

Poster Abstract

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club: Developing a sustainable Meat CSA

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While demand for local foods is rising, producing a local source of meat remains a challenge in part due to the infrastructure required for processing and marketing. The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) proposed to strengthen the local food economy in Sonoma County by developing a pilot project which explored a new county-based meat buying club. The club, which began as a small-scale pilot project in February 2008, gives county residents access to local meats, raised on Sonoma County family farms following environmental and humane practices, at an affordable price. In doing so, the club enhances local market opportunities for the county's livestock producers, and income streams that can help keep ranching operations viable.

During this pilot project, UCCE, Sonoma County has teamed up with Sonoma Direct to create the Sonoma County Meat Buying Club. This Club was started through a USDA marketing grant. The Sonoma County Meat Buying Club has reached over 200 members, providing local beef, lamb, pork, duck and goat to members purchasing 7, 15 or 25 lbs on a monthly basis. Along with each shipment, members receive education information about local organizations, livestock practices, cooking instructions and more. A local chef creates recipes each month that accompany the shipments, enabling club members to explore new options for cooking their local meat.

This educational opportunity exposed Sonoma County residents to benefits of livestock production. Not only does the industry producing a safe, quality product but their management practices are helping to maintain biodiversity on Sonoma County range and pasture lands, enabling consumers to eat their view shed.

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