

## **Project Title: Urban Agriculture**

## **Project Leader: Francis Mangan**

### **Project Overview**

A focus of activities for FY 2018, 2019 and 2020 will be related to a USDA grant that covers all three years. This grant, Promoting the Healthy Incentives Program in Massachusetts, has the goal of promoting the purchase of Massachusetts-grown fresh produce by SNAP recipients living in Massachusetts at four retail point-of-sale sites: farmers' markets, farm stands, mobile markets and CSAs. This grant involves multiple organizations in Massachusetts, including the Department of Transitional Assistance, which oversees the SNAP program, the Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources and CISA among several others.

This is a state-wide project. A focus in FY 18 is on 19 cities in Massachusetts: Boston, Lynn, Lawrence, Lowell, Malden, New Bedford, Fall River, Taunton, Southbridge, Brockton, Worcester, Leominster, Fitchburg, Greenfield, Springfield, Holyoke and Pittsfield, Framingham and Haverhill. Latinos make up the majority of SNAP recipients in the public schools of these 19 cities. There is also a large Portuguese-speaking population in these cities, including Brazilians, Portuguese (from Portugal) and Cape Verdeans.

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

1. To increase access and consumption of fruits and vegetables by families from 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.

### **Activity Summary – 2017**

- Crops grown at the UMass Research Farm provided to participating stores throughout the season and promoted to their customers (17)
- UMass Urban Ag Facebook page and posts (40)
- Urban Agriculture presentations and workshops (15)
- Presentation to Bhutanese Community on how to use SNAP at Farmer's Markets (1)
- Workshop on soil fertility for urban settings (1)
- Presentation to Plant Biology Seminar Series entitled "Growing Tropical Crops in Temperate Regions" (1)

- Presentation at Catie (Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza) as part of a proposed integrated project in the Northeastern United States (1)
- Presentations at 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Urban Ag Conference "Ethnic Crops for Massachusetts.", "Soil fertility for urban settings". (2)
- Meeting with president of the Puerto Rican Farm Bureau related to proposed collaborations (1)
- Presentation at Regional Land-grant meeting entitled "Opportunities for collaboration on ethnic crop production and marketing" (1)
- Evaluation of aji dulce varieties for production in Massachusetts (1)
- Urban Agriculture print publications (7)

***Total educational contacts***

	Adult Contacts
In Person	510
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	32500

**Narrative Summary and Impact**

A major focus of our work in in FY 2017 was related to a USDA grant to promote activities related to the Healthy Initiative Program (HIP). The overall goal of HIP is to promote the consumption of Massachusetts-grown fresh produce to SNAP recipients. (SNAP, formally known as Food Stamps.) Specifically, our component of this project was to promote locally-grown produce among ethnic and immigrant groups in Massachusetts. Immigrant and ethnic SNAP recipients in Massachusetts are estimated to be approximately 50% of the one million residents in the Commonwealth eligible for SNAP.

Research activities focused on evaluation of crops at the UMass Research Farm. We evaluated three crops at the UMass Research Farm in a high tunnel:

A. aji dulce (*Capsicum chinense*). This is part of an ongoing research program on this pepper popular among Latinos from the Caribbean. A focus in 2017 was to provide this pepper to collaborating markets and also to implement surveys with members of these communities for their preference among the six cultivars grown at the UMass Research Farm. Over 300 surveys were implemented throughout the state among Latinos who use these peppers in their cuisine.

B. Garden egg (*Solanum gilo*). There is a large and growing market in Massachusetts and region for this vegetable. The focus in 2017 with this tropical eggplant was to evaluate new varieties for production in Massachusetts. One issue is the size of the fruit from the cultivar that has been used by growers in Massachusetts. We evaluated seeds of plants that produce larger fruit. These seeds will be provided to cooperating farmers for production in 2018.

C. Pigeon peas (*Cajanus cajan*). We evaluated two varieties of pigeon peas, called *guandules* in Spanish, that are a staple in multiple countries in Latin America, Africa and other regions of the world. We provided pigeon peas to several cooperating markets to get a sense of the market potential.

### **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