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Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Non-Technical Summary

The Generating Permanent Farmers through Permanent Agriculture (GPFPA) Initiative will create a system to produce and train beginning farmers and connect them with resources to access farmland, and establish viable farms, while also enhancing the viability of beginning existing farmers to retain prosperous farms. The result will be a thriving network of small farms producing sustainably-grown local foods for Miami, the fourth largest and one of the poorest urban populations in the US. The Initiative will increase farmland access and ownership, particularly among socially disadvantaged Latino and urban farmers, with intensive "infill agriculture" on underutilized land. Earth Learning and its partners will leverage their experience as community agricultural educators to support the creation of viable new farms by leading beginning farmers through a development continuum beginning with outreach and access to training, financing and asset building, and land access programs. Earth Learning and GPFPA farmers will form the Everglades EcoGrown cooperative to sustainably produce, market and distribute large amounts of food grown in perennial polyculture food forests in small-scale, underutilized infill farms settings.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

Goals: 1) to increase farmland access and ownership, particularly with intensive "infill agriculture" on underutilized land; and 2) to support the creation of viable new farms by facilitating access to training, financing and asset building programs. Objective 1: Perform outreach to prospective, new, and existing beginning farmers from socially disadvantaged and limited resource groups. Outcomes include: Create awareness of program and benefits Attract people to farming that had not considered it before Engage New or Existing farmers in a more viable type of farming Objective 2: Enable prospective, new, and existing beginning farmers to produce large amounts of food sustainably in small-scale, underutilized conventional and non-conventional settings (infill farms). Outcomes include: Initial exposure to Prospective farmers Knowledge gained in sub-tropical sustainable agriculture and farm ecology Experience gained / paid work through Internship and Apprenticeship opportunities Objective 3: Provide technical assistance to prospective, new, and existing beginning farmers in the form of business development, land and resource access, whole farm planning and design, marketing and other cooperative services; including USDA programs and services. Outcomes include: Formal development of business plans for micro-enterprise Acquisition or access to resources for farming Reduced quantity of land needed for farming Access to land (lease or other arrangements) Acquisition of land Objective 4: Create support structures including regular and diverse networking opportunities and a Farming and Distribution Cooperative that will serve to enhance the viability of beginning farmers by connecting them to restaurants, institutional buyers, CSAs and farmers markets, and directly to consumers. Outcomes include: Connections created to a supportive community of farmers New or increased viability for beginning farmers Mid-range outcomes include: Prospective farmers becoming New farmers, New farmers accessing land and becoming Existing

farmers, and Existing farmers acquiring land and becoming Permanent farmers. Long-range outcomes include: the establishment of an innovative model for generating permanent farmers in large metropolitan areas by reducing land requirements and therefore surpassing barriers to farm ownership; an increase in the availability of local, sustainably-produced, healthy foods in local markets; and, the number of partnerships between farmers and the community support increases. Outputs: Additional Beginning Farmers Prospective-->New: 90 New --> Existing: 65 Existing --> Permanent: 45

What was accomplished under these goals?

New Beginning Farmers: Of the 39 apprentices (new beginning farmers) that have completed 58 apprenticeships by participating in multiple levels of our 24-week program to date 33 are now farming or have launched a farming related business, four intend to do so within the next year, and 2 are either not farming or are out of touch with us. We are employing and giving technical assistance and training to 8 New Latino Farmers. Farmer Network and Local Food Hub: We are growing a local food infrastructure and network that is supporting our existing farmers/producers (over 50), as well as providing a welcoming network for our Beginning Farmers (both existing and new). The Local Food Hub is now functioning as a pilot program, buying food from these farmers and feeding the local markets, including three of our own. The Network has already hosted several very successful and well-attended events, including three Community Food Summits, several Locavore Lounge (mixers) and new farmer gatherings.

