



## Connecticut Program Helps Strengthen Farms' Financial Viability

Candace Bartholomew and Trish Manfredi, from the University of Connecticut (UConn) Cooperative Extension, wanted to help small and beginning farmers improve their farm's viability. Thanks to funding from the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education, they were able to run a multi-faceted educational project titled, "Strengthening the Viability and Capacity of Beginning Small Farms in an Urban State."

The two saw that farmers in Connecticut were being hit with financial factors that they couldn't control – including high urban land values and taxes, and town regulations. To assist beginning and small farmers increase farm viability, they held workshops to address a range of financial, production, legal and marketing risks that had been specifically identified by participants of previous programming.

Through the project, four financial planning workshops were held in four state regions, with 67 participants learning how to improve their financial plans. They also conducted a one-day conference, titled "From Farm to Kitchen to Market", which addressed the issues of Commercial Kitchens including regulations, costs and food safety. This conference enabled 100 participants to assess if they could add a commercial kitchen to their business, and connected them to both public and private resources. A comprehensive guide to Commercial Kitchens in Connecticut was also posted online for anyone interested to utilize as a resource.

In addition, they also held a mini-conference, plus three diverse on-farm tours, addressing "Marketing Strategies for Small Farms in an Urban Economy", with 40 producers strengthening their marketing strategies as a result of their participation. Finally, since a resource guide of town and state regulations relating to agriculture and value-added businesses was developed by a collaborator and is available online, a marketing workbook with additional worksheets was drafted to complement the marketing focus of the project.

One producer who benefited from participating in the business planning and marketing workshops, as well as the Farm to Kitchen to Market Conference, is Nancy Livensparger. Her 2.6 acre Fire Ring Farm CSA services 26 members, and she credits the project activities for improved marketing tactics, and particularly for helping her connect with resources both public and private. Livensparger's CSA has grown to be so successful that she currently has a waiting list of 75 people.

With the support of funding from the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education, these two Extension educators were able to conduct a series of workshops and post information online that has helped small farmers in Connecticut increase their farms' financial viability.

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# EXTENSION RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

*“Helping America’s farmers and ranchers manage risk.”*

The Extension Risk Management Education program provides training to help producers learn new strategies to manage complex and growing agricultural risks. Extension Risk Management Education accomplishes this by encouraging and funding innovative programs across the country, and helping programs focus on accomplishing tangible results.

Projects are producer-focused, results-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted results that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those results.

Commitment to funding results, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration allow you to view the accomplishments of all funded projects online at: [www.ExtensionRME.org](http://www.ExtensionRME.org)

Section 524(a)(3) of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 authorized the Partnerships for Risk Management Education and provided \$5 million dollars annually to be administered by USDA-NIFA. Extension Risk Management Education is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

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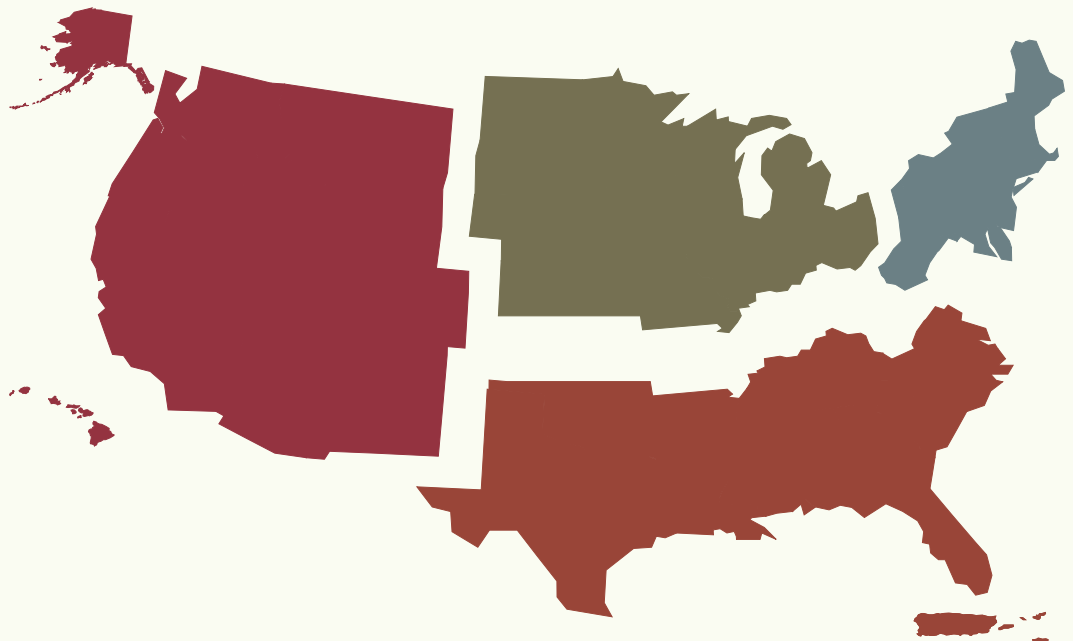
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