

For Immediate Release

National Initiative to Increase Access to Healthy Food Comes to Madison

The CDFI Fund and Opportunity Finance Network to Train 19 CDFIs to Help Eradicate Food Deserts and Decrease Public Health Challenges

Philadelphia, PA, August 9, 2011—The Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI Fund), a department of the U.S. Treasury that promotes 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 that approximately 20 CDFIs are attending a Madison, WI workshop on August 11-12 to learn how to increase access to healthy foods in their 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. "This series of workshops 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.

To help eradicate food deserts and decrease public health issues, the CDFI Fund and OFN are offering free healthy food financing workshops across the United States. This month's workshop is part of the CDFI Fund's Capacity Building Initiative and will provide 19 CDFIs—including 16 local CDFIs from the upper Midwest—in-depth training on Mid-Tier Food Chain Enterprises, including food processing, food aggregation and distribution, and waste management. The workshop is being hosted by The National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions on the Credit Union National Association Campus in Madison.

"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 are already successfully providing healthy food options to their communities. They include:

- **Opportunity Finance Network (OFN):** 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 and an Implementation Handbook showcasing best practices and case studies in successful healthy food financing.

- **The National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions (Federation)** is a certified CDFI Intermediary representing more than 235 community development credit unions (CDCUs) providing credit, savings, transactional services and financial education to more than 1.6 million residents of low-income urban, rural and reservation-based communities nationwide.
- **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)** The mission of the Marketing Services Division of the USDA is to improve food and agricultural product distribution.
- **The Reinvestment Fund (TRF)**: 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.
- **Eastern Market Corporation (EMC)**: A Detroit-based non-profit entity charged with converting one of the nation's oldest and largest public markets into a healthy urban food hub. The Eastern Market is a six-block public market that has been feeding Detroit since 1891. Every Saturday it is transformed into a vibrant marketplace with hundreds of open-air stalls.
- **Vernon Economic Development Association (VEDA)**: Based in western Wisconsin, VEDA focuses on asset based community development that creates businesses, jobs, and new community wealth. VEDA recently put together a financial package totaling just over \$4.5 million to develop a food enterprise center.

The next Financing Healthy Food Options workshop is on Food Retail in Denver, CO, September 15-16. Applications are still being accepted for this workshop. Certified and emerging CDFIs are eligible to apply at: <http://www.cvent.com/events/financing-healthy-food-options-track/event-summary-884a2b8961b54d86968c71a3f6c518ec.aspx>

To schedule an interview with any of the presenters, please contact Stefanie Arck, VP of Strategic Communications at Opportunity Finance Network, at 215.320.4306.

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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