

MARS CDC New Jersey Food Hub Partner Brief

MARS Community Development Corporation (MARS CDC), in partnership with Royal Dynastic Organics, is supporting a New Jersey Food Hub concept designed to strengthen local food systems, increase access to fresh and healthy foods, and create new economic opportunities for farmers, producers, small businesses, and underserved communities. The Food Hub is intended to serve as a coordinated connection point between agricultural producers, distributors, community organizations, schools, food access programs, local markets, and families. By supporting food production, aggregation, storage, distribution, and market access, the concept helps build a stronger and more reliable food supply chain across New Jersey.

A key partner in this effort is **Manatee V. Smith Jr.**, Operating Manager of **Producers1 Agriculture Group and Sustainable Solutions LLC**, a New Jersey-based Certified Minority Business Enterprise and Certified Small Business Enterprise. Mr. Smith brings more than 20 years of experience in agricultural advocacy, community building, outreach, agribusiness, rural and urban agriculture, land development, and equitable economic development. His work has focused on supporting marginalized, underserved, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers, ranchers, producers, agribusinesses, and communities. He has also worked as a consultant with the Windsor Group LLC on USDA-related programs, including the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program, the USDA 2501 Program, and the CRP-TIP Program, which support outreach, technical assistance, land access, and farm ownership opportunities.

Through his leadership, Manatee Smith has built strong relationships across agricultural and community development sectors, with a focus on fairness, diversity, equity, inclusion, training, and wealth-building opportunities for underserved farmers and producers. His experience includes food leadership, agricultural cluster development, supplier training, and engagement with organizations such as the North American Food Systems Network. His background in business management, sales, marketing, student leadership, and program development further supports his ability to help connect producers, buyers, institutions, and community partners.

Together, MARS CDC, Royal Dynastic Organics, and Producers1 Agriculture Group seek to advance a Food Hub model that is more than a distribution system. It is a community development strategy designed to reduce food insecurity, expand market access for small and socially disadvantaged farmers, support workforce development, improve supply chain coordination, and strengthen local economies. By working with farmers, growers, distributors, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, schools, senior programs, community organizations, and local businesses, the New Jersey Food Hub concept aims to create a more equitable, reliable, and community-centered food system that benefits families, producers, and communities across the region.