



2015 NCERME Funded Projects

Helping Farmers Create Innovative, Profitable, and Flexible Employment Opportunities, While Staying on the Right Side of the Law

Project Director: Rachel Armstrong, *Farm Commons*

Delivery Area: Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Project Summary: Good employee practices hold back farms from expansion to new markets, while others turn to risky informal labor. Few affordable resources guide farmers through the regulations, contracts, liability and taxation for workers. The situation is especially complex as diverse activities such as packing, delivery, and sales may not qualify for agriculture exceptions. On a proven track record, we will reach 975 farmers in six North Central states with education on the legal risks of labor regulations. More importantly, half or 463 farmers will do at least one of the following: purchase appropriate insurance, pay minimum wage, use written employment contracts, manage employment tax liability, and comply with labor regulations. We accomplish this by producing 4 legal risk guides, 6 state-specific checklists, one broad webinar, and 6 state-specific webinars. Our state-specific webinars use an innovative and interactive small group approach to help farmers learn from each other, alongside an expert attorney.

Paying it Forward with a Successful Transition Cow Program

Project Director: Jennifer Bentley, *Iowa State University Extension & Outreach*

Delivery Area: Iowa

Project Summary: Project will guide decision-making process to assist small, beginning, traditional commercial producers to determine best management practices in their transition cow program. While transition cow management encompasses only 20-30% of the herd, it can ultimately influence the milk production and health of 100% of the cows. Focus will be on facilities, nutrition, health, records, financial and production variables. Using 20 risk management surveys, 9 on-farm workshops, 6 classroom sessions, 6 on-line learning modules, 1 transition cow behavior video, and 40 individual visits, producers will increase awareness, understanding, and decision-making ability.

Following workshop series, 40 producers will have begun to develop or implement change to transition cow program best suited for their management, labor, and financial structure. Long term application of investing in transition cow period will increase changes in reduced stress, reduced fresh cow problems, and improved milk production through a better start.

Dairy Risk Management Using Private and Public Risk Protection Instruments – North Central

Project Director: Marin Bozic, *University of Minnesota*

Delivery Area: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio

Project Summary: The Agricultural Act of 2014 reformed the U.S. dairy safety net, abolishing countercyclical payments and support prices, and introducing Margin Protection Program for Dairy Producers (MPP-Dairy). This project addresses the marketing and financial risks dairy farms face as a result of changing market outlook and a changing farm income safety net. The 1000 project participants are small, transitioning and commercial dairy producers in ten North Central states.

Participants will attend workshops and webinars and will use online interactive tools to learn how to integrate public and private dairy risk protection instruments. We will conduct 45 producer workshops, 5 webinars, and will make available interactive online decision-support tools at www.DairyMarkets.org. Upon workshop completion, 750 producers will complete financial stress-test scenario planning using the MPP-Dairy tool, 500 producers will register for MPP-Dairy for 2016, and 100 will combine public risk instruments with forward, futures or option contracts.

Pesticide Application Training for Hmong Growers

Project Director: Jack Chang, *Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection*

Delivery Area: Wisconsin

Project Summary: This project is a new educational approach to teaching pesticide application to Hmong produce growers by modifying an existing curriculum with cultural adaptations. Using pesticides safely and appropriately addresses production and food safety risk management concerns for this population. The modified curriculum will be piloted in a two-day training located in two Wisconsin counties: Marathon and Dane. One targets ginseng growers and the other targets fresh market produce growers. We expect 40 Hmong growers to participate and learn new skills; 75% of them to apply new information/skills learned to their farming operation, 20% will actually take the private pesticide applicator test, with 75% of those passing the exam.

The improved pesticide handling will help producers reduce chances for crop losses and save money by reduced spraying. This new approach will be able to be replicated in Minnesota as well as in other areas of Wisconsin.

Human Risk Management for Agricultural Producers (HR 4 Ag)

Project Director: Jessica Jones, *Nebraska Extension*

Delivery Area: Nebraska

Project Summary: The project Human Risk Management for Agricultural Producers (HR4Ag) will address issues related to human risk management. The target audience is small to medium sized agricultural operations in Nebraska and the Midwest. The project will utilize a multi-platform delivery approach. The in-person workshops will be held across Nebraska. Online

materials will also be available to producers. Web-based deliverables will include a website with online videos, accompanying materials, and interactive forums focused on specific human risk management issues.

Our team will present in-person workshops to six different audiences reaching at least 200 producers. This project will help producers 1) improve their communication skills, 2) learn how to successfully recruit/retain quality employees, 3) effectively train employees, 4) increase the well-being of themselves as well as their employees, 5) take steps to improve safety of employees and families, and 6) take action on developing transition and estate plans.

