

**ACCESSION NO:** 0219869 **SUBFILE:** CRIS  
**ROJ NO:** TEXW-2009-03853 **AGENCY:** NIFA TEXW  
**ROJ TYPE:** OTHER GRANTS **PROJ STATUS:** TERMINATED  
**CONTRACT/GRANT/AGREEMENT NO:** 2009-49400-05966 **PROPOSAL NO:** 2009-03853  
**START:** 01 SEP 2009 **TERM:** 31 AUG 2012  
**GRANT AMT:** \$665,038 **GRANT YR:** 2009  
**INITIAL AWARD YEAR:** 2009  
**INVESTIGATOR:** Bennack, G. H.  
**PERFORMING INSTITUTION:**  
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN  
201 W. UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
DINBURG, TEXAS 78539-2999

***DIRECT MARKETING INITIATIVE FOR BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS IN SOUTH TEXAS***

**NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY:** Need for the project--This project's target audience is beginning farmers and ranchers in South Texas that need: 1. Lower-cost production methods and techniques that require minimal acreage; 2. Reduce risk of catastrophic loss due to adverse weather conditions; 3. Drip-irrigation technology that reduces water consumption on small acreage; 4. Extended season multi-crop production that provides income throughout the year; 5. Higher sales prices for their agricultural products. Rationale for the project--Beginning limited-resource Hispanic farmers and ranchers do not have the resources to buy large acreage and high-dollar capital equipment. Land values are often driven by real estate and recreational development, making it difficult for the beginning farmer and rancher to own enough land to profitably grow traditional agricultural commodities. Therefore, this project will help targeted, beginning farmers and ranchers to successfully direct market their agricultural produce and products. Methods to be used--This project's novel and creative methods include: 1. A novel partnership approach that includes a leading Hispanic Serving Institution partnering with a leading Community-Based Organization, in addition to strong partnerships with a world-renown relief organization, with the nation's largest micro-lender, and with AgriLife Extension. 2. A novel and pragmatic approach to providing long-term sustainability to beginning farmers and ranchers by transitioning their focus towards the direct marketing of intensively cultivated fruits, vegetables, and small livestock. 3. A novel and efficient approach that includes focusing on the region of the U.S. with the highest number and concentration of Hispanic farmers and ranchers, one of the highest levels of poverty, and the highest number of 'colonias'; rural communities that lack utilities and infrastructure. 4. A novel and comprehensive approach to assisting participants coordinated outreach, training, technical assistance, and mentorship, along with an array of referral services to other related projects. 5. A novel technological approach to assisting participants on their farm locations by photographing farm and crop conditions and emailing the digital photos to subject-matter experts at Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Outcomes and impacts--This project's outcomes and impacts include: 1.The establishment of a growing group of small-scale Hispanic farmers and ranchers that effectively direct market their produce. 2.The promotion of a growing regional culture that supports and sustains the demand for direct marketing of agricultural products. Anticipated benefits--This proposed project is expected to double the number of beginning farmers and ranchers that are actively involved in directly marketing their farm and ranch produce in the 34-county South Texas region, while doubling the earnings of individual participants during the three-year project period. Over 450 beginning farmers and ranchers (BFR) will be served by this project during the three-year project period.

**OBJECTIVES:** Goal and Objectives--The goal of this Standard BFRDP project, the Direct Marketing Initiative for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers in South Texas, is to enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers in the 34-county region of South Texas by helping them to successfully direct market their agricultural produce and products. Supporting objectives include: 1.Increase the awareness of direct-marketing options and agricultural programs available to beginning farmers and ranchers through coordinated outreach efforts. 2.Enhance the land stewardship by beginning farmers and ranchers through production and management strategies. 3.Enhance the financial viability of beginning farmers and ranchers through business management and decision support strategies. 4.Enhance the competitiveness of beginning farmers and ranchers through direct marketing strategies. 5.Improve the viability of beginning farmers and ranchers through legal strategies that provide land and farm acquisition and transfer. Expected Outcomes--This proposed project is expected to substantially increase the number of beginning farmers and ranchers that are actively involved in directly marketing their farm and ranch produce in the 34-county South Texas region, while doubling the earnings of individual participants during the three-year project period. Expected outcomes are outlined in this application's Logic Model attachment. Over 405 beginning farmers and

anchers (BFR) will be served by this project during the three-year project period. This includes: 1. BFR participants in the primary nine-month intensive training program; 108. 2. BFR participants in the secondary nine-month intensive training program; 54. 3. BFR participants receiving direct on-the-farm assistance; 108. 4. BFR participants in introductory computer and Internet training; 54. 5. BFR participants in intensive, longer-term computer and Internet training; 18. 6. BFR participants in farmers' market development training; 72. 7. Number of regional training events including direct marketing training; 27. 8. Number of attendees at regional training events; 900. 9. Number of invitation mailings delivered for regional training events; 27,000.

