



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD & AGRICULTURE**  
**SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**  
**FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

<b>USDA Project No.:</b> 38	<b>Project Title:</b> Specialty Commodities Promotion in Disadvantaged Communities		
<b>Grant Recipient:</b> National Hmong American Farmers	<b>Grant Agreement No.:</b> SCB11038	<b>Date Submitted:</b> June 18, 2014	
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**Project Summary** (Please respond to all bulleted items)

- *Provide a background for the initial purpose of the project, which includes the specific issue, problem, or need that was addressed by this project.*

Fresno County produces many of the specialty crop fruits and vegetables consumed in the U.S. but it is also one of the poorest areas of the country. There are high rates of malnutrition, obesity and diabetes with many of the socially disadvantaged residents having little access to the fresh fruit and vegetables themselves. Even though Fresno Unified School District had recently spent \$25 million building a central kitchen for the schools so that children may eat healthier, no connection between local growers and children's plates had been established during the time. This project was designed to improve the health of communities through promotion of healthy eating habits by: 1) supplied school meal programs with locally grown fresh specialty crops 2) developed school farm stands to offer healthy choices at prices below market value while educating students and teachers, and 3) established mobile vending to visit disadvantaged communities to sell specialty crops.

Constraints were established so that this project solely benefited specialty crops. Each specialty crop producer was required to complete an application to verify that their product classification code is consistent with eligible specialty crops as defined by USDA. The Director reviewed and verified each application prior to participation in this project.

- *Describe the importance and timeliness of the project.*

The classroom education program taught students the importance of healthy eating habits and impacted not only the 240 target students, but their families as well. The mobile vendor reached into disadvantaged communities and impacted over 25,000 residents who normally would have no access to fresh, locally grown products. Lastly, this project changed the eating habits in the targeted communities to ones that promoted healthy choices through fresh specialty crops.

- *If the project built on a previously funded SCBGP project, describe how this project complemented and enhanced previously completed work.*

This project did not build upon a previously funded Specialty Crop Block Grant Program project.



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**Project Approach** (Please respond to all bulleted items)

- *Briefly summarize activities and tasks performed during the entire grant period. Whenever possible, describe the work accomplished in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Specifically, discuss the tasks provided in the **Work Plan** of the approved project proposal. Include the significant results, accomplishments, conclusions and recommendations. Include favorable or unusual developments.*

The National Hmong American Farmers (NHAF) hosted four Advisory Committee meetings in January 2012, March 2012, December 2012, and March 2013. The meetings focused on project activities for the Specialty Crop grant as well as develop a strategic plan to pursue wholesale, direct sale and farmers markets for project participants. The committee members were to provide constructive feedback to the Director as well as recommend partners, vendors, speakers, and quantitative methods of record outcomes.

The NHAF hosted two listening sessions. These Listening Sessions took place March 22, 2012 and March 27, 2013 during NHAF's annual conference. The target audience consists of small limited resource farmers from diverse and economic background including Hmong, African American, Latino and White farmers as well as non farmers. Many of the audience grow and consume some or most of the specialty crops identified under the Specialty Crop definition. Other who were in attendance were California State representing USDA office of the Risk Management Agency, Rural Development, Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource and Conservation Service and staff members from the USDA Office of Civil Rights. During these listening sessions, panelist presented on the health advantages of adding various specialty crops to your diet in children and adults. This discussion included an overview of this Specialty Crop grant as well as access to healthy foods, improving health and reducing chronic disease, and its relationship to eating specialty crops. The listening sessions both had approximately 200-300 people in attendance.

During this reporting period NHAF administered over 1000 healthy eating habits surveys to kids at 7 Fresno Unified Schools during the 12 classroom presentations.

Post survey results indicated that

- Students eat 3-4 meals per day on average and eat at least one fruit/vegetable per day.
- They are aware of the benefits from eating healthy.
- Many of the students have reduced their intake of candy and other junk foods, and have substituted in more fruits and vegetables.
- Students also prefer fruits over vegetables for snacks.

Pre Survey results indicated that

- Many Fresno residents would like have more fruits (banana, grape, oranges, apples)
- Many residents were not aware of any healthy issues among children today.

Information was also given on NHAF working with Asian Specialty Crop growers, child obesity statistics, and introduction to locally grown specialty crops.



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NHAF established a mobile vendor to disadvantaged low-income communities in Southeast Fresno, Central Fresno, and Southwest Fresno to sell specialty crops. The mobile vendor operated during the months of April to November 2012 and restarted March 2013 to the end of June 2014. Mobile vendor averaged \$70-\$80 per day with all revenue going back to the farmer who consigns specialty crop commodities with the mobile vending truck. Mobile vendor routinely operated twice a week during the months it was active.

NHAF recruited 25 farmers in Fresno County to participate in this project. The NHAF recruited the farmers to assist in providing specialty crops.

