

Appendix A6: Cover Letter and Introductory Package Sent to Agricultural Businesses



Waushara Food Connections

Making nutritious food available and accessible to all county residents through sustainable, community-based projects that strengthen the local food system

Central Wisconsin Community Action, Inc.
1000 Highway 13; P.O. Box 430
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965
(608) 254-8353 ext. 243

Pam Hughes and Sara McKee
Project Directors
pam@cwcac.org; saram@cwcac.org

Waushara Agribusiness

September 6, 2010

Dear Agribusiness,

I am writing on behalf of Waushara Food Connections, a local non-profit project administered by Central Wisconsin Community Action Council and funded currently through a one-year U.S. Department of Agriculture grant. Waushara Food Connections, with the help of the Waushara County Farm Bureau, is conducting a community food assessment to identify the strengths and needs of the county food system. Once complete, we will assist the community in developing comprehensive approaches that both meet the long-term food needs of residents and strengthen the viability of local food-producing businesses.

As a food producer in Waushara County, we need your help. Your input is valuable to us. We would like to learn more about your business operations, hear your ideas, and see how we might assist you to continue to successfully farm in this community.

We realize that you are very busy and that your time is limited. We hope, however, that you will be able to find time somewhere in your week to either fill out our enclosed questionnaire or to speak with us over the telephone. We will be calling you within the next few weeks.

I have enclosed a copy of our interview questions, a contact form if you would like to be listed in our free-listing of local producers, an information sheet (CSA, IFM, and Farmers' Market), and a written summary of our food-planning project. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Pamela Hughes
Waushara Food Connections
Project Director

Kevin Krentz
Waushara County Farm Bureau
President



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Interview Questions

Agricultural Businesses

1. What food product(s) do you raise/grow? Do you have a specialty?
2. Where is the product sold? Do you sell your products in the local market, either directly to consumers or to grocery stores, restaurants, or other institutions? Why do you choose to sell them in this way?
3. Are you interested in expanding your local sales? (Local market options could include produce auctions, web-based sales, grocery stores, restaurant, institutions, etc.)
4. If you are not currently selling locally, what would it take to sell your products in the local market? Are there barriers to doing this?
5. Do you currently, or would you consider direct marketing through a CSA model (Community Supported Agriculture Project)? (Please see handout for more information.)
6. Are you interested in selling or are you currently selling to institutions in Wisconsin i.e. schools, hospitals, etc.? (Please see handout for more information on the Institutional Food Market Coalition.)
7. What currently happens to your surplus products? Why? Is it possible to donate products to others in the community? Why? Why Not? (liability, time, expense, etc.)
8. Would a farmer's market benefit your farming operations? Would you consider participating? Please explain. (Please see handout for more information on Farmers' Markets.)
9. What would help you continue your agricultural operations in Waushara County?
10. How might Waushara Food Connections assist you in this effort?

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11. If you market directly to the public, would you like to be on our free listing of local food producers? This list will be distributed to people interested in buying directly from local farms. If yes, please fill out the form, "Free Listing of Local Food Producers."
12. Would you like to receive a copy of our food assessment report when complete?
13. Would you like to be informed of Steering Committee meetings and/or join the Committee and be a part of planning community food projects?

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Free Listing of Local Food Producers

First and Last Names of contact person(s):

Name of business, if applicable:

Home address: street, city, and zip code:

Address of retail outlet (if different from home address – i.e. road side stand): street, city, and zip code:

Phone number with area code:

Email:

Website, if applicable:

Are you open for business year-round? If not, what are the approximate dates that your food business starts and ends? Are you open 7 days a week? If not, what days are you open? What are your hours of operation?

Are you a certified vendor for the Senior Farmers Market Voucher Program and/or the WIC Farmers Market Voucher Program? If not, are you interested in becoming certified? (These programs provide coupons for seniors and for low-income mothers in the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Program to purchase fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs from local farmers. Certification is free.) (If you're interested in becoming a certified vendor, contact the State WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Coordinator at (608) 261-8867 or wicfmpn@dhfs.state.wi.us.)

Please describe the products you sell and any other information that you would like the public to know.

About Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

CSA is a unique social and economic arrangement between local households and farmers who work together to share the responsibility of producing and delivering fresh food. Households support the farm by paying an annual fee in the winter or spring that entitles them to a "share" of the season's harvest. Once harvesting begins, members pick-up a weekly box of fresh foods that may include produce, fruits, cheeses, eggs, meats, poultry, flowers, herbs or preserves. Pick-up sites are often located at a member's house or at the farm. Most farms create a newsletter that accompanies each delivery with notes about farm activities, descriptions of what's in the delivery, cooking tips and recipes. Many farms also create opportunities for their members and families to visit the farm and participate in farm events. The typical CSA season in Wisconsin runs from the end of May through mid-October. Farms offer a diversity of share options including extended season shares, multiple share types and sizes, and special funds and payment plans to accommodate households on a tight budget.

Benefits of a CSA Marketing Structure:

- Supports farmers financially at the time of year when their expenses are greatest.
- Directly links producers with consumers allowing people to have a personal connection with their food and the land on which it was produced.
- Strengthens local economies by keeping food dollars in local communities.
- Makes nutritious, affordable, wholesome foods accessible and widely available to community members.
- Creates an atmosphere for learning about agriculture, animal husbandry, and food production.

Local Resource – Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition

The Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC) supports and connects Community Supported Agriculture farmers and eaters. They coordinate community and farmer education programs, including the Partner Shares Program which raises funds to subsidize CSA memberships for households on a limited income.

Interested growers and households join the coalition mailing list to receive newsletters and invitations to grower gatherings and other events. Farmers wishing to be formally promoted by the Coalition complete an application and interview process held annually in the fall.

Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition
P.O. Box 7814
Madison, WI 53707-7814
(608) 226-0300
www.macsac.org

About Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM)

The Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM) works to identify and solve obstacles to local sourcing in order to increase the sales of local Wisconsin food into institutional markets. They conduct systematic outreach to institutional buyers, producers, and distributors, in order to connect key stakeholders in the supply chain. Institutional buyers include hospitals, hotels, conference centers, correctional facilities, retirement communities, private corporations, and others.

The Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM) was established in 2006 in an effort to:

- Expand market opportunities for Dane County and regional growers
- Connect large volume institutional buyers, such as hospitals, universities, nursing homes, prisons, office parks and large businesses with local Wisconsin product
- Identify and resolve obstacles to local sourcing

Institutional buyers are choosing locally grown food for many reasons, including:

- Competitive pricing
- Tastier, more nutritious food
- Local sales support WI family farms and rural communities
- One to Four – Buying locally contributes to economic development. For every one dollar spent on locally grown WI products, it is estimated that four dollars stay locally, creating a significant multiplier effect.
- Local sourcing helps to reduce air pollution by decreasing the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from farm to table.

Contact IFM

IFM wants to hear from you! Don't hesitate to call or email with questions about how you can buy or sell local produce and products in Wisconsin.

Olivia Parry, IFM Director, (608) 266-4270, parry@co.dane.wi.us

Laura Witzling, IFM Coordinator, (608) 266-6389, witzling@co.dane.wi.us

Courtney Berner, IFM Outreach Specialist

Address

Institutional Food Market Coalition
Dane County Planning and Development Department
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, room 362
Madison, WI 53703
<http://www.ifmwi.org>

About Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets are one of the oldest forms of direct marketing by small farmers. In the last decade they have become a favorite marketing method for many farmers throughout the United States, and a weekly ritual for many shoppers.

In a farmers' market, a group of farmers sell their products once or twice a week at a designated public place like a park or parking lot. Some farmers' markets have live entertainment. Shopping at a farmers' market is a great way to meet local farmers and get fresh, flavorful produce.

Benefits of a Farmers' Market:

- Gives growers and producers of agricultural commodities and other farm-related products alternative marketing opportunities.
- Provides an opportunity for farmers and people from the community to deal directly with each other rather than through third parties, and to thereby get to know and learn from one another.
- Provides an educational forum for consumers to learn the uses and benefits of quality, locally grown or prepared food products.
- Provides educational opportunities for producers to test and refine their products and marketing skills.
- Enhances the quality of life by providing a community activity that fosters social gathering and interaction.
- Improves the variety, freshness, taste and nutritional value of available produce.
- Preserves Wisconsin's unique agricultural heritage and the historical role that farmers' markets have played in it.



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Planning Project to Address Food Needs in Waushara County

Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, Inc. is pleased to announce the award of a \$25,000 Community Food Projects Planning grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The one-year planning grant, entitled Waushara Food Connections, will study the food systems of Waushara County and assist the community in developing comprehensive approaches to meet the long-term food needs of residents, especially those of low income families.

Waushara County's current food system is struggling to meet the needs of a growing low-income population. The recent economic crisis has seen food pantry use in Waushara increase by up to 158%. This year, 52% of the county's school-aged children are eligible to receive free and reduced cost hot lunch. Just as many families are facing financial hardship, many family farms and hometown grocery stores in Waushara County are at risk of economic failure.

To create a more locally-based, self-reliant food economy in Waushara County, Waushara Food Connections will help bring farmers, consumers, and communities together to address food, farm, and nutrition issues. Short-term relief is not enough. Sustainable, community based solutions are needed to increase food self-reliance at both the household and county levels.

Waushara Food Connections is an open-ended planning project with two phases. The first part is a Community Food Assessment to identify the strengths and needs of the county's food systems. To ensure that the voice of the community is heard, this assessment will include focus groups and surveys of county residents, farmers, business owners, and community leaders.

The project's second stage is a community food planning process that will use the results of our Community Food Assessment to set goals and explore, plan, and implement long-term, comprehensive responses to food needs, especially those of low-income families. Some of the needs that may be addressed include increasing the accessibility of locally grown produce, strengthening the economic viability of local grocery stores, and reducing transportation barriers to grocery stores and farm stands. The project will

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explore various responses to food needs, including initiatives such as a traveling farmer's market, community gardens, Farm to School projects, community kitchens, and educational programs.

Waushara Food Connections is a planning project whose final outcomes will be determined by participating county residents. By creating partnerships, planning projects, and recommending policies, Waushara Food Connections seeks to maximize the strengths of the county's resources to address its food needs, increase food self-reliance, and expand economic opportunities in the local food production, processing, and distribution industries.

In late August and early September of 2009, Waushara Food Connections will host open community meetings to provide an overview of project goals and activities. The focus of discussion at these meetings will be how to best study the local food system, how to maximize community involvement, and generally, how to proceed. At these first meetings, the Waushara Food Connections Council will be established. This council aims to include a variety of community members, including low-income residents, the agricultural sector, local government, community resource leaders, and area business owners. Committees will be formed to help guide the food study and volunteers will be requested to assist with the development of surveys and to facilitate focus group discussions.

County residents and other interested parties are encouraged to participate in these meetings and in every phase of Waushara Food Connections. All are invited to come prepared to share their ideas; community feedback is much needed to make this project a success.

To learn more about the Waushara Food Connections Project, contact Project Directors Sara McKee or Pamela Hughes at Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, Inc.: (608) 254-8353 ext. 243; (608) 697-4619 or email us at saram@cwcac.org or pam@cwcac.org.