

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

Success Story

Title

Farm Management Team Receives NIFA Innovation Award For Women In Ag Programs

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Relevance

The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) honored the Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach Women in Ag Program with a Partnership Award for Innovative Programs and Projects on April 24, 2019 in Washington, DC. The NIFA award recognizes the Department of Economics Farm Management Team for outstanding contributions by a partnering land-grant university.

Women have significant employment, management and ownership on family farms and agribusiness in Iowa. The 2017 Census of Agriculture reported 49,085 women farm operators, representing 34 percent of all farm operators in Iowa. This number is up from 20,258 women farm operators representing 22 percent of all farm operators in 2002. Women have become more than half of the undergraduates in the Iowa State University (ISU) College of Agriculture and Life Sciences representing 53.1 percent for the 2018-2019 academic year. The 2017 Study of Farmland Ownership and Tenure in Iowa shows women own 47 percent of all Iowa farmland. A 2015 study of Gender Roles & Equality in Agribusiness reported more than 90 percent of men and women surveyed felt women were an integral part of agribusiness. There is a critical need for education directed specifically to women in agriculture to help them make good decisions that contribute to food security and agricultural sustainability.

Response

To help meet this need, the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm Management Team developed a program for women with a focus on agricultural risk management. The mission of the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Women in Ag program is to improve the quality of life in Iowa by providing research-based education that expands agricultural business, improves natural resource conservation, and supports the community of women in agriculture. The team accomplishes this through innovative and effective Extension programs.

Annie's Project is the cornerstone of the ISU Women in Ag Program. The 18-hour course features a series of six weekly classes on a variety of agricultural business and risk management topics. The goal of the educational program is to empower farm women who want to be more knowledgeable about their agricultural businesses. Annie's Project creates a comfortable and supportive learning environment focused on the best farm business management practices. This enables women to become stronger business partners in their farming operations.

Historically, Ruth Hambleton, a former University of Illinois Extension Farm and Marketing Specialist, created Annie's Project in 2003 with a NIFA North Central Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) Challenge Grant. In 2004, ISU farm management team members helped create an Annie's Project national leadership team. Currently, two team members serve on the board of directors for the Annie's Project Education for Women non-profit organization. The ISU team accessed NIFA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Professional Development Program and Risk Management Agency community partnership grants to help educators in 38 states implement Annie's Project.

Building on the Annie's Project core values, the ISU team developed several other local, small-group, multi-session curricula for women, each 9 to 15 hours long. Emerging audience needs were identified based on local steering committees, evaluation results, and experience in teaching the audience. The farm management curricula includes the following. The Women Managing Cattle curricula was supported by a 2010 NIFA ERME grant. Women Marketing Grain was first supported by a 2010 Risk Management Agency community partnership grant. Managing for Today and Tomorrow farm transition planning curricula was developed through a 2012-2015 NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) grant with Extension colleagues in ten states. This farm transition curricula was selected as the 2018 National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA) Search for Excellence in Farm Management national winner. Women Managing Farm Finances was developed with a 2014 NIFA ERME grant and Extension colleagues in three states. Heartbeat of the Farm Human Resource Management was developed in 2015 with support from a NIFA ERME grant. Women Managing Crops was developed through a 2016 NIFA ERME grant.

Two online courses were also developed and posted on the national web portal, www.eXtension.org. Investing for Farm Families arose from a 2011 FINRA Investor Education Foundation grant led by Rutgers University with partners in four other states. Women's Roles in Farm and Ranch Transition Planning was created in 2016 with support from NIFA eXtension and Agribank.

The team co-founded the eXtension Women in Ag Learning Network with Vermont and

seven other states with support from NIFA eXtension, CHS, Inc. and Agribank. As a member of the 2016-2019 NIFA BFRDP Educational Enhancement grant led by the University of Vermont with five other states, the ISU team conducted a meta-data analysis of programs to benefit beginning farm and ranch women. They also developed evaluation tools and contributed to the 2019 national virtual conference for educators, Women in Ag Programs for 21st Century Farms and Ranches.

Specifically in Iowa over the past three years, the ISU Farm Management Team delivered 24 Annie's Project farm management courses reaching 408 women. They also taught 14 Women Marketing Grain courses, 7 Women Managing Cattle courses, 5 Managing for Today and Tomorrow farm transition courses, and 1 Women Managing Farm Finances course reaching another 407 women.

