



UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

Food and Society

Capitalizing on new values-based marketing channels:
Using market tours to link small, beginning, and immigrant
producers with wholesale buyers

2013 – 2014 Phase 1 Report

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CoBank
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Farm Credit West
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Capitalizing on new values-based marketing channels: Using market tours to link small, beginning, and immigrant producers with wholesale buyers

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Summary of activities and results from Year 1 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014)

This program is based on the idea that the best way to create sales is to introduce small and ethnic farm producers to willing wholesale buyers. We do this using a simple tool to affect change: experiential tours of produce markets supported by one-on-one consultations. Every farmer has different information needs.



However, given the opportunity to connect with and learn from a variety of buyers they will create action plans to turn the contact into profit. Farmers are more likely to profit if they are able to work with buyers to communicate values of local, ethnic, or sustainability. This theory of change has proven effective during the first year, Phase 1, of the project.

During FY 2013-2014, we conducted two bus tours of markets in the San Francisco Bay Area leaving from Sacramento and from the Monterey Bay region. We

conducted individual consultations with growers who asked for and were ready to make use of specific marketing information. We have begun to measure the outcomes for participating growers and will continue the process through Phase 2, 2014-2015.



The tours were well covered by the press including a full color spread on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle. With help from one of the buyers and one of the marketing consultants from the SF Terminal Market, Cooks Company Produce, we took the “tour to the farmers” at the California Small Farm Conference in Santa Rosa in March 2014. More than 45 additional farmers at the conference got “hands-on” experience touching, tasting and hearing about dozens of novel produce items.

Two more Farm Credit offices joined this effort during the year. Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn joined the project with additional funding. Fresno Madera Farm Credit has also provided funding for Phase 2.

Phase 2 of the project will begin in July of 2014. We will expand our tool to track outcomes for growers from the first phase and conduct two more tours. The resource page on the website will be launched and we will begin to organize the summit of organizations and educators that help small farmers access values added supply chains.

David Visser, the project coordinator and technical assistance consultant will leave the program in October after helping Gail Feenstra to transition in his replacement at ASI/SAREP.

Results

Tours

We have exceeded our goals with 46 farmers representing 44 operations participating in two tours. There were about 18 farmers on the tour leaving from Sacramento and about 28 from Watsonville. Twenty-five farmers (both tours; ~ 50% of total participants) asked for consultation about their marketing strategies or for help with a profile.

We visited 6 buyers on October 29 (Sacramento tour) and 6 buyers on November 5 (Monterey Bay tour). We met with a very diverse set of buyers who generously hosted us including: a wholesaler and a foodservice purveyor at the SF Produce market, a “Food Hub”/ delivery service, a fresh cut distributor, a high end restaurant chef, a midsized specialty distributor, two grocery stores, and a university food service. We received bonus presentations from the President of FreshPoint San Francisco, a food safety expert at Bay Cities Produce (on the Sacramento tour), and a loan officer from American AgCredit (on the Monterey tour). We also learned about food safety audits from a UC Cooperative Extension video on board the bus. And - we returned within minutes of our scheduled ETA!

Farmer learns how to help other farmers

“I have learned of specific buyers and what they are looking for in the produce they want to buy. This has broadened my knowledge base and will enable me to better support local organic farmers. I have made contacts with other small organic farmers on the tour as well”.

Experienced fruit grower sells entire citrus and persimmon crop

A Sierra foothill third generation fruit grower made a deal with Earl’s Organic to sell his entire citrus and persimmon crop for 2014. This may not increase total sales numbers since all fruit is now sold at farmers markets and a few local packers but sales efficiency will increase right away and Earl’s is a good customer for stone fruit as well.

The farmers who joined these tours were exceptionally diverse. At one moment, from a catwalk looking down to a warehouse floor, one could see three groups, speaking three languages gathered around boxes of produce hearing from the buyer and his employees about how the system works. Our Chinese and Latino translators were busy for 15 hours straight. We had vegetable, fruit, flower, agronomic, and livestock producers. Every buyer asked for a list of the growers. Many growers wanted to know when there would be another tour. The time with buyers was

valued highly by farmers. In fact, a complaint on some evaluations was that there was not enough time for growers to visit longer individually with buyers and they felt rushed.

The press was incredible. We had a full color, above the fold, front page spread in the San Francisco Chronicle. Articles also appeared in the Davis Enterprise, the Daily Democrat, FarmsReach (on-line outreach), and the Farm Bureau newsletters. Fox 40 News in Sacramento met us at dawn for an interview with the Sacramento tour participants. KQED met us at the San Francisco Produce Market and broadcast the story on the California Edition. The UC Davis Outlook Magazine did a story. The tweets and blogs are hard to track but with a Bay Area politician re-tweeting we reached thousands. This does not include the coverage we got back in August in Capital Press, AgAlert, Western Farm Press, and a Fresno radio station. Additionally, Farm Credit Services of Glenn-Colusa wrote a story for their newsletter. (Some samples of the coverage can be found in the Appendix)

Farmers from around Monterey Bay gather at Stanford University food service



Technical Assistance

After the tour, 25 growers checked the box on the evaluation form indicating that they wanted technical assistance or consulting. On follow up, 10 were unable or unready to receive the assistance because they lost their lease, had not yet started their farm, or simply because they changed their minds or were too busy. We have completed technical assistance for 15 growers.

Farmer Veteran tells his story and sells his tomatoes

“My family has farmed the same 40 fertile acres near Cordelia Junction in Solano County for four generations. I grew up here helping my father grow vegetables and many different varieties of peaches, nectarines, plums, apples and pears to sell at our roadside stand. I left home to serve in the United States Marine Corps in Iraq, but but returned to start my own vegetable operation on six acres adjacent to the home place.

Because the farm is only an hour from San Francisco I can focus on great tasting varieties, picked ripe, then packed and delivered quickly. I have cooling capacity. This year I will grow half an acre of asparagus and ten varieties dry (almost) farmed heirloom tomatoes including roma, red slicers and greenhouse varieties.

I want to develop serious, adaptable, interactive, fun, and long term relationships with buyers in the grocery, restaurant and wholesale markets. The fruit from my Dad’s farm is prized by our community and we can discuss including it in your order. My contact information is xxx, and my email is xxx. I look forward to speaking with you and discussing your needs and the possibility of working together.”

This young farmer expects sales to double in 2014 on new land lease. He has an arrangement with the owner of Cook’s Company Produce whom he met on the tour. Cooks will pick up from his farm. As a result of lessons learned from the tour and consultation he is diversifying his market by selling to several small groceries in Marin and Sonoma counties.

The individual consultations, as expected, ranged over a wide area of topics and are difficult to generalize. These growers got individual answers to their particular questions. One-on-one conversation with an expert is a significant teachable moment and many growers had real epiphanies. The most common questions were about pack, grade, boxes, and labels. Concerns about regulations both from buyers and from government were part of all conversations. Several growers were also interested to learn about the idea of getting operating credit from Farm Credit and from Farm Link. Those from the southern tour (Monterey Bay Area tour) all wanted the address of the local Farm Credit representative.

