

A Growing New Farmers Publication



Northeast New Farmer Program Profiles

March 2003

Sponsored by: GNF Professional Development Component

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Northeast New Farmer Program Profiles

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Northeast New Farmer Program Profiles

Introduction

A primary activity of the Growing New Farmers (GNF) Project is to create and support a Consortium of service providers who work with new farmers in the Northeast. GNF was created to build an effective and enduring “service infrastructure,” an active network of organizations committed to providing programs and services for new farmers. To create this service infrastructure GNF is comprised of many components including Mini Grant projects, Research, Policy and Professional Development. GNF professional development activities focus on offering Consortium members opportunities and resources to enhance and build capacity to support and serve new farmers primarily through peer learning and sharing. This publication has been compiled and written by the GNF Professional Development team to enhance peer sharing and networking.

This booklet profiles ___ programs developed by GNF Consortium members that specifically target new farmers in their region or state. The profiles represent the diversity of new farmer programming taking place in the Northeast. Each profile provides information on the program organization, the new farmer target audience, the need addressed by the program, response created, the challenges and successes encountered, project partners, outreach and promotion, funding sources and next steps.

This Booklet

This booklet begins with an article called “What Does the Term New Farmer Mean?” This article highlights the broad categories and stages of new farmers fall into. A way of classifying or understanding these various stages is shared using a typology. Each of the program profiles identifies the typology stage that the program targets.

Following this introductory article are ___ program profiles. Each profile refers to the new farmer target audience or typology stage that the program targets. As we strive to improve how we meet the various needs of the region’s new farmers, it is important to understand that they fall into different categories depending on factors such as their level of farming awareness, decision-making, commitment and risk. New farmers have diverse educational, resource and training needs in each of the various stages which points to the need to develop programs that are targeted to their particular farming or prefarming stage.

Please refer to the Table of Contents for a complete listing of the programs profiled.

Enjoy

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GNF Professional Development Series #101

What does the term "new farmer" mean?

By Cathleen Sheils, Growing New Farmers Professional Development Coordinator

As we work together as members of the Growing New Farmers (GNF) Consortium to strengthen and improve programs, resources and services for new farmers, it is important that we begin to use a shared vocabulary and framework to describe our constituency. This common use of terms will help us look at the diverse educational, resource and training needs of all those in this sector according to what kind of "new farmer" they are.

The following discussion is based on *Listening to New Farmers: Findings from New Farmer Focus Groups*. (The full text can be found on the GNF publications page at www.northeastnewfarmer.org.)

I. DEFINITIONS:

There are a number of terms and definitions that apply to this sector: *new farmer*, *beginning farmer*, *young farmer* and *next-generation farmer* are often used interchangeably. However, there may be slightly different meanings to these terms as used by a particular organization.

For example, according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), a *beginning farmer* is one who has operated a farm for ten years or less. This definition is used to qualify for USDA beginning farmer loan programs. These loan programs also require that a beginning farmer have at least three years' experience as a farm manager.

According to Farm Bureau, a *young farmer* is a farmer under the age of 35. The Future Farmers of America and 4-H programs work with young people of high school age. A young farmer may also be someone working with the older generation on the family farm.

The term *next-generation farmer* is often used to describe a young person who will be among the next generation of farmers. Sometimes the term specifically suggests the next generation of the family to take over an existing farm. Farmers who are the next generation on the family farm are likely to be moving through various stages of decision-making and control during the process of the farm transfer.

Other organizations propose a broad definition of a *new farmer*. This definition includes both people who have started farming *and* those who have not yet begun to farm. In this definition, a new farmer includes all of the above, plus people who are considering or planning a farming career.

II. NEW FARMER TYPOLOGY

Under the Northeast New Farmer Network Project (NENFN), the predecessor to GNF from 1998 - 2001, a series of focus group discussions was held with new farmers throughout the Northeast. A way of classifying -- a typology -- emerged that more particularly describes new farmers. As we strive to improve how we meet the various needs of the region's new farmer clientele, it is important to understand that they fall into different categories depending on factors such as their level of farming awareness, decision-making, commitment and risk.

In this typology, there are two broad categories: *prospective farmers* and *beginning farmers*. Within these, there are six commitment or decision-making stages depending on various factors such as their level of farming awareness, experience and commitment. These stages are: recruits; explorers; planners; start-up; re-strategizers; and establishers. For service providers and educators, it is important to recognize that new farmers have diverse educational, resource and training needs in each of these various stages.

New Farmer Descriptions:

Prospective farmers: Prospective farmers fall into three stages. In the first two stages prospective farmers have not yet begun to farm, or even made a commitment to farm. In the third stage they may work or apprentice on a farm, but are not decision-makers in their own farming activities and do not have a high level of commitment or risk associated with active farming. In these first three stages, they may be taking part in educational or introductory farming experiences such as apprenticeships.

1. **Recruits:** might consider a career in production agriculture if provided with information and connections to agriculture. This includes farm family members and those not from a farm. They could be high school students, or people who want to change careers.

2. **Explorers:** are investigating a farming future. They are gathering information and may be participating in introductory educational programs and/or farming related experiences. This includes next generation farm family members as well as those not from a farm.

3. **Planners:** have made a choice to pursue some sort of commercial production agriculture. They may not actually be farming yet, but are actively planning their farm entry. Farm

employees, apprentices and farm family members who do not have control of farm assets and limited decision making responsibility also fall into this stage.

Beginning farmers: Beginning farmers are those who are farming, but have been farming for ten years or less. They also fall into three stages.

1. **Start-ups:** are in their first three years of farming. They can be an employee, manager, or operator on rented or owned land. They have decision-making responsibility and an increasing commitment to farming either in time, equity and/or resources, either on their own farm, a rented farm or on a family farm.

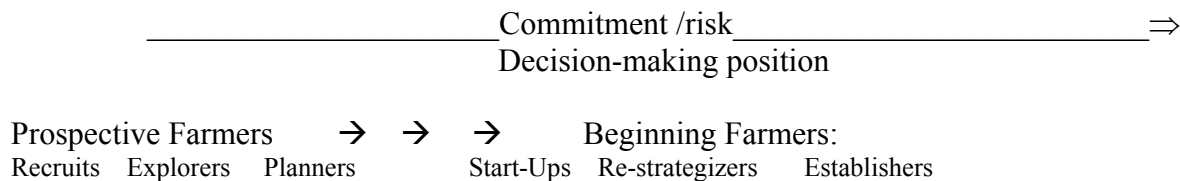
2. **Re-strategizers:** are farmers who are making adjustments in their fourth to seventh years. They have increased decision-making responsibility and commitment to farming as a farm renter, manager or owner. Typically, re-strategizers go through a critical phase of modifying or restructuring their operations.

3. **Establishers:** are farmers who are stabilizing in years eight to ten of the beginning farmer phase. They are on their way to becoming established farmers, and who continue to make changes and improvements to their farm operation.

New farmers who grew up on the family farm are not easily classified in this typology. It's hard to say when they actually "began" farming, or when they moved from planning to actual start-up. These young farmers are family farm members who have varying degrees of decision "influencing" roles on the farm without having farm operator status. They may be highly experienced farmers who actively influence farm decisions, but because of the nature and progress of farm transfer within families, they are not easily classified as planners or start-ups. Because of their unique circumstances and programming needs this group may qualify as a particular subset of new farmers. In many aspects, they parallel the central stages of the new farmer typology.

III. The New Farmer Progression:

New farmers typically pass through several stages during their farming careers. These stages are associated with increasing degrees of commitment, decision-making responsibility and risk.



A steady progression of farmers moving through each of these stages is necessary to sustain the agricultural production sector in the Northeast.

Each stage has definitive (not necessarily exclusive) service and program needs and requirements -- in terms of *what* is offered and *how* it is offered. Our service provider network can best respond by reviewing the typology categories and determining which groups of prospective and

beginning farmers each organization or program is best equipped to serve. Grouping all new farmers together for educational purposes is less likely to meet their needs and less likely to be successful. The most effective programming will deliberately target programs to meet the needs of new farmers in each category.

The next GNF articles will focus on the needs of new farmers in each of the six stages.

Each month over the next year, the GNF Professional Development component will highlight a program that targets one or more of the new farmer clientele in the six stages noted above. If you have a program example that you would like to have highlighted, email crm3@cornell.edu.

Source: Johnson, Sue Ellen, Marion Bowlan, Kathy Ruhf, and Cathleen Sheils, *Listening to New Farmers: Findings from New Farmer Focus Groups*, June 2001. Funded by the Mid-Atlantic Consortium and the NE SARE Program. © New England Small Farm Institute

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GNF Professional Development Series #201 A



Program:	Beginning Farmer Apprentice
Organization:	Pennsylvania Farm Link
Targeted to:	Recruits, Explorers
Dates:	Began 1999, Ongoing

Need

The Pennsylvania Farm Link program identified two needs that prompted it to initiate a Beginning Farmer Apprentice program:

1. Since fewer young people grow up on farms where they can learn the business from their families, efforts must be made to train new farmers. A good education that includes real-world experience improves beginning farmers' chances for success. Students bound for a career in law or medicine get experience as law clerks or interns; prospective farmers need the same opportunity.
2. Farmers face challenges in finding skilled, qualified employees. If farmers can gain competent employee or partner after apprentice training is completed, they will assist in a training effort.

To address these two challenges, Pa Farm Link, a non-profit organization dedicated to "creating farming opportunities for the next generation," developed a state- and national-registered apprentice program in production agriculture. Being a certified program through Pennsylvania and U.S. Labor and Industry makes the apprentice program similar to those for plumbers and electricians.

Program Development

To develop the Pennsylvania Beginning Farmer Apprentice program, Farm Link:

1. Held focus groups

To determine the needs of high school students considering a career in farming, we held two focus groups with vocational agriculture students. One was in W.B. Saul High School, an urban school, and the rural Manheim Central High School. Students agreed that hands-on experience was important to developing a farm career. The students with more farm experience wanted their educational curricula to include in-depth focus on production agriculture and less information on general agriculture. All students wanted work experience to include different types of farms to help them determine the best career fit.

2. Review existing apprentice programs

We found that Wisconsin had the only program targeting youth for apprenticeships in production agriculture. We talked with people at Wisconsin's Cooperative Extension and Department of Agriculture and received the program's identified dairy work skills.

Other programs we discovered during our review include:

- A farm apprentice program in Germany where students work under the supervision of a master farmer to eventually become a Certified Farmer or Certified Farm Manager. Unlike apprentice programs in this country, German farmers pay the students, and the government reimburses them.
- Canada has an apprentice style, skill-training program called Green Certificate.
- Minnesota has a farm internship program.

A number of states have sustainable agriculture apprentice programs for adults. These do not have the same criteria as registered apprentice programs with U.S. Labor and Industry.

Targeted schools

Initially, Pa Farm Link targeted high school vocational agriculture students at W.B. Saul High School in Philadelphia, the state's largest and the nation's second largest vocational agriculture school. Saul was a priority in order to give urban youth opportunities to develop hands-on farming skills and to encourage minority participation. (Pa Farm Link contacted Saul's principal in August 1998 to discuss developing the apprentice program.)

Pa Farm Link also targeted two rural schools in the project's first year: Manheim Central High School, Lancaster County, and Kutztown High School, Berks County.

In the second year of the project, seven schools were targeted: Liberty High School in Tioga County and the Lancaster County schools of Delaware County Career and Technology Center, Ephrata High School, Lampeter-Strasburg High School, Penn Manor High School, Warwick High School, and Lancaster Mennonite.

With the cooperation and support of vocational agriculture instructors, Pa Farm Link made two presentations at most of the schools. The importance of vo-ag teachers to the program's success can't be overstated. Student response was generally better at schools where the teachers actively supported an apprentice program. Some schools indicated no vocational agriculture students were interested in entering farming.

So that students can get credit for existing co-op programs while participating in the beginning farmer apprentice program, Pa Farm Link has tried to coordinate its requirements with co-op programs. To do this, we need to consult with vo-ag teachers and to get their support. Support is more likely to come if students and teachers understand how the apprenticeship program will benefit both groups.

Obtaining partners

During the start-up phase, the program held at least 15 meetings with stakeholders to gain support, determine partners, set direction, and establish guidelines for apprentices.

Program representatives met with people from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture who expressed support. To develop a program that would be officially registered and meet state and national standards, we met with both the Pennsylvania and U. S. Departments of Labor and Industry. Early efforts to get official status were difficult. But in 1999 Pennsylvania's governor started an initiative on youth apprentices and because of this, we succeeded in developing a youth program for

production agriculture. To ensure that our educational program meshed with vocational schools' curricula, we met periodically with the state's Department of Education.

Additional groups that supported the apprenticeship program and helped with outreach efforts include Pennsylvania USDA Office of Rural Development and Penn State University's Rural Leadership Program (RULE). Farm groups that helped enlist mentors and apprentices include: the Pennsylvania Young Farmers, FFA, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Pennsylvania Farmers Union, and Master Farmers.

Apprentice and Mentor Experience

The Labor and Industry Training Council officially approved the Beginning Farmer Apprentice program on September 14, 2000. The program, available to students who are at least 16 years old, requires:

- 2,000 hours of work experience.
- 144 hours of related instruction.
- Farmer mentors must pay minimum wage and carry workers' compensation insurance on apprentices.

The project's goal was to place four students the first year. Participating farms and apprentices were primarily located in southeastern Pennsylvania, with the expectation that the program would expand statewide eventually.

In the summer of 2000, the program placed three apprentices:

- A female senior from Saul High School worked on a dairy farm in Lancaster County during the summer and on some weekends throughout the year. Her apprenticeship succeeded beyond expectations! She was treated like a member of the family. Her work skills included milking, cleanup, calf care and breeding skills. She did a presentation at the Farms for the Future Conference in December in Philadelphia and attended DHIA meetings throughout the year. She helped her mentor's children show dairy cattle at the local farm show and was elected to a statewide FFA office, a first for an urban FFA member.
- A male apprentice was placed at an orchard/farm market in Delaware County. His placement worked well. He worked primarily in the orchard in the summer and at the farm market in the fall. As a result of his apprentice program, the student's interests changed to floriculture, and he now works for a local florist.
- Another male student was placed in a landscape/nursery business in Berks County. He has completed over 500 hours of his apprenticeship and works closely with the nursery manager. His job skills include digging trees, landscaping and planting. He needs to develop skills in sales and marketing, customer interaction, machinery operation, and handling fertilizers and chemicals.

