



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Vermont Rural Foods System Program **Name:** James M. Miller
Other Team Members:
Program: Nebraska Program
Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** UVM Burlington, Vt
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: My project was attending the Vermont Rural Foods System Program, at the University of Vermont, and to observe for a couple of days at the Green Mountain Farm to School Program.

"Sustainability" is a term that is beginning to creep into the general public conversation (it's been used in agriculture for years) and Vermont is a bedrock model of sustainable agriculture which is why I elected to go there. The ten day course at UVM was designed to articulate the relationships between consumers and producers.

Much of the course involved travel to both production facilities and consumer outlets to accentuate these relationships. Without reporting on every facility we visited which would be too lengthy, some of the highlights of what we saw included: St. Albans Co-op Creamery, Shelburn Vineyard, Middlebury Grocery Co-op, Monument Farm (Dairy), The New England Culinary Institute, The Vermont Department of Agriculture, Dakin Farm (maple production), High mowing seeds (organic seed production). Also, we met on campus for a couple of hours each day with representatives of various consumer advocacy groups.

My time spent at the Green Mountain Farm to School program was also hugely rewarding. Green Mountain is a non-profit institution dedicated to providing nutrition training and sustainable agriculture information to grade school students. They accomplish this through classroom instruction, school gardens, and summer camps. I was inspired by the work they are doing with students at a formable age.

Career Impact: Having spent thirty years in the mid-west where everything in agriculture is driven by "economy of scale", the greatest professional challenge I faced in Vermont was that "smaller scale" farming operations are as real as two thousand acre ones. One of the questions I went to Vermont with was; "what elements of a sustainable Ag. economy like Vermont's is transferable to a commodity based one in the Midwest?"

I'm still processing the answers to that question, and how to present those opportunities to students.

Classroom/Community Impact: Since most of the students in my school come from an agricultural background, the Vermont experience has enabled me to broaden the conversation I have with them about the future of, and careers in agriculture.

As I mentioned in a previous section in this area of the country "economy of scale" affects everything in the farming community and so it is easy for students to become discouraged by the prospects of a future in the industry. Having now experienced a different type of production agriculture I am now better equipped to be optimistic about their entering the field.

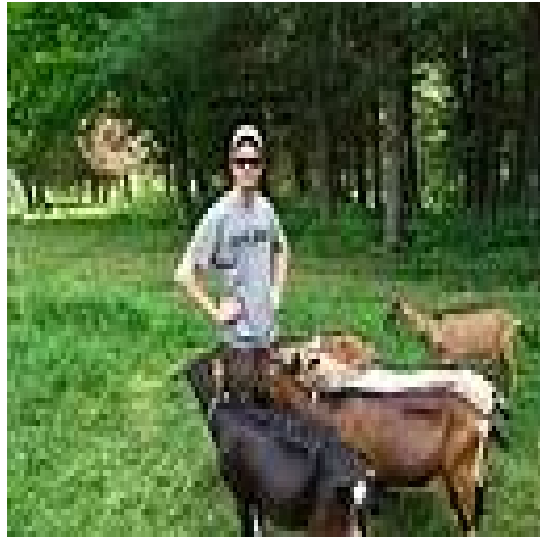
Open Response: I have talked to my administration about the trip and potential for providing wide spread education through distance learning. We are also discussing potential for providing forums for various sustainable agriculture groups to address the community. And, I've had the opportunity to have a number of discussions with my colleagues about the trip and how we might incorporate the information I returned with into their curriculums. We hope to get started on including the information into the various classrooms second semester.

Quote: experienced the diversity of the food system network

Photos:



Dairy processing facility



Student with milk goat, product used in cheese



Dairy cow being milked



apple orchard



maple syrup processor



organic seed storage



New england Culinary Institute



Dairy cattle