To our surprise, only one farmer asked for help with a profile during the consultation even though most who asked for a consultation also asked for a profile. (This may be a result of how the questionnaire was arranged with adjacent check boxes.) The one completed profile was used successfully by the farmer as part of his business plan and as part of his approach to a buyer. The result was an arrangement

wherein the foodservice buyer will pick up product weekly during the season from the grower.

Manager of a training program for disabled adults chooses a marketing strategy

A startup, small, intensive farm near Half Moon Bay has formed to train and employ developmentally disabled adults. During the tour and a consultation the farmer developed a strategy to direct market product to a restaurant that supports the mission and also wants local produce.

The growers on the tours were generally quite sophisticated and did not need writing help. Most of the Latino growers were attached to the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) where they already had help with both profiles and strategic planning. We coordinated with ALBA staff to meet in Salinas sequentially with 6 farming couples, then followed up with the information and resources they needed.

None of the Chinese farmers wanted profiles and the Hmong farmers had college educated family working on the farm that were quite capable of performing this task.

Sales Data

During the technical assistance and other follow up, we were able to obtain sales data for 2013 from 12 farmers with average sales of \$62,000. Only 5 were prepared to estimate sales in 2014 with an average increase of 126%. All affirmed that the tour and consultation were valuable however most have not yet actualized that value in profits. Only 4 have follow up contacts with new buyers as a result of the tour, but almost all of them said they have collected cards and intend to make contact.

Farm Conference

In March, the team presented a workshop to about 45 producers at the California Small Farm Conference in Santa Rosa.

Buyers took the tour to the farmers at a Farm Conference workshop

Selling value-added produce in wholesale markets with your farm story: opportunities for small, ethnic, and immigrant farmers



Although markets are expanding for local food, it's not easy to find new markets for your produce when you're an immigrant farmer or someone new to farming. You may not have the contacts, language or cultural skills to connect with wholesale produce distributors who are looking for local produce from small or ethnic growers and who need you to pack, grade, and label safely. In this workshop, Ric Tombari and Bill Fujimoto of Cooks Company Produce will show you what well packed produce looks like. They know how to help you tell your story to get the best price. Ric and Bill have vast experience in bringing new farmers into the market and can provide tips and advice you will find nowhere else. They will bring boxes of produce to actually show you what to do. Our premise is that growers learn by doing, sell when they meet buyers, and build capacity when they see the profit. The panel will also include Gail Feenstra (moderator) and David Visher from UC SAREP who will describe the small/ethnic farmer marketing tour program that has successfully linked growers with produce buyers

Farmers affirmed the value of the tours in handwriting on the back of the post tour survey

The experience of direct contact with the different buyers I met today has provided me with an invaluable educational opportunity I could not have had on my own—the reason for this is two-fold; one—Automatic credibility because of the organizations that sponsored the tour (the buyers know the farmers on this tour are serious customers) two—the opportunity to meet and talk with the buyers as well as the other touring farmers on the bus enables opportunities and synergies not available otherwise. I have new ideas generated just by interacting with everyone today. I just I would not have had otherwise. I have new direction as a result that will enable me to help the industry, consumer, buyers and health of the planet (hopefully) as a result, thank you very much. You are providing a wonderful service to us all.

“The tour could not happen without the generous funding. I hope that it continues. It is the best investment one can make. Kudos and thanks to you all!”

“I want to thank the American Ag Credit for this generous tour that gave us new tools to manage our business. Now it's our job to follow up however we want to. Thank you for this help offer to these starting farmers. We found Mark Franco, (American Ag Credit, Salinas) to be very helpful. I have been farming for 5 years and this is something new.”

Mark, (Franco) It was great to meet you today. I will be sure to tell my uncle to call you when I have a great new idea and we don't have the money!

Result Metrics

Figure 1 Proposed results by end of Phase 1, year one

This table is drawn from the original scope of work and explains variances from expected outcomes

	<u>When measured</u>	<u>Est #</u>	<u>Actual #</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Producers will understand the range of new values-added market channels available to them	11/2013 Verified by written evaluation	40	44 + 45	63 people were on the bus: 46 were producers representing 44 operations. Nearly all were fruit or vegetable growers, one grows cut flowers, 1 grows agronomic crops, and a few raised both animal and produce. An additional group of about 45 growers who we impacted attended a workshop at the California Farm Conference taught by buyers and based on the tour.
Producers will meet with 7 wholesale and retail buyers during each of 2 market tours to learn about what is required to conduct business.	11/2013 Verified by written evaluation	40 7	44 7.7	The average number of new buyer contacts (business cards, conversations, follow up plan, etc.) each producer made was 7.7 based on evaluation, (post tour survey). Farmers took the initiative on the tour to connect with additional buyers whom they met at the markets.

<p>Producers will create a simple action plan, with consultative help, about how they will implement a new market channel strategy and manage the risk.</p>	<p>3/2014 Verified by written evaluation</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>Each grower pursues action planning in their own way; our role is to assist them as requested.</p> <p>The 15 farmers who accepted post tour consultative assistance were led towards an action plan and we have some written evidence of that effort. Although 47 of the fifty farmers on the tour said they intended to follow up with buyers – an action plan, only 25 requested assistance. Ultimately 15 received one on one technical assistance.</p>
<p>Growers will work with staff to create edited and illustrated farm profiles that they use as marketing collateral to overcome communication barriers, add value, and facilitate new buyer relationships.</p>	<p>5/2014 Verified personal interviews</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Only 1 farmer asked for help with a profile during the consultation even though 22 of the 25 who asked for a consultation also asked for a profile. Because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growers were more sophisticated than expected and most can write their own. 2. Latino, and Chinese growers already have help through their associations 3. Hmong grower has educated son who is creating a brand.

<p>Growers will sell product to new buyers or make agreements for the next season after meeting buyer's vendor requirements: Gap, certification, insurance, etc.</p>	<p>6/2014 Verified by pre/post assessment</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>The data was gathered for this report before May. So only anecdotal information about grower expectations is possible. It is not the standard in the market channels we explored to make hard vendor agreements. However 5 growers have made specific connections as a result of the tour that they expect to result in sales in 2014. We will survey them again during phase 2 after a completed season.</p> <p>All the growers learned about vendor requirements direct from buyers and from a film shown on the bus of a mock GAP inspection.</p>
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Figure 2: Technical Assistance Consultations

Would you like a follow-up consultation?	25
Would you like help on your farm profile? (Note: only 1 (!) actually wanted help on a profile.)	22
Consult complete	15
Of the 15 TA completed the number of follow up buyer's contacts to May 1.	4
Growers received TA and were willing to share 2013 sales	12
Average sales in 2013	\$61,900
Growers prepared to project 2014 sales	5
Average projected increase in sales for 2014 (N=5)	%126

Figure 3 Survey taken at end of the tours

Key: 1 = yes, 0 =no.