Outreach Efforts

Presentations on the Beginning Farmer Apprentice program were made at the Vo-Ag Institute and Young Farmer Annual Conference, and to several local young-farmer groups. We gave teachers background information and copies of the program's standards. Teacher response was mixed: Some were very enthusiastic; others assumed that farming is a dead-end career.

Pennsylvania Farm Link became part of the governor's focus on youth apprentices by participating in Youth Apprentice Day where more than 1,000 students learned about farm apprentice placement.

Outreach efforts to high school students included presentations to vocational education classes at these schools: Kutztown High School, Manheim Central, Ephrata, Lampeter-Strasburg, Delaware County Career and Technology Center, and Penn Manor High School. We also sent every state vocational instructor a letter, program brochure and an invitation to the New and Beginning Farmer workshop. At least five students, two teachers, and one farmer-mentor accepted the invitation.

Funding

Grants from the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Mid-Atlantic Consortium (W.K. Kellogg Foundation).

Successes

PA Farm Link successfully placed three apprentices in registered apprentice programs. Apprentices indicated that the experience was valuable and that it would influence their futures. One apprentice used her experience to become the first urban high school student to be elected to a state FFA office. She is currently pursuing a college degree in dairy science. Another apprentice decided to pursue a career in the floral industry as a result of his apprenticeship, and the third is actively pursuing the completion of his apprenticeship. Each mentor stated that the experience was positive.

Initial guarded relationships with Labor and Industry became cooperative and supportive. In fact, we were encouraged to pursue a farm manager apprenticeship.

Challenges

Pa Farm Link and the Beginning Farmer Apprentice program face five challenges:

1. Continue to develop relationships with school districts and vocational education teachers to meet two goals: improve program participation and destroy attitudes that farming is a dead-end career.
2. Continue to coordinate standards of the apprentice program with those of vocational education.
3. Obtain the support and endorsement of state agencies. This is critical to the program's success but because PA Farm Link is a small non-profit organization, it was challenging to gain support from state departments, schools, and some agencies. A group effort is helpful and recommended.
4. Identify apprentices who want to complete the apprenticeship. To meet this challenge, Pa Farm Link will continue outreach efforts. Once the program can document additional successful apprenticeships, they must be publicized. Obtaining mentors was not as difficult.
5. Secure funding. Labor and Industry is willing to fund individuals for training and work needs. However, funding required to staff the organization which implements the Beginning Farmer Apprentice program is difficult to secure.

Next Steps

In addition to meeting these challenges, Pa Farm Link will continue to meet with vocational agriculture schools, young farmer groups and farm organizations. As success in additional schools is achieved, placements will be easier to secure.

Plans to integrate work standards with job skills identified by the school districts are ongoing. Also, work skills for different types of farms must be defined. Working with the targeted industry, e.g.

nursery/landscaping, the program will continue to revise the requirements of different farm enterprises to meet the needs of that industry.

Pa Farm Link's long-range plan includes establishing job skills and educational curricula for farm manager apprentices (journeymen). This category requires 4,000 hours of on-farm experience and approximately 280 hours of instruction. Requirements for the journeyman position will include nutrient management training, borrower training, business plan development and marketing.

Resources:

www.pafarmlink.org

Apprenticeship standards for dairy and nursery/landscape

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GNF Professional Development Series #202A



Program: Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring
Organization: Regional Farm and Food Project, Albany, N.Y.
Targeted to: Startups and People Looking at
Alternative Enterprises
Dates: Began in 2000

Need

Often new operators of farms or people starting alternative enterprises cannot establish viable full-time businesses. This may be due, in part, to new farmers' having minimal contact with established, respected farmers who can serve as teachers, mentors and role models. Even if people starting a farm or an alternative enterprise have the necessary technical skills, they often lack a whole-farm management and entrepreneurial orientation. Plus, few new farmers have clearly articulated long-term goals that guide their decisions and actions.

Program Development

The Regional Farm and Food Project conceived the Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring program to help individual farmers develop successful and sustainable farm enterprises that suit their farm resources. Through the mentoring program, farmer mentors, including some farm couple teams, representing 10 farms mentored with 19 new farmers (mentees) during a 10-month period. Mentees must have some technical skills, experience and an operating farm.

The program coordinator selected mentors who had farming and communication skills. Mentors were admired for their competence, sustainable farming skills and contentment in their careers. Many of the mentors were popular presenters at farm workshops, and some had acted informally as mentors or had taught apprentices who went on to farm independently.

Mentees were screened through a two-page written application. Information required on the application included:

- Contact information, as well as the best time and method of contact.
- Farm description, including people involved, type, duration, acreage, marketing and production approaches.
- Whether they farmed full or part time.
- Successes and challenges.
- Long-term goals in production and products, environment and resource management, marketing, profit/income, family/people, quality of life and new enterprises.
- Learning experiences, such as workshops, apprenticeships, growing up on a farm, that have been particularly helpful.

- How a farmer mentor would assist them.

The majority of the farmer mentees were organic vegetable growers. Six mentees were grazers raising meat animals or dairy cows. Mentee ages ranged from early 20s to early 60s. Few had grown up in agriculture. Most had participated in or were enrolled in at least one of the sponsor's multi-day workshops.

Implementation

The program coordinator took the following steps to implement the program:

- Drew up a short list of possible mentees for each mentor.
- Sent the mentees applications to mentors for review. They talked to the coordinator about people they might prefer working with.
- Encouraged mentees to contact one or two mentors who the coordinator thought would be appropriate for them. They were to report back on their preference. Mentors and mentees could reject a match if they didn't think it would "click."
- Conducted the orientation and final evaluation meetings and provided written materials with thought-provoking questions. At orientation day, mentoring pairs discussed their expectations about the frequency, timing and intensity of contact. The final evaluation prompted farmers to reflect on their involvement with the program. In several cases, participants may have gained self-knowledge, which will facilitate more effective participation in future learning and mentoring programs.
- Provided a Plan Development form with a comprehensive list of topics such as soil fertility, water, labor management and marketing/distribution. Under each topic were two subheadings: goals and present situation. The mentoring pair used this to assess the farm's current position and the mentee's goals. This Plan Development form helped the pair build a work plan for their mentoring relationship.
- Talked often with each mentor and mentee. Regular contact with both parties was necessary to support the mentoring relationships and troubleshoot any difficulties that might develop.

Funding

A Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant entitled "Whole Farm Entrepreneurship: Farmer-to-Farmer Education for Vegetable & Livestock Producers" provided funding. Also, consultees paid a \$50 fee to participate. Applicants were required to be Regional Farm & Food Project members, at a cost of \$25 per year. Mentors kept a log of the time spent communicating with their mentees or doing work on their behalf. This might include reviewing a business plan or researching equipment. Mentor compensation was \$20 per hour, with 12 hours allocated per mentee, which was not a realistic limit; 30 hours is more appropriate.

Outreach

The program developed a brochure with descriptions of each mentor. We distributed this to all farmers on the sponsor's mailing list as a way to generate inquiries from prospective consultees. We publicized Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring at farmer workshops and in press releases to farm publications and organizations' newsletters in the region. Farmers who could benefit from the program were encouraged to submit applications.

Analysis

In the Regional Farm & Food Project's analysis of the Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring, the following successes and challenges were identified:

Successes

1. The program is simple and flexible.
2. Participants appreciated it. As one mentee said, *"this program permits me to pick the brain of successful farmers without feeling guilty about using them or leaning on them too much."*
3. Mentees reported positive changes. They increased returns in the marketplace, achieved economic objectives, improved farming practices, and enhanced their understanding of basic agricultural principles. They made other tangible changes such as acquiring needed used equipment, expanding their infrastructure, and streamlining operations. Personally, mentees gained new ideas, renewed hope for their farms, and enhanced self-confidence.
4. The farming pairs forged strong, enduring bonds. Mutual respect, understanding and an interest in the mentee's success made a tremendous difference in the mentoring relationship. Mentee's visiting the mentor's farm during the season showed them systems and equipment operations that they needed to learn about. These included soil preparation, planting, cultivation and harvesting *"After a walk through the fields, I realized that many things were lacking at my farm,"* said one mentee. The farmer noted seeing standard row spacing, cultivating equipment set up permanently for efficient cultivation, succession plantings, midseason cover cropping, more efficient use of plant bed space, and concentration on certain profitable crops.
5. Both mentors and mentees rated friendship as an important benefit of the program. Overcoming isolation is a related theme.
6. Experience shows that the Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring program has been successful because it has a part-time paid coordinator who is available to establish and support the mentoring relationships. The coordinator functions as a coach, cheerleader and confidant.

Challenges

1. Geography was a huge challenge since mentors and mentees live in three states, as far as three hours from Albany.
2. Mentee's keeping track of questions to ask was a problem. This was solved when the farmer kept a notepad or a clipboard to write down questions as they occurred.
3. Planning for regular contact was important. It needed to be agreed upon by each mentoring pair.
4. It's tough to ask for help. Sometimes independence, rather than failure to articulate questions or recognize problems, prevented a mentee from taking advantage of the program.
5. Knowing how busy farmers can be, some mentees were concerned about imposing upon a mentor after having gained a lot from the person.
6. Mentors need to have realistic expectations of what they can gain from the program. A mentor cannot solve all problems or make difficult decisions for a mentee.
7. Mentors should not expect their mentee to follow all of their advice. And mentees must feel empowered to act only on suggestions with which they agree.
8. A shortage of capable and willing mentors is probably the biggest obstacle to building the Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring program. New mentors must be recruited as the demand for them increases and experienced mentors pull back to take a break. Also, as mentors form lasting relationships with their mentees and continue to work informally with them, they may be less available to take on a new mentee.

9. Mentor development should be explored. Developing a workshop in goal setting, planning and other skills for people interested in becoming mentors would strengthen the program.
10. The program's future depends upon fundraising, probably from grants and individual donors, since mentee's payments cover a small fraction of the cost.

Next Steps

Experience taught us that this time-line works for the Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program:

January – August: Recruit mentors, informally announce program.

September: Produce & disseminate brochure & outreach materials.

September – November: Accept applications & make matches.

Mid-November (or mid-January): Hold orientation; program begins.

Mid-December: Mentees turn in work plans.

Monthly – Quarterly: Coordinator communicates regularly with mentors & mentees. Spring: Farm visits begin.

November: End-of-season gathering and evaluation. (Mentoring pairs may opt to end their participation in the program or continue through either the end of winter or for another 12 months.)

Winter: Mentees working with their mentors evaluate previous season and plan upcoming one.

In the future, the following three points must be addressed:

1. Mentor time allotted must be increased to at least 30 hours per mentee.
2. Program costs must be reevaluated. Costs include hourly compensation and mileage for mentors for one farm visit, and a share of program coordination and administration.
3. We estimate it requires 10 hours per mentee to coordinate the program, given about 20 mentees in the program. This is based on their being a shared history and foundation relationship with a mentee from previous educational programs. Lacking this, it might take considerably more effort to launch such a program.

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Program: Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire
Organizations: NH Resource, Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) and North American Heifer International.
Targeted to: Recruits, Explorers, Planners, Startups, Re-strategizers and Establishers
Dates: 1997 to present

Need

Beginner farmers face a number of challenges. Many are financially burdened as a result of changing careers and a lack of knowledge about, or access to, grant funding and farm lending resources. Many are considering agricultural projects for which they are not technically prepared.

The Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire program attempts to identify and make available the resources necessary to meet these challenges. It supports and encourages individuals wishing to start farming or gardening, and those who are currently farming. The program is a farmer-to-farmer network that:

- Connects farmers to the farming community where they can share ideas and information and access technical expertise and agricultural education.
- Helps small-scale and beginner farmers achieve their goals.
- Strengthens farm communities.
- Boosts the agricultural industry and economy.
- Improves the quality of life in New Hampshire.

Program Development

In 1996 the Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire program was organized by a small group of farmers who felt that beginner and novice farmers needed support. This group also saw a community need for this program.

Program Delivery

The Beginner Farmers program organizes and delivers support to farmers in technical areas (livestock management, grazing, conservation, planting, and construction), management, financial, marketing, collaborative or cooperative buying and selling, and goal setting and achievement.

The program also provides training and assistance to help beginning farmers identify what permits they must apply for and what grants are available. The program then helps farmers apply for them.

The major activities of the Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire program are at the county level where groups present seminars on topics such as hay equipment repair, getting started with

dairy goats, bee keeping, mushroom farming, financial accounting for farmers, and so on. Besides seminars, techniques used to communicate information to beginning farmers include farm tours, workshops, the planning and execution of marketing projects, and outreach using such avenues as a website and e-mail.

Seminar presenters are frequently drawn from a pool of people knowledgeable in agriculture including the staff of USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), University of New Hampshire Extension (both retired and current), and the private sector.

When practical, presenters are chosen from the program's current membership. For example, in the spring the manager of a major greenhouse operation presented a seed-starting series of four meetings that included a lab, lecture and problem solving.

The opportunity to network with farmers facing similar challenges is an important component of Beginner Farmers. What beginning farmers can learn from others runs the gamut. Some questions asked: Where can hay be bought? Can turkeys with lice be legally processed?

Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire also provides some introductory materials such as "The Beginning Farmer's Resource Guide," which was developed by a number of New Hampshire state agencies. They are also currently compiling some helpful resources and links on their website.

Response

Some of the typical activities of Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire include:

- Organize county and statewide farmer networks.
- Hold monthly network meetings in many counties for local farmers to meet each other and discuss their farms and experiences.
- Organize meetings where speakers present training workshops and farm tours.
- Initiate cooperative activities such as group buying to receive bulk discounts.
- Provide opportunities for members to buy and sell products from each other.
- Help to develop local markets for farmers' products.
- Develop relationships with local, county and state agricultural agencies to meet the unique needs of beginner or small-scale farmers.
- Research potential funding and assistance sources available for farmers.
- Participate as the New Hampshire sponsor of the Tri-State Women's Agricultural Network.