Will Your Farm Outlive You? Motivating and Educating WI Farmers on Farm Succession Planning

Project Director: *UW Center for Dairy Profitability*

Delivery Area: Wisconsin

Project Summary: This project will motivate and educate 400 Wisconsin producers to take action on farm succession planning through, 1) The development of materials highlighting succession strategies/tools used by Wisconsin farmers. Ag professionals' will offer insight on why these strategies were effective and how farms can evaluate the tools/strategies for their own situations. 2) A Farm Succession Facilitator's training for professionals to build farm succession facilitation capacity in Wisconsin. These trained facilitators will speak at workshops, where appropriate. They will also be connected with farms seeking facilitation assistance, where appropriate. 3) Five farm succession workshops to provide motivation, education and resources to producers. 4) A Farm Succession Professional Team to evaluate the professional team meeting to efficiently provide recommendations rather than meeting separately with each professional. 5) Three farm succession peer discussion groups will offer farm succession facilitation and education but also provide the opportunity for producers to learn from each other.

Linking Native American Youth to Agricultural Futures

Project Director: *Rachel Lindvall, South Dakota State University Extension*

Delivery Area: South Dakota

Project Summary: Youth in South Dakota's Indian Reservations (designated USDA "Strikeforce" zones) often overlook making connections between their futures and roles that agricultural careers can play in them. In light of aging trends among producers, overall projected shortages among the state's workforce and the connection to land that actively exists in many native communities, opportunities to create new linkages abound.

This proposal offers agricultural entrepreneurship and leadership camps specifically for youth living on South Dakota's Rosebud, Cheyenne River and Oglala Sioux Tribal reservations. Camps, follow-up workshops, materials, and learning communities we develop among youth and their mentors will be unique in their scope, structure and focus. Absent of FFA or other school based agricultural curriculum, we propose to educate our Native youth about career choices in agriculture and provide road maps for the achievement of the goals they will develop (including

USDA youth loans and funding opportunities), while fostering culturally/scientifically based land ethic.

Strategic Information Portal for Environmental Risk Management

Project Director: Ray Massey, *University of Missouri*

Delivery Area: Entire North Central Area

Project Summary: This project addresses legal risks: environmental regulations, a timely topic given the recent Waters of the U.S. rule proposed by the EPA, and the nutrient reduction strategies likely to affect fertilizer use in the corn-belt states. It also will address financial risk: strategic planning. We will develop an interactive website tool that allows farmers to obtain an environmental sensitivity report for any parcel of land in the North Central states. The tool will work on desktop and mobile platforms. Environmental sensitivity reports will be generated using existing geo-referenced datalayers of landscape, population and policy features revealing environmental sensitivities and provide relevant risk management ideas. The target audience is farmers facing strategic decisions such as changing production practices or expanding size. Our goal is to prevent problems by giving farmers information that insures they are aware of potential risks, able to evaluate risks and make decisions to reduce risks.

Producer Network Development and Education: Scaling-up to Sell Wholesale into a Food Hub

Project Director: Katie Nixon, *Lincoln University*

Delivery Area: Kansas, Missouri

Project Summary: Two food hub feasibility studies were recently released in the Kansas City region, one focused in and around Douglas County, Kansas and one focused in and around Kansas City. They shared data of the producers surveyed and therefore had similar key findings for regional producers: 1.) that there are significant barriers for growers to produce on this level and 2.) a producer led or owned food hub is the recommended model. This project seeks to improve the knowledge-base and implement systems for growers to scale-up production of fruits and vegetables and to help the interested producers form a network that would own the food hub. Through one-on-one technical assistance and five workshops we will help growers transition to a wholesale production system. Key subjects include: crop planning, post-harvest handling, building on-farm cold-storage, packing and grading, implementing food safety practices, and forming a legal entity (a cooperative model is recommended).

Protecting Profits: Helping Nebraska Cattle Producers Manage Market Risk

Project Director: Jay Parsons, *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Delivery Area: Nebraska

Project Summary: This project will provide Nebraska cow/calf producers with timely information on important risk management tools and strategies to help them better manage their market risk. The objectives of this project are to: improve producer understanding of their risk preferences and market risk management goals; help producers better understand available tools such as LRP insurance, put options and private treaty contracts; and help producers develop and implement a marketing plan that matches their preferences and management objectives. This project will fund four in-depth workshops in two locations with a targeted audience of at least 20 producers at each location offering. As a result of this project,

40 producers will significantly increase their knowledge of available risk management tools and how to develop an effective risk management marketing plan. Twenty-five producers will complete development of a marketing plan for their cattle operation and implement the plan over the course of the project.

