



NIFI's purpose is to strengthen the capacity of immigrants to farm successfully by providing support and advocacy for disadvantaged farmers and farmworkers; to advance sustainable farming and food systems.



New farming realities for former farm-workers in Fellsmere, FL

NIFI News

by *Mapy Alvarez*
Executive Director

With the help and support of the Rural Coalition, NIFI has become a non-profit organization that continues demonstrating its commitment to supporting refugee farmers, immigrant farmers, and farm-workers through projects and organizations that help their agricultural businesses to flourish.

NIFI has shown its support to farm-workers in Fellsmere, FL who are looking to establish agricultural projects that will provide them with access to farmland while providing attention to the legal aspects that are implied in this activity, such as leasing the land and organizing the group. The Farmworker Association of Florida continues supporting the communities' efforts and for this reason invited NIFI and the Rural Coalition to collaborate with them in this new project.

In another effort to work with our communities, NIFI has supported various meetings in the Albuquerque, NM area with the purpose of establishing a project to empower farmers or aspiring immigrant farmers. The project is in its first stages and counts with the collaboration of

some community-based organizations such as La Plaza de Encuentro, Development Council of Anthony, The Anthony Water and Sanitation District, the American Friends Service Committee, the State University of New Mexico and naturally with the Heifer International office in El Paso, TX. We thank all of them for their unconditional support.

Learning from the communities, NIFI continues opening ventures and applying lessons learned nationwide. In this way we continue offering interpretation workshops to those linked to projects (volunteers and staff) that are the pillars of success in the services that these organizations provide. We also continue supporting conferences that directly benefit refugee and immigrant farmers such as the Second National Hmong American Farmers in Fresno, CA.

We are very excited with the planned projects in the upcoming months and especially with the great interest that different organizations nationwide have shown in our work. In our commitment with the immigrant and refugee farmer community, we will continue offering support through workshops, conferences, and our internet site. We would like to thank the NIFI community members and the like minded organizations for their invaluable support. ♦

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Thanks to Heifer International for their continuing support to NIFI and the immigrant, refugee, and farmworker farming community and for underwriting the publication and printing of this newsletter.

Project Profile

Flats Mentor Farm High Tunnel Pilot Project

With funding from the U.S Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), 8 socially disadvantaged farmers in Massachusetts will benefit from a pilot project that consists of installing seasonal high tunnels (hoop houses) to implement successful and sustainable growing practices while preserving the environment.

This pilot project consists of a seasonal high tunnel (a greenhouse-like structure) that maintains the temperature necessary for cultivating crops in the soil, without the need of heating or ventilating equipment and also protects crops from pests. This project is part of a USDA initiative called "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" which seeks to connect consumers with their local producers by promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Maria Moreira, Project Director of Flats Mentor Farm in Lancaster, Massachusetts and Board Member of the Rural Coalition and the National Immigrant Farming Initiative, has provided assistance to these 8 Hmong immigrant farmers who seek to become owners of successful commercial farming enterprises and has witnessed their hard work in cultivating and selling crops from their native country at various Massachusetts farmers markets. According to Maria, the high tunnels "will address conservation issues, and also will truly make a difference in the income for these farmers and their families." The Flats Mentor Farm provides assistance and support to immigrant beginning farmers with land, farming infrastructure and marketing assistance necessary in maintaining successful farming enterprises using sustainable farming methods. Through this mentoring training model, farmers pass on their knowledge to their fellow farmers locally and nationwide. The Flats Mentor Farm farmers have had significant success at various Massachusetts farmers markets and the high tunnels pilot project adds to their hard earned success.

This milestone was achieved with the support of the Farm and Food Policy Diversity Initiative, coordinated by the Rural Coalition that actively advocated for the socially disadvantaged farm-



Busy farmers at the Flats Mentor Farm

ers in USDA programs. The Diversity Initiative worked with the Senate Agriculture Committee and House Agriculture Committee to ensure that the provisions of socially disadvantaged producers' funding through NRCS to improve their farming methods be included in the Farm Bill.

The Rural Coalition and supporting organizations expressed to leaders in the office of the Secretary of Agriculture and the NRCS the need for cost-shares for hoop houses and greenhouses for small and disadvantaged producers that was in turn successfully approved. NRCS in 39 states, including Massachusetts participated in the High tunnel pilot project. The Farm Service Agency aided the Flats Mentor farmers in obtaining a valid lease for a specific plot of land, assuring that the farmers secure their own individual farming enterprise number on the land. Farmers at the Flats Mentor Farm were eligible for the high tunnels pilot project thanks to the training and technical support received from various organizations for over a decade and to the tireless efforts of the Flats Mentor Farm, USDA leaders, and NRCS. This progress is vital to the preservation of sustainable farming practices and success of socially disadvantaged farmers. ♦

NIFI Board Member Attends Wholesome Wave's First Annual Convening in Washington, D.C.

