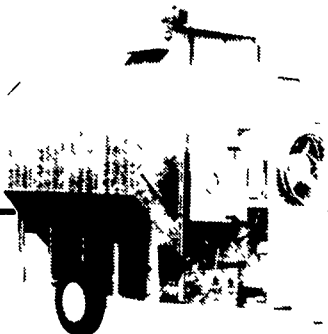
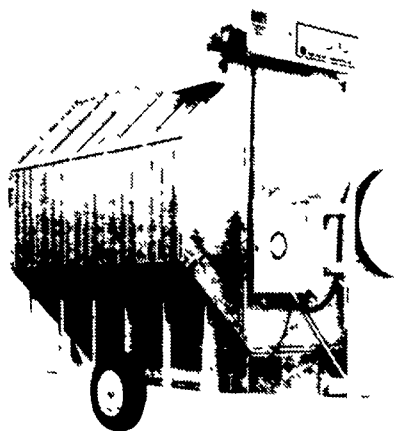


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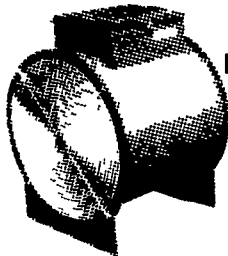
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Small Farmers Find Success In Marketing To Schools

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The USDA has issued four "Small Farmer Success Story" bulletins which outline the experiences of the New North Florida Cooperative.

The bulletins describe how a group of growers with limited resources in the northern Florida area formed a cooperative to market fresh produce to local school districts.

"An important part of USDA's small farm initiative is to encourage farmers to develop innovative marketing strategies for value-added products," said Kathleen A. Merrigan, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. "We hope that pilot projects like this cooperative serve as models for small farmers in other regions of the country."

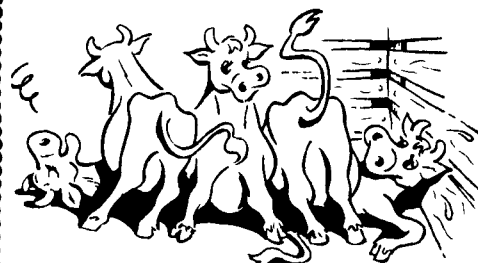
The small farm operators organized to concentrate on local school districts as a market. To provide fresh, high-quality products, the cooperative developed a post-harvest handling system including a packing shed, refrigerated storage, a rinsing system, a chopping system, packaging procedures, and

transportation practices.

The cooperative worked with the Gadsden and Jackson County school districts to provide leafy green vegetables on a schedule that would meet the menu plans of the school food-service directors. They produced, processed, packaged, and delivered an average of 2,000 pounds of leafy greens every two weeks. They also produced strawberries and blackberries that were sold to the schools for desserts and as additions to the School Breakfast Program.

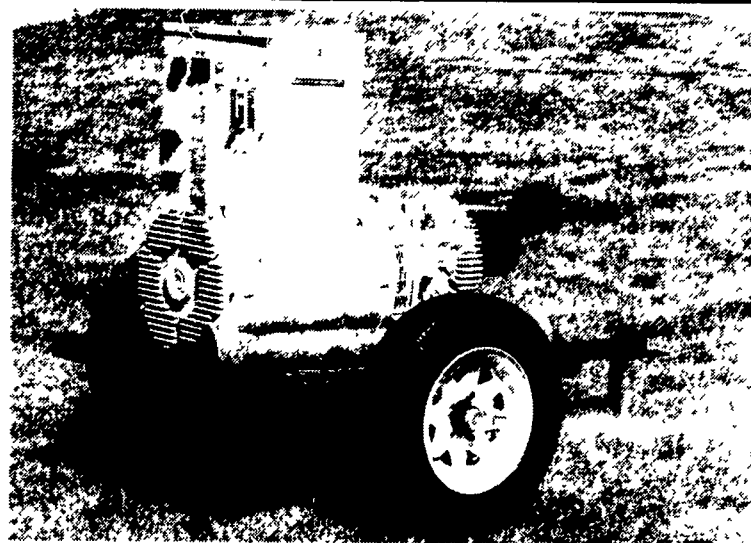
The project received support from AMS, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the West Florida Resource Conservation and Development Council, and the Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project of Florida A&M University.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the bulletins, contact Dan Schofer, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, STOP 0266, Washington, DC 20250-0266, tel. (202) 690-1170, fax (202) 690-3616, or e-mail dan.schofer@usda.gov.



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