NHAF established 3 Farm to School Stands within Fresno Unified School District. These farm stands, established through a contract with Fresno Unified School District allowed the NHAF to operate a farm stand on campus. Items provided in the farm stands were locally grown specialty crops from farmers. All revenue was given back to the farmers that the NHAF received the produce from.

The Last Project Activity in the Work Plan states that, “Disseminate project results through UCCE and NHAF’s website. This last activity has not been completed at the present time but will be completed as agreed upon in this grant agreement. NHAF’s web host crashed a while back and there was an oversight on our part to not have added the results from this project to NHAF and UCCE’s webpage. We have all the necessary data and results and our web host is up and functional so we will upload the results as soon as possible.

- *If the overall scope of the project benefitted commodities other than specialty crops, indicate how project staff ensured that funds were used to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.*

No funds from the Specialty Crop Grant were used to transact any other crop. NHAF’s farmer members only cultivate and grow and sale specialty crops. They are familiar with the methods and places to cultivate, grow and they also consume these specialty crops in the homes. Small limited resource Hmong farmers grow these items because there are many realistic benefits for them, 1. Seeds are collected and passed down generation to generation. 2. The cultivation process and methods are passed to the next groups of young farmers 3. Because it is a specialized crop and requires knowledge and experience limited resource Hmong farmers have also have developed many markets and uses for these specialty crops as well. For example, they can and will market their crops with NHAF under this grant in the hopes of creating one more new market that already includes their roadside stand, local mom and pop shops, and a one or two farmers markets already. Their goal is be able to sale all of their grown products at one or more these markets as this their only source of income for the year is from farming.

Response:

- *Present the significant contributions and role of project partners in the project.*

This project identified and established partnerships with organizations that touch the lives of socially disadvantaged residents in Fresno County every day. Key partners such as Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, University of California Cooperative Extension, Fresno Unified School District and Sia Produce played a significant role in this project's success by providing outreach through established networks, sharing their expertise in the classroom, and being part of this project's advisory board. This was a



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unique opportunity to leverage resources of these various groups, and provide opportunities to promote nutrition and healthy eating habits through Specialty Crop produce.

**Goals and Outcomes Achieved** (Please respond to all bulleted items)

- *Describe the activities that were completed in order to achieve the performance goals and measurable outcomes identified in the approved project proposal or subsequent amendments.*

Response: The NHAF recruited an Advisory Board and hosted 3 community listening sessions. The listening sessions identified the project goals and needs such as establishing farmers markets, operation of the mobile vendor, the benefits of specialty crops, available resources for socially disadvantaged farmers, and marketing tools for specialty crop farmers and community members/consumers. NHAF was able to recruit 25 farmers through Sia Produce to supply fresh fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops to the farmers market stands with Fresno Unified and mobile vendor that operated in socially disadvantaged areas in Fresno.

- *If outcome measures were long term, summarize the progress that has been made towards achievement.*

Response: All measured outcomes were completed during the duration of this grant period.

- *Provide a comparison of actual accomplishments with the **goals** established for the reporting period.*
  1. Supply schools breakfast/lunch programs with locally grown fresh specialty commodity fruits and vegetables.
    - The NHAF was able to work with FUSD to supply two schools, Vang Pao, Anyesworth with fruits and vegetables for about two months.
    - The fruit that was donated to use was fresh locally grown strawberries. This is a very popular item and was used in their breakfast programs.
    - NHAF also donated has locally grown Hmong mustard greens to the school in an attempt to introduce a new green vegetable into the lunch program.
  2. Develop school farm stands to offer healthy choices below market value and educate students and teachers
    - farmer's market stands were established at Vang Pao, Anyesworth and Mayfair part of the FUSD.
    - Locally grown fruits and vegetables were pre- packaged into \$1.00 plastic bags and sold to parents, students and teachers after school way below market price.
    - Education to students, teachers and parents came in the form verbal education e.g. "what is this?"
    - NHAF also provided receipts on a 3x5 index card that was also made available at the farmers market stand during the sale to students, teachers and parents.
  3. The NHAF was able to establish a mobile vending to outreach into the community to sell specialty crops.
    - Mobile vending was active in the community on Tuesday and Thursdays from 3 to 5pm
    - From November to June in the first year and the September to June in the second year for the Specialty Block Grant.



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- Specialty crops were collected, packaged and distributed into apartment's complex, special events and by stands during these days.