**APPROACH:** Methods and Efforts--This proposed project does offer novel methods and efforts that will enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers in South Texas. These novel ideas and contributions include: 1. A novel partnership approach that includes a leading Hispanic Serving Institution partnering with a leading Community-based Organization that is comprised of and governed by Hispanic farmers, in addition to strong partnerships with a world-renown relief organization, with the nation's largest micro-lender, and with AgriLife Extension. 2. A novel and pragmatic approach to providing long-term sustainability to low-income limited-resource beginning farmers and ranchers by transitioning their focus towards the direct marketing of intensively cultivated fruits, vegetables, and small livestock, and away from agricultural commodity production that requires significant amounts of high-priced land with high start-up and production costs. 3. A novel and efficient approach to allocating 100% of the project budget to targeted participants of the BFRDP by focusing on the region of the U.S. with the highest number and concentration of Hispanic farmers and ranchers, one of the highest levels of poverty, and the highest number of colonias; rural communities that lack utilities and infrastructure. 4. A novel and comprehensive approach to assisting participants targeted by the BFRDP through coordinated outreach, training, technical assistance, and mentorship, along with an array of referral services to other related projects (see Section 1.5.). This comprehensive approach effectively integrates and coordinates the region's disparate efforts to assist beginning Hispanic farmers and ranchers with their direct marketing efforts. 5. A novel technological approach to assisting participants on their farm locations by photographing farm and crop conditions and emailing the digital photos to subject-matter experts at Texas AgriLife Extension Service. This use of technology will allow subject-matter experts to work efficiently, cover more area, and assist more project participants. Evaluation of Outputs--The project outcomes will be determined by analyzing and comparing the total number of beginning farmers and ranchers in the 34-county South Texas region at the beginning of the three-year project period with the total number at the end of the period. Participants' average earning at the beginning and the end of the three-year project will be determined as well. Survey instruments will be used for these tasks, and these surveys will capture the participants' earnings figures from their direct marketing efforts. Milestones will be compiled using participant tracking systems and sign-in sheets. A quantitative assessment of project output will be done on a monthly basis by comparing actual and projected milestones. Qualitative assessments will be done through training evaluation forms and surveys.

**PROGRESS:** 2009/09 TO 2012/08

**OUTPUTS:** Activities include field tests, surveys, assessments, facilitating, teaching, and mentoring. Events included 64 workshops, field days, and training events. Of these 164 events, 55 events were in partnership with Texas Mexican Order Coalition (TMBC), 62 events were in partnership with AgriLife Extension for Grow'n Growers, 47 events specifically targeted beginning farmers that are low-income and Hispanic. The 55 events with TMBC included Hispanic farmers and ranchers that were both beginning and more experienced farmers and ranchers. This project provided 68 hands-on demonstrations on planting, harvesting, and weed control and targeted 308 disadvantaged, immigrant, beginning farmers seeking to increase their knowledge and become sustainable. Services included 135 visits to individual farms to provide consulting, counseling, and tutoring to beginning farmers and ranchers that are low-income and Hispanic, so that they can better market their produce directly to consumers. Also, 69 visits were made to farmers' markets in order to assist beginning farmers and ranchers with their direct-marketing activities. Dissemination included 42 formal PowerPoint presentations along with handouts in English and Spanish to mostly beginning farmers and ranchers that are low-income and Hispanic, covering topics including: Introduction to Organic Gardening, Fall Planting Schedule, Compost Tea, Seedlings, How to make your own Compost, Vegetable Families, Medicinal Herbs, Diseases in Vegetables, Spring Planting Schedule, Beneficial Insects, Vermicomposting, Pests in Vegetables, Cover Crops, Irrigation, Marketing your produce, Cooking your vegetables, Soil principles, Tomato diseases, How to take a soil sample and test, Pest identification, Weed management. Materials produced to publicize and administer the program or recruit beginning farmers for training. Included: 30 bilingual flyers created to disseminate and promote educational events; Website: [www.utpa.edu/bfrd](http://www.utpa.edu/bfrd) redesigned and updated; a new Facebook [www.facebook/begfarmers](http://www.facebook/begfarmers). Media exposure included four newspaper articles, two radio interviews/spots, five videos

