

HMONG AMERICAN FARMERS ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

In the United States, Minnesota has one of the largest Hmong populations and many of them farm for a living. Hmong American farmers play an important role in the Twin Cities farmers market scene, making up over 50% of all the farmers that participate. Even though they dominate metropolitan farmers markets, Hmong American farmers still face barriers such as land and equipment access, training, and access to alternative markets.

Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) is a non-profit social justice organization that manages a 155-acre incubator farm in Vermillion Township. HAFA gives Hmong American farming families the chance to lease land, build their businesses, and have access to agricultural education. The HAFA food hub gives their farmers access to their CSA and alternative markets. Language is a large barrier for many Hmong farming families. Since 2011, HAFA has worked to give their farmers access to bi-cultural and bi-lingual training so that they can be better stewards of the land. They offer workshops for their farmers on topics such as soil health and good agricultural practices (GAP).

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Every year HAFA runs a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program that allows Hmong American farmers at their farm to aggregate produce at the HAFA food hub and sell to CSA members. Their CSA includes spring, summer, and fall produce shares. As well as flower bouquet shares throughout the summer and fall. HAFA CSA memberships include a weekly box of assorted produce and a email newsletter with information on what they will be receiving for the week. The newsletter also gives members an inside look at what's happening on the farm, as well as information on how to use different produce.

This year HAFA needed someone to help with their upcoming CSA season. The objective for my service learning project was to help with HAFA's CSA by creating a newsletter template and content.



Pictured on the left is typical HAFA CSA produce.

OUTCOMES

Through this project I...

- Created a CSA newsletter template that can be used throughout the CSA season.
- Created content on how to use various unfamiliar produce/recipes for the CSA newsletter.
- Interviewed 4 farmers for a spotlight in the CSA newsletter.
- Helped with CSA tabling at events.
- Volunteered 25 hours of work at HAFA.



Pictured on the right is Dia Her and I at the HAFA farm.

LESSONS LEARNED

I learned a lot about non-profit social justice work related to agriculture, and specifically the challenges vegetable farmers face here in Minnesota. I also learned a lot about Hmong American farmers and the obstacles they face farming here in the US. I think one of the greatest lessons I learned was from hearing HAFA farmers stories and how much they love farming even though there are many challenges and barriers that face them.



Pictured above is Chao and I at the HAFA farm. Chao was having tractor troubles that day.

REFERENCES

Hmong American Farmers Association <https://www.hmongfarmers.com/>