Funding and Partners

Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire enjoys significant organizational, spiritual, financial and developmental assistance from the North American Heifer International Project. It provided the four northern counties of New Hampshire with a major seed-money grant; the six southern counties are currently preparing a grant application.

The Heifer Project also provides funds for several specific purposes such as acquiring and managing group equipment. It conducts a "pass on" program for breeding improvement. In this program, high quality breeding stock is placed with eligible recipients. In exchange, recipients are obligated to "pass on" in the future similar high-quality breeding stock. This is a model of sustainability and community development.

The New Hampshire RC&D provides significant administrative, management and fiscal assistance.

Beginner Farmers has a generous grant from the Growing New Farmers Program to be used for the development of a market program.

The program has obtained several smaller grants for selected narrow projects.

Outreach

Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire is visible because of its website at www.beginnerfarmers.org

Beginner Farmers also enjoys good relationships with the USDA, Cooperative Extension, and New Hampshire's Department of Agriculture. It receives positive local press coverage.

Both USDA and NRCS publicize many of our presentations, and federal agencies have generously provided farmers with information about the program. For example, there is a link to Beginner Farmers' website on the front page of New Hampshire's FSA website.

Analysis

- **Successes.** Many of Beginner Farmers' members attribute specific successful farming projects (chickens, beef cattle, etc.) to the support of this program. When state agricultural events occur, Beginner Farmers program is always invited because it is recognized as an important voice of the farming community. The efforts of Beginner Farmers have contributed to an increase in the number of farms in New Hampshire reported in last year's census.
- **Challenges.** One of the biggest challenges is learning to run a viable organization. Farmers typically are independent people, so getting cooperation for mutual benefit is challenging. This is especially so for members who lack knowledge, time, money and skills.

The start-up phase of the Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire program is almost over, but the administration of a 'stable' group requires different skills, and we are developing these now.

Next Steps

We are working to establish systems, policies and procedures that make Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire a stable, self-supporting organization. Due to the high level of involvement of outside management, Beginner Farmers has not developed its own sustaining structure, populated with people skilled in administration. All parties realize this, and we are making significant progress to address the issue.

We are working to unify the statewide organization and make the county organizations stronger. Larger issues of policy, infrastructure, and some financial management are handled at the state level. True membership activities usually happen at the county level with events being open to the statewide group.

Understanding this, plus building at the grassroots level and doing more projects that directly include the county members, is crucial to the growth and stability of Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire.

Additional Resources

- Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire's website: www.beginnerfarmers.org
- As our direct sponsor, New Hampshire Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is a good source for information about Beginner Farmers.
- In northern New Hampshire (Belknap, Carroll, Coos, or Grafton counties), call the North Country RC&D office at (603)527-2093 or contact: Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire, NH RC&D Area Councils, 719 North Main Street, Room 220, Laconia, NH 03246-2772. E-mail: lisa@beginnerfarmers.org
- In southern New Hampshire (Cheshire, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, Strafford, or Sullivan counties), call the Southern New Hampshire RC&D offices at (603)223-0083 for more information. Write to Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire, c/o Southern NH RC&D 10 Ferry St., Box 4, Suite 422, Concord, NH 03301. E-mail: bianca@beginnerfarmers.org
- The North American Heifer International Project's website: www.heifer.org

Written By Brandon Sussman, New Hampshire Farmer

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GNF Professional Development Series #204A



Program: Exploring the Small Farm Dream: Is Starting an Agricultural Business Right for You?

Organization: New England Small Farm Institute

Targeted to: Prospective farmers, or Explorers, and early stage Planners.

Dates: Exploring the Small Farm Dream is presented in early spring and fall in Belchertown, Massachusetts. At other times and in other locations, it is presented in collaboration with cosponsors. A self-study workbook is available year-round.

Need

People from non-farming backgrounds often lack the necessary information to make informed decisions about starting a commercial agricultural enterprise. Few written materials provide this information, and most service providers don't target Explorers or Planners. Consequently, a certain number of start-up farmers fail each year simply because they didn't understand such things as the effect farming might have on a family's lifestyle or the implications of a marketing and distribution choice.

The New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) staff noticed that many participants in its agricultural business-planning courses for start-up farmers were explorers and unable to fully benefit from the business planning process. NESFI staff decided to design programming targeted to the needs of this group.

Program Development

NESFI developed the short course "Exploring the Small Farm Dream: Is Starting an Agricultural Enterprise Right for You?" and a workbook with the same name for the single purpose of helping Explorers decide whether or not they want to farm as a business.

Many prospective farmers know that they love to grow crops or raise livestock. But do they know what is required to start and operate their small-farm dreams as commercial agricultural businesses. Exploring the Small Farm Dream is designed to help participants become aware of the reality of operating small farms as commercial agricultural businesses and to decide if they really want to embark on that path.

The course and workbook help Explorers identify and assess personal motivations for starting an agricultural business and to clarify their values. Participants also assess their business and farming skills and identify available resources.

Based on this information, they decide whether or not farming as a business is right for them. Based on that decision, they identify the next steps.

Exploring the Small Farm Dream serves as a reality check for most participants. Some decide to pursue their small farm dream and start a farm business. Most, however, choose to move more slowly toward that goal, maybe by saving money for a few more years or by working as a farm employee to gain needed practical experience. Still others decide that gardening, homesteading or working in an agriculturally related field suits them better than commercial farming would.

Funding

Exploring the Small Farm Dream is supported by the Growing New Farmers Project with additional support from the Claneil Foundation, Country Bank for Savings, the Northeast SARE Program and program fees.

Partners

NESFI developed Exploring the Small Farm Dream in collaboration with the Pioneer Valley Enterprise Program, a project of the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute.

NESFI recently piloted its instructor and delivery-partner training programs with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey. It is now seeking other organizations that would like to offer the course in the Northeast. In addition, NESFI is collaborating with the Hartford Food System to translate the materials into Spanish.

Outreach

As of May 2003, NESFI has taught the Exploring the Small Farm Dream course six times to more than 71 participants. In its three years, response to the program has been excellent, and NESFI anticipates a need for the course across the Northeast. To meet that need, NESFI plans to reach out to other service providers as delivery partnerships.

With little promotion, NESFI has sold more than 60 workbooks for self-study. NESFI plans a promotional campaign to let more aspiring farmers know about this resource.

At several conferences, NESFI staff has offered a mini-version of the course as a workshop. It will continue to offer these.

Analysis

Successes: Exploring the Small Farm Dream meets a real need. Of the 71 course participants who completed evaluations, 100% felt that they were better able to assess farming as a business. Participants rated the course very highly for usefulness, overall quality, quality of instruction, value of information and workbook quality.

Self-study readers have found the Exploring the Small Farm Dream workbook very helpful.

Other service providers agree that this population exists and is not currently well served. The course and workbook will be valuable aids, they say.

Challenges: Refining the course and workbook involved extensive piloting, evaluation, editing and reviewing, all of which took longer than the Institute anticipated.

Next Steps

NESFI's plans to identify and train a group of service providers to deliver the course throughout the Northeast. The Institute is currently completing a manual for Explorer instructors and cosponsors, and we have piloted a "train the trainers" session.

Beginning in fall 2003, additional training sessions are planned for instructors and delivery partners from across the region.

NESFI is also in the process of conducting a survey of self-study readers to determine how well the workbook has met their needs.

Additional Resources

- Small Farm Development Program components include:
 - Small Farm Education and Training. Technical, business and management skills; courses and workshops; publications, learning tools; and advising.
 - Lampson Brook Teaching Farm. Site-based, intensive short courses. Full -season residential training is being developed.
 - Small Farm Training and Support Network. Regional network of on-farm mentors, instructors and cosponsoring organizations.
- Small Farm Resources. A 5,000 volume library, on-line card catalogue, referrals, and customized searches.
- New England Land Link. Matching farm properties and farm seekers, workshops, publications, advising, lease models and facilitation.
- Northeast Workers on Organic Farms. Apprenticeships.

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GNF Professional Development Series #205



Program: Land Link Vermont

Organization: University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Targeted to: Startups, Re-strategizers, Establishers

Dates: Started 1998, ongoing.

Need

Access to farmland and farming opportunities is one barrier new farmers face. Many are not raised on farms so do not have access to family farmland.

In the Northeast where land prices are steadily rising and development is slowly reducing the amount of available farmland, finding an affordable farm to buy can be a serious challenge for beginning farmers. Sale of development rights and PDR (purchase of development rights) programs have helped some new farmers acquire farmland at a reasonable price. Private and public funding for these programs is limited and land trusts who hold the rights may not be interested in smaller land parcels desired by many new entrants.

These situations directly impact and create concerns about the vitality of Vermont's rural communities and the sustainability of its working landscape.

Given the high start-up costs of some farm businesses, purchasing a farm is not the best first step in starting an agricultural business.

Those new farmers who hope to take over a family farm someday face slightly different, although significant, challenges. When attempting an intra-family farm transfer, new farmers and their families must ensure the ongoing viability of the farm, maintain positive family relationships and communicate both farm business and family goals.

Program Development

To address these needs, the Center for Sustainable Agriculture created Land Link Vermont in 1998. It is modeled after similar linking programs begun in the Midwest following the 1980s' farm crisis when poor economic conditions resulted in a mass exodus from farming. Central to linking programs is making connections between new and experienced farmers to pass on knowledge, farming skills, and agricultural business assets.

Goals

Land Link Vermont connects beginning and relocating farmers with farmland and farming opportunities in Vermont and helps participants make informed decisions about farm start-up and transfer issues.

To achieve these goals, the program provides three services:

1. The Matching Service provides the linkages between farm seekers and farmland owners. Interested parties complete an application form that includes information on goals, acreage, location, enterprises, and tenure options. The program enters this information into a relational database, which is shared with seekers and owners.

To date, more than 450 farmers and farmland owners have participated in the Matching Service. Participants are interested in a variety of transfer options including buy/sell, lease, and joint farming.

Farm seekers have expressed interest in a number of enterprises including dairy, vegetables, maple, small ruminants (sheep and goats), and herbs.

2. Education through publications and workshops provides farmers, landowners and agricultural professionals with links to information on farm start-up and farm succession issues. Most of the educational activities are offered in collaboration with other organizations like Extension and other non-profits.

Topics addressed thus far include farm transfer planning, effective leases, farm financing, business planning, financial literacy, and direct marketing.

3. Consultation and referrals help link farmers and landowners to service professionals (ie. attorneys, accountants and realtors) and Vermont agricultural organizations. Because no two farms and no two-farm families are alike, addressing individual needs is critical to success.

Through collaboration with existing agencies and programs, Land Link Vermont helps connect farmers to a wide variety of expertise on business management, legal issues, agricultural production, retirement and estate planning, and marketing.

Funding

Although the program is housed at the University of Vermont, Land Link Vermont relies almost exclusively on external sources for funding. Past funding for the program has come from the Freeman Foundation, Vermont Land Trust, the John Merck Fund, the Friendship Fund, the Frank and Brinna Sands Foundation, Robison Foundation, Wendling Foundation, UVM College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, individual donations, and program fees.

Partners

A central role of the Center for Sustainable Agriculture is to establish working collaborations among the university, agencies and organizations, farms, and communities to promote sustainable farming systems. To that end, Land Link Vermont has sought partnerships when developing programs.

On-going partners include the following: University of Vermont Extension, Vermont Land Trust, and Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont. We have also partnered with the Intervale Foundation, National Farm Transition Network, New England Small Farm Institute, Natural Resource Conservation Districts, Vermont Farm Bureau, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, Vermont Farms! Association, Vermont Food Venture Center, Women's Agricultural Network, and others.

Outreach

To expand the program's effectiveness, the Center hired two part-time outreach assistants – Vermont farmers: Herman Buzeman of Addison and Dexter Randall of North Troy – for Land Link Vermont in April 2000. Both farmers have been active in the agricultural community for more than 30 years, and are currently working on intra-family transfers on their own farms. Their job is to meet with individuals and/or groups – particularly farm owners who seem to benefit from personal visits – to explain Land

Link Vermont and its Matching Service. Since Herman and Dexter have been on board, they have made more than 1000 contacts with farmers, agricultural professionals and service providers.

Land Link Vermont also has an Internet site: <http://www.uvm.edu/landlinkvt>. It includes a description of the program's services and application forms for the Matching Service. The website seems particularly useful to farm seekers and our program partners.

Successes

To date, 800 farmers and others have attended workshops sponsored and co-sponsored by Land Link Vermont. Center staff have facilitated 16 farm matches, affecting 3,271 acres or \$5 million of estimated real estate value.

An example of a Land Link Vermont success story follows: A young couple with farming experience enrolled in the Matching Service. They attended a Land Link Vermont workshop where they developed a financial plan for their farm business.

After a couple of leads through the Matching Service, they met a non-farming landowner who shared a similar farming vision and was interested in leasing a farm to them. Through consultation with Center staff, the couple developed a set of questions and considerations, and they followed up on a referral to an attorney who helped them develop a lease agreement for the farm.

Challenges

Land Link Vermont participants, staff and advisory committee members identified the following challenges for the program:

1. Many farm seekers lack adequate farm business experience. Too often, seekers come to the program in the aspiring and exploring stages without commercial farming experience that farm owners desire.
2. Cultural values about owning vs. accessing and controlling farmland hinder alternative tenure options.
3. There is a lack of on-site housing for farm seekers.
4. Many seekers and owners come to the program without an adequate transfer and/or business plan.
5. The unstable dairy economy is a stumbling block for both unrelated and intra-family transfers where one farm must provide multi-family incomes.
6. Land Link Vermont must have long-term, stable funding.

Next Steps

As most linking programs recognize, the matching function alone, while essential, is not enough to ensure successful matches. Education and support are needed. To that end, Land Link Vermont is partnering with others interested in farm start-up and succession issues.

More than 10 organizations in the state have formed a working group to serve the needs of new farmers. The Center for Sustainable Agriculture staff has taken the lead in facilitating this group called Vermont New Farmer Network.

The New Farmer Network is first addressing the priority actions identified by farmers in a Beginning Farmer Forum held in February 2002. These include, among others:

- Coordinate existing beginning farmer programs.
- Provide new farmers with low interest loans or grants.
- Expand the availability of business training programs for new farmers
- Compile a new farmer resource packet.