Question one: Are you farming now or do you intend to farm in the future?

Sacramento: 21/23 Monterey: 25/27 total: 46/50

Question two: Did you learn about any new ways to market your produce on today's tour?

Sacramento: 22/23 Monterey: 26/27 total: 48/50

Question four: Estimate how many new contacts you made today, (business cards, conversations, follow up plan, etc.)

Averages- Sacramento: 6.5 Monterey: 8.6 Total: 7.7

Question five: Do you plan to follow up with these or similar buyers as a result of this tour?

Sacramento: 21/23 said yes. Monterey: 26/27 said yes. Total: 47/50 said yes.

Question six: Do you sell labeled product now?

Sacramento: 10/23 Do. Monterey: 9/27 Do. Total: 19/50 Do.

Question seven: please rate this tour on a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful) for ideas to increase sales: average rating for Sacramento: 4.56 Monterey: 4.62 Total: 4.6

Next steps

Phase 2

Beginning in the Summer of 2014 and continuing forward through Spring of 2015, we will develop the website in support of the project and expand our client management capacity in order to more effectively support the most committed farmers. We will also gather remaining second and third season data to measure outcomes.

We learned during our first year that we need different metrics to measure success; not just sales increase:

- **We should be asking about sales efficiency and the contribution of the new market channels to overall profit, not only increased sales.** Our target market is a producer who is considering moving into boxed and branded product for wholesale. This means that they are already producing and selling through one or more existing market channels. Therefore, the

tours and consultation may not result in new sales but a shift into a profitable or more efficient market channel.

- **Are the producers committed to selling to a wholesale market? We should be asking what GAP, cultural practice certification, safety trainings, and formal application for vendor licenses are a result of lessons and contacts made during the tours and consultations.** Buyers have their own set of requirements a grower needs to meet before a sale can happen. Sometimes a formal application and review process defines this, other times it is a handshake.
- **Capacity investment** – All wholesale buyers require boxes, labels, post harvest treatment, and sometimes processing. The producer has to have a plan to get product to market. These things require capital. **We should be asking if the grower is making any investment in boxes, post harvest equipment, logistics or partnerships to move or aggregate product.**
- **Action plans and profiles** – every producer has an action plan or they would not be on the bus. The success of a consultation should be measured by the *action plan the consultant executes* to deliver an effective consultation. Not written homework for the farmer to do.

We will plan more tours to meet building demand from new growers. In 2014-2015, we will offer two more tours—one for Fresno area farmers and one for farmers at the rural urban interface surrounding the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2015-2016, if we are funded for the final year we will offer a tour for farmers of the central coast from San Luis Obispo County south to Ventura County.

We have proven our concept for how to effect change using a simple tool: experiential tours supported by a consultative style follow up. The next step, during the third year/Phase III is to leverage that knowledge and the contacts with industry, and contacts we have made across the entire community of NGO's, Extension, USDA agencies, Small Business Development Centers, banks, and their partners. Many of these organizations have an interest in helping small farmers increase viability through access to new wholesale markets.

Many organized efforts exist throughout California to build educational tools (including food safety workshops, for example) and business models that assist ethnic and small growers to enter values based supply chains. However this work is dispersed and best practices are not shared widely. Farm Credit and UC SAREP could be appropriate sponsors for a summit focused on identifying ways to collaborate and communicate around this common interest. Goals of the summit may include the following:

- Convene organizations involved in helping small, ethnic, young farmers access new values-based supply networks and share strategies
- Identify ways to collaborate more effectively to increase farmer sales into values based markets

- Provide a venue for the creation of public/private partnerships
- Identify information and resource gaps, as well as investment opportunities
- Locate the leverage points along the supply chain where we can effect the most change for producers using the least resources
- Identify a plan for measuring results of our collaborative work

It is challenging for this team to project next steps beyond the summit since we anticipate that the outcomes of the summit that will drive the next steps. However, after three years we will have launched a training and outreach program that will provide useful information and contacts for beginning ethnic and young farmers, helping them to effectively enter new wholesale markets with a solid business foundation.



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In her first year of farming near Elk Grove



Appendix

Press

[*Small and Ethnic Farmer Market Tour Project | Farm Credit Alliance*](#)

[*SF Chronicle*](#)

[*One Davis CAES newsletter*](#)

[*Capital Press*](#)

[*Press Release*](#)

SMALL AND ETHNIC FARMER MARKET TOUR PROJECT

University of California, Davis

Program links new farmers with produce distributors

It's not easy to find markets for your produce when you're an immigrant farmer or someone new to farming. You can sell your crops at fruit stands or farmers markets, but you may not have the contacts or even the language skills and cultural customs to connect with large-scale produce distributors.

Meanwhile, in restaurants, grocery stores, schools, hospitals and corporate lunchrooms across the state, buyers are clamoring for locally grown food.

“The demand for local, sustainable food is large and increasing,” said Gail Feenstra, food systems coordinator for the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and the Agricultural Sustainability Institute at the University of California, Davis. “Distributors can't find enough locally grown produce to meet the need.”

But that's changing, thanks to a new Small and Ethnic Farmer Market Tour Project which introduces small farmers to conventional distributors interested in offering a line of locally grown food. The project is run by the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP) and funded by CoBank, Farm Credit West, American AgCredit, and newly added Fresno-Madera Farm Credit along with Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn.

The tours work like this: Farm advisors and Cooperative Extension specialists identify the small, specialty-crop growers in their areas, many of whom are Hmong, Mien and Latino. The growers climb aboard a bus along with tour leaders like Feenstra and David Visher, an analyst with UC SAREP.

“We have translators on board, too, if needed,” Feenstra said. “We drive to terminal markets, produce houses or processing facilities where growers meet face-to-face with distributors who explain their produce needs.”

SAREP hosted two successful tours in fall, 2013 to a group of 46 farmers who grow fruits, vegetables, flowers, and field crops. Tour participants spoke English, Chinese, and Spanish, and translators worked for 15 hours to ensure that each participant understood all the information shared. Farmers were able to learn about purchasing criteria from a number of different buyers and establish contacts with them.

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The success of the tours was evident in the weeks to follow. Several farmers reported back that they connected directly with produce buyers and even sold much of their upcoming harvests as a result of the contacts made.

“Workshops and field days are great education tools, but nothing makes markets happen as well as simply introducing a willing seller to a willing buyer and then stepping out of the way,” Visher said. “We help growers tell their stories and make good-value propositions to buyers, but it’s really up to these business people to make their own deals.”

In thank you notes following the tour, farmers gave overwhelmingly positive feedback to the tours.

“The trip has been encouraging,” said Emma Torbert. “I currently sell to markets in my area, but am interested in expanding. Today, I got the impression that there is a lot of demand.”

“Invaluable connections were made and key information was imparted to all the growers,” said another farmer on the tour. “This will increase the market channels for small growers and help secure economic viability of small growers. Supporting this type of essential bus tour is testament to your commitment to the sustainability of California Agriculture.”