were produced and broadcast on a rural television channel and three local television interviews. Dissemination also included 99 e-mail blasts to the project's 347 member list-serve to farmers and ranchers notifying them of upcoming field days and training events. UTPA's BFRDP demonstration sites have hosted thirteen demonstrations that included 42 beginning farmers and also rural school teachers starting nutrition gardens for their students. Numbers and demographics of participants attending face-to-face workshops and training programs were: Socially disadvantaged(293/308)95%, Limited Resource(277/308)90%, Farm workers(20/308)6.5%, Females(263/308)85%, Males(45/308)15%, Currently farming / ranching(230/308)75%, Planning to farm/ranch(78/308)25%. PARTICIPANTS: A total of 13 individuals worked a month or more on the project during its three years of operation. The project included three primary partner organizations and three other collaborators, and the project provided the opportunity for professional staff development. Project staff included: 1) George Bennack, Project Director, who was responsible for the overall performance of the project, including performance and financial reporting; 2) Amelia Sanchez, Assistant Project Director, who provided assistance and training to project participants in different groups including distant locations that were more challenging to support; 3) Juan Raygoza, Field Representative, who provided training in classroom based and face to face technical assistance 4) Elias Tamez and 5) Mario Anthony Martinez students research assistants that assisted with training and technical assistance; 6) Cruz Salinas, 7) Avan Guerra, 8) Steve Studebaker 9) Albert Ybarra and 10) Tito Mata all worked part time on the project to assist Beginning Farmers and Ranchers with raised beds, drip irrigation, planting and harvesting activities. They also worked on demonstration projects for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. 11) Annie Studebaker worked part-time on this project to produce and broadcast video segments to train and assist Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. 12) Veronica Guzman took processes and analyzed soil samples for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers and project demonstration sites. 13) Adrian De Los Santos worked part-time to assist Beginning Farmers and Ranchers interested in developing marketing cooperatives. Primary partner organizations included: 1) Texas AgriLife Extension Service, which assisted in the provision of training and technical assistance to project participants; 2) Texas/Mexico Border Coalition CBO (TMBC), which assisted with the provision of training events that provided training and information to beginning farmers and ranchers in the region. Training and professional development opportunities for project staff included: First year: 1) Small Farms Conference, Springfield, IL, 09/14/09; 2) Pepper Conference, Weslaco, TX, 11/13/09; 3) Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Chattanooga, TN, 01/20/10; 4) Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Edinburg, TX, 02/04/10. Second year: 1) Conference on EQIP Funding, Weslaco, TX 9/24/10; 2) Sustainable Agriculture Conference, McAllen, TX, 02/04/11; 3) First Beginning Farmer Rancher Conference, Orlando, FL 2/5/11; 3) Economic Development and Emergency Management, South Padre Island, TX 6/2/11; 4) National Rural Gathering Conference, Shawnee, OK 6/22/11. Third year: 1) Southern SAWG Conference Practical Tools & Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms, Little Rock, Arkansas, 01/18/12; 2) Sustainable Agriculture Conference, McAllen, TX, 02/10/12; 3) Second Beginning Farmer Rancher Conference, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 02/17/12; 4) Agricultural Resource Gathering, Santo Domingo, New Mexico 4/11/12; 5) Goat Workshop, Weslaco, TX 08/4/12. TARGET AUDIENCES: Target Audiences that were served by the project include: 1) Beginning farmers and ranchers that are limited-resource Hispanic producers and often immigrant and first-generation farm workers, living in food-desert areas; 2) The school-age children of these low-income Hispanics that are often immigrant and first-generation farm workers; 3) Farm workers and other low income people seeking to become independent farm business owners, as well as farm owners operators with less than 10 years of experience; 4) Beginning farmers and ranchers that are Hispanic. Educational methodologies included: 1) The provision of an intensive 12-month training program to socially disadvantaged and limited resource beginning farmer most of whom speak Spanish as their first language and instruction, presentation and handout have been in Spanish; 2) The provision of less frequent training programs to beginning farmers and ranchers at more distant locations that were more challenging to support; 3) The provision of training to beginning farmers and ranchers through risk-management training events on a variety of subjects; 4) The development and use of demonstration sites to demonstrate farming techniques to beginning farmers and ranchers; 5) The provision of technical assistance to insure the successful adoption of techniques reviewed during training events; 6) Hands-on training at rural areas in collaboration with non-profit organizations. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: In the first year of operation major changes to the approach to project activities included: 1) Involving low-income school-age children in project training and assistance, in order to mold and shape behavioral patterns through early intervention and to have a greater long-term project impact; 2) Moving the project's demonstration sites to higher ground in order to better cope with flooding conditions from hurricanes and tropical storms; 3) Increasing focus on raised-bed production in order to reduce the amount of equipment required to prepare and maintain small-scale garden plots; 4) Placing more emphasis on train-the-trainer activities in order to have more project impact. The second year of operation the project established two