Since 2016, the team further expanded the scope of women's programming in Iowa by innovating several new activities including the following. Two statewide Women in Ag Leadership Conferences in 2017 and 2018 reached 275 women and were led by a new 20-member conference advisory committee with support from Farm Credit Services of America. The team partnered with Landus Cooperative to host a statewide grain marketing forum reaching 80 women in 2017. Seven agricultural tours focused on risk management reached 226 women in 2017 and 2018 with support from a 2016-2018 RME grant. The team honored 21 "Women Impacting Agriculture" including on-farm/business video stories which were supported by Farm Credit Services of America. The team created two dozen video lessons on risk management through support from RMA community partnership grants in 2016 and 2017. More than 10,036 people viewed the story and educational videos. The team designed and distributed 4,449 Extension-branded 120-page notebooks with 11 pages of Extension information through support from Farm Credit Services of America. The team led 14 Third Thursday at Three online educator webinars and discussions with an attendance of 168 educators. Three state-wide day-long planning meetings were attended by 155 people. These meetings increased awareness about risk management education and the audience of women in agriculture, while allowing Extension professionals to share best practices and improve skills.

Over the past three years, the Farm Management Team contributed to women in ag programming led by colleagues in Iowa, Extension in other states, plus partners such as Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Iowa USDA Women Land and Legacy, Iowa Women in Agriculture, Women Food and Ag Network, Women in Denim, and Colorado and National Farmers Unions. In 2019, the team partnered with Colac Area Health and Rural Financial Counseling in Victoria, Australia to present two workshops for dairy farmers.

The work of the Farm Management Team in serving the audience of women in agriculture is only possible with the collaboration of many ISU colleagues. The farm management team is deeply appreciative of county-based Extension professionals, ISU Economics Department, ISU Value Added Agriculture Program, Research Institute for Studies in Education, Human Sciences Extension and Outreach, Program Services and others. As a result of this collaboration, program processes were established to increase efficiency and customer interaction such as statewide online registration, monthly client-focused newsletters, and online evaluation tools.

Type of Change(s)(s)

- Condition Changes

Impact Statement

When farm and ranch women are empowered, they can contribute to a more sustainable agriculture by improving economic resiliency, conserving natural resources, and supporting each other's influential roles in families and communities. Women across Iowa trust Extension to provide research-based information and tools to help them make good farm management decisions. Extension educators have an important role in providing effective and efficient farm management education for women in Iowa. By improving agricultural sustainability, women in the industry are key stakeholders in the production of safe, plentiful and accessible food.

ISUEO Signature Issues

Food & the Environment --> Farm Business Management

Outcomes

The team works to develop appropriate evaluation tools and gather program impacts. Pre- and post-course surveys are administered to gather program impacts from the courses offered; the surveys can be completed online or on paper. For the leadership conferences, an extensive survey was distributed via email following the conferences. For the tours, a one to two page paper survey was collected at the end of each day. Video storytelling with past participants is another important way the team gathers and shares program impacts. The team makes every effort to not only collect results, but to also share outcomes. They developed an annual program report and contributed posters and presentations on women in ag programs at the national ERME and NACAA conferences every year. The team published program impacts in the Journal of NACAA on Managing for Today and Tomorrow (2015), Professional Development for Educators (2016), Annie's Project (2017), and Leadership Conferences (2018.)

Specific examples of program outcomes in Iowa follow. Annie's Project courses were successful in increasing knowledge in the five agricultural risk areas of finance, human resources, legal, marketing and production. Evaluation results indicate a statistically significant difference in the overall mean knowledge gains from pre-course assessment to post-course assessment with $p < 0.01$ in all content areas combined. Survey respondents also took important actions to manage risks during the courses. The 2017 Women in Ag Leadership conference survey respondents rated the event highly in the areas of inspiring their leadership journeys, increasing confidence, providing useful resources, helping them learn practical skills, and offering opportunities for peer support. Based on the conference evaluation, an advisory committee recommended lengthening breakout sessions to 75 minutes to allow for more in-depth learning.

The 2018 Women Marketing Grain survey respondents indicated more than half had previously enrolled in other farm management courses for women. All eight of the marketing topics taught were rated as equally valuable. The number of women who indicated they 'have completed or currently do this' for the management action of 'calculate my/our grain storage costs' on the pre-course surveys, increased by three times on the post-course surveys. In an open-ended question, one 2018 Managing for Today and Tomorrow survey respondent wrote my goals for applying what I learned from this course are to "Gather my documents and put them in an accessible place, go to the next estate planning workshop, and review my will."

Through a video interview, Diane C., a participant in Iowa's 100th Annie's Project class shared, "Women do have a crucial part...we all have something to bring to the business and its good to work together to make that business, the family farm, as productive as we can."

Location / Participant(s) Came From

- State

Partner(s)

- County Extension Staff