By Amy Carrington

Portland, ME (May 21, 2010) -- NIFI board member Amy Carrington had the honor of attending a gathering of nonprofit partners from around the country at which USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrihan and Under Secretary of Food and Nutrition Kevin Concannon delivered key addresses. This convening highlighted the expansion of Wholesome Wave's hallmark Double Value Coupon Program, which incentivizes the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables by doubling the value of federal nutrition benefits at participating farmers markets

throughout the country. Wholesome Wave brought together a nationwide roster of key policymakers, leaders from grantee partner organizations, national and regional collaborative partners, and supportive foundations and funders at a critical point in time for food access legislation issues in communities all over the country.

Wholesome Wave Charitable Ventures, Inc., a nonprofit organization whose mission is to make healthy, affordable locally grown foods available to communities that would otherwise not have access to them, held its First Annual Convening on May 10 and 11 at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C. Since its founding in 2007, Wholesome Wave has inserted itself deep into rural and urban communities in need of nutritional and economic viability. It has funded many farmers' markets that serve immigrant and refugee farmers and

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World Crops: Amaranth

Edited by Laura Valdes

Originating in the Americas, Amaranth is an ancient internationally used crop considered an important high-protein grain. The Amaranth plant has been cultivated in Mexico, Central America, China, Nepal, India, and Eastern Africa, recognized worldwide for its healing properties as well as been incorporated into traditional wholesome dishes. Acreage in the United States has been slowly and carefully increasing each year and grain amaranth is used in over 40 products such as flour in breads, cereals, noodles, pancakes, granola and cookies.

Recent studies conducted by U.S agronomists have shown that Amaranth is a high fiber, high- protein (15-18%), gluten-free, low-saturated fat, highly nutritional grain that has cholesterol and blood-pressure reducing properties. It is also a good source of calcium, potassium, phosphorus, vitamins A and C, and iron.

Grain Amaranth plants produce more than 1000 lbs of grain per acre and are relatively drought-tolerant, growing well in sunny warm climates. A productive harvest stage can only be assured if there is a proper frost followed by week of drying weather. A firm moist seedbed is needed for these small seeds and should be planted at ½ inch deep. In order to control lambsquarter and pigweeds (weeds that compete with grain amaranths), the fields must be tilled before the crops are planted. However, grain amaranth production should be avoided in areas where weeds are predominant.

During the harvest stage, careful measures must be taken to avoid shattering of the crops during the cutting process. It is also important to plan the drying and storage of the grain amaranths prior to its harvest. To avoid molding, the grain must be cleaned of plant material, subsequently dried and stored in wooden storage bins or in heavy -duty (4 or 5 ply) paper bags.

Potential clients include those allergic to wheat products since Amaranth can be cooked as a cereal or mixed with other whole grains, soups, salads, pasta, stir-fry, and baked goods to name a few meals. Producers also sell Amaranth to local health food stores, companies or restaurants. Some genus of the Amaranth include beautiful ornamental annual plants native to India that can be sold for decorative purposes.

Here are two nutritious and delicious recipes taken from Karen Railey's *How to Improve Fading Memory and Declining Thinking Skills with Nutrition*:

Amaranth with Spinach Tomato Mushroom Sauce

1 cup amaranth seed	2-12 cups water
1 Tablespoon olive oil	1 bunch spinach (or young amaranth leaves if available)
2 ripe tomatoes, skinned and coarsely chopped	1/2 pound mushrooms, sliced
1-1/2 teaspoons basil	1-1/2 teaspoons oregano
1 clove of garlic minced	1 Tablespoon onion, minced
Sea salt and pepper to taste (or use a salt substitute)	

Add amaranth to boiling water, bring back to boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 18-20 minutes. While amaranth is cooking, stem and wash spinach, then simmer until tender. Dip tomatoes into boiling water to loosen skin, then peel and chop. Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat and add garlic an onion. Sauté approximately 2 minutes. Add tomato, mushrooms, basil, oregano, salt, pepper and 1 Tablespoon of water. Drain and chop spinach and add to tomato mixture. Cook an addition 10 – 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Lightly mash tomato as it is cooking. Stir the sauce into the amaranth or spoon it on top.

