Good Humus Produce Farm to School Project

Annie Main (California – *Farmer/Rancher Grant*)

Project Number: FW00-299

Title: Good Humus Produce Farm to School Project

Principal Investigator:
Annie Main
Good Humus Produce
12255 Road 84A
Capay, CA 95607
530.787.3187
www.goodhumus.com

Annie Main of Good Humus Produce.

Technical Advisors

Desmond Jolly, Director
Small Farm Center
University of California
One Shields Ave.
Davis, CA 96616-8699
540.752.8236
dajolly@ucdavis.edu

Gail Feenstra, Food Systems Analyst
UC SAREP
One Shields Ave.
Davis, CA 95616-8716
530.752.8408
gwfeenstra@ucdavis.edu

Cooperators:

Kerry Stevens, Community Alliance for Family Farmers
Melanie Okamoto, Food Systems Project
Gloria and Steven Decator, Live Power Farm
Dru Rivers, Full Belly Farm
Carol Hillhouse, UC Davis Student Farm
Crunch Lunch Salad Bar, Davis Joint Unified School District
Environment Traveling Companions
Community Food Security Coalition

Jeff Main takes a break from harvesting peaches.

SARE Grant: $5,300

Situation

Good Humus Produce is a 20-acre organic family farm that grows and markets vegetables, fruit, herbs, and flowers in the Capay Valley of Yolo County. For many years, Good Humus had fielded queries for farm visits from schools whose students have little opportunity to experience food production and the farm environment.

In 2000, Good Humus realized the growing demand was likely to continue as schools integrated gardening into curriculum and connected farming communities to school activities.

Good Humus envisioned that hosting school visits presented an opportunity for both farmers and school communities to benefit through an organized, comprehensive, and financially feasible education farm visit program.

Objectives

1. Develop guidelines for an educational, attractive, and affordable farm-visit program, providing activities that fit into day-to-day farm production schedules
2. Develop an educational farm visit program that can be integrated into school curricula, using farm rhythms, to provide children and teachers with a comprehensive knowledge of food systems, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture
3. Establish children's educational programs with public schools to increase and diversify the source of farm income
4. Host two school visits per month for six months of the year and be compensated managing the program
5. Increase the community supported agriculture program with the families of school children that visit the farm
6. Provide a written experiential program for farmers that need information about running a farm-to-school program

Peaches are among the many crops at Good Humus.

A worker harvests nectarines.

Row crops mature in mid summer.

Actions

- Good Humus developed a school program with a theme of compost to showcase for students:
  - Cycles of growth, decay, and fertilization on the farm
  - Creation of input for the farm from within the farm
  - How each aspect is part of the whole
  - Connection between soil fertility, plant health, and farmer health
  - Concept of teamwork – sun, soil, water, insects, and humans
- The farm developed a fee structure for daytime and overnight visits that provided compensation sufficient for economic sustainability
- Began with two school visits a month to test the idea
- Engaged support from the California Alliance for Family Farmers and the Davis Unified School District

Results

The Good Humus Farm to School Project hosts daytime school visits during nine months of the year and overnight farm stays on request.

An example of a programmed daytime visit for April:

Turning the Compost Pile

Things to see and eat

- Flowers
- Young seedlings
- Lettuces
- Carrots
- Greens
- Dried fruit

Fruit dries in the July sun.

Presentations

- What's happening in the decomposition process
- How are we so dependent on decomposition and how is it connected to so many living creatures
- Why is the temperature of soil so important to the seeds
- How are soils different

Activities: Using pitchforks, water and shovels, turn the compost pile made in March. Emphasize the importance of water. Add the biodynamic preparation.

Schedule

- 9:30-10 – Welcome and introduction game; circle with presentation of farm rules and the day's activities
- 10-10:15 – Farm Fresh Snack (dried fruit or other fresh available ingredients
- 10:15-11:30 – Tour with Treasure Hunt Farm Tour
- 11:30-12 – Lunch
- 12-1 – Action: Kids engage in project designed to let them experience real farm activities

Potential Benefits/Impacts

Few visiting parents and children have ever set foot on a farm, so the visits enable these families to identify faces and place with the food they eat. They also are able to connect how food is grown and the difference between local and long-distance distribution.

Good Humus Produce learned valuable lessons about integrating farm visits into busy production schedules:

1. Develop a theme concept, which makes the program manageable and efficient
2. Engage a committed, enthusiastic long-term member of the farm team, supported by other key members
3. Create focused, bounded spaces and settings
4. Provide opportunities for physical connections to the farm and food – feeding animals, pulling carrots, digging, etc.
5. Realistically assess human resources
6. Set a fee to validate the economic sustainability of the program
7. Plan a year-round curriculum and schedule