To help farmers explore the full range of farm succession options, particularly alternatives to the purchase-and-sale model, Land Link Vermont is working with other organizations in the Growing

New Farmer Consortium to develop written case studies. By providing farmers with success stories, it is expected that more farmers will make informed decisions about farm succession and, ultimately, successfully transfer their own farms to the next generation.

Additional Resources

- Land Link Vermont website: www.uvm.edu/landlinkvt
- National Farm Transition Network: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/nftn/homepage.html>
- Vermont Land Trust: www.vlt.org
- New England Land Link: www.smallfarm.org/nell

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GNF Professional Development Series #206



Program: Operating a Profitable Small Farm

Organization: Maryland Cooperative Extension

Targeted to: Startups and Re-strategizers

Dates: 1996 to present

Need

New farmers need to learn farming basics. To create sustainable agricultural businesses, they also need support in selecting an enterprise and developing a business plan, produced in conjunction with a marketing plan.

Program Development

The need to develop targeted programs for the beginning farmer audience became apparent, as current programs were not attended by beginning farmers although requests for information and resources from this audience was increasing.

A targeted program was developed that included creating teaching materials and offering evening classes by Cooperative Extension Agent Terry Poole. These classes start with the basics of farming and move on to the topic of developing a farm business plan. The classes are generally geared toward nontraditional farming enterprises that serve niche markets.

Operating a Profitable Small Farm seeks to improve the profitability and enhance the viability of small farm operations.

Program Presentation

The program consists of a two-part curriculum of seven consecutive sessions each. The first part meets in the spring and the second in the fall. Approximately 40 students meet at the Extension office one evening a week for seven weeks.

The program begins with the basics – soil type and planting – then moves on to understanding hay quality and pasture management. Participants also learn about record keeping and financial management and information on various computer-based record keeping programs is presented.

During the fall sessions, classes touch on topics such as cover crops and goes into more detail on financial management, business planning and provides information about governmental cost-share programs.

Students explore what information they need to help them select enterprises that allow their farms to be sustainable. Classes cover the importance of securing a market, including many of the nontraditional niche markets, including organic, natural and ethnic markets.

Program participants are diverse representing both traditional small-farm agricultural producers and those not typically reached by traditional Extension programs including beginning, new immigrant, limited-resource and minority farmers.

Funding

The Maryland Cooperative Extension, with its traditional funding sources of local, state and federal governments provides the resources for the program, there is no additional funding. Participants are charged a small fee to cover the cost of snacks and materials.

Partners

Guest speakers and materials are sought from many different organizations.

Outreach

Information on the program is available on the Maryland Cooperative Extension website for Frederick County: <http://agnr.umd.edu/frederick>

Classes are advertised in local newspapers and flyers are circulated and mailed to a list of farmers developed by Extension agents. Word of mouth from farmer to farmer is the greatest advertisement for Mr. Poole's course on operating a profitable small farm. While originally a program for residents of Frederick County, participants now come from all Maryland's counties and even from out of state.

Analysis

Successes: Two factors signal the success. Attendance has spread from the county of origin and the majority of program participants currently run successful small farm enterprises at a time when the economy has caused many farmers to have financial difficulty.

Challenges: The creator of the program plans to retire within the next three years and would like another Extension agent to pick up the torch and continue the program, not only in Frederick County but expand it throughout the state.

Next Steps

Continue to offer the program and promote expansion in other regions of the state.

Written by Ruth Maltz, GNF Program Profile Coordinator

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GNF Professional Development Series #207



Program: Growing Places: Exploring Opportunities & Realities of Owning an Agricultural Business

Organization: A collaborative effort of the University of Vermont Extension System, University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Targeted to: Recruits, Explorers and Planners

Dates: 1995 to present

Need

Frequently prospective farmers lack the basic information required to make informed decisions about whether farming can fulfill their career and family needs and goals. This is particularly true for people who did not grow up on farms or around agriculture. They also may not be aware of support programs, regulations and environmental realities that impact farm success.

Program Development

Growing Places is an 18-hour class designed to guide participants through the process of clarifying their goals, developing a decision-making model, finding resources, and determining an appropriate scope and scale for their agricultural businesses.

Growing Places is organized into six sessions, each addressing a different aspect of farm business development. In addition to Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) staff, experts in particular areas lead the lecture, discussion, and hands-on exercises of each session. Guest speakers and panelists are an important component of the sessions. By sharing their experiences with the group, they offer a much-appreciated realistic perspective.

Program Curriculum

Following are summaries of each of the six sessions:

Session I. Mission Statement and Goal Setting

This introductory session helps participants explore their values, needs, and preferences, looking also at how these relate to a business plan. Students examine how business decisions affect family and others close to them. Determining current levels of satisfaction and hopes for the future is critical to successful business planning.

Once participants have established a set of values, they develop a mission statement, or goal that captures the essence of what they want to have accomplished by the end of the course. The mission statement plays a critical role by focusing potential farmers on the most important aspects of their businesses.

Session II. Decision-Making

Participants learn a system to help them arrive at the best possible choice for a situation that confronts them. Students learn how to use their mission or goal statement in the decision-making process, and how this process will help them to make important decisions with confidence and with significantly less conflict and stress. This decision-making process is particularly helpful when participants face major decisions, those complicated and consequential choices that result in long-term impact, involve significant risk, increase stress levels and require careful research and exploration.

Session III. Resource Evaluation

Resources are the building blocks of profitable small businesses. Successful small business owners tend to be excellent resource managers, knowing how to combine different products, ensure a higher quality product, add value, and/or change direction quickly. As potential small business owners, participants can be more flexible than owners of large businesses can. Learning how to use this flexibility is the essence of resource management.

In this session, participants define resources, identify those they have, examine their availability and, then, with help from others, identify some potential combinations of businesses that would best use the available resources.

Session IV. Financials

Students receive a basic introduction to financial management, learning the language and concepts of financial management. Time is also spent on discussing the intricacies of borrowing money and credit.

Session V. Marketing

Using their idea for a preferred enterprise, participants explore the market for their product/service. They will answer these questions: Who will buy? How will I sell to these buyers? How much are they likely to purchase? How much are they willing to pay? Who is the competition?

Students also complete a product/service definition, explore market research techniques and develop a personal market research plan.

Session VI. Next Steps

During this last session, students reflect on what they have accomplished and come up with a plan for future action that will move them toward meeting their personal goals. Participants develop a timeline that answers these questions: What would you like to get done? How would you like to do this? When?

Participants also learn more about various agencies and programs available to support agriculture.

Funding

Participants pay a \$75 registration fee. People who require special accommodations or financial assistance to participate in Growing Places are assisted.

Partners

Growing Places is a partnership of United States Department of Agriculture, University of Vermont Extension System, University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Women's Agricultural Network-Maine, Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire, Vermont Women's Business Center.

Outreach

The program sends press releases to local news media and places notices in newsletters sent to past participants of Growing Places. Former participants are very helpful in providing information and talking about their experiences to others considering agriculture as a career. Partners in Growing Places receive flyers and registration materials, and are helpful in disseminating information.

Analysis

Since Growing Places began in 1995, there have been 12 cycles and 158 graduates. Of the Growing Places graduates, 42% decided to start an agricultural business. Of these, 21% started their agricultural business within six to eight months of enrolling in Growing Places.

The program's success is best seen by meeting some of Growing Places graduates:

- Carolyn D'Luz and Jennifer Gilligan completed Growing Places in the spring of 1996. Jennifer was in the process of taking over her family's farm and deciding what to do with 200 acres. Carolyn has a passion for horticulture, especially vegetables, but no access to land. In the summer of 1997, they began a cooperative venture on Jennifer's land. Carolyn started a greenhouse tomato business while Jennifer is raising sheep and starting a roadside stand.
- Margo Tucker and her partner, Mike, were planning to start a sheep dairy. Margo, with no previous agricultural experience, completed Growing Places in the fall of 1996 and Start Up in the spring of 1997. In the fall of 1997, Margo and Mike received an operating loan to begin Ewetopia Farm, a sheep dairy. They are now part of Vermont's growing sheep dairy industry and supply raw cheese to Vermont Shepherd Cheese Company, a nationally recognized and growing company.
- Robin McKnight graduated from Growing Places in the spring of 1997. She recently completed the development of her new mail-order business, Robin's Summer Kitchen Soaps, which specializes in the sale of herbal soap products using herbs that Robin grows on her East Topsham, Vt., farm.

Challenges

Growing Places faces two challenges:

1. Finding profitable sectors of agriculture that can be done on a small scale.
2. Program funding, given that resources for this program – and many others – are scarce.

Next Steps

Growing Places looks forward to having the complete program accessible on line by the fall of 2003. A more advanced Growing Places group is being developed for people who need to refine their business plans after they have been farming for a few years.

Written by Ruth Maltz, GNF Program Profile Coordinator

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GNF Professional Development Series #208

Program: The Dr. George Show: Bringing the Generations Together in a Family Business

Organization: NY FarmLink, NY FarmNet, Department of Applied Economics and Management @ Cornell University

Targeted to: Explorers

Dates: November 22, 2002 and November 21, 2003 (Program ran from 12:15 to 5:00 p.m.)



Need

To improve and enhance the communication between agricultural students who plan to return to their family farms and their parents who own and operate those farms.

To meet that need, Dr. George Conneman, Cornell Professor Emeritus, presented an entertaining scripted Talk Show that presented the points of view of both the senior and junior generations. The Dr. George Show focused on the topics of family communication and getting the transfer process started.

Program Development

Objectives

- To present an educational – and entertaining – conference.
- To highlight attitudes and expectations of both generations, and possible change those where necessary.
- To serve as an ice-breaker for farm transfer talks between students and family.
- To help both generations recognize that businesses are going to change.

Staff

Program planning committee members included: Steve Richards and Karin Jantz, NY FarmLink; Wayne Knoblauch, George Conneman, Dave Galton and Jason Karszes, Cornell; Bernie Erven, The Ohio State University; Don Rogers and Gary Snider, Farm Credit; and Cathy Sheils, NY FarmNet.

Description

The Dr. George Show is an educational program focused on farm transfers from the point of view of both the senior and junior generations. It was designed to explore and answer the following questions:

1. Is the family farm business right for both the senior and junior generations? Have the sons and daughters assumed that the family farm was their future? Had their parents assumed that they would come home to the farm?

2. Had the students and parents talked about their expectations for the future? This is a harder discussion to initiate. The program planned to show students how to talk to their parents about their expectations and to help parents talk to their kids coming home after college.
3. How can the two generations work together once a son/daughter returns to the farm? The senior generation needs respect for the business that they built over the years. The junior generation needs to be trusted to take on new business responsibilities and challenges. How does a farm family business accommodate both of these desires?
4. How do families start the farm transfer process? Even after points 1 through 3 are addressed, the actual transfer process still must take place. The Dr. George Show addressed these questions in this area: How long should Mom and Dad wait to start transferring the farm? How long should the kids work before they are allowed a “piece of the business?” What are the preliminary steps that need to be taken?

Funding

The Stanley Warren Teaching Endowment Fund provided funding. New York FarmLink applied for and received a grant for \$9,000 earlier in 2002.

Partners

NY FarmLink, NY FarmNet, Farm Credit, Cornell University Department of Applied Economics and Management, PRO-DAIRY, Cornell University Department of Animal Science, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Morrisville

Outreach

- 500 full-color glossy brochures were distributed to students at Cornell, SUNY Morrisville and SUNY Cobleskill. They were also mailed to students’ families.
- 12 posters were prominently displayed in elevators, stairwells and other locations at Cornell, SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Morrisville.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and Farm Credit and New York FarmNet consultants were all invited to attend.
- Consultants were asked to invite any farm families with whom they were currently working on farm transfers.

Analysis

Successes:

More than 200 people attended the first Dr. George Show in 2002 and 150 in 2003. A majority (122) of 2002 attendees completed a survey, designed to measure how well the program met its objectives. The surveys indicated the Dr. George Show was a resounding success.

Here are some of the results:

Q: Will this program help you move forward in your farm transfer discussion?

YES: 96.8%

NO: 2.4%

N/A: 0.8%

Q: Do you understand the “other generation’s” point of view better now?

YES: 92.6%

NO: 3.3%

N/A: 4.1%

Q: Would you like additional information regarding farm transfer mailed to you?

54 people requested additional information and left their contact information.

Challenges:

Even though attendees responded positively, on the whole, to the Dr. George Show, to repeat the program presents at least three challenges:

1. Convincing parents to attend the program. Although the Dr. George Show had a good mix of senior and junior generation participants, students far outnumbered parents. Many students wished that their parents could have attended and asked if the program could be repeated next year or in a different location or at several locations.
2. Comments on the survey showed that we could fine-tune the location and the time of the program. Maybe it should be held on a weekend, was one comment. On the whole though, the surveys contained very few negative comments. Negative comments on content and length of the program were offset by positive comments on its length and content.
3. It is not certain that Warren Teaching Funds, which made the Dr. George Show possible, will be available year after year. Survey results make us hopeful that the program will be repeated:

Q: Do you think that this program was a good use of Warren Teaching Funds?

YES: 98.2%

NO: 0.9%

N/A: 0.9%

Q: Do you think that this program should be held for students next year?

YES: 98.2%

NO: 0.9%

N/A: 0.9%

Next Steps

Investigate other funding sources if The Warren Teaching Funds are not available. Consider a weekend presentation, and look at possible locations throughout the state, particularly areas with more available parking.

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GNF Professional Development Series #209

Program: Massachusetts Farm Viability Enhancement
Organization: Massachusetts Department of Food & Agriculture
Targeted to: Re-strategizers and Establishers
Dates: 1995 to present



Need

The Massachusetts Farm Viability Enhancement Program addresses farmers' need to develop viable business plans as the basis of successful businesses. It also meets the need of businesses to have a marketing strategy that allows for diversity and increased market share.

Program

The main focus of the Farm Viability Enhancement Program is to strengthen farmers' business skills. At the same time, the program aids farmers in exploring business diversification while maintaining environmental integrity.

The program provides learning opportunities and technical assistance to aid farmers in the development and production of viable business plans. The Farm Viability Enhancement Program also assists participants in developing a marketing strategy. This component helps farmers find ways to increase their market share by moving into retail sales, processing, a broader range and/or different mix of products, or value added.

