



Good to Great – Improving Labor Management on Fruit and Vegetable Farms in New York State

Labor shortages, worker turnover and poor workplace communication are critical concerns for farm employers. **New York State** fruit and vegetable farms rely on a combination of local, foreign-born seasonal, and year-round workers primarily from Mexico and Guatemala, as well as H2A temporary workers from Jamaica, Mexico and Guatemala. Farmers want to learn how to support their increasingly intercultural workplaces.

In order to address these concerns, a team from **Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)** and the Cornell Farmworker Program (CFP) led by Project Director, **Elizabeth Higgins**, developed the educational program *Good to Great – Improving Labor Management on Fruit and Vegetable Farms in New York State*.

The trainings reduced two areas of risk for fruit and vegetable farmers - Human Risk (labor supply, recruitment and retention, and employee management and communication) and Legal Risk (labor regulations) by improving producer management skills. The primary methods of program delivery were a 4-workshop series,

which was offered at 5 sites, and 8 half-hour webinars conducted in order to reach producers across the state. The team followed up with the workshop participants by email, and used newsletters, a website, social media (Facebook), and YouTube videos to help reach additional growers. They also held three part-day trainings on managing a Latino workforce at Ag Expo, NOFA-NY, and Eastern NY Fruit and Vegetable School, and conducted a 2-hour webinar on employing foreign-born workers.

As a result of these educational opportunities, 192 participating farmers learned about labor management best practices and resources available for assistance. In the first year of the program participants adopted both improved employee management methods and improved legal compliance to help decrease worker turnover. In one year, the educators were able to document 27 improvements on 21 farms in the areas of employee manuals, legal compliance, improved trainings, and improved working conditions.

Interest in ag labor management has continued to increase in recent years. The Project Director noted that this grant enabled the team to develop tools and resources to meet the growing need for ag labor management education for farmers and farm managers. A wealth of materials developed for *Good to Great* are now available to other educators and the public through the project’s Final Report, which is archived on the national Extension Risk Management Education website (extensionrme.org).



“The workshops we attended were well-organized and full of useful information for producers.”

- New York Farmer





**NORTHEAST
EXTENSION
RISK
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**



**EXTENSION
RISK
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**



United States
Department of
Agriculture

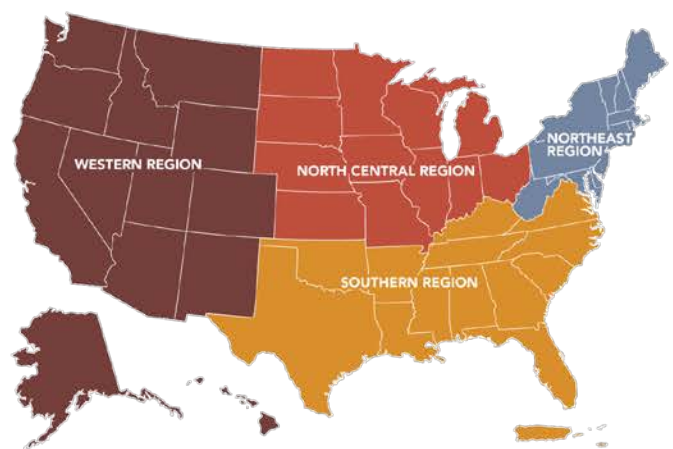
National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

“Educating America’s farmers and ranchers
to manage the unique risks of producing food
for the world’s table.”

Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

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.

Extension Risk Management Education has funded innovative programs that have generated tangible results for producers in every state. ERME is committed to funding results, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration. View the accomplishments of all funded projects on our website.
<http://ExtensionRME.org>



ERME REGIONAL CENTERS



**NORTH CENTRAL
EXTENSION
RISK
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**

University of Nebraska
Dept. of Agricultural Economics
303 Filley Hall
Lincoln, NE
68583-0922

(402) 472-1742
NCERME.org



**NORTHEAST
EXTENSION
RISK
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**

University of Delaware
Dept. of Applied Economics
and Statistics
112 Townsend Hall
Newark, DE
19716-2130

(302) 831-6540
NERME.org



**SOUTHERN
EXTENSION
RISK
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**

2301 South University Ave.
Little Rock, AR
72204

(501) 671-2165
SRMEC.uark.edu



**WESTERN
EXTENSION
RISK
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**

222 N. Havana St.
Spokane Valley, WA
99202

(509) 477-2168
WESTRME.wsu.edu

NERME.org