ew collaborations with faith-based organizations that are involved in helping limited-resource Hispanic producers that are beginning to farm and ranch. These two organizations include: Proyecto Desarrollo Humano in Penitas, Texas; and Iglesia Luterana Agua Dulce in El Cenizo, Texas. During its second year this project lost its long-standing partnership with Heifer International due to the closing of its Southwest Regional Division. This closing was due to severe budget cuts within the Heifer organization that resulted from the slow economy. In the third year of operation the project has established a new collaboration with HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability Incubator Project a non-profit organization in Cameron County, Texas. This organization was formed to help provide funding to develop programs and acquire equipment for shared use, to give training and education to low income and disadvantaged families, small scale farmers, and individuals interested in growing, preparing and selling their own organic food in a self-sustainability way; and to increase the number of beginning farmers in the area. The training for this farm incubator started this year with 14 participants, limited-resource Hispanic producers that are beginning to farm and ranch.

**IMPACT: 2009/09 TO 2012/08**

This Project had 759 participants during its three years of operation. In its first year of operation, included 38 participants in an extensive 9-month training program and 52 in less extensive training sessions. A change of conditions occurred with project participants: 1) One additional farmers' market was open as a result of more participants in the project's training program; 2) Diet and health improved as participants eat more fresh fruits and vegetables that they produced. Two-years after the initial training program, included 50 participants in an extensive 9 month training program and 74 in less extensive training sessions, carried out in remote food-desert areas. A change of conditions occurred with project participants: 1) Families of beginning farmers benefited from having access to fresh vegetables and increased their consumption while reducing their food budget; 2) One additional farmers' market was opened in March as a result of the interest of a local hospital to provide easy access for fresh produce to employees and general public; 3) Low income beginning farmers gained knowledge on sustainable farming practices; 4) Beginning farmers program participants learned new marketing practices and applied them at Farmer's Markets and increased their sales. Third year of operation included 36 starting participants from colonias in an extensive 12-month training program and receiving individual technical assistance at their home plots; 83 farmer participants in less extensive training sessions, carried out in remote food-desert areas. A farm incubator program was started in collaboration with HOPE (Holistic Outreach Project and Education) non-profit just formed this year with 14 starting beginning farmers participants. Size of target beginning farmer audience: At project start (baseline) = 120; Year 1 = 08; Year 2 = 247; Year 3 = 304 Of those who completed a workshop and training program, three years after the initial training program, percent of participants who as a result of this training: graduated = 84%, started farming = 28%, did not start farming = 16%, continued farming = 84%, stopped farming = 4%, changed farming/land management practices = 63%, changed marketing practices = 37%, changed business practices = 37%, developed farm plan = 84%, continue to participate in training programs = 89%. A new collaboration of Direct Marketing Initiative for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers in South Texas with HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability Incubator Project had contributed in the training and education of 14 low income, disadvantaged families and small scale farmers, interested in growing in a self-sustainability way. Families of beginning farmers benefited from having access to fresh vegetables and increased their consumption while reducing their food budget; Low income beginning farmers gained knowledge on sustainable farming practices. Two additional farmers markets were opened this year as a result of the public interest for easy access of fresh produce.