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

The project has provided Permaculture Design Certificates and Advanced Permaculture Training (2,935 hours) and hands-on training (34,812 hours). In addition to the formal and hands-on training, we have hosted 3 Community Food Summits (community-wide dialog and networking event for producers and all involved in bringing about a robust local food system); hosted networking events for Beginning Farmers, with young urban farmers and activists presenters from around the country. We have hosted the following regular gatherings: Locavore Lounge (quarterly), for beginning farmers, existing farmers, and local food enthusiasts; Crop Mobs/Volunteer events (monthly) for beginning farmers to learn, work, and share a meal together around an on-farm project, creating over 5000 hours of farming exposure; Earth Harvest Festivals: Slow Money South Florida Regional Chapter (Monthly) for people interested in pooling funds to invest in small farmers and local food infrastructure; South Florida Food Policy Council (monthly) participating to as a voice for urban producers and beginning farmers; Weekly Farmers' Markets a forum for creating community connections and a market for beginning farmers. Our beginning farmers participated in and many times helped make these events possible, learning to organize them and often teaching workshops to communicate the skills they had learned.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

We took every opportunity afforded to us at various scales to communicate our program, highlighting always our results and successes.

Locally, we gave regular tours of our Learning Centers (working farms) where our Apprentices were stationed; we organized several levels of programs with school and community groups (Junior Apprenticeships and service learning) and with Universities (Miami Dade College, Florida International University, University of Miami) that involved service learning, internships, and research-based courses; We held public events, such as the Community Food Summits (mentioned above) and Earth Harvest Festivals and Farmers Day where we performed outreach throughout the County. We exposed 5,700 members of the general public to our farm and apprenticeship program that was shaping the farm. We collaborated with Natural Awakenings Magazine to host Natural Farmer Day. The Learning Center at The Farm at Verde Gardens was a major collective accomplishment for the classes of Apprentices that trained there and it and they received a fair amount of Media Coverage, and we always emphasized the Apprenticeship program. We have conducted over three dozen talks from colleges and universities to Sierra Club meetings, environmental education providers, slow food gatherings, municipal meetings, and chambers of commerce to conduct outreach and to disseminate information about our program.

Regionally & Nationally, we presented the program and its innovations at various statewide, regional, and national conferences and gatherings. The program and our work in training Beginning Farmers in Permaculture is well known throughout the loose permaculture network in North America.

We would like to pull our collective experiences, curricula, tools and resources together and publish a book-length manual to share with others, if the funding became available.

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

{Nothing to report}

Participants

{Nothing to report}

Target Audience

The following target audiences that we have worked with are 80% or more with a social, economic, and/or educational disadvantage. Most are Latino or African American. We have conducted varying degrees of outreach to each of these

populations depending on their specific needs and their awareness levels. Target Audiences: Prospective Farmers: People who are exploring an alternative livelihood, and are interested in learning more about farming (pre-college age to mid-career to late in life) New Beginning Farmers: Those who self identify as wanting to engage in a farm-based venture Effort: We have delivered formal classroom instruction and practicum experiences to our Apprentices, which involved the development of a curriculum based on Permaculture Design and Ecological Farming that exposed them to a broad array of workshops and experiential learning opportunities.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products**Product Type**

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

Hands-on, Permaculture-based curricula for 3 levels (Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced) of Beginning Farmer Apprenticeships covering various fields of knowledge

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

Personal Learning Plans: Tools to continually asses learning goals and progress

Changes/Problems

The goals and objectives were changed and approved by NIFA as follows after the project's first year:

The goals of GPFPA is: To support the creation of new "permanent" farmers by facilitating access to training and technical assistance programs that empowers them to practice diverse, sustainable small-scale intensive "infill agriculture" on underutilized land.

Objective 2: Enable prospective and new beginning farmers to produce large amounts of food sustainably in small-scale, underutilized conventional and non-conventional settings (infill farms).

Objective 3: Provide technical assistance to prospective and new beginning farmers in the form of business development, land and resource access, whole farm planning and design, marketing and other cooperative services; including USDA programs and services.

Objective 4: Create support structures including regular and diverse networking opportunities and a Local Food Hub that will serve to enhance the viability of beginning farmers by connecting them to restaurants, institutional buyers, CSAs and farmers markets, and directly to consumers.