

Michigan Food & Farming Systems-MIFFS

Scott Corrin
172 Natural Resources Bldg
East Lansing, MI 48824
517-432-0712
corrinsf@msu.edu

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PROJECT TITLE

Food Safety Education for Michigan's Specialty Crop Producers

PROJECT SUMMARY

While specialty crop producers are taking steps to keep their food crops safe, we have learned through our training sessions and conversations with growers that there is still confusion about good food safety practices on the farm and how to prepare and implement plans that can be certified by an auditor. The purpose of this project is to provide food safety education for Michigan's specialty crop, direct market and wholesale producers at a variety of scales and knowledge levels. The overall goal is to reduce the risks of microbial contamination of fruits and vegetables produced by Michigan's specialty crop producers.

A good understanding of food safety risks is important, in addition to more formalized Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Handling Practices (GHPs) plans to minimize the risk of food contamination at the farm and processing levels. GAPs are largely focused on field production and harvest conditions while GHPs are focused more on postharvest handling and processing. Both are commonsense approaches to reducing the contamination risks associated with bacteria, viruses and parasites that cause human illness. Understanding the "why" and "how" of implementing food safety, good agricultural and handling practices are necessary for any farm operation functioning in today's food system. The GAP training complements previous SCBG training. The training for this project was held in different geographical locations than the previous year to help train additional growers.

PROJECT APPROACH

During this agreement, MIFFS conducted three food safety training sessions in Michigan (Lapeer, Kalamazoo, and Traverse City) and developed a one stop food safety website to help growers develop their food safety plans. Sysco Food Services, long-time food safety partner, invited MIFFS staff to attend and evaluate a GAP session on March 22, 2011 in Cleveland, Ohio. Because of that experience, MIFFS will be modifying their workshop content and format to better serve the audience targeted by this grant. Sysco is interested in cosponsoring more training sessions for 2012 and offered corporate resources to make this happen. This was the first year that MIFFS worked with US Foodservice as a workshop presenter. Their Michigan representative and food safety expert from Chicago to co-present at one of the training sessions. This is a new partnership that will help more MI producers sell fruit and vegetables to US Foodservice.

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Environmental Stewardship Division is creating a "Food Safety-A-Syst" unit that will augment existing tools currently available to growers who desire to assess risks and take voluntary action. This tool was developed to help growers and is based on the GAP training that MIFFS has done.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Program Goals: Assemble Training Planning Team

Indicators (outcomes/outputs):

Plan workshops (w/s)

Assist in facilitation

Debrief workshops

Plan mock audit

Debrief mock audit

Data Source: Meeting minutes

Performance Standard: Meet monthly for planning, then as needed/post grant events.

Revised educational materials

Results: Worked with MSUE, MDARD and wholesale distributors to develop updated training materials.

Program Goals: Assemble Website Development Team

Indicators (outcomes/outputs): Oversee development and launch of new website

Data Source: Meeting minutes

Performance Standard: Meet monthly until launch. Launch by fall of 2011.

Results: The team did not meet as often as planned and the MIFFS webmaster was on maternity leave during part of the grant period. As a result, the beta site was not ready for testing/preview by end users as early as expected. Scheduling and input with multiple partners was difficult.

Program Goals: Collaborate with partners to promote and test project activities; Increased ability of partners to assist growers; Strengthened relationships between MIFFS and partners

Indicators (outcomes/outputs): Feedback from end users collected to design food safety website

-All specialty crop producers will be aware of w/s and new website. Strengthened ability of partners to serve specialty crop growers. Stakeholders will continue to partner with MIFFS and support ongoing food safety efforts.

Data Source: Stakeholder Survey

Performance Standard:

-Attendance at five grower events.

-100% of partners will have increased knowledge about farm food safety

-75% of partners will have an increased ability to assist growers.

-100% of partners will feel that this project has strengthened their relationship with MIFFS.

Results: Promotion/exhibits were conducted at (3) sites: Northern Michigan Small Farms Conference, Michigan Family Farm Conference and Great Lakes Expo/Meet Buyer event. 43% of partners did not know about displays and the beta site was not ready for testing at these events. 86% of partners will use the educational materials to assist specialty crop producers with farm food safety issues and 57% feel they can help producers write Farm Food Safety Plans

Program Goals: Conduct farm safety beginner and advanced level workshops, Conduct a two-part webinar, Conduct an on-farm mock audit

Indicators (outcomes/outputs): Increased number of growers who complete farm food safety plans, self audits and certified audits if necessary, Increased number of growers obtaining assistance for above, Certified grower will lead one on-farm audit.

Data Source: -Attendance lists and Post workshop interviews with producers

-Stakeholder Survey

-Participant Survey

Performance Standard:

3 traditional workshops

One webinar

One on-farm mock audit

350 participants

5 topic areas

One producer speaker/session

(Long term – 2012)

35% of specialty crop growers attended one of the sessions

175 Farm Safety Plans completed

70 Farm Safety Audits completed

70 Certified Audits completed

Results: Workshops were held in Kalamazoo, Lapeer and Traverse City. An on-farm mock audit was conducted at Apple Schrams Orchard. Attendance at all workshops was below projections

(67 total). The mock audit had high participation and 71% of stakeholders rated it Good to Excellent; almost half (43%) identified it as the *most effective* project activity. Upon completion of project activities, 71% of partners have a better understanding of what is needed to conduct an on-farm audit. No Participant Survey was completed for the mock audit.

Program Goals: Launch and evaluate a Farm Safety website

Indicators (outcomes/outputs): Increased number of growers utilizing farm food safety materials and resources for farm food safety planning and audits.

