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A Dozen Mini Farmers Markets Bring Local Produce to Minneapolis Neighborhoods

Markets Reach Communities with Limited Access to Healthy Food

Minneapolis – The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy’s Mini Farmers Market Project has kicked off another successful season, doubling in size from six markets in 2008 to 12 markets in 2009. Located in Minneapolis neighborhoods with limited access to healthy foods, the mini farmers markets feature five or fewer farmers selling locally grown vegetables, fruits and flowers at community centers, senior housing facilities, hospitals, educational institutions, churches and other neighborhood hubs. IATP coordinates the markets, which are hosted and managed by local community organizations.

“The enthusiasm, energy and dedication that the market hosts bring to the markets is incredible,” said IATP’s mini-market project coordinator Heather Schoonover. “We help the markets get off the ground but their success is really the result of the community organizations that choose to launch and manage a mini farmers market in their neighborhood.”

The markets are made possible by an innovative public policy developed by the city of Minneapolis in collaboration with IATP. The policy simplifies the farmers market permitting process, making it possible for smaller community organizations to host their own markets. “A sincere thank you is due to everyone in the city government who helped develop and implement this policy,” said JoAnne Berkenkamp, director of IATP’s Local Foods program. The markets are a great way for the city to partner with the community in improving access to healthy food and supporting local farmers.”

To further increase food access, IATP serves as the umbrella under which all of the markets are able to accept WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) food assistance coupons. FMNP coupons comprise half to two-thirds of the sales at some of the markets. Many participating farmers also donate some of their unsold produce to local food shelves.

“We encourage everyone in the Twin Cities area to visit a market to pick up some fresh produce, support our local growers and meet their neighbors,” said Schoonover. IATP’s involvement with the mini-markets is supported by the City of Minneapolis’ “Steps to a Healthier Minneapolis” program. Information about market locations and times is available on IATP’s Web site: http://www.iatp.org/localFoods/project_miniMarkets.cfm.

IATP works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems.