

For Immediate Release

National Initiative to Increase Access to Healthy Food Options Kicks Off in Philadelphia

The CDFI Fund and Opportunity Finance Network to Provide Workshops for CDFIs to Help Eradicate Food Deserts and Decrease Public Health Challenges

Philadelphia, PA, June 23, 2011—The Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund), a department of the U. S. Treasury created for the purpose of promoting economic revitalization and community development through investment in and assistance to CDFIs, and Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), the nation's leading network of community development financial institutions (CDFIs), announce the Philadelphia kick off next week of a series of national workshops designed to bring greater access to healthy foods in low-income communities.

"Too many Americans live in food deserts with limited or no access to healthy foods. As a result, their communities have increased rates of obesity, diabetes, and other public health challenges," said Donna J. Gambrell, Director of the CDFI Fund. "Today's workshop is the first in a national series that will build the capacity of CDFIs to help eradicate food deserts and the problems caused by them."

Food deserts are urban neighborhoods and rural towns with limited access to affordable and nutritious food. USDA estimates that more than 23 million people in America live in low-income areas that are more than a mile from a supermarket. The lack of supermarket access corresponds with higher rates of diet-related disease in Philadelphia, according to an article in the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice.

To help eradicate food deserts and decrease public health issues, The CDFI Fund and OFN have partnered to offer CDFIs free healthy food financing workshops across the United States. The first Financing Healthy Food Options workshop, which is offered as part of the CDFI Fund's Capacity Building Initiative, is scheduled for June 29-30. It will provide 16 CDFIs—including 5 local CDFIs—in-depth training on Food Retailers, such as grocery stores, co-ops, institutions, public markets, farmer's markets, community supported agriculture, and mobile vendors. The workshop will include a panel discussion with local healthy food practitioners, and feature expert presenters, such as Philadelphia-based The Reinvestment Fund, a national leader in providing financing for supermarkets and other grocery stores that operate in underserved communities across the Mid-Atlantic.

"CDFIs are strategically poised to finance healthy food options in low-income and low-wealth communities because they already effectively fund small businesses in urban, rural, and Native markets across the U.S. Through these training workshops, CDFIs will expand their capacity to support healthy food options and create healthy communities," said Mark Pinsky, President and CEO of Opportunity Finance Network."

Presenters, panelists, and guest speakers at the Philadelphia workshop include local experts with an impressive background in providing healthy food to Philadelphia communities, such as:

- **Opportunity Finance Network (OFN)**, presenter: From June 2011 through June 2012, OFN will provide eight, free, two-day workshops across the U.S. Along with a roster of expert instructors, OFN will conduct in-depth training across the healthy food continuum, including farms and food production, food retail, and mid-tier food chain enterprises. OFN will also develop free resources for workshop attendees and non-attendees, including: a Financial Resources Catalog; an Implementation Handbook showcasing best practices and case studies in successful healthy food financing; and a National Demand for Healthy Food Options Report.
- **The Reinvestment Fund (TRF)**, presenter: A leader in neighborhood revitalization, TRF works to improve fresh food access in underserved communities. Through the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI), TRF underwrote and committed more than \$85 million in grants and loans for 80 stores to support the development of supermarket and other fresh food retail enterprises in underserved, low income, urban, and rural communities throughout Pennsylvania.
- **Nessa Richman**, presenter: Nessa has been working as a food systems consultant since 2002. She is the Founder and president of Brightseed Strategies, which provides information and resources for people and organizations working to build healthy food systems.
- **Jeff Brown**, speaker: President and CEO of Brown's Super Stores, Inc., Jeff is a fourth generation Philadelphia grocer, whose ten stores employ more than 2,300 associates in the Delaware Valley. Brown's Super Stores have been recognized by local and national media and The White House for its efforts in serving poor communities in food deserts.
- **The Food Trust**, speaker and panelist: Founded in 1992, The Food Trust works to improve the health of children and adults, promote good nutrition, increase access to nutritious foods, and advocate for better public policy.
- **Greensgrow Philadelphia Project**, panelist: The Greensgrow Philadelphia Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is dedicated to promoting social entrepreneurship through the reuse of land once deemed useless. The Greensgrow Philadelphia Project is the parent of Greensgrow Farms, an urban farm located in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia.
- **Weaver's Way Co-Op**, panelist: Weaver's Way Co-Op operates three community-owned markets in Philadelphia that offers fresh local fruits and vegetables—including food from their own co-op farm in East Mt. Airy.

The next two Financing Healthy Food Options workshops are: Mid-Tier Food Enterprises in Madison, WI, on August 11-12, and Food Retail in Denver, CO, on September 15-16.

To attend a workshop or schedule an interview with Mark Pinsky, or any of the presenters or panelists, please contact Stefanie Arck, VP of Strategic Communications at Opportunity Finance Network, at 215.320.4306.

The CDFI Fund invests in and builds the capacity of community-based, private, for-profit and non-profit financial institutions with a primary mission of community development in economically distressed communities. These institutions—certified by the CDFI Fund as Community Development Financial Institutions or CDFIs—are able to respond to gaps in local markets that traditional financial institutions are not adequately serving. CDFIs provide critically needed capital, credit and other financial products in addition to technical assistance to community residents and businesses, service providers, and developers working to meet community needs. The CDFI Fund's vision is an America in which all people have adequate access to affordable capital, credit and financial services.

Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), the leading network of private financial institutions, creates growth that is good for communities, investors, individuals, and the economy. Members of OFN are community development financial institutions (CDFIs) that deliver responsible lending to help low-wealth and low-income communities join the economic mainstream. Opportunity Finance Network originated more than \$23.2 billion in financing in non-conforming urban, rural, and Native communities through 2009, which generated or maintained 298,511 jobs; 60,261 businesses and microenterprises; 635,528 housing units; and 6,465 community facility projects. More information is available at:

www.opportunityfinance.net