

Project Title: Urban Agriculture

Project Leader: Francis Mangan

Project Overview

Worcester is the second largest city in New England, after Boston, with a population of 181,631 (US Census). As is happening in many urban areas in Massachusetts and other areas of the Northeastern United States, the immigrant population has grown significantly in Worcester. In the 2015-2016 School Year, Hispanics are the largest ethnicity in the Worcester public school system (40.8%), followed by non-Hispanic whites (32.5), African Americans (14.9%) and Asians (7.6%). Hence, Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians together comprise 63.5% of the Worcester Public School System. Current estimates indicate that 73% of students in the Worcester Public Schools are eligible for free/reduced-price lunches.

Since this plan was first initiated, we have added two more cities for our urban agriculture and nutritional activities: Springfield (population: 153,703) and Lawrence Mass. (population: 77,657) In Springfield, Hispanics are the largest ethnicity in the public schools (64.5), followed by African-American (19.4), non-Hispanic whites (12.3) and then Asian (2.5%). In Lawrence, Hispanics are the largest ethnicity in the public schools (91.6%), followed by whites (5.0). African Americans and Asians are tied at (1.5%) each.

The two goals of this project are the same for all three cities:

1. To increase access and consumption of fruits and vegetables by families in low income, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic neighborhoods in Worcester, Springfield and Lawrence Massachusetts.
2. Increase the availability of fruits and vegetables for people living in the target areas.

Given the large number of Latinos, which include Brazilians, in the target cities, a large percentage of our outreach was prepared and distributed in Spanish and Portuguese, languages that project personnel speak fluently. We grew several crops popular among Latinos, Brazilians and Africans at our research farm and provided them to five collaborating markets in Worcester and one collaborating market in Springfield. We also produced a commercial in Spanish that ran on a popular Latino TV station, Univision. This commercial promoted a healthy recipe of sofrito, a staple sauce used in Puerto Rican and Dominican cuisine; the two largest Latino ethnicities in the target cities. This recipe was promoted at several events in Worcester and Springfield during FY15. We also promoted another recipe called sancocho, popular among Latinos in Worcester and Springfield that had been developed by project personnel in FY14.

Activity Summary – 2015

- Crops grown at the UMass Research Farm provided to participating stores throughout the season and promoted to their customers (5)
- Individual visits to markets in Worcester and Springfield Mass (11)
- UMass Urban Ag Facebook page and posts (274)
- Urban Agriculture presentations and workshops (15)

Total educational contacts

	Adult Contacts
In Person	4795
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	39127

Narrative Summary and Impact

In the fall of 2014, we finished up our work with four markets in Worcester Mass. One was primarily for Brazilians; one was for Brazilians and Latinos, one was for Africans (from Africa as opposed to African-American) and one was primary Latino. We were promoting and marketing crops popular among Brazilians, Latinos and Africans, specifically taioba, cassava leaves, jiló, ají dulce and garden egg.

In 2015, we grew an acre of crops popular among immigrant/ethnic groups at the UMass Research Farm in Deerfield MA. A focus was on crops popular among Latinos from the Caribbean (specifically Puerto Rican and Dominican). The main crop we worked on was aji dulce (Capsicum chinense), which is a staple among Latinos from the Caribbean. In addition, there were other crops popular among Latinos and Africans (born in Africa) that we grew at the Research Farm. These included cubanelle peppers, onions and cilantro, which along with ají dulce are four of the six ingredients of sofrito, a culinary base that is a staple in the cuisine of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, the two dominant Latino ethnicities in our region.

We supplied and promoted locally-grown ají dulce peppers to several stores in Worcester and Springfield, Mass., with a focus on one popular Latino market in both cities. We provided fresh aji dulce to these two markets weekly from late July until mid-October. In addition, we sold an average of 1,000 lbs. of ají dulce/week that were grown at our research farm to Latino markets throughout the region, through the wholesale market in Chelsea Mass. This allowed us to establish the size of the market for ají dulce, which we estimate to be about 4,000 lbs./week in New England, with a retail value of more than \$24,000/week and more than one million dollars/year.

In addition, we grew at our research farm an eggplant called garden egg (*Solanum gilo*) that is popular among certain ethnicities from Africa where this eggplant is very popular (Springfield and Worcester have a growing number of Africans, i.e. from Africa as opposed to African-American). We provided this eggplant to one African store in Worcester on three occasions. There are also a number of Africans that shop at the Latino store we worked with, and for the other weeks of the summer/fall while we were in

production we provided this eggplant to the Latino store. The market for this eggplant is large, but we did not have enough production to establish the size of the market or the price point.

In addition, we worked with the Community Harvest Project, based in North Grafton Mass., and UMass Medical, to provide culturally-appropriate fresh produce to low-income participants at the Family Health Center of Worcester (part of UMass Medical) on a weekly basis from August 27 – October 1. We brought culturally-appropriate crops we grew at our research farm and provided recipes of sofrito and sancocho to the Latino members of the community who came to get free produce. We also did cooking demonstrations at the event, in collaboration with nutrition educators at the UMass Nutrition Education Office in Worcester.

Collaborating Organizations

- **Sujeh Ethnic Market**
- **Benjie Market**
- **Jays Food Mart**
- **Sunrise Sunset Mini Mart**
- **Popcorn Market**
- **Abreu Market**
- **Center Market**
- **Compare Supermarket**
- **Fleet Street Market**
- **Worcester Meat Market**
- **Family Health Center of Worcester**
- **Community Harvest Project**