The program can provide capital ranging from \$20,000 to \$60,000 to farmers who complete their business plans. They use the money to implement their business plans and to improve farm operations.

This program requires at least two years of farm business experience. And participants' gross net income must fall within a specific range for them to qualify.

Response

This program has successfully helped 25 to 30 Massachusetts' farmers a year draw up and implement realistic business plans that take into account industry changes brought on by global competition.

Here is an example from the cranberry industry of how the program addresses business skills, diversification, change in response to global conditions and attention to the environment. Massachusetts' many cranberry growers are facing difficult economic times as supply exceeds demand.

To address their plight, the Farm Viability Enhancement Program successfully aided cranberry farmers in diversifying away from cranberry production. It has helped individuals develop businesses that might, for example, move them toward agritourism. The water required for cranberry production might lend itself to the development of a bed and breakfast with picnic areas and canoe rentals. Another cranberry farmer might diversify into processing and produce jams, relishes and other value-added items for retail sale in a farm market.

Farmers can use capital received from the program to build a greenhouse, processing plant or farm market. This helps them to actually implement their business plans.

In accepting program funds, farmers must sign a covenant that requires them to use their land exclusively for agriculture for five or 10 years, depending on the amount of capital provided. This assures that more farms will remain in Massachusetts.

Funding

The Massachusetts State Open Space Bond Legislation funds the Farm Viability Enhancement Program. In the summer of 2002, it provided \$14.5 million to maintain open space in Massachusetts for the next five years.

Partners

The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation partners with the Farm Viability Enhancement Program by subcontracting and hiring the accountants and technical consultants used by the program.

The Cape Cod Cranberry Farm Viability Program is also an active partner.

Outreach

Several methods are used to inform the public about the program. The Massachusetts Department of Food & Agriculture's website provides information and application forms. Press releases appear in agricultural publications and in the Department's newsletter. Handouts detailing the program are available at all winter farmers' meetings and farm shows.

Analysis

SUCSESSES. The Farm Viability Enhancement Program has successfully to develop viable business plans. It has also provided the capital for them to implement their plan.

A study completed two years ago showed that farmers who implemented business plans developed through the program had an average net increase in farm income of \$18,500.

Of the more than 200 farms helped by this program over the last eight years, only two have gone out of business.

The Farm Viability Enhancement Program also offers technical assistance, but not capital, to "gentleman farmers" to help them remain viable in today's economy.

Participating farms are maintained as viable farmland by the covenant, protecting the land from nonfarm use. The threatened family farmer no longer has to sell land that may have rested in family hands for generations to developers who erect cookie-cutter houses and condos.

CHALLENGES. During the first years of the program, the lack of capital due to the state's austerity budget was a problem.

Currently, there is only one staff person for the program, who also manages the state food cupboards. Additional staff are needed to handle in-house paper work and other program details.

Next Steps

There is a need for an additional program that offers business plan development and implementation to start-up farmers in the first three years of farming. He envisions a pilot program that would limit capital investment to \$10,000 per farm. This program could be helpful to those developing livestock and herb farms.

Just as the cranberry farmers needed help transitioning their farm business to be more viable, last year the state's apple farmers realized that they also need this type of program to help them through difficult economic times. Because of increased need for assistance, the Farm Viability Enhancement Program must become larger in order to serve more farmers.

Written by: Ruth Maltz, GNF Program Profile Coordinator

Additional Resources

- Dr. Craig Richov, Director of the Farm Viability Enhancement Program, Massachusetts Department of Food & Agriculture, 251 Causeway St. - Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114-2151. Phone: (617) 626-1725. E-mail: Craig.Richov@state.ma.us
- USDA-NRCS, Massachusetts State Office, 451 West St., Amherst, MA 01002. Tel: (413) 253-4350. Website: www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov
- Growing New Farmers Consortium at New England Small Farm Institute, P.O. Box 608, Belchertown, MA 01007. Tel: (413) 323-4531. Fax: (413) 323-9594. E-mail: gnf@smallfarm.org. Website: www.northeastnewfarmer.org

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GNF Professional Development Series #210



Program: Marketing & Management Skills for Farmers: A Train-the-Trainer program

Organizations: The Penn State University College of Agricultural Sciences and Penn State Cooperative Extension

Targeted Audience: Penn State county and university Extension staff who educates prospective and/or beginning farmers

Dates: October 2002. Ongoing development and enhancement of materials and support to use in teaching marketing and management skills to farmers

Need

The Marketing & Management Skills for Farmers program addressed several needs:

- Business management and marketing decisions determine the viability of agricultural enterprises. But the educational needs of prospective farmers in these areas can be overlooked as education specialists concentrate on narrow subject matter and the number of specialists declines.
- Prospective farmers often lack agricultural vocabulary and/or experience to comprehend or adapt technical information adequately.
- Educators often assume that prospective farmers have higher skill levels than is reasonable to expect, making basic business education important to this audience.
- Service providers may lack educational materials to meet the business management and marketing needs of this audience. Comments from at least 37 educators certified to deliver agricultural entrepreneurship curriculum support this conclusion. Most participants noted a lack of confidence in their business skills knowledge.
- Agricultural service providers often rely on established client groups for program guidance and may not be aware of the needs of other groups. Meeting the needs of established farmers contributes to providing inadequate information to new clients whose questions or concerns might seem trivial.

Response

Six Penn State Extension Specialists and one independent businessperson developed educational materials targeted to the needs of prospective producers.

In October 2002, 18 Penn State Cooperative Extension Educators participated in a two-day in-service training to develop service-provider skills, distribute educational materials and share experiences focused on working with prospective and beginning farmers. The in-service stressed outreach to the underserved audience of prospective and beginning farmers and the appropriate methods of marketing educational programs to these audiences.

Topics covered included:

- Presentation techniques for the adult educator
- Introductory business planning

- Accounting basics
- Agriculture's legal framework
- Retail marketing
- Risk awareness
- Farm Bill implications
- Outreach research and methods.

Educational materials included lecture notes, media articles, electronic presentations, worksheets, simulation games and textbooks that instructors have successfully used. The training also used Growing New Farmers research and workshop materials, stressed the use of web-based resources and discussed available research on the needs of entrepreneurs.

The program established a library of production information targeted at beginning farmers. Slide sets, videotapes, printed material and electronic information is included in this modest collection.

Funding

The Penn State University provided the majority of funding. A multi-year Northeast SARE grant supported securing or reproducing materials.

Project partners include Penn State Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology faculty; Ag Accounting Service, a private firm; and county Extension educators. New or beginning farmers provided input through a needs' assessment.

Outreach

Outreach was internal to the Penn State Extension system. (Peculiarities of the in-service protocols restrict activities to direct employees. In the future, this training could be offered to others.)

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The major success was making educators aware of, or reminding them of, the needs of prospective and beginning farmers. Importantly, the program distributed appropriate management and marketing educational materials to educators. Participants express interest in continuing this process.

CHALLENGES: These are abundant. Decreased funding for education institutions means there are fewer employees to do the work required for the program. The impact of one-on-one consultations is sometimes hard to justify.

Next step

A plan to seek outside financing is required, to do train-the-trainer activities and to develop additional programs to meet the needs of prospective and beginning farmers.

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<http://lehigh.extension.psu.edu>
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Additional Resources

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Website: <http://www.cas.psu.edu/>

Penn State University, Cooperative Extension, 217 Ag Administration Bldg., University Park, PA 16802. Tel: (814) 863-3438. FAX: (814) 863-7905.

Website: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/>

[Cooperative Extension in the South Central Region](#). Website:

<http://www.extension.psu.edu/scregion/Agriculture/FarmMgmt.htm>

Growing New Farmers Consortium at New England Small Farm Institute, P.O. Box 608, Belchertown, MA 01007. Tel: (413) 323-4531. FAX: (413) 323-9594.

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GNF Professional Development Series #211

Program: New Farmer Development Project

Organizations: Cornell Cooperative Extension-New York City, collaborating with Greenmarket Program of the Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC), City University of New York (CUNY) and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

Dates: 1999 through present

Audiences: Agriculturally Experienced Immigrant in the New York City region – represent Explorers, Planners and Startups



Need

Today's immigrants in New York City come from countries in South, Central and North America and the Carribean. They often have vast agricultural experience. But when new immigrant farmers try to establish themselves in farming in the United States, they must not only adjust to a very different culture and climate but also overcome the same obstacles that all beginning farmers encounter.

The Program

The New Farmer Development Project (NFDP) was developed to encourage a new generation of skilled farmers to farmland in downstate New York. NFDP participants come from about 13 countries, from South, Central and North America (Mexico) and the Carribean. The project recruits individuals interested in becoming independent farmers and/or working in farm-related jobs, with an emphasis on management not farm labor. The project helps participants to start up their farm operations in Upstate New York, Nw Jersey and Pennsylvania. The goal is to help this ethnically diverse group learn farm production methods relevant to the Northeast region, marketing skills and how to access the local farmer's market system.

The project only accepts individuals who have previous farming experience and are interested in market-oriented production but who lack the necessary business expertise to run a successful farm. NFDP participants are encouraged to use direct marketing including selling to restaurants and operating a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

The project consists of a pre-season series of training sessions, called 'La Nueva Siembra,' held at Cooperative Extension offices in Manhattan. During the growing season, participants use demonstration plots in Staten Island, Far Rockaway and Astoria, Queens. The Astoria site, known as the Phoenix Triangle, is operated in cooperation with Goodwill Industries. The project added a new site in 2003. At each site, participants learn to raise produce, and the project assists them in marketing through the established New York City Greenmarkets farmer's markets. There is not a farm market site in Far Rockaway, so participants are encouraged to sell at other farmers markets in addition to the Greenmarket.

The New Farmer Development Project is not the first of its type in the United States. The promise of developing new farmers can be seen in a similar program in Massachusetts. The New

Entry Sustainable Farming Project, sponsored by Tufts University, helps disadvantaged Hmong immigrant farmers from Cambodia become commercial farmers.

Like the New York City project, it has three major goals:

- To re-energize the region's agriculture through diversified operation and ownership.
- To develop greater economic self-reliance among the disadvantaged.
- To expand production of ethnic foods by providing immigrant farmers with land that is leased at a low cost and with mentors from the farming community.

The Massachusetts program's teaching methods include dual translation teams to help overcome language barriers and videotaped demonstrations.

In Minnesota, the large acreage once available to immigrants has disappeared, and new immigrant farmers must find a way to do more with less land. The state's Farming Incubator Program helps them make the transition into sustainable small-scale farming operations by leasing them parcels of land for up to four years at the University of Minnesota's Rosemount Research and Outreach Center.

A New Immigrant Farm Program complements the Farming Incubator Program by working with immigrants who are farmers and already own or lease land.

Both of these programs provide classroom and field-based educational activities. In turn, the immigrant farmers inject an enthusiasm into area farmers markets and introduce new foods to consumers.

Response

In the second year of the New Farmer Development Project, 25 residents from the City and surrounding counties participated in workshops and hands-on instruction. The 15 fully attended sessions covered all aspects of production important to new farmers, including what to expect the first year, marketing strategies, transport options, selecting farmers' markets, niche and ethnic markets. Some participants also completed a certificate short course in hydroponics.

La Nueva Siembra is a series of 14 workshops. At the present time we do not have any transportation options to offer to participants. The selection of farmers markets is a process done by the independent farmer and demonstration farm participants.

In 2003 land was prepared in Long Island City (Queens), under sponsorship of Silver Cup Studios, for participants interested in demonstration plots. New sites in the city mean farmers can avoid long-distance weekly commutes to work on out-of-town plots.

As the number of new immigrant farmers continues to grow, programs such as the New Farmer Development Project will help ensure the success of this new generation of Americans. "I think we're beginning to see the renaissance of the American small farm," says Joanna Green, senior Extension associate with Cornell University's Small Farms Program. "New immigrant farmers are going to be an increasingly important part of that renaissance."

Funding

The project is funded by Cornell Cooperative Extension-NYC, Greenmarket, City University of New York and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The project has also received funding from the Growing New Farmers Consortium (GNF), Heifer International, The Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, USDA's Community Food Projects and Risk Management Agency and the Fund for Rural America.

Analysis

SUCCESS: Completing its third year in 2003, the New Farmer Development Project has helped new farmers overcome the challenges of getting started in farming.

“Everyone benefits from this program,” says Norma Brenes, Extension Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of New York City. “The farmers get the information and resources they need to become successful. Greenmarkets are able to expand and enrich their present farmer’s market operations, and consumers have a dependable source of locally grown and ethnic products.”

The success of the program has already being seen. One participant leased land in Upstate New York and is marketing eggs and produce at farmer’s markets in Tribeca and elsewhere in the City. Others have taken positions with local farmers as managers or with farmers at the market to assist with sales.

CHALLENGES: The project needs to develop new farming sites, so participants will not have to make long-distance weekly commutes to work on out-of-town plots. Also, funding must increase so the program can expand to serve more immigrant farmers.

Next Steps

The Project has two major goals: To seek additional funding sources so that more participants can be served. To locate and develop new parcels of land that can be farmed, preferably in areas that don’t require long commutes. To establish a mentorship program.

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GNF Professional Development Series #212

Program: Connecticut New Farmer Initiative

Organizations: Hartford Food System and Connecticut Farmland Trust

Targeted to: Start-ups and Re-strategizers

Dates: July 2002 - June 2004



Need

Connecticut has one of the highest growth pressures in the nation. This pressure affects the long-term survival and productivity of the state's farms.

The Program

The Connecticut New Farmer Initiative addresses the need to keep the state's farmland actively farmed by matching new farmers with available farmland.

The initiative seeks support from local land trusts in finding and securing suitable farmland.

Response

The New Farmer Initiative was developed and takes a two-prong approach

1. It intends to help new farmers find affordable land.
2. It helps these farmers develop a farm business plan with the assistance of First Pioneer Farm Credit employees. The plan outlines how to develop a niche market and to farm successfully in today's difficult farm market environment.

Partners in the New Farmer Initiative include Connecticut Natural Resource Conservation Service, the state's Land Trust Service Bureau, CT-NOFA and First Pioneer Farm Credit.

Funding

A USDA SARE grant for 2002-04 provides funding.