Over half of the tour’s participants have since signed up for individual consultations with Visher to continue to refine their marketing strategies. The consultations help farmers create an action plan for selling their crops and prepare a farm profile — a flyer that explains who they are and what they grow.

“We’ve been getting good responses from the promotional flyer David (Visher) helped us prepare for our avocado ranch,” said Los Angeles area farmer Steve Bailey. “Thanks to the contacts and advice, we’ve started selling to local restaurants.”

“We’re always on the lookout for new sources of organic produce and local farms,” said David Weinstein, sales manager at Heath & Lejeune, Inc., a certified organic wholesaler in Commerce, Calif. “Our firm knows firsthand that some of these small farmers will become important suppliers in the future and it is in our interest to help them know how to do business at our level.”

Following the tours, each produce buyer requested contact information for the full list of grower participants, opening doors for those conversations to develop into business relationships.

CoBank and the Farm Credit partners say they are happy to help.

“Local food initiatives prove that the food we eat can do more than nourish our bodies,” said Leili Ghazi, Western Region president of CoBank. “They can strengthen and support our communities and create tremendous economic opportunities. The challenge has always been connecting the right people and businesses at the right time. CoBank and our Farm Credit partners are so pleased to support UC Davis in its efforts to help introduce the region’s small, ethnic farmers to those who can truly help them grow their business.”

In response to the success of the 2013 tours, Fresno-Madera Farm Credit has joined with CoBank, Farm Credit West, American AgCredit, and Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn —to expand the workshops to other regions of California.

The tours, dubbed “workshops on wheels” by many social media users, received excellent press coverage including a front page article in the [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [the Daily Democrat](#), [Capital Press](#), [AgAlert](#), Valley Public Radio, Farms Reach, the California Farm Bureau Newsletter, and a news segment by Fox 40 in Sacramento.

To learn more about project and how you can participate, contact Visher at (530) 758-2429, dlvisher@ucdavis.edu

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UC plants seeds of growth for local farmers

Stacy Finz

Updated 9:53 pm, Monday, November 4, 2013

Emma Torbert, a stone-fruit grower, didn't know what to expect when she got off a bus to tour wholesale food businesses in the Bay Area.

By the time she went home to her farm near Davis, her head was filled with possibilities.

She and 17 other growers, participating in a University of California workshop, learned that being a small farmer is actually a boon in today's market, where consumers are clamoring for fresh and local foods with a story. The demand is great enough that wholesalers are doing something entirely new - passing up large-scale commercial growers for people like Torbert, who farms only 4 acres.

"The trip has been encouraging," said Torbert, 34. "I currently sell to markets in my area, but am interested in expanding. Today, I got the impression that there is a lot of demand."

While some consumers have gone straight to the source, many shoppers are demanding that their neighborhood retailers carry fruits and vegetables from local farmers instead of huge conglomerates that buy from worldwide growers.

Focus on local food

In 2009, Mintel, a global marketing research company, found that 1 in 6 consumers made it a point to buy food grown regionally to support the local economy. Shoppers also perceived that food produced relatively close to home was fresher, better tasting and better for the environment, according to the firm.

Last year, Mintel found that 52 percent of consumers polled said that it was even more important to buy local fruits and vegetables than organic produce.

Torbert's tour last week was intended to help small growers like her find new avenues to sell their products besides farmers' markets, fruit stands and community-supported agriculture. The tour was organized by the UC Davis Cooperative Extension, the university's Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program along with the Agricultural Sustainability Institute.

"Everyone wants to do business with them," David Visher, a project analyst who helped organize the workshop, said of his tour group, mainly farmers from along the Interstate 80 corridor. "We're not advocating that they choose processors over farmers' markets. We're just trying to show them their options and introduce them to the right people so they can make their own choices."

Many small farmers have complained that farmers' markets and farm stands aren't a sustainable way to do business. Transportation and labor are expensive and take them away from the land. Several on the tour acknowledged that they were looking for other, more cost-effective models.

One of the stops was Bay Cities Produce, a large processing company in San Leandro. The company wants to work with local, small farmers and even offers incentives to fulfill Bay Cities' stringent food safety requirements.

"We've gone from 5 percent local to 50 percent in the last three to four years," said Karl Kolb, Bay Cities' food safety executive. "Our clients want quality, and they know that they can get it from the small farmer."

Same demands nationally

In addition to selling produce to grocery stores such as Whole Foods, Andronico's and Mollie Stone's Markets, Bay Cities sells to restaurants, institutional kitchens and hospitals. All have become particular sticklers about having locally grown produce, Kolb said.

"We're seeing it across the nation," he said. "Our clients want to know where the food is sourced, how it's sourced and who it's sourced from. In Kansas they want produce from Kansas."

Kolb said dealing with small farmers - his definition is anyone who cultivates up to 1,000 acres - is more difficult than buying from industrial growers. One bad frost isn't likely to wipe out a commercial producer's entire crop, so the grower is more reliable, he said. Their product also tends to be more consistent in size, shape and color, and delivery times are consistent. Furthermore, the big guys already have safety standards in place.

"But the customer is always right," said Steve Del Masso, vice president of Bay Cities, which was founded by his father. He added that if his clients want small and local, he'll deliver.

Because small growers can't always afford to set up food safety mechanisms on the farms, Del Masso offers financial incentives, including cash, to pay for systems that ensure water and soil quality and ways to trace back produce in instances of food-borne illness outbreaks. Once the farmers comply with Bay Cities' rigid health requirements, Kolb said, "we will meet their price. We pay very well, according to the market."

Broadening his business

Chip Morris, an heirloom dry bean farmer from Thornton (San Joaquin County), was impressed with the tour. He sells his beans to Williams-Sonoma and specialty markets such as restaurants, but would like to find a midsize distributor to broaden his business.

When the bus stopped at the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market on Jerrold Avenue, Morris started to get excited by his prospects.

"We're not hurting," he said. "We're going pretty strong in California with restaurants. But we haven't done too much with grocery stores, and we don't have a marketing team. If we could find a company like Bay Cities to get us out there, it would be great."

Stacy Finz is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: sfinz@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @sfinz

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HEARST newspapers

Program links new farmers with produce distributors

Jul 16, 2013 — Diane Nelson — University of California, Davis

A new program introduces small farmers with large-scale produce distributors interested in offering a line of locally grown food. The connections are helping beginning farmers grow their business and helping distributors find the locally grown food consumers crave.

It's not easy to find markets for your produce when you're an immigrant farmer or someone new to farming. You can sell your crops at fruit stands or farmers markets, but you may not have the contacts or even the language skills and cultural customs to connect with large-scale produce distributors.

Meanwhile, in restaurants, grocery stores, schools, hospitals and corporate lunchrooms across the state, buyers are clamoring for locally grown food.

"The demand for local, sustainable food is large and increasing," said Gail Feenstra, food systems coordinator for the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and the Agricultural Sustainability Institute at the University of California, Davis. "Distributors can't find enough locally grown produce to meet the need."