Data Source:

-Survey of web users

-Count # of hits

-Interview with webmaster.

Performance Standard: (Long term) 5,000 specialty crop producers using site.

Results: www.mifarmfoodsafety.org was launched by December 2011. Feedback from beta site indicates that the content is easy to navigate, provides valuable resources and answers questions about food safety certification. Google Analytics indicates that hits on the food safety WebPages has increased by nearly 40%. In the long term, will be able to track the hits with the Google Analytics.

Program Goals: Increase market access and competitiveness of Michigan specialty crop growers

Indicators (outcomes/outputs): Michigan specialty crop growers will have enhanced ability to expand into new or existing markets because timely and important farm food safety information/trends were shared.

Data Source: Stakeholder Survey

Performance Standard: *90% of stakeholders will feel that their support of this project has enhanced the competitiveness of Mi specialty crop producers.

*90% of stakeholders will feel that their support of this project has increased market share of Mi specialty crop producers.

Results: 75% of partners feel that as a result of supporting this project, they have increased the competitiveness advantage of specialty crop producers and 56% feel that they have enhanced the ability of specialty crop producers to increase market share.

BENEFICIARIES

This grant project was year three of a multi-year approach to educate specialty crop producers on food safety topics. With the exception of conducting *advanced-level* workshops, MIFFS completed their plan of work within the time frame allotted, including three beginner level workshops, an on-farm mock audit, a webinar/video workshop, and launching of a food safety website. Demographic information from workshop evaluations indicates that participants represent smaller farms in terms of size with an average of approximately 65% farming 100 acres or less. Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants are not currently GAP certified. A small percentage is in the process of becoming certified.

Responses from stakeholders have verified that their knowledge about food safety and attitudes towards food safety issues has improved. Specifically, 75% of partners feel that as a result of supporting this project, they *have increased the competitive advantage of specialty crop producers* and 86% will be *providing resources to support specialty crop producers in the development of farm food safety plans*.

Long term outcomes are more difficult to assess (see comments below) It is unknown how many producers have completed farm food safety plans this year, or in previous years as a result of these specific project activities. Project partners/stakeholders believe that MIFFS is doing *good work* and that *organizations are working together to reach Michigan's specialty crop producers and that can (continue to) happen with continued communication and collaboration*.

Attendance was down at workshops this past year, signifying that it may be time to move to more specific or advanced topics such as traceability; however 56% of partners disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that *"we have reached a majority of specialty crop producers with educational workshops"*. Additionally, 86% of workshop participants indicated that they would attend more workshops on this topic.

attendees. Examples could include strawberry, spinach and peanut recalls and their economic impacts (the peanut company did not have a good food safety plan in place and 3,200 people are unemployed because the company did not survive the recall).

Food Safety from a Local Point of View

Finding someone to talk about the importance of local food and how businesses and their customers are assured safe food is a new addition MIFFS should consider. Michigan needs to look at food and farming issues from the municipal side of things and educate local planners/zoning administrators on what GAP could mean for their local community. GAP regulations could be in conflict with existing zoning statutes as was discovered in the northeast region.

Trace Back and Record Keeping

Not enough time was spent on this section and it needs to be more of an emphasis for producers. A longer session would help producers minimize their risk in case there was a recall of any size or nature. MIFFS continues to pursue funding that would allow them to do sessions on traceability.

Identifying the Target Audience

With the third year of workshops completed, the number of growers needing food safety education is shrinking. One area that has not been targeted is cooperatives and the members within a cooperative who sell fresh produce. MIFFS has already initiated discussions on how to reach this target audience in the next project grant cycle.

On Farm Mock Audits

MIFFS conducted one on-farm mock audit in this grant cycle and learned that the session was extremely helpful to participants. The recommendation going forward is to do an on-farm mock audit in conjunction with each workshop.

CONTACT PERSON

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

FINANCIAL RECONCILIATION

Category	Budget	Reimbursement Request 2011-03-30	Final Reimbursement Request 2011-12-31	Budget Remaining
Salaries and Fringes	\$34,662.00	\$17,708.67	\$17,117.81	\$-164.48
Travel	\$2,000.00	\$ 1,023.71	\$918.07	\$58.22
Materials and Supplies	\$5,200.00	\$ 1,669.62	\$3,041.40	\$488.98
Contracts	\$7,450.00	\$ 2,810.00	\$4,607.85	\$32.15
Other	\$1,100.00	\$185.00	\$418.48	\$496.52

Totals	\$50,412.00	\$23,397.00	\$26,103.61	\$911.39

Receipts- Attachment A, B, C, D, E

- Salaries and Fringes- receipts A
- Travel- receipts B
- Materials and Supplies- receipts C
- Contracts- receipts D
- Other- receipts E

Appendices- Attachment F

Evaluation Tools

1. Stakeholder Survey (Annotated instrument)
2. Stakeholder Survey template
3. Attendance Record template

Educational Materials

- a. Good Agricultural Practices.ppt (MSUE)
- b. USDA Audit
- c. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) Internet Resources
- d. Food Safety Auditors (MSU Product Center)
- e. Checklist of Potential On-Farm Food Safety Risk (MSUE)
- f. Creating a Field Map with Google Maps (MSUE)
- g. Illustrated Guide to Growing Safe Produce on Your Farm (National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service).
- h. GAP material (Du Russels' Potatoe Farms Inc.)
- i. Wholesale Success Manual (Family Farmed.org)
- j. Sample Audit (MSUE and Michigan Agriculture Commodity Marketing Association-Apple Division.)