Outreach

For outreach, the program advertised widely to the new farmer audience and to entities/owners with available farmland in the fall and winter of 2002.

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The New Farmer Initiative matched a "re-strategizer" farmer with a large regional land trust and one of its farm holdings in New Milford, CT. After doing business planning, provided by First Pioneer Farm Credit, the farmer has made inroads with nearby markets, specializing in vegetables that appeal to the Latino populations in the eastern part of the state. The farmer is currently arranging a contract with a nearby restaurateur to grow produce to menu specifications.

The New Farmer Initiative assisted a recently married couple in coming back onto the family farm. After business planning, again provided by First Pioneer, and several visits to fruit farms in New England, the couple is starting a berry operation. They planted their first berry bushes in the fall

of 2003.

CHALLENGES: Our major challenge is matching farmers with land trusts. Farm leases with local land trusts exist in Connecticut but are concentrated in one region of the state. Only one of the four farmers has been matched with a land trust.

The program is still negotiating leases for a "start-up" farmer and a "re-strategizing" farmer on currently unprotected farmland. Both landowners in the two leases seek farmers who will operate in a sustainable way. Both program participants must address whether to relocate since the farms under consideration are beyond their communities and familiar market areas.

Next Steps

The Connecticut New Farmer Initiative will solicit feedback from the new farmers they have worked with: What do they see as their successes and challenges? How well has the initiative supported them?

The program gathered feedback at a dinner and roundtable discussion in the fall of 2003 that brought together the four new farmers and the initiative team, made up of members from the partnering organizations.

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GNF Professional Development Series #213



Program: New York FarmLink

Organizations: New York FarmNet and Cornell Dept. of Applied Economics

Dates: 1996 to present

Target Audience: Planners and startups, as well as exiting farmers

Needs Addressed

Transferring management responsibility and farm assets to the next generation or a non-family member is a critical, but often confusing, process. In addition, exiting farmers often face limited choices for retirement, and new farmers can struggle to obtain the necessary knowledge, skills and financing.

New York FarmLink was created to assist exiting and entering farmers with this important and difficult task. Program organizers determined two resources are needed: human resources such as consultants and easy-to-use printed materials. An assessment of available materials revealed that the majority of literature on farm transfers was so technical that it intimidated farm families as well as FarmNet consultants and Cooperative Extension personnel working with them.

Recognizing the need for assistance and materials, Cathy Sheils, New York FarmNet director, sought support from Cornell University's Department of Applied Economics. It funded one half of a new position, with responsibilities for FarmLink, within the FarmNet program. She also convinced the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to increase FarmNet's operating budget by a third. With funding, New York FarmLink could begin to meet the needs of new farmers (explorers, planners and startups) and retiring ones.

Response

Increased staff and budget allowed FarmLink to evolve into a program that provides educational resources, consulting and opportunities that enable more farms to be transferred and joint ventures to be developed.

FarmLink created two farm transfer workbooks – one each for the junior and senior generations. These easy-to-use, step-by-step guides clarify the transfer process, breaking it into smaller segments. The program created a facilitator's guide to accompany the two farm transfer workbooks.

FarmLink held a two-day training on transfers for Cornell Extension educators and FarmNet consultants in September 2002.

FarmLink scrapped the entire database of farm transfer information. It obtained new legal and financial articles by purchasing permission to reprint copyrighted articles under the FarmLink name and logo.

FarmLink expanded its database to include options for beginning farmers who are not ready to own a farm. Options include apprenticeships, management opportunities, partnerships and farm rental.

FarmLink held 17 regional workshops for farm families and FarmLink participants from October 2002 to March 2003. Participants received the farm transfer workbooks and were teamed up with a facilitator from either FarmNet or Extension.

Funding

In addition to funding from Cornell University's Department of Applied Economics and the state's Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York FarmLink received a financing grant for a new producer milk-marketing contract. The mentor/apprenticeship SARE grant proposal by Ora Rothfuss and Cathy Sheils also provides funds. FarmLink also raises funds through participant fees, publication sales and grants.

Partners

NY FarmNet consultants, Cornell Cooperative Extension Farm Management Educators and agribusiness professionals make the majority of initial contacts with FarmLink.

Outreach

Early in 2003, FarmLink launched an advertising campaign targeting trade shows and agricultural business meetings. The program made more than 1,000 direct mailings and scheduled 10 trade show exhibits. The program received invitations to five agricultural business meetings.

FarmLink has an accessible website: <http://www.nyfarmlink.org>. It provides a wealth of information about farm transitions and numerous links to other helpful sites.

Analysis

Successes: New York FarmLink can point to six major accomplishments:

- 1. The farm transfer workbooks** and the facilitator's guide. Cooperative Extension educators and FarmNet consultants give these resources rave reviews for their usefulness in helping families with business transfers.
- 2. Effective regional programs.** FarmLink held meetings in every region of the state in 2002. As of this writing, FarmLink appears to have scheduled even more meetings in 2003.
- 3. Recognition statewide** that FarmLink is a resource for farm transfer information. Cornell Cooperative Extension, FarmNet consultants and agribusiness professionals make the majority of phone calls to FarmLink.
- 4. Heightened farmer awareness** of FarmLink and farm transfers. The New York FarmLink name has gained high recognition across the state because of its expanded service – it's more than a "matching service" – and a valuable product to accompany that service.
- 5. Increased awareness** of farm transfer issues among agricultural service providers. The program accomplished this by launching an aggressive marketing campaign directed to agricultural businesses and trade shows early in 2003. As previously stated, FarmLink mailed more than 1,000 information pieces, scheduled 10 trade show exhibits and received five invitations to agricultural business meetings.

- 6. Facilitated matches.** FarmLink facilitated at least six matches between 1996 and 2001 and nine successful ones in 2002. These matches serve as high-profile promotional pieces in magazines and newsletters. A participant in one of these “matches” serves on the FarmNet board of directors.

Challenges: We see six major challenges for the New York FarmLink program as it attempts to secure its future and to assist farmers:

- 1. To help** new farmers (planners) reach a skill level necessary for them to start farming.
- 2. To develop** a mechanism to handle new farmers labeled as “dreamers.” These are people who need exposure to basic farming. Providing that experience requires a lot of resources and time. And successes are few.
- 3. To increase** farm owners’ capacity to think of – and implement – innovative options to bring the younger generation into agriculture. They need to explore flexible business arrangements and methods to help their successors develop management and business skills.
- 4. To secure** continued funding of FarmLink through state funds and grants.
- 5. To research,** then publish materials on, various farm transition approaches such as partnerships and joint ventures. FarmLink plans to publish more workbooks on areas such as exiting farming, beginning farming and alternative approaches.
- 6. To reach** farm families who do not attend workshops sponsored by Cornell or FarmLink.

Next Steps

To meet the six challenges, to discover and prepare for new challenges, and to increase the capacity of FarmLink’s staff, consultants and cooperators to address the transition process.

Contact

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GNF Professional Development Series #214



Program: Beginning a Successful Small-Farm Operation

Organization: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Allegany/Cattaraugus counties, N.Y.

Dates: November 2001. Repeated February/March 2002 and April 2002

Targeted to: Explorers, Planners and Startups

Needs Addressed

The small, part-time farming segment of the agricultural community is increasing in New York's Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties. Many small-farm operators come from non-farm backgrounds. Because they often don't have farm experience, these operators critically need basic, fundamental information on farming and technical assistance to help select a successful enterprise.

Response

The Beginning a Successful Small-Farm Operation program was started to expose people interested in farming to sound, basic agricultural information and to answer their question: What should my farm produce?

Armed with information, program participants can make educated decisions regarding the type of enterprise best suited to their interests and resources. It will help ensure that Explorers, Planners and Startups can develop successful enterprises.

The information provided in Beginning a Successful Small-Farm Operation fills each individual's knowledge gap. Some people came with more technical knowledge of agriculture but need business and marketing assistance. Others came from a business background but need practical assistance in production agriculture.

Program Description

Originally program organizers scheduled four classes:

1. Ag 101: An introduction to farming terminology and basic facts for those considering a career in farming
2. Basics of Soil and Plant Fertility
3. Pasture Management and Hay Evaluation
4. Marketing What You Produce

Organizers added a fifth class covering tax information and basic bookkeeping in response to participant interest. Two farmers attended that session to share their experiences with and give advice

to startup farmers. As they discussed the development and ongoing operation of their enterprises, the two farmers reinforced information presented throughout the series. This was a positive addition to the program agenda.

Each class session ran two hours and included a formal presentation on the evening's topic, resource materials and hands-on or interactive time to encourage participants to use the information presented during the session. Each family/farm received a notebook binder of educational materials.

The instructor allowed time for participant questions at the end of each class and started the next class with information to support answers to specific questions from the previous week. This satisfied the need for more technical or species-specific information that was not covered in the class because of time constraints.

This format allowed for flexibility in program content. Although a lot of information was presented in each class, participants appreciated the classes' being on schedule.

Because people had conflicts during the fall session and others inquired about the course after it began, part one of the series with all five classes was held in February/March 2002.

In April 2002, Part II of the series was held. It focused on the interests that participants identified in evaluations from the introductory series. Part II is a four-week course, focused on enterprise selection, developing businesses, financial management and marketing plans.

The series of classes were followed by two one-day farm tours, one of a grass-based livestock operation and the other of a horticulture/agro-forestry enterprise. These tours created opportunities for participants and local farmers to exchange ideas and to create a network for future mentoring.

Funding

A Cornell Cooperative Extension Small Farm Task Force grant and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Allegany/Cattaraugus counties supplied funding. A \$20 fee per family/farm was charged.

Partners

Participating farmers who serve as mentors and share experience with participants, partner in Beginning a Successful Small-Farm Operation.

Outreach

Organizers advertised the program through local media, flyers, direct mail and Cooperative Extension publications.

Analysis

SUCCESSSES: Of the eight participants, two were involved in what they described as "hobby operations." One couple was selling standing hay. As an expected outcome, both of the "hobby farmers" looked to expand into farming enterprises: one as a full-time operation for the couple, the other as a second income for the family.

Two of the participants plan to develop a beef cow/calf enterprises; one was undecided as to the enterprise best suited to her resources and interest.

All of the respondents gave positive evaluations of the workshop series and were interested in attending future workshops.

From contact with small-farm operators, they indicate that they support this type of project. They are willing to work with Extension to provide additional programs that support the growth and economic vitality of the small farm as a way to strengthen local communities.

CHALLENGES: The Beginning a Successful Small-Farm Operation program encountered no challenges.

Next Steps

Upon request, the Beginning a Successful Small-Farm Operation series was offered a fourth time. Species-specific or crop-specific workshops are offered to meet a continued need for education among the participants.

Additional Resources

The Beginning a Successful Small-Farm Operation series was adopted from a program offered by Terry Poole of Maryland.

For more information, contact Lynn A. O'Brien of Allegany County Cornell Cooperative Extension at 5435A County Road 48, Belmont, NY 14813. Tel: (585) 268-7644, Ext. 18. E-mail:

lao3@cornell.edu.

Resource notebooks are available for \$22. They include the newly printed "Farmer's Pocket Guide," sponsored by a Small Farm Task Force grant.

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Program: Agricultural Community Outreach Initiative for Underserved Producers in New Jersey

Organization: Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Salem County

Dates: 2003 – 2004

Targeted to: Underserved agricultural producers in New Jersey, including women and widows as sole proprietors, women as wives or partners, limited-resource farmers, minorities, new farmers, part-time farmers, and small niche-farmers.

Need addressed

Many farmers are unaware of the resources available to them. They would benefit from knowing about those resources that can help them manage – and minimize – their economic risks so they can be viable in this changing global market.

Summary

The overall goal of the project is to increase the capacity of underserved producers to positively impact their lifestyles.

During Year One of the Outreach Initiative, we designed and developed a risk management curriculum with input from underserved producers. The curriculum includes an agricultural resource guide that has a comprehensive directory of agricultural programs and contacts, associations, industry and service providers, and information and resources. The curriculum also includes a risk management workbook with interactive, flexible exercises that producers can use to manage and minimize risk-posing challenges.

During Year Two of the grant period, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, with the support of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, proposes to continue its partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) and to team up with additional, carefully selected organizations.

The goal of this collaborative effort is to deliver the risk management curriculum to underserved producers and agribusiness professionals through three mechanisms:

1. Regional one-day workshops
2. One-on-one consultations
3. Train-the-trainer sessions.

Throughout Year Two, project leaders will modify the curriculum to reflect the needs of underserved producers. We will also evaluate the curriculum to determine its efficacy as a model that can be replicated in other northeastern states.

The project will coordinate regional risk management clubs. And in its second year, the Outreach Initiative will expand to target underserved producers in the New York City region.

Funding

USDA Risk Management Agency Grant

Partners

Besides the USDA Risk Management Agency, other partners include:

- New Jersey Department of Agriculture
- Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey
- New Jersey Farm Bureau
- New Farmer Development Project of New York City
- First Pioneer Farm Credit
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
- USDA Farm Service Agency of New Jersey
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service of New Jersey

Outreach

To reach its target audience, the project worked with partnering agencies, through focus and task groups, and with known underserved producers.

Analysis

SUCSESSES: Developing a curriculum that truly reflects the needs of underserved producers has been a great success. The project has also successfully brought together numerous state and federal governmental agencies, as well as county Extension personnel, to work effectively with farm producer groups and other organizations. The collaborative effort identified underserved farm producers and helped them to become more viable.

CHALLENGES: Promoting the project to as many underserved producers as possible to ensure maximum attendance at the risk management workshops is our number one challenge.

