

# **Dartmouth Local Foods Project**

## **Year-End Report to SARE 2006**

### **Summary**

Vital Communities (VC) has developed a task force of farmers, Dartmouth Dining Service (DDS), students, faculty, and wholesale representatives to create strategies for selling locally grown food to DDS. We provide training and technical assistance to project farmers enabling them to profitably produce food to DDS's purchasing specifications. By addressing real and perceived barriers to local foods sales, combining production capacity of several local farms, and drawing institution-wide effort to the project, we are creating a profitable and satisfying market for local foods no one farm could establish by itself.

### **Objectives/Performance Targets**

Ten VT/NH farmers of produce, meat, poultry, dairy and other products will establish profitable and satisfying wholesale or direct accounts with DDS by the end of three [four] years.

\* The project applied for and was granted a one-year no-cost extension until Dec 31, 2007. The strategies we expect to employ in the final year include:

- Invite additional farmers to participate
- Invite additional farmers to accept technical assistance
- Complete the marketing efforts to consumers, including
  - Fully utilizing the logo that has been crafted
  - Marketing the project thoroughly throughout campus
  - Establishing our planned main "Meet-the-farmer" event
  - Deepening the local foods experience of the first year students, especially in their first weeks

### **Accomplishments/Milestones**

1. 50 farmers express interest in Dartmouth sales  
ACHIEVED SO FAR: 63

Sixty-three farmers have expressed interest in growing for the project. They have expressed this interest through postcard replies, emails, personal conversations, and telephone calls. We have interviewed each interested farmer to get a clearer picture of what they are interested in selling to DDS, what their T/TA needs are, and whether or not they have the capacity to be part of the project at all. In 2006 we also fielded investigative queries from food producers using locally farmed ingredients.

2. 30 participate in introductory workshops  
ACHIEVED SO FAR: 15

We didn't hold the one major orientation session and subsequent workshops that we had originally planned. It seemed that the strategy of quickly introducing a number of small farms to DDS through a public event could lead to unmet expectations and worse, failed attempts at business relationships. Instead we have taken a slower, steadier approach.

In 2005 we held farmer tours of DDS, at which eight farmers from seven farms attended. We also held strategy sessions on meat, produce and dairy; two farmers and a wholesaler attended those, along with the DDS Purchasing Manager, and invited guests, a Coop Extension Livestock Specialist and the Perishables Manager at the nearby Hanover Consumer Cooperative.

In December 2005, upon DDS's change of heart toward direct product purchases, we held workshops for produce growers who had been interviewed and seemed likely candidates for direct sales to Dartmouth. Six growers attended one of two sessions with the Director and Associate Director of Dining, the Purchasing Manager, the Manager of one of the dining halls, and the Manager of the Dartmouth Organic Farm. At these two discussions substantial breakthroughs were made: DDS decided to commit to buy produce directly from approximately four farmers starting in spring 2006.

The main 'workshops' of 2006 were these two produce discussions, which clarified how we would approach the ordering, costs, delivery, and promotion of the more than one dozen fresh produce items selected.

3. 20 provide product for tasting events for DDS chefs and administrators  
ACHIEVED SO FAR: 32+

There have been local dinners and lunches using products from many different farms:

Collis Porch BBQ Day August 2006  
Freshman Local Foods Dinner September 2006  
Phi Tau Corn Husking Party summer 2006  
Amarna Wine & Cheese Party fall 2006  
Fall Festivus November 2006

4. 15 will decide to produce for this project and receive T/TA NOT ACHIEVED YET  
So far the following farms are supplying products for DDS regularly or somewhat regularly:

Riverview Farm	apples, fresh, in season
Walhowden Farm	apples, fresh, in season; apple cider; maple syrup year 'round
Edgewater Farm	strawberries, melons, and vegetables, fresh, in season
MacLennan Farm	corn on the cob and raspberries, fresh, in season
Healthy Buffalo	bison burgers, raw, year 'round
Pete & Jerry's eggs	cage-free eggs, year 'round

So far these farms are supplying products occasionally:

PT Farms	beef burgers, raw
Celtic Moon Elk	elk sausages, raw

Our project purchased products from the following farms and decided not to continue:

500 Farms	beef burgers: the enterprise folded
Blue Ox Farm	organic vegetables: the price was prohibitive for DDS <sup>1</sup>

These processors are currently discussing their products with DDS:

VT Smoke & Cure	meats sourced in VT & Canada, processed in VT
Dole & Bailey	meats sourced in New England

There are many other individual farms whose produce has been served at Dartmouth as purchased through Black River Produce and Upper Valley Produce. Because those farms do not know their produce is served there, the suppliers change frequently, and they did not ‘decide’ to grow for this project, we are not including them in this list.

