

Progress Report

Title:	The Center for Integrated Agriculture: Building a Entrepreneurial Beginner Farmer Resource		
Sponsoring Agency	NIFA	Project Status	COMPLETE
Funding Source	Non Formula	Reporting Frequency	Annual
Accession No.	223531	Grants.gov No.	
Project No.	FLAW-2010-03136	Award No.	2010-49400-21800
Project Start Date	09/01/2010	Proposal No.	2010-03136
Reporting Period Start Date	09/01/2010	Project End Date	08/31/2013
Submitted By	Beverly Green	Reporting Period End Date	08/31/2011
		Date Submitted to NIFA	11/30/2011

Program Code: BFRDP**Program Name:** Beginning Farmer and Rancher**Project Director**

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Recipient Organization

FLORIDA WEST COAST RC&D COUNCIL
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BRADENTON, FL 34209
DUNS No. 137134370

Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Co-Project Directors

Crane, Sarah

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

Like most urbanizing communities around the country, "Local Food" has emerged as a critical issue over the past few years in Central/Southwest Florida, and much has been done to address the need. There are over 70,000 visits per month on the Florida Small Farms website, a series of regional small farms conferences were initiated in 2006, and two regional farmer-to-farmer networks have emerged. At least a dozen regional conferences are held annually and in addition, many other county or local programs are being held now. These programs are being attended by a few thousand people annually. Although these programs address some educational needs, beginner farmers still need and are requesting more in-depth training, experiences, and assistance. Florida needs a high-intensive agricultural business training center. Currently, there are few agricultural training programs. The closest farmer training site is a start-up organization with very little programming in Birmingham, Alabama. With Florida population and local food demand expected to increase along with unique soil and climate conditions, a high-intensive training facility in Florida is necessary. By the next USDA census, Florida will have an estimated 7000 beginner farmers that are in the most delicate time in their business - start up and diversification for long-term viability. In response, the Center for Integrated Agriculture (CFIA) in Southwest Florida was established in 2007 to train beginning farmers in all aspects of resource conservation, farm operation and management. Technical assistance is offered by various agencies to support individual decision-making. Beginner farmers need assistance in accessing loans, getting management and technical trainings, networking with other new farmers, and help with acquiring land and equipment. Through the relationships developed with professional staff, local businesses, and with other beginner farmers in the network, farmers start to have a support structure. The CFIA takes a high-intensive training approach to increase success rates of new farmers. This model replicates the theories behind traditional business incubation. Business incubators use strategies such as increasing access to capital, assistance with loans, comprehensive training, and increasing networking opportunities, giving clients much greater chances for success than typical startup businesses. The overall objective is to establish the next phase of the CFIA's beginner farmer programming, focused on launching agricultural businesses from the planning phase to farm ownership. The economic impacts regionally are estimated at 100 farmers substantially increasing their capacity, with 15 new businesses created, and 30 jobs created. If 100 small farmers making less than \$10,000/year increase their returns by 15% due to improved capacity, that is a \$150,000 in short-term direct return on the grant investment, and will continue to increase. The 5-year estimate for improved capacity and small farm start ups is estimated at over \$10 Million dollars being generated and circulated locally in the small farm economy.

Progress Report**Accession No. 223531****Project No. FLAW-2010-03136****Accomplishments****Major goals of the project**