Next Steps

One-day Risk Management Workshops are scheduled for:

February 24 and March 23: Snyder Research and Extension Farm

February 25 and March 31: Rutgers University EcoComplex

February 26 and March 25: Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Resources

- Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Salem County
51 Cheney Rd., Suite 1
Woodstown, NJ 08098
Tel: (856) 769-0090
<http://salem.rutgers.edu>
- Growing New Farmers Consortium at New England Small Farm Institute
PO Box 608

Belchertown, MA 01007
Tel: (413) 323-4531. Fax: (413) 323-9594
E-mail: gnf@smallfarm.org
Website: www.northeastnewfarmer.org

- New Jersey Department of Agriculture
PO Box 330
Trenton, NJ 08625
Tel: (609) 984-2506 Fax: (609) 633-7229
E-mail: Karen.Kritz@ag.state.nj.us
Website: www.state.nj.us/agriculture/rural/rurldev.htm
- First Pioneer Farm Credit
Website: <http://www.farmcreditus.com/firstpioneer/about/L3/agenhance.htm>
- Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey
P.O. Box 886
Pennington, NJ 08534
Tel: (609) 737-6848
Fax: (609) 737-2366
E-mail: nofainfo@nofanj.org
Website: <http://www.nofanj.org/>
- USDA Farm Service Agency of New Jersey
Website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nj/>

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Program: Wayne County Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program
Organization: Wayne County, New York
Dates: March 2002 – ongoing
Targeted to: Explorers, Planners, Startups, Re-strategizers, Establishers

Need Addressed

There was an economic crisis in Wayne County's apple industry, a major agricultural sector. Micro-enterprise loan programs seemed an appropriate method to address that. They are an established economic development tool for small businesses. The program is based on the concept that the viability of business enterprise improves with a business plan and possibly a small loan.

Micro-enterprise loan programs are also attractive to young and beginning farmers.

Summary

Wayne County received a \$600,000 New York State Governor's Office for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to start a Wayne County Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program. Funds are used to:

- Provide technical assistance and business planning and enhancement seminars.
- Establish an agribusiness development center.
- Begin a \$500,000 revolving loan program for farm, agribusiness and agriservice owners.

Agriculture is a major industry in Wayne County, with 840 farms contributing \$107 million in gross farm income in 1997, according to the Census of Agriculture. Farmers who face a globalized marketplace and recent weather pressures are looking beyond traditional crop and livestock operations to new opportunities.

The Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program provides a structure for Wayne County farm owners to analyze opportunities for diversifying their businesses. Expanding an agricultural operation or switching from a production to a marketing focus or to a value-added operation can require a dramatic change and detailed planning.

Many farmers want to try something new but need assistance in determining the proper way to proceed. With Wayne County's program, small farmers and agribusiness owners have the opportunity to develop business plans that include new enterprises and to use the micro-enterprise loan program.

Description

A micro-enterprise business employs five or fewer workers, including the owner.

The CDBG funds for the Wayne County Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program come through the Governor's Office for Small Cities and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The goals of these two agencies include creation and retention of jobs for low- and moderate-income persons.

Micro-enterprise loan applicants are required to have a business plan and to complete a confidential form identifying their family income. For example, CDBG guidelines consider a Wayne County family of four as low to moderate income (LMI) if the family income is less than \$42,300. Individuals or families who are above the LMI limits may also apply for loans if they employ people who qualify as LMI. For those who do not have a business plan, the program provides technical assistance.

The benefits of the Wayne County Micro-Enterprise program extend to the farmers and agribusiness owners, who increase or diversify their incomes; to employees who retain jobs; to new employees who gain jobs created through business expansion or diversification; and to the community that gains successful new enterprises using farm products.

Funding

Funding for this program came in the form of a \$600,000 Community Development Block Grant from the New York State Governor's Office for Small Cities. A grant of \$100,000 provides for the technical assistance (business planning) aspect. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wayne County provides four business-planning seminars over two years.

The program pays for materials for eligible participants and for business consultants from New York FarmNet and Farm Credit of Western New York for up to 20 hours of business planning assistance.

Approved loans have below-market interest rates (two points below prime) and a \$40,000 cap. Loans may be used for equipment, business start-up costs, leasehold improvements and working capital.

Partners

Wayne County's Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program partners include:

- Wayne County Planning
- Wayne County Industrial Development Agency (IDA)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wayne County
- New York FarmNet
- Farm Credit of Western New York.

The dynamic combination of partnering organizations, each with its own area of expertise, serves the farmers of Wayne County well:

- The Wayne County IDA operates a successful revolving loan program established with a CDBG grant in 1983. It administers the agribusiness micro-enterprise loan program. While agribusinesses have been eligible to apply to the IDA's earlier program, the Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program recognizes the special pressures faced by the farming industry and addresses the need for an agricultural focused program. The IDA's current loan review committee was expanded to add agricultural industry representatives.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wayne County provides business plan development workshops for farm and agribusiness owners. An agribusiness development center is located at the Cornell

Cooperative Extension building and contains a library devoted to developing agribusiness, a computer with internet access, and software to assist with the development of business plans.

- New York FarmNet and Farm Credit of Western New York provide one-on-one technical business plan development for farmers who qualify for low- and middle- income assistance.

Outreach

This effort has consisted of news releases to agricultural and local press, letters to lending institutions and announcements in local Extension and USDA newsletters. The most responses and inquiries came from announcements regarding the classroom business training programs. Successful projects will be highlighted in press releases.

The program currently works with agricultural lenders to raise their awareness of the program benefits for farmers and lenders. The program can help lenders spread their risk by partnering on loans. Often lenders understand the benefits of business plans but are hesitant to encourage their customers to develop them due to the cost of the process. This program can help reduce that cost for qualified businesses.

Analysis

SUCSESSES: A major success is the five-way partnership to bring this program to the county agricultural industry. The program demonstrates ways in which existing IDAs can work with agricultural service providers to support farms.

As of Dec. 31, 2002, 27 farms or people have applied for technical assistance. Seven of them are planning new farms or agribusinesses and eight are farms considering some form of inter-generational transfer.

CHALLENGES: To date, the biggest challenge has been developing the need for the loan program. The farm economy has been down, the program started in March and after April, most farmers were busy. Some farms wanted fast loans, but did not have the required business plan.

Being a new program, farmers and lenders don't necessarily have it on their radar screens.

Next Steps

At approximately the halfway point, the next steps will include increased outreach to agricultural lenders to explain the program benefits. We expect as farmers and lenders become more familiar with the program, interest will increase.

In an effort to raise awareness with farmers, we are developing press releases to highlight successes. These will be distributed to the local press and the agricultural press.

Additional Resources

- Ora Rothfuss
Wayne County Agriculture Development specialist
Wayne County Planning
Tel: (315) 946-5919
E-mail: orothfuss@co.wayne.ny.us
- Dave Richards
Wayne County Industrial Development Agency
Tel: (315) 946-5917
- Elizabeth Claypoole
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wayne County

Tel: (315) 331-8415

E-mail: eac9@cornell.edu

- Kevin Ellis
Farm Credit of Western New York
Tel: (800) 929-7102
- Cathy Sheils
Director, New York FarmNet
Tel: (800) 547-3276
E-mail: crm3@cornell.edu
- New York Governor's Office of Small Cities
Agency Building 4/6th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223
Tel: (518) 474-2057
Website: <http://www.nysmallcities.org/>

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Program: The Women's Agricultural Network

Organization: The Women's Agricultural Network

Dates: 1995 to present

Targeted to: Prospective Farmers – Recruits, Explorers and Planners – and Beginning Farmers – Startups, Re-strategizers and Establishers

Need

Women have traditionally been an underserved group in programs designed to help people establish or enhance farms or agriculture-related businesses. Because of this, women may not have been encouraged to take leadership roles in the agriculture sector. Therefore, many women may have lacked the necessary business skills and network to establish and develop successful agriculture businesses.

Response

Through a series of educational, technical assistance and networking opportunities, the Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) works to increase the number of women owning and operating profitable farms and agriculture-related businesses. The program also strives to elevate women's profile in leadership positions throughout the agricultural sectors of business, government and community.

The WAgN offers programs to support and encourage women at varying levels. Its programs meet the needs of women whether they're developing and assessing business ideas or at the stage of advanced planning and implementation.

The WAgN provides necessary information and education for participants to assess the feasibility of agriculture as a career choice. It also educates women on economically feasible and environmentally sound management practices that lead to increased profitability.

The program seeks to build an effective network of federal, state and local partnerships to provide women with a comprehensive continuum of services.

While the WAgN programs are targeted specifically toward woman, men are welcome to attend programs and access services.

Funding

The WAgN is funded through a combination of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants and support from University of Vermont Extension System.

Partners

The WAgN is a collaborative effort of the University of Vermont Extension System, the University of Vermont's Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the USDA. Other partners include the Women's Agriculture Network-Maine, Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire and Vermont's Women's Business Center.

Outreach

The WAgN programs are publicized on its website: <http://www.uvm.edu/~wagn/>. There are also links to the WAgN website on the websites of the program's partners.

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The WAgN programs have enrolled 1,200 women throughout the Northeast. Some 200 people have successfully completed the Growing Places program. Support groups, which offer woman opportunities to network and learn from others, regularly attract 150 people to discussions throughout the state. Another 635 participants have received technical assistance and help with developing business plans, with more than 200 business plans being written. The WAgN has presented 55 workshops to 780 people. Of those, 89% felt that their businesses were more efficient and profitable because of having attended the program.

CHALLENGES: Continued funding is always a challenge. It's difficult to balance the needs of beginning farmers with those of more experienced and mature farmers. A third challenge is trying to stay current on all the new programs and opportunities available to the farm community.

Next Steps

The WAgN is developing a manual to be used by other states and communities that want to start a woman's agricultural network. The manual will be easily accessed on WAgN's website.

The WAgN instituted an on-line Growing Places program in the fall of 2003. And it plans an advanced support group for people who need to refine their business plans after farming for a few years.

Additional Resources

- Mary Peabody, UVM Extension Specialist
Director, Women's Agricultural Network
Community Resources & Economic Development &
617 Comstock Road, Suite 5
Berlin, VT 05602-9194
Tel: (802) 223-2389, Ext. 13
Fax: (802) 223-6500
E-mail: mary.peabody@uvm.edu or wagn@zoo.uvm.edu
Website: www.uvm.edu/~wagn/
- Growing New Farmers Consortium at New England Small Farm Institute
PO Box 608
Belchertown, MA 01007

Tel: (413) 323-4531
E-mail: gnf@smallfarm.org
Website: www.northeastnewfarmer.org

- Cathy Sheils
Director, New York FarmNet
Warren Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
Tel: (800) 547-3276
E-mail: crm3@cornell.edu
Website: www.nyfarmnet.org

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Program: Agriculture and Rural Development Services

Organization: New Jersey Department of Agriculture

Dates: The mid-1970s to present

Targeted to: Prospective Farmers, Explorers, Planners, Beginning Farmers, Re-strategizers and Establishers

Need

The targeted audience needs a central point where it can access information critical to their businesses and the agricultural industry.

Response

The Agriculture and Rural Development Services (A&RDS) serves as a point of resource information for targeted audiences. It provides guidance, reference materials, industry contacts and technical guidance.

The A&RDS program works directly with agricultural producers, farm-related industries and rural communities. One-on-one problem solving, coupled with advocacy for the agriculture industry, has been successful at resolving questions related to economics, environment, taxation, farm-building construction and land use.

The A&RDS efforts are part of rural public policy that provide services needed by the agricultural business sector and rural communities if they are to capitalize on opportunities for economic growth.

Description

While the A&RDS program does not have a loan program for purchasing farm real estate or providing farm-operating capital, it disseminates information and responds to questions on the availability of agricultural financing from federal, state and commercial institutions. The program advises people on the importance of developing a business plan and preparing financial records to obtaining financing. They are also told of asset requirements for financing.

To support agriculture and rural economic development, staff provides technical support to existing and new agribusinesses in the Garden State, including food manufacturers, that add value to production agriculture.

Regulations often hinder economic development and farm viability. The program offers technical assistance to farmers, architects, engineers, farm-building consultants and agricultural contractors concerning the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code as it relates to farm buildings.

The A&RDS program gives farmers and agribusinesses information on federal and state motor vehicle regulations. This includes information on license plates for farm vehicles (farmer plates), commercial license provisions, and requirements for the International Registration Plan (IRP) and the International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA).

Cost savings are a priority for any agribusiness. Taxation of agricultural buildings can place an undue hardship on existing farms and could jeopardize the sale to a prospective farm operation. The A&RDS program provides technical guidance to farmland owners and local property tax assessors on the farm building provisions of the New Jersey's Real Property Appraisal Manual.

Recycling saves valuable landfill space, extends the life of existing landfills and contributes to the Garden State's goal of recycling 60 percent of its solid waste. The A&RDS program provides technical guidance and facilitation on recycling in the following areas:

- * Using leaves and grass clippings to mulch farm fields.
- * Applying non-hazardous, non-contaminated food-processing byproducts to farmland.
- * Nursery and greenhouse film recycling program.
- * Pesticide container and nursery pot collection and recycling.
- * Helping the food processing industry find markets for soon-to-expire and expired food products.
- * Working closely with other agencies on creative recycling solutions for non-traditional materials.

Finally, renewable energy and energy efficiency on farms is another cost savings. The A&RDS provides technical guidance in this area.

Funding

General State Funds appropriations to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's funds the A&RDS salaries.

Partners

The A&RDS program partners with Cook College, Rutgers –The State University, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service, the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, New Jersey Farm Bureau, various New Jersey agricultural trade organizations, USDA, First Pioneer Farm Credit, and various state and county government agencies.

Outreach

Through our websites, we provide basic information to get people started on their quest for information. The targeted audience is alerted to program activities through various farm newspapers and agricultural and recycling trade magazines, newsletters issued by agriculture organizations, and state and county government agencies. Staff participates in various trade meetings. And word-of-mouth plays a large role in alerting people to the multi-faceted ways the program can help.

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The A&RDS program handles, on average, 1,000 inquiries annually from the target audience looking for help in one way or another. Technical assistance provided by A&RDS has fostered the construction of more than \$10 million annually of agricultural buildings. Over the last

30+ years, staff has seen the second generation take over farms that their parents started with the help of direction provided by the A&RDS program.

CHALLENGES: Maintaining a viable agricultural industry through economic development initiatives. The program must work with other state agencies to ensure barriers are not imposed that may hinder agriculture's progress.

Next Steps

Continue networking with various organizations to share information that will help us better serve the targeted audience.

