SIU Sustainability Council Project Final Report

Project title: Vegetable Production for SIU Housing using Vermicomposts

Project I.D. #: 101111

Award date: December, 2010

Completion date: July 31, 2011

Funds used (if different from award amount):

Used all funds awarded-\$23, 871

Brief write up of project/project experience (not to exceed 250 words):

The overall goal of the project was to produce vegetables on SIUC farms for use in SIUC's University Housing Dining Halls meal preparation. This was a pilot project to get the SIUC organic farm producing vegetables for the Dining Halls with undergraduate students involved in the production process. This was the initial project that put us where we are today. We are now producing a significant amount of fresh produce for the SIUC dining halls each year and we have numerous undergraduates that work at the farm. This is a valuable experience for them to learn about organic vegetable production.

We are trying to now sustain what was started with this project. The area has now expanded from ½ acre to over 2 acres of organic vegetable production. We produce vegetables in a sustainable manner using primary vermi-composts produced from SIUC dining hall kitchen wastes as fertilizers with minimal organic pesticide use.

Best things learned/produced from project:

We learned which vegetables are most wanted by the dining halls that fit best into our sustainable organic production system.

How do you define sustainability?

Sustainability has different meanings to different people. But, sustainability is really based on a simple principle: **Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment that surrounds us**. Therefore, we need to manage our surrounding natural environment in a manner to preserve it so that it can be used by future generations. We should not manage it in such a way to disrupt the existing biodiversity through removal of habitats or through toxic applications or dumping various chemicals into our surrounding environments. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can co-exist in productive harmony, but that will also allow fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations. Sustainability is important to make sure that we have and will continue to have, the water, materials, and resources to protect human health and our environment for many generations to come. Thus,

sustainability really provides economic vitality without the destruction of our natural environment, which relates to productive, healthy communities.

In vegetable production and other farming systems, sustainability must satisfy three criteria. It must first enhance or maintain the long-term economic viability for someone that is producing vegetables. Secondly, it must enhance the diversity and long-term productivity of both the managed agricultural ecosystem and the surrounding natural ecosystem and it must also enhance rather than threaten the health, safety and aesthetic satisfaction of growers and consumers

Has this changed over the course of your project? If so, how?

It has not changed for me.

What do you see as the next step for the project?

We are continuing to train and educate undergraduate students at the organic farm as well as various tour groups, such as elementary school children. We are an educational vehicle for the campus community and campus. We look at this project as the beginning for all that we are achieving here on campus to provide fresh food produced right off our farm to feed SIUC students.

We will continue to grow and develop this farm which will make SIUC a leader in sustainability among its peer institutions.

Optional: Do you have any suggestions for the SIU Sustainability Council to improve the Green Fund award process? Not really.

Attach a minimum of five images – these will be used to promote interest in Sustainability Council projects. These can be photographs of the progress of the project, the completed project, or promotional materials.



'Violet Queen' cauliflower produced at the SIUC Organic Farm. It produces beautiful, royal purple heads of cauliflower that makes a colorful salad.



Spinach growing in early spring at the SIUC organic farm. These were used a few weeks later in the SIUC Dining Halls.

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Close-up view of spinach growing in early spring at the SIUC organic farm. The large edible leaves were a hit with students at the SIUC Dining Halls. We can't grow enough spinach to fulfill their needs at the Dining Halls due to it being so popular.



An Immature romaine lettuce head growing at the SIUC organic farm in early Spring. It will be mature in about 3 weeks for use in the SIUC dining halls.

Students weeing



Weeding is a major task that must be completed by hand at the SIUC organic farm. We are always looking at alternative ways to control weeds such as the use of cardboard and mulching with straw.



Weed control in organically grown potatoes destined for the SIUC Dining Halls.