But that's changing, thanks to a new Small and Ethnic Farmer Market Tour Project which introduces small farmers to conventional distributors interested in offering a line of locally grown food. The project is run by the UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute and funded by CoBank, a national cooperative bank serving rural America, and three farm credit associations: Farm Credit West, American AgCredit and Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn.

"With this round of funding, UC Davis will work with growers from the Monterey/Salinas area and from the Sacramento Valley," Feenstra said. "We conducted three tours last year — in Sacramento, Los Angeles and San Francisco — and they were wonderfully successful," Feenstra said.

The tours work like this: Farm advisors and Cooperative Extension specialists identify the small, specialty-crop growers in their areas, many of whom are Hmong, Mien and Latino. The growers climb aboard a bus along with tour leaders like Feenstra and David Visser, an analyst with the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

"We have translators on board, too, if needed," Feenstra said. "We drive to terminal markets, produce houses or processing facilities where growers



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meet face-to-face with distributors who explain their produce needs.”

The program also helps farmers create an action plan for selling their crops and prepare a farm profile — a flyer that explains who they are and what they grow.

“Workshops and field days are great education tools, but nothing makes markets happen as well as simply introducing a willing seller to a willing buyer and then stepping out of the way,” Visher said. “We help growers tell their stories and make good-value propositions to buyers, but it’s really up to these business people to make their own deals.”

Often, small farmers need to join forces in order to efficiently sell to wholesale buyers. The program helps them do that, too.

“We hear a lot of great conversations on the bus between growers about how best to aggregate their product,” Visher said.

The farmers and distributors make lasting connections, according to those who participated in last year’s tours.

“We’ve been getting good responses from the promotional flyer David (Visher) helped us prepare for our avocado ranch,” said Los Angeles area farmer Steve Bailey. “Thanks to the contacts and advice, we’ve started selling to local restaurants.”

“We’re always on the lookout for new sources of organic produce and local farms,” said David Weinstein, sales manager at Heath & Lejeune, Inc., a certified organic wholesaler in Commerce, Calif. “Our firm knows firsthand that some of these small farmers will become important suppliers in the future and it is in our interest to help them know how to do business at our level.”

CoBank and its Farm Credit partners say they are happy to help.

“Local food initiatives prove that the food we eat can do more than nourish our bodies,” said Leili Ghazi, Western Region president of CoBank. “They can strengthen and support our communities and create tremendous economic opportunities. The challenge has always been connecting the right people and businesses at the right time. CoBank and our Farm Credit partners are so pleased to support UC Davis in its efforts to help introduce the region’s small, ethnic farmers to those who can truly help them grow their business.”

To learn more about project and how you can participate, contact Visher at **(530) 758-2429**, dlvisher@ucdavis.edu.

Media contacts:

- Diane Nelson, UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, **(530) 752-1969**, denelson@ucdavis.edu
- David Visher, UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute, **(530) 758-2429**, dlvisher@ucdavis.edu
- Gail Feenstra, UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute, **(530) 752-8408**, gwfeenstra@ucdavis.edu

New farmers meet produce distributors



Courtesy of UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program Pang Eng Chang, who grows jujube, papayas and other crops near Fresno, attends a University of California-sponsored tour of agricultural wholesalers in Sacramento in late 2012. The UC plans to offer more such tours for small and ethnic farmers this fall.

By TIM HEARDEN

Capital Press

DAVIS, Calif. — New and ethnic farmers in the Sacramento and Salinas valleys will be given an opportunity this fall to market their fresh produce to wholesalers in the San Francisco Bay area.

A University of California-Davis program will offer bus tours this fall to growers identified by their local Cooperative Extension farm advisors, and the farmers will visit terminal markets, produce houses and processing facilities to meet face-to-face with distributors, said Gail Feenstra, a UC food systems coordinator.

Immigrant farmers will be accompanied by translators, and the UC's Small and Ethnic Farmer Market Tour Project will help growers develop a flyer that explains who they are and what they grow.

The tours aim to match small, specialty-crop growers looking for sales outlets with restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals and corporate lunchrooms around the state that are clamoring for locally grown food, UC officials say.

“If you take these small farmers who might be selling at farmers’ markets and introduce them to buyers and then step back, the learning just happens,” said David Visher, an analyst for the UC’s Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program here. “The business cards get exchanged and business starts to happen between some of those farmers and some of those buyers.”

The tours will be similar to those conducted last year in Sacramento, Los Angeles and San Francisco. This year’s trips will be geared to growers in the Salinas-Monterey area and Sacramento valley and will be funded by CoBank, a national cooperative bank serving rural America, and Farm Credit West, American AgCredit and Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn.

“We are really excited about having the opportunity to work with ethnic growers, which is a very hard audience to reach,” said Feenstra, who works with the Sustainable Agriculture Research Education Program and the Agricultural Sustainability Institute at UC-Davis.

Many small growers of niche commodities are Hmong, Mien and Latino.

“Having this experiential strategy for bringing growers to distributors and fresh-cut processors really is an effective way of helping to make business deals and educate both sides, really, about what’s needed to increase their sales,” Feenstra said.

To learn more about the project and the tours, contact Visher at dlvisher@ucdavis.edu or **(530) 758-2429**.

Online

UC-Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute: <http://asi.ucdavis.edu/front-page>

UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program: <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu>

Produce market tour connects small farmers with wholesale buyers

Sacramento— October 15 2013 —

###

It's not easy for a farmer who is used to selling direct at farmers markets, a roadside stand, or to a processor to make the big step into selling boxed and labeled product to a wholesale buyer. Yet these buyers really want to meet small farmers so they can serve the rapidly expanding market for locally grown food. The University of California Cooperative Extension offices in Sacramento, along with the Agricultural Sustainability Institute at UC Davis are planning to connect these farmers and buyers from the San Francisco Bay Area during a bus tour on Tuesday October 29.

David Visher from University of California Agricultural Sustainability Institute is working with Chuck Ingels, UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor to organize the tour. "Workshops and field days are great education tools, but nothing makes market connections happen as well as simply introducing a willing seller to a willing buyer and then stepping out of the way." Visher added. "We help growers tell their stories and make good-value propositions to buyers, but it's really up to these business people to make their own deals." Buyers will show growers what they expect from farmers regarding pack and grade, food safety, and terms. In turn the growers can discuss what they grow and why it is special.

Farmers who want to join the bus tour need to pre-register by contacting UC Cooperative Extension at (916) 875-6913 or sending email to caingels@ucdavis.edu .

The day long tour will leave UC Cooperative Extension in Sacramento at dawn, pick up more growers on in Vacaville on the way to San Francisco, then tour the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market and see different kinds of buyers in the area. The farmers will also visit an independent retailer who buys direct as well as a foodservice or restaurant buyer. The tour will be a "workshop on wheels" where participants will learn about food safety requirements and credit and loan opportunities.

