



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Colorado —Rural Business & Cooperative Service

# Local & Regional Food Systems

## Business Grant Helps Food Rural Cooperative Expand Customer Base

### Outline Of Need:

Rio Culebra Cooperative represents fifty-two family farmers and ranchers located in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. Member's of the cooperative came to Rural Development for assistance with expanding their customer base.

### How Rural Development Helped:

Several Value Added Producer Grants and Small, Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grants (SSPDG) have been awarded to the entity since 2006. In 2010, they were awarded a \$186,000 SSDPG to help producers sell specialty crops for Chicos and Bolita Beans.

### The Results:

The cooperative is committed to sustainable agricultural production practices that protect health, community and the environment. Currently the cooperative markets 100% grass-fed beef, that is raised without antibiotics.

### Fast Facts

**Program:** Value Added Producer Grant and Small Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grant Programs

**Investment:** Since 2006,\$956,265 in grant funding has been provided

**Partners:** 52 cooperative members

#### Demographics

Rural Population: 619, persistent poverty county

#### Impact:

- Customers are able to know where and how there food is being produced locally.
- Family farms in this poverty stricken area are able to continue family traditions and prosper financially.



Crestina Martinez, Costilla County Commissioner, and Rio Culebra Cooperative Members are awarded funding from USDA Rural Development .

They also market chico's, which are processed from heirloom corn varieties that have been passed down for generations. The corn is harvested by hand then gently roasted on the farm in a traditional horno earth oven.

Through the funding from Rural Development, the cooperative has been able to expand their base to include a website which will soon allow customers the opportunity to order products online.

They have also been successful in meeting with four national grocery stores to market their meat and vegetables. They are also in the process of completing an additional market study to secure new areas for members to sell additional products.

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