

**Sustainable Agriculture: Evaluating and Advancing Seller Practices  
at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Center for Urban Education About Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA) manages and operates the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in downtown San Francisco. The market is open twice a week and is visited by as many as 10-15,000 shoppers on Saturdays alone.<sup>1</sup> CUESA's mission is to promote a sustainable food system through the operation of the market and its educational programs.<sup>2</sup> To reach this goal, CUESA aims to collect and analyze information on the practices of the sellers to indicate their level of sustainability. These indicators will then be used to evaluate the sustainability as a whole of each seller's operation. As such, the information collected in these applications is critical in measuring the sustainability efforts and practices of sellers.

CUESA would like to ensure that the sellers at the market represent its vision and use the information collected from the applications to implement an evaluative process that will tie a minimum level or standard of sustainability into the criteria for selling at the market.<sup>3</sup> In order to advance the mission, CUESA has defined what it means by sustainable agriculture and developed sustainable agriculture frameworks that contain guiding principles and examples of best practices for the sellers at the market. Sellers were not consulted for the purpose of this report.

This report will analyze information on seller practices from the 2008 market application, review analogous scenarios that have effectively advanced sustainability, and make recommendations that support CUESA's goals. Research methods for this analysis consisted of a literature review of organizations and educational institutions that are working to advance sustainable agriculture, telephone interviews with personnel at associations working in this field, and data analysis on the seller applications from 2008.

### *Key Findings*

The vision CUESA has for the market will be furthered by developing a more specific and educational application process to collect information on the practices and business operations of the sellers. In addition, working with sellers to identify barriers and set goals will better inform CUESA's work and help CUESA assess the best way to promote sustainable agriculture for each seller. There are many organizations, educational institutions, and agricultural experts working to advance sustainable agriculture. Identifying areas for partnerships and collaboration will assist CUESA in reaching its goals and provide further resources for sellers. The following

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<sup>1</sup> "Ferry Plaza Farmers Market." Ferry Building Marketplace. 2005. 12 Mar. 2008 <[http://www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com/farmers\\_market.php](http://www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com/farmers_market.php)>.

<sup>2</sup> The Center for Urban Education About Sustainable Agriculture. 2005. Dec. 2007 <[www.cuesa.org](http://www.cuesa.org)>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

recommendations are presented for CUESA's consideration to support its mission of advancing sustainable practices among sellers at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market.

### *Recommendations*

#### Short-term:

- Strengthen the application process to collect more complete and accurate data based on the products sellers bring to the market. Determine a system to weight the elements of sustainability within their operation. Place the application online and make it an interactive and educational tool that scores the seller on all the different criteria of a sustainable operation and provides them with confidential results showing their scores and displaying where they rank within the market.
- Build trust in the marketplace by creating a pledge for sellers verifying that their responses on the application are accurate. Create a pledge for CUESA to honor its commitment to promoting sustainable practices within the marketplace.
- Set clear attainable goals of sustainability for sellers. Include a list of prohibited practices or products to determine eligibility for inclusion in the market.

#### Long-term:

- Draw on success of other organizations that have worked to advance sustainability. Develop partnerships and collaborate with them whenever possible.
- Host workshops targeted to improve weaker areas of farm management, as identified in the applications.
- Explore possible incentives and ways CUESA can offer support to sellers to help them advance their practices.
- Establish a minimum level of sustainability that reflects CUESA's guiding principles of sustainable agriculture.
- Implement a grandfather approach to allow returning sellers time to adjust their practices to meet CUESA's minimum level of sustainability.

This report will explore these recommendations in further details.