###

For more information:

- Chuck Ingeles UC Cooperative Extension Sacramento County (916) 875-6527, caingels@ucdavis.edu
- David Visher, UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute, (530) 758-2429, dlvisher@ucdavis.edu
- Gail Feenstra, UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute, (530) 752-8408, gwfeenstra@ucdavis.edu

Marketing, Agenda, Forms, and other Collateral

Sacramento Tour Agenda

[1 Sacramento Tour Agenda](#)

Monterey Bay Tour Agenda

[2 SC Tour Agenda](#)

Post Tour Survey

[3 Survey](#)

Announcements

[4 Announcement mailing Sact](#)

[5 Announcement mailing SC](#)

Consultation Guide

[6 Consultation Guide FC](#)

Sample Action Plan

[7 Action Plan for XXx Farmer](#)

Text

Tell Your Story, Sell Your Produce: Tour of Produce Markets

Tour guide mobile phone numbers: David Visher (530) 574-6824
Chuck Ingels (916) 835-7458

Buyer contact information: It's up to you! Ask for a card, make notes, and follow through.

5:30 – 6:15 **Sacramento to Vacaville** October 29, 2013

8:00 – 10:00 **San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market** Michael Janis
San Francisco Wholesale
Produce Market
Jack Pizza
Washington Vegetable
Ric Tombari and Bill Fujimoto
Cooks Company Produce

Michael Janus, the market manager will welcome us to the market then we will head to Washington Vegetable, a wholesaler, to hear from Jack Pizza. Then to Cooks Company Produce, a distributor, to hear from Ric Tombari and Bill Fujimoto.

10:15 – 11:15 **Good Eggs** Julian Nachtigal
Good Eggs

Good Eggs is an online food hub that also aggregates and delivers product from small producers. This is a leading edge business model that offers real opportunity to small and midsized farmers.

12:00 – 2:15 **Bay Cities Produce Company** Steve DeMasso, VP
Karl Kolb, Food Safety

Bay Cities Produce is the largest restaurant purveyor in the Bay Area and for produce and fresh cut. They are innovators in food safety programs and local sourcing with a long history of support for small producers.

We will eat lunch here and hear a food safety presentation from Dr. Kolb

2:45 – 3:30 **Oliveto Restaurant** Bob Klien
Chef Jonah Rhodehamel

This white tablecloth restaurant was buying the best quality produce and meat directly from growers before anyone used the word "local".

4:00 – 5:00 **Diablo Foods** Bill Fujimoto

Established in 1968 Diablo Foods is high quality, independent, single store grocery.

5:45 – 6:30 **Vacaville to Sacramento**

This tour is funded by a grant from CoBank, Farm Credit West, American AgCredit, and Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn. It is a project of the University of California Cooperative Extension and UC Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program, (SAREP), / Agricultural Sustainability Institute (ASI) Page 28

Tell Your Story, Sell Your Produce: Tour of Produce Markets

5:15 – 6:15 **Watsonville to San Martin** November 5, 2013

7:30 – 10:00 **San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market** Michael Janis
SF Wholesale Produce Market
Jack Pizza
Washington Vegetable
Company Produce, a distributor, to hear from Ric Tombari and Bill Fujimoto
Cooks Company Produce

10:15 – 11:15 **Good Eggs** Julian Nachtigal
Good Eggs
Good Eggs is an online food hub that also aggregates and delivers product from small producers. This is a leading edge business model that offers real opportunity to small and midsized farmers.

12:00 – 2:30 **Stanford University** Diane Mavica
Dara Olmsted Silverstein
Stanford University
Scott Davis
FreshPoint-San Francisco
Mark S. Franco
American AgCredit, Salinas
Stanford Dining, through the [Sustainable Food Program](#), has developed a set of purchasing guidelines for food that is: local, direct, organic/sustainable, humane, and fair. Stanford contracts with FreshPoint-San Francisco for most produce deliveries.
We will eat lunch here and hear a from a Farm Credit Loan officer about the uses and sources of capital for farming enterprises.

3:00 – 4:00 **Chef's Choice** Bob Menefra
Chefs Choice
A Buy Fresh Buy Local and CAFF member, Chef's Choice is a produce company with a delivery area that covers the greater Bay Area. They have large tech company clients who prefer to source from local, and sustainable farms.

4:30 – 5:15 **New Leaf Community Markets** Maroka Kawamura
Ysa Mandac
New Leaf Community Markets - San Jose
Founded in Santa Cruz this small grocery chain has six stores. Their commitment to sourcing locally has resulted in an unusual policy to empower local produce managers to take delivery at the store level.

5:45 – 6:30 **San Martin to Watsonville**

Tour Guide – David Visher's Cell Phone is (530) 574-6824



Marketing Tour Survey
Sacramento Tour:
October 29, 2013

Thank you for telling us about what you learned today. All surveys are confidential.

1. Are you farming now or do you intend to farm in the future?

- NO
 YES

2. Did you learn about any new ways to market your produce on today's tour?

- NO
 YES

What did you learn?

3. What is the most important thing that you learned today that will help you sell to wholesale or retail buyers? What is your "take home message"?

4. Estimate how many new contacts you made today, (business cards, conversations, follow up plan, etc.)

5. Do you plan to follow up with these or similar buyers as a result of this tour?

- NO
 YES

6. Do you sell labeled product now?

- NO
 YES

7. Please rate this tour on a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful) for ideas to increase sales

1 2 3 4 5

8. What did you like best about today's tour?

9. What could we have improved about today's tour?

Tell Your Story, Sell Your Produce: Tour of Produce Markets

Are you interested in selling your boxed and labeled product to buyers who want to know your story? Join us on a bus tour of markets in San Francisco Bay Area to make valuable contacts with these buyers and decide for yourself if the wholesale market is right for your farm.

Tour: Tuesday, October 29 from 5:30am to 6:30pm
Where: Bus departs from Sacramento and makes visits at San Francisco Bay Area markets. Growers may board the bus in either Sacramento or Vacaville

Corner of Riverside and Broadway
(Next to the Target Store
2505 Riverside Blvd) Sacramento
5:30 am

Nut Tree Plaza
(Next to Panera Bread
1637 East Monte Vista Ave.) Vacaville
6:15 am

Registration: \$20 per person to register; fully refundable upon boarding the bus.
Space is limited. Register by calling (916) 875-6913

Why join the bus tour: If you grow fruits or vegetables on a small farm and are looking for a new market channel or just want to learn about a variety of wholesale markets in the SF bay area, this one-day bus tour is for you. Perhaps you sell at the farmers market, have a CSA, or sell everything to a processor or packinghouse but you are now looking for another way to sell your produce. Where do you begin? A good way to start is simply meet the people who are interested in buying produce directly from smaller farms and sell to customers who care about family farms like yours. They will show you how their operation works, and describe what they need from you.