The overall goal is to establish the next phase of the CFIA's beginner farmer programming, focused on launching agricultural businesses from the planning phase to farm ownership. The first objective is to develop an evaluation tool for trainees to identify gaps in skills, knowledge, and abilities that helps CFIA staff individualize trainings. A total of 12 evaluation tools and 100 individualized plans for targeted programming will be developed under this objective. Also, 3 ag business resource libraries will be established. Objective 2 is to assist beginner farmers with efficient financial management by developing farm-friendly sales, recordkeeping, and financial trainings and tools. This will result in 2 training sessions in financial management, 10 training sessions presented and 150 file systems with truck-ready file totes distributed to beginner farmers in addition to direct technical assistance that will be offered. Objective 3 is to equip farmers with decision making strategies on risk management issues to increase long-term viability. Under this objective 3 training modules will be developed for risk management. The final objective is to facilitate ownership and management of farms for beginner farmers with technical assistance and trainings in land transfer strategies, lease arrangements, and leadership development. Outputs for objective 4 include 5 alternative lease or land transfer sample documents developed by a lawyer, 3 training modules developed for regulatory compliance, 25 farmers receive technical assistance on ownership program, 50 digital customizable templates distributed of sample lease agreements, and five 5 beginner farmers enter into 3-yr incubation program. The initial evaluation tools will be developed in September 2010. Books for the resource libraries will begin to be selected and procured in October 2010. Training sessions and technical assistance development will begin in October 2010 and be fully developed by April 2011. In January 2011 an attorney will be selected and model lease agreements will be completed by April 2011. Recruitment, training sessions, and technical assistance will begin by May 2011. Remote incubation and associated recruitment will begin by September 2012. A preliminary measurement of outcomes will be complete by September 2013.

What was accomplished under these goals?

Project year 1 was primarily a year for development of resources to be applied in years 2 and 3 of the project, therefore outcomes measured are limited to areas of the project where target audiences have been engaged such as the apprenticeship programs at Geraldson Community Farm and Gamble Creek Farm. In the first year 5 apprentices were actively enrolled in the program. In year 2 the total number of apprentices will reach 8, in year 3 it will be 12. In year 1, 80% of the active apprentices have plans to start their own farm operations. By the end of year 1 40% were continuing to farm on training sites. 20% were farming on their own land. 20% are farming on other operations. 80% of total apprentices were continuing to farm using methods learned in the training program. The other 20% were not farming, but had future plans to farm. Approximately 40 new applications were received for new apprenticeships for year 2. Baseline data has been collected from previous Ag Census data to determine the number of farms established in the long term after the project period. Short term baseline data to measure farm startups in the project area has been collected on LocalHarvest.org. Training delivered in years 2 and 3 of the project will be evaluated by participants to determine planned changes in behavior and plans to start or continue farming. Changes in business practices and numbers of participants that started farming will be measured after one year. Individual technical assistance recipients will be measured differently according to the evaluation tools reported in the outputs section. 10 technical assistance requests have been received and initial evaluations conducted. Upon completion of technical assistance measurable outcomes will be reported. Of the present requests, 50% are presently farming, 50% are planning to start farming. Baseline knowledge has been measured based on the types of assistance requested and outcomes will be reported for year 2 as the assistance progresses.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

OUTPUTS: The Center for Integrated Agriculture focuses on four objectives toward facilitating the development of beginning farmers. Those objectives include individualized programming, financial management, risk management, and farm ownership. We record outputs for this project in accordance with those four objectives. Through our evaluation process for individualized programming, the intended outputs for year 1 of the project were to develop a process by which to assess the needs of a beginning farmer such as the goals, strengths and weaknesses. Post assessments will be developed for farmers that have been through some level of instruction or mentorship to assess the effectiveness of the training and make the changes necessary to improve the delivery method or subject matter. In the first year 12 evaluation tools have been developed to assess training recipients that are categorized as apprentices, trainees, technical assistance recipients, or remote incubatees. Different evaluation tools are used for farmers at three different levels of experience, including those with less than 2 years, 2 to 5 years, and 5 to 10 years experience. Self directed learning is another part of the individualized programming objective. In year 1 of the project we procured resources for 2 beginning farmer libraries, one at Geraldson Community Farm and one at the Florida West Coast RC&D headquarters. In year 2 of the project, a third library will be developed for Gamble Creek Farm. Each library holds over 50 resources, including crop management manuals, business planning resources, organic certification guides, and many more resources for farmers. Library visits will be tracked in year 2 and 3 of the project for reporting purposes. The second objective is financial management. Through this objective we have created 1 guide to cash handling

