

## **Interview Questions with Agricultural Businesses**

### ***Background & Methodology***

As part of Waushara Food Connection's community food assessment, interviews with local agricultural business owners were conducted in an effort to learn more about their farming operations and, in keeping with our vision, to discover how Waushara Food Connections might help them remain "strong, viable businesses that meet local needs." In addition to providing assessment data, another purpose of these farmer interviews was to identify participants interested in joining our Steering Committee.

Three hundred and eight people were called on the telephone, and twenty-five interviews were conducted over a six-week period (between September 1st and October 15th of 2010). Two referral lists were used to identify people, one from UW-Extension and the other from the Farm Service Agency. Other methods that were used to identify participants included the Farm Fresh Atlases for Eastern Wisconsin and Central Wisconsin; focus group participants; Berlin farmers' market coordinator; and finally other farmers that were interviewed. Of the three hundred and eight people who were called, eighty (26%) were not farmers or were not currently farming. There were many people as well who were not home and did not return our calls, or who did not fit our selection criteria. (Farmers were screened for the following factors: 1) their farming operations are located in Waushara County, 2) they are currently marketing their products in the local market or are interested in doing so, and 3) they grow food products for human consumption.) Almost half of the twenty-five farmers who were interviewed were referred directly from other farmers.

Once it was determined that a farmer qualified as our target population, an introduction package was sent out. This mailing included a cover letter; a list of the interview questions; a form to fill out to be included in a free listing of local food producers; information sheets about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), the Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM), and Farmers' Markets; and a copy of a press release sent out in August of 2009 introducing Waushara Food Connections to the community (see Appendix A5: Cover Letter and Introductory Package Sent to Farmers).

Next, either an interview was scheduled and conducted over the telephone or the farmer filled out and mailed in the interview questionnaire.