The itinerary:

- 5:30am *Exactly!* - board the bus at the Target Store at Riverside and Broadway in Sacramento
- We head for San Francisco with one stop in Vacaville at the Nut Tree Plaza near Panera Bread to pick up more farmers
- On board we will learn about food safety for small farms by viewing a newly released 20 minute video and will also learn about credit and lending opportunities from a representative from Farm Credit banks.
- Our first stop will be at the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market where we will hear from different buyers at the terminal market.
- We will then visit one or more distributors and /or fresh cut operations close to the market
- Lunch is on us
- In the afternoon on we visit an independent retailer and a food service buyer that markets local products. You will have time on the return trip to network with other grower attendees.
- 6:30pm estimated arrival back in Sacramento

After tour assistance: If you join the tour and then decide that you would like some assistance with developing a marketing strategy, we will arrange a one-to-one consultation with you.

This tour is funded by a grant from CoBank, Farm Credit West, American AgCredit, and Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn. It is a project of the University of California Cooperative Extension and UC Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program, (SAREP), / Agricultural Sustainability Institute (ASI)

Tell Your Story, Sell Your Produce: Tour of Produce Markets

Are you ready to sell your boxed and labeled product through new market venues? Would you like to make valuable contacts with buyers? Join us on a bus tour of markets in the San Francisco Bay Area to meet buyers and tell your story. Decide for yourself if new approaches to marketing are right for you and your farm.

Date: Tuesday, November 5 from 5:15 am to 6:30pm

Where: Growers may join the tour in Watsonville or San Martin prior to scheduled visits at San Francisco Bay Area markets.

UCCE Santa Cruz County
1432 Freedom Boulevard
Watsonville

Bus departs promptly at 5:15 am

Santa Clara Government Bldg. parking lot
80 W Highland Ave., Building K
San Martin

Bus departs promptly at 6:00 am

Cost:

- \$20 per person to register; fully refundable upon boarding the bus.
- Space is limited to 40 attendees.
- To register call UCCE (831) 763-8040 or email cesantacruz@ucdavis.edu or you may register in person at Watsonville office. Cash or check (to Regents of UC) accepted.

Why Attend: If you grow fruits or vegetables on a small farm and are looking for a new market channel, or you just want to learn about a variety of markets in the San Francisco Bay Area, this one-day bus tour is for you. Perhaps you sell at the farmers market, have a CSA, or sell everything to a processor or packinghouse but you are now looking for another way to sell your produce. Where do you begin? A good way to start is to simply meet buyers who are interested in purchasing produce directly from small-scale farms, people who care about family farms like yours. They will show you how their operation works, and describe what it takes to successfully market products.

The itinerary:

- 5:15 am: The bus departs UC Cooperative Extension office from Watsonville.
- We head for San Francisco with one stop in San Martin at 6:00am to pick up more growers.
- En route we will learn about food safety for small farms by viewing a newly released 20 minute video and also learn about credit and lending opportunities from a representative of Farm Credit banks.
- Our first stop will be at the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market where we will hear from different buyers at the terminal market.
- We will then visit one or more distributors and /or fresh cut operations close to the market.
- Lunch is on us.
- In the afternoon we will visit an independent retailer and a food service buyer that markets local products. You will have time on the return trip to network with other growers and attendees.
- 5:45 pm and 6:30PM estimated arrival to San Martin and Watsonville, respectively.

After tour assistance: If you join the tour and then decide that you would like some one-to-one assistance with developing a marketing strategy, we will arrange for a consultation with you. **Page 32**

This tour is funded by a grant from CoBank, Farm Credit West, American AgCredit, and Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn. It is a project of the University of California Cooperative Extension and UC Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program. (SAREP). / Agricultural Sustainability Institute (ASI)

Farm Credit market tours to link small, beginning, and immigrant producers with wholesale buyers

Consultation Guide

Last update: 6/16/14

Code # _____

Grower Contact:

Name, Farm name

Address

Phone, Email /url

Other people

Baseline Questions:

Tour: Sacramento Watsonville Neither

1. Number of buyer contacts you have made since the tour: _____
2. Increase to 2013 sales as a result of these contacts: _____
3. Gross sales in 2013 _____
4. How many, if any, of these new contacts resulted in contracts _____
5. How much will sales increase in dollars for 2014 _____

Consultation Goals:

Profile Action Plan

I can help you directly with marketing and business planning, marketing contacts, specialty marketing and crops. I can refer you to resources about production issues, specific financial advice, succession, land, and regulatory risk including food safety.

If you like, I will help you to write your marketing profile.

I propose to do this in steps:

1. Phone interview and perhaps a visit to your farm where I can see and photograph the operation.
2. I will write a draft profile and a report and if needed we can talk again.
3. I'll finish the profile and print some copies for you.
4. I will contact you about six months to check in on your progress and results.

Farmer Goals



January 22, 2014

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXX

XX

Goals for Consultation and Action Plan for xxxxxx at xxxxx Farm

During our meeting on Jan xx, 2014 we decided that you had good resources to create your own profile and action plan. In fact, with your daughters help you are capable of a complete branding strategy, once you decide what it is. Therefore I am focusing on the recommendations related to marketing and less on an action plan. Your questions were;

1. What is the best market channel strategy for the farm?
2. Where to get pricing information?

Strengths:

- *Very diversified* with many products; meat, dairy, grain, fruit, vegetables, and ag tourism or education potential. This diversity is your competitive advantage because few farms in the area can offer this range.
- *Close* to xxxxxx and within an hour of the east bay area population centers.
- You, xxxx, are *articulate and personable* and capable of selling or teaching.

Weakness:

- *Over diversified.* With the possible exception of pomegranates you don't produce enough of one crop to gain a reputation or consistently satisfy any but the smallest buyer. You have to sell the whole farm package at a time, not a product that you produce. For instance a restaurant would not start a relationship with you because you grow great oranges because you don't have a consistent supply in a usable quantity. This means you need a restaurant to agree to buy whatever you have. They buy the farm not the products. This holds true for the CSA as well. This is a much harder sell.
- *Legal and safety challenges.* A good opportunity for the farm is as a destination for school children or other agro tourism ventures. However the farm would not pass an inspection in its current condition.
- *Labor.* Because of the diversification and the size of the farm, you have to spend a great deal of time off it in order to sell.

Opportunities:

- *CSA.* As you have recognized, this is perhaps the most viable market channel. You have not been able to build a large enough community because:

- You are selling to one customer at a time. You are not leveraging a preexisting community that would reinforce its member's alliance with your farm. Since you sell to the customer, not the customer's community the only community experience you offer is on your farm. This is possible but takes a terrific amount of time. There is little reason for a customer to stay with you after the season is over.
- U-pick. You seem to require that the CSA member come to your farm and pick for him or herself for at least part of the basket. This greatly reduces the number of potential customers.
- You don't deliver to drop off points or to the door.

Look for pre existing communities and offer an incentive to join; Go to a school and offer cash back for every CSA member the PTA signs up. Offer to teach a class to kids at their school. Go to a church and offer to support a local food bank with their sponsorship if they want to adopt your farm as the church CSA. Plant an acre of Zinnia and invite anyone who wants to come pick for free provided they give half of their bouquets away to an old people home or shelter. Then send out a press release when the crop is blooming.