Finally, we initiated other relationships through bringing product samples to DDS or arranging for those samples to be delivered, so that DDS staff could analyze and evaluate the products. One example was Nutty Steph’s Granola. The only VT/NH farm product in it is the maple syrup. At about \$3/pound, however, it is much more expensive than the granola that Dartmouth makes itself, which is sweetened with corn syrup. While Steph’s is a delicious, high-quality product, the comparative price (and sales issues related to it—how would they offer two differently-priced granolas in bulk?) makes it prohibitive at the moment.

## **Impacts and Contributions/Outcomes**

### **STABILIZING LOCAL ORDERING:**

After 3 years of this project we have developed a workable balance that is beginning to stabilize for ordering local farm products:

1. On an everyday basis, DDS buys produce from Upper Valley Produce (UVP) and Black River Produce (BRP), and both distributors know that Dartmouth prefers “local when available”.<sup>2</sup> This meets the daily needs of DDS buyers to get large volumes of produce in the door for processing, and maximizes with little to no

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<sup>1</sup> The certified organic prices of this small farm were too high for regular purchases by the undergraduate dining halls, and the specialty products offered (such as radicchio) were not always a great match; however, the farm may yet be a good candidate for one of the graduate school dining halls.

<sup>2</sup> This was made possible because of the step taken by DDS in year one of the project: we gave them the language to insert in their primary vendor contract, allowing DDS to buy any amount of local product they wish, regardless of the promises made in that contract.

- effort the percentage of that produce that comes from regional sources. It is worth noting the limitations of this approach: the buyer can't always know which farm the local product came from, which makes it hard to promote to consumers; and sometimes though "local" was asked for and recorded on the invoice, it was not what was picked for the truck (because of mis-picks and local supply running out); also, "local" to BRP means any farm from which their drivers pick up product directly to bring to the warehouse—so Massachusetts product qualifies, even though for the purposes of this project we are focusing on VT & NH farms.
2. Through DDS's experience with the summer committed farmers, buyers have gained confidence in this method and eagerly plan to continue it next year and into the future. Two of the three farmers had successful and profitable experiences with Dartmouth and also plan to continue. The planning and execution involved (gathering farmers and DDS together in the winter, coordinating products and timing and pricing) is more work than purchases through distributors, but has better payoff, too, in building real long-term relationships.
  3. At various times DDS buys from individual farmers on an as-needed basis, such as the Walhowden Farm maple syrup. When Beth needs some, she calls the farmer and orders it. Currently, one of the sons is a student, so he simply brings it in when he comes to campus next. Riverview Farm also delivers their apples directly throughout the fall. Healthy Buffalo sends their product when it is ordered.

Coming up: We will in February 2007 hold a planned session to match DDS buyers and produce farmers where they can commit to spring, summer, and fall 2007 deliveries. We benefited by the experience of the Hanover Coop staff who have a long history of arranging with farmers over the winter who will grow what for them for the coming year. As we explore possibilities of how this annual meeting will be organized into the future, it could be the DDS staff, an intern for DDS, contracted out to us at Vital Communities every year, or perhaps folded into the Hanover Coop's process.

#### INSURANCE COSTS:

Dartmouth College in 2006 waived their standard \$2 million insurance requirement for small produce farmers, though the Risk Management office wasn't at the time willing to put it in writing. DDS staff asked Hanover Coop if their suppliers were required to have \$2 million insurance, and they replied that only electricians and other service providers were, and that seemed to be enough for the person in charge at the time. However, Risk Management has had some staff turnover and it is yet to be a formalized policy. Walhowden Farm is able to be a direct supplier because of the waiving of this additional insurance need.

#### TASK FORCE COORDINATION:

Because of political challenges when the task force always met all together, in 2006 we got together mostly in productive small groups working on specific tasks. At our full group meeting in November we decided to meet as a full task force 2-3 times per year, with most work continuing to be done in small focused groups.

#### MARKETING—FALL FESTIVUS

On November 30, Dartmouth held a local foods “Fall Festivus” from 11am-2pm at Collis Café, a dining hall popular with students who seek out vegetarian, vegan, organic, natural, and wholesome meals.

The lunch menu featured several local farm items: elk sausages, beef burgers, apple teabreads, butternut squash spice cake, butternut squash bisque and a five-vegetable curry. There was also free ice cream, pumpkin pie and mulled cider. More than two hundred Dartmouth students, staff and faculty attended, as well as several community members. The elk sausages were especially popular, and ran out within an hour. The Collis Café dining area was decorated with lights, informational posters, informational brochures, and linens on the tables. Students enjoyed speaking with Donn Cann, the elk farmer who produced the sausages. Vital Communities intern Mark Hopkeimer provided information about Upper Valley foods, and Sustainability office intern Emily Jones signed up 44 students to the Dartmouth Sustainability initiative. The students who signed up for the initiative will use re-usable containers and cloth napkins. Feedback was largely positive; students particularly enjoyed the tasty pumpkin pie and the elk sausages.

