

Project Summary

Project Title: Connecting Agricultural Producers and Low-Income Consumers: Tacoma Farmers Market CSA Feasibility Study.

Key Words: Low income, integrated food systems, CSA, Tacoma, Cascade Land Conservancy

Cascade Land Conservancy (CLC), a land trust and planning non-profit, requests a Planning Project Award to conduct a feasibility study for the development of a cooperatively-run community supported agriculture (CSA) program managed through Tacoma Farmers Market (TFM).

Tacoma, Washington's second largest and most diverse city situated in Pierce County, is a hub of food insecurity with 16% of Tacoma's population below the poverty line. Pierce County farmers also face economic difficulties as they no longer have access to major markets. Farmers' debt loads are increasing, and they are converting farmland to homes at a rate of five acres a day to stave off bankruptcy.

CLC is developing a \$20 million farmland conservation plan for Pierce County. CLC's studies indicate that a CSA managed through TFM will promote a comprehensive response to local food and farm issues, mutually benefiting low-income consumers and farmers.

Goal

A feasibility study will determine whether a cooperatively-run CSA will develop a socially responsible food distribution network, promoting food security for all economic classes and the economic viability of Pierce County farms. Specific goals for the CSA would include:

1. Link farmers and low-income consumers
2. Expand entrepreneurial activities of TFM
3. Link nonprofits, for profit business and government

Objectives

- Accessible and affordable produce
- Economic impact: 70-80% of receipts to farmers
- Sustainability: CSA covers overhead

Activities

- Stakeholder interviews: farmers, low-income consumers, businesses
- Best practices review of cooperative CSAs/other Community Food Projects
- Base business plan upon peer groups and stakeholder input