Additional Resources

The following websites provide information on A&RDS:

- www.nj.gov/agriculture/rural/rurldev.htm
- www.nj.gov/agriculture/rural/renewableenergy.htm
- www.ag.state.nj.us/

Also Growing New Farmers Consortium at New England Small Farm Institute
PO Box 608
Belchertown, MA 01007
Tel: (413) 323-4531
Fax: (413) 323-9594
E-mail: gnf@smallfarm.org
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Program: First Pioneer Farm Credit Beginning Farmer Program

Organization: First Pioneer Farm Credit, ACA

Dates: Ongoing at all First Pioneer Farm Credit offices

Targeted to: Beginning Farmers, Start-ups, Re-strategizers and Establishers

(A beginning farmer is a farmer, rancher, or producer or harvester of aquatic products with 10 years or less farming experience as of the loan transaction date.)

Need

The First Pioneer Farm Credit Board recognizes that the long-range strength and soundness of the association and the agricultural community it serves depends on the individuals entering the industry. It further recognizes that the need for capital and farm and financial management skills make it difficult for a beginning farmer to become established in the business.

Response

It is in First Pioneer Farm Credit's best interest to assist individuals who have a high potential for success to become established in farming by providing loans and credit-related services. The lender also sees the importance of providing and encouraging participation in activities that improve farm and financial management skills.

First Pioneer is a full financial services provider for agricultural businesses. It offers a broad range of loans, such as mortgages, seasonal loans and lines of credit. It can meet the beginning farmer's other business needs, including equipment leases, record-keeping, tax planning and preparation, appraisals, business consulting, multi-peril crop insurance and more.

First Pioneer Farm Credit offers financial services to assist in the development of farm and financial management skills. It provides, according to the resources available, educational opportunities.

It may also offer incentives to new borrowers meeting the definition of a beginning farmer. Sound lending practices are followed in making and servicing these loans in keeping with the policies and procedures that apply to all loans. If First Pioneer Farm Credit is unable to meet the credit needs of a beginning farmer applicant, it should assess whether a coordinated credit package together with another lender or guarantee from a public or private party would make the applicant creditworthy. If so, the Association shall encourage the beginning farmer applicant to make such arrangements and assist in developing an acceptable credit package.

Description

Special incentives may be offered to beginning farmers for a period of no more than five years. They may include:

- Farm Accounting and Management Software Fee. The fee associated with first-year enrollment on AgCHEK may be discounted by 75%; second year enrollment may be discounted by 50%.
- Tax Preparation Fee. The fee associated with first-year tax preparation may be discounted by 50%.
- Consulting Fee. All fees associated with one limited consulting visit during the year after loan closing, including a standard written report, may be waived.
- Appraisal Fee. All fees associated with one appraisal completed for credit purposes or one fee appraisal completed during the year after loan closing may be waived.
- FSA Guaranteed Loan Fee. Initial-year fees incurred in conjunction with a Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan guarantee may be paid by the Association.
- Interest Rate Assistance. The rate charged on variable rate or fixed rate loans may be discounted one tier from that otherwise called for in a Board's policy relating to interest rates. Interest Rate Assistance for an individual borrower shall be limited to a period of five years. Loans for which the interest rate is discounted shall be limited to \$250,000 in aggregate for an individual borrower, and the balance outstanding on all such loans for the Association combined shall not exceed \$30 million.

Funding

First Pioneer Farm Credit

Partners

Farm Service Agency

Outreach

If applicants for loans are beginning farmers, they are offered the various incentives.

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The reduced cost of consultation and business planning has helped beginning farmers to be more successful, thus enabling them to repay their loans promptly.

CHALLENGES: Ensuring that sound lending practices are followed in making and servicing these loans and that they are in keeping with the policies and procedures which apply to all loans.

Additional Resources

First Pioneer Farm Credit, ACA
29 Landis Ave.
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
Tel: (800) 219-9179
Website: <http://www.firstpioneer.com>

Growing New Farmers Consortium at New England Small Farm Institute
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Program: Finfish Aquaculture Demonstration Project

Organization: Finfish Aquaculture Extension

Dates: November 2002 - present

Targeted to: Explorers, Planners & Start-ups

Need

Many people start out keeping fish as a hobby. Then they begin to think about the possibility of moving into a commercial venture of raising fish for profit. These people need basic information on state requirements for commercial fishing businesses, technical knowledge on raising fish and logistical information on how to begin an enterprise.

Response

Randy Mickley of the University of Rhode Island received a Rhode Island Sea Grant to develop and build a demonstration finfish production model. Through the Finfish Aquaculture Demonstration Project, he can provide hands-on courses about what is necessary to produce fish commercially in a cold climate such as Rhode Island's.

Description

Since having built the demonstration project during 2003, Mickley now has a forum where he can demonstrate how to handle fish safely, how to determine the sex of the fish, how to build cages to separate young fish and what materials are necessary to keep the fish warm.

He is able to help people understand the economics of growing fish in a colder climate. Fish farming for food done in colder climates may not be competitive with that in warmer climates. But farmers can grow higher value exotic fish that hobbyists are willing to pay a premium price for. This approach is often successful.

The course educates participants on state regulations and permits. For example, permits are required for people who import nonnative species into the area. Health certificates are required from the seller. The state also inspects fish production farms to ensure that water discharge will not pollute streams and that nonnative fish cannot escape into the environment.

In response to increasing interest in developing water gardens, a course is taught on how deep to dig a pond so that it can be winterized with an air-stone, allowing fish to survive. The course

teaches landscaping techniques and stocking procedures for water gardens. Participants learn how to properly care for the fish by learning to recognize and treat common fish illnesses.

The Japanese fish Koi are frequently used in such gardens, as are ornamental aqua plants such as water lilies. Both the fish and water lily are valuable products to grow. The wastewater from fish tanks can be recycled and used as fertilizer in a hydroponic garden.

A farm pond can also be used for growing fish. There are many options: fish can be feed and raised for family use or sold as fresh fish at a farm market. Ponds can also be stocked with fish and then managed as a “pay for fishing area.” Farmers can make additional income by selling bait and snacks and renting tackle.

Funding

A Rhode Island Sea Grant and fees for courses. The University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Service offers support.

Partners

University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Service and the state of Rhode Island Sea Grant

Outreach

Specific courses are publicized via the local media, by Fish Hobbyist Groups and through the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Service.

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The development of the Finfish Aquaculture Demonstration Project is a major success. In addition, many people have received basic technical information, business and financial planning, and logistical information on requirements to operate a fish farm. Participants learn the importance of locating an appropriate market. The program helps people write grant proposals for fish startups. And it has also organized tours to fish production operations.

CHALLENGES: Some people call for basic information on costs to set up a fish farm, financial returns from fish farming, what is needed for permits and other information. Then they hesitate and don't take the next steps.

Next Steps

Now that the Finfish Aquaculture Demonstration Project has been completed, Mickley plans to develop more course materials for programs that make the greatest use of this forum.

Resources

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Internet Information Sources for Aquaculture

- American Tilapia Association: <http://ag.arizona.edu/azaqua/ata.html>
- Aquaculture.com: <http://www.aquaculture.com>
- Aquaculture Network Information Center: <http://www.aquanic.org/>
- Cornell Aquaculture Resources: www.bee.cornell.edu/extension/aquaculture/
- FINS Fish/Aquarium Information Service: <http://www.actwin.com/fish/>
- Fish Vet: <http://users.jagunet.com/~fishvet/>
- National Agricultural Library: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/>
- National Fisheries Institute: <http://www.nfi.org>
- Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center:
<http://www.umassd.edu/specialprograms/nrac/welcome.html>
- Sea Grant: <http://www.mdsg.umd.edu/Extension/index.html>
- Southern Regional Aquaculture Center: <http://www.msstate.edu/dept/srac/>
- U.S. Trout Farmers Association: <http://www.ustfa.org>
- World Aquaculture Society: <http://www.was.org/>

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A northeast service providers consortium
GNF Professional Development Series #221



Program: New Jersey Exploring the Small Farm Dream

Organization: Northeast Organic Farming Association-NJ and Mercer County Community College

Dates: Beginning fall 2003. Offered again in spring 2004

Targeted to: Prospective Farmers -- Explorers and early-stage Planners. (People at all levels of experience interested in beginning an agricultural enterprise are welcome.)

Need

People who come from nonfarming backgrounds often lack the information they need to make an informed decision about starting a commercial agricultural enterprise. Few written materials address these issues, and most service providers don't target Explorers or Planners. Consequently, a certain number of start-up farmers fail each year simply because they didn't understand such things as the effect farming might have on a family's lifestyle or the implications of a marketing and distribution choice.

The New Jersey Exploring the Small Farm Dream is an outgrowth of programs by The New England Small Farm Institute

Response

During the course, participants discuss current opportunities in small-scale agriculture, explore objectives, assess personal and financial resources, conduct preliminary market research and develop an action plan for pursuing their interests in food and farming.

Two people who have personal experience in the agricultural industry teach the course. Pam Flory has taught gardening and farming to a wide range of audiences. In 2000, she designed and started Spring Hill Farm in Hopewell and was farm manager there for three seasons. Laura Sayre, program manager at Northeast Organic Farming Association-NJ (NOFA-NJ), has more than 10 years of experience working on organic farms.

Description

Participants interests are many and varied. They range from raising goats and making goat cheese to growing and selling cut flowers or raising a rare tomato variety or some other specialty food that will

fill a niche market and create a viable business.

Exploring the Small Farm Dream serves as a reality check for most participants. Some decide to pursue their dream and start a farm business, but most choose to move more slowly toward that goal, maybe by saving money for a few more years or by working as a farm employee to gain needed practical experience.

Still others decide that gardening, homesteading or working in an agriculturally related field suits them better than commercial farming would.

Funding: Tuition is \$150, including materials. Two people working on the same farm business idea may attend for a combined tuition of \$170 including two copies of all course materials.

Partners

The New England Small Farm Institute, a non-profit organization supporting beginning and small-scale farmers in the Northeast, originally developed Exploring the Small Farm Dream. First Pioneer Farm Credit's AgEnhancement Program provided funding, in part, to bring the course to New Jersey.

Outreach

The Mercer Community College website: <http://www.mccc.edu>.

NOFA-NJ members or its website: <http://www.nofanj.org>

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The course helps participants understand the nature of farming, identify their interests and assess the possibility of entering farming as a business. The course material is practical and useful. Course feedback for the fall program was very positive.

CHALLENGES: None encountered.

Next Steps

It would be advantageous for this program to be spread to other Community Colleges in the area, as some participants needed to drive long distances to attend. The program would like to obtain some small grants so that one to three scholarships could be offered, especially to farm interns and apprentices.

Additional Resources

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Program: Rhode Island Shellfish Aquaculture Extension

Organization: Roger Williams University - Center for Economic and Environmental Development

Dates: Began February 1, 2003

Targeted to: Recruits through Establishers

Need

Shellfish aquaculture is a well-established aquatic farming effort, but it is under-represented within Rhode Island's farming community. Although the farming of oysters and clams accounts for the vast majority of Rhode Island aquacultured product, the overall amount is relatively low compared to its neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Response

The Rhode Island Shellfish Aquaculture Extension program is designed to support, advance and encourage startups and established farmers in the shellfish aquaculture industry. It will also provide information and educational resources to the general public on all aspects of aquaculture.

Roger Williams University (RWU) supports the Rhode Island shellfish aquaculture industry in a variety of ways. It is currently constructing a small-scale shellfish hatchery for research and production at the University. The products from this hatchery will contribute to on-going programs in shellfish restoration throughout Rhode Island. For example, seed quahogs grown at the hatchery are used for planting in selected areas in support of wild commercial and recreational fisheries.

The hatchery will enhance technology for existing and new shellfish farmers through research and development in such areas as advanced disease resistance in shellfish lines, improved growth characters of shellfish species and an expanded number of species available for shellfish growers to farm.

In conjunction with this effort, courses and workshops in shellfish farming and other aspects of aquaculture are presented for a range of audiences, including high schoolers, undergraduates and established shellfish farming businesses that benefit from technical workshops.

Shellfish aquaculture encompasses technologies ranging from growing microalgae for feeding early larval stages of shellfish in the hatchery through nursery systems to field grow-out of shellfish to a harvestable/marketable size. The Center's first effort involved installing technology that can be used to produce shellfish for the industry and for demonstration during educational activities.

Shellfish aquaculture goes beyond farming technology to include skills such as business management, marketing, accounting and all of the ancillary disciplines farmers need to run their business.

The RWU Center for Economic and Environmental Development's aquaculture program is working to meet the needs of farmers to acquire a working knowledge of both the technical and business skills required.

To initiate educational programs, the Center currently runs two courses: an undergraduate survey course in aquaculture and an applied course in "Practical Shellfish Farming." This later course is presented to adults who want to enhance their skills in shellfish farming, with the thought of establishing a shellfish farming business in Rhode Island.

Funding

The RWU shellfish program operates on funds derived from a variety of sources: direct internal funding from the University, competitive research grants from state and federal agencies, donations and contractual work from private industry, and federal funds from the Rhode Island Aquaculture Initiative.

Partners

We consult and collaborate with a variety of partners: the Ocean State Aquaculture Association; Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association; private non-profit, non-governmental organizations, such as Save the Bay; aquaculture industry members; other academic and research institutions, such as Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and University of Rhode Island; and many knowledgeable individuals.

Outreach

To create awareness of Rhode Island Shellfish Aquaculture Extension programs, we use public media, industry association meetings, scientific symposia presentations and technical publications.

Analysis

SUCCESSSES: Although our program has operated one year, we have had a few successes to date. We are currently working with commercial fishermen to train them in the technology of rearing shellfish with the objective that they will help restock and restore commercially important species in local waters. We have approximately 15 trainees in the Practical Shellfish Farming course who have the potential to expand the shellfish farming industry in Rhode Island. Lastly, we have transitioned a demonstration project growing fish in a modified cranberry bog into a commercial enterprise. This serves as an example of how cranberry growers can diversify.

CHALLENGES: We must identify ways to expand our influence and to find the people who need the information we can provide. Also, we must identify the current and future needs of the aquaculture industry in Rhode Island, then respond to those needs.

Next Steps

We plan to investigate the possibility of starting an oyster gardening program where private citizens can learn to rear the critical early stage oysters for use in oyster bed restoration in the bay.

Resources

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Also see these websites:

- Roger Williams University
<http://www.rwu.edu>
- Rhode Island Aquaculture Initiative
<http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/research/rhodyaquaculture/rhodyaquaculture.html>
- AQUANIC
<http://aquanic.org/>

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