Amaranth “Grits”

1 cup amaranth	1 clove garlic, finely chopped or pressed
1 medium onion, finely chopped	



3 cups water or vegetable stock
Hot sauce to taste

Sea salt or soy sauce to taste
Garnish: 2 plum tomatoes

Combine the amaranth, garlic, onion, and stock in a 2-quart saucepan. Boil; reduce heat and simmer covered until most of the liquid has been absorbed, about 20 minutes. Stir well. If the mixture is too thin or the amaranth not quite tender (it should be crunchy, but not gritty hard), boil gently while stirring constantly until thickened, about 30 seconds. Add salt or soy sauce to taste. Stir in a few drops of hot sauce, if desired, and garnish with chopped tomatoes. ♦

Information Sources:

- "Amaranth Grain Production Guide" produced by the Rodale Research Center (RD 1, Box 323, Kutztown, PA 19530) and the American Amaranth Institute (Box 216 Bricelyn, MN 56097)
- "Amaranth - Modern Prospects for Ancient Crop". 1984. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
- "Amaranth, Quinoa, Ragi Tef, and Niger: Tiny Seeds of Ancient History and Modern Interest" (1986) Minnesota Experiment Station Bulletin AD-SB-2949, St. Paul, MN.
- "Growing Grain Amaranth As A Specialty Crop" by Robert L. Meyers and Daniel H. Putnam, Center for Alternative Crops & Products, Minnesota Extension Service, AG-FS-3458, 1988. University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN.
- Taken from: Amaranth D.H. Putnam¹, E.S. Oplinger², J.D. Doll³, and E.M. Schulte²
- Center for Alternative Plant & Animal Products, Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108.
- Departments of Agronomy and Soil Science, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and Cooperative Extension Service, University of Wisconsin - Madison, WI 53706. Nov. 1989.
- How to Improve Fading Memory and Thinking Skills with Nutrition by Karen Railey

NIFI Board Member Attends Wholesome Wave's First Convening

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consumers, including markets in San Diego CA, Kansas City KA, Boise ID, Manchester, NH, Boston and Holyoke, MA, and Lewiston and Portland, ME.

Cultivating Community, an organization with staff and farmers who serve on NIFI's board, is a Wholesome Wave partner and grantee and will be implement the double value program at markets in Maine in 2010. Approximately \$20,000 in matching incentives will be provided to food stamp, Woman and Infant Children (WIC), and Senior Farm Share clients in southern Maine. Many of these clients are immigrants and refugees and a majority of the producers are refugee participating in Cultivating Community's New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (NASAP). The nutrition incentives "double value coupon promotion" where a consumer can spend \$1 in benefits and receive \$2 of vegetables--and through which the farmer can receive the full \$2 - has the potential to greatly increase the consumption of fresh Maine grown fruits and vegetables. By creating access for federal nutrition benefit clients to shop at local farmers' markets, Cultivating Community hopes to set an example of how low-income customers and farmers can provide mutual support.

"Our initiatives allow local farmers to increase their independence as small business owners, and will prove an effective investment for under-served community redevelopment while reducing healthcare costs nationwide," said Michel Nischan, founder and CEO of Wholesome Wave. "No matter where Wholesome Wave plants the Double Value Coupon Program seed, we are seeing the community responding with a voracious hunger for more," said Gus Schumacher, Wholesome Wave Chairman and former USDA Under Secretary of Agriculture. "Whether we look at cities like Boston, Miami and Chicago, or entire states like California, Vermont or Maine, it is evident that the Double Value Coupon Program's continued success in these locations can help shift financial allotments in agriculture legislation and build the case for a systemic overhaul of the nation's food system." ♦

Upcoming Events

Big River Farms In-Field Training Sessions

What: Practical hands-on sessions aimed at the immigrant farmers in the Big River Farms Training Program, but open to the public for \$20/session. Interpretation available if you give us one week advance notice.

Where: 14220-B Oslund Trail North, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047 (10 miles north of Stillwater, MN, about 3 miles east of Marine on St. Croix. Call for directions.

Contact Info:

Telephone--651.433.3676

Info and registration--katie@mnfoodassociation.org

Website--www.mnfoodassociation.org

Schedule:

Sunday, August 15, 4-6 pm: Composting Systems and Mulching Techniques. Trainer. TBA.

Sunday, August 29, 4-6 pm: Cover Cropping and Putting Fields to Rest. Trainer: Aaron Blyth, BRF Farm Manager.

Sunday, September 12, 4-6 pm: Seed Saving Basics. Trainer: TBA

Sunday, September 26, 4-6 pm. Hoophouse Production and Season Extension. Trainers: Aaron Blyth and Melanie Timpano, BRF Production Coordinator.

Florida Small Farms Alternative Enterprises Conference

Kissimmee, Florida, July 31, August 1
Sustaining Small Farms; Strengthening
Florida's Communities

For More INFO:

<http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu/floridasmallfarmsconference/2010/index.shtml>



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