



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

Advancing Next Generation Urban Farmers: Experiential Training, Mentorship and Employment

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Multinational Exchange for Sustainable
Agriculture (MESA) and Planting Justice

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development
Program Award No [2015-70017-04613]



Project Overview



- Audience: Formerly incarcerated people, immigrant farmers, refugees and otherwise socially disadvantaged beginning farmers to gain training, mentorship and employment in sustainable and profitable urban and peri-urban farms
- Key Approaches: Agro-ecology Hands-on Training, Paid 3-6 Month On-Farm Mentorships, Living-wage job creation, New Farm Startups
- Target Outcome: 116 Beginning Farmers, including 90 Formerly Incarcerated, Immigrant, or otherwise Socially Disenfranchised Farmers; 20 New Full-Time Farmers Employed or Self-Employed



Project Accomplishments

- 25 Currently Incarcerated People Enrolled in San Quentin Beginning Farmer/Gardener Program, Inside the Prison
- 13 People Currently Enrolled in 1st 4-month Cohort, all Socially Disadvantaged Beginning Farmers
- 2 Excellent Lead Agro-Ecology Educators Hired
- 7 New Living Wage Jobs Created for Beginning Farmers Currently in Cohort #1, including 4 Formerly Incarcerated People
- 114 individuals enrolled in online courses in agroecology and organic seed production



Impact and Evaluation

- Sustainable employment of socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers
- Mentorship network of experienced farmers committed for next phase
- 4-month Training Immersion foundation complete for remaining cohorts
- Online multimedia courses developed for hybrid learning and partners at learn.mesaprogram.org
- Online evaluation template created to track short term and long term impact
- Evaluations are submitted online, as well as via in-person and phone interviews



Online Curriculum for Hybrid Learning

The screenshot displays the Farm Centered Learning Network website. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'About', 'Courses and Certificates', and 'Network'. A user profile for 'leahatwood' is visible in the top right corner. The left sidebar contains navigation options: My Profile, My Courses, My Docs, My Achievements, My Forums, Live Chat, and Log Out. The main content area shows a course description with two numbered points: '4. To evaluate the dangers posed to farmworkers by pesticides and inhumane working conditions.' and '5. To suggest solutions to the current decline in pollinators.' Below this is a 'Lesson Modules' section with a list of topics: Self-Assessment, History of Pesticides, The Pesticide Treadmill, Socio-political Consequences of Pesticide Treadmill, Pollinators, Methods for Managing Insect Pests, The History of Weed Control, and Wild Plants in Traditional Farming Systems. On the right, a detailed description of the certificate course is provided, stating it combines academic, scientific, socio-political, and traditional knowledge in 7 lessons. The course is attributed to MESA.

FARM CENTERED LEARNING NETWORK

Home About Courses and Certificates Network

leahatwood

4. To evaluate the dangers posed to farmworkers by pesticides and inhumane working conditions.
5. To suggest solutions to the current decline in pollinators.

Lesson Modules

- Self-Assessment
- History of Pesticides
- The Pesticide Treadmill
- Socio-political Consequences of Pesticide Treadmill
- Pollinators
- Methods for Managing Insect Pests
- The History of Weed Control
- Wild Plants in Traditional Farming Systems

This certificate course combines academic, scientific, socio-political and traditional knowledge in 7 lessons, giving learners a holistic understanding and application of Agroecology. The material is presented in video, audio, visuals and readings to allow learners to develop their own perspective, and be able to apply theoretical knowledge through interactive on-farm activities.

Course by MESA



Lessons Learned & Best Practices

- Outreach and recruitment timeline modified
- Training immersion timeline adjusted
- Online curriculum in Applied Agroecology collaborative development and pre-training
- Integration of training immersion, formal paid-apprenticeship model with mentorship tools, customized apprentice training plans, and individual consultation
- Experience facilitating the empowerment of re-entry and new-entry beginning farmers



Next Year & After

- Two 4-Month cohorts planned for next year, with 50 participants and 75% socially disadvantaged
- First round of on-farm mentorships post graduation
- Development of incubator program
- First round of funded agripreneurs and incubated farmers
- Goal of 10 full-time employed farmers by year two who participated in program



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Thank you!

Questions?

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