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procedures for direct market operations and have begun developing 2 training sessions to cover topics such as payment methods, cash flow management, basic record keeping of sales, customer retention, and basic Quickbooks training. A customized Quickbooks file and matching file system is under creation currently, and approximately 50 truck friendly file tote cases will be in development to hand out to farmers that attend training sessions in year 2 of the project. The third objective is risk management. This objective will be met through training sessions and individual technical assistance. A training session has been developed by Stephen Gran of the Hillsborough County Agricultural Industry Program for Economic Development and these sessions will be delivered in years 2 and 3 of the project. Technical assistance resources are under development to handle topics such as production risk, marketing risk, financial risk, legal risk, and human resources. The fourth objective is farm ownership. One of five sample lease packets has been developed in year 1 of the project. Attorneys are being selected to assist with further development of lease options in year 2 and year 3 of the project. Partnerships have been developed with 2 local lenders to provide training sessions in years 2 and 3 of the project on loan acquisition for beginning farmers.

PARTICIPANTS: Project director Jacob Leech has worked on this project providing deliverables such as oversight of project implementation and personnel, development of training sessions, development of evaluation tools, and handling incoming requests for technical assistance. Farm managers William Harris and Eric Geraldson have provided oversight and training on a day to day basis through mostly matching contribution for apprentices. William Harris is the replacement farm manager for Adam Lichtenberger. The farm managers have evaluated incoming apprentices and potential remote incubation candidates and selected applicants who can most benefit from the program, and have worked one on one to train apprentices in management techniques and production methods. Sales manager Linda Percy coordinated the development of the beginning farmer resource libraries and assisted in development of training modules. Partner Laura Morton, USDA NRCS, has provided in kind technical assistance for the apprenticeship program and mentorship to project personnel. **TARGET AUDIENCES:** In year 1 of the grant project the primary target audience has been applicants for apprenticeship and remote incubation and beginning farmers with technical assistance requests. Of the apprentices described in the Outcomes section of this report, 40% are female and 60% male. 20% are socially disadvantaged, 80% are economically disadvantaged, and 20% are educationally disadvantaged farmers. Applicants for apprenticeship were approximately 80% economically disadvantaged and approximately 30% socially disadvantaged farmers. Requests for technical assistance have come from approximately 60% socially disadvantaged farmers and 80% economically disadvantaged farmers. **PROJECT MODIFICATIONS:** In year 1 of the project no changes in scope have occurred, however other obstacles have occurred that slowed the progress of project deliverables. Several organizational staff departed, including some who were working on the project. Sarah Crane, Logan Beal, and Adam Lichtenberger departed the organization in Year 1. Adam Lichtenberger was immediately replaced by William Harris, the new farm manager for Geraldson Community Farm. Sarah Crane and Logan Beal were not immediately replaced. However, late in the first project year a new executive director for the organization was hired as well as a new marketing and outreach coordinator. A request will be made to have them replace the appropriate project staff and begin working on project deliverables immediately. Project director Jacob Leech assumed the role of Acting Executive Director in the interim leaving him with additional duties that decreased the amount of time he was able to focus on starting work on the grant project. Since the hiring of new staff he has worked to bring the pace of the project up to speed, mostly since the beginning of the second project year. Additionally, federal support for the RC&D program was eliminated from the federal budget in year 1, further limiting the capacity of the organization. Since the hiring of the new executive director the condition of the organization has improved and project activity has resumed at a fast pace. The project is on pace to match the deliverables and outcomes for the first two project years on schedule with high importance being placed on completing the goals of the project this year. Partners for the project are still in place and ready to provide training and technical assistance in the second and third year of the project.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

{NO DATA ENTERED}

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Participants

Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students with Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0

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Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students with Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Professional	0	0	0	0	0
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	0	0	0	0	0

Student Count by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Target Audience

Products

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
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Citation

No publications reported this period

Other Products

Changes/Problems