



**Local Agriculture:
Buyer & Producer Workshop
(Farm2School)**

PROGRAM

February 4, 2020 | Registration & Resource Fair- 1:30 PM

Workshop | 2-5:30 PM

LONG LAKE CONSERVATION CENTER

Planning Committee

Gabrea Anderson, Farm to School Workshop
Coordinator, The Greater Mille Lacs SFA Chapter



Allison Rian, The Greater Mille Lacs SFA Chapter Chairperson & Aitkin Area Aggregation
Manager



Hannah Colby, RD, LD, Aitkin County SHIP Coordinator & Public Health Educator



Grace Brogan, Renewing The Countryside



Jane Grimsbo Jewett, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture & Aitkin Area Farmer

Resource Tables

Aitkin County SHIP Program- Farm2School



Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture



Minnesota Schoolyard Garden Coalition



Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom



Northland Food Network



The Greater Mille Lacs SFA Chapter

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The Farmers' Market Aggregation Project (FMAP) started in 2018 with nine MN farmers' markets, including the Aitkin Area, becoming licensed wholesale food handlers and establishing aggregation and distribution hubs for local products. The 2020 season will be the third year of the project funded by Specialty Crop Block Grants. The project team has now secured a USDA Farm to School grant to help the markets and their local schools forge better connections, and increase the amount of locally sourced food going into school food service.

This farm to school workshop is part of a series of six regional workshops that will take place in Lake City, Cannon Falls, Chisago City, Rochester, Aitkin & Grand Rapids during the 2019-2020 fall and winter months. The workshops will include content on farm to school concepts, food safety, culinary skills, schoolyard garden best practices, and innovative farm to school resources and models available in the state

OBJECTIVES

1. Offer education to increase capacity for local food purchases by institutions, with a focus on k-12 schools and school-based early care sites.
2. Offer education in increase production of vegetables by gaining an understanding of season extension and disease control management.
3. Learn how to market and sell on a retail level.
4. Cultivate strong partnerships between producers and buyers.
5. Increase culinary skills for kitchen staff, and an understanding of schoolyard garden best practices.

GOALS

1. Engage the Aitkin Area Community in active support of their local school and community food system
2. Increase student and teacher knowledge of food, farms and nutrition by incorporating curriculum that meets MN Standards in classrooms
3. Increase direct marketing opportunities for locally produced foods
4. Increase the number of local purchasing contracts with schools and institutions

THE FARMERS' MARKET AGGREGATION STUDY

Project Abstract:

Many farmers have the capacity to grow more fruits and vegetables than they can sell to individual customers at farmers' markets. This is evident by the amount of produce farmers often have at the end of the farmers' market. This project will help farmers' markets to develop new income streams for their vendors by facilitating sales to a broader pool of buyers, including institutions and retailers in their community.

Renewing the Countryside, in partnership with the Minnesota Farmers' Market Association (MFMA) and the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) will implement this project, building on an innovative program that was piloted at the Wabasha County Farmers' Market in 2016.

This project will build the capacity of market managers to make connections with institutional and wholesale buyers, including restaurants and retailers, which will lead to expanded sales for farmers. Eight farmers' market managers and their vendors in MN; with associated buyers, regulators, and advocates; will understand regulations and operations for aggregation and sale of produce by farmers' markets. A functional ordering/billing system will be developed. A comprehensive model of operations transferable to other markets will be created, tested, compiled into a guidebook, and made available statewide. The concept of wholesale aggregation and sales of produce by farmers' markets will become normalized, and produce production and sales will increase in the state.

Project Purpose:

Institutions and other buyers increasingly want to provide local food to their customers as indicated in the 2015 Farm to School Census and a survey of MN rural grocers.

At the same time, small farmers struggle to expand their markets. While farmers' markets provide a good outlet for sales, most farmers have excess produce at the end of market. Others would grow more produce if they had ready markets.

The needs and requirements don't line up nicely. Small producers can't supply enough to larger buyers. Buyers don't have the time or expertise to set up efficient systems to source local product.

What is needed is an aggregator that can pool enough local produce to supply wholesale buyers. Food hubs are one example, but most require significant capital investments for infrastructure and operating expenses.

Aggregation by a farmers' market is an efficient and inexpensive approach to address these challenges and requires limited infrastructure and staff.



AGENDA

OPENING- GROUP DISCUSSION ON THE FARMERS' MARKET AGGREGATION PROJECT (FMAP)

Facilitated by: Renewing the Countryside

2-3 PM; Location: The Great Hall in the North Star Lodge

CULINARY SKILLS TRAINING: REVAMP & RELOAD YOUR RECIPE BOX!

Only for Foodservice Staff who have registered

Culinary Specialist: Lachelle Cunningham from The Good Acre

3-5 PM; Location: The Dining Hall

Agriculture is Everywhere: Learn how to Incorporate AG in the Classroom

Speaker, Sarah Kuschel from MN AG In The Classroom

3-4 PM; Location: The Great Hall in the North Star Lodge

Retail Marketing

Speaker, Ryan Pesch, University of MN Extension Educator

3-4 PM; Location: The Marcum House

SCHOOL GARDENS

Speaker: Kirsten Saylor, MN Schoolyard Garden Association

4-5 PM; Location: The Great Hall in the North Star Lodge

Production Methods & Disease Control

Speakers: Natalie Hoidal, University of MN Extension Educator

4-5 PM; Location: The Marcum House

CLOSING/WRAP UP

Facilitated by: Renewing the Countryside

5:00- 5:30 PM; Location: The Great Hall in the North Star Lodge

DESCRIPTIONS OF TALKS & PRESENTATIONS

GROUP DISCUSSION ON THE FARMERS' MARKET AGGREGATION PROJECT (FMAP)

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CULINARY SKILLS TRAINING: REVAMP & RELOAD YOUR RECIPE BOX!

Food service staff will learn how you can leverage your time and equipment to make serving local food a sustainable and delicious affair. This training will focus on: recipe development that adheres to budget and nutritional guidelines, produce specific and technique training including knife skills, roasting, and preserving.

SCHOOL GARDENS

Curriculum integration, food education, and serving garden produce to other students are powerful goals for our school gardens, enabling students to engage at any age in where food comes, entrepreneurialism and community outreach. Garden management and summer care can be barriers to achieving this vision. On behalf of the MN School Garden Coalition, Kristen Saylor brings her experience, research, best practices and organizing process and tools for the sustainable and successful garden classroom that makes a school proud.



RETAIL MARKETING

Ryan has worked in community economic development for Extension in West Central Minnesota since 2004. In that capacity, he works in community food systems, focusing on successful development strategies for direct farm marketing and research on the local foods market.

AGRICULTURE IS EVERYWHERE: LEARN HOW TO INCORPORATE AG IN THE CLASSROOM

This session will include whole group activities, hands-on experience with lessons and curricula and sharing samples of their free educational resources. MN Ag in the Classroom Education Specialists share academic standards-based, Ag focused activities throughout this workshop.

PRODUCTION METHODS, DISEASE CONTROL & SEASON EXTENSION

Natalie Hoidal works statewide with vegetable growers of all sizes on a wide range of production topics. In this session, you'll learn about common issues with scaling-up for wholesale production, as well as tips for disease prevention, growing healthy crops, and succession planting to meet demand throughout the season.



WORKSHOP SPONSORS



Partners in this project include The Good Acre, MN Schoolyard Garden Coalition, Aitkin County Public Health, Minnesota Farmers' Market Association, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Renewing the Countryside, and U of M Extension.