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Thai CDC Awarded \$67,623 from USDA for its Farmers Market Project

LOS ANGELES, CA -- Recognizing the importance of access to healthy food for the low-income community in East Hollywood, Thai CDC was just awarded \$67,623 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) to establish the East Hollywood Farmers Market. This new farmers' market will promote healthy diets, create jobs, financially sustain growers, and expand access to fruits and vegetables for low-income individuals. "The East Hollywood Farmers' Market is a community project of the Thai Community Development Center that will improve access to healthy food and provide additional revenue generating options for local farmers. Locating this market at a major subway station in East Hollywood will further improve the community's access to healthy and locally-produced foods," states Project Manager Alex Holsheimer.

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded Thai CDC a one-year planning grant to establish a farmers' market in the low-income community of East Hollywood. After conducting focus groups with local growers and diverse residents of East Hollywood, Thai CDC has been seeking implementation funding since 2007. Nearly 150 farm-to-consumer marketing projects received funding today under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Market Promotion Program, marking a \$9.2 million investment to support direct marketing and to increase consumer access to healthy food, much of it in food deserts and other low-income areas. This year's awards--149 in total, distributed across 42 states and the District of Columbia--showed a rise in urban projects and increased diversity in the types of projects funded.

"Earlier this year, we reported that more than 1,000 new farmers markets have been recorded across the United States, totaling 7,175 markets," said Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. "Through programs like FMPP, we believe that USDA's contributions to direct farm-to-consumer marketing are providing alternative economic opportunities for our nation's agricultural producers."

Traditionally, FMPP has funded projects in both rural and urban areas. However, this year saw a shift toward a more even distribution, with urban projects growing to nearly half of the

portfolio. “In addition to funding many worthy start-up farmers markets, I was particularly pleased to note a rise in the number of innovative projects like those that create or expand community-supported agriculture programs (CSAs), agritourism, and mobile markets,” Merrigan added.

Increasing fresh food access in food deserts – low-income areas identified as having limited access to affordable and nutritious food – and other low-income communities was a priority for this year’s awards. As a result, over 40 percent of projects funded by FMPP this year serve one or more food deserts and another 20 percent will be implemented in communities with a poverty rate of 20 percent or higher. “As the only other City of Los Angeles recipient of FMPP funding this year, it is clear the USDA recognized Thai CDC’s innovative strategy to bring healthy food to low-income communities through CSAs and synergy with mass transit,” comments Alex Holsheimer.

Additionally, improvements in transportation and delivery methods, purchase of refrigeration equipment and improvements to packaging and storage that facilitate food access comprise nearly a third of the projects funded. Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) projects continue to exceed the congressionally mandated 10 percent, accounting for approximately 24 percent of total funding which gives participants in federal nutrition assistance programs even greater access to nutritious food.

Since its inception in 2006, the Farmers Marketing Promotion Program has awarded more than \$23 million across the country to support direct producer-to-consumer marketing and local food projects. FMPP is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service. Projects are expected to be completed within 24 months of initiation. The full list of awards granted for fiscal year 2011 is available at www.ams.usda.gov/FMPP.

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