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Growing New Farmers

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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
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- Growing New Farmers Consortium at New England Small Farm Institute
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- First Pioneer Farm Credit
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- Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey
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