserves genetic diversity

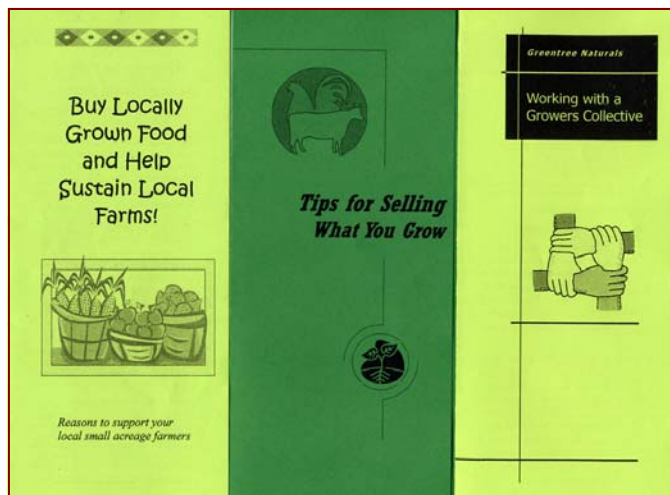
2. "Tips for Selling What You Grow." This describes approaches to three market venues – farmers markets, restaurants and community supported agriculture – and offers Greentree Naturals' basic rules for success:

- Sell the best, compost the rest
- Never promise something you can't deliver and always deliver everything you promise
- Offer a satisfaction guarantee with all of your products

3. "Working with a Growers Collective." This offers tips for developing and operating a grower collective – a group of small acreage producers who market their produce collectively – based on the model and experiences of the Sandpoint area Growers Collective.

Presentations

Project coordinator Diane Green presented half a dozen one-day regional workshops and two five-week workshop series in 2001 and 2002.



Brochures printed for the Western SARE Farmer/Rancher project.

Topics included:

- How to sell at a farmers market
- Organic gardening and natural pest control
- Small farm marketing
- Extending the growing season

Website

The website, www.greentreenaturals.com, was launched in June 2002.

Results

The project team developed and distributed 400

copies each of the three brochures.

As a result of the June 9, 2002, presentation in Noxon, Montana, attended by 19 people, the Noxon Farmers Market was opened in August 2002 with 12 vendors.

Workshops conducted in 2001 and 2002 on organic gardening and natural pest control prompted nine growers, half of the 18 attending, to become certified organic growers and all to improve their growing practices.

During a workshop on season extension techniques, 20 of the 24 attendees built hoophouses to extend the season at their gardens and small acreage farms.

The website received more than 8,000 "hits" during the course of the project.

Potential Benefits

The project created a model not only for setting up farmers markets, but also for making presentations on topics related to organic production and ways to update and extend information to both new and seasoned gardeners and market farmers.



Diane Green of Greentree Naturals in Sandpoint clips zinnias for sale at the farmers market.