Vermont Mystic Pie provided twelve pies and we went through three gallons of Strafford Organic Creamery ice cream. Walhowden Farm provided 7 gallons of apple cider. The Fall Festivus was sponsored by the Dartmouth Programming Board and two student groups, the Progressives and Sustainable Dartmouth.

75 surveys, which asked students how much more money they would be willing to pay for local foods, were completed. It has not yet been seriously pursued to increase the cost of dining at Dartmouth. However, if everyone increased their account by \$30 per term, at 2500 students, that could increase DDS revenue by \$75,000 per term. Even half of that would go a significant way toward sustainably paying for local farm products, and equipment and training needs to implement them fully.

#### MARKETING—BBQ DAY

During the summer of 2006 Collis Café held a BBQ Day on its outdoor porch. They grilled 4 and 6 oz beef burgers and 6 oz Italian sausage patties from PT Farms in North Haverhill, NH. When asked about their preferences, one couple stated that they had never purchased any meat from the grill before, as it seemed unappealing to them; however, when they saw that it was from a local farm, they figured that it would be high-quality meat, and they subsequently enjoyed their first burger on campus.

Roasted Vermont corn on the cob was popular, and a wrap made with all local farms’ produce. Cabot Cheese sent two boxes of cheddar for the burgers as well as two boxes of the .75 oz samples to give away. Dartmouth Progressives had some free Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream as well as info about sustainability and local foods. Edgewater Farm cut up and distributed some yellow watermelons, which were surprising new items for many students. Collis reported receiving a lot of positive comments from students for this lunch.

Because it was on a Thursday, Scott Stokoe, the manager of Dartmouth's Organic Farm, and some student interns were running the Organic Farmstand as well, in the space adjacent to the BBQ.

#### MARKETING—A TASTE OF THE UPPER VALLEY, FRESHMAN LOCAL FOODS DINNER

During Orientation Week this dinner featuring VT/NH farm products served its third annual meal, which has become a regular event. Especially popular were the Riverview apples at the exit door to take home. Students were seen leaving with pocketsful to enjoy later.

#### MARKETING—CORN HUSKING PARTY

Phi Tau, a campus Greek house, held a corn husking contest on its front lawn, inviting students to race for the title of chief corn husker. They provided a selection of flavorings for the cooked corn after the excitement of the contest. About two-three dozen participants enjoyed the warm afternoon and delicious corn.

#### MARKETING—INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS' GUIDE

We updated the draft Institutional Buyers' Guide again and emailed it out to the DDS buyers. Our intention is to have all farmers and producers listed in it by the time we are done with the project. It is definitely a working draft at this point.

#### MARKETING—FARM TO DARTMOUTH LOGO

We have a finalized "Farm to Dartmouth" logo.<sup>3</sup> Intern Josh Proper '10 created the initial shelf talkers and other signs that DDS managers can use to promote their VT & NH sourced farm products. As of the end of 2006 there were signs up to promote all the products regularly available. We have yet to find ways to get the logo up electronically on website menus, physically on large-size posters, and up on signs when the farm products are one ingredient in a recipe.

#### MARKETING—PROMOTING PURCHASING DATA

Refining this purchasing data has been one of the most difficult pieces of the project. It is easy to see why almost no one else tracks their local farm purchases. While we have a part-time intern dedicated to collection and analysis, and DDS staff have been as helpful as they can be, the system is against us. For example, if a farmer sells directly to DDS, all that is needed is to track their year's accounts payable. However, for anything coming through a distributor of any kind, there is a lot of sorting to do—no business anywhere tracks the state where the farm product originated from, on an invoice.

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<sup>3</sup> While originally called the "Dartmouth Local Foods" project, we had to change the project name to match the logo phrase: "Farm to Dartmouth". Vermont & New Hampshire appear to be the only two states in the US which have laws regulating use of the word 'local' (and other related words, like 'native') at the point of sale of agricultural products. In NH, the law explicitly states that the produce must have been grown on a NH farm in order to call it 'local' at the point of sale. This project uses farm products from both VT & NH, since Dartmouth is right along the border of the two states. For this reason, the logo phrase and project are "Farm to Dartmouth".

Nonetheless, we keep refining and working to have year-by-year numbers and a process for Dartmouth to continue collecting the information, so that after the project is over they can continue to monitor and promote their successes.

