



Transplanting Traditions Community Farm: Increasing Independence and Income for Asian Refugee Farmers in N.C.



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NIFA Award Number: 2018-70017-27354

Abstract

The Transplanting Traditions Community Farm (TTCF) is an incubator farm serving 100% limited resource and socially disadvantaged beginning refugee farmers from Burma. TTCF works with 56 refugee farmers from Burma. With these organizations, TTCF has developed a comprehensive five-year program education plan to meet the multi-tiered needs of farmers from entry level to graduation. The long-term goals for the proposed grant are to 1) Increase the number of refugee farmers operating farm businesses in NC 2) Increase profit and marketing opportunities and marketing independence for refugee farmers 3) Improve farmer's production practices. 4) Assist farmers as they progress in the incubator from entry to advanced levels and graduate to operating independently 5) Increase the grassroots and community driven management of farmers at TTCF's incubator program ensuring greater program sustainability and success. TTCF is leveraging its expertise in working with low-literacy refugee farmers with the strength and joint capacity of its community partners and collaborators to ensure the success of the proposed grant. TTCF has partnered with NC State University (NCSU), Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) and collaborated with Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSa), The Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED) The Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) and The Karen Communities of N.C. (KNC). In the past year, Transplanting Traditions farmers have seen a 30% increase in farm income, have identified key focus areas for risk management improvement and are in the process of analyzing efficiency with the goal of increasing profit margins. Farmers are regularly meeting benchmark requirements and progressing towards greater independence.

Objectives

- Objective 1:**
- Over 3 years enroll 25 new farmers into incubator program
- Objective 2**
- Improve and expand market outlets to include Asian vegetable niche markets
 - Provide ESL trainings on specific business and marketing skills
 - 10 advanced farmers will attend eight yearly trainings on the CSA marketing model
- Objective 3**
- Each year, expand hands on trainings for TTCF specifically to improve TTCF farmer's production practices and efficiency.
 - Each year, TTCF staff will provide 12 multi-tiered (entry, intermediate, advanced) classroom trainings as a part of their Winter Growers' School, which provides curriculum specific to low literacy refugee farmers. Trainings will enable farmers to progress to increasing levels of success using a scaffolding curriculum method.
 - 10 farmers to graduate to leased or owned land.
 - Partner with Rural Advancement Foundation International to provide four trainings covering agricultural business planning to Intermediate and Advanced refugee farmers. Collaboration with project partner The Triangle Land Conservancy on leasing land options for farmers.
 - Each year, enroll seven intermediate and advanced refugee farmers in the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association's annual four day farming conference.
 - Each year, provide stipends to five advanced refugee farmers who are current participants of the incubator program to lead 10 hands on training workshops for beginning and intermediate farmers. Advanced farmers will be paired with beginning or intermediate farmers in a mentors/mentee relationship.

Activities

Winter Growers School

- Classroom trainings held at a local refugee church
- Hands-on workshop using visual and demonstrative approaches
- Lessons were targeted to farmers' level (entry, intermediate, advanced)
- Incorporated culturally appropriate materials (ie picture usage and Karen translation)
- Hands-on teach shown to be highly effective for low-literacy farmers



Above: Watermelon Harvesting Hand-Out from a classroom training
Right: Farmers attend a hands-on lesson on using a BCS

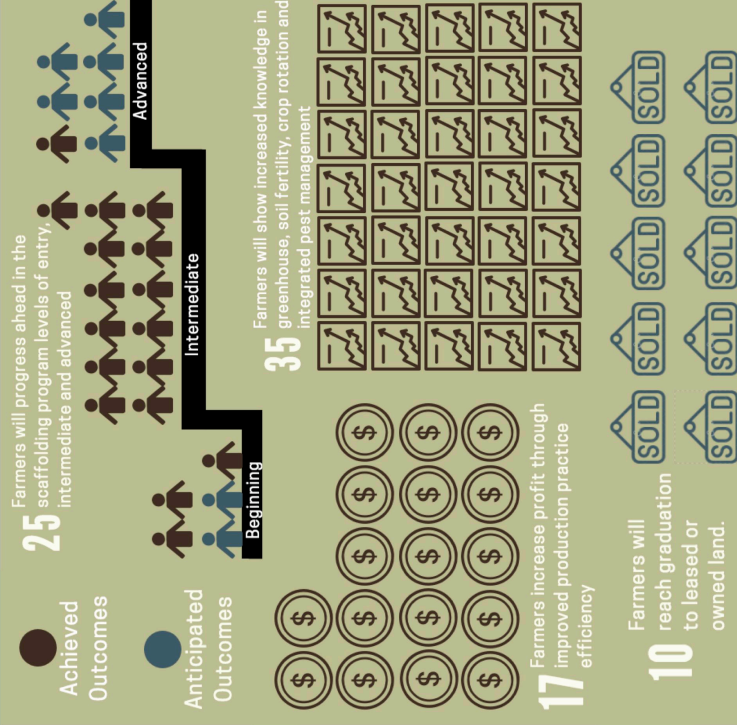
New Farmer Support

- Interview and orient new farmers recruited from waitlist
- Enroll farmers in educational and marketing programs
- Assess farmers' needs using Farmer and Staff Assessment SMART Tool



Right: Farmer participates in hands-on CSA marketing program

Anticipated Outcomes



Field Day Workshops

Below: Farmers attend field days workshops at local area farms, increasing farmer-to-farmer networks.



CFSa Conference



TTCF's farmers attended CFSa's four-day conference and increased knowledge in targeted topics.

Asian Vegetable CSA



Right: Asian vegetables harvested for Summer CSA

190 customers participated in an Asian vegetable focused CSA. Asian vegetables are an important niche crop for TTCF farmers. A goal of the BFRDP grant is to develop business and marketing initiatives that focus on Asian vegetables.