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## **Wedge Community Co-op grocery store thriving**

December 5, 2013

MINNEAPOLIS — Amid artsy boutiques in an eclectic neighborhood here is a grocery store run by the Wedge Community Co-op. Shoppers walk directly into a well-stocked, clean, attractive, colorful produce department managed by Dean Schladweiler. The department offers around 250 SKUs.

Since the store opened in 2008, produce sales have grown 3 percent to 5 percent a year in “a very steady trend,” Schladweiler said.

Local produce is featured. When the U.S. northlands are frozen, Wedge supports smaller family farms from California and other corners of the world.

The Wedge cooperative warehouses and buys produce in support of the store. From April to January the store manages to have at least some produce from Minnesota. Growers in nearby Wisconsin, Michigan and other Upper Midwest states are also considered local suppliers. Schladweiler indicated that the majority of the growers supplying produce to the cooperative have food-safety programs, “especially those that are out-of-state.”

Organic produce is strongly promoted with the local label. Wedge also offers as many Fair Trade produce items as it can. In the fall, local produce includes potatoes, onions, garlic, fall greens, apples and cabbage. When The Produce News visited the store in mid-November, Wedge offered a nice selection of cut local greenhouse flowers.

Framed over the produce aisles are photos, with captions detailing the stories of growers supplying the cooperative.

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Noting the highly competitive nature of retail produce sales in the Twin Cities area, Schladweiler nevertheless said that Wedge will open a second location within a year.

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