

Encouraging local food in Vermont's Institutions: Announcement of Local Food Market Development grant recipients

Farms across the state are selling local food to institutions. Colleges and universities, k-12 schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and correctional facilities are interested in supporting Vermont's agricultural communities and serving healthy, nutritious and locally-grown food to their constituents. As exciting as the opportunities in Vermont and throughout the New England region have been, many more opportunities exist for encouraging local food market development to institutions.

In 2011 the VT Legislature provided \$40,000 to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM) for the creation of the **Vermont Local Food Market Development Grant Program**. This program focuses on increasing Vermont producers' access to institutional markets and increasing the quantity of local food available in Vermont institutions. Matching grant proposals of up to \$5,000 were accepted this spring from Vermont farmers, producer groups, food-focused community groups, and food hubs to further institutional market relationships.

Twenty-four project proposals totaling over \$110,000 were received by the VAAFAM and grant review committee and ten were funded which best facilitated local farms' access to institutional markets.

The following Local Food Market Development grants were awarded:

- Alchemy Gardens – Shrewsbury
- Greenfield Highland Beef – Greensboro
- Green Mountain Farm to School – Newport
- Grow Compost – Moretown
- Harlow Farm - Westminster
- Joes Brook Farm – St. Johnsbury
- Kingdom Creamery – East Hardwick
- Mad River Food Hub – Waitsfield
- The Tutorial Center - Bennington
- Vermont Technical College - Randolph Center

All grant recipients have current experience with institutions. These grant funds will allow for relationships to expand or develop and for more efficient processing, storage and transportation of local product to assured institutional markets. Supported farm to institution activities will include: developing marketing materials for institutional clients, coordinating matchmaking events to connect producers with institutional buyers, establishing infrastructure and tools to improve production efficiency, purchasing portable processing equipment, creating a portable produce washing station, installing year-round on-farm storage, improving refrigerated trucking of institutional product, and pick up of organic waste for compost.

If you are interested in learning about potential future Local Food Market Development grant opportunities, please contact Abbey Willard, Local Foods Administrator with VT Agency of Agriculture at 828-3829 or abbey.willard@state.vt.us.