Response:

- Clearly convey completion of achieving outcomes by illustrating baseline data that has been gathered to date and showing the progress toward achieving set targets.*

Response:

Goals	Oct '11 - Mar '12		Apr '12 - Sep '12		Oct '12 - Mar '13		Apr '13 - Jun '13	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Advisory Committee Meetings	2	2			2	2		
Listening Sessions	1	1			1	1		
Target Disadvantage Communities			3	3				
Recruit Qualified Farmers	10	0	15	20			5	
Survey Healthy Eating Habits	200	200	100	100	100	400	600	300
Contract with FUSD for snacks & farm stands			3	0			3	
Classroom Pres on Healthy Eating					12	12		

- Highlight the major successful outcomes of the project in **quantifiable** terms.*

Response: The successful outcomes of the project were the mobile vendor. With the mobile vendor, NHAFF was able to establish an on-going continuation of this after this grant period. The mobile vendor provided fresh fruits and vegetables to residents in Southeast, Southwest, and Central Fresno. It operated twice a week in different locations stopping on the streets, at apartment complexes and recreational and community events. The mobile vendor served an estimated 25,000 people during the duration of this grant. The mobile vending was successful because residents now have access to products as many of them do not a vehicle to drive to the stores to make these purchases. The mobile vendor was the first of its kind in the city of Fresno. It gave many limited resourced farmers a chance to sell their products to a new group of consumers.

Another successful outcome was the farm to school stands. The farm stands had three locations that were at Vang Pao Elementary, Aynsworth Elementary, and Mayfair Elementary. With the introduction of specialty crops such as jujubes, green mustards, bok choy and bitter melon, many of the students, school administration, and community members were astonished by the texture and the different taste they had. NHAFF had an estimation of over 6,000 students participate in the farm stands.

**Beneficiaries** (Please respond to all bulleted items)



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- *Provide a description of the groups and other operations that benefited from the completion of this project's accomplishments.*

The primary beneficiaries of this project include elementary school students, teachers, community residents and farmers. It is estimated that over 6,000 elementary school students participated in the breakfast/lunch program at 3 schools and receive healthy snacks with their meals. Additionally, students, teachers, and parents had access to 3 farm stands to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables below market value before and/or after school.

With the completion of this project, Sia Produce was able to establish farmers through the NHAF. The completion of this project also allowed Fresno Unified School District to establish Farm to School with local farmers through the NHAF. Farmers have also benefitted with having the opportunity to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to local schools and low-income areas of Fresno County and Fresno Unified. During the duration of this project, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) was able to administer assessments on healthy eating habits while educating teachers and students during classroom presentations

- *Clearly state the **number** of beneficiaries affected by the project's accomplishments and/or the potential economic impact of the project.*

Farmers and communities located in Southeast, Southwest, and Central Fresno have been affected by the accomplishments of this project. Due to accessible specialty crops in the area, they have been provided an opportunity for fresh fruits and vegetables.

The NHAF's was working with over 25 Hmong farmers who provided specialty crops for sale and distribution through the Specialty Block Grant. NHAF working with the assistance of Sia Vue Produce to collect package and distributed the products into Fresno's low income community of Southeast, Central and Southwest communities.

There was over 2500 plus people who receive benefits from this grant. Location where these benefits were found are at the three FUSD where students, parents and teachers received fresh locally grown specialty crops. The mobile vending machine also provided fresh fruit and vegetables to the underserved low income communities in Southeast, Southwest and Central Fresno who otherwise would not have them in the middle of the afternoon.

#### **Lessons Learned** (Please respond to all bulleted items)

- *Offer insights into the lessons learned by the project staff as a result of completing this project. This section is meant to illustrate the positive and negative results and conclusions for the project.*

In conclusion, this project provided the NHAF with experience in working with the promotion of specialty commodities in disadvantaged communities. Positive outcomes included being able to establish specialty crops in low-income areas of Fresno County as well as providing specialty crops



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within Fresno Unified School District. Without the assistance of this grant and partners involved, the NHAF would not have been able to provide to the schools or create farmers markets in the school districts as well as establish a mobile vendor. Goals were met during the duration of this project as measured. The NHAF plans to continue the farmers markets in contracted schools and continue operating the mobile vendor at the close of the project.

Getting involved with Fresno Unified School District has opened many doors for local specialty crop farmers. Being able to have access to local crops has benefitted both the school districts and farmers. School districts will have the ability of working with local growers to purchase items for the cafeteria and farmers will have another source of revenue.

- *Describe unexpected outcomes or results that were an effect of implementing this project.*

During the duration of this project, the NHAF did not expect students and families to be as participative in the farm stands and mobile vendor. Students and families acknowledged that the farm stands were beneficial for them due to low-cost, easy access ways to locally grown specialty crops. Many of the students established healthy habits with the produce provided to them with the farm stand and mobile vendor.

- *If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving.*

Goals were achieved during this grant period.

**Additional Information** (Please respond to all bulleted items)

- *Provide additional information available (i.e. publications, websites, photographs) that is not applicable to any of the prior sections.*

Response:

Any information can be located on our website at

[www.nhaf.org](http://www.nhaf.org)

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