

West Virginia University (joint program with WVSU & UMD College Park)
Final Activity and Outcome Summary for the 2011-2014 State Program Project
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Project Title: Sustaining family farms and their communities by building new capacity to enter and compete in locally accessible higher-value markets

Performance Target:

- 30 of the 110 Agricultural Service Providers (AG SP) educated through this program will teach 300 farmers about marketing, meeting demand specifications, and business planning strategies for identifying and selling in new or expanded markets
- 100 of these 300 farmers will implement at least one of the recommended actions directed towards entering and competing in a new or expanded local, accessible, higher-value markets

Performance Target Outcomes Reported

- **78 ag service providers** reported using information or resources from the State Program in more than **3,000 educational activities** that **reached 9,000 farmers**. Activities reported were:
 - 1,120 Workshops
 - 106 On-farm demonstrations
 - 1,320 Webinars/presentations
 - 220 Fact sheets/guidance documents
 - 600 Articles
 - 9 On-line courses
 - 4 Conferences
 - 9 National presentation
 - 7,000 Individual consultations
- The 78 agricultural service providers were asked to report what percentage of the farmers they had reached implemented or intended to implement specific changes recommended through the state program or through state program-supported events. They reported this data about the farmers:
 - 43% conducted or intended to conduct a market analysis
 - 100% used or intended to use new/improved production and management systems and new crops and livestock
 - 52% developed or intended to develop a food safety plan
 - 85% conducted or intended to conduct a value-added feasibility study
 - 88% keep or intended to keep farm records and use simple farm management tools
 - 55% partnered or intended to partner with other producers
 - 90% used or intended to use new marketing strategies
 - 35% developed or intended to develop a 5-page business plan

Some agricultural service providers reported that farmers contacted them to relay how they have benefitted from the program. They shared these stories:

One participant is now looking to diversify her operation and has contacted me about obtaining commercial dehydrators and seeking contacts for specialty products.

Another farmer participant reported that record-keeping helped her get through a recent IRS farm audit. Yet another said she realized through her participation in this class that her current chicken tractor farming had not been profitable and she plans to re-evaluate poultry production for her operation.

And these quotes:

This will certainly help change my business for the better.

Finally I can see why I am losing money and how I can change that.

This class has given me the knowledge, skills and confidence to start my own aggregation and distribution business, with many of my fellow-participants being among my first customers. I can't thank you enough!

Additional Outcomes Reported

The following additional outcomes were reported as a result of the project:

- 23 New working collaborations
- 27 Grants applied for
- 16 Grants received

Project Milestone Activities Conducted or Hosted		Participants
67 Workshops/Field days	7 On-farm demonstrations	127 ag service providers w/ a core group of 33 3,000+ farmers w/ a core group of 75
4 Tours	78 Webinars/Presentations	
9 on-line short courses	200 Individual consultations	
3 surveys		
Assessments of Learning		
93 ag service providers and 3,000 farmers verified they increased knowledge and skills in one or more of four content areas as a result of participating in state program events.		
Key knowledge and skills taught through the program included:		
<p>Sustainable Production Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying best farm enterprise to add/expand - Crop/livestock diversity for sustainable production, marketability - New production systems, crops, livestock - Niche market issues and opportunities - Production certification choices, benefits, costs, marketing opportunities - Season extension and protected culture mgt. <p>Farm Financial Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basics of farm business planning and analysis - Simple record-keeping systems - Enterprise budgets and simple financial statements - Estimating costs, returns, and break-even points - Calculating measures of financial performance - Using financial mgt tools for business decisions - Building a viable business plan. 	<p>Value-Adding and Direct-Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New, higher value direct markets - Feasibility of value-added product enterprises - Effective/innovative marketing strategies - Building a marketing strategy - Building/sustaining profitable agritourism operations <p>Food Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State/federal policies and regulations for direct marketing - GAPs/GHPs and GMPs procedures and compliance - Food Safety Plans for direct market crops, livestock <p>Networking and Collaborations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benefits from networking, collaborating, partnering with other producers and with purchasers - Effective networking strategies 	

Publications and Products

The state program and other training presenters developed the following products for us in state program events:

- 41 Fact sheets/guidance documents
- 47 Decision tools
- Website and FaceBook page
- 9 Curricula

Outreach about SARE and Grant Programs

During the 3-year project, the WVU/WVSU/WMD state program reached more than 300 agricultural service providers and 3,800 farmers with information about SARE grants and projects through exhibits or presentations at meetings and conferences.

Examples of the events attended include:

- WV Small Farms Conference
- Farm Opportunity Days
- Women in Agriculture Conference
- Urban Agriculture Conference
- Beef Days Short Course
- Sheep Short Course Day
- Food Expo
- WVUES Dinner Meetings

Information about SARE grants is also shared on the NESARE in WVU website and Facebook page; these had more than 3,000 visits and 497 likes, respectively.