**PUBLICATIONS (not previously reported): 2009/09 TO 2012/08**

no publications reported this period

**PROGRESS: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31**

OUTPUTS: Activities include field tests, surveys, assessments, facilitating, teaching, and mentoring. Events included 69 workshops, field days, and training events. Of these 69 events, 33 events were in partnership with AgriLife Extension for Row'n Growers, 21 events were in partnership with Texas Mexico Border Coalition (TMBC), and an additional 15 events were done without AgriLife Extension or TMBC. The 33 events with AgriLife Extension specifically targeted beginning farmers that are low-income and Hispanic. The 21 events with TMBC included Hispanic farmers and ranchers that were both beginning and more experienced farmers and ranchers. The remaining 15 events included 42 hands-on demonstrations on planting, harvesting, and weed control and targeted disadvantaged, immigrant, beginning farmers seeking to increase their knowledge and become sustainable. UTPA's BFRDP demonstration sites became operational in January 2011 and have hosted six demonstrations that included 56 beginning farmers and also rural school teachers starting nutrition gardens for their students. Numbers and demographics of participants attending face-to-face workshops and training programs were: Socially disadvantaged 94%; Limited resource 90%; Farm workers

%;Females 82%;Currently farming/ranching 47%; Farming/ranching less than one year 50%. Services included 34 visits to individual farms to provide consulting, counseling, and tutoring to beginning farmers and ranchers that are low-income and Hispanic, so that they can better market their produce directly to consumers. Also, 32 visits were made to farmers' markets in order to assist beginning farmers and ranchers with their direct-marketing activities. Dissemination included 15 formal PowerPoint presentations along with handouts in English and Spanish to mostly beginning farmers and ranchers that are low-income and Hispanic. Dissemination also included 15 flyers in Spanish, distributed by other agencies, to recruit beginning farmer participants; 2 videos on Organic Gardening and Pest Control; 2,000 mailings to farmers and ranchers notifying them of upcoming field days and training events for farmers and ranchers. Dissemination also included 35 e-mail blasts to the project's 324 member list-serve. PARTICIPANTS: A total of five individuals worked a month or more on the project during the second year of operation. The project included three primary partner organizations and three other collaborators, and the project provided the opportunity for professional staff development. Project staff included: 1) George Bennack, Project Director, who was responsible for the overall performance of the project, including performance and financial reporting; 2) Amelia Sanchez, Assistant Project Director, who provided assistance and training to project participants in different groups including distant locations that were more challenging to support; 3) Elias Tamez, a student research assistant that assisted with training and technical assistance; 4) Annie Studebaker, Field Representative, who developed demonstration plots and worked on nutrition gardens for Hispanic children; 5) Epifanio and Ofelia Mata, who worked part time to assist with demonstration sites and provide technical assistance on small-scale farm and garden plots. Primary partner organizations included: 1) Texas AgriLife Extension Service, which assisted in the provision of training and technical assistance to project participants; 2) Texas/Mexico Border Coalition CBO (TMBC), which assisted with the provision of training events that provided training and information to beginning farmers and ranchers in the region. Other collaborators included: 1) Grow'n Growers, a Texas Agrilife Extension Service project that helped provide low-income participants with training and technical assistance on small-scale farming operations; 2) Project FORGE, a UTPA and MBC project that provided training to Hispanic farmers and ranchers. Training and professional development opportunities for project staff included: 1) Conference on EQIP Funding, Weslaco, TX 9/24/10; 2) Sustainable Agriculture Conference, McAllen, TX, 02/04/11; 3) First Beginning Farmer Rancher Conference, Orlando, FL 2/5/11; 3) Economic Development and Emergency Management, South Padre Island, TX 6/2/11; 4) National Rural Gathering conference, Shawnee, OK 6/22/11. TARGET AUDIENCES: Target Audiences that were served by the project include: 1) Beginning farmers and ranchers that are limited-resource Hispanic producers and often immigrant and first-generation farm workers, living in food-desert areas; 2) The school-age children of these low-income Hispanics that are often immigrant and first-generation farm workers; 3) Beginning farmers and ranchers that are Hispanic. Efforts to deliver knowledge through formal and informal education programs included: 1) The provision of an intensive 9-month training program to beginning farmers and ranchers that were interested in directly marketing their produce; 2) The provision of less frequent training programs to beginning farmers and ranchers at more distant locations that were more challenging to support; 3) The provision of training to beginning farmers and ranchers through risk-management training events on a variety of subjects; 4) The development and use of demonstration sites to demonstrate farming techniques to beginning farmers and ranchers; 5) The provision of technical assistance to insure the successful adoption of techniques reviewed during training events; 6) Hands-on training at rural areas in collaboration with non-profit organizations. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: This project has established two new collaborations with faith-based organizations that are involved in helping limited-resource Hispanic producers that are beginning to farm and ranch. These two organizations include: Proyecto Desarrollo Humano in Penitas, Texas; and Iglesia Luterana Agua Viva in El Cenizo, Texas. UTPA and this project lost its long-standing partnership with Heifer International due to the closing of its Southwest Regional Division. This closing was due to severe budget cuts within the Heifer organization that resulted from the slow economy.