- *Restaurants.* You would be a great partner for a white tablecloth restaurant chef as a sort of pet farm.
 - You would have to guarantee some exclusivity to the chef in his/her market area. (Alternatively adopt two farm names like a second label)
 - For this to work you need to be willing to at least label your product
 - Deliver into the bay area at least twice a week before noon
 - Chefs need to be cultivated. This means providing a list of what you will have, how much, and when you will have it at last 3 months ahead. Chefs want you to talk to them and they are visual and tactile learners. You will need to bring products to them to taste and handle as you talk.
- *A cash crop.* We did not discuss this but consider planting a big block, a couple of acres, of one specialty crop with these characteristics:
 - U-pick pumpkins. We discussed this option. There are many resources on the net about how to make this work.
 - It can be held and sold over time, (potato's or allium, or dried and held, thai pepper or lavender) –OR–
 - It can be sold all at once as either a specialty item or commodity item. (Specialty wheat, other grain for hobbyists like barley for brewers or sesame seed for bakers)
 - Find a home before you plant it. For instance:
 - Rocambole garlic (hard neck) for Berger Potato at SF terminal
 - A seed crop
 - A big tea company, (Numi) with an organic version of something they are importing now.

The idea here is to take a risk on the one crop that could save your bacon - high risk, high return. The trick is to take this chance before you get so close to the edge that you can't afford a single mistake. This advice is completely contrary to conventional wisdom that says you should diversify to ameliorate risk. I think you have plenty of diversification already.

Pricing

The USDA Ag Marketing service keeps pricing information by commodity, organic, region, shipping point, etc. It provides the information daily or can aggregate it over a period of time you select. This is an excellent point of reference for you as you set prices or for predicting your income. However you are selling your farm and your story and your prices will reflect this added value. The best resource is the price list of a specialty foodservice purveyor like Cook's Company, General Produce in Sacramento, or Veritable Vegetable. <http://www.marketnews.usda.gov/portal/fv>

Xxxx, please contact me if you want to discuss any of these recommendations or any other ideas or questions that you may have. I will certainly be contacting you within six months to ask some follow up questions that will help us track the effect of the market tour program. Thank you for hosting me at your farm and for attending the market tour in November.

Sincerely

David Visher
SAREP
dlvisher@ucdavis.edu
(530)758-2429

Proposal

[Original project proposal](#)

**Capitalizing on new values-based marketing channels:
Using market tours to link small, beginning, and immigrant producers
with wholesale buyers**

Project Overview

The best way to create sales is to introduce sellers to buyers. A market niche is emerging in the produce industry, driven by consumer demand for farm products delivered through conventional channels while communicating values of local, ethnic, or sustainable. The produce distribution industry is mobilizing to meet this demand and needs appropriately prepared farmers. Through a series of wholesale market tours in selected regions of California, this project builds capacity among immigrant, new, and small farmers to manage market, price, and legal risk, and to access this wholesale market with properly packed, GAP certified, and branded products. Tours will be followed by one-on-one consultations, and advice in developing a farm profile and action plan for future sales.

Project Description, Phase 1

In the first year (2013-2014) during phase 1, growers from two areas, Monterey Bay / Salinas Valley and Sacramento Valley, will speak directly to buyers during two wholesale market tours. Each will receive follow-up consultation to create action plans and a farm profile. Marketing resources and templates will be designed and made available via a project website. Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors and consultants in each region will help organize the tours and conduct follow-up consultations.

Measuring Outcomes

Short-term output measures such as number of farmer participants, number of wholesale tour participants and basic feedback about the tours will be collected after each tour. Longer term outcomes such as completed action plans and profiles will be collected during follow up consultations in the next 7 months. Impacts of this project (sales, contracts with buyers) may or may not materialize during Phase 1 (first year). If this project continues, follow-up interviews in year two will be conducted to determine how the tours have impacted sales.

The following table describes expected results in Phase 1.

<u>Proposed results by end of Phase 1, year one</u>	<u>When measured</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Method to verify</u>
Producers will understand the range of new values-added market channels available to them	11/2013	40	Written Evaluation
Producers will meet with seven wholesale and retail buyers during at each of two market tours to learn about what is required to conduct business.	11/2013	40	Written Evaluations after each tour
Producers will create a simple action plan, with consultative help, about how they will implement a new market channel strategy and manage the risk.	3/2014	25	Written Evaluation
Growers will work with staff to create edited and illustrated farm profiles that they use as marketing collateral to overcome communication barriers, add value, and facilitate new buyer relationships.	5/2014	20	Personal Interviews
Growers will sell product to new buyers or make agreements for the next season after meeting buyer's vendor requirements: Gap, certification, insurance, etc.	6/2014	10	Pre/Post Assessment

Phase 2

Beginning in the Summer of 2014 and continuing forward through Spring of 2016 we will expand our client management capacity in order to more effectively support the most committed farmers and to gather second and third season data and metrics to improve efficiency. We will plan more tours to meet building demand from new growers. In 2014-2015, we will offer two more tours—one for Fresno area farmers and one for farmers at the rural urban interface surrounding the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2015-2016, we will offer a tour for farmers of the central coast from San Luis Obispo County south to Ventura County).

Measureable outcomes for phase 2 will be similar to phase 1 with additional follow-up on gathering data about sales, agreements and new business opportunities for farmers that have come to pass as a result of this project.

Our past projects and the one we propose here for the first year should prove our concept for how to effect change using a simple tool: experiential tours supported by a consultative style follow up. The next step is to leverage that knowledge and the contacts with industry we have made across the entire community of NGO's, Extension, USDA

agencies, Small Business Development Centers, banks, and industry partners. Many of these organizations have an interest in helping small farmers increase viability through access to new wholesale markets.

Many organized efforts exist throughout California to build educational tools (including food safety workshops, for example) and business models that assist ethnic and small growers to enter values based supply chains. However this work is dispersed and best practices are not shared widely. Farm Credit and UC SAREP could be appropriate sponsors for a summit focused on identifying ways to collaborate and communicate around this common interest. Goals of the summit may include the following:

- Introduce organizations involved in helping small, ethnic, young farmers access new values-based supply networks and share strategies
- Identify ways to collaborate more effectively to increase farmer sales into values based markets
- Provide a venue for the creation of public/private partnerships
- Identify information and resource gaps, as well as investment opportunities
- Locate the leverage points along the supply chain where we can effect the most change for producers using the least resources
- Identify a plan for measuring results of our collaborative work

It is challenging for this team to project next steps beyond the summit since we anticipate that the outcomes of the summit that will drive the next steps. However, after three years we will have launched a training and outreach program that will provide useful information and contacts for beginning ethnic and young farmers, helping them to effectively enter new wholesale markets with a solid business foundation.

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County level Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors will anchor our projects in each region. They know the farmers well and are established credible sources of information to them.