



# University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE)

## Developing Marketing Niches for Small Scale and Minority Producers

UCCE and CSUSB Inland Empire Small Farm Initiative (IESFI)

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### Background/Introduction

Declining small farm ownership and under representation of Hispanics in Southern California has been the basis for the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) risk management education program since the year 2000.

In 2003, UCCE and California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) funded by USDA formed partnership and established an Initiative for expanding the risk management education in the Inland Empire counties of Riverside and San Bernardino.

### Purpose and Goals

To enhance the feasibility and sustainability of small farm and Hispanic farmers through:

- Risk management education of marketing and production.
- Collaboration and participation with local institutions and agencies for implementing economic enhancing programs.

### Methodology

- Needs assessed using survey of farmers.
- Advisory board (farmers, small business representatives and educators) helped identify critical issues and program designs.
- Educational series and ventures targeted marketing niches and local outlets.
- Networking efforts brought resources that enhance program implementation by community development institutions and agencies.

### Results and Accomplishments

- UCCE and CSUSB in partnership established the Inland Empire Small Farm Initiative (IESFI): A center for Small Farm and Hispanic risk management education in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.
- The establishment of IESFI served us as a medium to work with local institutions to develop programs of economic growth for small scale and minority growers in the region.
- Local direct marketing programs developed .
- Education on marketing niches and production for local markets conducted to ~3,000 clientele informally (flyers, newsletters and poster presentations) and through seminars/workshops: 250 clientele : 32% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 25% female.



*Coachella Valley grower (left) discusses his date palms production and his marketing strategies with UCCE farm advisors Eta Takele (middle) and Jose Aguiar. He sells through farmers market. Development of local market would benefit farmers like him.*

### Impacts

- We demonstrated the importance and effectiveness of collaboration to attract funds and pool resources for addressing issues affecting clientele on a broader scale.
- Through IESFI collaboration and the support of the Sheriff Department and the Agricultural Commissioner, DACE received funding to go forward with the development of farmers market in Riverside County.
- Search for funding continues to develop the school lunch program.
- Networking with DACE has led to a continuum of the risk management education by UCCE and the consulting program by CSUSB in small scale business management and economics.
- There has been an increase in growers participation in DACE programs such as the use of the computer cubical and expertise for business analysis and tax programs.

### Conclusion

UCCE expanded its risk management education through partnership with CSUSB and forming the Inland Empire Small farm Initiative. This project was able to identify some critical needs of small scale and minority growers. Educational and consulting programs have addressed marketing and production issues. Moreover, this joint effort was able to pool resources through collaboration with several institutions and agencies and approached a common project jointly. A farmers market is one of the outcome of this project and its collaborators. Partnership such as this, have the potential to enhance programs and outreach across institutions and organizations.

### Project Collaborators

Joe Elizondo, Director, Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship, CSUSB and Jose Aguiar, UCCE Small Farms and Vegetable Crops Advisor, Riverside County