Coaching Farm Families Through a Facilitated Farm Transition Process

Project Director: Kristine Ranger, *The Learning Connection*

Delivery Area: Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin

Project Summary: This proposal addresses the risk management education topic (5) Human Risk, specifically, transition and estate planning. The delivery method will include online assessment and self-paced tools, three facilitated webinars, and on-site or remote coaching. We'll target farm families in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota where the principal owners are 50-65 years old with an identified need to formalize a farm enterprise transition plan. The secondary audience includes children of the principal owners – those who are still engaged on the farm and those who have left. We may also include non-family members currently employed on the farm who are interested in a future role. We anticipate 30 farms (50-60 stakeholders) initially in a formal pre-transition dialogue process to define SMART goals and prepare to use the AgTransitions online tool with 30-40% (8-12) of those farm families utilizing live or archived webinars and coaches to complete their Family Transition Charters and web-based transition plans.

Western FBFM Financial Risk Management

Project Director: Robert Rhea, *Western FBFM, Illinois*

Delivery Area: Illinois

Project Summary: This project brings producers in the middle of daily risk decision making together with experienced professionals who can offer information and direction for a more sound understanding and implementation of risk management tools. We will focus on two core study areas: 1) farm families in grain production enterprises and 2) livestock producers with both new and continuing operations. Utilizing small group learning sessions, participants will be presented current and vital financial information from prior year's performance and projections for future years. Then one-on-one meetings will be conducted to take that general knowledge and apply it specifically to their farm's financial risk characteristics. Producers will receive access to daily information streams, complete a benchmark exercise to measure their comparative performance, and create a projected financial plan to be implemented.

Farming Together: Estate and Retirement Planning

Project Director: Denise Schroeder, *Purdue University*

Delivery Area: Indiana

Project Summary: Farming Together: Estate & Retirement Planning is designed to help farm families manage risk during the farm transition process by better understanding and implementing estate and retirement planning tools in conjunction with their succession plan. Through the Farming Together series, Purdue Extension has worked with farm families to write and implement a transfer plan. The estate plan will add to the succession plan by helping farm families think through an exit strategy which continues to provide for the older generation if

need be, while ensuring the sustainability of the farm. In addition, the program will stress the importance of an estate plan for all farm owners, regardless of age, and help participants create their own “Code Red” contingency book. The educational effort will be developed with the leadership of the Purdue Farm Succession Team to be offered in 4-5 locations around Indiana to 125 farm family members.

Soil Health for Ranch Success

Project Director: Mercedes Taylor-Puckett and Mary Howell, *Kansas Farmers Union Foundation*

Delivery Area: Kansas

Project Summary: Soil Health for Ranch Success provides educational and networking opportunities to assess and manage production, financial and human risk. Target participants include producers wanting to better understand: how a healthy soil improves productivity and prosperity, livestock producers exploring managed grazing, alternative forage crops, ranching economics, market demands, and cost management. An estimate 810 Kansas producers will participate in 8,230 hours of programming, including two conferences, a three-day grazing school, 8.5 full-day workshops and several hands-on learning opportunities.

380 producers will better understand grazing systems and soil health in hands-on pasture/covercrop settings, ranch economics, agroforestry, grazing 101, mycorrhizal fungi, livestock water and fencing, carbon sequestration and low stress livestock handling. 160 producers will evaluate grazing practices and the soil and grass beneath their feet on home operations. 95 participants will implement a strategy relating to soil health improvement, grazing management, water or fence design, agroforestry, or improved financial management.

Implementation of a Retail Farm Market School in Missouri

Project Director: Crystal Weber, *University of Missouri*

Delivery Area: Missouri

Project Summary: The Missouri Retail Farm Market school project is aimed at decreasing producers' financial risk in produce storage and merchandising. The project will be delivered in face-to-face day-long educational hands-on workshops at nine regional locations throughout Missouri. The target audience will include existing and new specialty crop producers through the state, with three workshops delivered to urban producers. Project staff will develop relationships with planning committees from existing producer meetings as a means to offer the course in conjunction with existing producer travel.

Program participants will learn and be able to implement basic produce science techniques, food storage techniques, and use safe food handling principles to prolong the life of their produce and increase its marketability. The Missouri Retail Farm Market School project anticipates outreach to an estimated 750 specialty crop producers from Missouri and surrounding states.

Missouri's Retail Farm Market School, adapted with permission, from Penn State Extension.

Exploratory Projects:

Managing People, Managing Risk: Developing a Farm-Friendly Human Resource Management Curriculum

Project Director: Jennifer Blazek, *Dane County, University of Wisconsin*

Exploring a Community of Practice Model for Enhancing the Role of Cooperatives in Local Food System Development

Project Director: Jane Bush, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*

Novel Business Plans to Promote Crop/.Livestock Integration on a Landscape Basis

Project Director: Roger Gates, *South Dakota State University*

Program Development for Beginning Beef Cattle Producers – Integrated Risk Management Education

Project Director: Ken Olson, *South Dakota State University*