



Profile from the Field

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Connecting the Dots Between Farmers and Rural Refrigeration

Project Titles: Connecting the Dots Between Farmers and Rural Refrigeration

Coordinators: Ren Olive

Location: University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota

SARE Grants: \$12,000

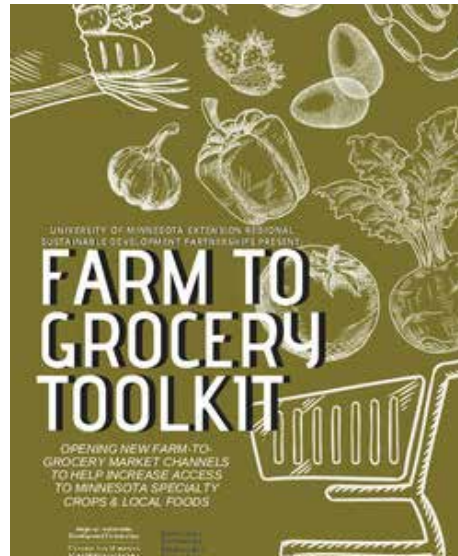
Duration: 2016-2018

To read the full project reports, go to <https://projects.sare.org/> and search for project number GNC18-267.

Post-harvest refrigeration can make food safer, increase sales windows, and reduce food waste. However, University of Minnesota (UMN) graduate student, Ren Olive, says refrigeration can be a barrier for farmers, due primarily to cost.

“Imagine a farmer at the end of a farmers market day with an unsold pallet of fresh strawberries that were cooled in water but not refrigerated,” said Olive. “The strawberries lost their ‘plumpness’ and now have a shorter shelf life because the farmer did not have access to refrigeration; considered ‘non-marketable culled produce,’ the farmer cannot make a sale. This scenario is not hypothetical; as a current UMN Extension employee, I have heard this feedback from multiple Minnesota farmers.”

The UMN’s Farm to Rural Grocery to Wholesale (F2G2W) program is working with existing rural grocery stores and their wholesale suppliers to “backhaul” locally grown produce on emptied wholesale trucks for redistribution. Olive received SARE support to expand F2G2W to include opportunities for small and medium-size produce farmers to utilize excess refrigeration in rural grocery stores. Olive is assessing farmers’ needs and refrigeration availability at more than 250 rural grocery stores, and is working to answer the question,



Dig Deeper: UMN’s Farm to Grocery Toolkit is a resource for farmers and grocers to help facilitate the sale of farm-grown products to grocery stores, particularly in rural Minnesota. <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/212328>

“Can collaboration between farmers and local, rural grocery stores provide savings to farmers who need refrigeration infrastructure, while helping rural grocery stores profit from leasing unused refrigeration space?”

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