



Exploring Producer Cooperatives in Northern New Mexico

Taos County Economic Development Corporation

The Taos County Economic Development Corporation (TCEDC) has helped ranchers and value-added producers in the rural and isolated areas of Northern New Mexico to advance their risk management goals for the past 27 years. TCEDC's suite of programs includes a mobile slaughter facility and Food Sector Opportunity classes that have trained and prepared over 400 value added producers for the Taos Food Center commercial kitchen which has initiated over 200 food businesses. Their newest program – a year-round food market equipped with freezer and cold storage – delivers locally grown meat, produce and value added products to 18 stores, 3 southern cities and points in between.

Tradition and culture play an integral role in the food system of this largely remote and rural area, where the most viable plan is to grow and produce locally.

Exploration of formal food cooperatives as a way to develop value for community food systems was the goal the project team had in mind for meat, fruit and veggie producers. Through education and expert technical assistance, over 50 producers were guided through the risk management benefits and best practices for forming producer cooperatives. Participants learned about the mechanics of joint ventures and how to work with each other to develop markets through networking and sharing of resources.

At the end of this project, 15 producers contributed content for a Cooperative Formation Resource Manual. Receiving the confidence to develop and sustain peer relationships necessary for the formation of cooperatives was a major benefit for workshop attendees.

Participants acknowledged the challenges of forming cooperatives and pointed to coordination, commitment, time restraints and lack of resources as formidable obstacles to overcome especially in rural communities.



Two producers from a small village in the Chihuahua Mountains moved to Taos to begin a new life for themselves and offer a better future for their children. After 4 years working in the food business and participating in the program, they opened their own Taqueria.

“We had thought about having a taco cart for a few months and their (TCEDC’s) encouragement motivated us to take the first step. Their training, marketing and product development classes have also been very valuable.”





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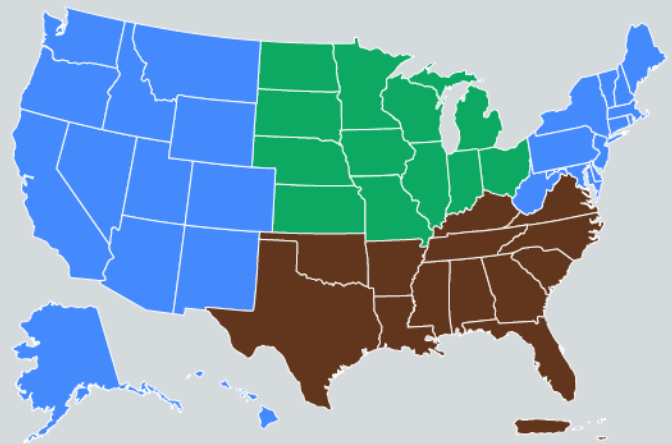
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**“Educating America’s farmers and ranchers
to manage the unique risks of producing food
for the world’s table.”**

Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

Projects are producer-focused, results-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted results that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those results.

Extension Risk Management Education has funded innovative programs that have generated tangible results for producers in every state. ERME is committed to funding results, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration. View the accomplishments of all funded projects on our website. <http://ExtensionRME.org>



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