**IMPACT:** 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

This Project had 247 participants during its second year of operation, including 50 starting participants in an extensive 9-month training program and 74 in less extensive training sessions, carried out in remote food-desert areas. Of the 120 participants in the extensive training program, 12 graduated and 20 substantially adopted methods and techniques learned in the training program. Size of target beginning farmer audience: At project start (baseline)= 120; Year 1 = 108; Year 2 = 247. Of those who completed a workshop and training program: percentage who are farming = 47%; percentage change in knowledge = 100%; percentage change in attitudes = 90%; percentage planned change in behavior/approach = 80%; percentage of the ones planning to start farming = 53%; percentage that plan to continue farming = 100%. One year after those who completed a workshop and training program: 100% changed farming

and management practices; 70 % developed farm plan; 23% started farming; 14% are not farming; 86 % changed marketing practices; 86% changed business practices; 83% continue to participate in training programs. Two years after those who completed a workshop and training program 100% changed farming\land management practices; 70% developed a farm plan; 25% started farming; 8% are not farming; 50% changed marketing practices; 50% changed business practices; 83% continue to participate in training programs. A change of conditions occurred with project participants: 1)Families of beginning farmers benefited from having access to fresh vegetables and increased their consumption while reducing their food budget; 2)One additional farmers' market was opened in March as a result of the interest of a local hospital to provide easy access for fresh produce to employees and general public; 3)Low income beginning farmers gained knowledge on sustainable farming practices; 4)Beginning farmers program participants learned new marketing practices and applied them at Farmer's Markets and increased their sales.

**PUBLICATIONS:** 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

0 publications reported this period.

