



MASSACHUSETTS



Massachusetts Farmers Learn to Manage Financial and Labor Risks

As the owner of the Benson Place blueberry farm in Heath, Massachusetts, David Gott said that he wanted to figure out new ways to think about his farm's profitability and labor issues. Luckily for Gott, Kelly Coleman and Devon Whitney-Deal from the organization Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) had received funding from the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education to create programs that would educate farmers on those very issues.

The first program, "Managing Farm Finances: Tools and Resources to Help Farmers Assess and Grow Their Businesses" helped Gott and his partner learn how to look at their assets to determine profitability for specific parts of their farm. Gott said that the program helped them "assess the different enterprises within our farm, such as pick your own blueberries versus pre-ordered berries and some other aspects. We learned the tools that helped us see the individual values."

The program was set up to help farmers improve their farms' financial management, assess funding and financing opportunities, and make sound financial decisions. Fifty-five beginning, small, and limited resources producers, who make up a large percentage of the local farming population, participated in the workshops. The workshops covered topics like understanding and improving credit scores and traditional loans, benefits and tools for good financial record keeping, financial decision making, and alternative financing options.

The second workshop, "Managing Labor Risks: Tools and Resources to Help Farmers Manage Human Capital," dealt with labor issues, and Gott said "there were great presentations that we heard from other local farms, and talking with others, it was good to see that people were facing similar issues to us."

The project helped 43 beginning, small or limited resource farmers in the region by addressing issues such as labor management and human capital to help farmers identify labor risks and to provide them with strategies to improve labor management. Within six months of completion of the project, it is anticipated that at least 100 additional farmers will use the new online self-assessment tools to understand their labor risks and plan how to improve their human resource strategy.

Gott said that the risk management education programming provided by CISA was invaluable, not just for the information it provided, but also in the way it brought together the farming community. "I think it's a terrifically valuable program. Farmers do a lot of work on our own. We're really isolated, and so it's good to get together to learn from one another and the presenters."

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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

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.

Extension Risk Management Education Regional Centers

Southern Center

University of Arkansas
(501) 671-2165

Northeast Center

University of Delaware
(302) 831-6540

Western Center

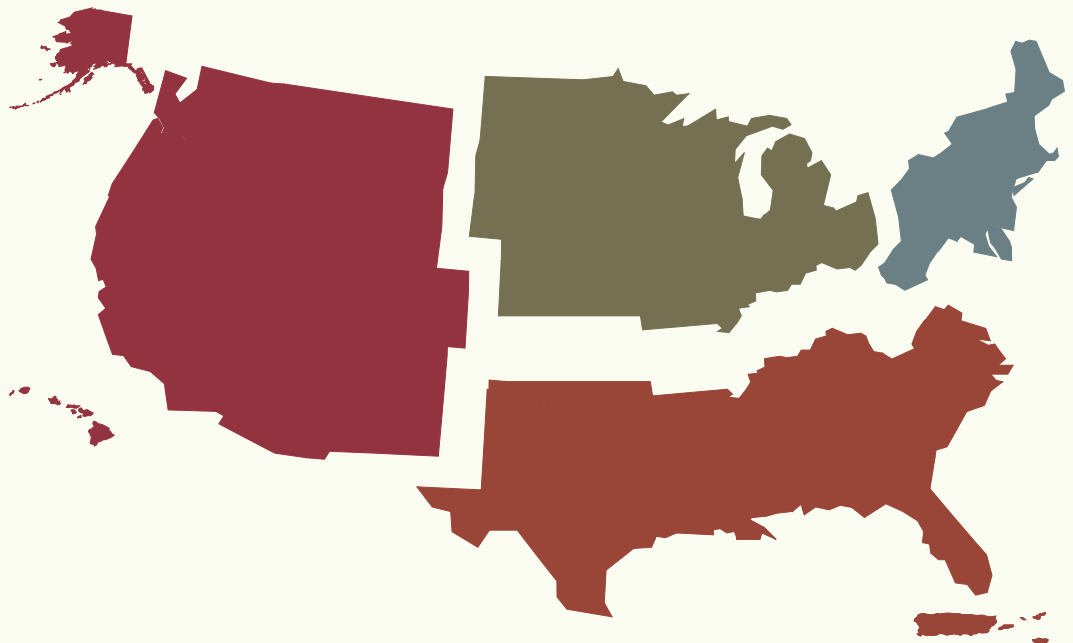
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