



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Iowa — Business Programs

Local & Regional Food Systems

Helping Connect Local Growers to Consumers in Northeast Iowa

Outline Of Need:

Children's nutrition has become a much discussed issue as of late as childhood obesity in the U.S. has tripled during the past 30 years.

The USDA, through a variety of programs, is helping children become more aware of importance of fresh meats, fruits and vegetables and ways to have a more active lifestyle.

The Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (NIFFI), funded in part by USDA Rural Development, has seen tremendous results in recent years, including assistance to local farmers who now have additional markets for their fresh produce.

How Rural Development Helped:

Earlier this year USDA Rural Development provided the Winneshiek County Agricultural Extension District with an \$90,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant to expand the work the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative is doing for regional local food system development in northeast Iowa



Photo:

Part of the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative includes classroom time where local producers talk to students about growing the healthy foods that are now included in student lunches.

The Results:

Efforts from the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative have had a tremendous impact in northeast Iowa. Here are some results from 2010:

- ** 21 farmers sold products to local schools
- ** 16 schools purchased food from local farmers
- ** 5 new community-supported agriculture (CSA) ventures were started
- ** 11 new farmers started producing food for local markets.

Also, NIFFI reports that in northeast Iowa local producers had local-food sales (primarily fruits and vegetables) totaling \$1.6 million in 2009.

Today, NIFFI has expanded to six counties, with nearly 50 active members and more than 100 producer members

“Several organizations have now come together to work toward their shared goal of providing the opportunity for a positive lifestyle change to the members of their communities,” said Brenda Ranum, Regional Extension Education Director in the Iowa State University Extension’s Allamakee, Iowa, office.

The pursuit of improved access to local food is an important way USDA Rural Development can support rural communities.

Fast Facts

Program: Rural Business Enterprise Grant

Investment: \$90,000

Partners: Winneshiek Co. Ag Extension District

Congressional Districts: IA-1 and 4

Demographics

Northeast Iowa

Impact:

- Enhancing production and distribution of local foods in northeast Iowa

November 2011