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## **Mini-Markets Connect Low-Income Residents and Farmers** **Minneapolis Food Shelves Also Benefit From Four New Markets**

Minneapolis—A new project to introduce small farmers markets to low-income communities successfully launched four markets and contributed hundreds of pounds of fresh produce to local food shelves this year, announced the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

“The amazing thing about this project was how easy it was to set up these markets,” said Mark Muller, Director of the Environment and Agriculture Program at IATP. “They expose how inefficient our food system is for many communities, and how these types of markets could become much more common.”

The markets were made possible through the City of Minneapolis’ “STEPS to a Healthier Minneapolis” initiative. The markets were designed to increase access to healthy food in low-income neighborhoods that have traditionally lacked healthy food resources. Each market is expected to run independently next year, when additional markets will be organized in other locations in cooperation with other groups.

This year markets began once a week at the Ebenezer senior high-rise apartment buildings in the Phillips neighborhood, Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in North Minneapolis (in partnership with the Northside Food Project), and at the Brian Coyle Community Center in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. They will continue into October. Many residents in these areas receive federal Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons, and these coupons made up half to two-thirds of total sales.

Food left over from the farmers markets is delivered to local food shelves. Each producer donated an average of 50 pounds of leftover produce per market. Those food donations went to Second Harvest Food and Hope for the City food banks, and ultimately were the primary source of produce for El Centro, the Brian Coyle Community Center, and Groveland food shelves.

“The word is spreading and other community organizations are appearing at the market to ask how to bring these spaces into their neighborhoods,” said project organizer Brian Noy. “If we can cut down some of the red tape, we can make it easier for groups to set up mini-markets in their neighborhood.”

The project identified ways the city can streamline its approval process for such markets. IATP and others, such as the Northside Food Project, are discussing the development of a Food Policy Council to increase the availability of healthy food choices in all Minneapolis communities.

To find out more about how the markets impact diet, the University of Minnesota’s Obesity Center conducted a survey of participants. The results will be compiled into a report by November.

Details on and photos of the Minneapolis Mini-Market project can be found at: [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).

*The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works globally to promote resilient family farms, communities and ecosystems through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.*