



Rural Development • Business & Industry • Rural Business Enterprise Grant

## Organic Food Hub for South Central Texas and beyond

As we are becoming more conscious of our environment and the food we eat, more people are turning to organic foods. Organic foods have become a widely sought commodity in the past few years.

There is a growing cluster of organic farmers in South Texas. Unfortunately, it seems only the large farmers are able to sell their produce to the chain grocery and retail stores due to the volume they are able to produce.

Where does this leave the smaller farmers? They have very limited choices; some may get lucky and be able to sell to smaller stores and markets, or they have people who will buy bulk quantities of their inventory. Still other farmers have fewer avenues to pursue; they can sell on the side of the road, or they can go to Farmer's Markets to sell their produce.

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) has been searching for a solution for these small farmers and a way to make their crops more profitable for them. NCAT is dedicated to projects that specifically deal with sustainable food/agriculture, and farm energy.

NCAT came to USDA Rural Development for an \$87,330 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG). These funds are to be used for a feasibility study for an Organic Food Hub to be placed in Guadalupe County. The choice of placing the food hub in Guadalupe County was due to the easy access to I-35, I-10, US Hwy-46, US Hwy-90, Hwy 123 corridors, and other smaller Farm to Market roads. This hub would be a gathering place for farmers from all over Texas to bring their produce, add it together with other farmers' produce to facilitate more volume, and enable them the opportunity to sell to the larger market. This hub would create jobs, which would then also help the economy.

Aside from the study of the wholesale operation location for the feasibility study, NCAT also plans to create an educational book with templates that can be used by grower groups as they try to develop food hubs in other areas in Texas.



*Organic vegetables straight from the farm to the farmers market.*

**Obligation Amount:** \$87,330.00 grant

**Date of Obligation:** April 2014

**Congressional District:** Representatives Hinojosa TX-15 and Doggett TX-35; Senators John Cornyn and Ted Cruz

**Partners:** None

**Demographics:** Organic farmers in South Texas and beyond

**Impact:** Feasibility study of a wholesale operation to be located in Guadalupe County and the creation of an educational book with templates that can be used by grower groups as they try to develop food hubs in other areas in Texas.