## Plans for 2007

1. Invite additional farmers to participate
  - While we have achieved something significant in produce and ‘other’ (eggs, maple), we can do more with meats and dairy
2. Invite additional farmers to accept technical assistance
  - While we have offered much in the way of introductory information to potential suppliers, we clearly haven’t put full effort yet into using the wisdom of technical growing support staff to help farmers more
3. Complete the marketing efforts to consumers, including
  - Fully utilizing the logo that has been crafted
    - ✓ Electronically onto website menus
    - ✓ Physically onto large size posters
    - ✓ On point of purchase signs when an ingredient in a recipe
  - Marketing the project thoroughly throughout campus
  - Establishing our planned main “Meet-the-farmer” event
    - ✓ Holding the first tasting and meeting event to celebrate the farmers who sell to Dartmouth
    - ✓ Setting up a plan by which it can happen at least yearly
  - Deepening the local foods experience of the first year students, especially in their first weeks
    - ✓ Work with the First-Year Office to get local foods into the Mooselauke Lodge for the end of first-year trips
    - ✓ Talk with the Dartmouth Outing Club about using the Big Green bus for a farm trip, keeping students the priority audience

Update on activities so far in grant project:

2004:

- Task Force formed, met 9 times over 7 months
- 3 strategy lunch meetings with DDS buyers, farmers, wholesalers
- Dec 10, 2004: presented project at annual DDS staff training day
- Thayer introduced NH storage apples, 140 count, through other SARE project
- Met with Provost Barry Scherr, he supports project and assigned Mary Gorman to task force
- Homeplate tried beef burgers but supply and distribution and price were lethal problems
- DDS buyers began receiving fax from Black River Produce weekly listing prices, including local products
- DDS begins increasing VT/NH farm products through increased BRP purchases
- August: Tasting event at Sigma Nu fraternity sampling roasted corn & fresh salsa from 2 farms
- September: Freshman local foods dinner instituted during orientation week, features food from 12 farms
- 61 farmers (compared to goal of 50) expressed interest in growing for the project

- We interviewed each one for suitability for this project and for T/TA needs

#### 2005:

- Held farmer tours of DDS, eight farmers attended
- March: Administrators' Local Foods Luncheon held with 11 farmers' products; coordinated through the Provost's office, effort introduced by Provost
- May: Amarna Wine & Cheese party bought cheese from 2 area farms
- May: Several buyers attended VF&F's Flavors of the Valley event, met producers
- May: we created "Institutional Buyers' Guide" first draft, listing farmers interested and able to see to Dartmouth on a specialty or regular basis
- [As a result,] Homeplate introduced buffalo burgers from a NH farm
- September: Riverview apples in season at many dining halls, very successful
- September: Freshmen Local Foods dinner now called "A Taste of the Upper Valley", includes 7 farmers' products, Riverview apples an especially big hit
- DDS begins to see some limitations in buying only from wholesale distributors and decides to more strongly consider adding direct purchasing relationships to augment wholesaler purchases
- Samples brought to buyers: beef, organic cheddar
- First draft of data available, showing NH/VT purchases up \$40K in 2005 to \$440. Includes 7 local producers from this project. NOT COMPLETE DATA.
- Research and focus groups held for design of marketing approach
- 4 logo drafts created for review by task force
- Twice updated DLF project e-bulletin with project updates and info about available food

#### Spring 2006:

- May: Amarna Wine & Cheese party bought cheese from area farms
- May: Two buyers attended VF&F's Flavors of the Valley event, met producers
- We held two workshops for 6 produce growers to talk with dining managers
- June: 3 farmers agreed to be the guinea pigs for this summer, and DDS committed to buying 12 produce items from them over the summer at agreed-upon prices
- Sustainability Office works with DDS to get cage-free eggs from a NH farm

#### Summer 2006:

- Commitments honored to provide and purchase local produce crops through direct delivery at specified prices: two of three farmer arrangements worked well
- Farm to Dartmouth logo completed and available for use on signs throughout dining halls
- Aug 23, 2006: Collis held a local foods porch barbeque with local beef, corn, yellow watermelon, vegetables, Ben & Jerry's ice cream
- DDS purchased other area farm foods above and beyond summer arrangement
- Sample brought to buyers: granola with VT maple syrup

#### Fall 2006:

- Sustainability Office got up posters for sustainable dining effort, includes mention of local foods
- 2 Dartmouth interns for VF&F: Josh to put up logo signs and Mark to institute farmer tasting on campus
- Fall Festivus held at Collis Café, with elk sausages and beef burgers grilled out on the porch, apple and butternut breads/cakes, ice cream, pumpkin pie, apple cider.
- Data collection efforts stalled by cumbersome nature of system
- Fall: Amarna Wine & Cheese party bought cheese from area farms
- Revised and updated Institutional Buyers' Guide, emailed to all buyers