**PROGRESS:** 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

**OUTPUTS:** Activities include field tests, surveys, assessments, facilitating, teaching, and mentoring. Events include 44 workshops, field days, and training events; 29 events in partnership with AgriLife Extension for Grow'n Growers, and 15 events in partnership with TMBC. The 29 events with AgriLife Extension specifically targeted beginning farmers that are low-income and Hispanic. The 15 events with TMBC included Hispanic farmers and ranchers that were both beginning and more experienced farmers and ranchers. Services include 49 visits to individual farms to provide consulting, counseling, and tutoring to beginning farmers and ranchers that are low-income and Hispanic, so that they can better market their produce directly to consumers. Products include a robust database for Hispanic producers in the 34-county South Texas region as well as a base-line inventory of 68 producers that were directly marketing their produce in a more focused 13-county South Texas region, at the beginning of the project. Products also include two collaborative networks; the AgriLife network and the Coalition (TMBC) network. Technology, methods, and techniques include an effective training/circuit-rider methodology that trains participants in groups, visits participants individually for mentoring and technical assistance, and uses digital, broadband technology to assist with integrated pest management. Digital photos of pest problems are taken and on-site emailed to entomologists for diagnosis. Products include a project web site at [www.utpa.edu/bfrd](http://www.utpa.edu/bfrd), project brochure in English and Spanish, six PowerPoint presentations, a list-serve of a 110 project stakeholders, and informational presentations in English and Spanish. Dissemination includes 10 formal PowerPoint presentations in English and Spanish to mostly beginning farmers and ranchers that are low-income and Hispanic. Dissemination also includes 3,037 mailings to farmers and ranchers notifying them of upcoming field days and training events for farmers and ranchers. Dissemination also included 21 e-mails to the project's 110-member list-serve. **PARTICIPANTS:** A total of five individuals worked a month or more on the project during the first year of operation. The project included three primary partner organizations and three other collaborators, and the project provided the opportunity for professional staff development. Project staff included: 1) George Bennack, Project Director, who was responsible for the overall performance of the project, including performance and financial reporting; 2) Amelia Sanchez, Assistant Project Director, who provided assistance and training to project participants, and assisted the project director with project operations; 3) Mario Anthony Martinez, graduate assistant that assisted with training and technical assistance; 4) Annie Studebaker, Field Representative, who developed demonstration plots and worked on nutrition gardens for Hispanic children; 5) Tito and Ofelia Mata, who worked part time to assist with demonstration sites and provide technical assistance on small-scale farm and garden plots. Primary partner organizations included: 1) Texas AgriLife Extension Service, which assisted in the provision of training and technical assistance to project participants; 2) Heifer Project International, which assisted with the provision of materials and supplies required for project activities; 3) Texas/Mexico Border Coalition CBO (TMBC), which assisted with the provision of training events that provided training and information to beginning farmers and ranchers in the region.. Other collaborators included: 1) Grow'n Growers, a Texas Agrilife Extension service project that helped provide low-income participants with training and technical assistance on small-scale farming operations; 2) Frontera Agricultural Risk Management (FARM) Project, a TMBC project that provided training to Hispanic farmers and ranchers; 3) South Texas Initiative to Grown Farmers, a UTPA project that assisted with the development of farmers' markets in South Texas. Training and professional development opportunities for project staff included: 1) Small Farms Conference, Springfield, IL, 09/14/09; 2) Pepper Conference, Weslaco, TX, 11/13/09; 3) Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Chattanooga, TN, 01/20/10; 4) Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Edinburg, TX 2/04/10. **TARGET AUDIENCES:** Target Audiences that were served by the project include: 1) Beginning farmers and ranchers that are limited-resource Hispanic producers and often immigrant and first-generation farm workers; 2) The

school-age children of these low-income Hispanics that are often immigrant and first-generation farm workers; 3) beginning farmers and ranchers that are Hispanic. Efforts to deliver knowledge through formal and informal education programs included: 1) The provision of an intensive 9-month training program to beginning farmers and ranchers that were interested in directly marketing their produce; 2) The provision of less frequent training programs to beginning farmers and ranchers at more distant locations that were more challenging to support; 3) The provision of training to beginning farmers and ranchers through risk-management training events on a variety of subjects; 4) The provision of technical assistance to insure the successful adoption of techniques reviewed during training events. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Major changes to the approach to project activities included: 1) Involving low-income school-age children in project training and assistance, in order to mold and shape behavioral patterns through early intervention and to have a greater long-term project impact; 2) Moving the project's demonstration sites to higher ground in order to better cope with flooding conditions from hurricanes and tropical storms; 3) Increasing focus on raised-bed production in order to reduce the amount of equipment required to prepare and maintain small-scale garden plots; 4) placing more emphasis on train-the-trainer activities in order to have more project impact.

**IMPACT:** 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

This Project had 208 participants during its first year of operation, including 38 participants in an extensive 9-month training program and 52 in less extensive training sessions. Of the 38 participants in the extensive training program, 2 graduated and 20 substantially adopted methods and techniques learned in the training program. A change of knowledge occurred with project participants: 1) 100% of the 22 participants in the 9-month training program experienced a change in knowledge; 2) 100% of the 52 participants in the less intensive training program also experienced a change in knowledge. A change of actions occurred immediately after project participants completed their 9-month training program: 1) 91% of the 22 participants (20 of 22) substantially adopted methods and techniques learned in the training program; 2) 86% of the 22 participants (19 of 22) planned change in their approach to growing vegetables and fruits; 3) 14% planned to start commercially selling their produce through direct-marketing techniques and methods. A change of conditions occurred with project participants: 1) One additional farmers' market opening in October as a result of more participants in the project's training program; 2) Diet and health are improving as participants eat more fresh fruits and vegetables that they produce.

**PUBLICATIONS:** 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

no publications reported this period